

Adult Education Session

Deborah House and Jon Reyhner

The adult education session was moderated by Deborah House and included Anna Lee Walters, Emmit White, Esther Scott, Jorigine Bender, and Gloria Johns. Each speaker described one or more native language programs for adults in their communities. There were many parallels between programs in their organizations and the themes they dealt with in adult language classes, including legends about coyote, emergence narratives, and so forth. Adult programs faced many problems, including scarcity of materials, the need to develop original materials or to modify often unsatisfactory existing materials, small class sizes, high drop out rates, and limited financial support (often using “soft” money). Program strengths included:

- Seeing small classes as seeds with the likelihood of rich harvests in the future.
- Learning in these small classes extends into family and community.
- Making extensive use of elders and traditional materials, underscoring the indivisibility of language, culture, and traditions (including art and music).
- Using computer and other technologies.
- Using community colleges as a home and structure for education programs. College credit provides additional incentive and validation for adult language classes.

Points discussed included: 1) the motivation for teaching these classes, including the satisfaction of hearing these students speak and commitment to the language (If not me, then who? Some personal sacrifice is required, including time away from family and a great deal of preparation time.); 2) the fact that the cost of computers can be at the expense of other programs such as field trips; and 3) the need to maintain a one to one relation between students and instructors and the need for authentic back and forth conversation. The individual presentations are summarized below.

Pawnee and Otoe-Missouria Language Programs

Anna Walters reported on Otoe language programs. The Otoe language is related to Missouria in the same way that Athabascan and Apachean are related. There were only about 100 Missouria left alive in the early nineteenth century, and they joined their relatives the Otoes. Today there are only two Missourias left. They are the oldest members of the tribe, a sister who is 106 and a brother who is 97. They are fluent speakers of Otoe.

The Otoe have been a small tribe since contact. In historic times, they have been as few as 300 people. They were removed from their Kansas/Nebraska homeland to Indian Territory and were deeply affected by the experience because their land is known through their language. In Oklahoma, they were put

on a reserve of one million acres, which was later reduced. They were about 1500 at that time. However, despite reductions in land and numbers, the tribal government still uses the Otoe language predominantly.

There are three reasons for the breakdown of Otoe language: 1) They were forced to leave their homeland and that affected language. 2) There was a psychological factor, an emotional response to the loss. People became unwilling to learn the Otoe language because it was associated with pain and hurt. Older people speak about it in this way. 3) There are only a few people left and everyone is related; therefore, people have to marry outside the tribe. There are only a few Otoes married to each other. In a mixed tribal marriage, family members use English.

There are more Pawnee than Otoe. Right now the population is 2,507. Thirty miles separate these two groups in Oklahoma. Pawnee is also used in tribal government. The Pawnee are related to the Iowa and Winnebago and are close to Otoe speaking groups. There are less than ten people who are really fluent, who can talk day and night without shifting to another language. Others can speak; some can read. However, there is not a high level of fluency. Pawnee is a Caddoan language that was written at the turn of the century, mainly by scholars. A related language group is Arikara. There are about 100 Pawnee speakers.

The Otoe tribe hires individuals to implement the Otoe language in adult education, where anyone not a teen is considered an adult. There is a language center with formal classes and the language is used in informal settings as well. Otoe is also taught at the Frontier High School on the Otoe reserve. This high school is part of a public school district, which went to the Otoe government leaders and asked who should teach Otoe and made a grant application. The resulting class meets one hour each day in the high school with an Otoe elder as the instructor. There are twelve in the class, which is made up of Otoe young people and others in the community who are interested. The class is offered in the high school for elective credit. The person responsible for putting together the program is not Otoe but does work for the tribe.

There are forces that both promote and hinder the preservation of the language. Tribal scholars have an interest in this task. In addition, there are publications funded by grants. However, there are only two books. There are problems with teaching the language. For instance, you have to hear the words and speakers. There are alternate ways to say the same thing. Standardizing of the language is not supported by many elders. There is a need to strengthen the speakers who do exist.

Pawnee Adult Education is run by a young woman, Merle Rubidoux, who set up and maintains the Pawnee language program. Classes meet two times a week for five to six weeks. These classes are scheduled regularly throughout the year and use Pawnee elders as resources. Students listen to elders speak and also learn to write. There is a set of tapes to supplement the elder's instruction. However, these are old materials and nothing newer is being produced.

In class, anyone can participate through dialogues and conversations. In addition, they are exploring putting things on a computer. Pawnee is not offered

in the school system. It is strictly through tribal community efforts. The tribe has the last word, but Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has the money. There is a concern that these languages will die without these efforts. All are encouraged to participate, but the attendance is usually only about twelve at a time.

In conclusion, Ms. Walters explained that in 1804, Lewis and Clark reported only a handful of Otoe and Pawnee people and said they expected these to be soon wiped out. After the Missouri reduction, it was expected that they would soon be wiped out. Yet they are all still here. However, they have different problems than larger tribes such as the Navajo with over 200,000 people. The Navajo tribal language is preserved. This is really different from having 100 people or 500 people. The two language groups look at the same questions in different ways and focus on different problems.

Pima Language Programs

Emmit White shared what the Pima River People of central Arizona are doing. He has been interested in Pima language for 25 years. He has taught on the reservation in a parochial school, in his village, and at Central Arizona College. He came to Salt River and worked with Caroline Antone and got his schooling from her in technical and linguistic matters. He also saw Lucille Watahomigie teach. Based on what he learned, he developed a community-based program that came out of the education program at Scottsdale Community College. The result was a three credit course in what the school characterized as a “foreign language.” To Mr. White, it was strange for his own language to be described that way.

He uses the concept of “Man in the Maze,” a traditional design from Pima baskets. He explained, “Where we’re from, past and future, are represented in the maze. There are four major points where we make decisions to change our lives and four directions: physical, mental, social, spiritual.” This is presented in the first lesson. Before coming to Salt River, he was used to the Hualapai project where they have circles. There are four types of letters or designs: stars, squares, triangles, and one other. Those designs represent the four areas of one’s life: infant, young person, adult, and elder. They use this concept to bring in people and help give them identity. He also includes traditional songs in lessons. A teacher’s guide for all the lessons, starting with “the maze” up to Lesson 27, has been developed. He uses this plus his own experience and that of his relatives. He deals with people’s roles in life as Pimas, their responsibilities, and kinship. It covers four generations and starts over. By the 27th lesson, the student can read Pima.

In this Pima language course he does not guarantee fluency; he teaches 250 words in 16 weeks as a way to begin to learn about the language. His teaching is very informal and no tests are given. All ages attend. Elders come in. Kids play around. It does not bother him; he works with the whole family. He says, “You have to think Pima to talk Pima. There is so much to learn.”

The program adopted the Hale-Alvarez orthography. Mr. White explained that he never knew this information before but learned all about it from Caroline

Antone. Together, they have written three songs down and translated stories about roadrunner that they are trying to publish. One story is about what roadrunner used to look like versus what he looks like now. The story is written on the bottom of the page in Pima. It is hard to translate. They also use Anna Moore Shaw's *Pima Legends* as a source of material. They read the story and then wrote it the way they would like to tell it.

There is one old couple who comes to class. They have attended the course all four times it has been offered. They understood the language but did not speak it. "In a year and a half, she can talk real good." Now they are learning legends about Coyote and Roadrunner. Those lessons are what the husband used to hear growing up. In Pima teaching, they leave the stories open for students to apply their wisdom to their own life.

There is also a class for tribal employees, for college students, and community members. He does grading and other work. He gave a set of the materials to Sister Juana at St. Peters; she uses it to teach for one hour a day. She is an O'dham woman, but still the kids learn.

Mr. White said this has been a long hard struggle. He would love to do the same thing one day on his own reservation. His people need it. His children are learning from his own mistakes. It took two years to develop this class. He has taught it four times. They are on the fourth edition of their books. The first edition is in the archives. He is also the coordinator of the bilingual program. It is community based and tribally run. A plan to transfer the course to University of Arizona's linguistics program is in the works.

Yavapai Language Programs

Esther Scott is from Prescott. She was approached and asked to teach the Yavapai language. "We really want to learn; can you teach us?" This request brought her out of retirement. She requested a linguistic consultant, Dr. Yamamoto, and they agreed to pay his expenses to come three times a year. But still she did not say yes right away. She got advice from Lucille Watahomigie in Peach Springs. When she finally did take the job, she started with the alphabet, so she could sound and write words and make an alphabet book. She photocopied lessons with space left for art work. They could not find an artist, so they used petroglyphs. She worked with adult students, starting with fifteen but ending up with only two students and her son. Those students got a certificate of achievement at the end of the year.

The content of the course was greetings, verbs, feelings, wh-words. There were 14 lessons at first. The first class met two times a week, but this year they only met once a week, and seven or eight stayed on almost to the end. However, when they were almost finished with the course, they were put on another task and not allowed to complete it.

"What my grandmother said?" was one of the topics. "What my grandmother said" is similar to the Ten Commandments of the Bible and concerns how to behave. Those were good lessons, including stories of long ago and the facts of life.

She thought she was through with her work at the end of the year, but the two wanted to go on. She said that it was up to the council. She wants to connect words and make stories. The council agreed, and she started up again. She wrote little stories about going to the restaurant and thunder, lightning, and rain. Later she will go into legends and coyote stories. She had to learn and search out information. At first she could not talk without mixing in English. In her family, they all spoke Yavapai out of school. She has been really happy with her group. They wanted to learn and worked hard, coming every day.

The second phase has been a little harder. In the first group, they laughed and laughed. The chairwoman looked in and found them laughing. It is hard to pronounce some Yavapai words.

Hualapai Language Programs

Jorigine Bender grew up speaking Pima. She learned Hualapai and Havasupai and lost her Pima language. She has worked with the Hualapai language for 18 or 19 years, developing her own orthography. She recorded stories from grandparents. She currently teaches at the K-8 public school in Peach Springs, which is a two hour drive west of Flagstaff, Arizona.

She has been in the classroom for four or five years and has developed materials and curriculum, including an ethnobotanical (plant) unit. They have a lab with 25 computers with the language on them. Students use the language for 25 minutes per day. They listen to sounds, see letters and vocabulary, record themselves and compare their efforts with those of fluent speakers. This is done in grades K-8.

There is lots of intermarriage, so even when parents try to speak their language in the home, they end up using English. Kids who learn Hualapai at school bring it home and surprise their parents. The parents asked Bender to teach them. They paid her with gifts, which she passed on. She started teaching language at a community college in Kingman with twenty or thirty students, but ended up with three to six. Three are starting to speak the language. That is what happened in her conversational Hualapai class. She ended up with those who were devoted.

One student told her, "My wife is not Hualapai, but she's learning; I share it at home." People began to speak the language at home, even people who were not tribal members. Children are picking it up. She has a Hualapai Reference Grammar Book and writes out lesson plans. Now there is a "Beginning Hualapai" class. They started with speaking and ended up by adding literacy. Lessons are modified for children. Students learn greetings and names of things in the classroom. Students need to be praised like kids. "We're like a kindergarten." Praise will keep students going. The students study the orthography on computer and mix reading and writing.

Once there were fourteen bands with dialect differences. However, the meanings are the same. She asks students to listen to how elders speak. She can identify a family by speaking to people. Students are picking up on this. Most of her students are older than she is. They ask how she knows how to speak Hualapai,

and she tells them that she grew up speaking it. Elders still ask her to come in their homes and teach them. They even give her little tests about old words.

To teach the language, fluent speakers need to take linguistics courses and consult with elders who are fluent speakers. It is hard to translate English to Hualapai and it takes time.

Navajo Teacher Education Program

Gloria Johns is the coordinator of Navajo Teacher Education program at Northern Arizona University (NAU). In conjunction with Navajo Division of Education at Window Rock this three year program is funded by the Ford Foundation to increase the number of minority teachers in the United States. They are one and a half years into this exciting and unique program.

Criteria for admission to the program includes: admission to the University, admission to the teacher education program, and fluency in the Navajo language. Students are usually working on the last two years of their elementary education degree.

Navajo language courses are taught through Navajo Community College (NCC). Classes are taken to students on-site at Tuba City, Kayenta, Ganado, and Chinle on the Navajo Nation. The program looks for Navajo faculty members. They currently have seventy students in the program and graduated four certified teachers Fall 1994. One more will graduate in Spring 1995. Approximately 30 students will be grad-uating in Fall 1995. Despite this success, there is a problem in regard to how to fund the program after the Ford Foundation money is spent.

Students in the program have to take five Navajo language courses. Eight classes are required through Navajo Community College and the Navajo Nation to become certified Navajo language teachers. Beyond that some graduating students want English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education endorsements. Several students want to go on and work on master's degrees.

Many students were teacher's assistants for years and have children. Many are single parents and the main source of income for the families. Their median age is 38. There were barriers at higher educational institutions such as required tests for college admission. NAU did away with Pre-professional Skills Test (PPST) that had kept many American Indians from entering the NAU teacher education program.

Faculty are trained in the Diné Educational Philosophy, and it is incorporated into class work. Formal western education is a linear thinking process. Ms. John said, "Navajo language and our own natural way of life and thinking is a circle with four cardinal directions. Traditional stories are taught for the morals behind them. A basis for discipline is found in emergence stories, 'Our way of thinking.' The new way is fragmented. Now we are putting back learning into a whole, into a circle way of teaching. Elders address what is happening to the young: lack of respect, loss of teachings, and social and economic issues."

She stated "It is good that the Navajo language is being written and put into lesson plans though it is hard to publish in Navajo and to get attractive text

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books. Navajo language allows students to feel comfortable to express thoughts and feelings. Thoughts, songs, and prayers are in our language. The faculty work with students to develop curricula in Navajo and to put students' writing, oral history, interviews, and summaries from elders into books. We are asking ourselves the question, Is teaching of native language only a school subject or is it to create more speakers? What about increasing the use of Navajo language outside of school? Native language is very powerful. Discipline is already built into it. Teaching in Navajo keeps students in control; it reminds them how to act properly. English goes in one ear and out the other. We need to make learning the native language exciting and fun."

She continued, "The Navajo Teacher Education Program is successful. At the university level there is a need for connections between schools and universities. Conferences like this need to be ongoing."