

LANGUAGE POLICY AND PROGRAMS IN THE MESCALERO AND PLAINS APACHE COMMUNITIES

Melissa Axelrod

and

Jule Gómez de García

University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

University of Colorado, Boulder

0 Introduction

There are a number of social and historical circumstances that bring the language of a speech community to the brink of death. As has been the case of all indigenous Native American languages in the contiguous United States, replacement by an economically and politically more powerful language has been the main contributor to the present moribund state of both Mescalero Apache, spoken in New Mexico, and Plains Apache, spoken in Oklahoma. Both languages have gone through the now well-documented and familiar process of devolution discussed by Elmendorf (1981), Kay (1977), and Hill (1973), among others. Devolution is the process by which a language, rather than growing in viable social contexts of use, instead exists in a narrowing social environment. This social environment is eventually restricted to a single environment, often the home or religious ceremonial contexts, reducing the learning opportunities for potential speakers. Eventually the value of the use of the language in any situation is lost to speakers, total replacement of an ancestral language takes place, and a language is lost.

This paper provides an update on language revival and preservation efforts in the Mescalero and the Plains Apache communities. In accord with the Inter-Apache Policy on repatriation, language, culture, and intellectual property, signed at the All Apache Summit of November 1995, most of the Apache tribes from Arizona to Oklahoma are involved in projects designed to document and maintain their languages. We describe the quite different linguistic situations that currently exist in Mescalero, New Mexico, and Anadarko, Oklahoma, and we report on discussions with Tribal representatives regarding plans for curriculum development projects.

Our purposes in the investigations of these two communities are

- 1 to provide a census of the speakers, semi-speakers, and rememberers in each community, complete with relevant personal and social histories of individuals,
- 2 to develop a means of assessing the fluency of all self-proclaimed and reported speakers of the languages,
- 3 to document and analyze the current structural state of the languages, and
- 4 to propose curriculum and other programs to assist communities in reestablishing the cultural contexts important to them for the use of ancestral languages

1.0 Mescalero Apache

The Mescalero live on reservation lands in Southern New Mexico along with speakers of Lipan and Chiricahua Apache. The Mescalero reservation has just under a half a million acres of grazing land and forest and tribal membership was reported at approximately 2,000 (Liebe-Harkort 1980). The town of Mescalero is "a three-tiered village which climbs the hill on the north side of a mountain valley" (Sonnichsen, 1973). East of Mescalero are rodeo grounds and the plaza where the annual puberty ceremony is held.

The Mescalero Tribe is financially and politically stable. In the 1950's, cattle ranching of a "Tribal Herd" produced a high income (Sonnichsen, 1973 288) and timber production was also a source of income for the Tribe. A fish hatchery was opened in 1965. In 1967, the Mescalero Tribe was awarded \$8,500,000 from the U S Government in response to claims filed under the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946. Since that time, the reservation has built a new hospital, community store, school, and housing. The Tribal Headquarters were built in 1968. The Apache Summit Resort opened in 1956 and grants of over \$300,000 were awarded in 1972 for encouraging further tourism. The President of the Mescalero reservation, Wendell Chuno, has been a leader of the Tribe since the early 1960's (Sonnichsen, 1973 297). Chuno's aggressive leadership, along with the natural richness and beauty of the reservation and the government funding has put the Mescalero Tribe in a good position both economically and politically in the state.

As late as 1973, according to Sonnichsen (1973 299), the Apache languages spoken within the Tribe were still quite viable. "Many Apaches still speak little English, many children come to school knowing no English at all." The Head Start Program, instituted in 1965 and carried on in the Community Center, made things easier for Indian children as they entered the public school on the reservation, but this was a transitional program and a maintenance program was needed because by 1980, according to Liebe-Harkort, the percentage of children under five years of age who spoke no Apache had risen from almost zero to 25%.

In 1976 a Title VII Program was started in the Bent-Mescalero school and an alphabet was developed by the Tribe's language committee. The alphabet has been revised since then, and in 1982 a dictionary of Mescalero Apache was produced (Brueninger, Evelyn, E Hugar, and E A Lathan 1982). This 168 page dictionary is arranged according to semantic fields, and has an introductory grammatical sketch written by Scott Rushforth. In 1980, Liebe-Harkort reported that afternoon language classes for children were being held and that Apache literacy courses were available to adults on the reservation through the University of New Mexico extension.

1.1 The Current Linguistic Situation

Currently, almost no elementary school-aged children are speaking Mescalero and only 50% of the high school students have some level of fluency. There are no figures regarding speakers of Chinichua or Lipan, though there are reports of some pidginization occurring. Tribal representatives say they would like standardized school materials for teaching all three languages within the cultural context. They would also like to develop means of educating school administrators, board members, and parents about language and language teaching.

Members of the Tribe's Cultural Affairs Committee, under the leadership of Berle Kanseah, have isolated five areas for immediate attention. The first area involves teacher training. The Mescalero Apache language is currently being taught at the high school level in the reservation's contract grant school, where classes are taught by native speakers assisted by paraprofessionals. Because these paraprofessionals are not themselves speakers, they feel uncomfortable speaking the language to the children. The Cultural Affairs Committee feels that training for the paraprofessionals and other non-certified staff involved in the education of Mescalero children is essential to help them become familiar and comfortable with the use and instruction of the Apache language. Further training for teachers and community members in linguistic analysis and language teaching techniques is also felt to be in order. A program to provide training in student assessment in special education needs is currently being started at the University of Texas at El Paso under the direction of Dr. Lawrence Ingalls, and a series of three teacher-training workshops is planned.

The second issue of concern to the Committee is a community census. A linguistic census

is necessary for determining the resources available in the community and the needs of the school children to be involved in the curriculum project. A third focus of Tribal concern is the development of the curriculum itself. The Committee would like to see the production of materials and lesson plans beyond what is currently available for teachers.

The last two areas the Cultural Affairs Committee has identified involve assessment procedures. Once a training and curriculum program is under way, evaluation and assessment of the teachers involved will be required. Committee members also expressed the need for the development of procedures for the evaluation of the language acquisition progress of students currently involved in the program.

2.0 The Apache Tribe of Oklahoma

Unlike the Mescalero, the Plains Apaches are a non-reservation community. Now known as the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, or Plains Apache, this group has also been called Ka-ta-ka, Na-i-shan Dené, and Kiowa Apache. Of the several Apache groups of the Great Plains in the 17th and 18th centuries, only the Plains Apache survived until the reservation period. They had close alliances since at least the early 1800's with the Kiowa, Comanche, Arapahoe, and Cheyenne. In 1865 they were assigned to a common reservation with the Arapahoe and Cheyenne (according to the never-ratified Treaty of the Little Arkansas), and then in 1867 the Plains Apache, together with the Kiowa and Comanche, were given a reservation of almost three million acres in southwestern Oklahoma according to the Treaty of Medicine Lodge. This territory was gradually reduced under pressure from homesteaders and speculators until the early 1900's. By that time, the Plains Apache population had declined to its lowest point (between 150-200 people), primarily due to epidemic disease. In 1901, in exchange for the original reservation, each remaining tribal member was given a 160 acre allotment. This left the Apaches with a total of 32,643 acres and the "surplus" reservation lands were open to European-American settlement.

Since that time, however, the population has grown fairly rapidly. According to the 1993 tribal census (Davis) the population was given as 1,400 and is now reported to be closer to 1,800. In the 1970's, a tribal government was formed to administer federal programs, and in 1972 they adopted a constitution and a new official designation as the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma. The Tribe, now centered in Anadarko, Oklahoma, has an administrative complex with offices, meeting rooms, and a gathering hall, as well as a tribal museum, culture center, bingo facility, and convenience store. They also have a dance ground located west of Fort Cobb, Oklahoma, for the Tribal Powwows held in June and August.

In 1993, a committee of elders and tribal leaders organized to preserve the Tribe's cultural and linguistic heritage. One product of this focus on cultural preservation is a 35-page "Education Aid for Southern Plains Lifeways" on the Plains Apache prepared by the Stovall Museum of Science and History at the University of Oklahoma and the Archaeological Survey. This booklet contains a brief history written by Julia A. Jordan, and pedagogical materials such as stories, recipes, and a short word list.

While Bittle found only 100 fluent speakers of Plains Apache during his field work in the early 1950's (Bittle, 1971:76), and perhaps a hundred more with some knowledge of the language, today there are only six elderly people who still speak the Plains Apache language. Liebe-Harkort (1980:88) reported that, while no children spoke the language, a few seem to understand it. In 1973, a Title IV Program was started as an after-school program held two periods a week. The program lasted two years -- the first year in Boone, Oklahoma, and the second year in Anadarko. Average attendance in classes was about thirty students between the ages of six and sixteen (Liebe-Harkort, 1980:88). At least two of the people now engaged in materials development for language preservation are alumni of that program.

2.1 The Current Linguistic Situation

Since, out of a total population of about 1,800, there remain only six elderly speakers of the language, the primary aim of the Plains Apache Tribe is to produce documentation, chiefly in the form of an interactive CD ROM dictionary of the language and they have a project towards this end already underway. Some words and phrases have already been collected and entered, with accompanying voice pronunciation of each word, into the data base for the dictionary. They have applied for funding to allow them to expand this project and also to permit text collection, grammar and curriculum development, as well as community awareness projects.

As a non-reservation community, the Plains Apache are surrounded by English and other non-Apachean languages as diverse as Kiowa, Wichita, and Delaware. Children attend public schools rather than an Apache Indian school. Community after-school and summer program designs are thus being considered as a more effective means of providing an intensive program devoted to Plains Apache language and culture. For this purpose, Tribal representatives express interest in the development of a teaching grammar and supplementary curriculum materials.

3.0 The Language Preservation Projects

We have proposed two distinct projects to accommodate these very different sociolinguistic and cultural situations. In each case, however, we have proposed to Tribal representatives a collaborative three-stage curriculum development project based on community involvement and community leadership. (See Appendix for one such curriculum development project model.) The products of these projects will include on-line and hard-copy teaching grammars and lexicons, curriculum plan and lessons, and audio, video, and print collections of texts.

3.1 Mescalero

The Mescalero project is a language revival project. The focus of this project is on a community effort to revive the language by establishing several relevant contexts of language use, particularly in the homes, so that children learning to speak in the schools (preschool through high school) will have opportunities to use the language. This effort must include parent education, not only in the language itself, but also education about the language acquisition process and about the socio-cultural aspects of language use.

We have proposed, and have been given permission to proceed with, a language documentation and preservation project that will generate standardized materials (including a teaching grammar, lesson plans, and bilingual volumes of traditional stories and oral histories) for teaching the Apache languages in the schools. The first stage of the project is the investigative stage: we will gather information from speakers, educators, students, and community leaders about language use and about linguistic and cultural goals. This information will be used in the second, developmental, stage of the project to work in collaboration with the community to produce a teaching grammar and to develop guidelines for curriculum development. Teachers will generate lesson plans according to these guidelines. The second stage of the project also entails the collection, translation, and transcription of traditional stories and oral histories in Mescalero, Chiricahua, and Lipan Apache. The third stage of the project will involve the evaluation of the materials produced and the development of procedures for teacher and student assessment.

We plan to begin the first, investigative stage of the project this winter. This work consists of three parts:

1. We will work with the School Board, teachers, parents, and the Tribal Council to

produce a policy statement on language curriculum. Preparing a general policy statement will allow an explicit statement of goals for the larger language maintenance project and will ensure participation and leadership from the community in the implementation of those goals. An initial questionnaire regarding the language use and parents' perceptions of the role of the school and the wider community in language renewal will be distributed to parents in the community. Then, at least three meetings with each of the groups concerned will be arranged. In the first round of meetings, input will be gathered on community objectives and expectations. A subsequent round of meetings will encourage response to a proposed statement that we will prepare based on that input and on responses to the parent questionnaire. A revised statement will be presented at the third round of meetings.

- 2 We will also be working with teachers and students to develop a language assessment and census tool regarding the fluency and proficiency of elementary and secondary school students in both Apache and English. Data on language use and language proficiency will be gathered from children enrolled in the Reservation Head Start, Elementary, and Secondary Schools. Once a preliminary tool has been developed, teachers will do a pilot study so that we may evaluate its effectiveness. Revisions will be made and the resulting survey tool will again be administered by the teachers.

For both the pilot study and the second, final, study, each child will be asked to respond to written questions in English about their use of both English and Apache. They will also be asked to respond orally to questions in Apache in order to demonstrate their proficiency level in that language. Bilingual teachers at the Mescalero High School will participate in developing both the pilot and the final language assessment instruments. They will also administer the instruments, and then participate in the analysis of the results. Efforts will also be made during this period to spend time in the classroom at Mescalero observing teacher-student interactions.

- 3 The completion of a language census for the three Apache languages spoken in Mescalero is an important step as it will provide information on the current contexts for language use and on the process of language loss, and thus afford an essential guide for the development of curriculum aimed at enhancing language use in the community.

From our community survey, we will identify those speakers who would be the best sources for ancestor stories, folk tales, and oral histories, and we will arrange consultation time with a group of the most proficient of these speakers to begin the work of language data collection. Our goal here is twofold: 1) to videotape language use (including spontaneous conversation, oral history, and folk literature), and 2) to engage assistants for the work of transcription and translation of those tapes. These videotapes will provide crucial data for the grammatical analysis which is central to curriculum development, and it will also provide audio-visual aids for that curriculum.

3.2 Plains Apache

Unlike the Mescalero language revival project, the Plains Apache project focuses on cultural awareness and language preservation-documentation projects. In August of 1996, we met with members of the Tribe's Cultural Affairs Committee, Jack Tountigh and Alonso Chalepa, in Anadarko, Oklahoma. Our discussion centered on a project to carry out language documentation, including a dictionary, grammar, videotaping of elders, and publication of oral history and folklore. Like the Mescalero project, this too is conceived of as a collaborative three-stage project involving community participation and community leadership. The first stage of this project will

again be an investigative stage in which we will survey the community with regard to language use, and we will gather information from speakers, educators, students, and community leaders about language use and about linguistic and cultural goals. During this stage we will also establish relationships with the remaining fluent speakers, and identify any semi-speakers within the community.

The second stage of the process will entail several separate tasks. First, we will collect video and audio recordings of ancestor stories and oral history from the few remaining speakers. The collection and use of elders' stories for documentation and curriculum development is a first step here, given the urgency of the situation.

A next task, preparing documentation for the Plains Apache language, will involve assisting with the completion of their CD ROM Dictionary Project. Data collected from speakers in the community will be used, as will information from older written sources, (e.g., Bittle, 1967, Gatschet, 1884). In addition to filling out the dictionary's entries, comparing the new information gained at this stage of the project with data from older sources will provide us with information on the structural changes the Plains Apache language has undergone. Structural changes in individual languages undergoing devolution vary from case to case, but common occurrences are relexification of the indigenous lexicon, as observed by Hill and Hill (1977) in Nahuatl, and morphological reduction and reduction of morphological resources, as demonstrated by Elmendorf (1981) for Yuki and Wappo. In addition to the contextual social factors involved in language loss, there is the fact of individual variation which becomes more and more important as the number of speakers declines.

A pedagogical grammar to accompany the dictionary and texts is an essential component, as is the production of introductory materials that will help to make the alphabet a more useful tool for Apache speakers and learners. These grammatical and introductory materials are felt by Tribal leaders to be a high priority.

The creation and design of programs that will involve the youth of the community in the efforts towards language preservation and cultural awareness is another high priority for the Tribe. Towards this goal, we will assist teachers, elders, and members of the Cultural Affairs Committee in preparing a set of lessons for use in an after-school program to be held in Anadarko. Lessons will be thematically tied to cultural context, and will be presented by community members. Understanding the needs and values of the community will allow us to most effectively define the direction of this curriculum development.

The third stage of the project will involve the evaluation of the materials produced, and follow-up discussions with community members about the effectiveness of the documentation process.

4.0 Conclusions

The methodology outlined here for both projects is based on the importance of making the teachers and the community the language experts. The projects aim at reducing the need for outside consultants and, in fact, assure the obsolescence of linguistic professionals by the end of a relatively short period. An important component of this kind of program is that it include planning for the self-sufficiency of the community with regard to language preservation and education. We are, of course, perfectly cognizant of the fact that contexts of usage cannot be recreated once they have disappeared from the social situation of a community of speakers, but new contexts may be imposed on already-existing situations where the ancestral language may be an appropriate replacement for English. The determination of whether such situations actually exist will be part of the investigation to be undertaken in both communities. A process of devolution of the current

replacement process through reinstatement of the ancestral language is the desired goal of the Tribal communities with which we will be working

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APPENDIX

The following chart, "Language Skills Curriculum Design," is the current revision of a plan initially prepared for the 1994 Oklahoma Native American Development Institute. It is a proposal for involving entire communities in language renewal or rejuvenation projects. The chart is designed for use after a linguistic survey has been made of the population of the community, a survey that would reveal the language proficiencies of individuals within the community, thus revealing the resources available and the needs to be met. Each member of the community is assigned a code letter from A to G, depending on the individual's age and proficiency in receptive skills (Listening and Reading) and in productive skills (Speaking and Writing) in the ancestral or tribal language. Such proficiency is determined through assessment materials developed for each community by linguists, educators, and community members. Members of the different groups work together to build curriculum and programs that allow the more proficient members to serve as peer mentors, teachers, and instructional materials developers for other members of the community. As individuals achieve greater proficiency, they are assigned a new classification and, in turn, become the teachers and mentors for younger or less proficient language users. (Age and proficiency designations are, in this particular chart, more or less arbitrary as they are not based on the data from any particular speech community. Cell size and shape will certainly vary from community to community. Suggestions for further revisions of the model are invited. E-mail: garciajm@ucsu Colorado.edu)

Proficiency Categories (indicates proficiency in the target/tribal language)

- A Children from infancy to six years of age (0-6) who have no proficiency (0) or some proficiency but are below age level (1) in all skill areas. (For example, Row 1 of the chart indicates lack of proficiency in any of the skill areas L0/S0/R0/W0 where L=Listening (understanding), S=Speaking, R=Reading, W=Writing)
- B Children 7-10 years of age ranging from no proficiency (0) to age appropriate proficiency (2) in all skill areas
- C All individuals over the age of 11 who have no proficiency (0) or are below age level (1) in proficiency in all skill areas
- D All individuals 11 years and older who have some proficiency, either below (1) or at age-appropriate levels (2), but with no literacy skills
- E Children ages 4-10 with age appropriate (2) Listening and Speaking skills and some degree, either below (1) or at age-appropriate (2) proficiency levels
- F All individuals 11 years and older who have age-appropriate (2) listening and speaking skills and varying literacy skills
- G All individuals 11 years and older who have age-appropriate (2) proficiency in all skill areas

Curriculum Development

Materials for each curriculum program block, A-G, should meet the following general objectives

- They should be age-appropriate within each block. Materials are to be designed to meet the student's beginning skill level and to aid their accomplishment of a Level 2 proficiency in each of the skill areas
- Where possible, all family and community members with whom individuals within the target population come in contact will be considered in the design and implementation of curriculum

The second objective is the most important for our discussion of community involvement in renewal and rejuvenation projects. An obvious example of community-centered curriculum would be a plan that would involve members of group G mentoring members in any other group, working with them to develop age-appropriate proficiency in all skill areas. Suggested activities would include Group G elders meeting with Group E youth to maintain and improve literacy skills. Group E youth might, in turn, produce written materials to be shared with Group A or B children and youth. It is suggested that materials be developed around a common theme such as "health and nutrition" or "cultural awareness and pride."

What the Language Skills Curriculum Design is intended to do is encourage those within the community working on curriculum for their rejuvenation projects to see the interrelationship of groups within the community and to work on developing materials that take advantage of whatever linguistic resources are already available within the community. Including the home, business, school, and whatever other contexts of usage are appropriate for any member of the community in the renewal curriculum will contribute to the development of a healthily evolving language. Members of Groups F and G are the natural teachers for members of Group A. It is hoped that a plan of the sort sketched and charted here would serve as a model for the growth and development of a speech community.

LANGUAGE SKILLS CURRICULUM DESIGN

Age = Years

Proficiency in target language

L = Listening, S = Speaking, R = Reading, W = Writing

0 = No proficiency, 1 = Some proficiency but below age appropriate, 2 = age appropriate skill proficiency level

	Age 0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 18	18 - 25	25 - 55	55 - 95
(1) L0/S0/R0/W0	A	A	B	C	C	C	C	C
(2) L1/S0/R0/W0	A	A	B	C	C	C	C	C
(3) L1/S1/R0/W0	A	A	B	C	C	C	C	C
(4) L1/S1/R1/W0	B	B	B	D	D	D	D	D
(5) L1/S1/R1/W1	B	B	B	D	D	D	D	D
(6) L2/S1/R0/W0	B	B	B	D	D	D	D	D
(7) L2/S2/R0/W0	B	B	B	D	D	D	D	D
(8) L2/S2/R1/W0	B	E	E	F	F	F	F	F
(9) L2/S2/R1/W1	B	E	E	F	F	F	F	F
(10) L2/S2/R2/W1	B	E	E	F	F	F	F	F
(11) L2/S2/R2/W2	B	E	E	G	G	G	G	G