



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

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# Acknowledgments

- Michif speakers: Verna DeMontigny, Mervin Fleury
- Sauk Language Department, Stroud, Oklahoma
- Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, IGS 0151, 2011 – 2014
- Phillips Fund for Native American Research, 2014-2015
- Co-presenters: Christopher Cox, Dylan Herrick, Tracy Hirata-Edds

*We would like to thank the ICLDC organizers and reviewers, the Special Session Selection Committee, the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and the NSF. We appreciate their generous support in allowing us to present our talks in one of the NSF-supported Special Sessions on Pedagogy in Language Conservation.*



# 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 (*Himmelman* 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.

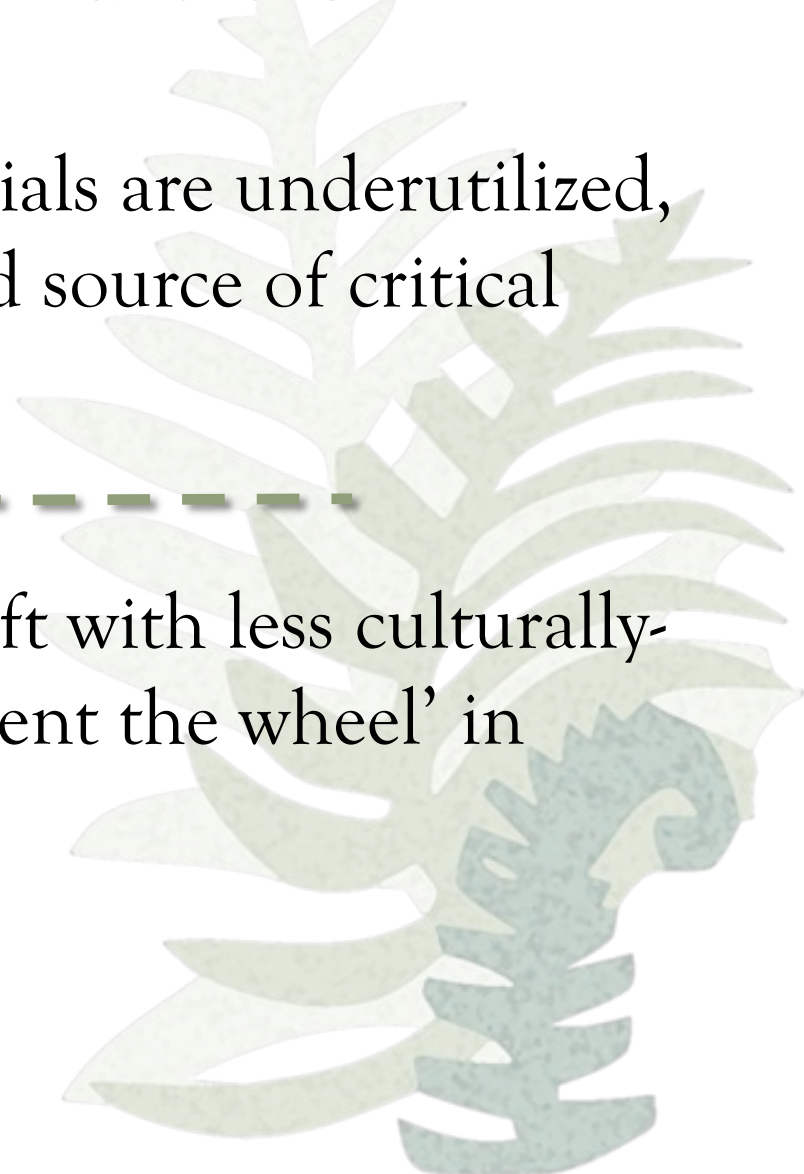
- Educational outputs of documentation may not be recognized or given the same academic weighting as other research outcomes.

# Consequences of division

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



- **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? (Gerdtz 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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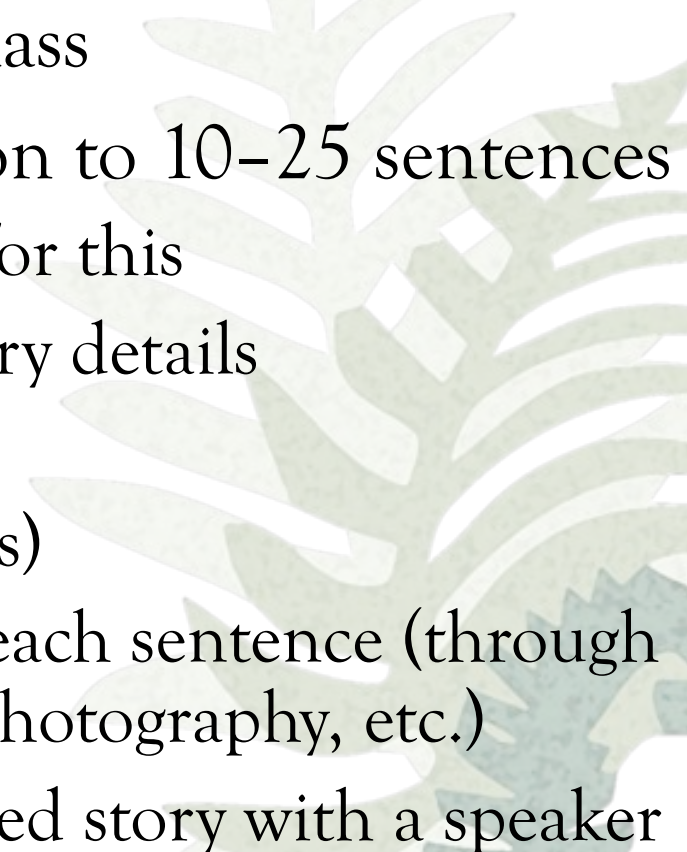
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# Taanshi li loor sa keu kiiwaniihtaaw

## '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.

<b>Adapted:</b> Sa keu dedañ. His tail is inside.	Chiipatapiiw dañ la glaas. He's sitting on the ice.
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**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
  - 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?
  - 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?

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Salish School of Spokane has partnered with the Colville Tribal Business Council to produce a comprehensive, sequenced curriculum designed to help new learners become fluent in Nxaʔmáxcin, Wenatchee-Columbian Salish. The total curriculum is comprised of six textbooks divided into three levels. At each level there is a language book and a literature book. Each book is accompanied by audio recordings, language learning software, and additional materials to aid in learning and teaching. *Oyemáxcin* (Pauline) Covington Stensgar is the primary translator for the Nxaʔmáxcin Curriculum Project. The curriculum model and its organization are copyrighted and provided by Christopher Parkin and LaRae Wiley. Salish School of Spokane began working on a Wenatchee-Columbian version of this curriculum in January 2014.

The books composing the fixa?fixin Curriculum Project are:

Kwa'wá:in 1: A Beginning Course in Wenatchee-Columbian Salish;  
Skwá:may 1: Kwa'wá:in Stories for Beginners;  
Kwa'wá:in 2: An Intermediate Course in Wenatchee-Columbian Salish;  
Skwá:may 2: Kwa'wá:in Stories for Intermediate Learners;  
Kwa'wá:in 3: An Advanced Course in Wenatchee-Columbian Salish, and;  
Skwá:may 3: Kwa'wá:in Stories for Advanced Learners

*Nxaxhxcin I: A Beginning Course in Wenatchee-Columbian Salish*

Click the icon to the right to download a PDF file of the *Noxáhwéin I* book by Ojimaatle<sup>®</sup> Covington Stensigar, Ernest Brooks, Sharon Covington & Christopher Parkin. This book is the first text in the *Noxáhwéin Curriculum Project*, a series of six textbooks with accompanying software, which is being developed by Salish School of Spokane and the Colville Confederated Tribes.



pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2011/01/

01. Greetings	02. Numbers & Age	03. Food
04. Physical Description	05. Personality	06. Family
07. Family 2	08. States of Being	09. Places to Go
10. Colors	11. Food 2	12. Actions



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ndkicn?sqakn? na?i ndkkip isk\*ist \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: first fill in the blanks with a word from the list; then, translate the sentence to English. Each word in the list is used only once.

## Set 1 Word Bank Exercise

siki?u?uqita?      kixax?uqita?ids      kixax  
 kixax?u      kixax      kixax      kixax?u?uqita?ids      kixax  
 kixax?u      kixax      kixax      kixax?u?uqita?ids      kixax

- [illegible]

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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)



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

-Herrick

-Hirata-Edds

# Overview: Technical to Teachable

- Teaching morphology without templates
  - Surface-oriented paradigmatic approaches to word structure may benefit both language pedagogy and documentation
- Texts in documentation & teaching
  - Documentary materials can serve pedagogical needs, and vice versa

-Cox

-Sammons

*Kichi-marsii!*  
*Ketêpihipwa! Mahalo!*  
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