

Collecting Texts in Endangered Languages: The Chickasaw Narrative Bootcamp

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While data collection early in the Americanist tradition included texts as part of the Boasian triad, later developments in the generative tradition moved away from narratives. With a resurgence of attention to texts in both linguistic theory and language documentation, the literature on methodologies is growing (i.e., Chelliah 2001, Chafe 1980, Burton & Matthewson 2015). We outline our approach to collecting Chickasaw texts in what we call a ‘narrative bootcamp.’ Chickasaw is a severely threatened language and no longer in common daily use. Facilitating narrative collection with elder fluent speakers is an important goal, as is the cultivation of second language speakers and the training of linguists and tribal language professionals. Our bootcamps meet these goals. Moreover, we show many positive outcomes to this approach, including a positive sense of language use and ‘fun’ voiced by the elders, the corpus expansion that occurs by collecting and processing narratives onsite in the workshop, and field methods training for novices. Importantly, we find the sparking of personal recollections facilitates the collection of heretofore unrecorded narrative genres in Chickasaw. This approach offers an especially fruitful way to build and expand a text corpus for small communities of highly endangered languages.

1. Introduction¹

The Americanist tradition in linguistics has as its hallmark the Boasian triad, which consists of a dictionary, a grammar and an interlinearized text collection.

¹We dedicate this paper to memory of the late Jerry Imotichey. Thanks to the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program staff, especially JoAnn Ellis and Stan Smith, for their support of this work, Brandon White Eagle for participating as a transcriber, and Rachel Wedlow and Teresa Workman for workshop logistics. We would also like to acknowledge additional participants from the Chickasaw Language Committee: Virginia Bolen, Pauline Brown, Pat Cox, LeeRene Frazier, Weldon Fulsom, Geneva Holman, Jerry Imotichey, Rose Shields Jefferson, Phyllis Latti, Dora Panther, Hannah Pitman, Vera Tims, and Catherine Willmond. We would also like to thank Pamela Munro for sharing her expertise at the workshops. This material is based upon work supported by while Fitzgerald is serving at the National Science Foundation as program director for the Documenting Endangered Languages Program. Any opinion, findings, and conclusions expressed in this material are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. This material is also based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grants No. BCS-1263699 and BCS-1263698, “Collaborative Research: Documentation and Analysis of the Chickasaw Verb.” We transcribed using the phonemic orthography developed by Pamela Munro. The voiceless lateral is represented by [lh], glottal stop by ['], vowel and consonant length by doubling, (phonemic) nasalization by underlining the vowel, and pitch accent by a grave over the vowel. Any underlining under the vowel must be done with a diacritic, not by using an underlining format for the



Attention to these traditional elements has re-emerged as part of the relatively recent development of the field of language documentation, where there is a resurgence of attention to narrative collection and analysis and to collection of diverse speech genres. Part of this attention has included the development of technological tools like ELAN (Wittenburg et al. 2006) and others which facilitate text concordances, more developed search tools and the tagging of sociolinguistic and other variables, as well as the opportunity for richer linguistic analyses of texts, the creation of corpora for lesser studied languages and the facilitation of collecting texts for use in revitalization programs. In addition to the technological developments, the literature on field methodologies has included renewed attention to methods and approaches to collecting texts (i.e., Chelliah 2001; Chelliah & de Reuse 2010), refining these methods, revisiting well-known techniques such as the *Pear Story* (Chafe 1980), and expanding the repertoire of approaches. As one example, researchers at the University of British Columbia have developed Totem Storyboards as a technique for eliciting narratives, especially those which might include semantic and pragmatic linguistic features harder to elicit directly from speakers, such as aspect or modality (Burton & Matthewson 2015). Several external factors also add impetus for exploring different ways to improve upon the process of text collection and analysis. With the high number of endangered languages and the limited resources—human and financial—to document all of them, it is important to maximize how those resources are spent. The advent of the ‘big data’ era has increased the value of large typological sets of data for analyzing a particular phenomenon or other investigations. Finally, and importantly, many communities have a strong desire to have contextually and culturally relevant language examples for revitalization programs.

In a linguistic area like that of Oklahoma, a project like text collection is impacted by several important factors. Oklahoma has been described as a linguistic ‘hotspot’ by National Geographic’s *Enduring Voices: Saving Disappearing Languages* due to the combination of significant linguistic diversity, severe endangerment, and significant lack of language documentation. Of the thirty-nine federally or state registered tribes, all languages represented are endangered and at least seventeen of these tribes no longer have fluent first language speakers remaining in the state. Moreover, only Kickapoo is described as a situation where children are acquiring the indigenous language in the home. In some communities, children are exposed to indigenous heritage languages in the classroom setting or outside of school in an enrichment activity like a children’s club or summer camp. A number of tribes, including the Seminole and Cherokee, have been using immersion schools to facilitate children’s second language acquisition of the indigenous heritage language. Adult immersion approaches are also employed; the Sac and Fox and some other tribes in the region employ modified Master-Apprentice programs for adult acquisition of their languages, while the Chickasaw Nation employs an adult immersion program called the Chikasha Academy.

The unrelenting push from factors accelerating language endangerment in Oklahoma means that in most language communities, English is the dominant language, vowel. Pitch-accented nasalized vowels will carry two diacritics. The orthographic representations from vowels make a cheat sheet easy for users since they can copy and paste from it.

that even fluent speakers are bilingual and, most likely, that bilingual speakers' dominant language is English.² While this does not characterize every Oklahoma indigenous language community, it does outline the key challenges for tribal language programs. As a result of these kind of linguistic contexts, fluent speakers may need prodding to stay in the language, or they may find using English more comfortable even in language teaching and documentation contexts, especially when their interlocutors have little or no conversational skills in the indigenous language.³ In using larger chunks of meaningful connected speech in the language, even the most skilled speakers may code-mix and include English when using indigenous languages as the medium for a conversation or storytelling. Focused elicitation of these genres of indigenous language use may also be of diminished effectiveness when the elicitor lacks fluency in the indigenous language and is working with speakers in this kind of bilingual, English-dominant environment.

Chickasaw, a severely threatened Muskogean language spoken in Oklahoma, is no longer in common daily use, and fluent speakers are, at the youngest, in their early 60s. Like many Oklahoma language communities, the Chickasaw are actively working to revitalize their language. As one component of that work, here we describe a text-collection process, driven by the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program (CLRP)'s goals of creating new speakers and documenting fluent speakers while they still exist. In doing so, we also contribute to the growing text-collection methodological literature by outlining our approach to documenting Chickasaw texts in what we have called a 'narrative bootcamp.'

A bootcamp is typically a short but very challenging training program that is designed to help people improve their ability to do some particular task, and to improve it in the short duration of that training. In the Chickasaw context, finding ways to facilitate narrative collection with elder fluent speakers is an important goal, especially when one goal of the documentation project is to collect a wide variety of speakers in a wide variety of genres. These workshops reactivate the kinds of stories told in daily life and typical conversations for recording in a more performative setting. A second important training component relates to finding ways to train language workers and student linguists to do fieldwork and data collection in endangered language communities with small numbers of older speakers. By bringing in a group of fluent speakers, and doing onsite recording, transcription and translation, the narrative bootcamp simultaneously supports both goals. We collected excellent language resources in what has proven to be a wonderful experience for the participating speakers. Even more exciting is that the participating students share these positive feelings.

In the next few sections, we outline the status of the Chickasaw language, followed by a discussion of Chickasaw texts and genres, and then we describe the approach we have taken to these narrative workshops. We conclude by discussing the implications of our approach in terms of larger discussions on text collections in the field.

²Kickapoo and Cherokee, and likely Choctaw, are among the few languages in the state with monolingual speakers; the last monolingual Chickasaw speaker, Emily Dickerson, passed away in 2013.

³For example, Jacob Manatowa-Bailey (p.c.), director of the Sauk Language Department, reports the considerable emphasis, especially early on in their Master-Apprentice Program, on having Apprentices working to keep their Masters using the Sauk language rather than English.

2. Status of the Chickasaw Language The Chickasaw language is a Native American language, a member of the Muskogean family, which consists of Chickasaw, Choctaw, Alabama, Koasati, Creek, Seminole, Hitchiti, and Mikasuki, as well as Apalachee, which is no longer spoken. Chickasaw and its close relative, Choctaw, are members of the Western branch of the Muskogean language family. These languages were originally spoken in the southeastern United States. As white settlements encroached on these traditional southeastern homelands, and after the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was passed by the U.S. Congress, the Chickasaw and others underwent forced removal to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) as shown in Figure 1. Today, the Chickasaw Nation has status as a federally recognized tribal nation located in Ada, Oklahoma, with more than 63,000 citizens in south central Oklahoma and throughout the United States.

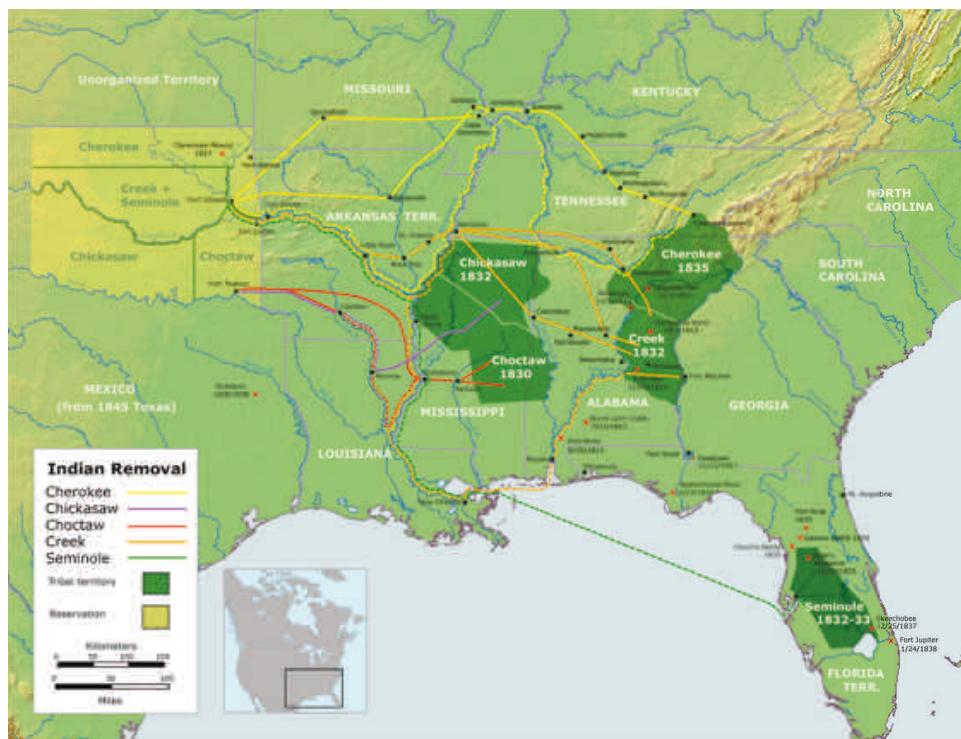


Figure 1. Removal of Chickasaw and other Southeastern Tribes. Map By User: Nikater—Own work by Nikater, submitted to the public domain. Background map courtesy of Demis, www.demis.nl and Wilcomb E. Washburn (Hrsg.) *Handbook of North American Indians. Vol. 4: History of Indian-White Relations*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. 1988. ISBN 0-16004-583-5, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2681249>

In the years following removal, the Chickasaw, like many tribes forcibly removed from their aboriginal territory, suffered devastating effects on the continued use and the intergenerational transmission of language and culture, among other areas. Chickasaw people were sent to boarding schools, where the dominant policies focused on

eradicating Native languages and cultures. As a result of these and other factors, the Chickasaw language underwent attrition over the next century, a loss facilitated by intermarriage with non-Indians and intertribal marriages favoring English as a common language. Chickasaw is currently spoken mainly in south-central Oklahoma. Two additional speakers live out of state, one in Tennessee, one in California.

Obviously, the impact of boarding schools and other disruptions of traditional family units have had a negative impact on intergenerational transmission of the Chickasaw language. Assessing the language based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) criteria on language vitality shows that its survival faces continued threats. On the positive side, the Chickasaw language community is vibrant, with activities designed to promote the language and its use, particularly in meta-linguistic ways. In Table 1, we give an assessment of the language in terms of the full list of UNESCO factors of language vitality (Mosley 2010). The language has excellent linguistic documentation with regard to a number of aspects (syntax, lexicon as evidenced by Munro and Willmond 1994, 2008), but fewer examples of language in context exist as far as texts, conversations or recordings.

As Table 1 shows, the Chickasaw Nation government supports language initiatives, funding language activities and the language program itself, with fluent elders currently on staff. Having a language department as part of the government structure, especially given the high level of support by the Chickasaw Nation, is highly significant and helps to create momentum. The Chickasaw Nation also commits funding to make at least some aspect of language accessible to all enrolled tribal citizens, whether by adult community classes, sports camps, a language app, or a language-based card game. By this measure of vitality, the language is well-supported and clearly vibrant. This is in strong evidence when examining how active the CLRP is by the wide range of their activities, with some more enrichment-oriented, others more acquisition-focused, and still others geared toward recording and documenting speakers. Other institutional programs include the Chikasha Academy (adult immersion program); Chipota Chikashshanompoli (children's language club); Anompa' Himitta' (Chickasaw Language Committee, for creation of new lexical items, among other projects); Chickasaw language classes at Byng High School and Eastern Central University; curriculum materials and literature development, including recent publications of bilingual prayer books (Chickasaw Language Committee et al. 2012) and cookbooks aggressive use of technology, including an iPhone and Android app and a Rosetta Stone Chickasaw product (slated for future release as of this writing); Fluent Speaker Day (includes prayer, singing, and storytelling in Chickasaw); and video recording of language-oriented events.

Even with all this activity, in assessing the quantitative aspects of language vitality in Table 1, the numbers are stark. Optimistically, there are 50 or fewer fluent speakers remaining, just 0.1% of all Chickasaw tribal citizens. In a number of cases, a fluent speaker may be the only sibling in that generation who retained the language. From this group of speakers, 25 are highly active with the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program, as staff or serving on the Chickasaw Language Committee. A

Table 1. Status of Chickasaw on UNESCO's Language Vitality factors

UNESCO Factor	Status of Chickasaw by Factor
Absolute Number of Speakers	at most, 50 fluent speakers (age 60 and over)
Proportion of speakers within the total population	Fluent speakers are 0.1% of the overall population
Type and Quality of Documentation	Two dictionaries, grammar, significant linguistic analysis published on the language, but relatively few recordings and published texts
Intergenerational Transmission of Language	n/a
Availability of materials for language education and literacy	Primarily beginning level pedagogical materials, also language app, cartoons, Chickasaw.TV and assortment of materials
Shifts in domains of language use	Most domains use English; some use both English and Chickasaw; fluent speaker day Chickasaw only; ceremonial prayers and hymns at public events
Response to new domains and media	Chickasaw language app, videos online at Chickasaw.TV, some presence on Facebook and Twitter
Community member's attitudes toward their own language	Surveys were conducted in 2007 and in 2013–4; attitudes are shifting to be more and more positive, including strong support for language revitalization and its benefits among the community; see Ozbolt (2014) for detailed results from the most recent community survey
Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use	Institutionalized language classes for employees, tribal leadership, and legislators; Chickasaw language can be taught in Oklahoma public schools; Chickasaw Nation certifies teachers; Chickasaw Nation provides significant support, including financial, to the Chickasaw language, including funding the CLRP; strong visibility of the language in public facilities and official ceremonies

number of them also serve as a Master in the Master-Apprentice Program or are teaching adults in a community class. Also important is the small group of four to five proficient second language learners, the majority of whom are staff for the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program. Some community classes are also taught by second language learners.

With a speaker population of these numbers, it is obvious how severely threatened the language is. The Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program has two main foci: generating new second language speakers and documenting the language of its first language speakers. This means any documentation project must be relevant to and support language revitalization.

3. Chickasaw Texts and Genres Stories from elders and other fluent speakers carry considerable traditional and cultural knowledge, and thus constitute an important component of a language documentation project. Collecting stories documents oral history and other knowledge from community elders. Because narrative recordings also offer an opportunity to hear language in context, they also have considerable potential for language revitalization and language learning, especially when recordings are accompanied by transcriptions and translations. Language revitalization programs can employ narratives in teaching, since they convey culturally and linguistically significant information. An interesting development is language documentation using second language learners as transcribers of texts, thus giving them an additional role to play in language revitalization by building language skills and meta-linguistic knowledge acquired via the act of transcribing and translating. For example, a language documentation project focusing on Gwich'in caribou anatomy knowledge involves the youngest speakers of the language. Their project website notes that as these youngest speakers work on transcription and translations of Gwich'in narratives, they build proficiency and meta-linguistic awareness of the language:

The mentorship of working with Kenneth on such translations as this helped Allan discover where he held misunderstandings and also helped identify gaps in his language abilities. For example, the Gwich'in word for the aurora borealis is *yakaih* or *zheekaih* ('sky lights'), which Allan had always heard as *zhee k'aai* ('sky willows'). The slight difference of the glottal stop on the "k" changes the meaning of the term. Allan also had a general understanding of caribou anatomical terms, *ch'atth'an* 'leg', *ch'iki* 'head', etc., but did not have a knowledge of the level of detail for body parts this research project has documented. In addition, Allan has also noted idiolectical differences in individual speakers, slight variations in speech unique to geographical areas or even family groups. (Mishler et al. 2015)

Also importantly, in our experience, people—the fluent speakers—enjoy telling and hearing stories in the language. With a small but emerging literature suggesting some positive health outcomes for indigenous populations connected to their language and culture in research such as McIvor et al. (2009), McIvor (2013), and Oster et al. (2014), the potential value of this kind of communal language activity cannot be underestimated, even if it might be difficult to actually quantify and rely more on anecdotes from field workers and language programs, due to small sample size and other factors.

Of linguistic relevance, texts are known for their usefulness in providing constructions that might not emerge as easily during more traditional morphosyntactic elicitations focused on paradigms and sentences without a larger linguistic context. With the agglutinative language structure of Chickasaw (see Fitzgerald 2016 for more detail), narratives have strong potential to illuminate verbal morphology, especially morphology, syntax, and semantics that are more challenging to elicit directly. There are, however, long, established traditions of tribal oratory for the Chickasaw, as well as for other related Muskogean tribes in the Southeast, but many genres, like medicinal speeches and songs, have been lost, as Hinson (2016) notes. However, documentation and reclamation of cultural heritage contained in Chickasaw-language narratives is a high priority for data collection since there are still speakers who have these skills and this knowledge.

Hinson (2016) lists some of the key genres in Chickasaw and other southeast oral traditions: the public ceremonial speech, 'the beloved speech,' ritual and medicinal speech and traditional stories, which encompass a broad and diverse range of topics with motivations and subtexts, from moral instruction to simple humor. With virtually no examples of these except a few as translations in English, the gaps in the Chickasaw documentation exist for all of these genres, as well as any type of personal recollection or autobiographical reminiscences.

With regard to *shikonno'pa* or 'possum stories,' there is one published and annotated example in Munro (2005). Animal stories such as these comprise the trickster stories found throughout Native America and other indigenous oral traditions, where the protagonist is a scoundrel or possesses other less flattering human frailties. In Chickasaw, the featured main animal is frequently either *Chokfi'* (Rabbit), *Loksi'* (Turtle) or *Chakwihili'* (Possum), the latter pictured in Figure 2. There is often an adventure, or more likely, a misadventure, where the animals serve as a type of fable or otherwise carry a pedagogical or moral subtext for listeners. In some, the stories explain why the natural world is as it is, such as why possum has a bare tail, or how an important plant or medicine came into being or was acquired by the Chickasaw. While only one such story has been transcribed or published in the Chickasaw language to date, related southeastern languages have a richer documentary record in these and other important text genres. For example, Gouge (2004) and Haas & Hill (2015) are two significant and detailed narrative collections for the related Muskogean language, Creek, with some of the narratives retold in audio format on a partner website (Martin 2015). Rich oral narrative collections such as these constitute amazing repositories of cultural and personal knowledge, and documenting such elements is an important component of creating a record of the linguistic practices of any community (cf. Himmelmann 1998).

Autobiographical reminiscences are perhaps the most prevalent genre told today in oral storytelling, giving the relative paucity of persons well-versed in *shikonno'pa*'. The topics here are diverse, ranging from the misadventures of youth to traditional foodways to remembrances of boarding schools or traditional material culture, among other themes. Cultural practices including Chickasaw churches and medicinal traditions are also common themes in narratives.



Figure 2. Chickasaw trickster, Lady Possum, in Stomp Dance Regalia. Artwork courtesy of the artist, Lokosh (Joshua D. Hinson).

A narrative collection component to a Chickasaw language documentation project must address the gap in texts (and related recordings). Many elders who speak the language share anecdotes and stories on events such as Fluent Speaker Day, where only Chickasaw is used. Speakers who talk and share at such venues self-select or may be urged to speak by their peers, which means there may be a lot fewer people telling stories or sharing different genres. In venues where there are more English speakers, or where English speakers are attempting text collection, as noted above, it may be considerably more challenging to elicit a set of narratives from various genres from each speaker, so finding creative ways to help elders brainstorm and share stories is important. Fluent speakers may need prodding to stay in the language, or may find using English more comfortable in language teaching and documentation contexts, especially when their interlocutors have little or no conversational skills in Chickasaw. Working with severely endangered languages is a challenge for beginning field

workers, whether they are linguists in training or community members committed to their heritage language. These two issues converge in any narrative documentation project in a severely endangered language community.

A key concern, then, is how to train young linguists or community language activities to successfully collect monolingual narratives in a variety of genres from communities with similarly threatened languages. What we outline next is how we have structured workshops to address the following critical challenges: 1) small groups of only bilingual elder speakers; 2) virtually nonexistent text documentation; and 3) the need to create experienced cohorts of language professionals to collect texts from this demographic of speakers in highly endangered linguistic contexts.

4. Structure of the Chickasaw narrative bootcamp In this section, we outline how we structure the narrative bootcamp workshops. These workshops facilitate three primary goals: to collect texts from Chickasaw elders, to process the collected texts (that is, segment, transcribe, and translate them) and to train linguistics students and language program staff how to collect texts and do language research in this type of endangered language community. Four workshops have been held to date, one each in 2013 and 2014, and two in 2015.

While Fitzgerald and Hinson have each collected narratives working individually with speakers, or jointly as a team, the transcribers had mostly not had this experience. To address this, we devised an approach to do onsite collection, transcription and translation on a larger scale. Starting small, with a group of five elders, allowed us to troubleshoot and pilot this approach while simultaneously being able to manage the mentoring and feedback given to transcribers.

We typically pair each speaker with a linguistics student or Chickasaw learner as their transcribing partner. This helps to develop an ear for transcription, creates a safe and supportive environment for learning how to work with elder speakers and document their language, and facilitates learning technology for language documentation. Provided we have otherwise paired up a team that meshes on the personality front, perhaps the biggest tension that may arise is over the transcription conventions that are used. Overall, however, this allows us to foster the development of skills in second language speakers and the training of younger linguists and tribal language professionals, while also providing immediate mentoring and feedback in the bootcamp context.

In piloting the first narrative bootcamp workshop, which was held over two days in August 2013, we recruited a small group of five fluent speakers. This number was driven by the recruitment pool of potential transcribers, such that we could pair them one-on-one with speakers. The goal was to have a designated transcriber for each fluent speaker, which we were able to accomplish. The overall structure of these workshops involve first listening to example narratives, followed by brainstorming narrative topics with the elders in small groups. Individual speakers record their narratives onsite. The transcriber then spends the remaining time working with the elder they are paired with to transcribe the Chickasaw language and to translate the

narrative into English, as well as segmenting and annotating the text, all using ELAN software.

For the earliest workshops, we typically started in the morning of day one with meta-discussion about stories, and talking about the kinds of stories speakers might record during the workshop. Two audio narratives were played with their time-aligned transcriptions and translations, using ELAN software to display time-aligned transcriptions and translations, as seen in Figure 3. None of our transcribers during the first workshop ever had much experience with the ELAN software, and only one was a Chickasaw learner. Having the translations visible simultaneous to the Chickasaw-language audio allowed transcribers to understand what was being said, and to see how the two narratives were well-received by the fluent speakers in the group. The fluent speakers showed obvious enjoyment at listening to the stories, both of which served as exemplars of storytelling.

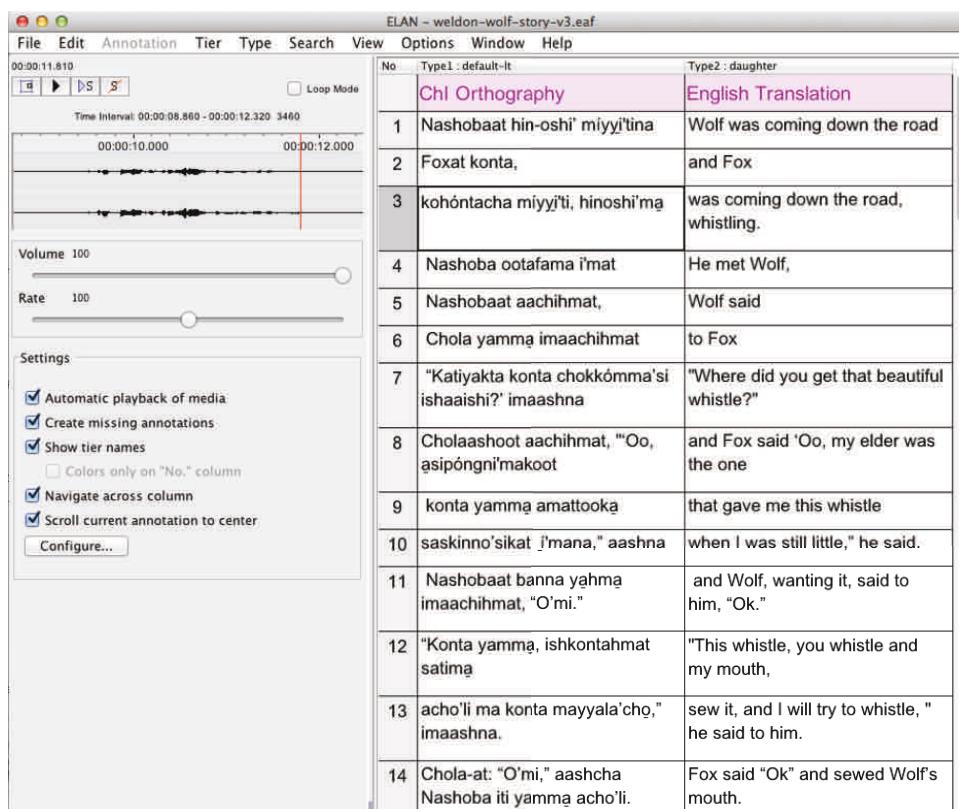


Figure 3. ELAN audio, transcription and translation for a story told by Weldon Ful-som

We used a couple of different genres of narratives to serve as inspiration for brainstorming workshop. The first genre was *shikonno'pa*, those 'possum stories' consisting of long-ago tales of animals from when they could talk. For this example, we played *Chola micha Nashoba* (Fox and Wolf), a traditional *shikonno'pa* narrated

by Weldom Fulsom, where Fox tricks Wolf into sewing his own mouth shut so that Wolf can whistle as nicely as Fox does. Playing this selection was intentional; it allowed us to see if we might get speakers to remember additional *shikonno'pa*', since this genre exists in Chickasaw but is poorly-attested in the published record. In our experience, Mr. Fulsom knows a great many animal stories, whereas other speakers more frequently have only one or maybe none of these stories in their repertoire.

The other narrative played at the beginning of the session was a personal childhood recollection, an entertaining and lively story told by Jerry Imotichey about when he was a boy and attempted to ride a calf like it was a horse. This other genre of storytelling falls into a subcategory, *chokoshp'a' nannanooli'* or 'humor stories.' Mr. Imotichey's story is a great humor story, and it generated laughter and smiles from all the listeners, regardless of whether they knew Chickasaw.

Playing the narratives and having some meta-discussion served as a lead-in to the brainstorming for each speaker to generate some of their own narratives, drawing from their own reminiscences and recollections of stories told in older times. We broke the brainstorming into two tables, which we separated out along gender lines. Each table had two speakers, plus two or three transcribers. The goal of this time was to facilitate the fluent speakers to choose and perhaps practice what they might want to record and transcribe at the workshop. By lunchtime, each of these five speakers had produced at least one narrative for us to record. Recording on memory cards made it relatively easy to immediately transfer the .wav file to the transcriber's computer, and using Audacity for sound editing, we exported .wav files that contained audio for the single story. We also asked speakers to record an English re-telling or version of what they told in Chickasaw.

Following our group lunch, we turned to the business of transcribing the recorded narratives. Each transcriber had a computer, several of which came from a mobile laptop lab provided by Fitzgerald. The computers were equipped with ELAN software, and each had an individual set of speakers plugged in, an electronic 'cheat sheet' of the relevant Unicode compliant characters to facilitate transcription, and an ELAN template file to ensure uniformity among all the .eaf transcriptions. Transcribers segmented their audio file, doing a rough chunking approach, and then proceeded to work with the elder to transcribe and translate all the segments of that elder's story. The next day and a half consisted primarily of transcriber-elder speaker pairs listening to segments of the audio to create a rough transcription of it, along with an English translation. The final afternoon of the second day of transcription was (ideally) finishing off the transcription and translation work for the speaker's second story.

Throughout the two days, the transcribers benefitted from the supervision, mentoring and close attention paid to their work by one or both of the team leaders, Fitzgerald and Hinson. Both have extensive experience in community-based language work. This provided the students with on-the-spot support and instant mentoring and feedback as part of their learning experience. It was also helpful that the participating Chickasaw speakers are very familiar with the team leaders, creating a more relaxed environment, even for those cases where they do not know the particular visiting students. Another important element to project design is a consultant to the project,



Figure 4. Lori McLain Pierce and JoAnn Ellis working on transcribing one of Ms. Ellis' narratives. They exemplify the pair/team approach we take in the narrative bootcamps. (Photo courtesy of Colleen Fitzgerald)

Dr. Pamela Munro of the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr. Munro serves as a 'master mentor' to the entire team; with more than 40 years spent working on the Chickasaw language, she is also able to give feedback on the transcriptions, as in Figure 5. Ultimately, this hands-on mentoring structure allows students and staff members to get instant feedback and support on their work, benefitting from the collective experience of the three senior personnel on the team, helping to build their confidence and skillsets as novice fieldworkers, and showing them how effectively a team-based documentation project can work. By pairing each fluent speaker with a designated transcriber, we are able to cultivate documentation skills amongst the transcribers.

For some of the workshops, the group of transcribers also included a CLRP staff member, Brandon White Eagle. Mr. White Eagle has been learning the Chickasaw language, both through Master-Apprentice individually (with elder Weldon Fulsom, both pictured in Figure 6), as well as more recently in the adapted Master-Apprentice group approach innovated by the Sauk Language Department, where one fluent speaker simultaneously works with several apprentices. The CLRP staff has recently founded the Chikasha Academy, a team-based adult immersion approach for weekday mornings for a number of staff, with the goal to increase fluency. As there is more language expertise on the staff in this area, we hope to have them involved in the narrative workshops and strengthen their knowledge of Chickasaw by working with different elders and their stories.



Figure 5. Dr. Pamela Munro serves as 'master mentor,' giving feedback on transcriptions to University of Oklahoma doctoral student, Juliet Morgan, who worked with Chickasaw fluent speaker Hannah Corsello Pitman. (Photo courtesy of Colleen Fitzgerald)

More recently, in the narrative bootcamps held in 2015, we modified this approach somewhat because only two of the six participating students had experience doing fieldwork. In the group were three undergraduate students, all funded via a National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates grant, and three graduate students, who had their travel and food expenses covered, but were otherwise unpaid. In the first of these 2015 workshops, the students spent a full workweek onsite, with two days in the middle focusing on the workshop. This allowed there to be pre-workshop training in the language and in technology, and post-workshop guidance on transcription and related issues.

For these workshops, we had a somewhat different group of speakers, plus the new students, as well as Fitzgerald and Hinson.⁴ We revamped somewhat the start of the workshop, and instead of showing ELAN transcriptions while simultaneously playing the audio, only the audio of stories was played. We played a number of stories of various genres: one *shikomno'pa*, two 'John Puller' stories,⁵ one other humorous story, and a retelling of a story told by the speaker's mother. A variety of different speakers, three women and two men, were the storytellers: Pauline Brown, LeeRene Frazier, Jerry Imotichey, Stanley Smith, and Vera Tims.

⁴Dr. Munro was also not present at the first of the two 2015 workshops.

⁵The late John Puller of Madill, Oklahoma, was a Chickasaw veteran and a well-known storyteller, who was well-known for his humor stories. Many speakers from the southern part of Chickasaw Nation re-tell John Puller stories.



Figure 6. Chickasaw elder Weldon Fulsom works on one of his narratives with Brandon White Eagle, a Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program staff member and a second language learner with Mr. Fulsom through the Master-Apprentice method. (Photo courtesy of Colleen Fitzgerald)

During the course of the two days, five speakers participated in the recording sessions. Four of those speakers stayed and worked with student transcribers. We also had a couple of additional speakers who came to see what we were doing and what our workshop was like.

This workshop went a bit differently than the two previous workshops, in that there was a lot of interest by participating speakers in recording, so a number of the speakers contributed three or four new (previously uncollected) narratives, and some additional genres, like recipes and directions, were collected. This may have been due to the different speakers who participated in this event, or perhaps the different venue that we used. This narrative bootcamp was scheduled at a local church, with a fellowship hall with a large room and many tables, and an upstairs suite of small classrooms. We positioned the recording station upstairs, and there was a steady flow of speakers going up to record. We also had a subsidiary space on the first floor to accommodate less mobile elders who were not able to manage the stairs, since the building did not have an elevator. The large first floor space accommodated each transcriber-speaker pair to have a somewhat secluded space to work on transcription or to get feedback on their work, as in Figure 7, and it facilitated communal activities, like eating and visiting, seen in Figure 8.



Figure 7. Narrative Bootcamp Setup for June 2015 Workshop, Ada, OK; Chickasaw fluent speaker JoAnn Ellis (right) works on a transcription with UT Arlington student Victor Jimenez, with guidance from Dr. Colleen Fitzgerald (center). (Photo courtesy of Mark Francis)



Figure 8. Communal Activities, Narrative Bootcamp June 2015 Workshop, Ada, OK (Photo courtesy of Mark Francis)

Overall, less transcription and less translation into English was accomplished for the first June 2015 narrative bootcamp. However, what we saw more of was genuine interest and excitement in recording the stories. The feedback from elders was very positive. The next day, one of the elders who was participating in their first narrative bootcamp said that it had been a lot of fun, not what they had thought it would be like. Positive reactions include how the approach may trigger more stories and the legacy left for learners.

I enjoyed it, but I ran out of stories! I think it's good. I like telling stories with other people. It might make you remember more. —Chickasaw elder Hannah Corsello Pitman

It's good. You know, it's a good workshop. I think it's a really good thing for the learners. We're gonna leave a legacy for them. Because all the fluent speakers are getting older and it's something for them to leave. And give back to the Nation. —Chickasaw elder and CLRP staff member JoAnn Ellis

As we do more such workshops, we expect to not only expand the corpus in terms of number of texts, but also in types of genres. For example, while humor stories are a very popular and highly entertaining story genre, our project has also been able to get personal recollections that are not humor stories. And playing the non-humor stories has seemed to encourage speakers to share more of their life stories, as they realize the genuine interest in collecting their life experiences, told in the Chickasaw language, rather than perhaps feeling that the only valuable stories are those that may be a bit more entertaining, such as *shikonno'pa'* or humor stories. Without many published Chickasaw narratives, every genre represents a contribution, and including life stories of this generation of Chickasaw speakers creates a rich set of oral histories for the Chickasaw community.

As we were able to schedule two workshops relatively close to each other, we found something like an explosion in productivity in the second workshop. We also changed our approach and focused on using ELAN to segment and translate as many narratives as possible. With more inexperienced transcribers, this allowed us to deploy their strengths in a more focused way, as well as to triage narratives so that untranscribed stories would at least have a translation to facilitate a later transcription. Rather than designating specific work pairs, as in our three previous workshops, instead students rotated and worked with a variety of elders, rather than just the same person. There was a steady stream of fluent speakers who wanted to be recorded, so we focused on collecting as much as people wanted to share, and on getting the stories set up in ELAN so they could be translated, chunk by chunk, into English. From our first pilot workshop in 2013, with five fluent speakers (Figure 9), we have seen participation flourish and been able to develop methods that best utilize our student volunteers, and the strengths of all those on our team. Figure 10 is a group photo from the most recent bootcamp in late June 2015. Adding to the convivial spirit of this last workshop, many of the elders brought their traditional arts and crafts work

and we had a sort of informal market. Mrs. Willmond is an expert beader, Ms. Brown makes Chickasaw dolls in traditional clothing, Ms. Cox does leatherwork and others who did not bring their work have talents in quilting, beadwork and more. With the productivity and camaraderie, this last bootcamp was the most successful yet and offers a path to continued success even with novice students on hand working with the elders on the recordings.



Figure 9. Participants in the August 2013 Chickasaw Narrative Bootcamp, pictured here at the Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, Oklahoma. (Photo courtesy of Colleen Fitzgerald)

5. Benefits to the Chickasaw narrative bootcamp approach Overall, we find many useful elements to this approach, with benefits applying to multiple audiences and documentation goals. We believe it could be used in other documentation and training contexts, either where the language is highly endangered, or where the goal is providing mentoring and supervision to a group being trained in language documentation work with elders (or any fluent speakers), whether those being trained are undergraduates, graduate students, or community members doing grassroots documentation.

This method is useful for numerous reasons. First, speakers are not always comfortable and productive in generating narratives, especially when the audience includes non-speakers. Second, by working with a group of fluent speakers, their interactions together trigger ideas for more recollections or stories to be recorded. Third, what we find is that there often emerges a theme to the narratives. Sometimes the theme comes from the narratives we play during the opening, like the horse and donkey stories, and other times they come out of the next set of activities, the brainstorming at individual tables, like the preacher stories. The emphasis is on telling



Figure 10. Attendees for Chickasaw Narrative Bootcamp, pictured here at the Trinity Baptist Church in Ada, Oklahoma in late June 2015. (Photo courtesy of Mark Francis)

the stories, not on written form. There are opportunities to tell the story more than once as a sort of practice before the actual recording. The speakers play off each other, their energy and enjoyment of speaking their language helping to increase their comfort level and to generate ideas from each others' experiences.

Also among the many beneficial outcomes to this method are fostering a positive sense of language use and language 'fun' as expressed by participating elders and the collection of typically 10–15 distinct narratives in a given day, with at least partial transcriptions and translations for each, with more narratives collected in each successive workshop as the approach was refined.

The bootcamps are nicely used for a concentrated effort on training, text recording, and generating en masse transcriptions and metadata annotations. As team leaders, we have also tried to give a crash course in transcription to transcribers so that they can prepare at least first-pass preliminary transcriptions in the phonemic orthography of Chickasaw. This builds the corpus of texts, does community training, builds documentation skills among the students and community members, and generates transcription drafts and English translations of the recordings. The transcription, translation and metadata increase the quality of this documentation, making the collection more valuable to the CLRP and future researchers because there is at least a basic set of transcriptions and description of the text content and speaker included. In one of the three workshops, the students remained onsite after the workshop itself, allowing the opportunity to work on transcriptions in an environment where they could get feedback, as shown in Figure 11.

What is also important is that the language documentation itself and the training show two important aspects of this kind of work and our (Fitzgerald and Hinson) philosophies on this work. First, it is about relationships, and this kind of work



Figure 11. Transcription feedback following a narrative bootcamp. (Photo courtesy of Colleen Fitzgerald)

thrives where strong relationships are built. As the relationships between all involved have strengthened, and as the elders have gained more trust in us as collaborators, the data collection and participation have also flourished. Better relationships, better language work. Second, giving back is an expected element of working in language documentation and revitalization, and really, obligatory in our view for documentation and revitalization in the Native American context. Training linguistics students to do this kind of work obliges us to model the behavior, to show it in action. In most cases, the students who participated gave up two days in their summer to join us. While we covered their housing and food so they did not incur additional expense to participate, they were not paid for their time, aside from those funded through the NSF REU grant.

Ultimately, both elders and transcribers characterized the two days as being a good time that they enjoyed, and this was done while simultaneously building the Chickasaw narrative corpus. There really is no better result than having language documentation and narrative processing at this rate be a good time for all involved.

6. Implications The narrative bootcamp approach has a number of implications, which we review in this section.

First, it creates a set of recorded texts, and often, at least a draft transcription and translation of those recordings. However, even if stories do not end up with transcriptions and (full) translations, the process always involves a retelling, however brief, of the story in English. This allows a richer metadata than otherwise might be possible, since each story has an English blurb about what it includes.

While words and vocabulary acquisition are important aspects of learning a language, it is using the language's sounds in a bigger, more meaningful context that creates more linguistic dexterity, allowing speakers with basic skills to become intermediate, and eventually advanced speakers. By creating a corpus of audio narratives, a documentation project such as ours can facilitate revitalization and second language acquisition, while simultaneously documenting language use, verbal arts, and the oral histories of today's elders.

Second, a collection of recorded stories plays an important role in language revitalization. Ideally, patterns of connected language usage are what learners work towards in terms of high fluency goals. This is promoted by valuing and using stories, especially recordings of stories. By creating a transcribed and translated audio corpus, the CLRP has a type of raw curriculum, which learners can use to improve their pronunciation in sentences and paragraph-sized units, helping them to become better communicators in their heritage language. What fluent speakers, learners and linguists all know or discover (even if that knowledge is implicit) is that when language is used in context, words often sound different when used by themselves versus when used in bigger chunks of conversation. This type of documentation corpus includes intonation, rate of speech, how pauses are used to 'chunk' information, sound change in context, reduction, deletion—all of which emerge as characteristics in narratives.

Third, these workshops offer opportunities to promote the language and language usage. The hardest part of the workshop activities is transcribing and translating the narrative line by line. A five-minute narrative, realistically, is unlikely to be fully transcribed during the duration of the workshop unless the speaker and transcriber are fully focused and vigorously working throughout the entire workshop. In working with elders in this age range, in their mid-sixties and older, a more realistic expectation is that a good amount of a story can be processed in this way, and that perhaps the remainder is given a translation so that transcribers can continue work somewhat independently after the workshop is finished.

A fourth implication, discussed above, is that this language use is fun for the participating elders, and for the visiting elders. With Chickasaw in such a severely threatened state, there are really probably twenty or so of the estimated fifty speakers who use the language on a semi-regular basis. Keeping the linguistic skills active by listening, speaking, and conversing in the language is a benefit of these workshops, but the fact that people enjoy and get great pleasure out of these activities means that they will attend the workshops. And for elders with more passive knowledge, or who are not on the Chickasaw Language Committee and thus use the language less frequently, or who are unsure of what we are doing in this collaborative documentation project, visiting and seeing what we are up to serves many helpful purposes. This

solidifies the tribal-academic partnership, going a long way to repair the historically fraught relationships between indigenous language communities and the academy, whether via boarding schools, making recordings that never make it back to the heritage community, or failing to truly communicate a project's results in a way that serves that community's goals.

Finally, students and staff members get feedback and support in working with speakers and in transcribing spoken language. As new generations of field linguists and community members move into this kind of work as an independent project, this allows confidence building and improvement of transcribing and listening skills among those participants.

7. Conclusions Our Chickasaw collaboration model takes a holistic approach, where this kind of documentation activity leads not just into analysis but into revitalization and training. Our model, pictured in Figure 12, incorporates all four elements in Chickasaw language work. This type of participatory, collaborative research model enables communities and linguists to work together in a way that enriches knowledge on both ends, not just for academics, but for indigenous communities who rightly insist upon doing work that creates new speakers, not just doing work that serves theoretical goals in linguistics.

In working with highly endangered languages, creative and fun approaches may be required to help create and expand the corpus. This is not only true in terms of elder speakers who are responsible for producing the language aspect of the corpus, but for community members and linguists who may be working with an elder generation of speakers needing additional resources to generate language materials when working with these elders. By creating essentially an oral history and genre collection project where there was none, we provide more reasons for speakers to use the language and to use the language in as many as possible of the diverse ways that speakers used Chickasaw prior to European contact.

The speaker interactions that happen in our narrative workshops enrich the corpus in a number of ways, especially in the kinds of stories speakers tell, with ripple effects that encourages people to share in ways that diversify the corpus. When we paired Chickasaw elder and army veteran Stan Smith together with UT Arlington student Devin Hornick, a Navy veteran, Stan recorded a story about how he was drafted into the Army. Many of Stan's stories are humorous, such as John Puller stories, and he himself is an outgoing gentleman, who peppers his conversation with laughter and jokes. This army story was different, not really funny or dramatic or with a surprise ending, just an oral history narrative from a veteran about when he was called up into army service. This seems to be the first such story recorded in Chickasaw as part of the language's documentation.

Additionally, playing this story influenced other speakers because of the kind of stories Stan is known for telling. After one speaker listened to it, she said she had expected it to be a funny story, but it ended up not being so. Hearing Stan's story helped other speakers realize that sharing their stories was not limited to the familiar, conventionalized genres like animal stories or humorous stories. Daily life, stories

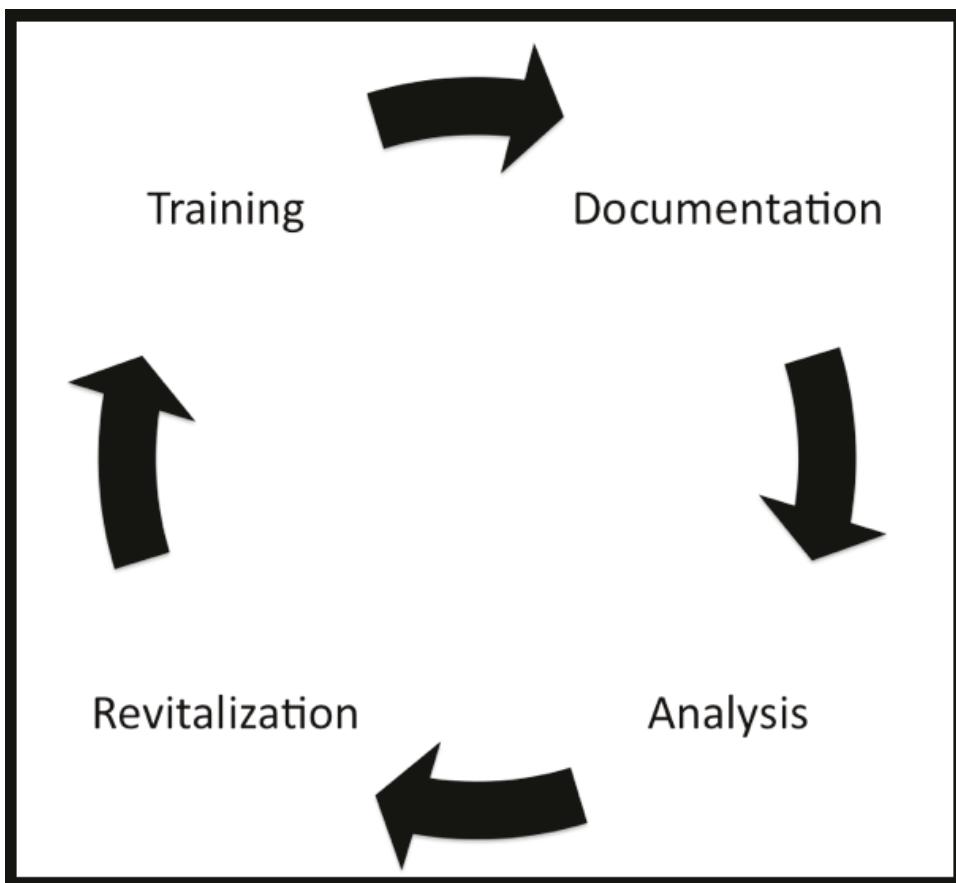


Figure 12. Our Chickasaw Model for Collaborative Language Research (Fitzgerald and Hinson 2013)

about life transitions, sharing of this kind of ‘ordinariness’ is part of the everyday fabric of language usage in a community. In endangered language communities, finding ways to document that ordinary, unexceptional usage is just as critical as documenting ritualized genres, since all are part of that ‘radically expanded text collection’ that characterizes the full range of linguistic practices of a community outlined in Himmelmann (1998). The Chickasaw narrative bootcamps ostensibly provide for onsite recording and processing of language texts. More than that, as the structure takes on a familiarity for the speakers, we have observed how the contrived atmosphere of the bootcamp has resulted in a greater and greater naturalness in the language use that gets recorded, not always an easy thing to achieve in a community with so few speakers.

Certainly, this approach may not work in every endangered language context. Because there are a range of tasks involved in processing a given narrative, this model can be extended in various ways for other communities at other levels of endangerment. Segmenting stories into smaller phrasal groupings, helping in identifying

the words in spoken connected speech, and translating the stories might be tasks where passive or semi-speakers or remembers contribute, as well as intermediate or advanced learners. Grinevald (2007:68) also points out how participants with this kind of knowledge serve as stakeholders and language advocates in other ways, and in fact, how involvement in language documentation and revitalization activities may increase fluency levels:

Pedro MacCrea...key to the project as boat captain, providing transportation for speakers between jungle, island of Rama Cay, and town of Blue-fields; he was also an excellent spokesperson for the project. Interestingly he became more fluent in Rama as the years passed, reaching the point of carrying out interviews with monolingual speakers. He is today the most visible and charismatic representative of the Ramas in their battle to protect their land, dealing with authorities and international consultants, and appearing in different media speaking (sentences of) Rama.

This global crisis of language endangerment requires creative solutions and ways to sustain language use and projects. The underlying causes of language attrition are not pretty, such as the trauma caused by boarding school experiences. The bootcamp approach we have outlined here is one creative solution. The Chickasaw Nation is fortunate, with enough fluent speakers who are vibrant and energetic enough to participate in these activities. However, this project has also included fluent elders who are facing more health challenges and have less energy, including a participant on oxygen. It is worth considering how these elders are motivated also by the opportunity to congregate for the common purpose of using the language, of recording the language for posterity, and by the recognition of the severely endangered status of their language. The bootcamp may not be an activity that will work with all endangered languages. However, it has been successful in the Chickasaw context for accomplishing three goals: creating fun opportunities to bring fluent elders together for documentation and revitalization goals; collecting and processing a diverse set of narrative genres; and training prospective field linguists and community language revitalization practitioners. As such, it is another element that could be added to the language documentation and revitalization toolkit as relates to narrative work.

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