

REVIEWS

TANACROSS LEARNERS' DICTIONARY: DIHTHÂAD XT'EEN IIN AANDĚĜ' DÍNAHTLĀĀ'. Compiled by Irene Arnold, Rick Thoman, and Gary Holton. Edited by Gary Holton. Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center, 2009. Pp. ix + 340. \$25.00 (paper).

The *Tanacross Learners' Dictionary* (henceforth *TLD*) is one of several recent dictionary projects of Alaskan Athabascan languages published with the language learner—rather than primarily the linguist or scholar—in mind. Junior dictionaries and learners' dictionaries were popular in the 1970s (e.g., Collins and Petruska 1979, Milanowski 1979, Peter 1979, and Wassillie 1979), but by 1990 Alaskan Athabascan lexicography took a decidedly more comparative, historical, and analytic turn. Kari's (1990) morpheme-based Ahtna dictionary and Jetté and Jones's (2000) richly ethnographic Koyukon dictionary each contain a wealth of information but require the reader to have considerable understanding of Athabascan structure to take full advantage of their offerings. The second half of the current decade has seen an upsurge in dictionaries designed to facilitate easy access for learners and semi-speakers, among which are Kari's (2007) *Dena'ina Topical Dictionary*, the electronic *Deg Xinag Learners' Dictionary* by MacAlpine et al. (2007), Tuttle's (2009) *Minto Lower Tanana Pocket Dictionary*, and the *Tanacross Learners' Dictionary* by Arnold, Thoman, and Holton under review here.

Tanacross is the English name given to *Dihthâad xt'een iin aandĚĜ'*, the Native language spoken by residents of the Tanana River valley in and around Tanacross Village (the name comes from "Tanana Crossing"), from Tok to Healy Lake, and including the now intermittently occupied communities of Mansfield Lake, Joseph Village, and Ketchumstuck. The introduction to the *TLD* describes the goals of the project and the intended audience: "The subject matter and the level of complexity are varied enough to make it a useful resource for users ranging from those who know nothing of the language to those who recognize some words or phrases or have heard the language spoken by their parents or grandparents" (p. 1). The book's first compiler, Irene Arnold, is a Native speaker who has taught Tanacross in various classroom settings for many years. She was joined on the project by Rick Thoman and Gary Holton, two linguists affiliated with the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, who have worked extensively with Tanacross.

The *TLD* is a standard-sized paperback volume with 36 pages of introductory and descriptive material, 261 pages of English-to-Tanacross main entries, a 39-page Tanacross-to-English "finder list," and a freely accessible companion website with more than 4,000 audio clips. I describe each of these in turn below.

The first part of the book contains four sections: an introduction, information on the Tanacross writing system, a guide to using the dictionary, and an overview of Tanacross grammar. The introduction gives general demographic information and a

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summary of contact with and borrowing from Russian, French, and English. Of note here is a discussion of *injih* ‘taboo’, an important concept for both lexicographers and language learners. *Injih* governs the (in)appropriateness of the use of certain words in Tanacross culture, and lexical entries with *injih* associations are marked as such. The pages on the Tanacross writing system contain a carefully written explanation of orthography and pronunciation, presented in terms of letters and sounds that the English-only reader is unlikely to be familiar with (e.g., semi-voiced fricatives, the voiceless lateral fricative, glottalized consonants, phonemic nasalization, and tone). The grammar overview section is a condensed description of the language with clear explanations of not only the particular details of Tanacross grammar but also general linguistic terminology and concepts like inalienable possession, participants, aspect, and paradigms.

The “Main Entries” section differs most noticeably from some other Athabascan dictionaries in two ways. First, headwords are presented in English rather than in Tanacross and, second, there is no morpheme-by-morpheme analysis or reference to the verb template. Individual entries contain the headword, followed by the Tanacross term and one or more of the following: a more precise English translation of the Tanacross term, example phrases, semantically related items, alternate pronunciations, cross-references to other entries, comments, and sample verb paradigms. The sample paradigms are presented in two-by-three tables inflected for person, number, and a particular aspect—usually imperfective—and are a useful addition not always found in Athabascan dictionaries. The aspectual stem allomorphy and notoriously difficult verb template of these languages make listing all possible forms impractical, but the tables in the *TLD* give the reader a convenient way to master a few basic forms. Some common verbs like *GO* contain multiple paradigm tables for different aspects.

A randomly chosen sample of six pages (pp. 202–7) contains 40 headwords, from *POUND* (*níthéynintheét* ‘she pounded it in’) to *PUT OUT/EXTINGUISH* (*kón’ nanihdeex* ‘put out the fire’). Twenty-one example phrases are given in these pages, like *tii ch’ udelneey ektseth* ‘I am punishing the naughty dog (with a switch)’, under the entry for *PUNISH*, and *Fairbanks ts’í natihdaat, k’ént’eh* ‘I will go to Fairbanks, probably’, under the entry for *PROBABLY*. Four of these entries contain comments about usage from the compilers, including a note about *injih* under *PRETTY*: “It is *injih* to say that someone is pretty or handsome” (p. 203). These six pages also include ten paradigm tables. Most of these are under the entry for *PUT DOWN*, which is in fact a group of seven different verbs that vary according to the type of object being handled (*nádíhqa* ‘I put it down [e.g., a box]’ vs. *nádekteq* ‘I put it down [e.g., a puppy]’). These are among the classificatory verbs of Tanacross, which are explained in the grammar overview at the beginning of the book. Four entries in these six pages contain cross-references. Two have literal English translations in addition to the headword, as in the entry for *PRaise*, in Tanacross *daydihcháax*, which is literally ‘he made him look or sound large’. Five entries here list semantically related words; the entry for *PUSSY WILLOW*, *dahliigaay*, also gives the semantically related but lexically unrelated *k’éy’ jiis* ‘pussy willow buds, young growth’.

The final section of the book is a Tanacross-to-English “finder list.” This is essentially an alphabetical index of Tanacross words that can help guide the reader with a particular Tanacross form in mind to the English headword where more information can be found.

The *TLD* companion website is <<http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/tanacross/tld/>>. It contains much of the same information on spelling, pronunciation, and grammar as is found in the print version, as well as all of the main entries. The website's greatest contribution to the project is the inclusion of more than 4,000 audio clips. Navigating to the entries corresponding to the six pages examined above, we find fully 75 audio clips of main entries, paradigm tables, example phrases, and related forms (a scant four items in this section did not have corresponding audio).

For a non-topically arranged dictionary, I find the *TLD* incredibly easy to use. More precisely, the compilers' choices (i) to list headwords in English and (ii) to limit the number of forms and the amount of grammatical information given for each item make initial access to the language very easy. By way of comparison, as a linguist I rely heavily on Kari's superb and densely informative Ahtna dictionary (1990), but as a language learner I find it time consuming to learn basic vocabulary and simple inflected verb forms in a morpheme-based Athabascan-to-English format. The clear layout of the *TLD*, while it sacrifices much in the way of morphological and historical analysis, makes it possible for a learner to reach basic proficiency without confusion before turning to another source—preferably to a Tanacross-speaking elder, as the book suggests—for more knowledge.

The explanations of orthography, pronunciation, and grammar at the beginning of the book are written thoroughly and simply and for the lay reader, but not condescendingly. One point that could be made clearer is the relationship between Tanacross aspect and English tense, which is just briefly mentioned in a paragraph about time. English-only readers are more likely to be looking for past or present tense than for perfective or imperfective forms. Those who miss where the compilers write “‘imperfective’ . . . is roughly similar to English present tense [and] ‘perfective’ . . . is roughly equivalent to English past tense” (p. 28) may become confused when faced with a paradigm table labeled simply as “perfective” or “imperfective.” On the other hand, the concepts of person and number, also relevant when reading paradigm tables, are clearly explained.

The choice of entries and example phrases reflects attention to traditional activities and the local ecology. For instance, the entries for FISH and FISHING list names for a dozen species of local fish, seven kinds of prepared fish, several verbs for ways to fish (e.g., with a hook, a dip net, or a set net), names for places to go fishing, and 16 kinds of fishing tools. Given the compact size of the book, I can easily imagine a language learner taking the *TLD* to summer fish camp and reviewing pertinent vocabulary on site.

Finally, the companion website is easy to navigate, and the tiny mp3 files load quickly. The recordings were made by several different speakers and are of excellent quality. Hearing the spoken words provides an immeasurable advantage to the learner over simply reading them on a page, as it helps untangle unfamiliar orthographic conventions and provides the opportunity for oral practice. It also reinforces Tanacross as a living language. My only complaint is that the default settings on most browsers open the audio files either in a separate program or in a new full-size window that hides the text entries, making comparing pronunciation to orthography a bit awkward. But this is only a minor problem that could be solved as the website evolves.

The *TLD* is a welcome and in many ways novel resource for students of Tanacross. The compilers call the dictionary “a community-based project” (p. 1) and point out

that “even the best dictionary is no substitute for working directly with Native speakers. . . . The future of the language depends now on the efforts of dedicated language learners working with the support of their elders” (pp. vii–viii). This dictionary will serve as an entry point to the language and open the door to the deeper complexities of Tanacross grammar and lexicon. With its uncomplicated layout and online audio component, the *TLD* also promises to be a model for similar projects in other Alaskan Athabaskan languages.

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FORMAS SONORAS: MAPA FÓNICO DE LAS LENGUAS MEXICANAS. By Esther Herrera Zendejas. México, D. F.: El Colegio de México, 2009. Pp. 249 + CD-ROM. \$19.00 (paper).

Formas sonoras is a sturdily bound paperback book that presents a wealth of detailed acoustic information about the sounds of six languages of Mexico based on work Herrera Zendejas (HZ) has personally carried out during the past several years. (Details about the dates of the work on each language are not provided.) The languages in question are (in the order presented; ISO 639-3 codes provided by this reviewer): Totonac (Papantla variety; top), Mixtec (from Ayutla de los Libres, Guerrero; miy), Chichimeco (pei), Mixe (Tlahuitoltepec variety; mxp), Amuzgo (Xochistlahuaca variety; amu), and Chinanteco (from Tepetotutla; cnt). Four of these languages belong