From technical to teachable:
The role of texts in documentation and pedagogy

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ENRICHING THEORY, PRACTICE, & APPLICATION

4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
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UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I
MĀLAMALAMA
1907
UA MAU KE EA O KA 'ĀINA I KA PONO

Question for today

? How can documentary texts enhance language pedagogy?

○ **Focus:** Practical strategies for adapting texts from language documentation to different language teaching contexts.

What do I mean by 'text'?

Communicative act:

- Personal narratives
- Oral histories
- Interviews
- Songs
- Jokes
- Conversations
- *...the list goes on!*

Format /Medium:

- Spoken or written
- Digital or analog

Why texts?

For pedagogy:

- Recent turn toward more communicatively-oriented instruction

- Source of realistic situations, naturalistic, contextualized input

- Embedded cultural information

For documentation:

- Radically expanded role of texts in documentary linguistics (*Himmelmann 2006, 2008*)

- High potential for reuse (*Woodbury 2003, 2011*)

- Embedded cultural information

So…

- Language documentation and pedagogy share a common interest in texts:
  - Teachers ideally want to bring realistic, authentic language into the classroom.
  - Linguists often aim to document a wide range of contexts of language use
- These would seem naturally compatible, yet we don't see much interaction between the two.

Why the disconnect?

Challenges for Pedagogy

1 Texts may seem to contain too much advanced information—especially for beginners.

○ Documentary materials are not immediately useable in the classroom, often needing to be adapted

  ○ No natural 'scope and sequence' to texts!

  ○ Typically not "Dick and Jane" language

Challenges for Pedagogy

2 It can be difficult for educators to adapt texts from documentation for use in language teaching.

- Access to texts?
- Time investment?
- Linguistic training?
- Challenge for educator's language ability?

- Length of text?
- Appropriateness of text? (*e.g., given age of learners, cultural sensitivities*)

Challenges for Documentation

1 Documentation is inaccessible, either for practical or technical reasons.

○ **Practical:** The documentation doesn't exist (*underdocumentation*), or can't be located, or is restricted (*cultural sensitivities, permissions*)

○ **Technical:** The documentation uses jargon, is missing useful information (*e.g., word-for-word translations*), or is in an inaccessible format

Challenges for Documentation

2 Documentary linguists' training may not prepare them to respond to educators' interests effectively.

- Most documentary linguists don't have a background in applied linguistics or language teaching (*Penfield & Tucker 2011*)

- Collaborations may assume expertise that linguists may not possess (*Crippen & Robinson 2013*)

Challenges for Documentation

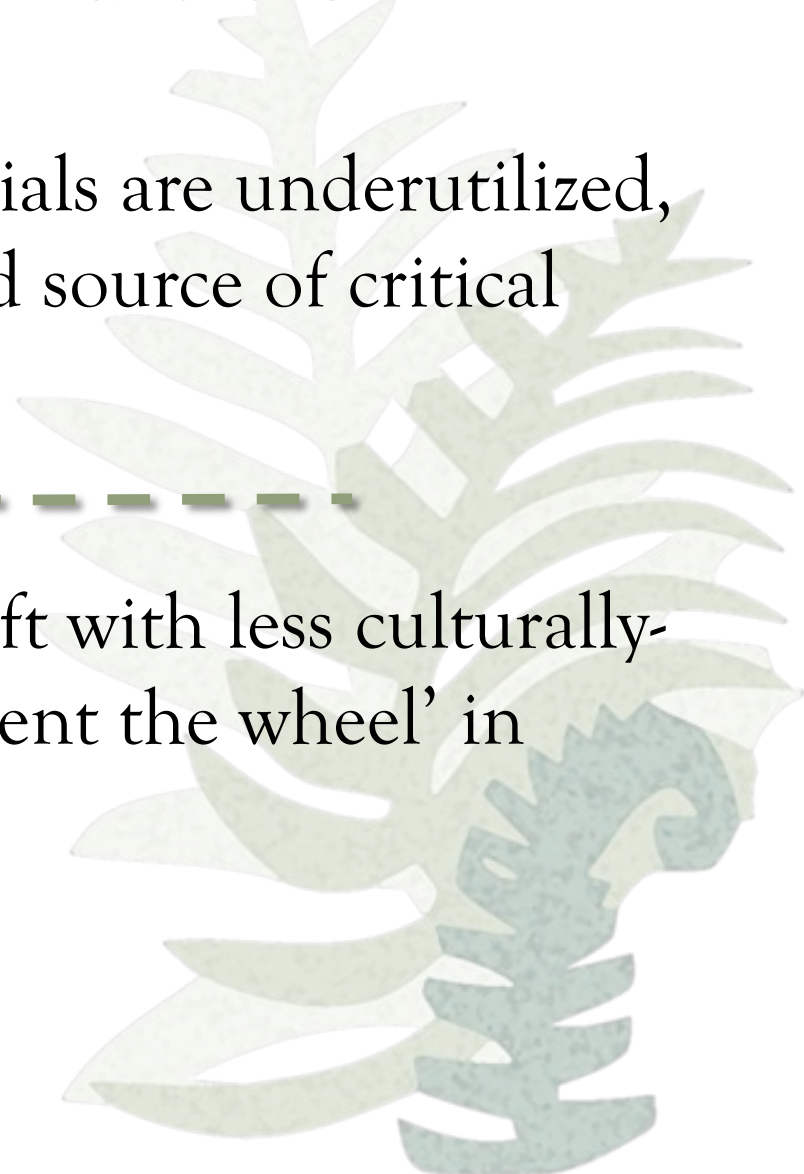**3** There may be disincentives around educational outputs for academic linguists.

○ Educational outputs of documentation may not be recognized or given the same academic weighting as other research outcomes.

Consequences of division

- **For documentation:** Materials are underutilized, losing a major audience and source of critical feedback

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- **For pedagogy:** Educators left with less culturally-rich material, have to 'reinvent the wheel' in developing resources

What can be done?

Educators:

○ How to adapt texts to be accessible to learners?

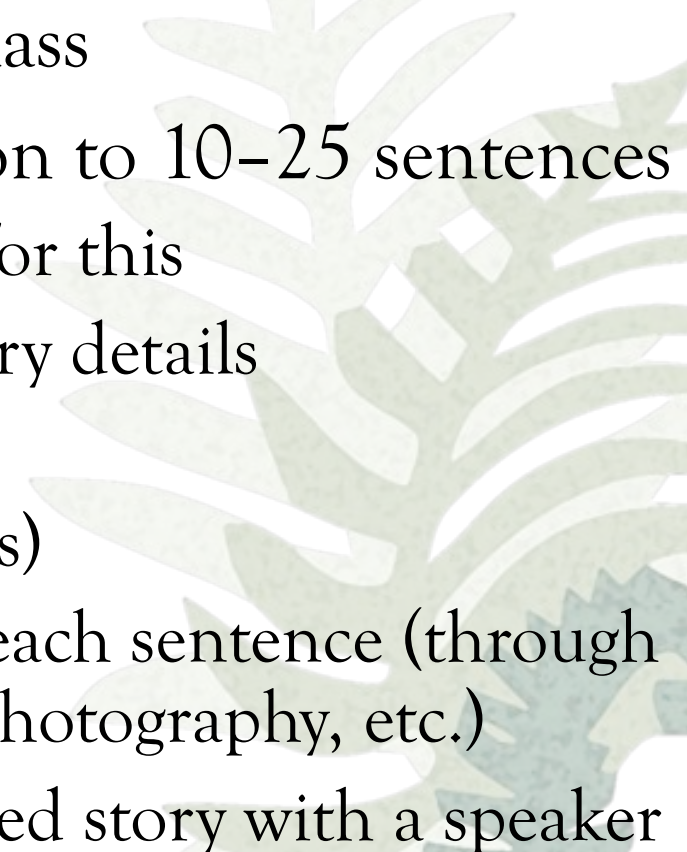○ How to communicate needs to linguists? (*Gerdts 2010*)

Documentarians:

○ What to document? (*Amery 2009, Buszard-Welcher 2010, Mithun 2007*)

○ How to present it? (*e.g., choice of orthography, elements of analysis*)

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Taanshi li loor sa keu kiiwaniihtaaw
'How the Bear Lost His Tail'

Beginner: Adapting Documentation

- **Learners:** Third-grade L2 class
- **Strategy:** Condense selection to 10–25 sentences
  - Might need speaker help for this
  - Eliminate unnecessary story details
  - Simplify sentences
  - Pull out vocabulary (in sets)
  - Create an illustration for each sentence (through student artwork, clipart, photography, etc.)
  - If possible, record simplified story with a speaker

Original: "Mo dayaan niiya en liiñg chi-ashtayaan anda," ihtweew.

"I don't have a line to put there, me," he said.

Adapted: "Mo dayaan en liiñg," ihtweew.

"I don't have a line," he said.

Original: Sa keu dedañ, akota chiipatapiiw ekwa dañ la glaas. His tail is inside, and he's sitting there now on the ice.

Adapted: Sa keu dedañ. Chiipatapiiw dañ la glaas. His tail is inside. He's sitting on the ice.

Original:

Kii-, kiipashikow oota osche.

He got up from there.

Adapted:

Pashikow.

He gets up.

Beginner: Delivery

1. Teach vocabulary in small sets
2. Turn each sentence into an activity
   - o Comprehension questions/exercises, e.g.:
     - Total Physical Response Storytelling: Point to 'the bear is running away, etc.' (using illustrations)
     - Yes/No questions: e.g., Is the bear sitting on the grass? Does the bear like to eat fish?
   - o Limited production questions (drills vocabulary in sentential frame):
     - Content questions: What does the bear like to eat? In which season does the story take place?

Paul Creek Language Curriculum:
http://www.interiorsalish.com/nxamxcincurriculum.html

Advanced: Adapting Documentation

- **Learners:** Master-Apprentice learners in a small-group immersion setting

- **Strategy:** Go beyond the story:
  - Prepare content questions around things that happen in the story
  - Identify target structures (e.g., drilling pre-verbs, adapting for persons, conditionals, etc.)
  - Assemble/create illustrations

Advanced: Delivery

1. Learners order the pictures and tell the story themselves

2. Learners role-play the story from viewpoint of bear/wolf, adapting for different persons

3. Discussion of content questions about the story:
   - Why did the wolf want to hurt the bear?
   - How do you think the bear feels now? Etc.
   - Who do you think was right?

4. Embed target structures (e.g., conditionals) in communicative activities:
   - What could the bear have done differently?
   - What would you have done if you were the bear?
   - What would you have done if you were the wolf?

"No English Storybooks"
(Sauk Language Department)
http://www.talksauk.com

- Encourage Sauk-only interactions between speakers and learners

- Reinforce specific vocabulary, grammatical patterns

- Provide opportunities to ask questions about characters' intentions, relationships, etc.

- **Reusable!** (novice–advanced, different target structures)

Manatowa–Bailey 2015

Conclusions

1 | Educators, texts are your friend!

- A single text can be adapted into many lessons (or even entire units) for many levels.

- Given the scarcity of pedagogical materials for many languages, educators benefit from getting the most out of what *is* available.

Conclusions

2 Documentation can fill a major need in language pedagogy.

○ For educational adaptation to happen, linguists need to be mindful of: what they document, how it's presented, and how their materials are made accessible to audiences in education.

Overview: Technical to Teachable

- Phonetics & phonology
  - The linguistic jargon or label of a concept is not as important as the concept itself

    -Herrick

- Tone & vowel length in Cherokee
  - Minimizing jargon and providing additional (visual) cues can make complex, technical data more accessible to non-specialists

    -Hirata-Edds

Overview: Technical to Teachable

- Teaching morphology without templates
  - Surface-oriented paradigmatic approaches to word structure may benefit both language pedagogy and documentation

    -Cox

- Texts in documentation & teaching
  - Documentary materials can serve pedagogical needs, and vice versa

    -Sammons

Kichi-marsii!
Ketêpihipwa! Mahalo!
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