

Conference on Language Revitalization: Sleeping and Awakening Languages of the Gulf South

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Abstracts

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“Stress in Tunica Word Formation and Noun Derivation”

Mary Haas' *A Grammar of the Tunica Language* was published in 1937. The substantial text exhaustively covers most of what can be found in modern grammars, including a discussion of stress placement. Haas describes stress behavior in detail through a series of examples and rules, and her accompanying *Tunica Dictionary*, published in 1953, meticulously records the stress pattern of every captured Tunica word. These texts comprise the majority of the corpus and the definitive grammar of the Tunica language. This paper uses Haas' texts to take a closer look at stress in Tunica, specifically in relation to noun formation and derivation. While Haas' analysis of stress is detailed and comprehensive, this paper attempts a simpler explanation through a different categorization schema. As the Tunica Language Project at Tulane University's purpose is to create pedagogical materials to support the effort in revitalizing the language, this paper hopes to contribute to the process by providing a more accessible and transparent system for understanding stress. The scope of consideration is limited to stress in relation to basic word formation and inflection using nouns as a descriptive model

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“Nahuatl of the Sierra Negra: Bilingualism and language contact”

This is a presentation on Sierra Negra Nahuatl, an indigenous language of the Southern Region of the Gulf of Mexico. It is spoken in the mountains of the Mexican state of Puebla. The purpose of this pilot study is the investigation of the variation that exists in the Spanish of bilingual speakers of Nahuatl and Spanish, and whether the variation is a result of sociolinguistic factors such as age, gender, education and place of residence, or linguistic factors internal to Nahuatl, or a combination of both.

Nahuatl has coexisted with Spanish for almost 5 centuries. In 1578 King Phillip II of Spain ordered that Nahuatl should be taught as the official language of New Spain. Nowadays, it is the second most widely spoken language in Mexico. Bilingualism is a broad topic encompassing diverse opinions. The two most recognized conceptualizations of bilingualism are the fractional, based on Chomsky's ideal speaker with perfect mastery of both languages, and the holistic, based on the recognition that a bilingual person has different abilities in both languages. For the pilot phase of this study audio recordings were made of interviews with six speakers, 3 men and 3 women related by either blood or marriage, using a Labov-style sociolinguistic questionnaire. The questions that provoked the best responses deal with a tornado the collaborators experienced, assaults they endured and their journeys through the desert. So far, two of the interviews (of one male and one female) have been analyzed, and the most interesting traits encountered include both phonetic and morphologic variation: the variation of the Spanish [f] as /f/ or /h/ (i.e. /fue/ or /hue/ 'was'; the substitution of /u/ for /o/ (i.e. 'documento' for 'documento'); and variation in the use of diminutives. The variation of [f] as /f/ or /h/ could be the effect of the speakers' place of residence and level of education; the substitution of /u/ for /o/

could represent interference between Nahuatl and Spanish or educational level; and the use of diminutives could be caused by discursive style, education or gender.

The preliminary results of the pilot study show that both sociolinguistic and internal linguistic factors are probably at work in the production of variation among bilingual speakers of Spanish and Nahuatl. Further investigation into this area could establish Nahuatl as a critical language leading to more resources being devoted to the study of Nahuatl, bilingualism and language contact.

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“On the Tunica Linguistic Trail”

When the Tunica-Tulane Language Project started in 2010, we had three sources for language materials: a Tunica grammar, a Tunica dictionary and a book of Tunica texts, all collected by Mary R. Haas. These materials were published from 1940-1950, and while they mentioned other Tunica manuscripts, there was no mention of where they were published. Materials that were readily located, such as audio files kept in the Indiana University archives, were deteriorated beyond use. Other published materials were also quickly uncovered, but unpublished manuscripts remained elusive.

This paper documents the journey of finding the Tunica materials scattered across archives from Washington DC to California, Quebec to Louisiana. It includes helpful tips for finding unpublished materials in an increasingly digital world, including the use of WorldCat subject search, history books and contacts at local historical societies. Finally, this paper addresses the ways in which the Tunica Language Project has worked to make the materials available to the language community and to the academic group working on the project, negotiating the different mediums and practices for digesting large amounts of digital media.

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“Tunica-Tulane Language Revitalization Project: History, Strategy, and Goals”

Formed in 2010, the Tunica-Tulane Language Project’s goal is to reawaken the Tunica language, which has been sleeping since the 1950s. Using a grammar and dictionary from linguistic anthropologist Mary Haas in addition to a few other texts recorded before the last speakers died, a group of linguists and anthropologists at Tulane have been collaborating with members of the Tunica-Biloxi tribe since 2010. This paper will document the strategy of the group from its formation up to the present. The paper will focus mostly on the academic section of the group and its approach to the project. I will pay particular attention to the children’s books produced, the nature and structure of the academic-tribal relationship, the summer camp, and the current efforts to produce a language-learning textbook and pedagogical grammar.

The paper will also address difficulties the Project has faced and how it handled them. Such challenges include the nature of academic work and the reliance on student labor, the physical location of many collaborators, and a lack of available resources for Tunica. The paper will conclude with the current goals of the group, the efforts currently underway, and the future goals.

This paper will use participant-observation data and interviews from members and leaders of the Project. Special attention will be paid to efforts and programs that have worked well and are potentially applicable to other projects working to revitalize or awaken endangered or sleeping languages.

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“Creating a Mixtec Language Course”

Mixtec is a highly tonal, indigenous Mexican language originally spoken in the southwestern state of Oaxaca. It is now also spoken in the US states of California, Oregon, and Washington. Since the early 1980s, Mixtec people have been migrating to the USA for work and better quality of life, bringing with them their language and culture. To address the needs of this large migrant community, the Binational Center for the Development of Indigenous Oaxacan Communities (CBDIO) was founded in 1993, providing services such as indigenous language interpretation at hospitals and courts. Interpretation is still among the major needs of the community because many indigenous Mexicans do not speak Spanish or English and are unaware of their rights as migrant workers.

After many inquiries about the language, CBDIO developed an interest in offering a Mixtec language course. Thanks to the generous support of the James Irvine Foundation, CBDIO was offered a grant to develop such a course. Linguists have worked with CBDIO in developing materials for teaching the Mixtec language, including a short prototype textbook. With the help of local rap artist and native speaker Miguel Villegas and others, CBDIO now has a variety of materials for use in a Mixtec language course.

At the beginning of the year 2013, CBDIO began offering Mixtec classes taught by Miguel Villegas. These classes aim to teach Mixtec speakers how to write their language and to use this new skill for oral art such as poetry. Children and adults have the opportunity to realize the richness of their language through exposure to the fundamentals of Mixtec grammar and daily expression. The purpose of these classes is to prevent the language from eventually disappearing.

Approximately seventeen people attended the first day of classes. The initial group consisted of older and younger adults, ranging from native and heritage speakers to non-Mixtec, second language learners. A separate class was initiated for Mixtec children from ages 5 to 12 years old. The adult class uses several textual resources, such as general language course formats. The children’s class utilizes more interactive activities for learning numbers and other basics. These activities include counting numbers while passing a ball around, and quizzes on animal names with photos. Children are also tasked with recitation of children’s poems translated to Mixtec. A lot of success has been observed with both classes, especially with the children’s class due to the abundance of interactive activities.

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“Ishak Words: Obstacles to Language Renewal for a Historic Gulf Coast Tribe”

I would like to discuss the prospect of language renewal for a people that does not exist. Being without federal recognition means a lack of resources. Our tribe’s language was studied by the Smithsonian in the late 19th Century, and books were published about it. The region currently known as “Acadiana” used to be known as the “Attakapas District.” (Older Cajuns often refer to the area as “the Attakapas.”) The U.S. Navy even had a U.S.S. Attakapas. In spite of all that, our tribe does not exist in the federal sense. We have not had a reservation, which is good in many ways, but bad in the sense that our tribe has been spread out in Louisiana and Texas, working regular jobs. Our decentralized power structure, which dates from a time before the European invasion, meant a lack of a single, large community of Ishak. Small bands remained in place such as Lake Charles and Opelousas, but eventually assimilated. Many of us speak French,

as with the Houma, but few know much of our original language, and if there are recordings of speakers of it from days of old, those have been lost. I wish to describe the situation of the Ishak because I think it is typical of some non-federal tribes.

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“American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI)”

The American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI) at the University of Arizona, Tucson has a thirty year history of providing Indigenous language education. AILDI’s mission is to provide critical training to strengthen efforts to revitalize and promote the use of Indigenous languages across generations. This is accomplished by engaging educators, schools, Indigenous communities and policy makers nationally and internationally through outreach, transformative teaching, purposeful research and collaborative partnerships. AILDI programs include its flagship summer institute, workshops, on-site training, conferences and symposia. AILDI is synonymous with its intense, unique, summer residential program. The institute promotes and cultivates an atmosphere of sharing among participants by structuring classes to have both a lecture and an applied component. Topics include language teaching, maintenance, documentation and revitalization. Participants enroll in credit bearing courses taught by a variety of reputable and experienced Indigenous language activists and Indigenous education instructors. Participants immediately apply language learning methodologies and materials to each other through micro-teaching; mini language immersion lessons as part of the culmination of their classes.

The summer institute has offered university courses to hundreds of students, community members, educators, scholars, researchers and language advocates.

AILDI was founded in 1978 with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Hualapai educator and language activist, Lucille Watahomigie with Dr. Leanne Hinton, linguist at the University of California Berkeley, received funding to develop a Yuman Language Workshop targeting Diegueno, Havasupai, Hualapai, Mohave and Yavapai language communities.

The first workshop was held at San Diego State University. The topic was Historical/Comparative Linguistics: Syntax and Orthography of Yuman Languages. The workshop was designed for speakers of the language to share linguistic and cultural knowledge and to develop educational materials to aid in the teaching of their language to younger community members.

The next year another workshop, four weeks in length, was held at Arizona State University and the focus was on Orthography, Phonetics, Phonology and Curriculum Development. Native language speakers joined with academic linguists to examine their languages and to create writing systems and teaching materials. For approximately a decade, the work of the language institute was hosted by several rotating schools and universities. In 1990, AILDI found a permanent home at the University of Arizona. With support from the department of Teaching, Learning and Sociocultural Studies College of Education, American Indian Studies, Linguistics and the Graduate College, AILDI continues to offer a sustained Indigenous language education experience.

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“Proto-Gulf: A Comparative Investigation of a Postulated Protolanguage”

Recent genetic, archaeological, and physical anthropological evidence suggests that the peopling of the Americas occurred in at least three waves from Siberia and the Asian mainland. These three waves seem to correspond to the linguistic groupings proposed by Joseph Greenberg of Amerind, Na-Dene, and Eskimo-Aleut. Within these classifications, numerous subgroupings of genetic relationships have been established, and many others have been proposed. One of the latter is the postulated Proto-Gulf language, first formally defended by Haas, in her paper *The Proto-Gulf word for Water*, but based on suggestions made earlier by Swanton, Sapir, and Swadesh. This postulated protolanguage was the supposed most immediate common ancestor of the now sleeping languages Atakapa, Chitimacha, Natchez, and Tunica, as well as the Muskogean languages, the neighboring Yuchi, and in some versions the unlikely California Yuki languages. Indeed Haas's assessment found only a handful of cognates with consistent sound correspondences, the most notable of which was the Proto-Gulf *k^w. A comparative and phonological assessment based on the available data shows that outside of the correspondences described by Haas and various intuitive connections, following Greenberg's methods, there are few determinable and predictable correspondences among this proposed language family. When accounting for a genetic relationship between multiple languages, the presence of numerous sound correspondences, as well as clear cognate relationships need to be determined. Further, predictable rules for phonological change over time need to exist. In the case of Proto-Gulf, numerous potential cognates could be argued to have existed, but in order to boost the number of examples above the critical criterion for a genetic relationship, self-contradicting rules would have to be established. This suggests that such a protolanguage is either unlikely to have existed in the grouping proposed, or existed at a time in the so distant past that determining the exact relationships would require the use of more sophisticated methods, or at least more substantial data, than are currently available. More likely alternatives, such as a sub-grouping of the proposed isolates, are considered.

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“‘Gulf’ as a linguistic sub-area”

The larger Southeastern area of the United States has long been established as a linguistic area, with about 25 proposed areal traits (Mithun 1999, Campbell 1997:341-4.). However, since many of the proposed Southeastern features do not apply to more than a few of the languages in the Southeast (or apply more widely outside the region), researchers such as Nicklas (1994) have proposed that the Southeast may be better characterized by smaller, tighter areal subgroupings which share more features more extensively.

There have been many attempts to find a genetic relationship between Muskogean and the isolates of the Southeast (Atakapa(n), Tunica, Chitimacha, and Natchez). The putative grouping was labeled “Gulf” (Haas 1951, 1952, 1958b, Swanton 1919, Munro 1994), and later abandoned due to lack of evidence (Haas 1979, Kimball 1994, Campbell 1997). In this paper I look at structural traits which were once used as support for the Gulf hypothesis as areal traits (not evidence of genetic relation), as well as other traits proposed for the Southeast as a whole, in an attempt to prove that the Gulf area languages form a strong areal subgrouping within the larger Southeastern area.

In light of new structural accounts of several of the isolates in the Southeast, it was necessary in evaluating the possible areal traits to also revise the previous accounts of which languages were thought to have which traits. For example, Tunica and Chitimacha, like the other languages in question, use patientive affixes for stative verbs. It is also not the case that

Chitimacha, Tunica, or Atakapa have reference-tracking comparable to switch-reference in Muskogean. Several previously unreported features were also added, such as Possessor + Possessee order (interesting because it is typologically unexpected given SOV word order). After compiling a list of the structural features which apply to at least the majority of the Gulf languages, features were evaluated for typological rarity, and how indicative they really are of a linguistic area. All of the features examined are shared almost unanimously by the languages in question, although many are either not inconceivable as potentially independently innovated, or are shared more widely throughout North America. However, there are at least five which I believe are strong areal features of the Gulf area, supporting the hypothesis that Chitimacha, Tunica, Atakapa(n), Natchez, and the Muskogean languages indeed constitute a linguistic sub-area.

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“Phonological Harmony Systems in Language Vitality”

Harmony is a phonological phenomenon in which phonological segments (consonants and vowels) become more alike. Harmony systems are found in many American Indigenous languages and are especially represented in Indigenous languages of the Gulf South, including the Muskogean languages and many of the isolates or extreme distant relatives of Muskogean. While harmony systems are common in American Indigenous languages, they are absent in “everyday” American English, and their presence is, at best, marginal or contested in other European languages with a history of contact with American Indigenous languages (e.g., French, Spanish).

This paper has two general goals: to provide an introduction to the language phenomenon of harmony, especially as it pertains to Indigenous languages of the Gulf South, and to open a dialogue on how to think about, understand, and work with harmony systems in the context of language vitality.

This paper begins with an overview of “what harmony is,” with Tunica, an often-cited harmony case in the theoretical linguistics literature, as the example. This is followed by a brief survey of harmony systems in other Indigenous language of the Gulf South. From there, the paper covers a few topics relevant to harmony, within the context of language vitality:

- 1) Questions of learnability and acquisition of harmony, including what functions it may serve in language.
- 2) Issues of phonological change in language vitality contexts: what will happen to harmony?
- 3) Practical considerations for how to portray harmony in a writing system, grammar, and pedagogical materials.

Although harmony is a subject of extreme interest to linguistics as a discipline (and the Gulf South language have much to add to that conversation), this paper focuses on addressing harmony along the lines of what will be most interesting and relevant to those whose primary profession might not be theoretical linguistics, including: language learners, community members, pedagogues/language instructors, those interested in typological facts of these languages, change/results of language revitalization, and language planning.

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“Building the lexicon for awakening languages”

Just as language endangerment involves a reduction in the domains of language use, language revitalization involves an expansion of the language into new (or previous) domains. Yet while all language revitalization efforts face the task of augmenting the lexicon to accommodate these new domains, very little guidance or training is available to communities for this purpose. This is especially unfortunate because word creation and the expansion of the lexicon are not straightforward tasks, either linguistically or socially. The creation or repurposing of words is a process fraught with conflicting language ideologies, and should ideally be informed by the lexeme-building processes that already exist in the language. This talk will provide essential guidance on how to avoid these pitfalls while successfully expanding the language into new domains.

There are two important components of expanding the lexicon for awakening languages, one sociocultural, the other linguistic. When awakening a language, it is important to decide whether coining new words is necessary or even appropriate, and to anticipate the consequences of these decisions for the community. For example, older speakers may be unable to understand younger speakers using coined words. Language revitalization projects also often overlook bottom-up approaches, where young speakers are encouraged to coin terms they feel appropriate, using the structures and words that already exist in the language, just as generations of speakers before them did. This ensures that the new words are both relevant to their everyday activities and are something they have a sense of vested ownership for, rather than being just another arbitrary word to memorize, passed down by the language committee. Such bottom-up expansion of the lexicon requires speakers with a sufficient understanding of the language's structure, and this is where linguistic considerations play a key role.

Each language has specific techniques for coining new words, some more productive than others. Using examples of recently-coined words from several awakening languages, this talk will overview the variety of ways languages tend to form new words (e.g. compounding; various types of nominal, verbal, and adjectival derivation; describing an object's function or appearance; etc.), to help speakers and learners of awakening languages identify the specific strategies that are most appropriate for their language.

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Joshua D. Hinson, Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program Joshua.Hinson@chickasaw.net
““Best Practices” in Developing Tribal-Academic Partnerships”

We present some ideas for "best practices" in developing tribal-academic partnerships, drawing from our collaboration. For four years, the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program (CLRP) and the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) have collaborated on language documentation and revitalization. This partnership was sparked by a service-learning trip by a UTA group to Ada, Oklahoma, the home of the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program. Communities with small or no speaker populations must prioritize revitalization, and in a way that maximizes resources and increases the documentation and understanding of the language. Our partnership offers ideas on how to approach this challenge.

Importantly, the partnership involves some elements unique to our situation. First, the Director of the CLRP's has expertise of thirteen years as a learner, teacher, and documenter of Chickasaw. Like many Oklahoma language programs with small numbers of much older speakers, a proficient second language learner directs the program activities. Consequently, he has academic training in second language acquisition and pedagogy, language revitalization, and linguistics. Second, the UTA side brings many outreach and service activities coordinated

by the Professor and her students, who have completed numerous service-learning projects for Oklahoma tribes. For example, in 2011-12, students edited audio and OCR text for a forthcoming online Chickasaw dictionary. More recently, in summer 2013, we test-piloted a narrative "boot camp," where we paired each fluent speaker with a transcriber (either a linguistics student or a Chickasaw program staff member). We did onsite recording of spontaneous narratives, then the pairs worked together to put a rough transcription and translation together using ELAN software. This method was well-received by the elder speakers and transcribers; it was a great way to do hands-on training and mentoring for Chickasaw staff and UTA students. We continue to explore ways to capacity-build both audiences, while doing revitalization-driven documentation.

An intense community focus underlies the approach we have taken with an action-research model design. Our collaboration supports the Chickasaw community by doing revitalization-driven documentation and training materials for learners that both feed into and are drawn from documentation. Moreover, theoretical questions underlie the data collection, important while we still have access to fluent speakers of the language. Finally, both sides of our collaboration are committed to the transfer of knowledge, both to this community, but also in sharing our findings and knowledge with other endangered language communities.

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"Auxiliary Verbs in Tunica"

The Tunica Revitalization Project's primary goal is to develop materials to make the Tunica language teachable to individuals of the Tunica tribe. Much work on the language has already been done, however in order to attain a linguistic proficiency sufficient to be able to develop teaching materials for the language, many aspects of the language must be explored in more depth than what is currently available. Six auxiliary verbs in Tunica appear to lend incredibly linguistically productive constructions, but unfortunately our understanding of the rules governing when and how they are employed is scant. My paper will begin with a brief discussion of the constructions of auxiliary verbs and their independent uses as we understand them. My research will explore potential uses for the auxiliary verbs as inflectional suffixes, based primarily on Haas's 1940 and unpublished grammars, with the intention of coming to an understanding of how a speaker chooses to inflect verbs. In looking at the auxiliary verbs my work seeks to illuminate the semantic and aspectual information encoded in the different auxiliary verbs. According to Mary Haas, there appear to be many exceptions to the rules she provides to explain auxiliary verb usage. Questions arise regarding why these exceptions exist and what the exceptions mean when looking at the linguistic data. Using data gathered from the parsed stories in both Haas's work as well as Gatchet and Swanton, I will propose possible evidence for explanations for these exceptions, and hope to illuminate the patterns of auxiliary verb usage.

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"Choctaw Ancestral Homelands"

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian's Department of Chahta Immi recently produced an interpretive map of the Gulf South region of the United States as an educational tool that illustrates Choctaw village sites and Indigenous trails as they were documented in the 1800's. The map is intended to support lessons aligned with Common Core Standards in Language Arts as well as in Geography, Choctaw Culture, and Language. The interpreted data came mostly

from oral histories collected in the late 1800s and early 1900s in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana by Henry S. Halbert, and this initial illustration of data provides an exciting landscape from which language teachers can integrate language teaching strategies and activities at any level of language learning. Any thematic teaching unit that is developed from the map creates a place-based and culturally significant knowledge center for learners of Choctaw while also greatly expanding the potential for language and culture discourse among learners from Indigenous Nations of the region; this will be the main focus for this presentation.

The overall project is firmly grounded in two decolonization projects suggested by Linda Smith in her work *Decolonizing Methodologies*. The first one Smith calls naming (157) has been initiated by the creation of this map as it has renamed places in the Gulf South region with their original indigenous names. The second project, revitalizing (147), requires the map to be utilized for language learning, where learners revitalize not just words and names from a distant past, but also the meaning of words that Indigenous Nations from our region shared or negotiated in the past.

The presentation will feature five brief examples of this approach with reference to the following sites on the map:

1. Bók Lahba – Designing a lesson to teach shapes & sizes utilizing Choctaw pottery but set in the Lubbub Creek, AL site.
2. Shokhata Tamáha – Storytelling on the border with the Chickasaw.
3. Ayanabi, Kashti Áyásha, Holihta Áyásha – Ancient homes, the people who lived there, and influence of other Indigenous languages.
4. Balbácha – Choctaw name for New Orleans.
5. Beaver Pond Stickball Field and Choctaw Corner – Sites of two well documented stickball games between the Choctaw and Creek.

The potential for Gulf South's Indigenous Nations to collaborate in reclaiming these names, and to initiate dialogue about locations and shared experiences from our collective Indigenous past expands our capacity to collectively revitalize awareness of our presence and worldview in the Gulf South, in our own discourses and own languages.

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“Chahta Anno pa Isht A ya Program”

Choctaw children today are at a point where they are now being exposed to the English language at a much higher rate. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is seeing fluency of the Choctaw Language at an all time low among school aged children. The Choctaw Tribal Language Program has been working towards a program to not only allow for more exposure of the Choctaw language in the schools but also a brand new class featuring a fluent Choctaw speaker who is trained and certified to teach the Choctaw language. The program is titled Chahta Anno pa Isht A ya which means to carry the Choctaw Language. The staff at the Language Program has worked closely with The Choctaw Tribal Schools, tribal elders, as well as various other entities to begin pilot testing beginning in March with the afterschool program. The administrators of the school district and tribe are well aware of the sharp decline in Choctaw speakers among the students. It is with this knowledge that the administrators have had full support integrating this program to the everyday regular classroom instruction.

Efforts to prepare implementation into the schools have required the creation of language learning standards for the Choctaw language. The language standards include documented progress indicators that align with proficiency ranges and can be used for creating assessment strategies by developing a culturally based curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core Standards. This has been done so that the language can be integrated into every classroom. This is divergent from the model of immersion programs that receives most of the funding support in federal grants, but it allows for much broader impact if carried out sequentially. This is our plan. Every grade, every classroom, every day! Holisso ápisa afammi aya ayyokali, áyimálbachi áboha ayyokali, nittak ayyokali, Chahta annopa oklah isht ayah.

In this presentation we will highlight some of the features developed thus far in preparation for the full implementation. Some examples include the utilization of traditional teaching styles and the incorporation of authentic Choctaw realia in combination with new technologies already in the classroom as well as how these approaches are combined with effective language acquisition theories such as Stephen Krashen's hypothesis of comprehensible input and a concentration on the three modes of communication. Most importantly, how the culturally based thematic units aligned with Choctaw Language Standards and the possibility for day to day lessons that works towards fluency to move language into other school subjects and outside the classroom.