THE TUNICA LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION PROJECT:
METHODS, CHALLENGES, AND DATA CONFLICT IN LANGUAGE RECREATION

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The Tunica Project
The Data: an Overview

- Grammar (1941)
- Dictionary (1953)
- Texts (1950)
- Gatschet’s field notes (259 pgs.)
- Articles by Gatschet and Haas
- Swanton grammar
- Gatschet/Swanton vocab cards
Haas Materials

- Grammar, dictionary, texts
- Trained linguist
- Most complete account we have of the language
- Had access to the earlier materials
B. Second Telling

a. ta'yoroníku, kats'ú'náhč, to'nima'honsa'hůku, ᭩uk̓o'ni-
se'má'n, na'muri'kin'usákukatá'ní. h-hč, ᭥ušto'hk̓'ocke'ní. h-hč,
wa'čí'n, ᭢uhá'l'uhke'ní. sa'hůku, wa'č̓uñwana'ní. h-hč, ta'ruko's-
unihke'ní. h-hč, ta'rula'puyak̓'s'unáhč, ᭥aka'h̓unihke'ní, ta'r-
kuki'čú'n. ᭥aka'h̓unáhč, ᭢awa'č̓unihke'ní. ta'ruko'sá', ᭥ape'k-
unáhč, ᭢u'ruhk̓'unta'ní. h-hč, ᭥ape'kah̓u'ránhč, ᭥a'm̓o'iltá,
'ara'p'unihke'ní. 'ara'pú'náhč, ᭩uk̓o'nisé'má'n, ya'katáhč, 'un-
wa'náñonta'ní. h-hč, ᭢uhá'yisa'hkú'n, ya'n̓'uhke'ní. "'a'šuma'n-
kupi'ráthč, ha'tíkán, ya'kapó'ít'íhč, la'puhč," si'níko'ní. h-hč,
sí'rišma'rgba'míonta'ní.
Problems

- From a semi-speaker
  - “Indeed, I often had the feeling that the Tunica grooves in Youchigant’s memory might be compared to the grooves in a phonograph record; for he could repeat what he had heard but was unable to make up new expressions of his own accord” (Haas 1941:10)
Problems

- Narrative data only
  - Greetings, colloquialisms, discourse
  - Mostly third person singular masculine forms
- Register and genre
  - Nothing to compare/contrast
Problems

- Descriptive holes
  - Undiscussed constructions
    - If you can relativize anything besides a subject
    - If you can have a definite article and an agentive
    - Multiple wh-questions
  - Forms only attested once or twice
    - Uru- hk- 'uta- 'u'uwaw- ani
      whoop-stem-3ms.caus-3ms.go.repet.-quot
      “he keeps whooping as he goes, it is said”
Problems

- Observations vs. rules
  - Motivations for auxiliary conjugations vs. non-aux conjugations
    - Hinyatich hara-ti- hch hipu- ’aki- ani
      then sing-3FS-while dance-3FS.aux-QUOT
      “Now while she sang, she danced, it is said.”
  - Little evidence for certain morphemes/constructions being more productive than others
    - Ex. –n vs. –ki (vs. –hchan) imperative postfixes
Gatschet/Swanton material

- By Gatschet, edited by Swanton
- William Ely Johnson, Volsine Chiki
- Seems to be elicitation and text data
- 600 Cards
- 1100 sentences
Methods

- Transcribe sentences into MS Word
- Flag examples that look helpful
- Parse using what we know from Haas’s description
- Look for structural similarities
to'ni mi'ta pan u-a'ku, the man who passes there yu'ka ya'na-le'pi witaka'ni, go to speak the discourse! an'antcha', I will be there (to do that). (command) I will go (lit. I will go)? (a woman dying (v.))
lupik a'ra(f.), great mortality, "dying continually going m ta'waran i'ta'ki ya' tara'pa. they go hunting on". kat amu'xki, where he went had gone. to kill deer.
u ama', he went to go to him he'k tchu'ima'n wiya: taking that, go! i grish i-anaxka' let us go to my home! wi'chami-wa'ya'wi, he wished to ascend wi'cha mu'xki, he ascended si'tashika'k'tchi, they will go away
hayic amu'xki he has gone up (into the air) in the air
a woman, dying
stro; most died (v.)
akata, she went in (v.) akahata, don't come in! (v.) ni'satci'ie ani'kaxtea, don't go away.
Why this data is essential

- Non-narrative data
- Paradigms (elicitation)
- Useful sentences
- Corpus is so small we need everything available
Orthography
- Almost never recorded glottal stop
- Often omitted glides intervocalically
  - Yuiki=yuwawiki
- ó, ö → o; ɛ, a → a
- Voiced stops: b → p, d → t, g → k
- c → š, tch → hč, dj → č
Problems

- Competing translations
  - Gatschet vs. Swanton
    - Ta sa korek(u): the dog barks (G) the dog drinks (S)
      - ta- sa kɔra-ku
      - det.-dog drink-3ms
  - Speakers
    - Umakati: it will not be good luck for him (V) something he does not like (J), punishment (G)
      - uhk-maka-ti
      - 3ms-punish-3fs.compl
      - “she punished him” (?)
Problems

- Anything that isn’t in Haas is difficult to reliably identify
- Sometimes conflicts with Haas’s account

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{H} & \quad \text{G/S} \\
\text{i-} & \quad \text{yahpa vs. ihk-} \quad \text{yahpa} \\
1s.inal- & \quad 1s.al- \quad \text{hungry} \\
\text{“I am hungry”}
\end{align*}
\]
Problems

- Limited knowledge of Tunica
  - **Yukapa tati**: she fell as she came (went, S)
    - yuka-pata-ti
    - arrive- fall- 3fs.compl

- Speaker competence
  - Tunica, Biloxi, Choctaw, French
  - “it was Youchigant’s opinion that Johnson’s principle language was Biloxi (his mother’s language) and that his command of Tunica left much to be desired” (Haas 1953:179)
Merits

- Another native speaker reviewed the information
- Translations were altered, not the Tunica
- Types of mistakes that WERE NOT made:
  - Paradigmatic
  - Word order
  - Morpheme/stem relations
Discoveries

- Narrative structure most obviously defined by –ani (quotative) and hinyatihch (however, then, so)

- -ki more productive imperative marker

- Reduplication probably was a productive process
  - Papat’a’axkini: I fall many times
  - Shihtika yayaku: (they) fasted many times
  - Kukuchakati: she was crushing repeatedly
**Discoveries**

- **Active system of agreement along stative/non-stative lines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subj./Obj. TV</th>
<th>Uhk-po-ni</th>
<th>ihk-po-wi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3MS-see-1S.compl.</td>
<td>1S-see-3MS.compl.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘I saw him’</td>
<td>‘he saw me’</td>
<td></td>
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<th>Subj. IV</th>
<th>Pata-ni</th>
<th>pata-wi</th>
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<tr>
<td>fall-1S.compl.</td>
<td>fall-3MS.compl.</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘I fell’</td>
<td>‘he fell’</td>
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<td>1S-be.hungry</td>
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<td>‘he is hungry’</td>
<td>‘I am hungry’</td>
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Applications in Revitalization

- Select discoveries are incorporated into the new language, and the general understanding we have of the language from this exercise will better inform how the language redevelops.

- “Language Recreation”
  - need the ability to create, not just describe
  - if we don’t understand it fully, we can’t teach them effectively to use it
TUNICA BILoxi TRIBE 
OF 
LOUISIANA 
Cherishing Our Past 
Building For Our Future
References


- Swanton, John R. n.d. Manuscript 4938, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Suitland, MD.