

THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

*** SSILA BULLETIN ***

An Information Service for SSILA Members

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-->> --Correspondence should be directed to the Editor-- <<--

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133.1 CORRESPONDENCE

Units of measure in Native American languages

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>From John Lord (jwl@johnlord.com) 26 Feb 2001:

I am working on a reference Web site (sizes.com) which treats units of weight, measure and time, and naturally would like to include American languages. In addition to soliciting any suggestions of units readers of the SSILA Bulletin may care to make, we have two current problems:

According to one colonial source, a Native American language in Virginia had a word "cohonks" which meant wild goose, winter, or year (as in 5 cohonks old). Is this true? What language was it? We know the word

was taken over into English for a brief period.

Again according to a colonial source, there was an English phrase "broken days" used by the Native Americans to indicate a period of time allotted for the performance of some undertaking, as in "Seventeen were the broken days...when the Choktah engaged to return with the French scalps" (direct quote from colonial source). The phrase sounds to me like a literal translation from another language into English. If so, does anyone know which language, and what the original phrase was?

--John Lord
Santa Monica, California
(jwl@johnlord.com)

Mascots
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>From Lisa Mitten (lamitten@yahoo.com) 20 Feb 2001:

The Chronicle of Higher Education is sponsoring an online discussion about whether colleges should stop the use of Native American symbols, names, and mascots for athletics teams. The discussion is based on the cover story in a recent issue of the Chronicle, which explored a controversy at the University of North Dakota. You can read the article and join the discussion at:

<http://chronicle.com/colloquy/2001/logo/logo.htm>

SSILA should be proud that it started the ball rolling on this issue among professional academic societies. I am so grateful to Sally Thomason!

--Lisa A. Mitten
(lamitten@yahoo.com)
(<http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten>)

In search of a word
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>From Laura Enguita (enguita73@hotmail.com) 28 Feb 2001:

I am trying to find out the meaning of a word that I don't know how to spell, nor do I know which (Indian) language it is from. The phonetic spelling is: "Oh-Shah-Qua." Does any reader of the SSILA Bulletin have

an idea of its meaning or its origin?

--Laura Enguita

(enguita73@hotmail.com)

133.2 DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN AUSTRALIA FOCUSES ON GRAMMATICAL DESCRIPTION

>From Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (a.aikhenvald@latrobe.edu.au) 22 Feb 2001:

The Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, invites applications from suitably qualified students to enter a Ph.D. program involving extensive fieldwork on a previously undescribed (or scarcely described) language, with the dissertation being a comprehensive grammar of that language.

RCLT prefers students to work on a language which is still actively spoken, and to establish a field situation within a community in which it is the first language. Fieldwork methodology should be centred on the collection, transcription and analysis of texts, together with participant observation, and -- at a later stage -- judicious grammatical elicitation in the language under description (not through the lingua franca of the country). RCLT's main areas of specialization are the languages of Amazonia, the Papuan languages of New Guinea, and the Aboriginal languages of Australia.

Doctoral study at Australian universities generally involves no coursework, just a substantial dissertation. Candidates must thus have had a thorough coursework training before embarking on this Ph.D. program. This should have included courses on morphology, syntax, semantics, phonology/phonetics and comparative-historical linguistics, taught from a non-formalist perspective. RCLT places emphasis on work that has a sound empirical basis but that also shows a firm theoretical orientation (in terms of general typological theory, or what has recently come to be called Basic Linguistic Theory).

The Research Centre for Linguistic Typology consists, at any one time, of about 20 scholars, working on a variety of languages and typological issues. Besides the permanent staff of Prof. R. M. W. Dixon (Director) and Prof. Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (Associate Director) RCLT has an array of Research Fellows and doctoral students; each year a number of senior scholars from across the world spend from three to six months with us as Visiting Fellows. The personnel this year includes specialists on

spoken languages from the following families or areas: Siouan, Tsimshian, Arawak, Arawa, Barbacoan, Macro-Je, Dravidian, Indo-European, Turkic, Uralic, Afroasiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Tibeto-Burman, Sinitic, Papuan, Austronesian and Australian.

Scholarships are available at the standard La Trobe University rate, Australian \$16,431 per annum. A small relocation allowance may be provided on taking up the scholarship. In addition, an appropriate allowance will be made to cover fieldwork expenses. The scholarship is for three years (with the possibility of extension for an additional six months if circumstances warrant).

Further information about RCLT can be found at the Centre's website:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/www/rclt>

See in particular the February 2001 RCLT Newsletter, which is available at this web address.

Prospective applicants are invited to write in the first instance to <a.aikhenvald@latrobe.edu.au>, providing details of their background, qualifications and interests.

--Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald
Associate Director, Research Centre for Linguistic Typology
Institute for Advanced Study, La Trobe University
Bundoora, Victoria, Australia 3083
(a.aikhenvald@latrobe.edu.au)

133.3 CANADIAN TV SERIES ON ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE SURVIVAL

>From Paul M. Rickard (rickbell@sympatico.ca) 28 Feb 2001:

Mushkeg Media Inc., a native-owned production company, is currently broadcasting a 13-part series ("Finding Our Talk") on the state of Aboriginal languages in Canada on APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network). We are also planning a second series and are looking for interesting and unique language revitalization initiatives by individuals, communities or organizations across Canada and in adjacent parts of the United States.

The series can be seen on APTN every Thursday at 2:30 pm and 11:30 pm Eastern time (check out the APTN website <www.aptn.ca> for the schedule in other parts of Canada). Listed below is the current schedule. For

more information about the series, or to suggest story ideas, e-mail:
<mushkeg@videotron.ca> or <rickbell@sympatico.ca>.

Since at present APTN programming is not widely available outside Canada, tapes of the programs can be purchased -- either individual episodes or the entire series as a box set. If interested, telephone my office in Montreal at 514-279-3507 and ask to speak to Sylvie Condo, who is taking care of purchase requests, or e-mail <mushkeg@videotron.ca>.

--Paul M. Rickard, Mushkeg Media Inc.
103 Villeneuve West, Montreal, Quebec H2T 2R6
(mushkeg@videotron.ca)

-- FINDING OUR TALK: CURRENT BROADCAST SCHEDULE (APTN) --

Episode 1 - Feb.1: Language Among the Skywalkers (Mohawk): This is the story of the legendary Mohawk ironworkers, and of new approaches to language instruction for both adults and children within the contemporary community of Kahnawake.

Episode 2 - Feb. 8: Language Immersion (Cree): This episode will trace the history of the very successful Cree Language Immersion Program, developed and implemented in schools in the Cree communities of Northern Quebec.

Episode 3 - Feb. 15: The Trees are Talking (Algonquin): George and Maggie Wabanonick take a group of teens to the woods to initiate them in their traditional culture and language. In the classroom, the kids and teachers struggle with their Algonquin lessons, while the pop group Anishnabe give the language new life.

Episode 4 - Feb 22: The Power of Words (Inuktitut): At a language conference in Puvirnituk, we witness efforts to keep Inuktitut alive and up-to-date, largely through the knowledge and commitment of elders.

Episode 5 - March 1: Words Travel On Air (Attikamekw, Innu): Karin Awashish, a young radio journalist working at SOCAM, makes a trip to her home community to tape interviews and legends told by elders in Attikamekw, as part of the network's language initiative.

Episode 6 - March 8: Language in the City (Ojibwe/Anishinabe): This episode will focus on Isadore Toulouse's weekly trajectory to four different urban-based schools, where we witness first-hand, and with raw immediacy, his efforts to pass on his own enthusiasm and passion for the Ojibwe language.

>From Joel F. Sherzer (jsherzer@mail.utexas.edu) 3 Mar 2001:

The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America/El Archivo de los Idiomas Indigenas de Latinoamerica (AILLA/AIILA) has recently launched a pilot site from which you can download, listen to, and view forms of discourse from the indigenous languages of Latin America. The purpose of this pilot site is to elicit comments from potential users of the full AILLA site that is being developed. Feedback from readers of the SSILA Bulletin is especially welcome. The URL is:

<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~ailla>

AILLA is designed to be a web-accessible database of audio and textual materials from the indigenous languages of Latin America. The holdings will be primarily audio recordings of naturally-occurring discourse, in many cases accompanied by text transcriptions and translations. Discourse forms will include political oratory, personal narratives, radio programs, everyday conversation, ceremonial and ritual speech, songs and chants of artistic and religious significance, and educational materials, among many others.

The goals of AILLA are to preserve irreplaceable materials, in particular fragile analog audio recordings, that have been made over the course of decades of research by anthropologists and linguists, and to render these materials accessible to a wider audience, to promote greater understanding of, and further original research using, these unique materials.

The realization of these goals is guided by two primary objectives: to archive these materials as digital records that can be stored and maintained in perpetuity, and to make these materials available in a manner that is guided by our responsibility to protect the intellectual and cultural property rights of the individuals and groups from whom these materials originate.

AILLA is a joint project of the Departments of Anthropology and Linguistics, and the Digital Library Services Division of the General Libraries, at the University of Texas at Austin, led by faculty and students from the linguistic anthropology program.

The pilot site has Spanish and English versions; a Portuguese version is in development. Materials currently accessible are in CHORTI, KUNA, SIERRA POPOLUCA, PASTAZA QUECHUA, and ZOQUE.

[Por este medio quisiera informarles que el 15 de febrero, 2001 AILLA

lanzo su sitio piloto en el web y su base de datos, del cual ustedes pueden descargar y escuchar archivos de sonidos y ver textos de la discurso indigena Latinoamericana. El objetivo de este sitio piloto es poner a prueba los diversos aspectos tecnologicos de nuestro proyecto y elicitar comentarios y colaboracion de usuarios potenciales del archivo. Esperamos recibir sus comentarios y sugerencias, especialmente aquellos comentarios relacionadas con el sitio y la base de datos que nos ayuden a satisfacer las necesidades de los usuarios indigenas y latinoamericanos. El URL es: <<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~ailla>>.]

* Inuktitut magazine
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>From Paani Lecompte (plecompte@tapirisat.ca) 21 Feb 2001:

For 40 years *Inuktitut* has been a journal of Inuit language, culture and tradition, serving Inuit in Canada, Greenland, Russia, Alaska and Denmark. It is published three times a year with three translations: English, French, and Inuktitut. *Inuktitut* is extremely valuable to the Inuit of Canada, who, until last century, kept their histories alive mainly through oral storytelling and example. With the advent of modern technology, the art of storytelling is not as widely used. Part of the magazine's mandate is to keep the history and tradition alive by publishing the stories of Inuit elders, including personal experiences, legends, and traditional family values.

Current and past issues may be viewed at:

http://www.magomania.com/search/show_issue.epl?id=458

You can subscribe online at the publisher's website:

<http://www.tapirisat.ca>

Please send your e-mail inquires to: <itc@tapirisat.ca>

--Paani Lecompte
Inuit Tapirisat of Canada
(plecompte@tapirisat.ca)

133.5 A THREAD ON DICTIONARY-MAKING SOFTWARE

[The Endangered Languages list has recently had a flurry of postings on

dictionary-making software. Since readers of the SSILA Bulletin who are not ELL subscribers may be interested in this thread, we reprint the postings below. For further information about ELL, visit:

<http://carmen.murdoch.edu.au/lists/endangered-languages-l/>

--VG.]

>From Martin Paviour-Smith (mpaviour@hotmail.com) 03 Mar 2001:

Can anyone recommend some dictionary making software? I am working with an Austronesian language, and the community has requested a trilingual dictionary, so I am going to need to keep track of things pretty tightly.

--Martin Paviour-Smith

>From Peter Brand (pbrand@mac.com) 03 Mar 2001:

I suggest you take a look at Vocab. It was initially developed by an Australian student of Indonesian and has since received world wide acclaim including a five cow rating at tu cows.com! I have been using Vocab for a year now in the teaching of a Canadian indigenous language. We have had excellent results with the program. We have created over two hundred word lists on various topics, plus a complete dictionary. All the lists have the sound of the words built into them.

Currently Vocab is written for the Mac only, but I understand that a Windows version is just days away. Also available is a multimedia authoring package called Vocab LanguageLab (Mac only). This is an excellent program for enabling language students to create multimedia presentations using text, sound, video, images, plus all the features of the word list program, Vocab.

Vocab and Vocab LanguageLab are shareware programs, and free trials can be downloaded from <www.cabsoft.com.> If you download the program, I could e-mail you a couple of demo lists complete with sounds so that you can see the program in action.

--Peter Brand
Saanich Indian School Board

>From Benjamin Barrett (gogaku@ix.netcom.com) 3 Mar 2001:

A really easy solution is Excel. You can alphabetize with the Sort function to print out three dictionaries. For that matter, Word does also, though it is easier to work with Excel for glossaries. My largest glossary has been about 2000 words.

--Benjamin Barrett

>From Nicholas Thieberger (n.thieberger@linguistics.unimelb.edu.au)
04 Mar 2001:

Excel is easy, but you get out what you put in. If you want a comparative wordlist it is fine. If you want dictionary entries, with different senses, examples, semantic fields etc, then you should use Shoebox from SIL.

A database will work, but only for flat entries, those that have no sub-entries or senses distinguished.

There are web sites about lexicography and dictionary software which you can find on the web.

--Nick Thieberger

>From Andrew Cunningham (andrewc@vicnet.net.au) 04 Mar 2001:

One brief comment on using Excel the way Benjamin Bartlett suggests: Your ability to sort is limited to the languages Microsoft directly supports. This will differ to greater and lesser degrees between their different operating systems.

So the question would be, is there a language that Microsoft supports that has similar collation to your target languages?

--Andrew Cunningham
Multilingual Technical Project Officer
Vicnet, State Library of Victoria

>From Claire Bower (bowern@fas.harvard.edu) 04 Mar 2001:

I'm surprised no one's mentioned Shoebox yet! I've used it to make both bilingual and trilingual dictionaries of various lengths, and you can put examples, etymological information, cross-referencing, paradigm forms and all that in the entry. It creates printed dictionaries, not interactive computer things, but if you want to format complicated dictionary entries painlessly then I'd recommend this. It also has concordancing in a wordlist function, and you can tie the dictionary to interlinearised texts.

It's now about US \$40, available from SIL (www.sil.org).

--Claire Bower
Dept of Linguistics, Harvard University

>From Benjamin Barrett (gogaku@ix.netcom.com) 4 Mar 2001:

Given that other products are so inexpensive, it may not be worth bothering with Excel. I use it for technical glosses. For alphabetization, I sometimes create an extra column that the list is alphabetized on. This column doesn't have to be printed out.

--Benjamin Barrett

>From Mike Cahill (mike_cahill@sil.org) 03 Mar 2001:

Depending on how much you are willing to invest in learning the program and how much consistency you want enforced, you might also want to consider

SIL's LinguaLinks program, which excels in dictionary work.

Shoebox is more user-friendly, and you can do quite a lot with it, as evidenced by the widespread use it has had across the world, with both SIL and non-SIL users. LinguaLinks is harder to learn, but it is an object-oriented program, enforces more consistency, and has better built-in cross-links using various semantic roles such as part-whole, members of a particular semantic domain, subentries, various senses, and so forth. Look for both of them at <<http://www.sil.org/computing/>>.

Within a couple years, SIL hopes to have "Fieldworks" out, which will combine the user-friendliness of Shoebox with the power of LinguaLinks. Watch for it!

--Mike Cahill
SIL

133.6 E-MAIL ADDRESS UPDATES

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