The Tohono O’odham Nation is situated in Arizona, south of Tucson, on the border with Mexico. The Tohono O’odham language is spoken in both the United States and Mexico, across a border that artificially separates the O’odham from the lands they traditionally occupied and traveled to for ceremonial and other purposes. The number of speakers of the Tohono O’odham language has been in decline over the past century. During this same time period, a considerable amount of documentation, much of it unpublished manuscripts and audio recordings, has been collected from O’odham speakers by linguists, anthropologists, and other researchers. These materials have the potential to serve as a valuable resource for the tribal community in language preservation, maintenance, and revitalization.

This paper examines language documentation efforts on the Tohono O’odham (or Papago) Reservation in southern Arizona, focusing on a set of collaborative efforts between linguists and tribal members. These efforts focus on legacy documentation, those recordings and manuscripts collected by previous researchers. They exist in US collections held by museums, universities, and individual researchers. In many cases, they are both inaccessible and unknown to community members. A considerable portion is untranscribed, untranslated, and unpublished. Many do not come up on a Google search, so if they are catalogued electronically, they do not emerge in the current technological tool of preference. Here we present the beginnings of a model of a collaboration that involves both indigenous and non-indigenous people. It is part of a long-term endeavor to transcribe, translate, and publish these O’odham materials and thus has implications
beyond the field of linguistics, raising significant questions about who determines the benefit and impact to indigenous communities.

The next section presents background on the linguistic situation. Section 2 discusses legacy documentation in Tohono O’odham. Section 3 is an overview of our community-academic partnership. Section 4 presents implications from this collaboration for other researchers.

1 Background

Tohono O’odham is in the Uto-Aztecan language family and is classified as the Papago-Pima or O’odham language by Saxton et al. (1989) and others. Like many Native American languages, the continued survival of the language is threatened. The 2000 Census reports 18,326 Tohono O’odham age 5 and over. Of those, 10,321 (56.3%) speak English only, and 8,005 (43.7%) speak a language other than English. The number of Tohono O’odham speakers represented by the latter number is a decline from the 1990 census, which is unsurprising given the comparable declines in other indigenous languages of the United States.

In many ways, the language is incredibly vital: one hears it on the reservation radio station, in tribal council, in legislative committee meetings, and it is taught as a subject in schools and the tribal college. However, there are very low numbers of children acquiring the language, and new learners of the language are key to its survival. A recent Comprehensive Education Study (Madsen 2004) conducted by the tribal college claims that only 10% of 18-19 year olds can speak O’odham, and Nation members age 40 and above are the only age groups in which 50% or more can speak O’odham. Although endangered, the vitality and visibility of this Native
American language suggests that it is ripe for preservation, maintenance, and revitalization efforts, since there is a significant group of speakers.

The existing documentation of the O’odham language provides a significant start on describing the language, but also serves to highlight the major needs in terms of providing basic documentation. There are three grammatical sketches of the language (Mason 1950, Mathiot 1973, and Saxton 1982), as well as a pedagogical grammar (Zepeda 1988). None approach the scope of contemporary descriptive or reference grammars. There are also two dictionaries, Mathiot (1973), which is not in print, and Saxton et al. (1989). The third major area of assessing documentation comes in terms of text materials, particularly the linguistic analysis of texts. Only three annotated texts have been published (Mason 1950, Saxton 1982, and Mathiot 1991). A solid body of texts and their translations exists; it focuses on traditional, conventionalized discourse such as ritual speeches, songs, coyote tales, and creation stories (i.e., Saxton and Saxton 1973, Bahr et al. 1974, Bahr 1975, and Haefer 1981). Major gaps in genre coverage thus exist, as well as the systematic absence of linguistically annotated materials.


While this previous research has provided a preliminary description of the language, it shows that there are important gaps in the documentation of O’odham in terms of texts, recordings, and a descriptive grammar. There is also a sharp absence in terms of linguistically
annotated texts. A corpus of annotated texts would be a significant contribution to the overall
documentation of O’odham, and it would be useful in a reference grammar and an updated
dictionary.

2 Legacy documentation

The focus in this section will be on the unpublished, untranscribed recordings in museum and
other collections. These archival materials include diverse genre types that would include and
expand the genres represented in current published work. For example, they include conversations
between O’odham people (both with and without Anglos present), explanations of vocabulary
terms and place names, spontaneous personal narratives of varying length, historical recollections,
and explanations of different kinds, including those on the topic of tribal government.

The institutions that possess O’odham recordings are located in various parts of the United
States. The largest set of holdings is probably found at the Arizona State Museum at the
University of Arizona in Tucson. This archive has an extensive collection of original recordings
that include conversations, ethnohistorical recollections, and autobiographical narratives.
Speakers come from different time periods and dialect groups. Some of this material has been
given a rough translation, but most of it is untranscribed and untranslated.

The American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania also has substantial
holdings. Upon his death, John Alden Mason bequeathed his notes on numerous languages,
including Tohono O’odham. In addition, researchers receiving the Phillips Fund grant for Native
American fieldwork have given copies of their recordings. These copies include a project on
lexical variability between Papago and Pima conducted by Kenneth Hale and ritual speeches and religious material collected by Donald Bahr. These recordings date back more than thirty years and include partial transcriptions.

The University of California at Berkeley holds recordings and manuscripts in the Bancroft and Hearst Museums. The earliest recordings (dating from approximately 1906) are located here. It is unclear whether these recordings have been transcribed or translated. On the reservation, the Venito Garcia Library and Archives possess numerous recordings in O’odham. Many of these are unique to the library, and most appear to be untranscribed, untranslated, and uncatalogued.

A number of researchers who have worked on O’odham language and culture have collected still-unpublished recordings from their research. Included in this category are the late Kenneth Hale (his materials are currently in the possession of Ofelia Zepeda), Madeleine Mathiot, Jane Hill, and Ofelia Zepeda. Mathiot has transcribed and annotated a number of coyote stories, legends, and a previously untranscribed war oratory, all from the 1960s. Hill and Zepeda have transcribed a large collection of materials from their dialect survey, recorded in the 1980s. It is likely that there are similar materials collected by Dean and Lucille Saxton, Donald Bahr, Pamela Munro, George Herzog, and others, at least some of which represent published texts. Finally, I also have about 10 hours of short narratives told in 2002. These are only partially transcribed and translated.

At present, no single comprehensive list exists for all these items, although a preliminary catalog of what exists and what has been published was presented in Fitzgerald (2005). The existence of so many recordings, spanning different times and dialects, represents a valuable resource in terms of documenting this language. It also represents a finite resource, as recordings may not be adequately preserved, and at some point, there may not be native speakers to do
appropriate translations. A long-term goal is for the recordings to be digitized, archived, and migrated to new versions, following current best practices in documentary linguistics. The new Tohono O’odham tribal museum, which opened during summer 2007, would be a perfect location to hold these materials and assign access; it would also be prudent for the same materials to be at a repository such as AILLA (Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America). I am currently unaware of any recordings that have been digitized and archived according to these standards.

3 Our community-based collaboration

Since 2002, we have been working on developing a tribal-based collaboration to transcribe, translate, and publish (where appropriate) these O’odham materials, as well as to generate ideas and reactions on the proper treatment of archival and documentary resources within both the O’odham and academic communities. This community-based collaboration reflects input and involvement from a variety of sources, including administrators from the Tohono O’odham Cultural Museum, the Tohono O’odham Nation government (legislators and the Culture and the Education Committees), Tohono O’odham Community College (the tribal college), and the Venito Garcia Library and Archives. This collaboration has developed from the dialogue between people of diverse backgrounds and generations, and it reflects input from community members and academic scholars about community concerns, educational needs, future goals for the Nation, language revitalization, dialect education, and accessibility.
Summer 2005 served as a test run for me to work on various legacy materials. I tried to put together a preliminary set of transcribed, translated, and annotated texts for various purposes, and to determine how long these tasks take for different kinds of legacy recordings.

Together we developed a research team of people based in Sells, Arizona. The tribal portion of this research team draws on local community intellectuals, O’odham people who have been involved in grassroots language and culture preservation, maintenance, and education. Four such people participated in this project, guiding the choice of materials and working on translations and transcriptions. The late Daniel Lopez held a faculty position at Tohono O’odham Community College (TOCC) where he taught language and culture, and also served on the college’s Himdag committee. Mr. Lopez worked with some of Mathiot's texts, editing her transcription and providing a translation to coyote stories. As a longtime figure in the community promoting language and culture, he also served as a major point person in the collaboration.

Phillip Miguel has also served as TOCC language faculty and a Himdag committee member (although currently employed by the Nation in another capacity), and he has been editing the transcription Stella Tucker's saguaro stories and translating them with one of these soon to appear in print (Fitzgerald and Miguel, forthcoming). In 2004, Ron Geronimo was in charge of K-12 Education for TOCC and on the Himdag committee. Mr. Geronimo began work on transcribing the El Plomo reminiscences, which involve conversational material and have only received a rough translation. He is currently completing a master's degree in Native American Linguistics at the University of Arizona. Dena Thomas, who works at the Venito Garcia Library & Archives, has collaborated with me on transcribing and translating an interview of Venito Garcia on tribal government that was conducted by Irene Harvey. The recording is the same as that also worked on by Phillip Miguel.
The choice of which materials to work on was determined by the tribal person, not the linguist. The proliferation of recordings means that anything is a contribution once it is accessible. But the team focused on recordings (rather than existing manuscripts without recordings) because of their value in terms of maintenance and revitalization for O’odham revitalization. The ability to partner recording, transcription, translation, and linguistic annotation could serve as a considerable resource in the second language classroom for those learning O’odham, as well as provide rich linguistic materials for a reference grammar.

The emphasis on recorded spontaneous narratives has at least four motivations. First, pedagogically speaking, spontaneous narratives may be easier to understand than coyote stories for second language learners. Coyote stories are a conventionalized genre that seems to have a higher proportion of function words to content words, at least in the introductory portions (see discussions of word order in Fitzgerald 2003). Spontaneous narratives require speakers to contextualize the story, and the grammatical structures seem more content-oriented as a result. Second, the access to audio files with an accompanying O’odham text and an English translation offers a major resource, both in teaching second language learners and in teaching O’odham literacy to fluent speakers. Third, these materials may contain otherwise unknown cultural information. The number of native speakers left who possess knowledge of specialized genres is dwindling, meaning there are few people left who know the entire creation cycle or who know ritual speeches. Finally, representing recordings from different time periods or different geographic regions provides classroom resources to illustrate linguistic variation, particularly dialects that differ from the teacher’s variety. Educators have recordings for students to hear the differences, and the printed texts can be used to discuss orthographical and lexical dimensions of linguistic variation and change.
4 Implications for other collaborative teams

In this section, I present a discussion of the implications of this survey of resources and planning with the Tohono O’odham community that can serve as a model for similar collaborative efforts by other teams of indigenous and non-indigenous investigators. From our collaboration, I propose some general principles that other researchers or community people can use to build teams.

The process of building collaborations relies on creating stakeholders in an endeavor. One way to create stakeholders is to share information. Academics are frequently viewed in indigenous communities as people who come by and collect something, never to return and never to contribute back. Furthermore, academics have access to and awareness of archives and other such collections. (Or, perhaps, linguists have no knowledge of archival materials; the lesson here is to investigate what unpublished materials exist for a given language.) An important task is to track down archival and other holdings and share this information with the community. The first principle for linguists should be share what is learned; even a handout that lists collections can be a helpful resource to a community.

A second principle is to personalize research; in other words, make it personal for everyone involved. Use audio (and video, if it exists) as a tool to communicate the personal implications of language archives. The use of audio impacts the linguist and the community; recordings have captured the voice of a long-gone elder, great-uncle, or important leader. Linguists need to see the deeply personal value of these recordings.
A third guiding principle is to listen and work to build trust. These types of efforts will likely involve collaborations for years, if they are successful. But there is a strong negative history of colonialism that often makes trust difficult. For the linguist, it is imperative to realize that academic concerns may be very different from tribal concerns, and that community members may resent outsiders. Linguists should listen to these concerns and consider how to address them, and ask community members what courses of action they suggest. It is also important to think outside the box and allow research to be community-driven. For example, archival texts and recordings have much to offer linguistic research as rich storehouses of phonological, morphological, syntactic and other data.

Regarding this principle for the community, it is important to realize that academics have to find a way to publish to be hired and promoted in universities. Is it possible to meet this need for publication in a way that serves community interests? What, if any, restrictions should be set on publications? On these questions, it is also important to think long-term. If materials are collected but unpublished, they at least exist for the future. Many recordings from decades ago could never be made today because elders who have this knowledge have passed on. Restrictions on access and publication can be set, but it is important to consider what the implications are if certain materials are not recorded and archived. Following this principle means much time is involved in talking, listening, and building relationships. Setting boundaries and expectations is a key component in a respectful relationship of any kind.

Another guiding principle is to recognize the ideologies held by linguists and by those in indigenous communities. Linguists fail to realize that many community members have internalized the negative attitudes held by mainstream groups about their languages. They may fail to realize that community members prefer certain dialects of the language in a way that
reflects both hierarchies in the language and the absence of a tradition of a standard. Community members may disparage the varieties spoken by youths, just as youth language is disparaged in mainstream American society. The language attitudes that play out in mainstream America over language do not relate to language but rather to attitudes about different groups in society (see, for example, Lippi-Green 1997). For community members, it is important to consider how language attitudes have an impact on a language whose status is endangered. Language change and language variation are natural results of speakers using a language. Linguists can serve as valuable resources for presentations on language change, language variation, bilingualism, literacy, and language endangerment, all as they relate to the particular language community.

It is also important to acknowledge value differences, not just between linguists and communities, but also to recognize different opinions within the community and contribute those to the academic community. Be a voice for the community in the academic world, even when it means offering opinions that reflect values or concerns that differ from your own. How else are academics to know that indigenous communities often have very different perspectives on all sorts of issues, such as whether materials should be easily accessible, whether they should be archived or digitized, and/or whether transcribing or recording is appropriate?

Another principle involves seeking partners. For academics, community intellectuals and grassroots activists are vital as partners. These are people who are involved in language and cultural preservation and maintenance, as well as in education, libraries, tribal museums, and outreach projects in the community. Who has a column in the tribal paper, or has a radio show, or does basket-making or storytelling sessions at the local schools? And what language materials would help them in their work and their goals? Community members seeking to find linguists as partners might by begin by asking for recommendations from linguists known for work with
communities; for the Southwestern United States, persons such as Ofelia Zepeda, Akira Yamamoto, and Leanne Hinton, for example.

Finally, it is important to create an open process of dialogue and brainstorming. When people from different backgrounds and perspectives come together, this can lead to a proliferation of ideas for a team to consider. Here is a list of some ideas that have come up in our discussions:

**Ideas Generated by Academics and Tohono O’odham People**

a. Coordinate with Tohono O’odham Community College by developing joint courses taught by linguists and O’odham instructors. Explore the possibility of jointly offering degrees or at least developing programs for that are “transfer friendly” for Tohono O’odham Community College students earning an associate’s degree.

b. Develop a panel of elders to assess if material should be restricted due to cultural, religious, or other concerns.

c. Develop community intellectual infrastructure to train O’odham people in current best practices to digitize and coordinate archival resources, as well as in other types of positions.

d. Develop legal safeguards for intellectual and online materials and ownership to hold between researchers and tribal governments.

e. Create a database with information about who participated in these archival materials, with as much biographic information as possible.

f. Store recordings and PDF scans of manuscripts in computers at the Cultural Museum to allow all tribal members access.

h. Have the tribal community determine archival access.

i. Develop grant proposals with tribal members as co-submitters.
Develop accessible software to allow elders to input materials.

5 Conclusion

For both academics and community members, language can be a vehicle to empowerment and education. It is helpful when linguists recognize that their standards of ethics, research programs, and expectations often reflect Eurocentric assumptions and a power dynamic that privileges these assumptions. For an indigenous community, the opportunity to collaborate with linguists can provide a way to heighten awareness of the local nature of language endangerment, create research agendas that are community-driven and increase access to education and jobs, and set local priorities and goals for the language community. Community-driven research agendas have the potential to be mutually beneficial. Discourse data, like the archival material described here, can have strong community value and impact; it is also a treasure trove for investigations into any component of grammar (syntax, morphology, semantics, phonology, etc.).

In the case of the Tohono O’odham, the threats of American popular culture, the English language, and globalization are very real. These are often balanced with the dynamic interplay between contemporary and traditional notions of O’odham identity. A more pressing recent concern comes from border issues. Spanish has become a rising linguistic presence, as young people may grow up with English and choose Spanish over Tohono O’odham as their second language of choice. The US-Mexican border in the Tohono O’odham region has become a crossing hotspot for immigrants, which has increased border patrol presence and restricted movement by the O’odham.
In the face of these issues, legacy documentation offers an opportunity for cultural and linguistic repatriation of a considerable body of materials. Linguists should consider these stockpiles of materials as a resource worth cultivating. Investigating whether archival materials (of both a formal and informal nature) exist should be considered critical in working with any endangered language, as it represents an untapped resource. Individual researchers may be the largest holders of such materials. Collaborative projects such as this one seek to complete the work to make such materials accessible, thus creating a legacy that is meaningful and useful for both researchers and community members.

TO ADD TO REFERENCES


Notes

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Thanks to the editors of this volume for helpful feedback. Any errors are my own.

1 *Waila music*, also known as *chickenscratch*, is a type of contemporary fiddle music played on the reservation. It has elements similar to the polka and *norteño* musical traditions.

2 “The Tohono O’odham Himdag consists of the culture, way of life, and values that are uniquely held and displayed by the Tohono O’odham people. Himdag incorporates everything in life that makes us unique as individuals and as a people. It is a lifelong journey” that includes language, among other things (Tohono O’odham Community College).