

28: ‘Haisla first’: Using Rapid Word Collection and the Participant-driven Approach to support indigenous language revitalization

Chuck Murphey

Abstract: This paper describes the execution and results of a Rapid Word Collection (RWC) workshop hosted in Kitimat, British Columbia, in August 2020, by the Haisla Nation community. Described and summarized are the modifications the Haisla community made to the Rapid Word Collection and Participant-driven (formerly ‘Participatory’) Approach methodologies to suit their specific context by altering both the order and content of the semantic domains employed in the ‘traditional’ RWC method. The paper additionally describes the effects of the workshop on Haisla community and language revitalization and concludes with recommendations that may be helpful in the case of similar workshops for other endangered First Nations languages. With modifications based on these recommendations, Rapid Word Collection can be an effective means of not only gathering words but also addressing Indigenous history as it relates to language suppression, language shift, and language loss.

Key words: First Nations languages, lexicography, semantic domains, community-based research, method modification, dictionary compiling

1 Introduction¹

Developed by SIL workers Roger Van Otterloo, Alison Nicolle, and Ron Moe (S. Nicolle, p. c. September 9, 2021) in the early 2000s to create a quicker, more efficient method of gathering words in a vernacular language, Rapid Word Collection (RWC) often results in 10,000 words gathered over the course of a two-week workshop. These 10,000 words are then typically pared down to a dictionary of 8,000 entries² coupled with recordings and glosses in the language(s) of wider communication (LWC). Comparing the results of six RWC workshops conducted in Africa and the Pacific, Boerger & Stutzman (2018) found that the lexical databases for each of the languages increased on average 6.2 times; for five other languages that had no lexical database prior to hosting an RWC workshop, there were an average 10,794 total words collected with 7,320 unique senses, or an average 67% of the original amount collected. Over eleven workshops that the researchers analyzed, 61–65% of the word collection were unique senses. Inspired by results like these, the Haisla Nation sought to use RWC methodology to collect words for creating a dictionary that could be used in Haisla language and culture curricula to not only preserve their heritage, but also promote Haisla to future generations.

This paper discusses the RWC workshop that was hosted by the Haisla Nation from August 20 to September 4, 2020, in Kitimat, BC. The situation of the Haisla people, as well as their

¹ I would like to recognize the elders who attended the workshop and show appreciation to the Haisla Nation for hosting this event on their traditional territory, as well as thank those who provided significant input earlier versions of this paper: Larry Hayashi; Jonathan Janzen; Ab Morrison-Hayward; Jonathan Moe; Jocelyn Harris; Kevin Warfel; Dr. Steve Nicolle; Dr. Mike Cahill; and Dr. Tim Stirtz, as well as the anonymous reviewer who provided feedback.

² What is meant by ‘entries’ is ‘individual lexical items’ or ‘lexemes’, often corresponding to the term ‘headword’ in modern dictionaries. Each of these will have at least one unique sense that distinguishes it from other words.

current efforts to revitalize the language, will be described in brief, and it will be explained how the RWC method was employed with the aim of providing a lexicon of Indigenous vocabulary to serve as the basis for Haisla language curricula. The author will then describe the RWC methodology in its standard form, as well as discuss the modifications that were necessary based on the Haislas' unique (but perhaps not entirely unheard of) situation, most notably changes in the number and type of semantic domains, as well as making these domains more culturally-appropriate for the Haisla context; of particular and immediate concern was the community's knowledge of the language, which has steadily decreased over the past several decades as the number of fluent and semi-fluent speakers has declined. Finally, the results and benefits of the workshop will be presented in addition to recommendations for future RWC workshops that might be hosted by endangered First Nation language communities; many First Nations groups are in a similar position to that of the Haisla and may therefore benefit from such a project.

The benefits of this workshop extended far beyond the database of words collected by additionally helping the community develop a safe space that promoted healing and restoration among participants as they handled issues related to their past. It is argued here that a Nation may confront their history of governmental abuse using Rapid Word Collection as a catalyst for talking about difficult subject matters, such as language loss and the historical factors behind this loss. However, for a truly successful First Nations RWC workshop, it is necessary to make certain modifications that greatly empower the community to use the method effectively.

2 The Haisla Nation, Haisla Nation education and language, and FNEF

The Haisla Nation is a First Nation³ located in northern British Columbia on the Pacific coast in the traditional Haisla territory on and surrounding Kitamaat Village, close to the town of Kitimat, where the workshop was conducted. The Haisla language belongs to the Northern branch of the Wakashan languages, and features two dialects: *xá'islaḱala*⁴ (Kitamaat dialect; also rendered 'Haislakala') and *xēnákṣialakala* (Kitlope dialect; also rendered 'Henaksialakala'), with just 89 fluent speakers—4.8% of the total population), all of whom are over 65 years of age⁵—across both dialects (Gessner et al. 2018:53). By the time of the workshop, the community reported even fewer speakers. As such, Haisla finds itself in a precarious position, and the Haisla community has struggled to revitalize its language despite multiple documentation studies and learning programs from the past century (Vink n.d.; Vink 1974; Vink 1977; Vink 1980; Lincoln & Rath 1986; Bach 1995; Bach 2006) and efforts by the Haisla Nation to promote second language acquisition in the community. These low levels of fluency are due in large part to systemic efforts by the Canadian government to assimilate the Haisla—as well as most other Indigenous groups—through practices such as the residential school system and the now infamous Sixties Scoop, both of which sought to separate Indigenous children from their communities and thus force them to become part of majority Canadian society. These efforts have resulted in widespread language and culture attrition among subsequent generations (First Nations Studies Program 2009).

The workshop was promoted and funded in large part by the First Nations Education Foundation (FNEF), whose stated goal is to “[collaborate] with First Nation governments to develop language revitalization programs for at-risk Indigenous dialects using contemporary

³ First Nations are one of Canada's three legally recognized Indigenous groups alongside the Inuit and the Métis, commonly referred to together as the 'First Peoples of Canada'.

⁴ This is the preferred spelling according to the latest orthography—note that Haisla does not use capitalization.

⁵ There are currently no fluent speakers younger than the grandparent generation, although some are trying to learn.

educational practices and innovative, interactive technology” (<https://fnef.ca/>). In April 2018, FNEF approached the Haisla Nation to collaborate with the Language and Culture Program run by the Haisla Nation Education, Employment and Training division. The coordinator of the team, Teresa Windsor, and her team members had already been working on language revitalization and were interested in new ideas and methods. FNEF worked closely with this team, brainstorming ideas to facilitate the revitalization project and create new curricula based on the community’s desired goals and outcome. Due to FNEF co-founder Scott Jeary’s familiarity with SIL-based language revitalization programs, RWC was suggested as one of the methods the community could try. As the details of the RWC methodology did not match the criteria for existing grant funding programs, FNEF raised funds outside of federal and provincial sources, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) Trust being the primary funder.

FNEF subsequently invited Larry Hayashi, a lexicography instructor at the Canada Institute of Linguistics; Kevin Warfel, an RWC consultant from Lexicography Services of SIL International; and the author of this paper, all of whom helped facilitate the workshop. A fourth consultant, Jonathan Jantzen, helped with transcription and spelling of words remotely, working with the audio recordings gathered at the workshop.

3 The Rapid Word Collection (RWC) method

Rapid Word Collection was developed by SIL linguist Ron Moe with the aim of “collecting words by using a systematic method to capture these words in a workshop organized in the language community”, the end goal being a published dictionary in a language that participates in the process (<http://rapidwords.net/>). RWC seeks to explore the range of topics that a language considers important and so has vocabulary for, and to discuss these topics in their natural context with Indigenous speakers who are qualified to talk about them. For a more detailed description of RWC, see Warfel & Stutzman (Chapter 25 this volume); for now, it will suffice to discuss some of the critiques the method has received, as well as discuss how those critiques can be addressed through use of the Participant-driven Approach to RWC.

3.1 Critiques

Critiques of Rapid Word Collection have largely centred on the readily apparent English influence present in both the domains and the accompanying questionnaire, both of which were developed by English-speaking researchers working in Africa and therefore inevitably contain both Western and African biases in the delineation and organization of the domain categories. Even in instances where the questionnaire has been translated into other LWCs, there still arises the problem of translation relying on the English source material, as well as the inability of an LWC to fully represent language-specific concepts. Critics argue that a minority language cannot be captured fully using only a metalanguage; as much as possible, the minority language itself must be employed in capturing the minority group’s worldview, resulting in a fully emic list of language-specific semantic domains. In a 2015 presentation on RWC, Boerger & Stutzman addressed this issue by pointing out two key features of the domain hierarchy: **a)** it is not a fixed list of domains, and in fact the hierarchy has undergone several revisions based on feedback from different language communities; and **b)** organizers are welcome, able, and encouraged to improve on the domain hierarchy for any particular situation by ignoring those domains that are irrelevant, as well as adding new domains based on community feedback (Boerger, Aviel & Stutzman 2015). This should, in theory, allow for greater flexibility in applying the hierarchy to almost any language while still preserving those

characteristics that make each language unique. Workshop facilitators for this event availed themselves of both techniques to the satisfaction of the community.

3.2 Participant-driven Approach to RWC (PA-RWC)

However, there is another, newer approach to RWC that attempts to capture a language group's worldview through a more interactive and speaker-led take on the semantic domain hierarchy. This method is called the Participant-driven Approach to RWC (PA-RWC, or simply PA)⁶ and attempts to provide speakers with the opportunity to define the semantic domains of the hierarchy according to their own unique cultural context. PA-RWC was developed in part by Larry Hayashi (one of the facilitators for the event described in this paper) and was first employed in the Philippines over a one-week period with the Kagayanen language group. The following summary of the method is taken from a 2018 presentation given by Jacqueline Huggins regarding her experience leading this workshop (Huggins 2018).

The method consists of providing participants with the opportunity to define their own semantic domain hierarchy by asking them, *“What are some of the most important things your people need to survive?”* From there, the responses are written on slips of paper (“meta cards”) as topics and placed for participants to see, listing topics under the categories *Very Important*, *Important*, and *Somewhat Important* according to how the group agrees each topic should be labeled. Participants then generate words for each domain, as well as additional sub-domains, write these on more meta cards, and add them to the growing hierarchy under their appropriate level of importance. The result is a domain list that accurately reflects the core cultural values of the language group under investigation, which in turn gives rise to a hierarchy that the participants develop themselves. The result is a deep sense of ownership and affinity in the finished hierarchy.

There are, of course, drawbacks to using the Participant-driven Approach. First, implementing this method requires that community members have a strong sense of what is most important to their culture, be highly motivated and organized in placing these core cultural values into a general list, and be able to specify additional subcategories to place under the main headings. Second, it is a potential tendency of the method to wane at the lower levels of any generated hierarchy (Huggins 2018), as the lowest levels of a semantic hierarchy may not be intuitive to many speakers. In this way, the prearranged hierarchy developed by SIL does have a clear advantage in that it includes many low-level and specialized categories that may not be immediately obvious to mother tongue speakers. Finally, PA-RWC can very quickly get disorderly without proper organization, with meta cards losing their structure once collected into piles.

PA-RWC was employed in a limited capacity among the Haisla to test its viability when compared to traditional RWC. The intent was to engage community members in generating their own culturally-relevant semantic domains, and community response was largely positive during this portion of the workshop.

4 Workshop preparation and limiting factors for the workshop

From the outset, the organizers and facilitators were aware of several limiting factors surrounding the workshop, including the lack of vitality of the language within the community;

⁶ This method was previously called the ‘Participatory Approach’ (PA), including in earlier drafts of this article, but after feedback from reviewers, it was changed to ‘Participant-driven’ to better reflect its difference from RWC; notably, ‘regular’ RWC is also participatory, and so a better term was needed to accurately distinguish the two.

an aging population of mother tongue speakers; low levels of fluency among workshop participants; and low levels of literacy in the new orthography finalized within a year prior to the workshop. Vitality, age, and fluency will all be discussed together, but the latest orthography will be discussed separately, as the first three were issues primarily for native Haisla speakers, while the latter was an issue primarily for the rest of the attendees at the workshop.

4.1 Language vitality, speaker age, and level of fluency

Language vitality was a primary concern. Currently, Haisla would be placed at roughly level 8 on the EGIDS⁷ scale—either 8a, *Moribund*, or 8b, *Nearly Extinct*. This classification reflects the lack of use of Haisla in daily activities, the elderly population of speakers, and the low level of fluency among younger members of the community. Fully fluent speakers were in short supply, and many of these even admitted difficulty in recalling words for certain concepts in Haisla, as they had used the language so little for so long. As such, the organizers were especially concerned with facilitating word recollection as much as possible for these speakers, and copies of a previously published and highly popular dictionary by Emmon Bach (2006) were provided at each table for speakers to consult. This proved useful as a standard that all participants could reference, but also hindered word collection when participants relied too heavily on the dictionary as authoritative, sometimes even rejecting words they could not find in it.

4.2 Orthography development⁸

Recently, the Haisla Nation decided to adopt a new standard writing system. This was challenging because multiple orthographies have been developed for *xá'isakala* (and by extension, *xenáksialakála*) over the past few decades, the most popular of which is the one Emmon Bach developed for his dictionary. The most recent “hybrid” orthography attempts to take the best of all previous orthographies and combine them into a new system that best captures the sounds of the language. The downside is that most of the community was not yet familiar with the new standard, which led to confusions in spelling for those tasked with recording words as they were generated. This confusion led to a wide variety of spelling systems being employed, each of which was in some way particular to its user.

5 Executing the workshop

Organizers and several participants arrived at the venue Thursday, August 20, for training in preparation for the kick-off event the following Monday. After training workshop participants on Thursday and Friday, collection began on Monday, August 24, and ran for two weeks until Sunday, September 6. The standard RWC model was followed as closely as possible, starting with handing out folders for domains 2 “Person”, 5 “Daily life”, and 6 “Work and occupation”, and then continuing with other folders in a specified order; however, several modifications became necessary as the work continued over the course of the two weeks.

⁷ ‘Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale’ (Lewis and Simons 2010).

⁸ This section is based primarily on personal communication with A. Morrison, a member of the Haisla Nation who specializes in the orthography (November 3, 2020).

5.1 Questionnaire

As per the standard RWC method, the questionnaire served as the main vehicle of word collection. Groups were formed, and leaders were given the task of guiding their group members through the questionnaire domain by domain. Progress was slow throughout the workshop due to many of the concerns listed above. For instance, many speakers often had difficulty in remembering specific vocabulary that they had not used in quite some time, and often there arose a group dynamic in which there needed to be consensus from several speakers as to the authenticity of a word before it could be included in the collection. If a word could not be verified, or if its meaning could only be hinted at, then it was often ignored. This was especially at issue when a word could not be found Emmon Bach's dictionary, which, by its own admission, is incomplete and requires revision.

Several other notable difficulties were encountered as participants completed folders and moved through the domain hierarchy. First, several domains proved fruitless in the Haisla context, and others produced laughter from the participants for being completely irrelevant to their way of life; such examples were practically any folder related to agriculture, which is not part of traditional Haisla food gathering methods. Second, several topics relating to taboo subjects made speakers uncomfortable, and so they were skipped entirely by those groups that did not wish to discuss them openly. Finally, many participants were dissatisfied with the questions in each topic, which were often worded in a roundabout and less direct way that frequently left groups confused and wondering how to answer them.

More problematic than specific topics, however, was the issue of using English words as examples. Throughout the earlier part of the workshop, organizers observed that almost every collection group relied heavily on the English words to generate their own Haisla vocabulary. Instead of relying solely on the questions to help speakers enter a Haisla frame of mind, as the questionnaire is intended to do, team leaders and speakers listed English words and tried to find the Haisla equivalent. This led to many instances of needlessly repeated words as speakers struggled to find Haisla equivalents for what were in fact English synonyms, or in some cases even whole phrases that served only as approximations of an English concept. These attempts at linguistic congruency did not represent true speech as would be used by fluent native speakers. Once the organizers decided to remove the English example words entirely and leave participants with just the questions to discuss, word production was smoother and relied less on translation, and several participants reported becoming more productive and comfortable using the questionnaire.

5.2 Participant-driven Approach

During the first week, after noting the slow progress of traditional RWC, the organizers decided to try the more experimental Participant-driven (formerly 'Participatory'; see above) Approach towards RWC to test its viability and compare its productivity to the more regular method. With only slight modification, this approach was adopted for the morning session on Friday, August 28, the end of the first week of the workshop. Speakers were placed into three large groups, and instead of taking the time to ask them what they considered necessary for survival, prominent members of the community had already suggested three very important domains: oolichans,⁹ canoes, and trees. From this, it was decided to create the following three categories

⁹ Also spelled 'eulachons'; a type of fish highly prized by the Haisla and other coastal peoples in the Pacific Northwest for their high fat content, which is commonly turned into 'oolichan grease' (HA: ʒáti).

for speakers to work with: *Oolichans & Their Harvesting*; *Canoes & Their Construction*; and *Trees & Their Uses*.

The groups were arranged in large circles, and facilitators handed out slips and pens. A practice round was conducted involving just the first of the domains listed above to familiarize participants with the new method, after which the other two topics were handed out to two of the groups, while one group continued discussing oolichans. The words that groups generated were written on the meta cards provided and then placed into a hierarchy in the middle for every participant to see for themselves.

All told, this method produced roughly 370 words in under two hours, a feat worthy of mention because this outpaced the rate of word production using the regular RWC method, which at the end of the workshop produced a median daily average of 358 words.¹⁰ Each group produced at least 100 words, although there was admittedly an issue with duplicate items as several participants would occasionally come up with the same word at the same or different times. Responses to the Participant-driven Approach were somewhat mixed, with several participants greatly enjoying the more active form of RWC, and others expressing a desire to return to the more structured and formal questionnaire they had been working with.

One clear advantage of this method is that it put the Haisla language first in the speakers' minds, which prevented them from thinking in English before coming up with native terminology. Only after the Indigenous word has been thought of do the participants then propose a suitable gloss for it. Organizers decided that a 'Haisla first' approach to RWC was most effective, and questionnaires were later reworded to place greater emphasis on using Haisla.

5.3 Recording

In addition to regular word collection, audio recordings were made in tandem with the folders being completed. Normally, this step is done after the workshop is completed during the clean-up stages with a select group of fluent speakers willing to lend their voices to the dictionary database. However, organizers deemed it necessary to perform this important step during the workshop due to the language's low vitality. In particular, the organizers were concerned with the age of speakers and their memory of the words produced. It was feared that words could be lost after being written down, as speakers could have difficulty recalling them later, even with a written form to reference. This proved to be the case, as even on same-day audio collection, speakers had difficulty remembering the words their groups generated. This was partly due to the inconsistent orthographies each group was using, as very few participants were familiar enough with the writing system to achieve a consistent spelling for speakers to recognize words they had said or that other groups had generated. Another problem was that many of the words collected had fallen of use in daily speech, as often these were words that were no longer commonly used; this included terminology for canoe building, oolichan harvesting, and even obscure body parts (e.g., the different bones of the body). Although many of these words are relevant, even essential, to Haisla culture, they are nevertheless uncommon, highly specialized, and often related to very specific cultural traditions. Additionally, all of these practices are now conducted in English, and so much of the native terminology associated with them has been lost or remains obscure.

¹⁰ This number also includes two half-days where participants only worked for approximately half the time of a normal workshop day—the first being the half-day on Friday as part of the training, and the second being the Saturday during which participants practiced their closing ceremony in the afternoon. Excluding these days, the production rate was a mean of 403 per day, which is still less than the rate produced by PA-RWC.

Given the conditions stated above, recordings were done with select speakers soon after folders were completed, thus ensuring the highest possible capture rate for novel words. Printed copies of the word collection sheets were also given to the speaker being recorded so they could read along with the facilitator performing the recordings. At the end of the workshop, approximately 2,000 words had been recorded as audio—admittedly only half of the total words collected (see Table 1 below) even figuring in the duplicate items. As such, the work of recording words will continue among the Haisla as the dictionary undergoes further revision.

6 Results of the workshop

In most cases, the results of an RWC workshop are counted purely numerically by the number of words collected. This is done to measure the level of success in a vital community of speakers in which the vernacular language is spoken regularly by all members of the society for a wide variety of uses, a situation that under normal conditions ensures the continuation of the language into the next generation. This is not the case of the Haisla Nation, and so success in this instance cannot be measured by word count alone. Instead, additional results must be taken into consideration, in particular the cultural attitudes that resulted from speakers and non-speakers alike engaging together in word collection. This process proved to be difficult for many, but at the same time therapeutic and meaningful for all. This additional consideration constitutes a large concern for the author of this paper, who is not concerned just with the final word count, but also the effect of the workshop on the community; as such, both the database and community response will be highlighted.

6.1 The Database

In the end, the workshop produced a virtual database of 3,853 individual entries, pooled together from 3940 words recorded on paper (see Table 1) over 700 total semantic domains; approximately 2,000 words were given audio recordings.¹¹ In many cases, words were being generated by Haisla speakers that had not been spoken for many years, and specialty knowledge of traditional cultural practices—such as canoe building and the feast system—was remembered and transmitted to the next generation using native terminology for the first time

Table 1: Total words and semantic domains collected by daily, weekly, and overall totals

| Week | Day | Total words collected | Words collected this day | Average words collected per day | Total semantic domains treated | Daily semantic domains treated | Words per domain (by day) | Words per domain (overall) |
|------|-----|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 145 | 145 | 145 | 20 | 20 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| | 2 | 489 | 344 | 245 | 76 | 56 | 6.1 | 6.4 |
| | 3 | 944 | 455 | 315 | 138 | 62 | 7.3 | 6.8 |
| 2 | 4 | 1312 | 368 | 328 | 227 | 89 | 4.1 | 5.8 |
| | 5 | 1801 | 489 | 360 | 301 | 74 | 6.6 | 6.0 |

¹¹ The discrepancy between the number of words written down and those recorded comes from the fact that not every word recorded on paper was entered into the database, as participants used discretion in not inputting obvious duplicate entries. Additionally, the facilitators performed some data clean-up as the workshop progressed, resulting in merging of duplicates, or deletion of invalid/incorrect entries.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|------|-----|-----|-----|----|------|-----|
| | 6 | 2253 | 452 | 376 | 343 | 42 | 10.8 | 6.6 |
| | 7 | 2629 | 376 | 376 | 403 | 60 | 6.3 | 6.5 |
| | 8 | 3055 | 426 | 382 | 486 | 83 | 5.1 | 6.3 |
| 3 | 9 | 3473 | 418 | 386 | 565 | 79 | 5.3 | 6.1 |
| | 10 | 3633 | 160 | 363 | 615 | 50 | 3.2 | 5.9 |
| | 11 | 3940 | 307 | 358 | 700 | 85 | 3.6 | 5.6 |

in a long while. Members with this special knowledge felt particularly honoured, valued, and engaged with because of their specialized cultural knowledge being called on for the benefit of their community.

In the weeks following the workshop, the database was exported to a draft online dictionary hosted by Webonary, viewable at the following link: <https://webonary.org/haisla/>. This dictionary has been widely promoted in the community, and feedback as generally been very positive; the dictionary has also been used in developing school curricula by providing a resource that educators in the community can use for verifying the spelling/pronunciation of culturally-relevant words to include in the classroom. By providing a way to view the words according to semantic domain, teachers and curriculum developers are also able to more easily filter for items that may be relevant to a particular lesson or topic, such as 'traditional fishing practices' or 'traditional foods.'

6.2 Community response

Relationship was a key element in the community's response to the workshop. Beyond the raw word count in the database, which served as a tangible means of encouragement from day to day, there was also a level of community engagement surrounding the language that had not been felt in the Haisla community for many years. As mentioned previously, Haisla is severely endangered in large part due to the history of assimilation strategies by the Canadian government, and many comments from participants, both publicly and privately, centred on the lingering effects of the Canadian residential school system and other forms of language and culture suppression. As many participants commented, this system had a profound affect on the Haisla, as the grandparent generation of the community were forced to abandon their language as children because of indoctrination in the residential system, leaving them unable to pass on the language to future generations. As such, the reconnection established between those few speakers who managed to retain their language and culture and the younger generation eager to learn from their elders created an inviting and productive space for the Haisla to communicate freely and strengthen intergenerational bonds.

7 Recommendations

Despite the success of the workshop, there are nevertheless ways to improve the RWC methodology so that it works better in a First Nation context, particularly one in which the language of the community is threatened with extinction. Such situations are delicate, and researchers hoping to assist a community in documenting their language must take great care and be sensitive to the community's history and needs. There were three areas of difficulty with the RWC method that could use modification should this technique be applied in the future: **1)** the semantic domain hierarchy; **2)** the questionnaire; and **3)** the Participant-driven Approach. Additional comments that do not fit these three categories will also be discussed.

7.1 The Semantic domain hierarchy

The first and most basic modification is to re-evaluate the traditional RWC semantic domain hierarchy so that it better fits a First Nation context. The author recommends that several

changes be made to the hierarchy provided by SIL:

- (a) Research should be done on the culture surrounding the target language, and the most relevant folders should be promoted to the early stages of the workshop, while the least relevant ones should be relegated to the back of the folder queue.
- (b) Participants should be free to suggest their own semantic domains for inclusion into the hierarchy, particularly where the pre-established hierarchy is shown to be deficient in capturing an aspect of the local culture.

7.2 The questionnaire

A slightly more complicated modification is to re-assess the wording of the questionnaire itself, especially regarding how much, if any, example words from an LWC (such as English) should be included. The author therefore recommends that following changes be made to the questionnaire:

- (c) The English example words should be removed entirely or almost entirely, leaving participants with just the questions to ask and discuss among themselves.
- (d) Where English words are left, care should be taken to exclude any that may be deemed offensive by the target people group, such as racial epithets, slurs, and any vocabulary that connotes a negative attitude towards Indigenous culture and lifestyle.
- (e) Questions should be reworded in a much simpler, less roundabout way, so as to ask as directly as possible for words related to the domain in question.
- (f) The questions that remain should as near as possible reflect those tendencies that are known to exist in First Nation languages and cultures, especially those features that may be common across a certain geographical area.

7.3 The Participant-driven Approach

It is the opinion of the author that the Participant-driven Approach to RWC could be employed with great success within a future First Nation-led workshop by providing participants with a freer, more participant-led method for collecting words in their own language. Thus, the author makes the following recommendations concerning PA-RWC:

- (g) The LA method should be introduced early in the workshop, ideally in the training and on the first day of the event or even earlier, in order for users to determine from the start what their most important topics are.
- (h) The original hierarchy developed by SIL should not be scrapped entirely, but should be reserved to the side for use if needed, or possibly used from the beginning in conjunction with the LA method.
- (i) Meta cards should be of uniform size and be made of sturdy material, and a clear means of maintaining their original hierarchical organization as laid out by the participants should be clearly indicated on the cards themselves, e.g., by numbering the cards or even taking high-definition pictures of the arranged hierarchies.

7.4 Additional comments

Finally, here are several other practices performed at the workshop that, while not strictly necessary in implementing Rapid Word Collection, may certainly be of use to others looking to perform the same kind of work, and so are presented here for the reader's consideration:

- (j) Provide visual aids for as many domains as possible, as these can help jog speakers' memories by providing a direct physical input; for the Haisla, these included pictures of the ancestors performing historical traditions, picture guides to local flora and fauna, and a model of a Haisla canoe brought in by one of the expert canoe builders in the community.
- (k) Start with more concrete semantic domains, such as those related to physical items and nature, as they are often the most productive and easiest for the community to bring to mind; as much as possible, pair these domains with visual aids.
- (l) Use Indigenous metaphors and terminology to engage the speakers in culturally relevant ways of thinking; in the case of the Haisla, this involved referring to semantic domains as "baskets" into which words were "harvested," as well as representing the total number of words as oolichans harvested in the collection process.
- (m) Groups should be composed of mixed age brackets as much as possible; this provides the opportunity for younger, tech-savvy members of the community to fill the important niches related to data input, and promotes connections between young and old community members.
- (n) If recordings are to be done concurrently with the workshop, printed sheets of the words collected should be provided to those being recorded; this will enable speakers to view the work they have already done and hopefully assist them in word recollection.

7.5 Final remarks and exhortations

One more thing should be kept in mind when working with any minority language community: circumstance should inform practice, and what works in one cultural context may not work in another, and so the author would like to exhort the reader with the following and final recommendation:

- (o) Let the community lead the workshop and modify the word collection process to fit their needs, particularly in sensitive areas, such as language loss, trauma healing, and community re-acculturation.

8 Conclusion

This paper aims to serve as a helpful illustration of the type of work that can be accomplished when Indigenous communities are engaged on their own terms, using their worldview and terminology to preserve their languages in a way that makes the most sense to them, while still retaining core linguistic principles to produce a rich database of language data that can be used in both vernacular language dictionary and curriculum development. The Haisla have benefited greatly by both taking charge of the word collection process through PA-RWC, as well as being able to generate a user-friendly, widely available database of vernacular words for use in dictionary and curriculum development. By demonstrating an attitude of cooperation and a desire to learn with the Haisla rather than teach them from a position of authority, the organizers and facilitators created a strong working relationship with the Haisla community, and the outcome of the event was viewed as a success by all involved, especially the community. There are still many Indigenous groups in Canada that are interested in doing this

type of work in their communities, and both the more traditional and experimental RWC methods, along with the modifications this author suggests, may provide these groups with a clear and defined way to achieve some of their goals, such as language and culture revitalization, trauma healing, and renewed identity.

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