

## Collaborative Development of Blackfoot Language Courses

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This paper presents the experience of developing a Blackfoot language course as a collaboration between a Blackfoot native speaker and a linguist. During the process, we encountered various challenges typical of indigenous language education in the United States. These include issues such as the lack of language teaching materials, the existence of multiple dialects and various writing systems, and the lack of teacher training opportunities. This paper describes our attempts at addressing these issues and devising strategies to meet these challenges.

**1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>.** In recent times, many indigenous communities have put effort into language revitalization, and some higher education institutions have even offered indigenous languages as academic subjects. Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Kiowa have been offered at the University of Oklahoma, Navajo at the University of New Mexico, Hawaiian at the University of Hawai'i, Omaha at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lakota at the University of North Dakota, Ojibwe and Dakota at the University of Minnesota, Iroquois linguistics at Syracuse University, Tohono O'odham and Navajo at the University of Arizona, Shoshoni at the University of Idaho, Yu'pik and Inupiaq at the University of Alaska, and Arapaho at the University of Wyoming. Although this is not an exhaustive list, it is apparent that there is a growing interest in offering Native American language courses in colleges and universities.

Some efforts in curriculum development and quality improvement for indigenous language education are reported in the literature. For example, Suina (2004) describes the struggles of Native language teachers of the Pueblo languages regarding pedagogical training in their language and culture. Additionally, Leap (1991) explains the development and usefulness of Ute literacy for indigenous education.

Despite the nationwide movement for indigenous language education, there is still much to be done in order to reach a point of delivering an effective indigenous language teaching program at the college level or elsewhere. Adley-Santa Maria (1997) mentions that the "important thing is that it has to come from speakers – leadership must come from them" (135). Despite this widespread preference in the field, sometimes an opportunity to

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offer an indigenous language class may derive from outside a community, as in our case: the president and an administrative committee at the University of Montana planned to offer a Blackfoot language course as part of the university's diversity action plan (see §2.2), and it was not suggested by the Blackfoot tribes. This circumstance yielded a situation for us to work in collaboration as described below (§2.2), and effectiveness of collaborative activities in language documentation and revitalization is discussed in the literature (Grenoble 2009; Rice 2009; Hermes 2012).

Having an opportunity to teach an indigenous language course at a post-secondary institution like an American university certainly contributes to language revitalization. This contribution may not be obvious in a situation in which a target language is taught to adults, since the most effective way to revitalize a language is to raise infants and children in the target language, as in the language nest model (Hinton & Hale 2001). However, at least at the University of Montana, it provides awareness of the language to enrolled students including heritage language learners of the Blackfoot tribes. These heritage learners are tribal members who someday may become language activists. Some linguistic knowledge of the heritage language may give them confidence and strength in promoting language revitalization activities. One remarkable example is the personal story of the late Darrell Kipp, who started to learn his heritage language, Blackfoot, at the age of forty, and who also founded the Piegan Institute, which established a Blackfoot immersion school (Kipp 2000).

It is especially encouraging if students can learn to actually use the language in a classroom, rather than simply trying to read linguistic descriptions, because a language description is not pedagogical material, *per se*. Students may also be able to learn the language from native speakers but, in reality, many Blackfoot speakers in the US are very elderly and many tend to 'correct' learners' English accents rather than continuing to teach useful phrases. This has been a discouragement because the 'correction' often comes with ridicule and, in fact, young members have not been successful at continuing to learn the language. However, an opportunity to learn the language in a classroom, where students are expected to make errors, can serve as an important step towards language revitalization.

This article documents the collaborative development of a Blackfoot language course at the University of Montana. In developing a two-semester Blackfoot language course, we encountered and attempted to address various challenges, such as a lack of language teaching materials, the existence of multiple dialects and various writing systems, and a lack of teacher training opportunities. This article provides our solutions, results, and improvement plans for each challenge. The paper is organized as follows: In §2, we describe our environmental backgrounds, credibility and experience, the types of students enrolled in the courses, and the kinds of expert consultation received. In §3, we identify the challenges faced in developing the course along with our attempts to address them.

**2. BACKGROUND.** In this section, we lay out the background of four aspects of the project: the experience and background in terms of Blackfoot and language education, the administrative course development process, the types of students who enrolled, and the types of support received from outside of the team.

**2.1 TEAM BACKGROUND.** The native speaker author, Chatsis, is from the Kainai nation (the Blood Reserve) in Alberta, Canada. Kainai is one of the four Blackfoot-speaking tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy (see also §3.2). She grew up speaking Blackfoot until she entered an elementary residential school at age five. Currently, she is in her fifties and uses Blackfoot with her elderly relatives only; she does not use it with younger family members, as they are not fluent in Blackfoot. She had never taught her language, nor studied it; however, she recognized that being a native speaker is an advantage for teaching the language, especially because she is familiar with culturally valuable pragmatic expressions.

Miyashita, the linguist author, began to study Blackfoot in 2006. As part of her research activities, she has been recording Blackfoot speech for language documentation. She was trained in generative linguistics with a focus in phonology in Tohono O'odham, a Uto-Aztecan language genetically and structurally distinct from Blackfoot. Although she has no formal training in Applied Linguistics, she researched and included applied aspects in her dissertation, and has experience in creating supplemental materials such as stories and a workbook for Tohono O'odham. Nonetheless, developing Blackfoot teaching materials was a challenging task since the structure of the language is completely different from languages familiar to her.

We were in a research relationship for more than a year before the collaborative curriculum development opportunity. When Chatsis was finishing her B.A. in Native American Studies (NAS), she heard from other Blackfoot tribal members that there was a linguist who researches in Blackfoot, and so visited Miyashita in her office. Miyashita then brought up the possibility of Chatsis assisting her research in Blackfoot. Since then, Chatsis had been a language consultant for Miyashita in transcribing Blackfoot recordings.

**2.2 SITUATION BACKGROUND.** According to Drake (2009), few of nearly eighty Native American Studies programs at universities and tribal colleges offer language instruction. Specifically of relevance to this paper, in the Department of Native American Studies at the University of Montana such a language course has never been taught until recently, except Montana Salish and Blackfoot featured in a linguistics field method course in past and Arapaho currently taught as an Indigenous language teaching method course. The motivation for the institution to start a Native American language offering was administratively top-down; it was part of the university's *diversity action plan* initiated by the university president at that time. No linguists, language educators, or native speakers of Native American languages were on the committee. This plan included support for faculty, students, and staff in programs including Native American Studies, Native American student support programs, and research laboratories.

Offering a Native American language course was included in this diversity action plan. By offering a course in Blackfoot, the university helps provide students with linguistic and cultural diversity education. It also enhances the action plan by selecting a language spoken in the state where the institution is located. This movement supports the Blackfoot community even though it was initiated by the institution (i.e., outside of the tribes).

At the University of Montana there are over 500 Native American students enrolled, and the majority of them are from the Blackfeet reservation. While there is an immersion school on the reservation, its current total enrollment is twenty-four, which means the majority of children on the reservation typically do not learn to speak the language. A

curriculum such as the one we developed will provide students entering the University of Montana from the community a chance to learn their ancestral language.

The first step to reach the goal of establishing the language course was to utilize distance technology in collaboration with Blackfeet Community College (BCC), on the Blackfeet reservation, where the language had been taught for several years. Students at the University of Montana took and participated in the BCC class via online live instruction for three semesters (Fall 2007 to Fall 2008). That is, the instructor at BCC gave a lecture at his institution, and students in the university watched his lecture on-screen with limited opportunities for interaction. After three semesters of the teleconference lectures, students expressed desire to make the course face-to-face. Consequently, the university began offering elementary Blackfoot courses in the Spring 2009 semester.

The instructor of choice by the NAS department was Chatsis, the native speaker author, who had completed her B.A. in NAS in 2007. Her selection was based largely on the myth in general that a native speaker is automatically the best choice as a language teacher (Phillipson 1992). However, “(w)hile it is still agreed that the native-speaker has something special to offer, s/he is no longer automatically considered to be a better teacher than the non-native-speaker” (Boyle 1997:164). In fact, she had never taught nor even thought of teaching her own language, despite serving as an onsite teaching assistant while the teleconference course was offered.

Because teaching the language was not her first choice as part of her life plan and because she did not have a teaching background, her initial reaction to the request to teach the course was to decline. However, she knew, from serving as a TA for the online course, that the students were desperate to have face-to-face instruction, and she felt that she would be able to teach them if she received appropriate help. So she expressed to the NAS department her willingness to take the offer with the condition that she would do so only if she received support and mentoring in developing the course. She identified the linguist author, Miyashita, with whom she had been working as a language consultant, as a potential mentor. The department concurred, she agreed to take the opportunity, and thus the team of Blackfoot language course development was established.

**2.3 MAKING OF THE COURSE.** The nature of ‘development support’ was left in our hands. The only clear goals were that Chatsis would teach Blackfoot and that Miyashita would mentor her. We faced one challenge immediately: time restriction. The abrupt transition from the teleconference lecture with BCC to the face-to-face lecture on campus occurred only one week before the spring semester started. This condition allowed us no time to explore self-training in teaching methodologies or examining different learning styles.

Within this single pre-semester week, we determined what needed to be done during the one-year mentoring period. We had to develop ‘starter’ materials that would help Chatsis to create further materials on her own, after the official mentorship period ended. We identified our tasks as development of a syllabus, learning outcomes, written materials, exams, and grading criteria, as well as training in linguistic structure and orthography and determining linguistic components to be covered in one year. In the same week, we also developed a syllabus and course materials (e.g., handouts) for the first week of the course.

For the rest of the semester, we spent every week preparing for the following week: making lecture notes, recording Blackfoot language samples, and creating homework as-

signments. Quizzes and exams were also developed during the semester. As described in §2.1, neither of us had experience in language teaching, developing a language curriculum, or preparing Blackfoot teaching materials. Nonetheless, we tackled this opportunity with excitement.

Table 1 shows the transition period from the teleconference class to the face-to-face class in the middle of the academic year (2008-09), the two semesters of mentorship (Spring 2009-Fall 2009), and the following semester without mentorship (Spring 2010). Students enrolled in the first face-to-face class, in Spring 2009, had taken Blackfoot I via teleconference in Fall 2008, and their second semester was expected to be the continuation of that class. However, we decided to develop new course material rather than using the material from the instructor of the teleconference class. The teleconference material introduced colors, days of the week, greetings, and other expressions. These words and phrases were introduced as lexical chunks, but there was a major problem: they were not organized by inflection or derivation, so the learners were not expected to produce new phrases by themselves.

We also had to present the course as Blackfoot II. Although this seemed like a big challenge at first, a way to accommodate this situation was found. The materials we created (intended for use as a Blackfoot I course) included more expressions than in the previous teleconference class, so the students in Spring 2009 studied more advanced Blackfoot in their second semester, just as they expected. The same material was then used in Fall 2009 as Blackfoot I. New students did not find the course materials too difficult although the content had become more advanced than those presented in the teleconference course. Then, during that semester we prepared still more advanced Blackfoot II materials for the following semester (Spring 2010).

During the year of mentorship, we met at least twice a week to build a frame for the overall teaching plan with examples and actual forms to be introduced in every class meeting. We felt that there should be more examples and actual forms included in the materials than we were able to present. However, we felt that in that limited period of time, the most important thing we could do was to create the course frame, recognizing that more examples could be added to future iterations of the courses. For example, once we established that the third week would cover the concepts of animate and inanimate nouns and their forms in both singular and plural, future examples could be added to bolster the concept. There might only be twenty examples for the first semester the course was taught, but this would grow into fifty to a hundred examples in future semesters.

Semester	Course	Instructor	Material Development	Material Used	Mentors
F 2008	Blackfoot I	BCC	---		---
S 2009	Blackfoot II	Native Author	Blackfoot I	Blackfoot I	✓
F 2009	Blackfoot I	Native Author	Blackfoot II for next semester	Blackfoot I	✓
S 2010	Blackfoot II	Native Author	additional examples	Blackfoot II	---

TABLE 1. Time table of semesters during the mentorship and the following two semesters.

**2.4 STUDENT BACKGROUND.** The University of Montana offers many language courses, including commonly taught languages such as Spanish, French, and German as well as less commonly taught languages such as Russian, Ancient Greek, Japanese, Chinese, Irish, and Arabic. These courses are open for any enrolled student to register in. The newly offered Blackfoot course is open to any student at the institution, and the first class in Spring 2009 consisted of students from various backgrounds with about a half being Native American, the majority of whom were from the Blackfeet reservation. This ratio between Native American students and non-Native students has varied from year to year.

Most of the non-Native American students who take the Blackfoot course have studied at least one commonly taught language, and very few or close to no Native American students have studied commonly taught languages. The Native American students, however, seemed to fall into several types: enrolled members or descendants of the Blackfeet tribe, enrolled members or descendants of other Blackfoot-speaking tribes (Kainai, Apátohsipikani, and Siksiká in Canada), Native American students who are not members of a Blackfoot-speaking tribe but whose mother or father is from a Blackfoot-speaking tribe, and Native American students who are not Blackfoot. With respect to students for whom Blackfoot is a heritage language, there are various levels of language backgrounds: some have no personal knowledge of the language but have grandparents who are speakers, some learned a few phrases in schools on the reservations or at Blackfeet Community College, and a few have some fluency from participating in Cuts Wood School, the Blackfoot immersion school on the Blackfeet reservation (Kipp 2000).

The motivation of students to take the class is generally twofold. Both Native American and non-Native American students take it as an elective course because the subject is interesting to them. In addition, some Blackfoot students take this class because they believe that if they have to study a language other than English, it should be their ancestral language. Unfortunately, this course does not currently fulfill the general education language requirement.

**2.5 SUPPORTERS.** It is important to note that we had community and academic support from Darrell Kipp, the director of the Piegan Institute, and Donald Frantz, the author of

*Blackfoot Grammar* (2009). In addition, graduate students in Linguistics volunteered to help make some teaching materials.

**2.5.1 PIEGAN INSTITUTE.** Miyashita has been developing a research relationship with the Piegan Institute since 2006. The Piegan Institute is a private non-profit research organization whose mission is to protect and promote Blackfoot language and culture. In 1995, this organization established a private K-8 immersion school called Cuts Wood School (or *Nizipuwahsin*). The school has produced several young Blackfoot speakers so far. With support from a researcher and teachers of the Piegan Institute, Miyashita has been conducting several language documentation projects. She also contributed to their mission by making recordings available online, helping record the language teacher's pronunciations of Blackfoot words, and providing basic linguistics training for the teachers. In turn, the Piegan Institute shared existing language teaching materials that were part of their collection, such as a copy of Siksiká language materials and Holterman's *A Blackfoot Language Study* (1996). As part of developing the Blackfoot language course at the University of Montana, we met Darrell Kipp informally for consultation. He shared his experience with us and strongly recommended the use of the Total Physical Response (TPR) teaching method (Asher 1969; Asher & Adamski 2003) because it led to the current success at the Cuts Wood School. He also encouraged us to keep working together because it is a precious opportunity in terms of language preservation.

**2.5.2 BLACKFOOT LINGUISTICS EXPERTISE.** Donald Frantz, the author of *Blackfoot Grammar* (2009), has been a mentor for Miyashita in terms of Blackfoot structures and description. Through this connection, we reached out to him for consultation on grammatical components, especially in morphophonemics and morphosyntax. Blackfoot grammar is complex and not intuitive even to trained linguists if they are new to Algonquian (Frantz p.c.); therefore, Frantz's input was extremely helpful. In addition, Chatsis did not have literacy in Blackfoot, so support from Frantz was crucial as he is a developer of the orthography widely used among Blackfoot language teachers, especially in Canada.

**2.5.3 GRADUATE STUDENTS.** Miyashita has since 2007 conducted a service-learning research group, the Blackfoot Language Group (BLG), which engages in developing materials for linguistics research and language teaching in Blackfoot. The group includes graduate student volunteers in the Linguistics Program; it conducts and encourages collaborative projects with members of the language community to meet community needs. The BLG group, for example, made recording materials developed by the Piegan Institute accessible and available to the public (2007-2009), developed picture books (2010-11) and video clips in Blackfoot (2011-12), and helped Chatsis by creating PowerPoint slides for her course.

Figure 1 is a sample page of a picture book titled *Ponoka ki Sisttsii* 'Elk and Little Bird.' BLG volunteers designed animals, backgrounds, and a short description of the picture (Lee et al. 2011). In the page shown in Figure 1, the bird, tree, and leaves were created as an original artwork in paper and ink and scanned into a graphic file. The simple sentence was then added. This sentence illustrates the intransitive animate verb root *ótsskoinamm* 'be blue.'



**amo sisttsíwa ótsskoinamma**

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FIGURE 1. Sample page from the picture book *Ponoka ki Sisttsii* 'Elk and Little Bird.' The phrase on the picture, *amo sisttsíwa ótsskoinamma*, means 'the little bird is blue.'

The group used an opportunity provided by a program in the Office of Civic Engagement at the University of Montana called Campus Corps. Under this program, a student could work for 300 hours a year for a unit that contributes to a non-profit organization in exchange for receiving about \$1000 toward her education at completion of the contract. The BLG group's aim included producing language materials for the Piegan Institute, a non-profit organization, and thus met the criteria for the program. The native speaker author used this book in her language class, and the students who used this in class were excited to see the material and encouraged BLG members to develop more aesthetically pleasing and motivating materials.<sup>2</sup>

**2.6 SUMMARY.** The project was initiated by the diversity action plan committee at the University of Montana. We had support from Blackfoot linguistics experts, a tribal activist, and graduate student volunteers. Besides the time restriction described in §2.2, the following challenges arose as our collaboration progressed throughout the semester: lack of language teaching materials (§3), issues with multiple dialects (§4), lack of a unified writing system (§5), and lack of training opportunities for indigenous language teaching (§6). These challenges could well face language education in many Native American language communities (Crawford 1995). In the following sections, we describe these challenges, explain our solutions, report the results (including students' responses), and outline improvements to be made. Although each of the challenges interacts with the others, we attempt to focus on one aspect at a time.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, in 2012 the rules for regulation and eligibility of Campus Corps members were modified. Now, for a student to be a member, he or she must volunteer directly at an off-campus non-profit organization, not at a group on campus which supports an off-campus non-profit organization. Since BLG is not an off-campus, independent non-profit organization, this system is no longer an option for BLG.

**3. LACK OF TEACHING MATERIALS: THE SEARCH.** There were a limited number of teaching materials available for Blackfoot. Searching the Internet did not yield the results we had hoped for. Commonly taught languages, such as Spanish, have abundant available resources such as textbooks, dictionaries, CDs, and DVDs. For example, a quick Internet search for Spanish textbooks returned more than 1,100 items on one site, many of them being language textbooks.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the same site returned only nine items for Blackfoot, and none of them were about language but instead dealt with the history and culture of Blackfoot-speaking tribes.

Although an Internet search did not provide us with any language material, we were aware of four descriptive and grammatical sketches of Blackfoot. The *Concise Grammar of Blackfoot* (Uhlenbeck 1938) contains noun formations, verb formations, numerals, and adjectives. It briefly describes some morphosyntactic characteristics along with examples. *A Grammar of Blackfoot* (Taylor 1969) describes Blackfoot articulatory phonetics, morphophonology, and morphology. The *Blackfoot Grammar* (Frantz 2009) is a concise book that captures the overall language structure and is organized by grammatical properties. Its intended audience includes researchers and native Blackfoot speakers, but the volume is favored by non-native speakers. *A Blackfoot Language Study* (Holterman 1996) consists of several Blackfoot lessons mostly based on Uhlenbeck (1938). There is also a dictionary of Blackfoot: *The Blackfoot Dictionary of Stems, Roots and Affixes* (Frantz & Russell 1995), which also contains an English-Blackfoot wordlist and is considered the most comprehensive dictionary of Blackfoot today. However, usage of the dictionary is not as intuitive as one may assume. The Blackfoot dictionary is organized by roots and affixes because of the language's polysynthetic morphology, in which roots require prefixes and suffixes. As a result, one must know a fair amount of the language's morphology and phonology in order to successfully look up a word. This requirement can be problematic for community members and even linguists with minimal knowledge in the language (Hinton and Weigel 2003). In short, all of these works are certainly helpful for understanding the structure of the language, but they are not pedagogical materials.

Through further research into Blackfoot language teaching materials and communication with Piegan Institute, we obtained some useful items for gathering example words and phrases for use in class. *Siksikai'powahsin* 'Siksika Language Series Kit' is a set of language materials designed for elementary school students by the Siksiká Nation, one of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The volumes include phrases used in everyday life and use drawings to help children learn the phrases as demonstrated by the volume *Aakaitapitsinniksists* 'Siksika Old Stories' (Ayoungman 1993). Although most of the kit is meant for use by children, the *Blackfoot* (Russell 1997, 2002, 2003) volumes are designed for adult members of the Kainai tribe. Phrases introduced in the volumes are those used in occupational and social situations of the Kainai tribe. Another resource, *Blackfeet Language*, is a set of notes, CDs, and a DVD originally created by the instructor Marvin Weatherwax for the course taught at the Blackfeet Community College. This set provides fewer phrases than Russell's works but is accompanied by pronunciation samples. These materials produced by the Siksiká tribe, Russell, and Weatherwax tend to be organized by topics and usually introduce some useful phrases relevant to the topics. Among them, only the teacher's guide

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.textbook.com>. (June, 2009) Currently, it returns over 3000 items.

that comes with Russell's materials contains some grammatical information — which may be difficult to understand without some linguistic training.

During the course of the project, we also discovered archived materials, including Lanning's *A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Blackfoot* (1882), Tailfeathers' *Blackfoot for Beginners* (1993), and Lewis' *Blackfeet Language Coloring Book* (1978), as well as unpublished materials that can only be obtained via personal connections on the reservations because they were made privately by native speakers and learners who were interested in the language. We did not obtain these archived and privately created materials at first due to the initial time restriction (§2.2).

The list of these resources may lead one to believe that there are copious Blackfoot materials to be used in a class. Although every resource has beneficial points, such as expressions, phrases, and perhaps a teacher's guide, we were not able to pick one as a textbook to be used for the course we were developing. Often, instructors of various fields say, "there is no one perfect textbook for my field," even when there are many published textbooks. In this case, there were very few language materials available, and none geared toward a college course. Thus, we concluded that it is necessary to create our own materials for the course, using these existing resources as references.

**3.1 TEACHING MATERIAL SOLUTION: WRITTEN COMPONENT.** The written materials developed for the course were primarily a collection of handouts providing information about sounds and some basic grammar. For the initial development, we mainly consulted the first several chapters in *Blackfoot Grammar* (Frantz 2009), because Miyashita was most familiar with this material and because this volume describes the general structure of the language, often absent in other materials. This selection of a primary source was necessary because grammatical explanations can vary from one source to another. For example: According to Frantz, a phrase containing prefix *á-* is described as an example of the durative because the affix implies an ongoing action or stative expression rather than a temporal indication, as shown in (1a). On the other hand, Russell (1997) uses the term 'present tense' for phrases that contain this affix. The use of 'present tense' is probably more accessible to a non-linguist audience in general. However, it is not technically correct as this same marker can occur in a future sentence, as shown in (1b).

- (1) a. *nóko'siksi áyimmiyaawa* 'my kids laugh/ are laughing' (Frantz 2009:33)  
 n-oko's-iksi á-yImmi-yi-aawa  
 1-offspring-AN.P DUR-laugh-PL-PRO<sup>4</sup>
- b. *apinákosi áakaoksa'so'pa* 'tomorrow we will be eating' (Frantz 2009:34)  
 apinákosi yáak-a-okska'si-o'pa  
 tomorrow FUT-DUR-run-21

<sup>4</sup> Abbreviations: 1 = first person, an.p=animate plural, dur=durative, pl=plural, PRO=attached pronoun, fut=future, 21=first person plural inclusive

Meanwhile, Holterman (1996) explains the affix *á-* as a harmonic that is necessary to smooth out the flow of sounds during speech. Its linguistic function is not mentioned.<sup>5</sup> Thus, what is described in Frantz covers an essential concept accurately where others do so only partially, and this pattern led us to choose it as a primary source.<sup>6</sup>

We decided to cover the following grammatical points of Blackfoot: (i) sounds, (ii) gender (animate-inanimate) of nouns and their forms in number (singular-plural), (iv) inanimate and animate forms of intransitive verbs, and (v) person and number on intransitive verbs. We felt that these are the most essential points in learning beginning Blackfoot and were confident that these pieces of grammatical information in the form of language teaching materials would be interesting to the learners. The written materials describing grammatical information were created by Miyashita and used by Chatsis in class. Students were not provided with highly detailed grammatical information, but they were given many example words and phrases. The following are samples of the materials for each of these grammatical points. Students' responses and a future improvement plan are outlined where applicable.

**3.1.1 SOUND INVENTORY.** The Blackfoot I materials started by covering the Blackfoot sound inventory. A sample list of symbols used in the orthography is presented with example words in (2). IPA representations, given in this article, were not given to students because most of them had no linguistics background. Instead, the instructor (Chatsis) pronounced the sample words multiple times so that students could familiarize themselves with the Blackfoot sounds.

(2) List of Blackfoot Sounds

a. Vowels

	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>IPA</u>
<b>a</b>	<i>apánii</i>	'butterfly'	[a] ~ [ʌ]
<b>i</b>	<i>imitáá</i>	'dog'	[i] ~ [ɪ]
<b>o</b>	<i>owaa</i>	'egg'	[o] ~ [ʊ]
<b>ao</b>	<i>aottaki</i>	'bartender'	[ɔ] ~ [aw]
<b>ai</b>	<i>aiksini</i>	'pig'	[ei] ~ [æ]

b. Consonants

	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>IPA</u>
<b>k</b>	<i>kiistó</i>	'you'	[k]
<b>m</b>	<i>mííni</i>	'berry'	[m]
<b>n</b>	<i>ninaa</i>	'man'	[n]

<sup>5</sup> Holterman also does not use the accent marker, which indicates high pitch according to Frantz.

<sup>6</sup> We are aware of two other descriptive volumes by Uhlenbeck (1938) and Taylor (1969). The grammatical information in these is similar to that in Frantz (2009) but we used the volume by Frantz because it is the most updated grammatical material.

<b>p</b>	<i>poos</i>	‘cat’	[p]
<b>s</b>	<i>sa</i>	‘no’	[s]
<b>t</b>	<i>takáa</i>	‘who’	[t]
<b>w</b>	<i>awaniw</i>	‘he/she is talking’	[w]
<b>y</b>	<i>áyimmiw</i>	‘he/she is laughing’	[j]

Also, as shown in (3), separate lists of sounds that are unusual to English speakers were provided. For example, Blackfoot distinguishes long and short vowels and consonants, where English does not distinguish sounds by length. Also, Blackfoot has vowels that are articulated but not fully pronounced when occurring at the end of a sentence. The velar fricative [x] is present in Blackfoot and non-occurring in English. Finally, in Blackfoot, affricate sounds [ts] and [ks] may occur word-initially, unlike in English.

Again, only the orthographic symbols, example words, and gloss were given to students. Linguistic terms such as *devoiced*, *velar fricatives*, and *affricates* were not provided in class materials, because these notions would not help students pronounce these sounds.

### (3) Blackfoot Sounds Unusual to English Speakers

a. Long Vowels			
	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>IPA</u>
<b>oo</b>	<i>poos</i>	‘cat’	[o:]
<b>aa</b>	<i>ninaa</i>	‘man’	[a:]
<b>ii</b>	<i>miin</i>	‘berry’	[i:]
b. Long consonants			
	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>IPA</u>
<b>pp</b>	<i>kiip<sup>s</sup>ppo</i>	‘hundred’	[p:]
<b>tt</b>	<i>aottaki</i>	‘bartender’	[t:]
<b>kk</b>	<i>nitáanikko</i>	‘my name is ...’	[k:]
<b>ss</b>	<i>issitsimaan</i>	‘infant’	[s:]
<b>nn</b>	<i>ninna</i>	‘my father’	[n:]
<b>mm</b>	<i>áyimmiwa</i>	‘he/she is laughing’	[m:]
c. Devoiced Vowels			
	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>IPA</u>
<b>a</b>	<i>aipottaawa</i>	‘it is flying’	[ḁ]
d. Velar Fricative			
	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>IPA</u>
<b>h</b>	<i>aohkíí</i>	‘water’	[x]
e. Affricates			
	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>IPA</u>
<b>ts</b>	<i>tsimá</i>	‘where’	[ts]
<b>ks</b>	<i>ksikksináttsi</i>	‘it is white’ (inan)	[k <sup>s</sup> ]

The glottal stop as a phoneme is not intuitive for English-speaking students, especially as the sound seems silent, but its existence is important in Blackfoot. Also, the Blackfoot stops *p*, *t*, and *k* are unaspirated word-initially and when preceded by a vowel, therefore sound like [b], [d], and [g] respectively. Handouts containing this limited linguistic infor-

mation helped students to learn the Blackfoot sounds and helped them become familiar with the way these sounds are represented in writing.

**3.1.2 NOUNS: NUMBER AND GENDER.** The second component of the course dealt with nouns. Nouns are an important part of sentence construction, and since Blackfoot morphologically distinguishes *animate* and *inanimate* nouns and these noun classifications interact with verbs (Uhlenbeck 1938; Frantz 2009), it was necessary to go over these forms first. On handouts, some animate and inanimate nouns were provided in a chart as shown in (4).

As can be seen in these examples, Blackfoot attaches different endings for singular and plural forms depending on the gender of the given noun. Unlike Cree, another Algonquian language in which animate and inanimate nouns are morphologically distinguished only in plurals (Wolfart 1996), Blackfoot differs in the forms of animate and inanimate nouns for both singular and plural.<sup>7</sup>

(4) Noun Classification

Animate			Inanimate		
Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.	
<i>poosa</i>	<i>poosiksi</i>	‘cat’	<i>óóhкотoki</i>	<i>óóhкотokistsi</i>	‘rock’
<i>miistsísa</i>	<i>miistsísiksi</i>	‘tree’	<i>nípi</i>	<i>nípistsi</i>	‘leaf’
<i>imitawa</i>	<i>imitaiksi</i>	‘dog’	<i>niítahtaaí</i>	<i>niítahtaaistsi</i>	‘river’
<i>ponokáwa</i>	<i>ponokáiksi</i>	‘elk’	<i>mohsokóyi</i>	<i>mohsokóistsi</i>	‘road’

Students were introduced to the *animate* and *inanimate* noun classification with a list of sample nouns from each category. However, many students mistakenly assumed that these classifications referred to the entity of a noun rather than being grammatical constructs. In order to successfully explain grammatical noun classification, Miyashita gave a guest-lecture in Blackfoot grammar focusing on gender and its grammatical importance. The guest lecture seemed to help students understand the concept.<sup>8</sup>

Future improvements to the course will involve the addition of example nouns that are unexpectedly categorized, such as *isapiikitsoohsa’tsis* ‘ring,’ and *ippotsísoohsa’tsis* ‘pant(s),’ which are both animate nouns referring to non-living things.

**3.1.3 VERBS.** Third, intransitive verbs were introduced in a simple paradigm. It was necessary to focus on one type because Blackfoot intransitive and transitive verbs inflect differently: While transitive verbs indicate the person and number of the subject and object, intransitive verbs mark only the subject as there is no object. Thus intransitive inflection was considered more accessible to beginners.<sup>9</sup>

As shown in (5), the given conjugated forms of an intransitive verb with respect to

<sup>7</sup> The word-final vowel of the suffixes are usually devoiced phrase-finally (Frantz 2009).

<sup>8</sup> During the guest lecture, many among the tribal member students gave comments that unpredictable gender nouns are something to do with cultural beliefs. Interestingly, however, the students who made these comments did not themselves have corresponding intuitions. Rather, they took this as an opportunity for them to learn their tribe’s cultural belief through learning the language.

<sup>9</sup> See Frantz 2009.

person and number included 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons in singular and plural forms, including exclusive and inclusive 1<sup>st</sup> person plurals. Blackfoot exhibits 4<sup>th</sup> person, but its form was not introduced at this point because it requires an extended context to explain the concept (Pustet 1995).

We chose to provide inflected paradigms like (5) for approximately 20 animate intransitive verb roots, rather than providing a paradigm of affixes, like the one shown in (6), for students to use in deriving inflected forms themselves. Several reasons contributed to this decision. Using an affix paradigm is not intuitive to students without a linguistics background, many students—especially those who had no experience taking foreign languages (like most ancestral language learners)—struggle to derive correct forms.<sup>10</sup> Blackfoot verb inflection is also complicated by multiple morphophonological rules, which often lead to incorrect surface forms when one tries to inflect a verb without much knowledge in Blackfoot phonology. Therefore, we preferred to provide already-inflected forms to students, which allowed them to use correctly inflected forms in practice.

(5) Paradigm of Animate Intransitive Verb ‘busy’<sup>11</sup>

Singular		Plural	
<i>nitsʹsinaʹsi</i>	‘I am busy’	<i>nitsʹsinaʹspinnaana</i>	‘we all (but not you) are busy’
		<i>isinaʹsioʹpa</i>	‘we, (you & I) are busy’
<i>kitsʹsinaʹsi</i>	‘you (sg.) are busy’	<i>kitsʹsinaʹspsaawa</i>	‘you all are busy’
<i>isinaʹsiwa</i>	‘he/she is busy’	<i>iʹsinaʹsiaawa</i> <sup>12</sup>	‘they are busy’

While only the already-inflected forms were given in the first semester, students were introduced to the affix paradigm in the second semester. Having learned already inflected verbs helped them to understand the organization of the paradigm.

(6) Paradigm of Animate Intransitive Affixes

subject number →	Singular		Plural	
subject person ↓				
1	<i>nit-</i>	‘I’	<i>nit-...-hpinnaana</i>	‘we (excl)’
21			<i>-oʹp(a)</i>	‘we (incl)’
2	<i>kit-</i>	‘you (sg.)’	<i>kit-...-hpoaawa</i>	‘you (pl)’
3	<i>-wa</i>	‘he/she’	<i>-yi (yaawa)</i>	‘they’

<sup>10</sup> Use of the inflection paradigm was not very intuitive to the native speaker author. However, as she continued preparing for and presenting the inflected verbs with these inflection paradigms, she came to understand the system and appreciate such charts as learning aids.

<sup>11</sup> There are exclusive (excl.) and inclusive (incl.) first person plurals in Blackfoot. Unlike other Algonquian languages (such as Cree), the inclusive form does not attach a prefix involving second person. The form of the inclusive also is identical to the impersonal form such as ‘someone is busy.’

<sup>12</sup> The third person plural suffix is *-yi*, and another suffix *-aawa*, called ‘Attached Pronoun,’ is added when no required noun is following the verb (see Frantz 2009).

Blackfoot, like many Algonquian languages, has four verb times: *inanimate intransitive* (II), *animate intransitive* (AI), *transitive inanimate* (TI), and *transitive animate* (TA). However, only intransitive verb inflections — II and AI — were introduced within the two-semester curriculum because TI and TA verbs inflect differently and are more involved, as mentioned above. In addition, Blackfoot is a polysynthetic language in which an inflected verb may contain a great deal of information, including person and number of subject and object, an incorporated object, the gender of a third person, tense, aspect, mood, and other deictic information. One inflected Blackfoot verb may be translated into a complex sentence in English. Due to this complexity, the polysynthetic structure was also not covered in the class. However, some examples using TI and TA verbs and polysynthetic structure were included when necessary, especially in dialogues (§3.1.5).

**3.1.4 SENTENCES.** For the fourth part of the course, a stative verb root such as *isttsii* ‘to hurt/have pain (inanimate)’/ *isttsimm* ‘to hurt/have pain (animate)’ was included in the verb paradigm. Some body part nouns are animate, some inanimate. Therefore, as shown in (7), when the noun is combined with the verb derived from *isttsii*, four forms are derived based on the two noun classes and their plural counterparts. In this example, ‘arm’ is an inanimate noun while ‘eye’ is an animate noun, therefore the four forms are inanimate singular (arm), inanimate plural (arms), animate singular (eye), and animate plural (eyes).

(7) Four Forms for ‘to hurt/have pain’

<i>noʔsisi ásttsiiwa</i>	‘my arm hurts’
<i>noʔsístsi ásttsiiaawa</i>	‘my arms hurt’
<i>noápsspa ásttsimma</i>	‘my eye hurts’
<i>noápsspiiksi ásttsimmiaawa</i>	‘my eyes hurt’

Another area involving careful consideration was how to address color terms. A color term is a type of intransitive verb in Blackfoot (Frantz and Russell 1995). For example, the form for ‘red’ *maohksinaatsiiwa* should be interpreted as ‘it is red,’ rather than ‘red.’ Additionally, color expressions take multiple forms depending on the gender (animacy) and number of the subject. For example, a word for ‘red’ would have the following four forms as shown in (8) below. This fact suggests that how the color term is presented must be carefully designed, as colors are one of the popular concepts to be covered in an introductory language class. Most introductory Blackfoot teaching materials introduced only the reference form or inanimate form. A pitfall of using color terms without careful planning is that it could lead learners to assume that these words behave as they would in English.

## (8) Four Forms for 'it is red'

<i>maohksinaattssiwa</i>	'it (inanimate) is red'
<i>maohksinaatsiiaawa</i>	'they (inanimate) are red'
<i>maohksinaamma</i>	'it (animate) is red'
<i>maohksinaammiawa</i>	'they (animate) are red'

Further complicating the issue of color terms, there is a word-specific complexity found in Blackfoot. A word for 'black' in Blackfoot, like other color terms, can be either animate or inanimate depending on the gender of the entity. In addition, however, the animate form is further differentiated between an animal and a non-animal. This results in six different forms, shown in (9).

## (9) Six Forms for 'it is black'

<i>siksinaatsiww</i>	'it (inanimate) is black'	e.g., leaf
<i>siksinaatsiiaawa</i>	'they (inanimate) are black'	e.g., leaves
<i>sikimiwa</i>	'it (animal) is black'	e.g., dog
<i>sikimiaawa</i>	'they (animal) are black'	e.g., dogs
<i>siksinaama</i>	'it (non-animal animate) is black'	e.g., tree
<i>siksinaamiawa</i>	'they (non-animal animate) are black'	e.g., trees

In class, inanimate and animate forms of color verb roots were given in singular forms first. Because of the intricacy of the 'it is black' color term, the conjugated forms were presented to provide detailed information about the possible forms. The non-exhaustive list of colors consisted of ten color verb roots including 'it is black.' Then the plural forms were provided in a following class meeting. Students were encouraged to familiarize themselves with the inanimate singular forms by memorizing them as a chunk, then to pay attention to other forms.

**3.1.5 ADDITIONAL MATERIAL.** The focus for developing materials for the first semester was on the four areas described above: sounds, nouns, verbs, and sentences. Since most of these materials were compiled by Miyashita, the content became somewhat grammar-heavy during our preparation meetings. Chatsis preferred providing students with something more practical; therefore, we developed several dialogues that can be presented along with the above grammatical points. These dialogues were mostly simple greetings, self-introduction, a casual invitation for a coffee break, and so on. We also intended, in creating these dialogues, to provide students with example conversation exchanges that could actually be used outside of class.

For example, a simple dialogue such as the one in (10) was introduced to the class when the stative verbs were practiced.

## (10) Sample Dialogue: ‘ \_\_\_ hurts.’

A:	<i>tsa kanístsspa?</i>	‘How are you?’
B:	<i>maatsoka’piiwa.</i>	‘Not good.’
A:	<i>átkia’piiwa?</i>	‘What’s wrong?’
B:	<i>_____ aisttsiwa.</i>	‘_____ (inan.) hurts.’
A:	<i>hánnia. kitáákahkayihpa?</i>	‘Oh! Are you going home?’
B:	<i>áa. nitáákahkayi.</i>	‘Yeah. I’m going home.’

Inclusion of the dialogues was a success. Students had tended to be quiet when they were told to practice pronunciation of non-contextual phrases, but they were more engaged in sounding out the phrases when they were required to do a role-play exercise using the dialogues. In addition, some students reported that they did indeed use Blackfoot with a classmate when passing them on campus, as in the two conversations recorded in (11). Some students greeted Chatsis in Blackfoot, and she answered back in Blackfoot. Even this simple use was not a scene observed on campus before the course offering.

## (11) Two Extra-Class Dialogues Reported by Students

a.	<i>oki, tsa nita’pii?</i>	‘Hi, how are you?’
	<i>iiksoka’pii, kiístsoo?</i>	‘Good, you?’
b.	<i>tsimá kitaakitapooohpa ?</i>	‘Where are you going?’
	<i>nitaakahkayi.</i>	‘I am going home.’

For the dialogues, all examples that included TI and TA forms had to be given as lexical chunks, since the necessary grammatical component of inflection was not covered. Students were advised to simply memorize these chunks, such as *kitaakotamattsino* ‘good bye’ and *issammis!* ‘look at it (animate object).’

**3.1.6 SUMMARY AND STUDENT RESPONSE.** Approximately eighty to one hundred verbs and one hundred nouns were introduced in the first semester. As a result, the written materials we created served the initial purpose of the course development: the making of a ‘start-up kit’ for the course, which will be continuously used with modification and improvement.

Students often gave informal comments on the course materials during lectures. The response from the students varied. A few students, including both non-Native American and Native American, wanted to know more example phrases. On the other hand, about half of the Native American students thought the amount they had to learn was too much.

Once the basic starting point for the course was developed, we began work to expand it. In Fall 2009, the second semester the course was offered, we began adding materials, and Chatsis started to feel more confident in presenting content in class and creating additional materials. Since then, she has continued to develop confidence in writing and to add more example words, phrases, and dialogues in her handouts.

**3.2 TEACHING MATERIAL SOLUTION: AUDIO SUPPLEMENTS.** Linguistic elements that are different from students’ native languages tend to be difficult for students to learn (Lado 1957). The use of audio materials for Blackfoot is crucial because without them learners may pronounce the orthographic representations of Blackfoot based on English pronunciation. For example, the plosives [p], [t], and [k] are unaspirated in Blackfoot

(Frantz 2009); when English-speaking learners try to pronounce these plosives in a syllable-initial position, they may aspirate them based on how they behave in English. Also, the orthographic symbol *h* represents [h] word initially and [x] non-initially (following a vowel). Because the sound [x] is not present in English, it is difficult for learners to study when a pronunciation sample is not available, as described by the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado 1957). Therefore, inclusion of audio samples became one of the priorities in addition to development of written materials.

Recent audio documentation activities in Blackfoot are now available to a wide audience. Red Crow College in Alberta, Canada, for example, provides online information including some audio/video materials.<sup>13</sup> Other recordings in Blackfoot are available online via the California Language Archive at the University of California Berkeley.<sup>14</sup> There is also a set of free online Blackfoot lessons created by The Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth.<sup>15</sup> At the time of the initial course development, however, we had no information about these resources. In any case, these recordings are not usually transcribed, which means they are not prepared or produced for direct use in language teaching circumstances. The Piegan Institute has recordings of several stories and interviews in Blackfoot from the 1980s and 1990s, but these need digitization before becoming accessible to the public.<sup>16</sup>

At the initial state of the material development, one set of pedagogical audio materials was available: a set of CDs made by Marvin Weatherwax, the Blackfoot instructor for the class at Blackfeet Community College. The set consists of twenty-four lessons, containing about twenty to thirty phrases per lesson, plus twelve CDs of audio supplements. This CD set was available at Blackfeet Community College's bookstore. However, due to the time constraint for preparing the initial class, and since the general topics and order of the audio samples in the CDs did not match the planned curriculum, recording sample audios of our own planned phrases would be quicker than trying to sort out phrases from the CDs. Also, the CDs did not include all topics planned for the course; for example, color phrases in the CDs reflected only the inanimate verb forms while, and therefore we included the animate verb forms as well.

In addition, creating new audio materials for this curriculum contributes to increasing resources for language documentation, as these recordings add to "the collection ... of primary data to be made available for a wide range of users" (Himmelman 2006:15). We held recording sessions while developing the curriculum throughout the first semester of the class, Spring 2009. We used a recording device (Zoom H2) available at the Linguistics Lab at the University of Montana. Miyashita handled the equipment and Chatsis pronounced each of the phrases prepared as samples for the students' use. These recordings were recorded as WAV files, and both of us saved a copy of the recordings for further use in research and teaching.

Miyashita then clipped the sound files into individual samples (using Adobe Audition 3), and converted these into compressed mp3 files for student use. We posted these record-

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<sup>13</sup> [www.blackfootdigitallibrary.org](http://www.blackfootdigitallibrary.org)

<sup>14</sup> <http://cla.berkeley.edu/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.usay.ca/services>

<sup>16</sup> A few collections are now available with the assistance of Blackfoot Language Group (BLG).

ings on the university's supplemental course program to make them available to students.<sup>17</sup>

The students used these samples to complete their homework assignments and were able to refer to them online throughout the semester. These audio resources were probably the materials the students appreciated most. Although students can hear the pronunciation by the instructor in class, the availability of the audio samples outside of class helped them to listen to the pronunciation repeatedly whenever they wanted. Also, several of the homework assignments made particular use of the audio resources by requiring dictation—students were given a sample sound file and had to write the words down multiple times.

Due to the limited time allocated for recording, editing, and uploading, ten to twenty sound files could be prepared each week. After the initial development period, the same audio files continue to be used, and no additional recordings have been made. This is partly because that we no longer meet regularly due to time conflicts. We do, however, recognize the positive effect of the sound materials, and when time allows, are willing to add more sample files in the future.

**4. LANGUAGE VARIATION.** Most commonly taught languages have a standardized language variant. This standard variant typically has a long history of written tradition and is used in grammars for education and administrative use. Generally, the standard variety has also been studied extensively, and pedagogical grammars and a range of materials have been produced to help teach it both as a first language and a second language. Indeed, these pedagogical materials have usually been revised multiple times, and the quality of these materials keeps improving. As a byproduct of educators using such materials, students (and citizens) tend to develop an idea that there is a standard language, which is the one taught in class.

Teaching Blackfoot to students who might have developed this idea is a challenge because there is no standardized Blackfoot dialect. What they actually find are regional, generational, and colloquial variation, which may be different from what they see in the grammar book. The following paragraphs briefly discuss the challenges encountered regarding this variation.

For Blackfoot, the four geographical and tribal groups — Siksiká, Apátohsipikani, Kainai, and Aamsskáápipikani — are also usually referred to as dialectal groups (Figure 2). They exhibit distinct regional variation. For example, in Kainai, *nítáa'psiksikimi* refers to 'coffee' while the form for 'coffee' is *aisiksikimi* in Blackfeet (Aammskáápipikani). But *siksikimi* in Kainai refers to 'tea', while the form for tea in Blackfeet is *átsoyoopoksiikimi*. In addition to regional variation between the tribal groups, although this has not formally been studied, there are also multiple variants even within the same group. This makes sense intuitively, considering the fact that the locations of the four tribes are based on political boundaries, while in each tribe there are several bands and families.

There is also generational variation in Blackfoot, exemplified by the degree of simplification in inflection. Speakers who are in their eighties, and especially those who were raised by their grandparents, tend to speak a variety which is close to what is described by Uhlenbeck (1983), Taylor (1969), and Frantz (2009). Younger speakers in their fifties who

<sup>17</sup> The institution was using Blackboard at the time; it shifted to Moodle in 2011.

experienced residential schools have a variety that is quite different from the previously described Blackfoot (Frantz p.c.). These versions are informally called Old Blackfoot and New Blackfoot, respectively (Kaneko 1999; Kipp, p.c.).

Chatsis is a speaker of New Blackfoot and notices that New Blackfoot speakers tend to omit or shorten noun and verb inflection while those who speak Old Blackfoot keep longer forms. For example, a question form for the third person, like ‘is he good?’ is *iiksoka’pssiwatsiksi* in the older form, and *iiksoka’pssiwats* or even *iiksoka’pssiwa* in New Blackfoot. Although the structure of New Blackfoot has not formally been documented in the literature, it differs in terms of phonology, morphology, and syntax from Old Blackfoot. Further, in Miyashita’s impressionistic view, there seem to be multiple varieties of New Blackfoot.



FIGURE 2. Map of the four Blackfoot-speaking tribes. A. Blackfoot Reserve (Siksiká); B. North Piegan Reserve (Apátóhsipikani); C. Blood Reserve (Kainai); D. Blackfeet Reservation (Aamsskáápipikani). Cartography by Kevin McManigal, The University of Montana.

Blackfoot also exhibits colloquial differences, which can be shown with examples of contraction. The phrase *tsa anista’pii* ‘what is it?’ is often shortened to *tsistapii* in natural speech regardless of age differences among speakers. Similarly, the phrase *kitaakotamatt-sinoo* ‘see you later again (goodbye)’ is pronounced *kiatamattsin* or *taakitamattsin*. These colloquial pronunciations are not described in published grammars.

Coverage of such variation in a beginners’ language class is challenging because there is no model design available — courses of strategic languages usually possess one basic variant: the standard. Nonetheless, we did not select one variant for presentation; instead,

we pursued our interest in conveying the importance and value of variants.

**4.1 LANGUAGE VARIATION: SOLUTION.** Recognizing the existence of multiple variants of Blackfoot, we strongly believed that one variant should not be presented as better than the rest. For this reason, the lessons and materials included as many variants as we could find. This approach challenged students at first, and some wanted the instructor to give them only one ‘correct’ form to study. Some even mentioned that their grandparents’ speech was different from forms they were taught in class, and were inclined to believe the different forms introduced in class to be ‘incorrect.’ In addition, since the instructor (Chatsis) is from the Blood Reserve in Canada, while many of the students in the Blackfoot class are from the US, a few students who were members of the Blackfeet reservation expressed feelings that Blackfeet (American Blackfoot) should be taught at the University of Montana as opposed to ‘Canadian Blackfoot’.

This paper does not intend to analyze the reason and ideology that brings this type of feeling toward a dialect; however, we note the importance of understanding of dialects and their equal rights to be recognized, especially within the groups where they share mutual intelligibility. Although an endangered language community cannot afford to spend time discussing correctness among dialects, this opinion may come from the gap between the expectations that one variant ought to be taught at an institutionalized language class and the reality of vast dialectal variation.

This experience led us start providing a lecture on the existence and characteristics of dialects, including the concept that no one dialect is superior to others and the fact that the instructor does her best teaching when she bases the lessons on her own dialect, especially during the first week of a semester when sounds are covered. As they enhanced their knowledge regarding variation, students slowly began to understand that there was more than one way of saying the same word and that each way is ‘correct’ in its own place. After the addition of the lecture regarding dialectal variation, students no longer questioned ‘correct’ versions, but rather shared information when they had some knowledge about dialects spoken in their hometown.

**5. ORTHOGRAPHY.** Blackfoot has only been written for a little more than a century, and a different writing system was created every time someone attempted to describe the language or variant: missionaries, linguists, teachers, etc. As a result, multiple writing systems now exist. Users of the written systems are mainly linguists and language teachers in schools—not general community members.

The three major descriptive works are *A Concise Blackfoot Grammar* (Uhlenbeck 1938), *A Grammar of Blackfoot* (Taylor 1969), and *Blackfoot Grammar* (Frantz 2009). Uhlenbeck used a phonetic notation but did not develop an orthography. Taylor’s writing system also used a phonetic system. Donald Frantz (1978) developed an orthography with the intention that it would be used by the community, and this is widely used today by researchers and many Blackfoot language teachers, mainly in Alberta, Canada.

Besides these writing systems, there is another system developed by Jack Holterman,

whose system differs from Frantz's.<sup>18</sup> Then there are language teachers who prefer to develop their own systems for the purpose of teaching, such as Weatherwax (2007). Examples of these various writing systems are shown in Table 2 below.<sup>19</sup>

Phrases	Frantz	Uhlenbeck	Taylor	Holterman	Weather-wax
'I know it'	nitssksiniipa	nitsksínixp	nitssksiniipa	nizxinipa	NII TS SKI NII PA
'you will go home'	kitáakahkayi	kitákaxkaii	kitáakaxkayi	kitakahkayi	KII TAK KAI
'come here'	pohsapoot	poχsapot	poxsapoot	pohsapot	POH TSA PO TA

TABLE 2. Various writing systems in Blackfoot

The existence of multiple writing systems in a language community is not uncommon. Many Native American languages have multiple systems if they are studied by linguists and/or approached by missionaries. For example, Tohono O'odham had multiple systems developed by missionaries, early linguists, and modern linguists (Zepeda and Hill 1998). Among them, the Alvarez-Hale system was ultimately selected as the Tohono O'odham tribe's official writing system; therefore, this was used in teaching the language course offered at the University of Arizona (Zepeda 1983). As another example, the Cherokee syllabary is a well-known writing system, the status of which is widely recognized inside and outside of the tribe. Its use was active among the tribe, and thus natural to be selected as an official orthography. Cherokee revitalization efforts include revitalization of syllabary literacy (Montgomery-Anderson 2008). The situation for Blackfoot, however, differs from Tohono O'odham and Cherokee in that there is no unified implementation regarding the orthography use. The following section describes how we made an orthographic selection for our Blackfoot language course development project.

**5.1 WRITING SYSTEM SELECTION.** Among these systems for Blackfoot, we selected Frantz's system for the class for the following reasons. First, Frantz's system was selected to be the official system at the conference among educators of the Blackfoot Confederacy in the 1990s (Kipp p.c.), and while this system is not official it is widely recognized as a standard (Ermineskin & Howe 2005). Second, it was developed based on a phonemic analysis of the language (Frantz 1978), while the other writing systems were not. Third, Frantz's work is the most accessible to learners, and students are encouraged to purchase the grammar book and the dictionary written in this orthography as additional references.

<sup>18</sup> Jack Holterman is a non-linguist scholar and educator who lived in Browning, Montana. He studied the Blackfoot language and developed language lessons with the Piegan Institute.

<sup>19</sup> A syllabic system also exists (Ermineskin & Howe 2005) which was designed in Siksiká in the late 1980s. To our knowledge, this has never been the preferred orthography in pedagogy. This is probably because of the fact that many native speakers are bilinguals who are literate in English while illiterate in Blackfoot. For this reason, we did not include the syllabary as a choice.

Finally, we received consultation from the developer of the writing system, and therefore it was natural for us to use this system.

Although the Frantz's system is recognized and actively used by teachers, this does not mean that all teachers use this system, and only those who know the system use it. Some, whether or not they know the system, prefer to write words in the way they feel most comfortable. English-literate native speakers who are illiterate in Blackfoot may spell Blackfoot words using their own English-based strategy, e.g., *kits-tsi ghee(h)-pa-goo-goo-ye* 'what did you do last night?' versus, in Frantz's system, *kitsíkiha kokoyi*.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike English, in which a word's spelling is standardized regardless of sound variation (e.g., *often* for /afn/ and /aftn/; *data* for /dejtə/ and /dætə/), selecting one system for Blackfoot does not mean that only one orthographic form will be used for a word. Even though the Frantz writing system was developed based on Blackfoot phonemics (Frantz 1978), the system is still phonetic in the sense that it represents sounds. For example, a first person singular pronoun can be uttered as [nisto], [niisto] or [niistoo] written as *nisto*, *niisto* and *niistoo* respectively. The difference here is an individual speaker's difference in vowel length, and there is no difference in structure or meaning. Also, *kitaikihpa* [kiteikiçpa] 'what are you doing' may be written *kitaikispa* and pronounced [kiteikispa] by another speaker, using [s] instead of [ç].

Because we decided to address language variation openly with students (§3.2.1), Chat-sis also conveyed to the students the general idea that flexibility would be respected in the classroom. One consequential challenge for students was that they had to face a possible discrepancy between the forms given in class and those in the dictionary. Such a discrepancy is indeed a reality of the language in the community, and it is important for learners to acquire spontaneous strategies to handle these representation differences. This flexibility was extended to students in the assessment of written quizzes and exams; students were informed that the written forms used in class would be used in written exams, but students' answers were accepted even when the forms were different from the versions given in class (e.g., omission of vowel length and syllable final glottal stop) as long as the instructor felt the forms fell within reasonable limits.

**6. TEACHER TRAINING.** Various training opportunities are available for teachers of commonly taught languages in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Each of these languages has specified teaching methodologies. In addition, languages that are referred to as less commonly taught languages (e.g., Japanese, Russian) often have similar teacher training opportunities. Thus, with respect to training opportunities it does not matter whether or not the languages are commonly or uncommonly taught as long as they are major *strategic* languages.

Native American language teacher training is "complicated by the fact that Indian language speakers often lack academic credentials, while outsiders lack essential cultural and linguistic knowledge" (Crawford 1995: 30). As briefly discussed in §2.2, being a native speaker of a language is not an automatic condition for one to be the best language teacher. Indeed, some linguistic and pedagogical awareness can be essential. Common learning errors can be anticipated when considering structural differences between L1 and L2 and

<sup>20</sup> This phrase, and its English-based written form, were used by a native speaker on Facebook.

negative transfer (Ellis 1994). An effective language teacher must know how the language works at least at the level that some basic negative transfers can be avoided. Thus, having conscious knowledge in language's systematicity is important for a language teacher.

For those who want to be language teachers, there are various methods of obtaining experience. One may enroll in a program specific to teaching the target language and receive a teaching assistantship to obtain experience teaching a language course. However, this option is limited to very few languages in the US: Hawaiian, Navajo, Lakota and Cherokee (Montgomery-Anderson 2013). If this is not an option, one may simply enroll in a language course and experience how the language can be taught. But this option is unlikely to be available to Blackfoot language teachers.

For indigenous language teachers in North America, there are several opportunities in indigenous language linguistics and teacher training: the American Indian Development Institute (AILDI), the Canadian Indigenous Language and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI), the Northwest Indian Language Institute (NILI), the Indigenous Language Institute (ILI), the Conference on Endangered Languages and Cultures of Native America (CELCNA), the Oklahoma Native Language Association (ONLA), Collaborative Language Research (CoLang/InField), Breath of Life, and the Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA).<sup>21</sup> These are designed to train teachers in indigenous language education in general, and, often, are not for any specific language. Although this type of program is extremely important for Native American language educators, it leaves the attendees the challenging task of applying the language instruction methodologies to their own languages and unique teaching situations.

For a prospective teacher of Blackfoot, it would be worthwhile to obtain skills through training institutes such as those listed above. However, for the project that is the subject of this paper there was no time for the team to attend any training before the first semester. We were forced instead to conduct self-training regarding Blackfoot language education. Since the initial development period, Chatsis has applied for some institutional funding opportunities to attend a training program as part of her ongoing training. However, these opportunities are prioritized for other faculty, such as members on tenure-track, and the applications have not been awarded. Nonetheless, she continues to apply for funding.

**6.1 SELF-TRAINING.** There were three major things we did to (self-)train: contacting the Piegan Institute, consulting a publication, and observing language classes taught at our institution.

The Piegan Institute has promoted the use of TPR (Total Physical Response) in language teaching, and Miyashita knew of this methodology from her prior connection with the Institute. For Chatsis, who had no experience or knowledge of TPR, Miyashita demonstrated a ten to fifteen minute TPR lesson using Japanese, her native tongue.<sup>22</sup> We then consulted *How to Keep Your Language Alive* (Hinton 2002) to incorporate some of the

<sup>21</sup> ASLA is a method taught at the Giving the Gift of Language Symposium and Workshop organized and presented by Neyooxet Greymorning (Hobson 2008)

<sup>22</sup> Miyashita has never taught Japanese in a formal class, but had some experience in teaching children Japanese and demonstrating TPR in Japanese to students in a class at AILDI as a guest speaker in 2002.

methodologies introduced in the book. One of the main ideas the team adopted was the creation of an ‘immersion situation.’ This resonated with suggestions received from the Piegan Institute and one of the tips obtained from observing foreign language courses, described below.

During the first few weeks of the semester, we observed two language classes taught at the university. During the first month, we visited a second-year Russian class and a first-year Japanese class. We chose these classes among the other language classes that were offered at the university because these languages are often considered difficult languages for English-speaking students to learn. Visiting these language classes was beneficial for several reasons. First, it gave us an idea of what types of supplemental materials could be used to enhance effective teaching. For example, the classes we visited had multiple props such as pictures and large printed phrases. Second, it showed us ways to include activities besides grammatical instruction. In these classes, the students were actively involved in learning and producing sentences on their own. For instance, the both classes included exercises to create a short conversation and act it out in front of their class. Third, it showed us what level of proficiency students might be expected to obtain. Students in the second-semester Japanese class were able to compose simple sentences, and students in the fourth-semester Russian students were able to carry out a short conversation.

After observing these classes, we discussed what would be useful to bring to the Blackfoot class. Most importantly, noticed that the teachers were using the target language for the entire class period with only occasional use of English – “creating an immersion situation” (Hinton 2002:8). This motivated us in several areas: for the instructor to i) speak in the target language as much as possible, ii) use pictures and drawings in class, iii) have students practice using the language, and iv) have some grammatical information when necessary. These points contributed to the process of designing the lectures. Also, phrases that are often used in instruction were identified, and the instructor engaged in using them in class as much as possible. These phrases included typical classroom imperatives such as *anit* ...! ‘say ... (directing to one student)!’, *anik* ...! ‘say ... (directing to multiple students)!’, and *isstsíyit* ‘listen!’ We searched for clip art that could be used for the class and designed dialogues (§3.1.1) that were used by students to practice conversation. Although Miyashita does not teach the course, she observed the course in the first semester and, as discussed in §3.1.2, gave a guest lecture on some grammatical points.

In addition, immediately after the course observation in Russian and Japanese classes, we had informal interviews with the instructors and found that they had obtained extensive teaching experience while they were in graduate school, that they had had opportunities to develop their own teaching styles by actually teaching language courses, and that they developed their own supplemental materials using available teaching resources.

Consulting the Piegan Institute, reading the *How to Keep Your Language Alive* (Hinton 2002), and observing actual courses gave us, especially Chstsis, who had no instructional experience, a good idea about how language courses could be carried out in the classroom. We are aware of “Where Are Your Keys?”™ (or WAYK) by Evan Garder, which is “a collection of techniques used for **rapidly reaching proficiency** in a target skill,” and “a system for using any method that works” (WAYK 2011). This system is gaining recognition among indigenous language educators and revitalizationists. The Culture and Language Program at Blackfeet Community College has recently included WAYK in their language

instruction, and reported us positively about the use of WAYK. We plan to incorporate it into future in-class activities.

Following the two semesters of the basic development period, Chatsis has continued to add to the phrases to be taught and pictures to be used in instruction. Also, while she developed some understanding of Blackfoot grammar during the course development period, more questions arose as her grammatical understanding developed, so she has met with Miyashita to discuss further linguistic notions to deepen her knowledge.

**7. CONCLUSION.** At the University of Montana, some commonly taught languages (Spanish, French, and German) are offered up to the fourth year. Among less commonly taught languages, the university offers Japanese and Russian majors with four years of instruction and a Chinese minor with two. Blackfoot, on the other hand, is a one-year (two-semester) course. It certainly takes more than two semesters for a student learning a language in a classroom to be able to understand and hold a basic conversation. Grammatically speaking, in these two semesters, the information that can be covered includes only gender, person, number, and intransitive verbs in the indicative mood. Other grammar distinctions are not covered systematically, though they are very important parts of Blackfoot, including transitive animate verbs, transitive inanimate verbs, subjunctive, conjunctive, direct-inverse, dependent third person pronoun, nominalizations, subordinations, and linkers (Frantz 2009).

A language teacher must know i) how to make plans and what those plans should be about, ii) how much can be taught in a given timeframe, iii) how to develop effective teaching materials, including written and audio components, iv) how to use these materials, v) how to evaluate, revise, and strengthen these materials, and vi) how students learn best. These skills do not automatically come with the ability of a native speaker. As a matter of fact, many teachers of commonly taught languages in the US are second language speakers.

Through the experience of developing this course, we learned important lessons. First, although there is no academic program that offers Blackfoot teacher training, the requirements listed above can be fulfilled by self-training and collaborating with others, such as speakers in the community, teachers of other languages, and linguists. The challenge is to maintain both human resources and funding.

The experience has also helped us learn about ourselves. It made Chatsis think about what it means to be a fluent, native speaker. Her identity is certainly anchored in being a speaker of Blackfoot, and during this project she encountered several situations that made her reflect on her linguistic ability. As described in §2.2, she was given the opportunity to teach a course from the institution without a question. She has a B.A. in Native American Studies and a Blackfoot teaching certificate attested by the Blackfeet tribe. Yet students' voices made her realize that there can be a gap between the instructor's background and students' assumptions and expectations about the class. The students in this case did assume there ought to be one variant taught in class. Some also assumed that the grammar of Blackfoot should parallel the grammar of Spanish or English. For example, one student asked why *aohpota* is not the name for 'snow,' based on *aohpotaawa* 'it is snowing' and an analogy with *ninaawa* 'he is a man' versus *ninaa* 'man.' Chatsis's answer was, "we don't say it that way; the snow on the ground is *koonsko*." This was one of several moments that she reached out for Miyashita's assistance after class. Finally, Chatsis had never written or read her language before her involvement in teaching, and has been gradually

coming to enjoy observing her own language from a different angle.

The experience of developing this course also made Miyashita think about how her linguistics training can contribute to language education. She realized that it is crucial for her to learn more about educational linguistics to become a more effective partner for Chatsis. It also made her think about how to explain technical information to her partner without forcing her to study linguistics for many years. In addition, as mentioned in §3.2, the language is changing and the existing descriptions are different from how most current speakers produce it. Experiencing this first-hand led Miyashita to believe that continuous documentation and study in connected speech are also important. Blackfoot has several descriptions, but these are not necessarily the best textbooks for conversational language teaching. She now believes that there is no end point in language documentation as long as the language is spoken, and the presence of volumes of language description should never be interpreted as completion of language documentation.

Grenoble (2009) states, “there are special needs in language revitalization that are simply not found in other second language programs,” and second language acquisition in indigenous languages is considerably understudied. As more Native American language teaching programs develop, although each situation is different, some major problems such as the issues discussed here are likely to arise. We hope that these situation, challenges, and solutions will help or at least give ideas to other groups in developing Indigenous language courses.

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