Video Documentation:
The Hän (Dene / Athabascan) Video Documentation Project
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The Hän Language
- Dene/Athabascan language family
- Spoken in Eagle Village, Alaska, and Dawson, Yukon.
- Only about 6-10 fluent speakers, with two in Canada and the rest in Alaska.
- These speakers are mostly English dominant and have few opportunities to use the language on a daily basis, outside of cultural settings (prayers, songs).
- Youngest speakers are in their mid 60s.
- Some efforts to teach the language in schools, more so in Dawson where the ethnic population is larger.
- Thus, the language is considered critically endangered.

Project Phases
1. Recorded the activity without narration (besides occasional in situ narration). About 15-20 minutes of footage was then extracted, capturing each major action.
2. The consultants then watched the videos while narrating roughly in Hän. Often, this included discussing in English what sentences would be best.
3. I then made clips of each sentence, writing up a rough script along with transcriptions.
4. We edited the sentences as a group and recorded them when necessary. The re-recording technique involved me reading the transcribed sentences in Han for the speakers to repeat back. This technique was difficult since it was hard for speakers to repeat verbatim, but also provided solutions to a lot of problems presented in a video documentation project for a critically endangered language (see Solutions).
5. Sized down the videos to about ten minutes each, adding the sound files and captions (English and Hän) for each sentence to the video.
6. Watched the videos with consultants, making any final changes in translations or re-recordings.

Equipment and Design
- Designed to elicit culturally relevant information in a framework that will aid speakers in remembering vocabulary and grammatical constructions.
- Includes three speakers of the language from Eagle, AK who each narrated their own video. Topics included sewing beaded mocassins, making frybread, and cutting salmon.
- Funded by a Jacobs Grant.
- Equipment:
  - Sony HDR-CX380 Video Camera
  - Zoom H4N Handy Portable Digital Recorder
  - Sony Movie Studio Platinum Suite 12

Challenges and Solutions

Speaker A: While watching herself perform the recorded activity, she was able to produce long, flowing passages without needed prompts. However, the narration included a lot of code switching and sentences she was unhappy with when we reviewed the video. The filming process also made her nervous.

Speaker B: On the contrary, speaker B’s sentences were very slow and less spontaneous. There was less code switching but still many English loan words when the consultant could not think of the appropriate Han word.

Speaker C: Speaker C’s video was the last recorded and overall the process was the smoothest. Learning from previous mistakes I added more structure to the elicitation (suggesting sentences, allowing any creativity the speaker offered).

Solutions:
- All three speakers and I worked together on editing the sentences for this video. In converging with her sisters they were able to find better ways to say things. She was less nervous when we re-recorded the sentences. I should have also provided more structure for eliciting the narration.
- We were able to record some of the sentences spoken at a faster rate with the re-recording technique. I also edited out long pauses. I also feel prescriptivism should be avoid when dealing with loan words, as long as the consultants are satisfied with their sentences.

Conclusions
- The re-recording technique was challenging but provided the best results for video documentation of a critically endangered language.
- All three speakers, despite being sisters, produced very different videos with unique strengths and weaknesses.
- A flexible approach is needed by the documenter.
- Video projects involving critically endangered languages can be successful with an approach tailored to the abilities and strengths of the speakers.

Māhsí’ Choo!