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NEGOTIATING ACCEPTANCE: A SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF SECOND
LANGUAGE USERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF SPEAKERHOOD IN CHEROKEE NATION
LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

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Dedicated to my children

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Abstract

Language revitalization has the major goal of creating new speakers, and the approaches and ideologies employed in the journey toward this goal are multiple and diverse. This research project presents the experiences and perspectives of those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language as they negotiate speakerhood in an endangered language community with an active population of individuals who acquired Cherokee as a first language in early childhood. The examination of these perspectives and experiences fills a critical gap in understanding how those who acquire an endangered, indigenous language negotiate acceptance as speakers within their communities. The endangered language context creates high stakes for this negotiation because in Cherokee communities, as in many other indigenous language communities, language is firmly ensconced as a foundational element of peoplehood. L2 users' perceptions of an idealized link between speakerhood and peoplehood and creates an atmosphere where social power and cultural capital can influence language use. This atmosphere serves to limit access to language learning and use in multiple ways. The addition of digital domains as avenues for revitalization provides those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language a more neutral space for language use and to actively negotiate their place as language users. This research illustrates that L2 users must be supported to insure a positive future for Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What does it mean to be a Cherokee speaker and how is that definition constructed in Cherokee communities? This is the basic research question that guided this work. Although I did not seek to answer this question definitively, I did hope to contribute toward an understanding of speakerhood within Cherokee communities. To frame this larger discussion, this chapter will begin by sharing the basic tenets of this project and its goals. Although the Cherokee language is an endangered language, there is still an active and engaged community of individuals who speak Cherokee as a first language (Cherokee Nation 2002). Therefore, those who are learning Cherokee as a second language negotiate their place alongside and in collaboration with an existing community of Cherokee speakers. There is a broad diversity of Cherokee revitalization initiatives. A selection of these initiatives are: online language classes, employee immersion classes, community language classes, teacher training programs, the Cherokee Nation Immersion Charter School, and the Cherokee Language Degree Program at Northeastern State University, a public university. Although the Cherokee Nation Immersion Charter School and the NSU Cherokee Language Degree Program receive other sources of funding, a significant portion of their support is from Cherokee Nation. Both individuals who speak Cherokee as a first language and individuals who speak Cherokee as a second language are employed with and participate in each of these programs.

Cherokee revitalization initiatives are an arena where relationships of social power and expressions of cultural capital gain intensity. This increased

salience occurs because of the deep link between Cherokeeeness and Cherokee language. This deep link imbues language use with elements of social risk but also serves as a catalyst for language learning creating a paradox for those seeking to acquire Cherokee as a second language. The creation of digital domains as space for language revitalization is a recent innovation and helps to provide a more neutral space for Cherokee language use. This new domain is not free of social risk but it is a place where those who are learning Cherokee as a second language are able to have a more active voice. The inclusion of the language, specifically the Cherokee syllabary, in new platforms and media allows for the control, growth, and expansion of language use, especially among those who are learning Cherokee as a second language.

Project and Goals

The creation of new speakers seems to be an implicit goal of language revitalization initiatives and the Cherokee Nation language revitalization program is no exception. This research provides insight on the experiences and perspectives of those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language in these revitalization programs. However, rather than viewing these individuals as an outcome of the process, instead this research examines their placement and active involvement within it through the ways that they are negotiating and constructing speakerhood. This negotiation is informed by the broader dialogue surrounding speakerhood in general that is motivated by diverse stakeholders like teachers, students, linguists, individuals using revitalization initiatives as political tools,

linguists, and the speakers themselves. Diverse stakeholders also hold a varied range of views about the role of the language that include multiple ideologies that can possibly be in conflict with one another. To add to this complexity, an individual can inhabit multiple roles in an endangered language community. All of these variables create a context where any aspect of revitalization can potentially be an area of contestation.

Revitalization initiatives are reactive occurring in response to issues of language endangerment and can take a wide variety of forms. The Cherokee Nation has been actively engaged in language revitalization initiatives since the 1960's (Cherokee Nation 2002). Yet, since that time, the language continues to be in decline with the number of speakers showing a decline. Despite this obvious language shift that continues to occur there is an active population of speakers who learned Cherokee as their first language and a population of children who are proficient and who are using Cherokee fluidly as a second language. This group of children has acquired Cherokee as a second language through the efforts of the Cherokee Nation Immersion Charter School. Yet, despite this broad diversity among individuals who are using Cherokee as a language of communication, there is a demographic gap present between the elders who use Cherokee as a first language and the children in the immersion school who fluidly use Cherokee as a second language. Within this gap are adults aged 18 – 50 who are learning Cherokee as second language. These adults use a number of methods for language learning and represent a wide variety of backgrounds with diverse levels of experience with the language.

The goal of this research is to represent the experiences and perspectives of these adults who are learning Cherokee as a second language in their negotiation of speakerhood. Speakerhood represents a socially powerful category within revitalization initiatives. This construction of speakerhood coupled with the decreasing number of speakers within Cherokee communities causes the negotiation of speakerhood by those who are using Cherokee as a second language to be particularly salient while containing elements of social risk. Viewing speakerhood through a sociocultural lens to gauge the perspectives of those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language offers insight on revitalization initiatives. In order to meet this goal, I engaged in participant observation and also interviewed individuals involved with Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives. This process will be described in greater detail in Chapter Two where the methodology employed within this research project is discussed.

Defining Speakerhood

A key element of this research is to provide a definition for what it means to be a speaker of a language. The term speaker is one that is used often within a variety of academic disciplines but that still requires discussion for clarity. Discussions of proficiency are common within linguistics, language acquisition, second language acquisition, language education, and language revitalization. It is this diversity of academic dialogue leads to a variety of ways in which this topic may be approached. The key to being a speaker of a language seems to be the use of the language. However, simple use is not typically enough to access the category

of speaker, there also seem to be standards of proficiency that are expected. These standards can vary widely and are significantly influenced by a number of factors.

Some element of language use is necessary to be considered a speaker of any language but there is considerable variation in what is sufficient for this determination. The question of who is measuring this proficiency and for what reason proficiency is being measured can significantly influence the determinations made. In addition, where there are elements of language endangerment with language shift actively occurring, there are potential mitigating variables that make this determination significantly more difficult. In this way, the presence of endangerment within a language community can cause definitions of speakerhood to shift thus revealing how social context can have influence of how speakerhood is constructed. This approach is analogous to Hymes (1961) approach to communication that states utterances are governed not only by linguistic rules but also by social context. In this way, viewing speakerhood as a consequence of social context as well as a product of linguistic proficiency is expected.

The definition of speakerhood that is used within this research is provided in Chapter Three of this writing and clearly delineates the tenets of that concept. In addition to a discussion of speakerhood, there is also a discussion provided about the ways that various stakeholders influence and shape the construction of the category. Also included is a discussion of how language endangerment raises the stakes of determinations of speakerhood. There are political, cultural,

emotional, social, and economic ramifications for definitions of speakerhood in addition to the linguistic proficiency denoted by pronouncements of speakerhood.

Relationships and Social Power

This research examines the perspectives of individuals acquiring Cherokee as a second language who are also actively involved in revitalization initiatives. This provides a unique perspective on how individuals integrate into the process and become participatory. The ability, or lack of ability, to access the category of speakerhood allows a window on the relationship between language and social power. As stated, revitalization initiatives are an area where the negotiation of speakerhood occurs but when speakerhood is also an index of social power this negotiation can be particularly sensitive.

The ideology of legitimacy and authenticity provides a motivation for language learning but also creates a conundrum where imperfect language use reflects negatively on legitimacy and authenticity of status. Unfortunately, mistakes in language use cannot be avoided during the learning process. Therefore, these language ideologies, while providing a catalyst for language learning, may provide hindrances for language use. For revitalization initiatives, language use, especially imperfect use, by those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language must be de-stigmatized for these initiatives to be successful. The social power of speakerhood in the Cherokee language community is what leads those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language to refuse the label of speaker.

To illustrate this concept and to better understand this refusal Chapter Four focuses on the relationship between language and social power and how it influences L2 users relationship with speakerhood. A general overview of language and social power is provided. Next, Cherokee language ideologies of legitimacy and authenticity are discussed along with their ramifications for language use in Cherokee communities. Also of particular concern are the ways that inauthentic claims to speakerhood are perceived by those who are acquiring Cherokee as second language. In a climate of language endangerment, the lack of language use by those who are acquiring language is sometimes perceived as a lack of interest when it is actually a healthy respect for the language that is inhibiting language use.

Expression of Cultural Capital

Individuals who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language seem to be refusing the label of speaker out of respect for its social power. However, not everyone who is learning Cherokee as a second language feels this same lack of access. Therefore, to understand why these individuals who are actively involved in revitalization initiatives perceive a lack of access, this research examines expressions of cultural capital in language use. The Cherokee language is perceived to be a primary indicator of Cherokeeeness but at one time was part of a collection attributes that signified cultural connections. Residency, religious affiliation, and language use were all markers of cultural Cherokeeeness (Wahrhaftig 1970). However, in the climate of active language shift that has been

continuously increasing in intensity, language use seems to have become a much more significant marker.

In Cherokee communities, peoplehood and cultural capital are constructed through an individual's connection to language, religion, land, and history (Fink 1998, Holm et. al. 2003, Cushman 2011). Individuals acquiring Cherokee as a second language with ties to Cherokee peoplehood through land, history, and religion seem to be more intensely aware of how errors in language use are perceived. It is possible because imperfect language use, which is one pillar of peoplehood and cultural capital, may reflect on the other three pillars of peoplehood as well. Therefore, for individuals acquiring Cherokee as a second language who are strongly connected, imperfect language use may be too significant a social risk to the other aspects of peoplehood. Individuals acquiring Cherokee as a second language who participated in this research often cited how connections to these other three pillars seemed to give them a pass on exhibiting their language skills. In addition, they also cited how individuals often invoked their connection to a close relative as an indicator of their relationship to language. This evocation of a tie to language rather than a direct use of language seems to be perceived as a fulfillment of the language pillar for some individuals within the community.

Speakerhood as an index of peoplehood is discussed in detail in Chapter Five. In this chapter, the framework for Cherokee peoplehood is presented along with the ways that these pillars are discussed and represented in this research. The way that this model informs perception of speakerhood is a central focus of

this chapter. In addition, the ways in which social behavior can affect how individuals are perceived as speakers are also highlighted within this chapter with specific attention to how socially unacceptable behavior can negatively effect these perceptions.

Digital Domains

The Cherokee language has recently undergone significant innovations with the inclusion of the Cherokee syllabary into new digital platforms and media. This push toward digitization of the language has largely come from those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language. The development of digital space as a space for revitalization initiatives has been a source of pride for Cherokee Nation and its Language Technology Department. The advent of technology creates a safer space for use of language by those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language and provides hope for the de-stigmatization of learner language in other spaces.

This creation of digital revitalization space has led to it being regarded as a space for decolonization and as a space where elders and youth interact in new and exciting ways. The language can be used in social media, as part of operating systems for a number of systems, and continues to evolve into new forms and functions as does technological innovation. Although there are potential pitfalls to the technological domain, the benefits to language use by those acquiring Cherokee as a second language seem to be undeniable as first glance.

The developments that lead to the current boom in technology is highlighted in Chapter Six along with the impact of this technology on revitalization initiatives and on those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language. The ability to use language in a safer space where interaction with elders and speakers is still occurring is an unexpected, but welcome, development in this setting. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of how literacy in the syllabary is given priority in this domain, thus flipping the dynamic of social power between those who are both literate and acquiring Cherokee as a second language and speakers who have yet to gain literacy.

Conclusion

In an endangered language community where a population of speakers exists, the negotiation of speakerhood for those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language has the possibility for more areas of contention. The features of social power and cultural capital in the construction of speakerhood exist in addition to the requirement of linguistic competency. However, as the digital domain for revitalization shows, there can be a renegotiation of the space itself as safe for use by those acquiring Cherokee a second language. This development indicates a need for additional programming focused on creating spaces for the use of language by those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language for the successful continuation of the Cherokee language through revitalization. With an aging population of speakers and a very young population of children who are acquiring Cherokee fluidly through the Cherokee Nation Immersion Charter

School, the existing adult population acquiring Cherokee as a second language will take on a more and more active role in revitalization initiatives. Each of these topics will be discussed in more depth in the pages to come.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This research is a qualitative study that uses semi-structured interviews and participant observation to examine the role of second language learners in the Cherokee language revitalization programs centered in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

“Participant observation’ refers to naturalistic, qualitative research in which the investigator obtains information through relatively intense, prolonged interaction with those being studied and firsthand involvement in the relevant activities of their lives” (Levine et. al. 1980: 38).

Participant observation is a staple in ethnographic field methods and allows researchers an “experiential knowledge to speak convincingly” (Bernard 2006: 322). Although this approach does grant experiential knowledge, it is also time consuming and subjective (Angrosino and Rosenberg 2011). As a researcher working in my home community, I found participant observation to be the most practical approach, as I would already be participating in community activities where research would take place. This chapter will describe the community, present the rationale for locating the research project in this community, the author’s positionality within the community as an indigenous anthropologist, and the methods employed for research. Although this research is centered on the experiences of second language users, it is the interplay between first language users and second language users utilizing language revitalization initiatives that gives this research meaning. This research will illustrate that language revitalization initiatives are a high stakes arena for the negotiation of power, peoplehood, and identity in Cherokee Nation.

Research Setting

Language revitalization initiatives have been underway in Cherokee Nation since the 1960's (Cherokee Nation 2003: 6). A 2002 language survey funded by Cherokee Nation and the Administration for Native Americans found that the Cherokee language was highly endangered and this finding led to a greater intensity of organized effort in language revitalization (Cherokee Nation 2003). Tahlequah serves as the hub for Cherokee Nation language revitalization activities, is centrally located, and is the headquarters for the Cherokee Nation. In addition, Tahlequah is also the headquarters for the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians of Oklahoma. A third federally recognized Cherokee government, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, is located in Cherokee, North Carolina. These are the only federally recognized Cherokee governments, but there are 15 states recognized groups that are Cherokee and 238 self-identified Cherokee organizations (Sturm 2010: 193, 201).¹ Each of the three federally recognized governments share Cherokee as a common heritage language and each have active language revitalization programs. However, this research focuses on the Tahlequah Cherokee community and the language revitalization programming of the Cherokee Nation. Ultimately, I chose Tahlequah as the site for this study based on the diversity of language revitalization programming offered through the Cherokee Nation government and because it is centrally located within Cherokee communities in Oklahoma geographically, politically, and historically. The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians of Oklahoma is also located within

¹ For further discussion of this issue see Miller 2003, Miller 2004 and Sturm 2010

Tahlequah, Oklahoma and also has an active revitalization program. Due to the unavoidable overlap, I could not feasibly avoid speaking with individuals who are associated with UKBCIO revitalization programs. A number of participants in this research are Cherokee Nation citizens who participate with Cherokee revitalization programs but who also participate in UKBCIO programs simply because they want to be able to engage in Cherokee language use and learning at every opportunity. While the UKBCIO and Cherokee Nation governments may have divergent goals, the citizens of each nation often search for ways to work together. Therefore, this research is focused on Cherokee Nation language revitalization programming but it does recognize that Cherokee L1 and L2 users may participate in other types of language programming.

Since the Tahlequah Cherokee community is at the center of Cherokee Nation's language revitalization efforts, governance and geography, it is particularly appropriate for this inquiry. Specifically, the Tahlequah Cherokee community uses a wide variety of language revitalization initiatives, including the Cherokee Nation Immersion School, the Northeastern State University Cherokee Language Degree Program, online and community Cherokee language classes, employee immersion classes, and informal grassroots Cherokee language groups. The Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah is also driving the push toward digitization for Cherokee language and has instituted new initiatives of language education in this newly claimed space (Cushman 2011: 213). This wide array of programming creates jobs in Cherokee Nation for many who use Cherokee as a second language while providing multiple avenues of employment for those wishing to become

involved in language revitalization. Second language users of Cherokee can serve as teachers, administrators, support staff, and as language and media technicians. Therefore, the Tahlequah Cherokee community offers significant information for integrating those who use Cherokee as a second language into the process of language revitalization in a localized context. The number of employees is hard to quantify as there are individuals employed in language related jobs in a number of departments throughout Cherokee Nation. The Cherokee Language Program alone has a staff of 14 and a budget well over \$1,000,000. This does not include the Cherokee Nation Immersion Charter School, the Cherokee Nation staff located at the Northeastern State University Cherokee Language Degree Program, or the multitude of staff members working within other departments in Cherokee language related jobs.

There is an active revitalization community among Cherokees in Tahlequah who work for Cherokee Nation and who are part of the community. This includes both individuals who use Cherokee as a first language and those who use Cherokee as a second language. It is precisely because of this interaction between L1 and L2 users that the Tahlequah Cherokee community is an area ripe to examine the ways that speakerhood is constructed. An L1 user is a person who has acquired Cherokee as a first language in early childhood and an L2 user is a person acquiring Cherokee as a second language after having acquired a different first language. These terms along with the terms speaker and learner are defined in Chapter Three. L2 users who are gaining linguistic competency are required to do so in relation to an existing L1 user population. This type of negotiation could be

much different, or perhaps even nonexistent, in a community with a very small L1 user population, or in a language reclamation project where no L1 users exist. However, in the Tahlequah community of Cherokee Nation, ideologies of authenticity cause language use to carry significant social meaning complicating every individual's emergence into speakerhood. The burgeoning presence of those who use Cherokee as a second language in active revitalization roles, especially as teachers and in other high profile positions causes this interaction to become more relevant. This is especially salient as the L1 user population continues to decrease and L2 users become more integral to revitalization processes.

Fieldwork in My Home Community

This issue is one of particular significance to me because of my deep placement within the Cherokee communities and within Cherokee revitalization initiatives. It could be said that I have unprecedented access to the phenomenon that I am investigating as I will go on to illustrate. I am a full blood citizen of the Cherokee Nation and grew up in tight knit traditional communities first in Tahlequah, in the central area of Cherokee Nation, then in Sequoyah County, in southeast Cherokee Nation. My paternal family is from the Briggs and Pumpkin Hollow communities and my maternal family is from the Blackgum and Evening Shade communities. These places were, and continue to be, meaningful places of Cherokee language use. Although I moved away from Cherokee Nation in 1995 to go to college, throughout the time I lived outside Cherokee Nation, my immediate family continued to live in Cherokee Nation and I returned home often to attend

family events, religious events, and to participate in language revitalization activities. Upon my return to Cherokee Nation in 2010, my three children began attending the Tsalagi Tsunadeloquasdi. The school attained charter status through the state of Oklahoma in 2012-2013 and is now known as the Cherokee Nation Immersion Charter School but continues to be known by its Cherokee name as well. I have always considered Cherokee Nation, specifically Tahlequah and the Sallisaw-Vian area, to be my home and I have always maintained my ties and connections to Cherokee communities. While these connections assisted me in identifying participants for this research project, it was only the process of interviewing and fieldwork that allowed me to identify this salient topic for discussion.

Prior to any interviews or active fieldwork, I pursued approval from both the Cherokee Nation and University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Boards. The University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board application number was originally 13042 then shifted to 0733 after an electronic submission system was put in place. Although the process for requesting approval from the two boards differed, the information requested was mostly the same. The Cherokee Nation IRB requested that I address specifically how the research project would be of benefit to the Cherokee Nation. I was able to address this consideration by noting the primary purpose of this research is to investigate the ways that L2 users become involved in the process of language revitalization. Ultimately, this goal will assist in the long term goals of Cherokee language revitalization by gaining understanding into how to best recruit and support L2 users involved in such programming. I

received an approval from the University of Oklahoma IRB, which was contingent on the Cherokee Nation IRB approval. Within the month of having received the University of Oklahoma approval, I received a Cherokee Nation approval and was able to begin the research project.

When this research project began in 2010, I was living in the Tahlequah community and was employed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant within the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oklahoma. I began with recruitment of participants and conducted my first interview in December of 2010. During this year, I engaged in the interview process with participants in the research project. In late May 2011, I became employed with the Cherokee Nation as a Clerk III at the Cherokee Immersion Charter School with no supervisory authority or staff. My primary duties were to type out written material into Cherokee and set material into books for in-house printing. While employed in this position, I was still heavily engaged in recruitment and interviewing participants. In January of 2012, I became the coordinator for an oral history grant program called "Preserving Iyadvnelidasdi." In this position, I was responsible for coordinating an Oral History grant program but again had no supervisory authority. During this year, I continued recruiting but in July felt I was reaching a point where I could consider concluding enrollment. For the second half of the year, I focused on completing interviews and transcribing interview audio recordings. At year's end, I had only two participants with whom I had not completed all interviews.

Then in January of 2013, I was promoted to become the Manager of the Cherokee Language Program supervising the departments of Language Technology, Translation and Community Language. In this capacity, I had supervisory authority for 12 staff members, 4 of whom I had enrolled and interviewed for this research prior to entering the position. In addition, I had signatory authority for budgets that funded events like the Cherokee Speaker's Bureau and the Language Consortium. I decided that the two interviews that were unfinished at the time of my promotion were to remain unfinished and that I would cease enrollment for the research project. At this time, I focused on transcribing existing audio recordings and data analysis as I entered the writing phase of the research process.

Although I am in a high profile position within the Tahlequah Cherokee community, I no longer serve within the Cherokee Language Program in an official capacity or with supervisory authority. Since December 2012, I have not recruited any new participants nor engaged in any research activities outside writing the dissertation. On December 9, 2013, I began serving as the Executive Director of the Cherokee Heritage Center. Although I no longer have direct authority for Cherokee language revitalization I still chose not to engage in any research outside of writing activities.

I have previously known many of the participants in the study as either friends or passing acquaintances. Although, there were people in the Tahlequah Cherokee community who were very active L1 and L2 users who I did not know personally when I returned to Tahlequah, I quickly met and became acquainted

with them through revitalization activities as I took every possible opportunity for language learning. Early participants made suggestions for others who might be included rather spontaneously once I told them about the purpose of the study. Thus, the sample of participants was ultimately recruited via an informed snowball method. This approach could potentially exhibit a bias toward selecting individuals with whom I have a previous association. A random sampling method would not have this bias but might not access a population of L2 users negotiating revitalization initiatives. Therefore, despite the possibility of bias, it was deemed the most appropriate selection method considering the knowledge that I have of the community as a member and a researcher.

At this point, I will take a moment to discuss the awkwardness of being positioned as a *GWY/tsalagi/Cherokee* and *YSGY/giduwagi/Keetoowah* and an anthropologist. The Cherokee Nation uses *GWY DβP/tsalagi ayeli* as the Cherokee language equivalent of Cherokee Nation and the United Keetoowah Band uses the *YSG GWY/giduwa tsalagi* and *YSG/giduwa* to describe themselves. However, I am using *YSGY/giduwagi* in a way that differs from the federally recognized Cherokee Nation and United Keetoowah Band governments that exist in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. To be *YSGY/giduwagi* is a separate and distinct religious membership that has its own responsibilities and strictures. All of this is personal knowledge gained as a member of both *tsalagi* and *giduwagi* communities. I am making this statement because to discuss language in Cherokee communities, the topic of religion must be discussed.

Cherokee churches are a tradition within Cherokee communities and are places where meaningful language use happens. Yet, there does exist a tension between *YSGY*/giduwagi beliefs and Cherokee Christian traditions. I have a deep respect for Cherokee Christian traditions but as a life long member of a Cherokee stomp ground I am aware that this placement informs my research on revitalization initiatives. It is the place where I spent many hours listening to speeches in Cherokee about the importance of our language and our way of life. I deeply questioned whether I should reveal my connection to Cherokee stomp grounds but ultimately decided it was something that I must share. It was within this moment that my status as an indigenous anthropologist became almost painful. My ceremonial participation is a fundamental part of my personhood and deeply informs this research but it is difficult to share something so personal in this format. This internal debate brought my cultural upbringing directly into conflict with scholarly ethics of transparency about researcher positionality.

Despite this tension, I feel personally bound by the need to respect the sacredness of these practices. I do not want to use my ceremonial involvement as a social currency to validate my Cherokeeeness within any context yet it is still a facet of my experience that does affect my perspective. This research is a corollary to Audra Simpson's (2007) discussion of ethnographic refusal where research "...involves a calculus ethnography of what you need to know and what I refuse to write in" (72). To mitigate this dilemma, I am relying on published resources and expanding on those resources where I feel appropriate without violating cultural restrictions. This approach is jarring for me because I did not learn about

Cherokee lifeways, heritage, or culture from the published materials that I am citing. Therefore, while this is admittedly an imperfect solution, it is one that I feel best balances my cultural insiderness and academic responsibility.

Choosing this Research Setting

Cherokee is the only language of the southern branch of the Iroquoian language family, and it exhibits patterning of the southeastern language area (Mithun 1999). It is also highly endangered by any measurement with the youngest Cherokee L1 users being 40 years of age (grandparent) or older as determined through a survey administered over 10 years ago (Cherokee Nation 2002). Therefore, currently, the youngest L1 users of Cherokee are 50 and older. Based on my observation, there is a very small number of L1 users who are in their 40's but, as the survey did note, if these individuals existed they would be statistically invisible as outliers. L1 users in their 40's probably represent the smallest demographic of speakers with the population of L1 users increasing as age increases. It seems that Cherokee speakers typically fall within the category of the elder age category. If an individual is a Cherokee speaker, it is likely that the person will be aged 60 or above. Although there has not been a survey conducted in Cherokee Nation within the past ten years, these are the best and most accurate numbers available. The United States census was conducted in 2010 but as this survey is purely self-identification, there is no sure way to know if the figures for language are accurate as the number of people who self-identify as Cherokee far outnumber the actual population of Cherokee citizens in the United States.

Durbin Feeling, a Translation Specialist in the Cherokee Nation Language Technology Department, renowned authority on Cherokee language as one of the authors of the seminal grammar on Cherokee language (Feeling and Pulte 1975), and Cherokee National Treasure² for Cherokee language, related a story to me about L1 user demographics (Feeling 2012b). He drew a straight line on a piece of paper and on the far left at the end of the line he wrote a W and on the far right he wrote a T. He stated that W stood for Womb and T stood for Tomb. He stated that he had given a presentation to the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council in the 1970's where he had spoken about the demographics of Cherokee speakers. He drew an

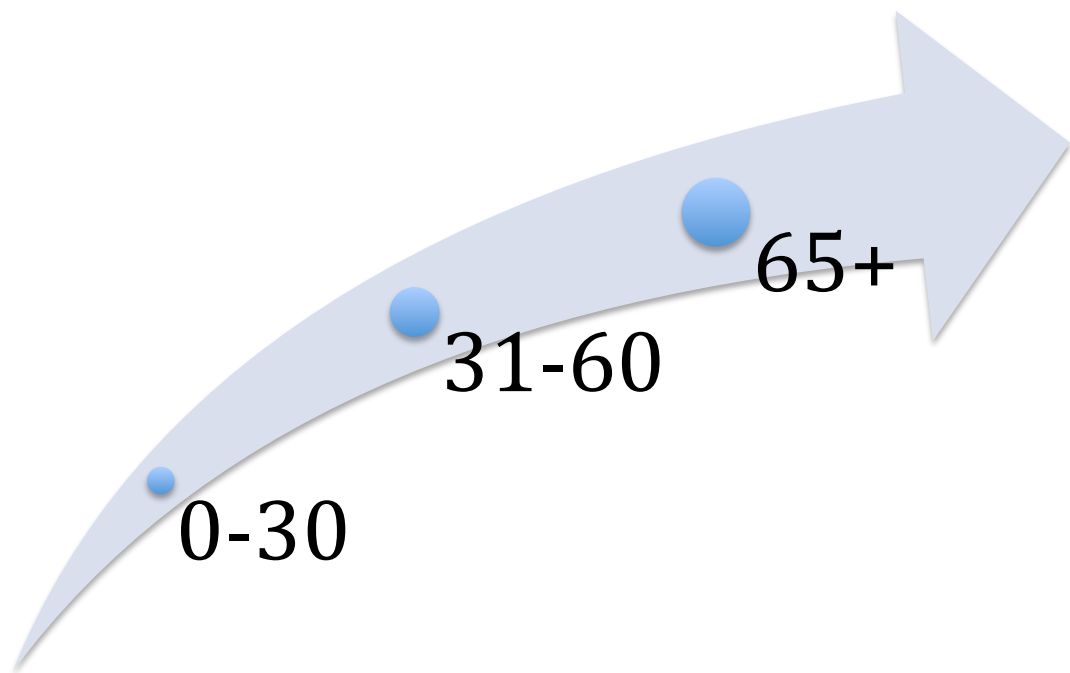


Figure 1: Visual Representation of Ages of Cherokee Speakers in 1970's (Feeling 2012b)

² The Cherokee Nation instituted the National Treasure program in 1988 at the behest of Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller. The program began as a way to recognize Cherokee artists practicing traditional arts but has expanded to include all Cherokee artists and now includes language as an area for which one can be nominated Cherokee National Treasures Association 2014).

ascending line parallel to the W-T line and said that the largest number of Cherokee speakers were 30 and older with the highest concentration being elders of an advanced age at 65 and older. This is the information he presented in the 1970's. He said that children were coming to school speaking English, not Cherokee, like they used to. He said that to avoid language death we had to create more speakers. Then he stopped, and said that this didn't happen. Visibly saddened, he said things are worse now than they were then (Feeling 2012b).

Individuals who work with Cherokee speakers and who work with language see the speaker demographics and are intensely aware that there are no longer active Cherokee language communities that they remember from years past. This is in direct contrast with individuals outside of language programs who claim there are still Cherokee speaking children in communities. Wyman Kirk, who is a professor at Northeastern State University in the Cherokee Language Degree Program, shared a story with me on this topic. Kirk said that during a conversation with an elder Cherokee speaker about the state of Cherokee language, Kirk stated that the language was in danger and the elder he was conversing with said that a person's children from Marble City were fluent speakers as evidence of young speakers. The children that the Cherokee speaker referenced are all over 40 and many of them have grandchildren of their own. The perception of vitality for our language is in contrast to the stark reality that we face.

People seem to consider the current population of Cherokee speakers a safety net because there are still active and vibrant speakers. However, the demographics of language users are heavy in the uppermost age brackets and we

lose more Cherokee speakers each year. In casual conversation with a group of Cherokee speakers, they began to speak about individuals who had recently passed away. In a group of four Cherokee speakers, they quickly counted 26 speakers they knew closely or were acquainted with had been buried in the two months prior. It continues to be a sobering realization. With a Cherokee speaker population at an elderly or advanced age, those who use Cherokee as a second language must become engaged in language revitalization initiatives.

Although participant observation was a significant part of this research, semi-structured interviews were the primary method of research used to investigate the experiences and attitudes of second language users in the Tahlequah Cherokee community and Cherokee Nation language revitalization initiatives. Bernard (2006) highlights the utility of semi-structured interviews, which rely on pre-formulated questions, but allow for open-ended answers and spontaneous follow up questions (205). The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. The questions were focused on the participant's community activities, involvement with language revitalization activities, opinions about what makes an individual a speaker of the Cherokee language, events that helped and hindered them in their learning and use of Cherokee, and perspectives on the importance of the Cherokee language. These questions can be found in Appendix A. Consultants determined the amount of time they devoted to an interview. Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes to two hours.

The study was initially divided into two groups. Group A was to consist of people who were actively involved in Cherokee language revitalization whether it

was through teaching, support services, language technology, translation or administration. Group B was to be comprised of individuals who were taking part as students or who were formerly involved but were not currently active in language revitalization programming. In the first few months of interviewing, I found that it might cause social stigma to define someone as not being involved in language revitalization and decided to use the Group A questions for all individuals. This led to a richer set of answers from individuals who might otherwise not have had the opportunity to discuss topics of speakerhood, social power, and language ideologies. First language (L1) users are individuals who acquired Cherokee as a first language or who acquired Cherokee and another language concurrently as first languages. Second language users (L2) are individuals who have acquired, or are seeking to acquire, Cherokee as a second language after having already acquired another language as a first language. A discussion of the terms speaker, user, and factors that influence the negotiation of what it means to be a speaker in Cherokee language revitalization will be presented in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six.

Community Participation

Participants were identified for recruitment based on their involvement with Cherokee Nation language revitalization activities. Due to my placement within the community, I was able to approach L1 and L2 users engaged in Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives and felt as though I had a good understanding of both the Tahlequah community and organized revitalization

initiatives. A total of 16 participants were recruited for the research project. Of these 16, a total of 14 completed the interview protocol. Of that 14 interview protocol completions, 13 sets of interviews were utilized in this research project. One interview set was removed because of statements that could not be de-identified. The 13 interview sets in this research are composed of seven men and six women with three L1 users and 10 L2 users. Of this 13, I had supervisory authority for 3 during my tenure as Manager of the Cherokee Language Program. Each of them made it clear that they would like to talk about my research and discuss related topics with me. I acknowledged their offers of help but chose not to engage in active research activities with any research participants. Past December 2012, I did not engage in participant observation or quote any of the statements made by individuals who were enrolled as participants or statements by individuals who were speaking at public events.

I made the choice to consciously disengage from quoting individuals at public events after December 2012 because I felt my role as Manager of the Cherokee Language Program gave me a position of power within Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives and did not wish to be exploit my position. I also made it clear during this time to research participants and to community members that I was no longer interviewing or seeking to interview individuals. Although my experiences, participation, and attendance at language focused events contributed to my ideas and conclusions organically, I made every effort to not actively be engaged in research activities that could be construed as me using my position to unduly influence participation in language events or in my research.

Similar to my own experience, many participants in this research project have changed professional positions since they first enrolled. It speaks to the fluid nature of the language revitalization community that people can change departments but still remain involved in language programming in integral ways. At the time of interview during the years 2010-2012, individuals were working in positions within the Language Technology Department, the Northeastern State University Cherokee Language Degree Program, the Cherokee Immersion Charter School, the Translation Department, as a freelance art instructor at the Cherokee Arts Center, the Cultural Resource Center, and/or attending classes at Northeastern State University in the Cherokee Language Degree Program. It would be fruitful to revisit each participant to see if attitudes and views had changed but that would be a topic for another time.

Maintaining a balance between genders during the recruitment process was an unforeseen challenge that occurred. From my own observation, experience in the community, and knowledge gained in the interviews, the number of female L2 users appears to be smaller than the number of male L2 users. Although there has not been a census of L1 or L2 users in Cherokee Nation, I found that my early recruitment skewed heavily toward male participants. I attributed this to the high population of men involved in language revitalization. After I became aware of this bias, I made conscious efforts to recruit women into the study. At that time, the research project achieved a balance in participants from both genders. Cherokee society is well-documented as a matrilineal society so to be reflective of the

community dynamics (Perdue 1999), this research also needed to be balanced according to gender as well.

Early on in the research project, I found scheduling interviews to be quite difficult. As I am a community member and an L2 user, I quickly found that word of my research traveled ahead of me. I was very open about this research project and found many people who were very receptive and supportive of my efforts. I had many acquaintances, friends, and family offer to take part in interviews only to run into scheduling problems when it came time to actually have the interview. Later, I began to realize that the offer to be interviewed was a way of showing active support even if the person making the offer did not actually intend to take part in an interview. Of the people recruited into the research project, there were often scheduling conflicts or times when interviews were interrupted by daily business only to resume on another day.

Perhaps most interesting was a small contingent of highly supportive individuals within my participant group who would call me to ask when I was going to interview them. The willingness to participate in the project helped to spur it forward. Yet, even when interviewing these participants there was still some hesitancy in the initial interview and during the beginning of follow-up interviews. Like many other researchers before me, I found that turning on an audio recorder shifted dynamics within relationships that preexisted and would outlast the researcher-participant dynamic.

I provided each person that I interviewed with an advance copy of my questions although I did tell them that there would be some unscripted questions that developed through our conversation. Questions from interviews included:

How did you learn to speak Cherokee?
Are there any things/activities that made you more/less comfortable using the Cherokee language?
What would you recommend to someone who wanted to learn to speak Cherokee?

These questions do not seem very revealing and often the answers would leave me with more questions. Some of the prompt questions that I asked are listed here:

What helps someone cross from learner to speaker?
Do you use language with people who you consider speakers?
Have you encountered someone you thought of as a speaker who avoided calling themselves a speaker?

This set of prompt questions are selections from the transcripts of the interviews and show the progression from the basic questions that set the stage to more personal questions as interviews progressed. At times, I would need to rephrase a question in order to get a fuller answer. The full set of scripted interview questions are available in Appendix A.

The semi-structured format used for the interviews meant that the scripted questions were a starting point for conversation and that many questions I asked were not scripted. In each interview, the participant spontaneously made statements about respect for Cherokee language and Cherokee speakers. This pattern indicated the significance of the topic for participants and helped to direct this research.

I was pleased to find that once the initial awkwardness wore off everyone that I interviewed was open and talkative and very willing to share experiences.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed us to explore topics I had not anticipated and allowed the participants to guide this research project. Once I ended an interview and turned off the recording device, the relationship was a bit more formal than usual. It seemed that acknowledging the device was a signal of the temporary formality introduced in new or preexisting relationships. Usually a joke from the participant allowed me to exit my role as researcher at least partially. For people who I was meeting through this process, talk often turned to various common interests before we parted ways. I am still in contact with everyone who I interviewed in one way or another because most of us continue to live and work within the Tahlequah Cherokee community.

Each interview was conducted on a one-to-one basis in a variety of places. There were times when we met in public venues like the NSU Tahlequah campus or a local restaurant during the quiet of the afternoon between the lunch and dinner rush. At other times, we met in an individual's office. I tried to avoid doing the latter in the beginning and to seek a more neutral setting but, oftentimes, participants requested their office specifically. On one occasion, I met a participant in a private home for an interview. In this case, the participant was a friend who I had known for a long time period who told me they wanted to participate when I was discussing my research with them. He had signed an informed consent form, but we had been encountering scheduling difficulties for his first interview. He was visiting me and inquired about when I would interview him. I responded by saying that we needed to set something up. He responded by asking whether we could just do the interview right then. At that time, I realized that in trying to maintain a

distinction between research time and non-research time I was drawing a false dichotomy. As a researcher in my home community, I realized that fieldwork would never really stop and that I would be faced with maintaining roles as community and researcher simultaneously throughout the process (Medicine 2001, Smith 1999, Tengan 2008). In response to this request and my realization, we conducted his first interview as a participant in the research project.

Of the 13 participants, 12 granted me permission to record the interviews with a digital audio recorder. One participant did not wish to be recorded, so I took copious notes during our interview and made sure to follow up after I transcribed the interview to verify I had paraphrased the statements accurately. I personally transcribed and analyzed the audio recordings of the interviews to draw insight into the experiences of L2 users in Cherokee Nation. Through the process of transcription, I was able to revisit the interviews and take in statements and details in a close and focused way that was not possible during the actual initial interview process. Although I did not include pauses or speech cadences, I transcribed each question and response fully. Although it felt time consuming, the experience was quite rewarding. In the transcription process, I redacted identifying information and transcribed pseudonyms where an individual's name was used. This was something that the Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board requested, and I made sure to comply in the interview transcripts. The audio recordings of the interviews will be destroyed when the research project is closed with the Cherokee Nation and University of Oklahoma Institutional Research Boards, leaving only the written transcripts.

Within these pages, I quote people by name who gave me explicit permission to do so. Each participant was afforded the opportunity to use pseudonyms, but all requested that their words be attributed directly to them. I am able to match transcripts with participants because of a numbered matching system that randomly assigned numbers to the de-identified interview transcripts.

During my three years in the field from 2010-2013, I conducted a total of 32 interviews. However, my first interview gave me significant insight into those that would follow and changed the course of my research. I had originally intended to ask interview participants to rate themselves as speakers to try and get a sense of how they saw themselves within the Tahlequah Cherokee community. However, in the interview, this question had a major and unexpected impact. I was interviewing Ryan Mackey, a long time language revitalization advocate and close friend. Over the years that Mackey and I have known one another, I saw his progression from Cherokee novice to someone who could make serious public speeches and teach daylong immersion classes in Cherokee. Although the interview was taking place at his urging because he was very supportive of my research project, the beginning of the interview was still a bit awkward as I fumbled to add the role of formal researcher into the existing friendship we shared. After an initial adjustment period, the interview had been going superbly well. Mackey thoughtfully and articulately answered each question. Although the initial questions were largely about his background, he shared with me a new side of his experiences and I learned quite a bit about him (Mackey 2011, 2012).

My sixth scripted question, “How would you rate yourself as a Cherokee speaker?” threw the whole interview into disarray. After I asked this question, there was a long, awkward silence until Mackey finally replied, “I wouldn’t call myself a speaker” (Mackey 2011). This exchange was an immediate indicator that the perception of what it means to be a speaker was much different than I had originally expected if what I thought was a basic question had such an impact. I used this experience to heighten my awareness of how L1 and L2 users were talking about what it meant to be a speaker in my periods of participant observation. In later interviews, I found that each L2 user who participated reacted as Mackey had to the question and a focus on these reactions is how this research project began to take shape and direction. Following this experience, I was prepared for the reticence from L2 users in referring to themselves as Cherokee speakers in any capacity. They refused the label of speaker in any context. A discussion of this phenomenon will take place in chapters four and five.

When I entered into fieldwork, I had written all of my interview questions to refer to second language speakers but these two L2 users were opposed being referred to as even a second language speaker of Cherokee. Many of the participants are L2 users that I felt were very accomplished because I have witnessed them use Cherokee publicly and be understood in conversation with L1 users. This reticence toward any application of the term speaker, no matter how it was mitigated, was surprising to encounter. This disjuncture caused my first interview to grind to a halt and spurred significant discussion about speakerhood in the Tahlequah Cherokee community in my first two interviews. Through this

experience of interviewing L2 users, I learned that using the term speaker is highly charged. I had initially considered changing the terminology in the interview questions from speaker to learner but instead I continued on with the questions as planned. Instead, because of the strong reaction to these questions, I realized that notions of speakerhood were an important discussion within revitalization initiatives. The complete set of interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

After these first two interviews, I was better prepared to handle the sensitive nature of discussing speakerhood with L2 users. In addition, those interview experiences allowed me to be aware of the strong reactions that came from applying the term speaker. After the modifications to the script, I still continued to introduce the term speaker but did so in a less abrupt manner. I am deeply thankful to the first two participants, Kirk and Mackey, as they had each provided deep discussions of the term speaker and their own reticence in claiming the term. In later interviews, participants did speak on the same issues but I felt that I was able to more sensitively introduce the topic and prompt further discussion because of these two initial participants. In an effort at sensitivity, I also began employing the term user outside of the interview script in prompt questions.

This change motivated significant discussion from subsequent participants and spurred further conversation about the notions of who is and is not considered to be a Cherokee speaker and lent a cogent focus to the research project. Ultimately, my misstep in applying the label of second language speaker to L2 users highlighted an area of disjuncture in the Tahlequah Cherokee community.

By slightly modifying verbiage in the interview questions, I was able to explore this new direction more freely as it does seem to be a category of salience for everyone who was interviewed. Through this experience, I learned that the participants guide the research in very productive ways and was glad that the semi-structured interview format had allowed for this type of flexibility.

Along with the interviews that were conducted, I also engaged in observation during public events and public gatherings of speakers. I made sure to engage frequently in the Cherokee Nation Speaker's Bureau, which is a monthly public gathering that focuses on Cherokee language use. I tried to attend lectures about language that occurred at Cherokee Nation and in the Tahlequah area. During these public events, I would observe, and if something was mentioned that was pertinent, I would approach the person who had made the statement after the end of the event to let them know I would be quoting their public statement. In each case, the individual welcomed me to do so and, in some cases, offered to be an interview participant. Although this did not lead to additional interviews for reasons that were often related to scheduling or geographic proximity, I took it as a positive sign. Where these individual's public statements are quoted in later chapters, it is noted specifically.

Data Analysis

I kept fieldnotes throughout this research and reviewed them consistently but the process of data analysis began in earnest when I began transcribing interview data. I transcribed each interview and this process gave me additional

insights allowing me to see themes emerge from the interview sets as a whole. The themes that had emerged in my fieldnotes also proved to be significant topics in the interviews as well. After each interview was transcribed, I went through each interview noting the significant topics emerging. I began by working with paper copies of the interview transcripts and using color-coding to flag items of similarity. The salient topics were attitudes toward speakerhood, perceptions of language use, and ideologies of authenticity. These themes that were apparent in the interviews also lined up with observations in my fieldnotes. By viewing the data and looking for themes without a predetermined theory, this research used a grounded approach to critical discourse analysis with open-ended coding (Bernard 2002: 460-463).

This approach allowed the themes to be driven by observations and by participant attitudes. Although the semi-structured interview process did direct conversation to a specific area, Cherokee language and revitalization initiatives, it was through the fieldwork process and data analysis that the topic of speakerhood became the lens through which this research focused. Present within speakerhood, ideologies of authenticity, and constructions of peoplehood were areas where social power, cultural competence, and acceptance are negotiated by L2 users. Without a grounded approach, these things may not have come to the forefront of this research. The semi-structured interview process also allowed the freedom to pursue the line of conversation as directed by the interview participant. Once the topic was established as pertaining to language, interview participants tended to stay on the topic and did not require much redirection.

There were times where we drifted into topics that were not germane to speakerhood but as the themes were not predetermined, even these experiences contributed to the overall understanding of L2 user experiences and attitudes.

After identification of major themes present within the interviews, I was able to create a matrix combining observations from fieldnotes and from the interviews into a body of data for review thereby allowing me to identify quotes that were illustrative of the larger themes being expressed by interview participants. By using this approach, negotiation of acceptance by L2 users and the construction of speakerhood as indices for larger issues of social power and peoplehood became evident. Critical discourse analysis was an appropriate frame to identify significant themes within this research and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

This chapter presented the methodology that guided this research project. It presented the rationale for the research setting and reasons for selecting this particular community. The details of community participation for the participant observation approach were described. It also discussed the intricacies of doing fieldwork in my home community with particular attention to my positionality within the Tahlequah Cherokee community. In addition, the methods and process of data analysis were presented.

Chapter 3: Speakerhood in Endangered Language Communities

This research focuses on experiences of those who are using Cherokee as a second language and their negotiation of speakerhood within the context of language revitalization initiatives. In order to frame that discussion, this chapter will provide a brief discussion of language revitalization. Building from this general framework, the chapter will focus on clearly delineating what is meant when the terms speaker, user, and learner are employed as each have separate connotations and are meaningful within this context. Next, the impact of language endangerment will be discussed including how definitions of what it is to be a speaker can shift within these communities making determinations of speakerhood a collaborative effort. This chapter will conclude by highlighting the ways that language endangerment raises the stakes of speakerhood making access to the category more contested.

Language Revitalization Initiatives

Although language death has happened throughout history, it is occurring at a faster rate now. While this research focuses on the revitalization initiative of one language community, it is part of a broader global trend. “By some counts, only 600 of 6,000 or so languages in the world are ‘safe’ from the threat of extinction” (Crystal 2000). This means that the vast majority of the world’s languages are in peril of dying. A language dies, or falls silent, “because there is no one left who knows it, or because those who know it no longer have any domain left in which to use it” (Hinton 2001b: 413). The indigenous languages of North

America are part of this global social crisis with North America home to three of the world's hotspots for language loss (Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages). One of those hotspots for language loss is in Oklahoma, where in 2004, seventeen of the state's thirty-seven indigenous languages were without speakers (Linn 2004). This locates the Cherokee Nation in the Oklahoma hotspot for language loss. Since the time of the survey in 2004, it can be stated with certainty that the numbers of speakers of Oklahoma's indigenous languages continued to decline further increasing the state of urgency. Revitalization initiatives use a wide variety of programs in the fight against language death.

Grenoble and Whaley (2006) state that, "language revitalization involves counter-balancing the forces which have caused or are causing language shift" (21). For many endangered language communities, language shift is a threat that can only be avoided through successful language revitalization initiatives. This reality makes the success of these initiatives a necessity for the survival of the language. Approaches to language revitalization are quite diverse. Some programs have a broad national focus while others have a smaller, local focus (Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 1). In addition to the diversity of size, there is also a broad range of programming that is offered as part of language revitalization initiatives. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) identify six types of language revitalization program; full immersion school-based, partial immersion school-based, endangered language as second language, master-apprentice, community based, and language reclamation (51-64). To clarify, the master-apprentice method is also an immersion method (Hinton, Vera, & Steele 2002). In addition,

some community-based programs may employ immersion as parts of adult language classes or as part of camps. Outside of these methods, there are home-based language learning methods that can, and do, include immersion to increase an individual's or a family's language skills (Hinton 2013). The goals for the different types of revitalization initiatives may vary broadly. Ultimately though the goals and scope of a language revitalization initiative should be determined by a community and its starting point should be based on the vitality of the language to be revitalized (Fishman 1991, Hinton 2001, Grenoble and Whaley 2006). Language revitalization initiatives can range from being focused on assessment and planning to efforts to incorporate the language into national government structures (Hinton 2001: 6). Therefore, while increased use of the language may always be a long-term goal of a language revitalization initiative, it may be necessary to first implement short-term goals of assessment and planning before expanding focus to creation of new speakers or language domains.

Defining Speakerhood

Determining how many people are speakers of a language is an important step in language revitalization assessment and planning (Hinton 2001: 6). The only exception would be if the effort were a reclamation project for a language that no longer has speakers (Amery as cited by Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 63). Although determining speakerhood among active reclamation projects is not the focus of this research project, there is some potential overlap in the negotiation of speakerhood discussed in Chapter Four. Where there is an existing language

community with speakers, determining who is a speaker is a complex process made up of multiple steps. First, the reasons for determining speakerhood must be considered along with the criteria that will be used. In addition, there could be multiple purposes for gathering such information that may affect existing language programs. Also of particular concern are the roles that diverse stakeholders may have in the process of determining speakerhood. These stakeholders may include speakers, learners, cultural leaders within the community, language advocates, community members with useful expertise, and outside consultants (ILI 2004a). As Irvine and Gal (2000) so aptly state, “There is no ‘view from nowhere,’ no gaze that is not positioned” (36). While that list of stakeholders is by no means exhaustive nor should the categories be considered as separate, it does communicate the broad range of roles that individuals hold, some simultaneously.

Determining how many speakers there are of a particular language can serve useful purposes. Information about the number of speakers could be used to indicate the status of the language. In some cases, a lack of speakers has served as a clarion call to action. Information about speakers can also influence the type of language programs that will be employed, or cause a change in the programming already in place. For example, the Master-Apprentice Approach was pioneered by communities with a very small population of speakers to quickly build language competency through intensive immersion (Hinton, Vera, & Steele 2002). While speakers could be counted as part of a census simply to add to information about a language community, it typically is used toward other goals within revitalization initiatives. The act of gathering the information through a survey process is an

opportunity to educate the community about the state of the language, develop short and long term goals, and obtain information about the process of language shift in the community (ILI 2004a: 2). These are all good reasons to collect information about the number of speakers within a language community.

While there are many reasons to determine how many speakers are in a language community, there are also various criteria that may be used to determine who is, and who is not, a speaker of the language. Bloomfield (1933: 54) defined a speaker of a language as any person who uses the language to communicate with others. While this definition is serviceable and is certainly inclusive, it does not contain enough nuance for this discussion. This definition presents a dichotomous understanding of speakerhood, either a person is a speaker or is not with that determination resting solely on whether the individual is using the language for communication. However, speakerhood in most language communities is full of ambiguities. As language is a social function developed through negotiation with others, speakerhood is also a negotiation.

Defining speakerhood is somewhat sticky although proficiency in the language is definitely a factor. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) offers as part of its services an Oral Proficiency Interview in which “proficiency is defined as the ability to use the language to communicate meaningful information, in a spontaneous interaction, and in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language” (ACTFL, Inc 2012: 1). In addition, the proficiency defined is not presented as an either/or distinction but as part of a six level continuum with three sublevels for each of those six levels.

Although comprehension and appropriateness of communication is judged by the standards of native speakers, one does not have to be a native speaker to be considered a proficient speaker in this paradigm. In their discussion of language revitalization assessment, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) present a continuum for language proficiency that places speakers on a scale of fluency as follows: “fluent speakers – highly proficient speakers – semi-speakers – non-speakers” (162-163). Within the discussion of proficiency, the highest level identified is “fully fluent speakers with native knowledge of the language” (Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 162). The authors are careful to couch this highest level of proficiency as native knowledge of the language and this careful distinction leaves the door open for non-native speakers to be considered if they function at a high level of proficiency. The Indigenous Language Institute (2004b) when discussing whether fluency in the language matters for teaching states that, “speakers whose first language is the Native language are fluent speakers” and that “speakers who can converse on most topics easily and express anything they want to say, and that their speech differ little from the people who learned it as their first language are also fluent speakers” (10). To some degree, these definitions conflate fluency and the knowledge of native speakers but none of them say that one must be a native speaker of a language to be a speaker of that language.

Most who work with language initiatives of any type, and specifically with revitalization initiatives, recognize that there are varying levels of proficiency. Fluency and proficiency seem to be used interchangeably. Fluency can be defined as the ability to speak a language well (Merriam-Webster). In the previous scales

of proficiency, one is considered to have higher proficiency, or fluency, the closer that one approaches native speaker patterns of speech. Although native speakers are commonly regarded as fluent speakers who have learned the language in early childhood as a first language, there are complexities that can cast this definition into disarray (Davies 2003). If a person begins using a second language to the exclusion of their first language, they may have difficulty when beginning to use the first language again. This phenomenon is described as a challenge when employing the master-apprentice method with a speaker who is not accustomed to speaking their native language, or first language, on a daily basis (Hinton, Vera, & Steele 2002). In addition, there are a number of terms that are employed by professionals working in both descriptive linguistics and by professionals who study the loss of a first language. The term semi-speaker has been used to describe individuals who speak a language with “low prestige and limited currency despite the fact that they speak it imperfectly” (Dorian 1980: 87). The term latent speaker, also sometimes referred to as a passive speaker, “is defined as an individual raised in an environment where the ancestral language was spoken but who did not become a speaker of that language” (Basham and Fathman 2008: 577). Other terms that are used that are similar are partial speaker, which is similar to semi-speaker, rusty speaker, which is similar to the phenomenon of a first language that has been replaced by a second language, and receptive bilingual, which is similar to the passive or latent speaker. This wide variety of terminology shows that there is not a uniform understanding of speakerhood, even among those who work with language initiatives. To add further complexity, notions of speakerhood must

accommodate varying degrees of fluency among native speakers when language shift is occurring.

There seems to be an intrinsic correlation between native speakers and fluency. In cases where the native language has fallen into disuse, as the terms semi-speaker, latent speaker, and passive speaker show, this correlation tends to break down. While it seems that this correlation can be supported where the individual has maintained their native language, there are questions about the transparency and utility of the term native speaker (Davies 2003, Lee 2005, Leonard & Haynes 2010). To be a native speaker of a language, it seems that individuals must have acquired the language as a first language in early childhood. However, if they acquired more than one language concurrently, they would be a native speaker of more than one language.

Yet, simply stating that a person is a native speaker of the first language they acquired and that native speaker type language use is desirable is not enough. The elements that make a native speaker's language use a desirable goal must also be identified. These are six factors that define what it means to be a native speaker (Lee 2005). These factors are:

1. "The individual acquired the language in early childhood (Davies, 1991; McArthur, 1992; Phillipson, 1992) and maintains use of the language (Kubota 2004; McArthur, 1992),
2. The individual has intuitive knowledge of the language (Davies, 1991; Stern 1983),
3. The individual is able to produce fluent spontaneous discourse (Davies, 1991; Maum, 2002; Medgyes, 1992),
4. The individual is communicatively competent (Davies, 1991; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1992), able to communicate within different social settings (Stern, 1983),
5. The individual identifies with or is identified by a language community (Davies 1991; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Nayar, 1998)

6. The individual does not have a foreign accent (Coulmas, 1981; Medgyes, 1992; Scovel, 1969, 1988)."

(Lee 2005: 156)

These six factors broadly encompass what seem to be minimum expectations for a native speaker with a defined set of characteristics. This set of factors is hinted at in other definitions of proficiency, or of fluency but these six factors clearly delineate early exposure and maintenance of the language, intuitive knowledge, spontaneous language use, communicative competence, identity, and lack of a foreign accent.

While Lee (2005) presents a very clear picture of the abilities that a native speaker possesses, Cook (2008) presents three ways of regarding the concept of native speaker: 1) A person is a native speaker of the first language acquired in childhood, 2) A person is a native speaker if they embody the characteristics of what it is to be a native speaker, or 3) A person is a native speaker if they adopt the identity of the language community (171-172). While the first tenet presented by Cook is fairly straightforward, the second tenet is frustratingly ambiguous possibly because Cook is seeking to accommodate for the broad variations existing even within a single language community. Cook's third tenet of self-identification as a member of the community illustrates how acceptance into a community plays a role in speakerhood. This tenet indicates malleability to the social aspect of speakerhood that is also present in the second tenet in regards to language use. The approach begins to account for the how speakerhood is informed by the social context of the language community where it is defined.

Davies (2003) problematizes the native speaker category by examining the native/non-native speaker distinction. Davies notes that it is seemingly simple but contains numerous assumptions and implications about both sides of the dichotomy. Problematizing the native speaker category is important within this research because of the implicit conflation between native speaker and the general definition of speakerhood by Cherokee L2 users. Conflating speakerhood with the native speaker category creates inaccessibility for L2 users that can never be breached which can prove detrimental to second language acquisition efforts. Therefore, to deconstruct the category of native speaker, thereby increasing access for those acquiring it as a second language increases the potential for self-identification as a part of the language community. Ultimately, Davies (2003) makes a salient argument that the distinction is a negotiation of power and identity. Making this argument is important because it shows that language, and language use, carries a social component that contributes to how individual users are accepted, and how their negotiation of acceptance, can be determined by their self-identification, or lack of it, as members of the linguistic community.

Identifying the factors that define a native speaker is useful. However, there are fundamental problems with uncritically assigning native speaker as the standard for determining proficiency or fluency. As these factors are performance based for the most part, individuals who no longer speak of their native language may not be able to satisfy the requirements to be considered a native speaker. The latent speaker is a phenomenon that tests the boundaries of what it means to be a native speaker thereby interrogating the conflation of native speaker and fluency.

In addition, there are also other factors that cause disruption in the correlation between native speaker and fluency. Even when factors are clearly delineated to define native speaker, one must ask which native speakers are being referenced to provide the base against which proficiency, or fluency, will be measured.

Every language community, and individual, has significant variations in their use of language (Bakhtin 1981). For example, English exists in multiple versions throughout the world which problematizes the use of American or British English as a standard version of English (Hickey 2012). The idea that a native speaker has both intrinsic knowledge of a language as well as communicative competence presents an explanation for why individuals need more than linguistic knowledge in order to function within a language community (Hymes 1970). To further clarify what is meant by communicative competence:

“I expect the native speaker to have internalised the rules of use, the appropriate use of language, to know when to use what and how to speak to others. I expect control of strategies and pragmatics, an automatic feeling for the connotation of words, for folk etymologies, for what is appropriate to various domains, for the import of a range of speech acts, in general for appropriate membership behaviour in him/herself and of implicit – and very rapid – detection of others as being or not being members” (Davies 2002: 98).

Therefore, communicative competence is both situational and contextual while also being culturally bound. Appropriateness is determined by the members of the language community but issues of prestige and standardization can make this problematic as well.

The term native speaker is used as code for a constellation of attributes that includes linguistic competence, communicative competence, identity, early

exposure to the language, consistent maintenance of the language, intuitive knowledge of the language, spontaneous discourse, and lack of foreign accent. However, this conflation can become problematic in cases of first language loss where an individual's native language has not been maintained. To add further complexity, the native speaker distinction seems to be used for convenience to refer to a high level of proficiency, or fluency, as well. This uncritical use of the term seems to imply that high levels of proficiency are solely the domain of the native speaker rather than being attainable by those acquiring it as a second language.

Speaker, Learner, User: Terms of Proficiency

If one were to set aside the requirement of early exposure, it seems that performing at the proficiency, or fluency, level of a native speaker is a possibility for individuals who are seeking to acquire a language. It may be an arduous, though not impossible, journey but it can be argued that once the identified elements of proficiency are attained the only remaining difference between native and non-native speakers is the inability of the non-native speaker to take on the identity of native speaker (Davies 2002). Although there are numerous references to native speakers and near-native fluency, there is not transparency about what communicative skills are unique to native speakers, or about how speakerhood is determined in general (Leonard & Haynes 2010). The lack of definition leads to ambiguity of use and to confusion around the term speaker. In order to clarify use

of terms within this research project, a short discussion will be included here for the terms speaker, learner, and user.

During the early formation of this research project, the term speaker was employed to discuss anyone who used Cherokee language. This research project was not intended as a survey device nor was it intended to measure individual language proficiency. Therefore, anyone who volunteered that they used Cherokee language would be categorized as either a native speaker or non-native speaker. Native speakers were those who had learned the language as their first language in early childhood while non-native speakers were those who had acquired, or were acquiring, the language as a second language after their native language. The category non-native speaker was expected to mitigate the social power in applying the term speaker. However, as the term native carries significant weight within Native North American communities employing the term non-native speaker could have unintended ramifications. This term, even when discussing second language acquisition, had the potential negative ramifications of branding an individual as someone who was not a tribal citizen, or not a community member. Therefore, the terms native and non-native were switched to first and second language speakers. However, when interviews began, the term speaker raised objections. Although I had thought through the potential ramifications and had defined the term speaker as anyone who used Cherokee for any purpose, I was not able to remove the social power, or the conflation of the term speaker with that of native speaker, by stating my own definition.

The majority of people who participated in this research actively referred to themselves as learners. This decision will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. The term learner can be a descriptive and useful category and seems to be used as a safe alternative to claiming speakerhood (Davies 2002). Rather than identifying as a person who is using the language, an individual who identifies as a learner seems to be implying that they are in study of the language rather than an active user. While the term learner is useful, it also seems to broadly separate those within the category from speakerhood. This research did not wish to deepen that dichotomy, therefore, the term learner was not included as a category of reference. This choice is a departure because most individuals acquiring Cherokee as a second language in the Tahlequah Cherokee community refer to themselves as learners. However, conceptualizing oneself as a learner distances speakerhood in distinct and meaningful ways. Where speakerhood is perceived as the constellation of the six factors that include linguistic and communicative competence, those who refuse speaker for learner are rejecting the application of all six attributes not just the distinction of early exposure.

This research is cognizant of the potentially social ramifications of designating individuals as speakers. However, in order to discuss the perspectives of those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language while accurately describing their relationship to the language, another term was selected. The term user was selected to describe the any person who utilizes a language (Cook 2002). The term second language (L2) user “is any person who uses another language than his or her first language (L1) that is to say, the one learnt first as a child”

(Cook 2002: 1). The corollary to this distinction is the first language (L1) user who is using the language that they learned first as a child. These distinctions are necessary within this research as the L1 and L2 users who are interviewed have salient differences in their perspectives on speakerhood and access to speakerhood. Designations of speakerhood can potentially carry significant social prestige, or stigma, depending on the social climate of the language within the local and/or national community (Evans 2001). For this reason, any determinations of speakerhood may have long-term ramifications (Leonard and Haynes 2010). Therefore, pronouncements of speakerhood or statements about individual language proficiency, or fluency, are something this research seeks to avoid. Therefore, the term user while being accurately descriptive is not an index of social power, or linguistic competency, in the same way as the term speaker.

The term speaker is one that L2 users of Cherokee refuse to adopt but a discussion of other possible terms has taken place among L1 and L2 Cherokee users in the past. Wyman Kirk, a professor in the Cherokee Language degree program at Northeastern State University and a Cherokee L2 user, shared a story with me about a group of L1 and L2 Cherokee users who discussed the complexities of speakerhood informally during a break at an Oklahoma Native Language Association meeting several years ago. Unfortunately, the designation of ᏓᏍᏗᏍᏗ/idvtisgi/user did not travel past this group to become part of common parlance within the Tahlequah Cherokee community. Despite that, it is worthwhile to note that discussions about negotiating speakerhood have occurred and that the term user had been previously conceptualized independently of this research.

Language Endangerment and Speakerhood

Language revitalization initiatives are a high stakes arena where definitions of speakerhood are negotiated by diverse groups of stakeholders. The result is one that impacts all parties involved but perhaps most strongly impacts L2 users who are negotiating space within the revitalization initiative. In an endangered language situation where language shift is occurring, determining who can be considered a speaker has significant short and long-term impacts (Leonard and Haynes 2010). In this milieu, L2 users must negotiate and then claim, refuse, or, possibly, contest what it means to be a speaker. There are a number of other factors that weigh heavily in defining speakerhood including communicative competence, early exposure to and maintenance of the language, spontaneous discourse, intuitive knowledge of the language, identifying with the language community, and lack of a foreign accent (Lee 2005). These factors are dynamic, contextually bound, and socially and culturally informed creating standards for determining proficiency that can be highly subjective.

There are approximately 5,000 - 7,000 languages in the world (Crystal 2000: 11). Every language is dynamic and manifests change over time that stems from social factors (Labov 2001). Language change is a normal process that has always been part of the global landscape, as has language death. In addition to language change being motivated by internal factors, in an endangered language context, language change, or perhaps language shift, may result from contact with another language (O'Shannessy 2011). Language change that occurs may complicate issues of defining speakerhood in any community, but especially in an

endangered language community, where the native speaker population may not be robust. Ultimately, speakerhood must be recognized as a category that is contextual and that may shift in response to the needs of the stakeholder constructing the definition.

A government or governmental organization, the endangered language revitalization program, outside consultants working with the endangered language or language community, teachers, L1 users, L2 users, and language purists may each offer different definitions of speakerhood for a particular language. To add another layer of complexity, some stakeholders may occupy more than one role serving as an influential part of the definition process. A collaborative model that gives the existing language community priority in determining characteristics of speakerhood is one possible approach to determining speakerhood (Leonard & Haynes 2010). This sort of collaborative model presupposes that there will be agreement within a language community over definitions of speakerhood. However, with notions of speakerhood shifting in response to the status of the endangered language, agreement on constructions of speakerhood within a language community may not be possible (Evans 2001). In addition, political, cultural, and social factors rather than linguistic knowledge may negatively or positively alter an individual's ability to be considered as a speaker (Evans 2001). Therefore, collaboration within a community is not necessarily a prescriptive cure for issues in defining speakerhood within an endangered language community.

On the other end of the spectrum "in defense of the lone wolf" are Crippen and Robinson (2013) who argue "...there are many situations in which a

documentary linguist working alone can produce important results in an ethical manner” (123-124). This perspective is more measured than it might suggest and cautions about making collaboration prescriptive or mandatory for linguists working in language documentation. While not specifically addressing speakerhood, being cautious about collaboration is a potentially valid statement. Unfortunately, the authors seem to sidestep the long lasting impact of documentary linguistics and assignments of socially powerful categories such as speakerhood on an endangered language. Language reclamation projects like that of Wampanoag (Baird 2013: 21) and Miami (Leonard 2011: 135) rely solely on language documentation to reintroduce languages that had fallen silent. Documentary linguistics can have a tremendous short and long-term impact on the communities and languages that are the focus of their work and highlighting the inherent difficulties of collaboration does not mitigate this responsibility.

The discussion around collaboration centered on the role of outside consultants in determining speakerhood. However, linguists who are outside consultants have a stronger focus on linguistic performance in one of the six identified categories for documentary or descriptive linguistics. Dynamics within a language community can present significant variables to negotiate for internal constructions of speakerhood. This internal community contestation may create a less receptive environment for collaboration within the community as well as between community members and outside consultants. Specific issues that create contestation are attitudes of purism and notions of authenticity.

Shifting notions of speakerhood that may not Evans (2001) points out the notion of speaker can shift contextually according to the vitality of the language in a community and may also be imbued with issues of cultural prestige or stigma leading to the adoption or refusal of speakerhood. Although Evans was working within the Australian context, the idea that notions of speakerhood are determined by community standards rather than determinations of linguistic competency or usage is broadly applicable for other language communities.

Cherokee Revitalization Initiatives and Measurements of Proficiency

When considering the vitality of a language, the demographics of the speaker population have a direct significance (Kincade 1991, Krauss 1992, Wurm 1991). It is very important to identify speakers of the endangered language within a community in order to determine what type of language revitalization initiative should be pursued (Hinton 2001, Grenoble and Whaley 2006). However, determining who is included as part of the population of speakers can present complexities. It is feasible to theorize that the tensions and complexities of speakerhood have always existed in the Tahlequah Cherokee community but I would argue that the evident language loss and recognition of language endangerment serves to reinforce the notion that speakerhood is an elite status imbued with social power and cultural meaning.

Carnegie researcher Albert Wahrhaftig documented the increasing use of English language in homes with two Cherokee speaking parents and this seems to mark a watershed period for language shift among active Cherokee speech

communities (Wahrhaftig 1970). Although Wahrhaftig notes that communities were still actively using primarily Cherokee at this time, English was becoming more prevalent despite Cherokee usually winning out in usage during what he termed showdowns between the two languages (Wahrhaftig 1970: 9). Over thirty years later in 2003, the Cherokee Nation sought to ascertain the state of the language through a survey funded by the Administration for Native Americans. The results of the survey were disheartening as researchers were unable to find any Cherokee speakers under the age of 40 and only 14% of the 300-member survey population was master, fluent, or competent proficiency in Cherokee (Cherokee Nation 2003: 21). The final report stated that the Cherokee language is highly endangered according to the Krauss and Fishman scales for language vitality and can be considered severely endangered by the UNESCO model (Cherokee Nation 2003, Peter, Hirata-Edds, and Montgomery Anderson 2008).

To illustrate the complexity of how speakerhood is regarded within Cherokee Nation, the 2002 language survey that was conducted through an Administration for Native Americans (ANA) grant used a five point scale to determine proficiency, or fluency, and did not differentiate between first and second language users (Cherokee Nation 2003: 12). The scale is provided below:

1. Novice or Passive: Ability to understand common words or phrases, without deeper comprehension of their meaning, none or very limited written symbol recognition. This was phrased as “understand Cherokee but cannot speak”
2. Apprentice or Symbolic: Ability to use common phrases and sentences by participating. It was phrased as “understand and speak a little Cherokee, but cannot read or write”
3. Social Competence or Functional: Ability to speak the language in social settings with basic understanding of rules of usage with a moderate speaking vocabulary and recognition of some written

- symbols of the language. This was phrased as “can carry on a simple conversation in Cherokee but may not be able to read and write”
4. **Fluent:** Ability to understand and speak the language with confidence, and understanding of normal syntax, grammar, rules of form, with an extensive vocabulary and recognition and/or use of most written symbols of the language. This was phrased as “highly fluent or able to speaker Cherokee well and with some ability to read and write”
 5. **Master or Creative:** Able to understand, speak, read, write, and translate the language fluently in ways that create new word usage and structure, showing a deeper understanding of the language and its potential new uses. This was the only level not self-reported. If respondents answered positive to a number of questions involving ability to speak, read, translate, and write the individual was selected and assessed to be “master” level. Three individuals were identified to be at the Master level.

(Cherokee Nation 2003: 12-13)

This scale reveals a complex and multifaceted relationship between proficiency and language use evident in governmental attitudes toward Cherokee speakerhood. In addition, through the category of Master speaker, there is a recognition of an elite class of Cherokee speaker that has special abilities.

The five-point scale continues to be used through the Cherokee Nation Office of Language Translation certification tests for Cherokee teachers and Cherokee language proficiency tests. The Language Proficiency Certification began in 2002 (Cherokee Nation 2002) and uses the same five-point scale as the 2002 ANA survey for denoting proficiency. The scale is as follows:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Novice: | Understand Common Words/Phrases |
| Apprentice: | Speak Common Words/Phrases |
| Competent: | Speak with a Minimal Vocabulary |
| Fluent: | Understand and Speak with an Extensive and Growing Vocabulary |
| Masters: | Ability to Design and Teach Language Tools |

An example of certification letter containing the scale can be found in Appendix B.

The scale itself offers good information on the way that speakerhood is regarded at

the governmental level. Although, it is not explicitly stated in the certification scale, Masters level cannot be reached unless an individual is literate in the Cherokee syllabary similar to the ANA survey definition. The certification test was initiated to gauge the fluency of Cherokee Nation employees and to encourage others to better their proficiency through a reward system (Cherokee Nation 2002). Since its inception, around 100 employees have taken the test (Chavez 2012). This number is fairly low as “The CN (Cherokee Nation) and its business enterprises employ approximately 6,000 persons...” (Raymond 2008: 2). Despite having a monetary incentive (Cherokee Nation 2012), there are relatively few employees that have taken the certification test. Despite a paucity of volunteers for examination, the notion of Masters level proficiency, and of Master Speakers, is significant within the Cherokee Nation government and within Cherokee communities. Evidence at the governmental level is for a higher remuneration for higher proficiency scores and through the inclusion of language proficiency and linguistic knowledge in the Cherokee National Treasure award. The award recognizes skill in language and high linguistic knowledge alongside skill in traditional and contemporary art forms thus establishing linguistic skill on a par with artistry in Cherokee Nation governmental programs and communities.

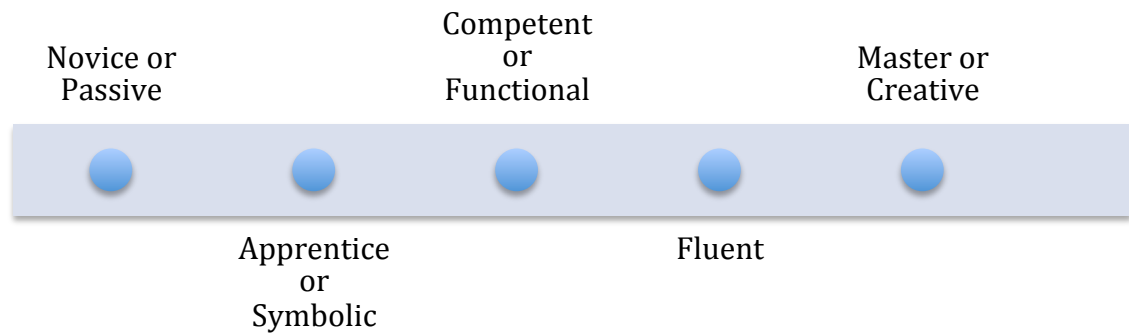


Figure 2: Five Point Scale for Cherokee Language Proficiency (Cherokee Nation 2003: 12-13)

The 2002 ANA language survey was a call to arms revealing the stark reality of endangerment for Cherokee language. In the 1960's, children were entering school having acquired Cherokee as a first language in the home but in 2002 it was clear that there were no speakers under the age of 40. The survey focused on the use of language and the attitudes of respondents about the importance of the language. They found that the locations of use for Cherokee were dwindling but that people felt the language was of high importance (Cherokee Nation 2003). This information was then used to create a wider array of revitalization initiatives to increase language proficiency of individuals, increase locations for use, and to heighten the status of the language. Despite the call to arms, there are no current numbers existing for the population of speakers with the most recent available numbers being at least a decade old. In 2004, Cherokee Nation estimated a population of 10,000 Cherokee speakers when contacted by Dr. Mary Linn for a survey of Oklahoma's Native Languages (Linn 2004). This is the exact same

number available from Mithun from five years earlier (1999: 419). Then, in 2014, Ethnologue provides that the Cherokee language has a population of 10,400 speakers (Ethnologue 2014). However, in the intervening years, it can be stated with certainty that the number has diminished. Therefore, there is a real and emergent need to update the survey data from 2002 (Raymond 2008). The current population of Cherokee Nation stands at over 315,000 citizens. Even the most optimistic estimates of speakers mean that less than 5% of the total Cherokee citizenry are speakers of the language. In this milieu of language shift, the ensuing emphasis on language revitalization has caused speakerhood to become a career path, an elite status, and an area of social power and cultural capital that may not have previously existed when the speaker population was more redolent. Therefore, perhaps the refusal of speakerhood by L2 users is in response to the increasing significance of Cherokee speakerhood to this development.

Chapter 4: Negotiating Speakerhood

Cherokee is the language that drifted around me throughout my life. It was the language that adults spoke to one another and the language that they used to preach every weekend. Throughout the years that I was growing up it was ever present but it was never something anyone expected me to use. I remember taking a Cherokee language class in the 8th grade where people assumed I was a speaker but never asked me to use the language. I remember bringing the homework to my grandparent's house and my mother proudly saying that I was doing my homework in the syllabary and even at home, the language continue to eddy and swirl around me without any expectations that I would use it as well. Then, when I was older and began to haltingly use Cherokee to my grandparent's approbation, the chasm between the speakers and me in my life seemed insurmountable. As my competency grew, I began to think the goal of having enough of a command of the language to be a speaker was similar to chasing the horizon. It was a definite goal that was just out of reach no matter how much ground I gained. As a serious student of the language, I take every possible opportunity for learning and have some communicative skills but have never felt comfortable describing myself as a speaker. Yet, it wasn't until I began this research, that I realized other L2 users felt this same lack of comfort in the language as well. By thinking about speakerhood only in terms of language and not social context, I was missing a vital part of the way that this category is constructed by second language users within Cherokee communities. In addition, I was not considering significant obstacles to speakerhood that I was constructing based on the social meaning of speakerhood.

Definitions of speakerhood are presented in Chapter Three and the social components of speakerhood are also presented in that chapter. The topic of salience presented was the need for L2 users to self-identify as part of the language community to bridge the gap in social power and identity represented by the native/non-native speaker dichotomy (Cook 2002). To elucidate this theme, this chapter will focus on the relationship between language and social power and how it influences L2 users refusal of speakerhood. First, language and social power will be framed with a general overview of the topic. Next, the topic will be discussed with special attention to the ways that Cherokee language ideologies of legitimacy and authenticity inform constructions of speakerhood. This chapter will then highlight the ways that these ideologies are causing L2 users to reject any application of speakerhood or any claim of speakerhood. The ideology of legitimacy is a double-edged sword that imbues L1 users with significant social power as speakers while that same meaning is what causes L2 users to shy away from any claims of speakerhood. Perceptions of speakerhood from L2 users will be included here along with how inauthentic claims to speakerhood have deleterious social impacts on the claimants. Ultimately, the disjuncture between L1 and L2 user perceptions of speakerhood significantly contribute to understanding of the social context of revitalization initiatives.

Language and Social Power

Viewing language as a discrete element with “abstract objectivity,” apart from its social context, was, at one time, a matter of course for the study of

languages (Voloshinov 1986). However, by situating language within its social context, it can be seen as ideational, reflective of social positioning, instrumental, or, perhaps, as distortion (Blommaert 1999, Fishman 1991, Gal and Woolard 2001, Hymes 1971, Kroskrity 2000, Kroskrity and Field 2009, Schiefflin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998, Silverstein 1979, Woolard 1985). The social context of a language has a major impact on its form and function. Chapter Five will consider the impact of culture on speakerhood by applying a model of peoplehood and its tenets of cultural competence, family ties, and community placement. While these are significant factors impacting the role and function of language, power and politics also significantly influence the use of and perception of language. Therefore, in order to fully consider the social factors affecting language use, this chapter will examine speakerhood as a negotiation of power.

To this end, I will present the complex relationship of language and social power in an endangered language community. While language use is a key component in how L2 users construct speakerhood, respect for speakerhood was consistently listed as a reason for not using language with L1 users. This is meaningful because it signals social power structures that affect the use of language within the community. By examining the ways in which L2 users are affected by the politics and power structures of the community, revitalization initiatives can determine ways to nurture and support L2 user efforts at negotiating acceptance as emerging speakers. While the majority of L2 users who participated in this research refused to consider themselves as speakers, this refusal, and its impact on the L1 users in the community, also provides significant

insight for the dynamics of social power in endangered language revitalization initiatives.

In order to fully consider the way that social power is employed through language use, one must recognize that language has the ability to impede or improve one's social aspirations, is inculcated through societal systems and serves to iterate and reinforce social stratification by assigning the highest prestige to elite level speech varieties (Bourdieu 1991). Within this frame, language has symbolic power that Bourdieu (1991) defines as:

“... that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu 1991: 164).

Therefore, individuals are imbued with the ability to exercise power, subjugate others, express dominance, engage in resistance and this requires the complicity of all parties involved (Bourdieu 1991). While this perspective on power represents individuals as agentive, even if complicit, another perspective on power is presented by Foucault (1972, 1982). Rather than being located in any specific source, power is diffuse and relational existing at multiple levels but not belonging to any party (Foucault 1971, 1982). In both of these perspectives, power is wielded from multiple platforms and permeates every interaction.

Deconstructing the notion of power is key to understanding how and why L2 users are refusing to claim speakerhood in response to the social power associated with speakerhood. While considering power is important, it should not be forgotten that language as a system is total social fact gaining meaning from negotiation and being influenced by political concerns in a multivalent manner

with multiple varieties (Bakhtin 1981). The variances in language throughout a linguistic community do play a significant role in expressions of social power through language use (Bauman and Briggs 2003, Labov 2001). For this reason, critical discourse analysis that connects knowledge and power (Foucault 1972) is a useful model for analyzing the power of speakerhood in endangered language communities. Within this research, L2 users perceive high proficiency in Cherokee as the standard for speakerhood. These perceptions that high proficiency in Cherokee is the minimum standard for performance inhibits language use by L2 users. Therefore, utilizing critical discourse analysis as a tool to examine the coupling of knowledge of language and social power is an appropriate theoretical frame for this research.

Critical discourse analysis provides a framework for examining the politics of inequality and manifestations of power in language use along with contestations and negotiations of power and inequality (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000, Bauman and Briggs 2003, Fairclough 1992, Van Dijk 1993, Wodak 1995). In this research, the relationship between knowledge and social power in language use will be presented through L2 users relationships and refusal of speakerhood. When social power manifests as control over the process of revitalization, ideologies of legitimacy emerge as a method of controlling access to speakerhood. In the Tahlequah Cherokee community, L1 users are not constructing speakerhood as a category limited to only native speakers but L2 users definitions of speakerhood are nonetheless functioning in this way. Therefore, according to Cherokee L2 users, early exposure to language is a major criterion for acceptance as a speaker.

Use of Cherokee language, particularly in public spheres, represents the most powerful form of language use. However, a negative corollary to this expression of power is the questioning of the individual's fluency, or proficiency.

Small populations of speakers and limited linguistic resources place an increased sense of urgency on negotiations of social power in language revitalization initiatives. Ideologies of negativity from the dominant language community about endangered, or minority languages, can also adversely affect revitalization initiatives (Crystal 2003, Dorian 1989, Grounds 2007, Skutnabb-Kangas & Philipson 2001). The ideology of contempt that is predominant in Western language ideologies subjugates indigenous languages creating a climate unfavorable to indigenous language use or revitalization (Dorian 1989: 12). This ideology of contempt for non-Western language feeds movements that explicitly subjugate other languages such as English-only legislation (Grounds 2007). Ultimately though, it is the language ideologies present within a community that either reinforce or derail revitalization efforts (Bunte 2009, Fishman 1970, Kroskrity 1998, Meek 2007, Meek 2010). Language boundaries between communities that are reinforced through language use, such as storytelling, can create division between peoples who share cultural similarity (O'Neill 2012). The link between knowledge and power is quite complex. Within Paiute revitalization initiatives, it is a positive force contributing to ongoing programs (Bunte 2009). While, ideologies that regard language use as the domain of elderhood can have less positive effects (Meek 2007). Language ideologies from outside the language

community have significant effects on revitalization initiatives but these initiatives are primarily driven, or inhibited, by community language ideologies.

As discussed in Chapter Three, defining speakerhood in an endangered language community is about linguistic competency but it is also about much more. Language use and speakerhood are also avenues for the expression of social power. When language endangerment is high, social power is heightened because the last speakers of the language take on critical importance (Evans 2001, Yamamoto 1995). The Cherokee language is certainly in a severely endangered position by any scale of language vitality. There are no conversational language L1 or L2 users under the age of 40, conversational language users represent a very small percentage of the population of Cherokees, and there are no children who are learning Cherokee as a first language within the home (Cherokee Nation 2003: 16-20). This data was gathered in 2002 and if it is adjusted for the passage of time, it can be stated that there are no L1 users under the age of 50. Although there have been some conversational L2 users produced since the publication of the report, my observations confirm that these are relatively low numbers in comparison to the over 315,000 citizens of Cherokee Nation (Cherokee Nation 2014). Holly Davis stated (e-mail to author on February 24, 2014) that the Cherokee Nation Immersion Charter School has 88 students in preschool to sixth grade and has graduated 14. This is a great achievement but it is a relatively small fraction of the L2 users when regarded with the total Cherokee population. To illustrate the decrease in number of speakers at a public event celebrating the achievements of the Cherokee Language Program as part of an International

Mother Language Day event on February 21, 2014, Joe Byrd, former Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, former and current Cherokee Tribal Councilman, and educator, stated that in 1987 there were 11 members of the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council who spoke Cherokee but that now in 2014 there is only one. Through personal experience and communication with speakers from different communities, I would suggest the number of conversational speakers is between 3,000-5,000 with the individuals composing the population being almost exclusively 50 years or older. However, since there has not been a recent census of speakers conducted, it is hard to quantify this statement. It can be firmly stated that the number of Cherokee speakers continues to decrease, and as it does, the social significance of being a speaker increases as well.

To Be Cherokee, You Must Speak Cherokee

Within Cherokee communities, being a speaker of the Cherokee language is characterized as a necessary element for being a Cherokee. I have heard Durbin Feeling state in many different contexts that the use of Cherokee is how you know if someone is Cherokee or not and he stated this again very strongly when I interviewed him for this research (Feeling 2012a). This linking of Cherokee language use to Cherokeeeness and Cherokee peoplehood dates back to at least the 1960's and is indicative of how language ideologies are 'iconizing,' exhibit fractal recursivity, and erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37-38). Idealization is present in the ideology and discourse that places language as an indicator of authentic Cherokee identity. Fractal recursivity is present in the development of

intergroup oppositions, in this case speaker/learner. Erasure is present in the lack of recognition of L2 users as integral parts of the process, and future, of Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives. In the 1960's, being Cherokee was a social concept based on whether a person lived in a Cherokee community, whether a person took part in Cherokee community events, and whether a person spoke Cherokee (Wahrhaftig 1970). It was the combination of these factors that composed the social context for definitions of Cherokeeeness and the lack thereof for definitions of whiteness (Wahrhaftig 1969). This social definition strongly links Cherokee language to authenticity but also considers other factors as equally important. During the 1960's, when this research was gathered, children were still entering public schools with Cherokee as their first language. It is particularly poignant to note that the children who are referenced in that research are now 50 years of age and older and are the same individuals composing the youngest L1 users in Cherokee Nation's most recent survey.

Authenticity in language communities is well documented as a discourse of power and can affect perceptions of language use within the community and in relationships with outside consultants (Bauman and Briggs 2003, Coupland 2010, Kroskrity 1993). While authenticity was, and remains, a social construct within Cherokee communities, when the language community was robust with L1 users, language use was one of a constellation of factors necessary for authentic Cherokeeeness. The discussion of Hopi youth ideologies toward Hopi language from Nicholas (2009) provide evidence of how language is one point in a

constellation of attributes of Hopi identity allowing youth to strongly identify as Hopi while maintaining connections between Hopi language and identity.

Contemporary iterations of Cherokee authenticity seem to be shifting to focus on blood, lineage, and race although language use and cultural aptitude continue to play a role (Sturm 2002). While factors that held meaning in the 1960's are still important, other factors such as appearance and racial designations seem to be gaining prominence. When considering how Cherokee people perceive authenticity there is a confluence of variables but language remains a major foundation for this construction. However, the dynamic nature of the relationship between power and knowledge is evidenced in the shifting of markers of authenticity. This continuing evolution of markers ties into ideals of fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38) in language ideologies based on authenticity although the oppositional groups have shifted over time.

Contemporary Cherokee language ideologies strongly incorporate discourses of legitimacy and authenticity. Within this discourse, being a speaker of Cherokee is necessary to be considered a legitimate, or authentic, Cherokee (Bender 2002, Bender 2009, Peter 2014). These discourses are often presented as a motivation and incentive for revitalization initiatives. Yet, ideologies of authenticity imply an unchanging standard against which judgment can be made (Eckert 2003). As indicated by the previous discussion on the shifting markers of authenticity, this is not the case. However, if more speakers are created, it can be argued that the tribal cultural identity and distinctiveness will be maintained.

Yet, this same discourse of legitimacy or authenticity, linking language to Cherokeeanness, makes the construction of the category of speaker more difficult to access for a couple of reasons. First, as noted by Peter (2012), this ideology makes some people feel like they are not able to access language learning because of a perceived, either by the individual or others within the community, a lack of cultural, familial, or community connections. In other words, because an individual does not look Cherokee, does not have strong Cherokee family ties, does not have strong community placement, or is not knowledgeable about culture, they do not feel they can access language learning (Peter 2014). Therefore, ideologies of authenticity limit access to learning for individuals who feel they do not have strongly established ties because of the established link between language use and authenticity. Yet, a second reason can also be discerned by applying the notion of power as social control through critical discourse analysis. The linking of language use to authenticity creates a paradox where language use containing even minimal errors can be used to detract from a person's connections through spheres of peoplehood like lineage, community, place, or phenotype. An error in language use does not erase these ties but it may call them into question as sources for establishing authenticity. While creating a link between authentic Cherokeeanness and Cherokee language use was probably not intended to discourage people from language learning the fact that it has is certainly a problematic outcome.

Another possible connotation of the essentialized link between language and Cherokeeanness derives from individuals who are not of Cherokee lineage seeking to learn and use the language. Does language use make individuals who

are not Cherokee into Cherokees? Every time the topic of language endangerment comes up in conversation, it seems that someone has a story about encountering a person who spoke Cherokee but who was not, or did not look, Cherokee. An L1 user talked about encountering such a person in a Tahlequah grocery store many years ago. He said that he and his wife were shopping and speaking to each other in Cherokee. He said that a ᏆᏚᏍ/yonega/white person came up to them and started speaking Cherokee. He laughingly said this man spoke better Cherokee than some Cherokees he knew. He said that they talked about the weather outside and some general small talk then the man left. After this story, other L1 users in the group started sharing stories about people who had learned the language well enough to pass as Cherokee speakers. These stories were from their childhoods that took place in the 1960's and focused on non-Indian shop owners and non-Indian men who had married Cherokee women. These Cherokee L2 users were regarded as Cherokee speakers although the stories were recounted with a measure of amazement at non-Cherokees being proficient users of the language. With language use taking on more prominence within the social construction of Cherokee authenticity, language use by non-Cherokees could potentially confound this construction when met with the increasing importance of race, blood, and appearance. Of great significance is the inclusivity of the category of speaker for L1 users who were having this discussion.

Although L1 users seem to have more broadly inclusive attitudes of speakerhood and about who can access language learning, this does not mean that there are not perspectives or actions to promote exclusivity. In 2009, Cherokee

Nation Councilor Cara Cowan Watts questioned the decision to allow enrollment of students who are not citizens of federally recognized tribes at the Cherokee Nation Immersion School (Good Voice 2009). This formal contestation is evidence that language use, or a desire for language learning, does not wholly override other social constructions of Cherokeeeness, specifically that of Indian identity. During an interview, Patrick Rochford (2012a), introduced in Chapter Four, shared a story about reactions to his own language use. At the Northeastern State University Symposium of the American Indian, a panel is held where students in the Cherokee Language Degree Program exhibit their language skills. During this event, Rochford said that he used Cherokee in front of the crowd present. Rochford later overheard a Cherokee who is not a L1 or L2 user state that he didn't understand why Rochford was stealing the Cherokee language and that Rochford should stop using the language because he was white. Rochford said this was not the first time he'd encountered this attitude and that he didn't let it discourage him from learning. At the time of the interview in 2012, Rochford was 20 but continues to be the most advanced speaker of his age. Being a young language user with a light skin tone and light hair is a departure from expectations about what a speaker is and illustrates how the social construction of authenticity affect expectations about speakerhood.

While Rochford encountered a negative attitude toward his language use from other L2 users and those who are not Cherokee language users at all, his reception with L1 users is starkly different. L1 users often cite Rochford as an example of good language use. While individuals who are not L1 users cite his

appearance as a reason to limit his access or use of language, L1 users cite his initiative to learn and use language as being more important factors. Rochford's experience is an example of the way that authenticity is a paradox capable of harming L2 users for language use while also penalizing them for a lack of use. While this discourse is most often used to motivate language learning within Cherokee communities, it also creates the greatest degree of risk to individual social standing when language is used.

Language endangerment is often an arena to discuss threats to the communities and the people who use the language as well as the state of the language (Duchene and Heller 2007). In much the same way, language use, competency, and fluency, are avenues to discuss, or sanction, social behavior. In late 2011 and early 2012, an informal Cherokee L2 users group met in various locations in Tahlequah. While these meetings were held as a way for L2 users to have a space to use Cherokee, the end of the meeting always gave a time to share about experiences as learners. The group composition varied but I was a part of it along with a few others. At the end of one gathering, after Cherokee language use had concluded, an L2 user told a story about being at a dinner where L1 users were serving food and Cherokee was the only language being used. A female L2 user said “ᏍᏍ DGSP/ga-du a-wa-du-li” to the male L1 user who was serving the bread. The L2 user telling the story said the word ᏍᏍ/gadu in such a way that it meant 'on top' instead of 'bread' signaling the error made. He said the room went silent while everyone took pains not to laugh with some people ducking their heads or covering their mouths. The sexual suggestiveness of her saying “I want on

top” to the man who was serving the bread, albeit through an innocent error, was what caused such humor. He said she took her plate, ate, and then left seeming throughout to be completely unaware of what had happened despite obvious nonverbal signals from the rest of the room. He said this is the story everyone tells about her, and is a statement I can confirm having heard the story several times before and after that evening. When I asked about when it had happened, I was told it had probably been in August of 2008. So four years later the story lived on, and each time I’ve heard it told, people focus on the woman’s obliviousness to her error. No one addressed it directly with her, and I implicitly understood that I was not to tell her about the way the story had taken life. Events like this one, where social norms are breached and linguistic errors are made, form a basis for shoring up of existing social norms by critiquing the breach through the access point of the linguistic error. In this way ideologies of legitimacy and authenticity are providing a foundation to regard language users as Cherokee while errors of use detract from an individual’s social standing as a member of the Cherokee community.

While Rochford is often cited by L1 users as an example of how Cherokee language can be learned, it is important to recognize that imperfect language use often carries social reprisal. Speaking the language is regarded as an important component of Cherokeeness but several participants in this research expressed their frustration at the lack of engagement from their peers in language learning and use. Outside of interviews within the Tahlequah community, I noticed that often when someone was asked if they spoke Cherokee, many people would respond by referencing their nearest relative that was a speaker. Instead of

addressing the question of their own language skills, they would reference the closest relative who was an L1 user. For example, rather than say no, a person would say, “My grandmother speaks Cherokee.” By referencing their Cherokee speaking relative, they acknowledge their lack of language skills but still indicate ties to authenticity. One participant in this research stated that he felt that people seemed to think having a speaker in their family exempted them from language learning. Another participant stated that she thought that as long as someone had speakers who were living in their family they didn’t feel any responsibility to learn themselves. While the statements referencing Cherokee speaking relatives may seem on their surface to be evading individual responsibility, I think they are, instead, a less socially perilous way to invoke a relationship to language than language use.

It may seem that the ideology of authenticity could be a disincentive for language use among L2 users. However, the inclusivity from L1 users for those who use language implies that any language production is of value in considerations of speakerhood. L1 users seem to be more critical of errors of social behavior or violations of social norms than about language errors. Negative reactions to language use from those in the community who are not L1 or L2 users highlight the way that the ideology of authenticity is twisted to place a burden on people to prove their authenticity before engaging in language learning or use. Unfortunately, the discourse of authenticity based on language use seems to create a situation where L2 users do not want to risk using language imperfectly. All of

these factors coalesce to create a highly charged environment for the negotiation of acceptance by L2 users.

Ambivalence Toward and Refusal of Speakerhood by L2 Users

It was during my first interview with Mackey (2011) that I was confronted with how complex negotiations of speakerhood can be for an L2 user. Although I had faced this as an L2 user, it was not until the interview with Mackey where he stated his own reticence to make the claim to being a Cherokee speaker that I realized other L2 users shared the ambivalence he was expressing and that I had also felt. Mackey currently serves as a Cultural Specialist at Cherokee Nation but at the time of the interview was teaching at the Cherokee Immersion Charter School in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Prior to teaching at the school, Mackey was one of the developers of the Cherokee Nation Employee Immersion course and is certified as a Cherokee Language Instructor and Master Speaker through the Cherokee Nation Translation Department. Because of those accomplishments, I had thought of him as a speaker and was genuinely shocked by his reticence to claim speakerhood. As discussed in Chapter Three, Cherokee Nation defines a five-point scale of language proficiency. While this standardized definition is meant to reflect the significance of speakerhood to Cherokee communities by providing an economic incentive for higher achievement on the scale, it does not override social constructions of speakerhood. Through that initial interview, I realized that I could not categorize participants as second language speakers of Cherokee because of how powerful

any designation of speaker was for L2 users. This is likely not a conclusion that I would have drawn without having taken on the role of researcher. A result of this realization was to contribute to the understanding of why L2 users, some who are referred to openly as speakers by L1 users, are uncomfortable with accepting or claiming speakerhood.

Language ideologies of legitimacy and authenticity contribute to the complexity of negotiating acceptance as speakers for L2 users by establishing L1 users as the singular designation for speakers. This attitude is expressed in the focus on providing space for Cherokee L1 users. This action is necessary for the creation of new language domains but L2 users perceive any designation of 'speaker' as a designation for L1 users only. Therefore, while these programs are open to L2 users, they are not perceived as such primarily because of the way that the two programs that began in 2007 were created specifically to serve Cherokee L1 users. These programs are the Speaker's Bureau and the Language Consortium. Speaker's Bureau is organized by Cherokee Nation, is held monthly in Tahlequah, and is a public event advertised through the Cherokee Phoenix, a subscription newspaper run through Cherokee Nation, and through e-mail communication to all employees of the Cherokee Nation. Dr. Neil Morton, Senior Advisor to Education Services at Cherokee Nation, creator of the event, described Speaker's Bureau as a venue to replace the benches around the courthouse where people once gathered to use Cherokee language. It continues to be held on the second Thursday of every month and to be held all in Cherokee. The Language Consortium is a bit more ambiguous as it is not advertised publicly but welcomes any participants willing to

communicate exclusively in Cherokee. This program began at the request of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians as a place where Cherokee speakers from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians of Oklahoma and the Cherokee Nation could gather to speak Cherokee with one another, share curriculum, and create new words using only Cherokee. It is held quarterly alternating between Oklahoma and North Carolina but one must be invited or hear about it through word of mouth as the dates for the gathering vary from year to year. The formation, support, and continuation of the Language Consortium bears directly on the way that L1 users, and L1 user speech, is elevated in prestige. However, due to the lack of public advertisements for Language Consortium meetings, data, attitudes, negotiations, and interactions observed during my participation in Language Consortium events will not be discussed. Instead, the public gathering of the Speaker's Bureau will be highlighted although I contacted any individual quoted at the gathering to obtain permission to use their words within this research.

In a Speakers Bureau meeting in 2012³, Morton stated that while the courthouse benches are not a place for Cherokee language anymore, the Speaker's Bureau meeting offers a place where that kind of fellowship can happen. Morton went on to state that in the beginning Speaker's Bureau was open only to Cherokee speakers. To prove this focus, he said that at that initial meeting he asked all non-speakers, even Cherokee Nation Council members and administration, to leave the gathering so the meeting could be entirely Cherokee language. Morton said he

³ In my field notes I found my notes on this occurrence but they were undated except for a notation that said 2012.

wanted to make it clear that Speaker's Bureau was a space for Cherokee language and Cherokee speakers. Ryan Mackey shared with me that he was at this initial meeting and that he offered to leave at this time as well but that he was urged to stay by L1 users with whom he had acquaintance (2011). At this time, Mackey was a L2 user but he wasn't sure whether he was included in the group of L1 users who were clearly speakers or the group being asked to exit who were clearly not speakers. This ambiguity felt by Mackey about his place within the language community is a meaningful example of the ambivalence felt by L2 users as they negotiate acceptance. It is telling that although Mackey felt this ambivalence and offered to exit but that the L1 users who knew Mackey urged him to stay seeming to not have the same ambivalence.

I identify as an L2 user and I have actively refused speakerhood but did not recognize this as a significant act until I began this research project. I had assumed that other L2 users, especially those who I considered to be proficient, would be comfortable with being labeled a speaker. That assumption was immediately turned on its head when I began interviewing L2 users on the topic. Instead of finding those who were comfortable claiming to be a speaker, it seemed that all L2 users harbored the same reticence. Roy Boney, Jr., a fullblood⁴ Cherokee, artist and

⁴ This designation does refer to blood quantum but often among Cherokee people fullbloodedness can be a cultural distinction that factors outside biology. See Sturm 2002, Wahrhaftig 1970, and Fink 1998.



Figure 3: Simpquoyah by Roy Boney, Jr.

language advocate who, at the time of the interview, worked in Language Technology at Cherokee Nation but now serves as the Manager of the Cherokee Language Program, shared with me a story about being publicly referred to as a Cherokee speaker at an art show and having no chance to make a correction (Boney 2012b). He also told me that a web page on Wikipedia featuring his biography lists him as a Cherokee speaker and shared his efforts to change that and other errors to no avail (Wikipedia). Although the focus of this chapter is speakerhood, this example also signals the way that digital domains are new arenas for negotiating designations of speakerhood and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. He spoke of being embarrassed that he was listed as a Cherokee speaker, which he felt was inaccurate, and of being bothered that the information was being referenced and shared with others. Boney often uses his artwork as a platform for language advocacy, includes Cherokee language titles for his work and often incorporates syllabary into his pieces as seen in Figure 3. In addition, he was and continues to be instrumental in digital initiatives for Cherokee language and uses the language daily on his Smartphone, computer, and through social media. In fact, he holds the bragging rights for being the top user of Cherokee on Twitter, which is a social media site that allows users to compose messages called tweets that are limited to 140 characters or less (Indigenous Tweets 2014). Boney was raised in a Cherokee speaking home with a father who is an L1 user. Despite this heavy exposure to and use of language, Boney does not consider himself a speaker.

Other L2 users also distance themselves from speakerhood and talked to me about doing so out of respect for those they considered speakers. Kristen Thomas (2012) said to me, “I don't refer to myself as a Cherokee speaker. I refer to myself as a learner of the language. To be a Cherokee speaker, I guess, is a very reverent position for me and I would never see myself as... I could just never refer to myself as that.” Thomas is firmly placed within Cherokee language revitalization and fully engaged as an L2 user in the Tahlequah Cherokee community but still seeks to distance herself from speakerhood. Patrick Rochford was a student in the Northeastern State University Cherokee Language Degree program and now serves as a contract translator for the Cherokee Nation Translation Department. He, too, reports, “I wouldn't call myself a speaker. It would be an affront for me to call myself a speaker. It is out of respect. It is a personal choice I make out of respect for elder's knowledge” (2012c) To complicate this perspective, Rochford was interviewed on the Cherokee Nation radio program Cherokee Voices, Cherokee Sounds entirely in Cherokee by the show's host Dennis Sixkiller. The interviews conducted on this program are typically reserved for L users who are also elders. The choice to invite Rochford for an interview on the show seems to me to be a tacit validation of his abilities as a Cherokee user. To date Rochford remains the only L2 user invited to speak on the program, and, after his appearance, L1 users praised his use of the language for its correctness providing further validation of his abilities as a speaker. I have witnessed many Cherokee L1 users refer to Rochford as a speaker or use him as an example of how a learner can become a speaker. Yet, despite this public validation

from L1 users of his abilities as a Cherokee language user, Rochford continues to refuse the label out of respect.

These quotes show that L2 users are refusing speakerhood. Therefore, it is important to discuss the ways that Cherokee L2 users conceptualize speakerhood to understand the depth of the refusal. The L2 users who spoke to me said that growing up speaking the language, a high degree of fluency, and being able to use Cherokee exclusively for communication were all aspects of speakerhood. To refer back to Thomas's perspective, she first told me what she felt made someone a Cherokee speaker. She said, "For me, a Cherokee speaker is someone who can communicate on all topics without code switching – someone who can translate an idea from Cherokee to English or English to Cherokee. I think those are the two strongest qualities of a speaker" (Thomas 2012). Her answer clearly states that a range of communicative abilities and the ability to communicate exclusively in Cherokee when communicating an idea were necessary to be a speaker. Thomas is referring to degrees of fluency and implicitly stating that in order to be a speaker a language user must be operating at a high level of fluency. However, when conceptualizing the degree of fluency necessary, Thomas seems to be placing the bar above her own level of proficiency.

Although level of fluency and exclusive use of Cherokee for communication were identified as hallmarks of speakerhood, growing up speaking the language was by far the most frequent characteristic listed. Even when it was not explicitly stated, it was often implied as a necessary characteristic for Cherokee speakerhood. Most L2 users who spoke to me explicitly defined a speaker as an L1

user. Mackey told me, “I think in order to fit into the classification of Cherokee speaker by modern Cherokee cultural standards you have to grow up speaking it. In fact, I believe that it has to be your first language” (2011). Hayley Miller, a student in the Cherokee Education program at Northeastern State University, echoed this sentiment by saying, “First I think that having Cherokee as a first language is part of what defines a speaker and second is the ability to understand and see certain meanings in words that learners can’t necessarily break down as easily” (Miller 2012). It is enlightening that Miller says having Cherokee as a first language is the first requirement and then next references an explicit knowledge of the language. Again, this is attributing the need for a high degree of fluency plus having grown up speaking the language to qualify as a speaker.

Even when an L2 user’s definition of Cherokee is not explicitly about being an L1 user, this idea is still an implicit assumption. For example, Thomas did not reference the need to be an L1 user in her definition. However, when I continued the questions and asked if a person had to grow up speaking Cherokee to be a Cherokee speaker. In reply Thomas (2012) said to me,

“Based on the qualifications I just gave, yes. Which almost makes me rethink what a Cherokee speaker is just because our current situation doesn’t lend itself to the idea that we can create a new generation of Cherokee speakers.”

The answer to the follow up question makes explicit Thomas’s perception is that only a L1 user of Cherokee would have the communicative range necessary to fulfill the requirements to be a speaker. One L2 user did accept the label of speaker but did so with a conscious renegotiation of the term that he based on

conversation with a L1 user and respected elder who has since passed away. JP

Johnson (2012a), a Cultural Outreach Specialist with Cherokee Nation, said to me,

“I don’t like the fact that people say, ‘I’m not a speaker because I’m not fluent.’ If you use the language then you’re using it. Even if you’re using it incorrectly ... to quote an elder who’s no longer with us, Hastings *jigesv*. He said, if you’re talking Cherokee and I understand you, you’re talking Cherokee and it don’t matter.”

Johnson’s statement was in response to me asking if he was a Cherokee speaker.

Rather than saying no, Johnson shared this story making it obvious that he considered intelligible communication the sole criteria for speakerhood. I should also note that throughout the interview, Johnson referred to himself a learner seeming to belie this conscious statement. Even in addition to the conscious renegotiation, Johnson made it a point to communicate that his broad definition was rooted in knowledge that was given to him by a respected elder who was an L1 user. This discussion illustrates how a perception that only L1 users are speakers is contributing to L2 user’s refusals of speakerhood.

Having Cherokee as a first language was the most frequent characteristic that was listed by L2 users as necessary for Cherokee speakerhood. The criteria of a range of speaking ability being next. Beyond establishing speakerhood, many of the L2 users who spoke with me said that there were degrees of speakerhood. Denise Chaudoin (2012a), a teacher at the Cherokee Immersion Charter School, said to me, “There are degrees of speaking. Speakers grew up with the language and they have a greater grasp than just conversation. They know older words, uncommon words.” Chaudoin touches on the requirement for having Cherokee as a first language but qualifies it by including that L1 users have a deeper knowledge

of the language. When Chaudoin references older forms, she seems to be referencing older words and the use of a higher register of Cherokee which would be at the end of a cline of abilities. Ultimately, it seems that even when L2 users are talking about the range of knowledge that a person must have to be a speaker of Cherokee they are linking this knowledge to first language experience.

L2 users who spoke with me perceive a significant gap between learner and speaker in Cherokee language use. Many referred to a gap between speaker and learner that is rooted in having Cherokee as a first or second language while others either explicitly or implicitly make their statements about culturally based perceptions of speakerhood. The individuals who perceive speakerhood as rooted with L1 users alone are defining speakerhood as a fundamentally unchangeable attribute that is inaccessible after childhood. It is instructive that every L2 user that I spoke with aside from Johnson articulated speakerhood in this way. The gap between L1/L2 users was illustrated during an informal group discussion speculating about many Cherokee speakers there are. During the course of this discussion, an L2 user asked the L1 users to list aloud names of speakers in their home communities. As the L2 user was writing down the spoken names, he would ask the person's age. Then for the younger speakers, he would ask if they'd grown up speaking and if they were really speakers. At the time it seemed impertinent to question an L1 user saying someone was a speaker. However, in retrospect, the question illustrates the pervasiveness of the idea that only L1 users are speakers and can designate who is a speaker. In an earlier quote, when Mackey (2011) referenced a L1/L2 gap, he said that having Cherokee as a first language is needed

for one to be *perceived* as a speaker (emphasis is mine). This was not an idle word choice for Mackey. This notion of perceptions, negotiations, and even contestations affecting determinations of speakerhood is definitely a reality for those in the Tahlequah Cherokee community. However, the sting in perceiving that only those who have Cherokee as a first language are eligible for speakerhood is that no L2 user can ever attain speaker status. This is a significant area of disjuncture within the Tahlequah Cherokee community and, I would argue, the Cherokee language revitalization initiatives at large.

Toward Claiming Speakerhood and Acceptance

Each L2 user who spoke with me, save one, refused to accept any degree of speakerhood and that L2 user only accepted after providing an authorization from an L1 user and broadening the category. Despite Johnson's conscious acceptance of the term throughout both of my interviews with him, he only referred to himself as a learner (Johnson 2012a, Johnson 2012b). Within this project, each L2 user I spoke with actively chose learner for referencing their relationship to Cherokee language. When I approached the L2 users for this study, I let them know it was because they were involved in revitalization initiatives and did not categorize them as learners. The early misstep in categorizing participants as speakers is illustrative of this mindset.

When talking about their own goals for language use, Cherokee L2 users in this research project talked about using language correctly and intelligibly. When asked about accomplishments with the language, Mackey stated that he felt his

biggest accomplishment was speaking to a group of L1 users and being understood. Mackey (2012) said, "I used Cherokee with a group of EBCI, UKB, and CN⁵ speakers in North Carolina and I talked for a long time and they understood me. That's the proudest that I am." I did not pursue the line of questioning to ask Mackey how he knew he had been understood because I think that Mackey is a good judge of whether or not he was understood. However, I have witnessed L2 users think they were communicating intelligibly only to have L1 users say upon their exit that they had no idea what they had said. Being understood by L1 speakers is a great victory because of the high degree of complexity of the language. However, also inherent in this story is the risk that is incurred by using Cherokee language publicly. Saying someone is not understandable as a Cherokee user is perhaps one of the most severe critiques that can be leveled by either an L1 or L2 user.

Fear of mistakes in public language is a common thread in second language acquisition. When this fear derails all oral production by L2 users, there is a significant issue in the language community. Notions of authenticity are present when an L2 user indexes speakerhood but these notions rest on more than linguistic knowledge. At this stage of language shift within the Tahlequah Cherokee community, language use is also an index of social power. Cherokee Nation has built the language revitalization program into a complex and broad reaching organization with programs and employees in the local public university, a charter

⁵ These acronyms stand for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the United Keetoowah Band (full name United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians of Oklahoma) and the Cherokee Nation. These are the three federally recognized Cherokee governments.

school that serves 88 students in Cherokee immersion who are Cherokee citizens and citizens of other federally recognized tribes, and a language department that offers online language classes, community classes, language technology initiatives, and a department for Cherokee-English translations. A Cherokee speaker once told Durbin Feeling that he couldn't make money for speaking his language implying that he could not have a professional career or make a living based on his knowledge of the language. However, revitalization initiatives have created several viable career options. Tribal support of language has created greater public acceptance and a more conducive educational and economic environment for the economic viability of Cherokee language use and study.

While Dawnena Mackey (2012) said this when asked if she considered herself a Cherokee speaker identifying her sense of loss about not being a Cherokee speaker,

“I feel like a fully Cherokee person with that exception and it's a huge exception. I know very little. I heard it every day growing up and we lived in a very small home and was surrounded with aunts and uncles and cousins but when they spoke to each other they spoke to each other in Cherokee when they spoke to us kids they spoke in English and so that's a huge thing that I guess maybe it's not enough to just hear it you've really got to interact in it. And so I really wish I could say I was a Cherokee speaker but I'm not.”

Among the group of L2 users who spoke with me, there were two who said explicitly that being a speaker did not make one more Cherokee. They also both stated alternatively that not being a speaker did not make one less Cherokee. This view echoes the ideologies of Hopi youth who regard Hopi language as central to Hopi identity but do not regard its absence as an erasure of Hopi identity (Nicholas 2009). One of the Cherokee L2 users said that they did not feel that learning more

Cherokee language made them any more Cherokee. These stated perspectives seem to contest the idea that language is foundational to Cherokee identity. Yet, while these perspectives contest the idea that language is fundamental to Cherokee identity, each individual also clarified and reiterated the importance of teaching, knowing and using Cherokee daily. I feel it was important to bring forth this alternate perspective on the relationship between language and identity among those who work within the Tahlequah Cherokee community to communicate the variations and malleability of the relationship between language and identity. I do not think the perspective expressed is unique to these two individuals but I decided not to share their names as it is likely these statements would subject the individuals to social reprisal. Other individuals have indicated that they do not study Cherokee because it is an impractical choice although they see it as valuable (Peter 2014). Ultimately, even these two individuals who do not identify speakerhood as intrinsic to Cherokee identity also refused speakerhood as well. The widespread refusal of speakerhood forces the conclusion L2 users see speakerhood as an unattainable goal. The real sting in this predicament is that it is L2 users who are constructing speakerhood in a way that makes speakerhood unattainable. Speakerhood as conceptualized by L2 users simultaneously creates, sharpens and broadens an impermeable line between L1 and L2 users. This refusal at its simplest may be a refusal of the elite status associated with speakerhood.

During my attendance at Cherokee Speaker's Bureau over the past three years, I have often overheard statements made to the group about the importance of the Cherokee language made in English and Cherokee. At one of the meetings in

2012, the topic of the importance of Cherokee language came up. George Byrd, an L1 user, talked about his feelings on the topic and stated to the gathered group, “We aren’t losing our language. We’re losing people who want to use our language.” George had stated this first in Cherokee and then repeated the statement again in English. Both of George’s statements received sounds of approbation and nods of agreement. This statement is one that I have encountered before among Cherokee L1 users though perhaps not as concisely as stated by George in the meeting. The Cherokee L1 users that I’ve spoken to informally on the topic echo the idea that a lack of public use of Cherokee indicates a lack on interest in the language.

This is meaningful because the refusal of speakerhood is also evidenced in a reticence to speak Cherokee publicly. This absence of public speech is perceived by L1 users as a lack of interest. However, L2 users feel very strongly about the importance of language and language use. Their fear of reprisal and of being perceived as disrespectful leads to a dearth of language use by L2 users and serves falsely as a sense of disinterest. Unfortunately, until forums are established for the support of second language use, this rupture created through the link between authenticity and language use will likely endure.

With the population of L1 users decreasing every year, the category of speaker becomes more limited and more highly imbued with social power. Speakerhood within the Tahlequah Cherokee community seems to be regarded by L2 users as indicative of not just linguistic competency but also reverence and respect that derives from early exposure to the language. The negotiation, or more

aptly the refusal, of speakerhood by Cherokee second language learners is a process that is guided by the construction of the category as impermeable and unattainable by L2 users, or by learners. This view of linking early exposure to language to fluency and then imbuing these two traits as necessary requirements for speakerhood have the potential to be detrimental to Cherokee revitalization initiatives. The next chapter will discuss the how constructions of speakerhood are based on Cherokee perceptions of peoplehood defined by an individual's, and a community's, relationship to a shared language, a shared history, shared lineage, and shared religion. Although these factors will be adapted for this research, it will be an instructive examination of the relationship between peoplehood and language use in the Tahlequah Cherokee community.

Chapter 5: Cultural Capital and Speakerhood

Early in this research, it became clear that speakerhood in Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives was a topic of salience. From early interviews and while reviewing my fieldnotes, I realized it was common for L2 users to refuse speakerhood. However, upon reflection, I realized that the refusal of speakerhood was something that I had encountered before. One occasion in particular stands out in my mind. During the summer after I graduated high school, I was at a community gathering speaking with a friend. This friend was from a neighboring community and during the gathering I introduced him to RSS/edudu/my grandfather. I knew my friend spoke Cherokee so I introduced him as a Cherokee speaker. RSS/edudu/my grandfather, taking me at my word, immediately began talking to him in Cherokee. To my delight, my friend responded and they had a conversation. RSS/edudu/my grandfather asked him where he was from and who his family was. It turned out he knew them and they had a good conversation. During this entire exchange, they spoke completely in Cherokee. After RSS/edudu/my grandfather walked away, I turned to my friend and complimented him on how well he spoke Cherokee. However, he said that he wasn't a speaker. I was shocked because he'd been instructing me on how to say things all evening long and I had just witnessed him in conversation with RSS/edudu/my grandfather. He maintained that he wasn't a speaker but that he just knew some words. I don't recall him providing any other reason for why he was not a speaker although he obviously was. Perhaps, he was mitigating the distance between his obvious speaking ability and my lack of it or exhibiting humility at his skill. He did

continue teaching me Cherokee until I left for college in August. While teaching, he often pointed out subtle distinctions between words that I've only encountered from highly proficient speakers and the whole time he maintained that he didn't speak Cherokee. Although I cannot assign a reason for my friend's refusal to claim he was a speaker, this story illustrates that refusal of speakerhood may not be linked to an inability to communicate in Cherokee.

Discussions surrounding language endangerment are often about things affecting communities of people who speak the language as much as, or more than, about language (Duchene and Heller 2007: 4). Speakerhood is similar because Cherokee language use is required to be considered a speaker but, for L2 users, speakerhood indicates more than just competency with the language. Therefore, this chapter builds an argument that L2 users construct speakerhood as fluid and contextual, and as an index of cultural capital in addition to a designation of fluency. This chapter presents a brief discussion of the link between language and culture. Next, the chapter will consider the four areas of the peoplehood matrix as areas where Cherokee people access and express cultural capital. After a brief explanation of the peoplehood matrix, this chapter will consider how this affects L2 users' constructions of speakerhood. A Cherokee speakerhood matrix will be presented that has its roots in peoplehood. The matrix exhibits an idealization between cultural capital and language use and that link makes language use and claims of speakerhood a greater risk for individuals who already possess significant cultural capital. This construction of speakerhood from L2 users actually makes language use less likely for the individuals who might seem to be

the most likely participants in language revitalization. When speakerhood or language use is viewed through this lens, language use does not only reflect on the individual user; language use also reflects on an individual's cultural status and on the status of their family. Through the discussion of how an idealization of the link between language and culture impacts L2 users' constructions of what it means to be a speaker, this chapter will contribute to the understanding of potential issues for L2 users as they negotiate acceptance into speakerhood.

Exploring the Link Between Language and Culture

Before the discussion can focus on how speakerhood is affected, the link between language and culture must be discussed. It is unarguable that culture influences and is influenced by language.

“For the notion of culture as learned patterns of behavior and interpretive practices, language is crucial because it provides the most complex system of classification of experience” (Duranti 1997: 49).

In addition, language represents a unique way of organizing human thought and relating to the environment and other people (Crystal 2000, Hale 1992). For example, language may signal the kinship system of the language community through specialized vocabulary, a shift in the way speech is structured, or through the a prescribed shift to a special register of the language (Crystal 2000: 63). Language encodes information and a specific way of looking at the world that adds value, both social and scientific, and contributes to our understanding of human thought and social relationships (Gumperz & Hymes 1972, Lucy 1996, Sapir 1949).

The relationship between language and culture can be illustrated in many ways such as through the ways that location and place are marked. This information is important for communication about direction and location but may also be culturally or spiritually significant (Basso 1996). A community located in the foothills of a mountain may require locative linguistic markers because they efficiently signal relative location and direction as 'uphill' or 'downhill' (Harrison 2007: 115). In another community, these locative markers are in relation to a river and are represented as culturally significant because of the place that the river has in the belief system of community members (Mithun 1999: 143-144). In either of these two languages, locatives are important to the community in relation to a meaningful landmark and this culturally significant information may not translate into another language. For example, parts of words (clitics) denoting culturally bound ideals were not used in the second language with the same intensity or frequency of the first language counterpart implying that culturally significant ideas do not survive translation from one language to another (Woodbury 1998). Language and culture are certainly related but it is the strength of that correlation and its perceived importance that has an impact on revitalization initiatives in endangered language communities. This idealized link can be the central reason provided by communities for revitalization initiatives as language loss is viewed as tantamount to cultural extinction (Pecos & Blum-Martinez 2001).

Within language revitalization initiatives that focus on second language acquisition, the specter of language death creates a complexity for those learning

the language and who are negotiating speakerhood. Just as language endangerment is about more than the dwindling use of the language in these communities, defining speakerhood in endangered language communities is about more than being able to use that language. However, linking language and culture or identity could be positive for revitalization initiatives (Bunte 2009: 172). Yet, whether this link is positive or not, being aware of its existence is crucial to understanding the high stakes for revitalization initiatives.

The link between language and culture is evident in both past and currently existing Cherokee language ideologies. “To be Cherokee is to speak Cherokee” was the phrase used by Wahrhaftig (1970) to describe the relationship between Cherokee language and Cherokee communities surveyed in the 1960s in Eastern Oklahoma (17). This statement adds to the perspective that language is central to Cherokee communities and lifeways,

“If we want to change to white people, the Indian has got to do away with it himself. First, we could stop teaching our own language. Second, we could marry overseas people. Then by the third generation there won’t be no Indian. We’ll still dance, sing – have feathers in our hats – but we won’t be no Indians” (Dreadfulwater 1998: 354).

In this example, Dreadfulwater, a language advocate and Cherokee spiritual leader, invoked language, lineage, and cultural involvement. More recently comes a vignette about the power of the language and its cultural meaning from Hastings Shade, former Deputy Chief of the Cherokee Nation, L1 user, Cherokee National Treasure for gig-making, language teacher, storyteller, and cultural advocate.

“‘There is a legend,’ Hastings said, ‘that as long as we speak to the fire in Cherokee it will not go out, and as long as the terrapins sing around the fire we will have the fire for our use. When the language

is gone, the fire will be gone. And so will the Cherokees. That is why the terrapin shells are used for the shackles the women wear while they are stomping dancing, this is how the terrapin sings” (Teuton et. al. 2012: 53).

In this example, Shade invokes cultural practice and religious belief explicitly tying it to culture while also grounding it from oral history that was passed to him. The dancing and singing in both Shade and Dreadfulwater’s statements are in reference to stomping dancing that takes place at Cherokee ceremonial grounds and is part of a religious system among Cherokee people (Mooney 1890, Speck and Broom 1983, Sturm 2002: 127). It should also be strongly stated that Cherokee language is a very important part of Cherokee Christian churches as well. Both the ceremonial grounds and Cherokee Christian Churches are cultural centers within communities and sites of meaningful language production (Sturm 2002: 127, Wahrhaftig 1970).

I attended the Cherokee Lifeways Conference held at the Cherokee Casino in West Siloam Springs, Oklahoma. The conference was the culmination of a grant program that had funded the development of public school curriculum that taught about Cherokee lifeways (Chavez 2011). I was staying at the hotel that was there at the casino along with a number of other conference attendees. On Wednesday evening, a small group of eight fellow attendees and I visited a Cherokee Baptist Church not far from the conference. The church was small but had a reputation for using Cherokee during the service. When we reached the church, I saw that it was a small white building with a steeple and a bell at the top. At the time of the service, the bell was rung to call people to the church. During the service, the pastor spoke mostly in Cherokee but also used English. The group I was in was a mix of religious affiliations, some were Christian but others were members of

ceremonial grounds. The thing that drew us to church on that evening was the information that the service was conducted in Cherokee. There were other churches that were closer but it was the combination of spiritual fellowship and Cherokee language that brought us there. In this day and age, there are very few places that can be reliably be known to have language but Cherokee churches and ceremonial grounds are two such places. Although the members of these institutions may not agree completely on religious convictions, there is significant overlap in their regard for the importance and sacredness of the Cherokee language.

Language, Land, Religion, History

The matrix of Cherokee peoplehood has four pillars; language, land, religion, and history (Fink 1998, Holm et. al. 2002). This construction of peoplehood is informed by Cherokee lifeways and culture thus providing a foundation for ideologies that motivate revitalization initiatives. This idealization of the link between Cherokee language and culture is strongly present within Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives but the concept of culture, and specifically of Cherokee culture, must be clearly identified in this discussion. As a foundational concept in anthropology, definitions of culture have changed over time and have multiple ways of being focused. What is most important in this discussion is clearly delineating how Cherokee culture will be regarded in this research and in this analysis. Though it is a broad definition, this research characterized culture as the lifeways of a people. I am conceptualizing culture

through the Cherokee language using the term ᏓᎦᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ/iyadvnelidasdi. The term ᏓᎦᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ/iyadvnelidasdi can be translated as lifeways but a fuller translation is the way that Cherokees lived in the past, the way that Cherokees live now, and the way that Cherokees should live. Delineating the idea of ᏓᎦᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ/iyadvnelidasdi is complex because of the huge amount of diversity among Cherokee Nation citizens. The number of citizens is well over 300,000 at last count (Cherokee Nation 2014) and Cherokee Nation citizens live throughout Oklahoma and the United States. Cherokee identity is complex and multifaceted (Sturm 2002) but by relying on ideas delineated by Wahrhaftig (1970) and Thomas (Fink 1998), this research can apply a model of peoplehood and culture that creates a shared foundation without being overly broad or too narrowly focused.

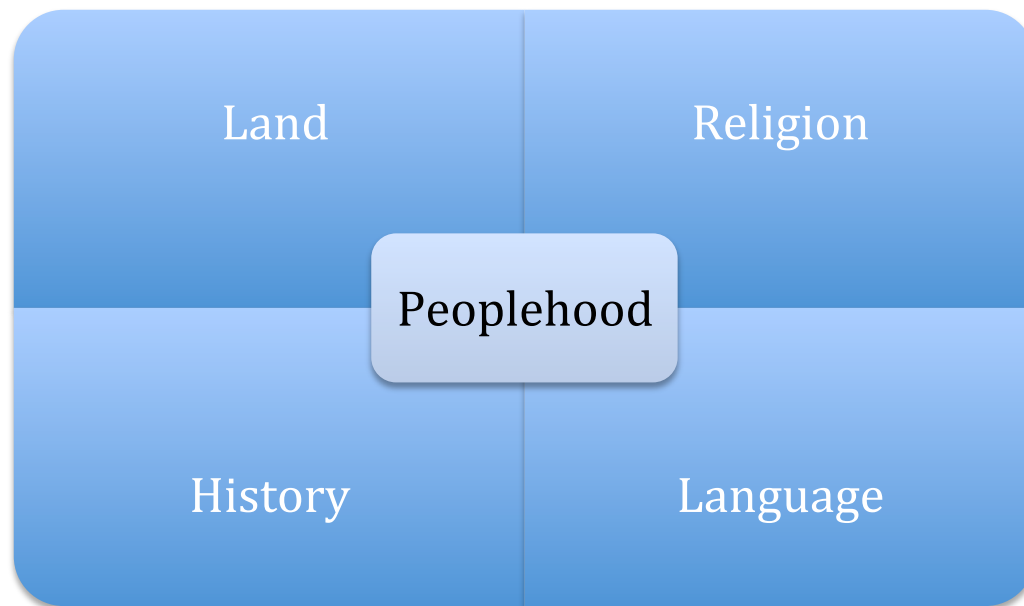


Figure 4: Peoplehood Matrix (Fink 1998, Holm et. al. 2003)

and the results of critical discourse analysis. The pillars of the Speakerhood matrix include Community, Communicative Competence, Family, and Language Use. My proposed Speakerhood Matrix is given in Figure 5.

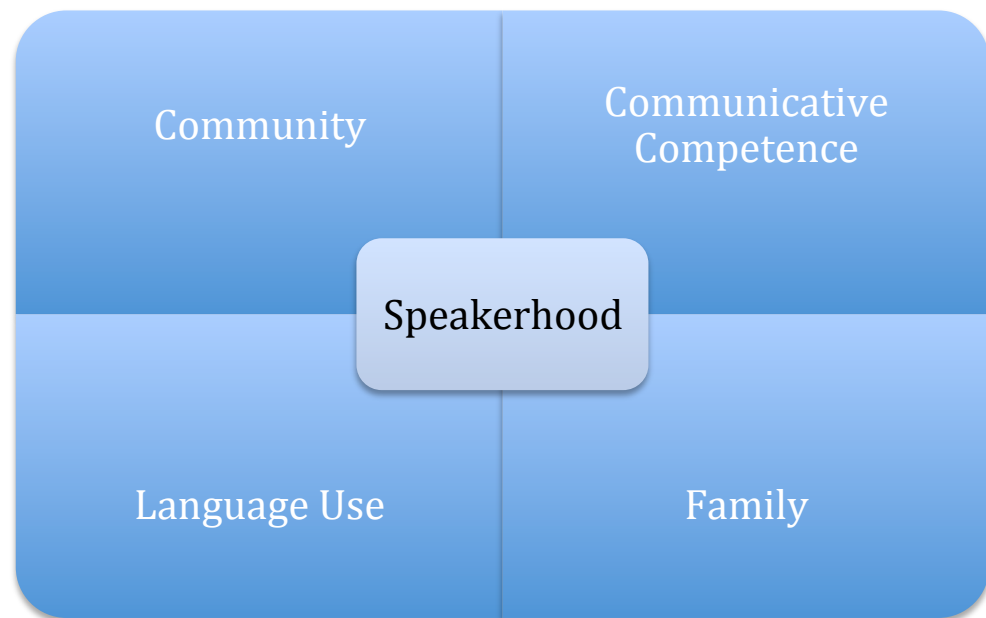


Figure 5: Speakerhood Matrix Based on Cherokee L2 User’s Perceptions

This discussion will focus on the way each of these pillars, language, land, religion, and history, inform Cherokee L2 users’ constructions of speakerhood. Land will be described through an individual’s ties to communities that are identified as traditional Cherokee communities. These communities continue to be meaningful centers for Cherokee lifeways and play a significant role in constructions of speakerhood. Religion, because of the broad diversity among Cherokee people, will not be represented as Cherokee Methodist churches, Cherokee Baptist churches, and Cherokee Stomp Grounds as it is in the peoplehood matrix. For the speakerhood matrix, religion will be represented through communicative

competence, specifically social competence in communication (Hymes 1971). History is the last pillar of the peoplehood matrix and is represented in constructions of speakerhood through an individual's family ties. Language will be represented through language use and L2 users attitudes toward language use. This section will describe and explain the utility of the speakerhood matrix that was developed from L2 users' perceptions.

The ties to a shared land base are included in constructions of Cherokee peoplehood (Cushman 2011, Fink 1998, Holm et. al. 2003). Within the speakerhood matrix, ties to land will amended and characterized through an individual's ties to traditional Cherokee communities. Wahrhaftig identified 74 Cherokee communities in 1963 (Bender 2009: 123). These communities are areas of meaningful language production and also have high numbers of speakers. However, as Sturm (2002) notes, even in 1963, only around 25% of Cherokees lived in these communities (149).

“Lacking precise demographic data, I can only roughly estimate that a little less than 10 percent of the tribe – perhaps almost 20,000 people – actively resides in a traditional Cherokee community” (Sturm 2002: 149).

Sturm's estimate is well informed and is something that bears out under my own observations within Cherokee communities. The shift in residency patterns has not eradicated the significant standing of these communities as meaningful areas of cultural significance (Raymond 2208: 17). Shifts in residency patterns mirror the shift from Cherokee to English that was occurring at the same time among Cherokee people. However, just as the perceived importance of the Cherokee

language has not diminished with the shift to English, the perceived importance of these communities has not diminished although residency patterns have shifted.

To measure ties to community, I coupled my own experiences with Wahrhaftig's identification of traditional communities and then noted where individuals referenced their own ties to community within their interviews. I also reviewed my fieldnotes to see whether it was a frequent point of discussion. In reviewing the mentions of place names within interviews, individuals who grew up in those traditional communities referenced them often. Of course, this is to be expected. However, individuals who grew up outside of these identified traditional communities acknowledged this and either explained their current connections to a traditional community or tied to back to the traditional community of their family's origin. These places with names like Wauhilla, Marble City, Greasy, Cherry Tree, Iron Post, and Blackgum continue to hold a place of high regard as culturally vibrant communities although the individual referencing them may not actually live in the community.

My first interview question that I had intended as a neutral warm up question was asking where a person lived. In response to this question, I would often receive the answer to the second interview question. This second question was an inquiry into whether the person had family in the area. For example, I would ask, "Do you live here in Cherokee Nation?" and would get a response either an affirmative or a negative that immediately followed with the traditional community where their family had the closest ties. For some participants the

answer was “Yes, I live in Tahlequah but my family is from Line Switch”⁶ At first this offering of ties to traditional community surprised me but after applying the model of peoplehood, I realized that this was a way of confirming their ties to shared land bases that are represented by these traditional communities.

As Sturm (2002: 149) notes, the residents of these communities are far outnumbered demographically by the population of Cherokee citizens living in other communities both inside and outside of Cherokee Nation. Yet, just as language endangerment is increasing the social power and cultural capital associated with speakerhood, the residence shift outside of these traditional communities may be having a similar effect for these communities. Therefore, where once social constructions of peoplehood were based on sharing a land base, locating oneself or one’s family in a traditional community is gaining importance. Therefore, when discussing how L2 users construct speakerhood, I will be referencing the traditional communities indicated by Wahrhaftig’s research and relied on by Sturm (2002), Bender (2009), and Cushman (2011). This will be done because exhibiting a tie to these traditional communities implies that there are ties to other aspects of peoplehood thereby impacting negotiations of speakerhood.

The pillar of religion was adapted to the ‘ceremonial cycle’ for the peoplehood matrix (Holm et. al. 2003: 14) but it requires a fuller explanation for inclusion in the speakerhood matrix. Religion is often explicitly discussed as a basis for revitalization initiatives within Cherokee communities as evidenced by earlier quotes. However, to categorize all Cherokee spiritual belief under the

⁶ Line Switch is a traditional Cherokee community and is used as an example here. Respondents referenced their own community.

catchall term religion implies an agreement that simply is not present within any Cherokee community. As Sturm (2002) notes:

“Although many Cherokees share a common spiritual cosmology ... they tend to diverge between two distinct religious institutions, both of which they consider to be traditionally Cherokee. The first and more common religious institution is the Cherokee Baptist Church whose services tend to represent a Cherokee variation of the Southern Baptist tradition. ... The other traditional Cherokee religious institution is the Keetoowah Society. Keetoowahs are non-Christians who gather together ... for ceremonies that usually include a stomp dance...” (127).

There is no singular approach to religion within Cherokee communities. Instead, there is a clear representation of two religious traditions that are viewed as equally valid.

When examining the construction of speakerhood, the inclusion of religion can be problematic because of the diversity of religious belief within Cherokee communities. However, the modification to ceremonial cycle could also be problematic for the same reason. Instead of conceptualizing this pillar as religion or ceremonial cycle, which is not something that all Cherokees ascribe to, this pillar will be represented through communicative competence, specifically social competence in communication (Hymes 1971). Social competence is informed by cultural meaning and can affect how Cherokee or English language use is perceived within Cherokee communities and revitalization initiatives. There is also difficulty in discussing social competence in communication because of the broad diversity in Cherokee communities. However, as this research focuses on language use and speakerhood, this discussion will be centered on the Tahlequah Cherokee community and its revitalization initiatives. Although this is a fairly narrow view of Cherokee communities, it could be generalized to speech communities that have

an L1 user population. Later in this chapter, I will include examples from my fieldnotes and from L2 user's interviews to highlight areas of alignment and rupture in this speakerhood matrix. Respect for others and for community was a recurring theme in these examples. While communicative competence can take many forms, in this research they will be informed by the socially accepted communicative competence of traditional communities. Evidence of communicative competence can be seen in the use of silence during conversations, waiting to be asked to speak rather than offering, and deferring to elders in conversation. The use of silence echoes the function of silence in Basso's (1970, 1990) studies of Western Apache communities.

The aspect of shared history will be represented through kinship ties, or lineage, to narrow the broader scope of a shared tribal history to a shared family and community history. As noted by Sturm (2002), the politics of identity in Cherokee Nation are complex and multifaceted influenced by race, culture, and social constructions of Cherokeeness. Therefore, to attempt a discussion of a group as diverse as the 300,000 plus citizenry of Cherokee Nation is rather bold. Therefore, centering this discussion on the experiences and perspectives of individuals who are involved in revitalization initiatives seemed initially to be a productive way to focus this research. However, within this inquiry, I found that the discussion of lineage and citizenship were very much present within the dialogues of the individual participants.

Language learning is presented as a way to access Cherokeeness for the Cherokees who are engaged in language learning. However, this perspective is

complicated when individuals who are not Cherokee citizens engage in language acquisition. Hayley Miller, a student in the Cherokee Language Degree program who is Choctaw, said,

“I have been called out a couple of times, people just like, well you're not Cherokee. And, I don't think that's really fair. I mean my kids are, I'm helping my kids and why not. I'm trying to help the language too and I know other people that have been in the same boat in the program and I don't think it's fair to judge people” (2012).

Miller's experience highlights one way where an idealization of the link between language and the construction of peoplehood can be detrimental to the negotiation of speakerhood. Miller is a dedicated student and language advocate and was able to persevere in her language acquisition despite the scrutiny of her motivation. However, as noted by Peter (2014) in her discussion of language ideologies in Cherokee Nation, a self determined lack in any one area of the pillars of peoplehood can be a deterrent to language acquisition. While the aspect of kinship is a difficult topic for discussion, it is one that has impact and bearing on revitalization initiatives in indigenous language communities because the highly contested nature of Cherokee identity.

Language use is unarguably a requirement for the negotiation of speakerhood. Definitions of speakerhood at the governmental level were highlighted in Chapter Three. The five-point scale for proficiency, Master, Fluent, Competent, Apprentice, and Novice, are used to indicate individual language proficiency. However, these carry very little weight among the L2 users who took part in this study. Two of the participants hold the designation of Master speakers and achieved that certification through the Cherokee Nation Office of Translation.

However, despite this official designation they feel no more able to access speakerhood. Therefore, rather than focusing on assessing individual fluency, this research instead focuses on a theme that was continually presented as a challenge to L2 users. This theme was inauthentic claims to speakerhood and the negative social attention that derives from these claims.

This speakerhood matrix was developed after data analysis of information gathered through fieldwork. Accessing L2 users' experiences and attitudes allowed for the construction of the speakerhood matrix presented Figure 5 on page 105. By understanding how L2 users construct speakerhood, we are better able to understand the reasons for refusal of speakerhood from these same individuals. In the next section, the application of this matrix presents a portrait of the social complexity of seeking acceptance as a Cherokee speaker. By strongly linking peoplehood and language, there is significant social risk created for the use of language by any individual. However, the risk is increased greatly for individual L2 users who have strong ties within the community, with kinship, and of cultural competence. It would appear that having strong ties in these areas creates a situation where individuals are more likely to use language because of a preponderance of Cherokeeeness based on the other three areas. However, it actually creates an inverse relationship where L2 users with high levels of connection in the other three areas are less likely to participate in language revitalization because of heightened expectations for performance. This will be discussed in more depth in the next section.

L2 Users' Constructions of Speakerhood

The original set of questions that I formulated were divided into two groups, one for people who were involved actively in revitalization initiatives and another for people who were not involved or who had formerly been involved. I had conceptualized involvement as being a current employee or student in these initiatives and the questions provided in Appendix A still reflect this original division. However, as I began interviewing people and conducting participant observation, this division felt as though it was not substantive. It was not a meaningful division because there was significant overlap in what people were saying about the topics of speakerhood and language use. In addition, I also found that individuals who were not employed with language programs or taking classes saw their personal interest in language as active involvement. Revitalization initiatives benefit from having advocates and I felt their perspectives should be considered fully alongside other L2 users in this research. Therefore, rather than asking an abbreviated set of questions, I engaged in full interviews with every participant. Participation in revitalization initiatives is ever changing so establishing two groups based on simple criteria such as employment or class attendance was not appropriate. In addition, although each individual may not be actively engaged in revitalization, they either intended to rejoin or were pursuing self-directed learning activities. The group lines that I had drawn prior to entering into fieldwork were not salient but an intergroup difference did arise in the views of individuals who were L1 users and individuals who were L2 users. L1 users

indicated a much more open definition of speakerhood than did L2 users on the average.

When discussing what makes someone a Cherokee speaker with L1 users, the definition was straightforward. When asked what makes someone a speaker, Durbin Feeling, introduced in Chapter Two, said to me,

“Communication, if you can communicate. I used to think that you have to know a lot. I used to say when I first started teaching that you have to say it this certain way. Well, I’ve changed my tune a little but. As long as you can talk and say something and the other person understands it, that’s talking. That’s communicating” (2012a).

This reference by Feeling of a change in perspective is important but he continues and emphasizes communication as the primary characteristic of what makes someone a speaker. When I asked Dorothy Ice, an L1 user, a community language teacher, and a Cherokee National Treasure for her artistry in loom weaving, the same question she said to me,

“I’m still learning and I want to learn more. All you have to do is introduce things to someone who wants to be a speaker and if they want to do this theirself then they’ll get there” (2012).

When I asked the same question again, she repeated the same answer. I did not ask again knowing that to do so would have violated polite behavior. Ice is more than someone I interviewed for this project; she is my elder, my teacher and the school bus driver that dropped me off at my grandfather’s weaving shop. Although I was in the role of researcher, I could not find the ability to continue the line of questioning because it would have signaled my lack of regard for social norms.

For me, the interview process was enough of a stretch of the relationship between Ice and me as she holds the status of a highly respected elder. In the

interview process, I was formally posing questions that she answered and this was a major shift from our previous relationship. She has significant cultural knowledge and as a L1 user from a traditional community with Cherokee lineage and much lived experience, she is very deeply connected as a Cherokee to her peoplehood. Additionally, Ice is unfailingly generous and patient at making explanations as I discovered under her tutelage. However, from my previous understandings of my community, pushing an elder to answer a question they feel they have answered adequately is not socially appropriate. Ice would likely have been puzzled by my continuing to rephrase and ask the same question but would genially have given me the same answer. This was one moment where my previous knowledge of my community created some dissonance in my pursuit of an answer.

Through the interviews with both Ice and Feeling and observation at the Cherokee Speaker's Bureau where L1 users spoke about their perspectives on language, I was able to ascertain that, for L1 users, being a speaker is about communicating in Cherokee. Ice does note that personal motivation is key to becoming a speaker but she does not otherwise limit the category. Perhaps the notion of speakerhood is broader for those who are definitively members of the category while, as will be illustrated, these notions are more limited for L2 users who are negotiating acceptance into the category.

An entire research project could be structured around ways to determine and negotiate communicative competence in Cherokee communities but this topic can only be discussed briefly here as it pertains to the link between language and

peoplehood in revitalization initiatives. The Cherokee language has words that specifically address ideal behaviors. Some of these are:

- *SGUFG4oD.J*/detsadageyusesdi/to value the existence of one another
- *SGUFG0S.JoD*/detsadaligenvdesdi/to care for or be careful with one another
- *SGU4oDSoD.J*/detsadasesdesdi/to watch over one another
- *SGUVAG4oD.J*/detsadadohiyusesdi/to believe in and respect one another

The included terms are a few of many that present ideas about the way that individuals within the community should behave toward one another. Words about caring, respecting, and valuing one another are ideals of behavior encoded into the language. These words are meaningful because of the etymological meaning that imparts cultural values and guides behavior.

Wyman Kirk (2011) told me about a conference held in January 2008 attended parents, students, teachers, linguists, community members, University employees, and paid consultants. He described it as a gathering to discuss the meaning of the language and what children should learn to be Cherokees. It is also referenced by Raymond (2008) as a gathering to engage in planning for the future of revitalization initiatives.. He stated that in this gathering of L1 users there were representatives who participated from the three different Cherokee cultural centers, Cherokee stomp grounds, Cherokee Baptist churches, and Cherokee Methodist churches. He said that the common factor that the group kept returning to was that of respect. Kirk jokingly stated that he was surprised that such a diverse group came to any consensus. He went on to add that people described

respect as caring for others, deferring to elders, not causing harm or offense, and checking on each other to make sure that people's needs are met.

The cultural values that guide communicative competence, a component of Cherokee speakerhood, are deeply held. I have seen interactions in many contexts where errors in communicative competence are made thus opening an individual to social critique. Patrick Rochford (2012b) said,

"I think there's definite tone and accent when Cherokee speakers talk. They don't ever really move their mouths. You can hear the Cherokee women talk... they've got certain mannerisms that they carry and I think it's the way you act that makes you a speaker too. Because you don't get in someone's face like this [leaning toward me] and talk Cherokee, it's just, see you back off. [Indicating that I physically leaned back.] That's what I would've done too. [Returned to original position]] You just don't get in someone's face like an English speaker would. Or like someone that's raised in that, I don't have to get in your space so you know that I'm talking to you and not anyone else."

Rochford is specifically indicating standards of communicative competence regarding personal, physical space that are present in Cherokee communities. By being aware and cognizant of how communicative competence differs inside Cherokee communities, Rochford exhibits a sensitivity that he also expresses in his communicative practices. His leaning toward me during the interview to illustrate his point and is not something that he has ever repeated in other interactions.

Rochford is observant picking up on cues of communicative competence.

At this time, I will share an example of a sensitive cultural exchange. An L2 user was conversing in Cherokee with L1 users about where he had been and his plans for later that day. The L1 users stated that they had been receiving phone calls asking for information that was culturally sensitive and one of the L1 users said that he wanted to send these inquiries to the L2 user. The L2 user seemed

surprised but said that it was okay. The L1 users in the room were surprised by the L2 user's acceptance of the task. The L1 user who had posed the question said that he would send any and all requests this person's way. The L2 user said that would be fine and after just a little more conversation made his exit. Afterward, the L1 users in the room were shocked that the L2 user had agreed to serve as a reference for anyone seeking culturally sensitive information. Then, the L1 users began to be openly critical of the L2 user's Cherokee language skills stating that he was incomprehensible. They appeared to understand him but began to focus on the struggle it was to do so. In this hypothetical, the L2 user thought he was deferring to the L1 users when the L1 users were trying to include him on a joke. Then, when the L2 user took the suggestion as a real request and accepted it, the L1 users were shocked. They were expecting a refusal. By offering to give out sensitive cultural information to an unknown requester, the L2 user exhibited an error in the social competence that guides communicative competence. This error then created an avenue of critique for the L2 user's intelligible Cherokee. The critique of this L2 user's Cherokee had not been something I witnessed prior to this exchange.

During the course of this research, I have witnessed many similar situations and posit that an L2 user's communicative competence contributes to how they are perceived as a language user. When an L2 user exhibits errors in both communicative competence and language use, there is more critique of their language use. The corollary of this phenomenon is that individuals who have strong social competence have higher expectations for language use. When

acquiring Cherokee as a second language, errors in phonology and syntax are part of the learning process and unavoidable. However, errors in communicative competence seem to tie directly into how language use is perceived. A breach of cultural etiquette opens the door for a critique of language skills but the door swings the other way as well. When an L2 user behaves in a culturally competent manner, L1 users seem to be more favorable about their language skills.

Another pillar of Cherokee peoplehood was a shared history but for the speakerhood matrix this is considered through kinship or family ties. A shared history as a people is certainly a vital component for the construction of a national identity. However, the way that an individual community member accesses that particular shared history is through kinship, lineage, or family ties. In this way, individuals are able to clearly define their shared Cherokeeeness with other individuals. Cherokee citizenship is broadly determined by allowing citizens to claim descent through either their mother or their father (Sturm 2005). The first questions that I encounter when I meet other Cherokees for the first time are about where I originate from and who my family is. When these questions come from elders who are L1 users, they are typically looking for a connection to my family through acquaintance or kinship.

In speaking with other L1 users, other L2 users, and other Cherokees who are neither, I have found this to be a common experience. It would also be prudent to add this is a fairly common practice among neighboring Native communities. It is a way to establish a relationship between new acquaintances but also allows for the sharing of experiences between Cherokees and other non-Cherokee Native

people. In addition to the experience of discussing family ties to determine a shared Cherokee peoplehood, L2 users also described another phenomenon related to family ties. L2 users talked about getting a pass from L1 users. They described this as an L1 user taking for granted that they were speakers if the L1 user knew the speakers in their family. Getting a pass meant they did not need to prove speaking ability or may not even need to use the language. L2 users said that it was almost as though their ability to speak was taken for granted. They also talked about having their speaking skills overestimated when L1 users knew the speakers in their family. Boney (2012b) spoke of having an L1 user stop by his office on a day when he had other visitors. The L1 user asked Boney a couple of questions in Cherokee to which Boney said he responded but in English. One of those questions was about his family. When he recognized the names of Boney's family and knew them personally to be speakers, he turned to the other two individuals in the room and began asking them questions. Boney stated that they answered the opening questions that were rather simple. Through these questions, the L1 user determined that he didn't know either individual's family then started asking other personal questions, not about family, that were progressively harder and harder until the other two individuals could no longer answer. Boney did not specify whether he meant harder in terms of linguistic difficulty or in terms of the subject matter of the questions. At the time, I assumed it to mean linguistic difficulty but in retrospect it may have been the subject of the questions. When the replies to his questions stopped, the L1 user chuckled and switched to English. Boney felt him not being questioned in the same manner as

the other two present was a direct result of the L1 user's familiarity with the speakers in his family.

To further illustrate this example, Kirk (2012) spoke of encountering students who had L1 users in their immediate family who seemed more hesitant to make errors in speech. In his capacity as a teacher in the Cherokee Language Degree Program Kirk encounters many students pursuing Cherokee language education, so for him to take note of this behavior seems quite salient. Kirk (2012) spoke about how these relationships can affect language learning,

"One of our students, again won't mention any names, the work we do they'd take it home. Here, at the college, we have a slightly different way of approaching the language in terms of what we provide students with and sort of the sequence of knowledge that we develop. When they take stuff home, how they express things may not be how, and certainly in actually many cases, will not be how their families would express the same ideas. So they have these sorts of differences when they go home and most of the time those speakers in their families have an understanding of the issues. But, in some cases, we've had the speakers from those families who interact with whoever's learning and it becomes a real strong source of contention and the students feel bad because their families have this expectation, you should know how to say this stuff. Why are you learning this because this isn't right, we say it like this.

On one level, there's an expectation that they're not saying things right because it's not the way that they're used in their families. They feel a pressure to be able to say these things but they don't know how to say these things because they hadn't learned them. It really sort of stifles their growth because on one level they can't be wrong. If they say something it has to be right and they feel that pressure internally but in some cases I've found that their families did it."

Kirk contextualized these examples by saying that he didn't think that language learning was easier for people who didn't have speakers in their families. He was stating that having speakers in your family may create higher expectations for language use. This correlates with the statements made by L2 users with whom I have spoken with in the course of this study. L2 users who do not have access to L1

users in their immediate family seem more willing to make mistakes with language use. L2 users with family members who are speakers can receive a pass on language learning, as illustrated by Boney's experience, but when language use does occur there do seem to be heightened expectations.

The third pillar of peoplehood, a shared land base, is conceptualized in speakerhood matrix as an individual's ties to Cherokee community. Place can be extremely important to a community (Basso 1996). That importance can be reflected in the way that location is encoded in a language (Harrison 2007: 115, Mithun 1999: 144). In 1963, according to Albert Wahrhaftig, there were 74 traditional Cherokee communities in northeastern Oklahoma (Bender 2009: 123). From personal experience, I know not all of these communities are still in existence,. Those that continue to exist have changed since that Wahrhaftig's survey in the 1960's but continue to be considered traditional communities. When meeting one another, Cherokees always inquire about an individual's family and from where they originate. Within this research, I would inquire where an interview participant was from and they would answer with their current residence then add the traditional community their family hailed from unprompted. By invoking a familial home, participants were invoking one aspect of the constructed notion of peoplehood. These communities remain locations of cultural significance and areas of meaningful language production thereby making connections to community an aspect of in L2 user's constructions of speakerhood.

This connection between community and language is demonstrated when individuals who grew up outside, or at the periphery, of Cherokee Nation move

into the Tahlequah Cherokee community. An individual who is from one of the recognized traditional Cherokee communities does not seem to encounter the same set of difficulties. One of the interview participants spoke about growing up just outside of Cherokee Nation, literally a few miles on the other side of the jurisdictional boundary but feeling like she grew up in a different state. Another individual, who grew up in a community on the periphery of Cherokee Nation, continually recalled his family's residence from two generations past when discussing his connection to language. I have heard L1 and L2 users say that a person is not really from here, with here meaning Cherokee communities, about someone who has lived in Tahlequah for over 10 years. Being connected to place, seems to give people more of a right to learn and use the language but this connection also creates a greater accountability.

In 2008, Cherokee Nation had a population of approximately 280,000 citizens, however, roughly 50% of citizens lived outside of Cherokee Nation jurisdictional boundaries (Raymond 2008: 3). There is a Cherokee Diaspora that creates situations where people actively construct relationships to a familial community. People maintain these relationships to their communities although they may no longer live in them. They do this by marking occasions to visit regularly and by adapting new communities in digital spaces. By solidifying their connections through regular visits, yearly or more frequently, they are able to maintain their connections to their familial homes. In some cases, these individuals had never lived in the communities of their familial homes but visit them in order to solidify their connections to community. People do maintain

these connections in more ways than just recollections or memories. L2 users to maintain, or even create, these connections seem to be more positively regarded in their language use.

A participant in this research, Patrick Rochford, hails from Illinois. He began visiting Oklahoma while still a teenager specifically to better his language skills through conversation with Cherokee users (2012c). Later, he came to be part of the Northeastern State University Cherokee Language Degree program to study Cherokee. Through this process, he began to think of the Tahlequah Cherokee community as home and others began to see him as part of the community. Rochford continues to visit regularly, driving from Illinois to Oklahoma at his own expense sometimes as many as four times a year. Rochford may not have originated in the Tahlequah Cherokee community and no longer lives in the community full-time, but he maintains those connections through visits and through digital spaces and communities.

Language use has been discussed throughout the discussion of each pillar because it is an integral component of speakerhood. L2 users identified language use as a key component of speakerhood. However, the language use that they identified as indicative of speakerhood was high-level proficiency. It was language use that would be characterized on the Cherokee Nation scale of linguistic proficiency as Master level. Denise Chaudoin (2012a) said,

“There are degrees of speaking. Conversational which is general everyday language. Then there are speakers who know older words. These are fluent speakers. They can read and write too. Growing up with the language. They have a greater grasp than just conversation and they know uncommon words.”

While Chaudoin did note that there are degrees of speaking, she excepted herself from speakerhood stating that she was a learner primarily because she was not capable of Master level Cherokee language use. In response to the same question, JP Johnson (2012b) said,

“They can more easily translate. They can... You know, if they want to they stop speaking English completely. Man, I would love to be able to do that. Just imagine what our world would be like.”

The ability to communicate solely in Cherokee fully excluding English, as evidenced by Thomas’ quote in Chapter Four where she stated that speakers do not code-switch, seems to be evident in L2 user attitudes toward speakerhood. Although some L2 users indicated that there was a range of proficiency among speakers, when asked to define speakerhood, most L2 users relied on definitions that fit into the Master speaker level of proficiency.

High expectations for individuals who are identified as speakers have a separate but related outcome. In each interview, L2 users spent some time talking about individuals who they had witnessed inauthentically claim speakerhood. Wyman Kirk (2011) referred to this act as overrating one’s own speaking ability and said,

“It’s interesting it’s usually second language learners, pure second language learners, or people who have a limited exposure to the language who tend to overrate themselves in the language. I’m not saying that negatively. I think the issue is that because there’s not enough people who really... Like in Spanish, because Spanish is so prevalent in our society even in places where Spanish is discouraged there’s a good way to check what you can really do in the language. In Cherokee, what you see are a lot of word lists and stuff and people can have a false sense of their capability. So, we run into a lot of people who know a lot of words but really haven’t thought about the fact they don’t know how to speak who rate themselves as speaker or near speaker and they’re not. Conversely, it’s really interesting there’s a lot of people who can speak the language but because they can’t

... speak it as well, as say, their parents who are maybe, in terms of say other scales are, master level or highly fluent. Because they can't speak at that level, they consider that to be the bar of speaking and put themselves below that and they say no I'm not a speaker. It's always... They're always older students, 30's, 40's. And I can name quite a few of them, they're speakers. You talk to them you interact with them they can stay in the language. To me, that's the barometer. I mean it sounds simple but if you talk to someone and they don't have to use a lot of English and they can talk to about most things in the language, they're a speaker."

Claiming speakerhood inauthentically was referred to by other L2 users as well.

Kristen Thomas (2012) also referenced this phenomenon of overrating saying,

"I don't refer to myself as a Cherokee speaker. I refer to myself as a learner of the language. Just because I feel that there are lots of individuals... Well, it's become the norm to, for people to refer to themselves as a speaker when they're not and I just hate to perpetuate that idea."

Thomas referred to individuals who claim to be speakers but have very little linguistic competence as a very common occurrence and as a model she did not want to emulate. When one considers that L2 users seem to conceptualize speakerhood at the Master level, it seems that claiming speakerhood identifies one as a Master level speaker.

Further illustrating this point is a statement from Jeff Edwards, a Language Media Technologist and artist who incorporates Cherokee language heavily into his work. An example of his work that melds Cherokee humor and language can be found in Figure 6. Edwards (2012b) said to me,

"Everywhere you go around here someone says *osiyo* (hello) or *wado* (thank you) in e-mails but if you asked that person, what are you doing today, they wouldn't be able to respond."

When one presents oneself as a speaker, these L2 users are expecting significant oral production of Cherokee language. Edwards (2012b) went on to say that "You

can't go around osiyo-ing⁷ everyone when you aren't really a speaker." Edwards is not seeking to discourage language use but does touch on the high-level of proficiency that is implied with language use in most contexts. For L2 users, speakerhood is certainly about linguistic competency but making a fallacious claim is seen as disrespectful and irreverent.

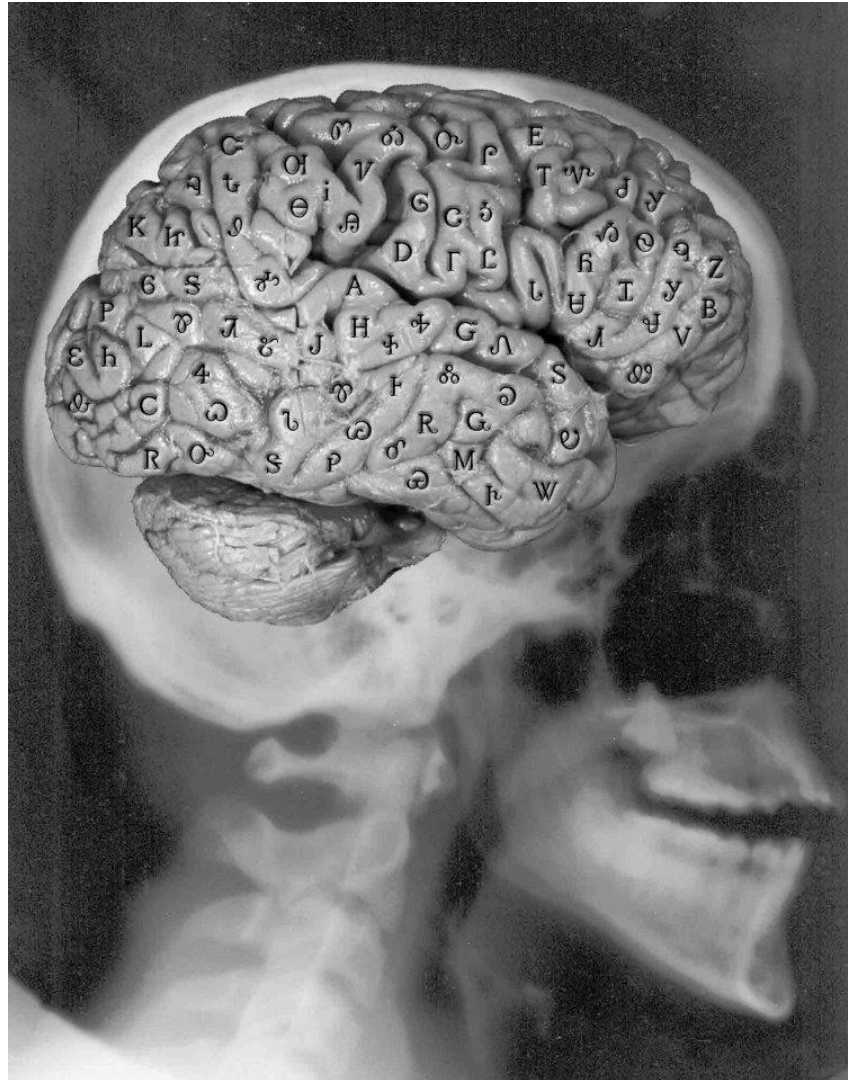


Figure 6: Language on the Brain by Jeff Edwards

⁷ *Osiyo* is used for hello in Cherokee and is a very commonly used word in the Tahlequah Cherokee community.

Limited Access to Speakerhood

L2 users' perceptions construct speakerhood as a category that is inaccessible to L2 users. However, when language use is considered through the speakerhood matrix, there are significant conclusions that can be drawn. If an individual is strong in three of four categories, specifically community, kinship, and communicative competence, it is less likely they will attempt to create connections in the language or try to access speakerhood. Errors in language use can reflect negatively on other aspects of the speakerhood matrix for individuals. This is true for individuals with community ties, kinship ties, especially with L1 users in their close family, and who have high levels of English communicative competence in Cherokee community settings. The sting in this scenario is that the idealization of Cherokee language and Cherokee culture means that errors in language use are perceived as having a negative impact on individual cultural knowledge. Therefore, the individuals who seem most likely to participate in revitalization initiatives do not feel they have access to speakerhood or the freedom to use Cherokee language. This is a bitter irony as Peter (2014) indicates that a lack of connection in these areas leaves some L2 users with the same perceptions of lack of access. This attitude is also seen in the examples presented earlier in this chapter from Kirk about students who are speakers but who refuse to identify as such. Kirk indicated that this refusal occurred because these individuals were not at as high a proficiency level as a Master speaker. While these individuals might not be acquiring and using Cherokee as second language, as Kirk indicated some

may be L1 users, this further validates the social significance of speakerhood in Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives and in Cherokee communities.

Despite this bleak outlook on constructions of speakerhood from L2 users, there are some who access language learning and become participatory in the process of revitalization. It seems that L2 users who have limited connections in the categories of community ties, kinship, and communicative competence seek access to language learning as a variable of Cherokee peoplehood they can actively increase. These L2 users are not claiming speakerhood but can use language as a way to create new connections in the other three areas, and build upon, or shore up, existing connections.

While false claims to speakerhood were identified by L2 users as problematic, the focus of this project is firmly centered on the experiences and perspectives of L2 users and their constructions of speakerhood creating a potentially sensitive situation. Although a number of interview participants referenced individuals who openly claim speakerhood but are not able to communicate in Cherokee, I was not able to interview any of these individuals. It does appear, however, that any L2 user claims of speakerhood invite critique and social reprisal from within the community. Perhaps it is because self-determined claims of speakerhood are very rarely from individuals with high-level proficiency. This research project did not include individuals who self-identify as speakers. The research focus is on L2 users in active roles in revitalization and it is rather difficult to find an L2 user in this role that openly claims speakerhood. L2 users in Cherokee revitalization initiatives work alongside L1 users and are involved in the

creation of curriculum and materials to create proficiency and assessments to gauge proficiency. They are intensely aware of the difficulty in acquiring a high level of proficiency in Cherokee language. Acquiring a high level of proficiency in any language is difficult but Cherokee is quite unlike English making acquisition challenging. Jeff Edwards (2012a) made this statement in regard to becoming a Cherokee speaker,

“It kind of goes back to when you were a little kid and you wanted to be an astronaut and your mama said well anything is possible if you try hard enough. I think Cherokee is no different. You can do anything if you really apply yourself but it's going to take a level of dedication that's going to be years, not short term.”

Edwards drew a metaphor between becoming a Cherokee speaker and becoming an astronaut, something a very small percentage of people are able to achieve. While Edwards may have been making a bit of a joke in the way he phrased his statement, he nonetheless encapsulates the intense difficulty in accessing speakerhood that is perceived by L2 users. The real tragedy is that this difficulty in access is, in part, solidified through L2 users' construction of speakerhood as an inaccessible category.

Speakerhood in the Tahlequah Cherokee community, as illustrated in the speakerhood matrix based on L2 users' perceptions, is about much more than language use. Speakerhood implies a deep connection to community, kinship, and communicative competence. In addition, to further complicate negotiations of acceptance, speakerhood is something that L2 users perceive as resting solely with L1 users as illustrated in Chapter Four. This chapter expanded the idea that speakerhood indicates more than linguistic competency by examining how the

deep connections between language and culture affect L2 users' constructions of speakerhood. This idealized link engages pillars of Cherokee peoplehood to inform constructions of speakerhood. L2 users construct speakerhood as a strong indicator of communicative competence, community ties, and kinship. Although the L1 users interviewed seem to have a much broader definition of speakerhood, participant observation revealed that L1 users in Cherokee communities who are not language teachers might construct speakerhood similar to L2 users. However, as the L1 users who participated in this study are language teachers, their broad definition of speakerhood may only be indicative of those who teach Cherokee language. This gap in knowledge indicates the potential for further inquiry but will not be pursued further within this chapter. In conclusion, teasing apart the intricacies of relationships helps to understand why and how L2 users negotiation of speakerhood encompasses more than language skills alone.

Chapter 6: Tsalageeks: Digital Negotiations of Speakerhood

I first heard the term Tsalageek in 2010 during a conversation with Roy Boney and Jeff Edwards. One of them used the term and it immediately caught my attention although I am now unable to recall who said it first. The word is a portmanteau of GWY/tsalagi/Cherokee and geek extending the Y/gi sound into geek. Later in separate interviews, Boney and Edwards both told me the neologism was a reference to people interested in Cherokee language technology. Although it is not widely used, it does capture the relationship between the Cherokee language, Cherokee people, and new forms of language use.

Negotiating speakerhood and language use are both major sources of tension for L2 users but digital space is an emergent language domain where L2 users seem to be taking the lead. This chapter will examine the emergent language domain first by presenting a brief history of Cherokee language technology. This domain was not created solely through the recent digitization of Cherokee language but its presence on Smartphones, computer software and the internet seems to have created a boom in its use. The use of technology for language use is seen as an act of decolonization by some members of the Tahlequah Cherokee community, which leads to an interesting renegotiation of this space by L2 users. Through this discussion, the importance of this new space will be highlighted along with the intriguing influence of literacy in the syllabary on speakerhood. Finally, this chapter will present an examination of how Cherokee language use in new domains can affect negotiations of speakerhood by L2 users.

Cherokee Language Technology

The beginning for Cherokee language technology is rooted in the early nineteenth century with the man known as Sequoyah, or according to some sources George Gist or George Guess. As Boney shared with me during an interview, the initial characters of the syllabary employed loops and flourishes to accommodate the free flowing ink used for writing in Sequoyah's time (2012a). In addition, to this structural difference in characters there were also significantly more characters at its initial invention with between 115 to 200 syllabary characters (Cushman 2011, Walker 1984: 164, Walker and Sarbaugh 1993, White 1962). The modern day incarnation of the Cherokee syllabary contains 85 characters with 78 representing a consonant-vowel combination, six representing one vowel each, and one representing a consonant. The syllabary chart that is recognizable today derives from the need to adapt the original handwritten chart for use in printing presses (Boney 2012). The original syllabary was formally presented and demonstrated to the Cherokee government by Sequoyah in 1821 (Bender 2002, Conley 2005, Cushman 2011). At that time, he and his daughter demonstrated that a message could be communicated from one to the other through writing alone. The demonstration with his daughter was necessary to prove the efficacy of Sequoyah's writing system. Initially, his efforts were met with suspicion and skepticism (Bender 2002, Walker 1993, White 1962). Sequoyah is credited as the sole inventor of the syllabary although there is some speculation that he may have publicized an existing writing system (Conley 2005). These

D _a	R _e	T _i	Ꭰ _o	Ꭱ _u	i _v
Ꭶ _{ga} Ꭷ _{ka}	Ꭲ _{ge}	Ꭳ _{gi}	Ꭴ _{go}	Ꭵ _{gu}	Ꭶ _{gv}
Ꭸ _{ha}	Ꭹ _{he}	Ꭺ _{hi}	Ꭻ _{ho}	Ꭼ _{hu}	Ꭽ _{hv}
Ꭾ _{la}	Ꭿ _{le}	Ꮀ _{li}	Ꮁ _{lo}	Ꮂ _{lu}	Ꮃ _{lv}
Ꮄ _{ma}	Ꮁ _{me}	Ꮆ _{mi}	Ꮇ _{mo}	Ꮈ _{mu}	
Ꮎ _{na} Ꮏ _{hna} Ꮐ _{nah}	Ꮊ _{ne}	Ꮋ _{ni}	Ꮌ _{no}	Ꮍ _{nu}	Ꮎ _{nv}
Ꮑ _{qua}	Ꮏ _{que}	Ꮐ _{qui}	Ꮑ _{quo}	Ꮒ _{quu}	Ꮓ _{quv}
Ꮔ _{sa} Ꮕ _s	Ꮖ _{se}	Ꮗ _{si}	Ꮘ _{so}	Ꮙ _{su}	Ꮚ _{sv}
Ꮛ _{da} Ꮜ _{ta}	Ꮝ _{de} Ꮞ _{te}	Ꮟ _{di} Ꮠ _{ti}	Ꮡ _{do}	Ꮢ _{du}	Ꮣ _{dv}
Ꮤ _{dla} Ꮥ _{tla}	Ꮦ _{tle}	Ꮧ _{tli}	Ꮨ _{tlo}	Ꮩ _{tlu}	Ꮪ _{tlv}
Ꮫ _{tσα}	Ꮬ _{tse}	Ꮭ _{tσι}	Ꮮ _{tso}	Ꮯ _{tsu}	Ꮰ _{tsv}
Ꮮ _{wa}	Ꮯ _{we}	Ꮰ _{wi}	Ꮱ _{wo}	Ꮲ _{wu}	Ꮳ _{wv}
Ꮴ _{ya}	Ꮵ _{ye}	Ꮶ _{yi}	Ꮷ _{yo}	Ꮸ _{yu}	Ꮹ _{yv}

Sounds Represented by Vowels

<p>a, as <u>a</u> in <u>father</u>, or short as <u>a</u> in <u>rival</u></p> <p>e, as <u>a</u> in <u>hate</u>, or short as <u>e</u> in <u>met</u></p> <p>i, as <u>i</u> in <u>pique</u>, or short as <u>i</u> in <u>pit</u></p>		<p>o, as <u>o</u> in <u>note</u>, approaching <u>aw</u> in <u>law</u></p> <p>u, as <u>oo</u> in <u>foo</u>, or short as <u>u</u> in <u>pull</u></p> <p>v, as <u>u</u> in <u>but</u>, nasalized</p>
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Consonant Sounds

g nearly as in English, but approaching to k. d nearly as in English but approaching to t. h k l m n q s t w y as in English. Syllables beginning with g except Ꭶ (ga) have sometimes the power of k. Ꭴ (go), Ꮃ (du), Ꮃ (dv) are sometimes sounded to, tu, tv and syllables written with tl except Ꮁ (tla) sometimes vary to dl.

Figure 7: Cherokee Syllabary Chart

claims cannot be proven at this time, therefore, this writing will consider the syllabary as Sequoyah's sole invention.

After the syllabary was adopted, literacy quickly became established in Cherokee communities (Bender 2002, Cushman 2011). A national newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, was established in 1828 and published both Cherokee and English in its pages (Perdue 1977: 207). However, it should be noted, that the Cherokee passages were not a translation of the English that was included. Information in English served as advocacy to English readers while content in Cherokee was communication intended for Cherokee speakers. Although this material did not reach the entire citizenry and was not representative of the variety of perspectives present it is nonetheless valuable as a resource (Perdue 1977). Sequoyah's syllabary was adopted rapidly by the Cherokee government, the Cherokee people, and was even used by U.S. government officials for written communication with Cherokee speakers with over 13,000,000 pages of printed material being produced from one press alone (White 1962). Although the development and adoption of the syllabary for communication took place in the early nineteenth century, innovation has continued since that time.

At its inception, the syllabary was a handwritten system. To make it ready for the printing press, the characters were adapted but since that major overhaul it has remained unchanged (Walker and Sarbaugh 1993). Although the syllabary characters have remained fairly static, they have gone on to be included in other forms of communication. A typewriter ball was created in the mid-1960's showing the willingness of Cherokees to adapt the syllabary to the most current technology

available (Cushman 2011: 173). In public presentations, Boney has described the process for typesetting the Cherokee dictionary in 1975. Boney stated that because the typewriter didn't have enough room for all of the syllabary characters and also for a set of numbers, the typist would have to leave space for the numbers then transfer the paper to a typewriter that had numbers and add them in. Obviously this process must have been arduous. However, this was just one more step in the evolution of the syllabary into different mediums. From the printing press to the typewriter, technological innovations continued to keep pace with the current technology for delivering written materials.

Although the Cherokee syllabary characters had begun making their way onto computer systems, a landmark moment in the syllabary's transition to new technology was the inclusion of the Cherokee syllabary into the Unicode Consortium in 1999. Durbin Feeling, Gloria Sly, and Michael Everson co-authored the application (E-mail from Roy Boney on August 12, 2012). This is significant because each Cherokee syllabary character was assigned a unique code point that enables each character to be recognized across all platforms. The Unicode system is a global system for recognizing characters. As both Boney (2012b) and Jeff Edwards (2012b), leaders within the Cherokee language technology movement, have stated to me during their interviews for this research, the inclusion of the Cherokee syllabary into the Unicode Consortium created more opportunities for the language.

The universal system of encoding Cherokee syllabary characters meant that any system that read Unicode could read, display, and create Cherokee syllabary

13A0	13A1	13A2	13A3	13A4	13A5	13A6	13A7	13A8	13A9	13AA	13AB
D	R	T	Ꭰ	Ꭱ	i	S	Ꭳ	Ꭴ	Ꭵ	A	J
13AC	13AD	13AE	13AF	13B0	13B1	13B2	13B3	13B4	13B5	13B6	13B7
E	Ꭶ	Ꭷ	Ꭸ	Ꭹ	Ꭺ	Ꭻ	W	Ꭼ	Ꭽ	G	M
13B8	13B9	13BA	13BB	13BC	13BD	13BE	13BF	13C0	13C1	13C2	13C3
Ꭾ	Ꭿ	Ꮀ	H	Ꮂ	Ꮃ	Ꮄ	t	G	Ꮆ	h	Z
13C4	13C5	13C6	13C7	13C8	13C9	13CA	13CB	13CC	13CD	13CE	13CF
Ꮌ	Ꮍ	I	Ꮏ	Ꮐ	Ꮑ	Ꮒ	Ꮓ	Ꮔ	Ꮕ	4	b
13D0	13D1	13D2	13D3	13D4	13D5	13D6	13D7	13D8	13D9	13DA	13DB
Ꮗ	Ꮘ	R	L	W	S	Ꮚ	J	J	V	S	Ꮜ
13DC	13DD	13DE	13DF	13E0	13E1	13E2	13E3	13E4	13E5	13E6	13E7
Ꮝ	Ꮞ	L	C	Ꮠ	Ꮡ	P	C	V	h	K	d
13E8	13E9	13EA	13EB	13EC	13ED	13EE	13EF	13F0	13F1	13F2	13F3
Ꮗ	G	Ꮜ	Ꮝ	Ꮞ	Ꮟ	Ꮠ	Ꮡ	Ꮢ	Ꮣ	Ꮤ	Ꮥ
13F4	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	200A
B											

Figure 8: Cherokee Unicode Point Range.
Image Courtesy: Roy Boney, Jr/Cherokee Nation

characters. This development paved the way for the inclusion of Cherokee into the a number of systems. These include the Apple Mac, iPhone, and iPad operating systems, the translation of Windows 9 and the online Office apps of Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and OneNote into Cherokee, the inclusion of Cherokee as a user language in Google Search and Gmail, the creation of the Cherokee Language Wikipedia (chr.wikipedia.org/wiki/GWY), and the inclusion of Cherokee as an official language of the social media website Facebook (Chavez 2013, Chavez 2014,

Cornelius 2011, Evans 2010, Good Voice 2010). Figure 9 shows the Cherokee syllabary in use on an iPhone screen.



Figure 9: Cherokee Syllabary on iPhone
Photo Courtesy: Roy Boney, Jr./Cherokee Nation

In addition, the social media website Twitter supports Unicode based characters so Cherokee can be used there as well. The inclusion of the Cherokee syllabary in this veritable panoply of technological platforms and communication systems is quite an achievement. It allows Cherokee L1 and L2 users the ability to use their language in many settings.

Literacy and Digital Spaces

The development of technological domains for language revitalization has been a long tradition in Cherokee Nation. This innovation begins with the invention of the syllabary by Sequoyah in 1821 but has continued to keep pace as new technologies emerge. At one time, writing was a technological innovation but the new frontier is digital domains. Yet, since 1821, literacy has been key for most technological developments. From the first introduction of the syllabary as talking leaves to the inclusion of the syllabary into social media, literacy is a key for participation. This renewed focus on literacy has led to an increased visibility and presence of Cherokee language on public signs in the Tahlequah Cherokee community.

Literacy was widespread in Cherokee communities, seemingly, overnight after the invention of the syllabary in 1821. However, this high rate of literacy has not continued. Bender (2002) notes a significant decline in Cherokee literacy except for specialized religious contexts. Durbin Feeling began his career as a language educator teaching literacy skills to Cherokee adults in the 1970's through Cherokee Nation (2012a). Feeling continued working to increase rates of adult literacy among Cherokee speakers throughout his career. During the course of that work, he developed a literacy workbook for speakers that is still used as a literacy workbook and teaching tool in Cherokee communities. In the early days of his career, Feeling encountered resistance to his efforts to teach Cherokee literacy to adults in Cherokee communities. The following is from an interview with Feeling (2012b).

“I was 30 years old, maybe younger than that, going around to communities to teach. And there was one guy – well there was more than one – that told me not to teach the syllabary. One guy, way out there by Line Switch, he came out and said, it's not good that you're teaching, you're too young, he told me. I asked him, why am I too young? He said, you don't know as much as an elder would and all these medicine books, if you ever get hold of a medicine book and you tried it on your own, it would mess up the effects of it, or something like that. I said that's not my intention at all. I respect those books that you guys use. All I'm doing is teaching people to read and write. He said, no, I don't support you. And plenty of other older ones were like that.”

The ties between literacy and specific religious contexts are obvious in the resistance that Feeling faced in his literacy efforts and resonates with Bender's research in Eastern Cherokee communities (2002). Even though, there was a decline in Cherokee literacy among adults, that trend seems to have shifted (Bender 2002, Bender 2009, Cushman 2011). Increased literacy seems to be occurring concurrently with a focus on revitalization initiatives (Bender 2002, Bender 2009). The strong link between Cherokee peoplehood and Cherokee language creates significant social meaning for the use of syllabary as an expression of Cherokee identity (Cushman 2011). This confluence of factors gives Cherokee language digitization initiatives significant strength and momentum in Cherokee communities.

This resurgence of Cherokee literacy is not without its own paradox.

Digitization initiatives are being strongly driven by L2 users, specifically those who are within the Cherokee Nation Language Technology Department.⁸ The decline in

⁸ During the years that fieldwork was conducted, October 2012 to December 2012, the individuals in the department were Roy Boney, Jr., Jeff Edwards, Joseph Erb, Durbin Feeling, and Zach Barnes, an intern, from the Cherokee Language Degree Program at Northeastern State University. Since that time, Joseph Erb left the Language Technology Department and Cherokee Language Program to pursue

literacy has led to a number of L1 users who are not able to read and write in Cherokee although Feeling's literacy drive did much to increase rates of literacy. However, with the addition of the Cherokee language to the Apple iPhone operation system in 2010, there was a major upswing in Cherokee literacy among L2 users. These reports come from L2 users who were interviewed for this research and from my own observations in the community. Individuals stated that they began using the language daily because they were able to access it through their iPhone. This type of movement created a situation where L2 users, who are mostly under the age of 50, were quickly becoming literate in response to a technological innovation.

This newfound literacy was then driving second language acquisition by these same individuals. These developments did create some interesting tensions, as elder, L1 users who were not literate in Cherokee were thrust into a role where they felt as though they were less knowledgeable than literate L2 users. In many cases, these literate L2 users had less proficiency with the language. However, their ability to quickly recognize and write syllabary characters was seen as a high level of proficiency by L1 users. The linking of language use, and specifically literacy, to religious contexts created ideological obstacles to literacy in the 1970's and earlier (Bender 2002, Bender 2009). However, the increase in revitalization initiatives and the resulting increase in technological innovations have largely overridden these obstacles. Yet, the legacy of that decline in literacy creates areas

creative projects and Roy Boney, Jr. became Manager of the Cherokee Language Program maintaining a role in language technology as the supervisor for the department.

of disjuncture between literate L2 users and L1 users who are still seeking to overcome ideological obstacles to gain literacy.

Due to the invention of the syllabary and the prominence of literacy among Cherokee language users, literacy is a component of determining speakerhood in Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives. While this was presented in Chapter Three's discussion of defining speakerhood, it is nonetheless a salient topic to revisit within the context of digitization initiatives. In order to be receive certification as a Master speaker, or to serve as a translator, an individual must not only use Cherokee language at a high proficiency but also be literate in the Cherokee syllabary. Some users find learning the syllabary more daunting than the learning to use the platforms of technology. However, for a number of L1 users, the inclusion of Cherokee syllabary has served as motivation to become literate. A delightful outcome when the syllabary, and therefore, the language, expanded into the digital domain was the addition of elders into the digital spaces being created by L2 user initiatives. Further analysis of how this inclusion of language into digital domains will be presented in the next section along with the implications for negotiations of speakerhood.

Applying the Speakerhood Matrix to Tsalageeks

The speakerhood matrix based on L2 users' perceptions is composed of language use, kinship ties, community ties, and communicative competence. This matrix is strongly informed by constructions of Cherokee peoplehood and deeply affected by the idealized link between Cherokee language and Cherokee culture.

Chapter Five addressed the limitations of this category and how it negatively impacted access to speakerhood and acceptance of speakerhood by L2 users in revitalization initiatives and community settings. However, with the introduction of digital space and the inclusion of literacy as a significant factor in language use, the speakerhood matrix must be applied to digital space as well.

Language use in digital domains is not solely done in the syllabary. Some individuals use Cherokee phonics to communicate so while literacy is a major factor, language use is not only limited to the Cherokee syllabary for electronic communications. Using Cherokee phonics to communicate allows the user to utilize an English keyboard for typing in Cherokee rather than the characters of the Cherokee syllabary. There are currently 28 users identified by Indigenous Tweets (2014) as users of Cherokee language on the social media website known as Twitter which allows users to construct messages of 140 characters or less. The social media website Facebook, which allows users to construct profiles and establish links with other users, has a much broader use of Cherokee language with 12 public groups for Cherokee language use. From my personal account, I know the number of Cherokee language user groups far exceeds this number. However, as these groups are not open to the public, they cannot be included in this discussion.

Language use in digital spaces takes many forms outside of tweeting and sharing language use on Facebook. In addition to these outlets, Cherokee language users are able to text in their language from the Apple iPhone and iPad with the addition to other Smartphones on the horizon. With the addition of Cherokee

syllabary to just the iPhone, a number of Cherokee language users purchased this phone specifically to take advantage of the language that was part of the phone's operating system. Through this access to language at their fingertips, Cherokee language users, both L1 and L2, were able to access a domain where they could use their language daily. This led to the creation of specialized use of the syllabary inspired by English emoticons. For example, by using punctuation English speakers can transform a colon, a dash, and an open parenthesis into a happy face. This would be written as :) or :-) or (: or (-: but there are a number of creative ways to represent this communication. Inspired by this creative use of punctuation to add meaning to text, Cherokee language user, Ryan Mackey sent me a text using a Cherokee syllabary emoticon with a happy face in 2011 (Text message from Ryan Mackey to author on October 27, 2012). It looks like this: ᵂᵂD. Mackey used the ᵂ/su and D/a characters to create a smiling emoticon similar to the emoticons that used English punctuation. This simple act of transforming syllabary characters for use as emoticon shows creative language use from an L2 user. Immediately after seeing the language used in this manner, I began seeing the syllabary and the language in new ways. Mackey's innovation quickly was shared with other Cherokee language users. Joseph Erb (2012) wrote a piece about Cherokee syllabary emoticons crediting both Ryan Mackey and me for their creation. In the article, Mackey and I are identified by our respective Cherokee names, Mackey's is ᵂᵂ/Wahde and mine is ᵂᵂ/Iya/Punkin. In the article, Erb (2012) includes a number of other syllabary emoticons adding to the first one send by Mackey. Although it is difficult to gauge the popularity range of use for syllabary emoticons,

their creation by Mackey shows that Cherokee language users are creatively using the language. In addition to the private use of Cherokee language in closed setting like private language groups and through electronic communication like texting and e-mail, Cherokee language users are interacting with each other ways through blogs, discussion boards, and virtually every possible avenue of digital, or electronic, communication.

The Cherokee language use exhibited across these multiple platforms in digital space allows chances for L1 and L2 users to interact. For L2 users, it seems that mistakes in language use in non-digital Cherokee communities reflect on individual community ties, kinship, and communicative competence not just on linguistic knowledge. Rather than perceiving imperfect phonology as a part of the learning process, these mistakes, which affect whether an individual self-identifies as a speaker, also seem to be perceived as linked with Cherokee peoplehood. L2 users keenly feel the risks associated with language use. Kristen Thomas (2012) said,

“My biggest struggle with Cherokee is that I only publicly practice something that I feel like I have a solid hold on and I know that hinders my language learning a lot.”

While she did not elucidate the reasons for this choice, she did note that only using familiar language was an impediment to the growth of her language skills. Other Cherokee language users spoke about the way that their Cherokee language use is received. Meda Nix, a teacher at the Cherokee Immersion Charter School, a song leader for a Cherokee youth choir, and a graduate of the Northeastern State University Cherokee Language Degree Program, said, “At first, I had speakers that

would correct you but they did it in such a way that it would really make you feel like you didn't want to try anymore." Nix went on to say that she did her best to avoid having that effect on anyone that she teaches. Nix grew up with the language but considers herself to be bilingual while working to strengthen her Cherokee language skills. Having experienced harsh correction, Nix endeavors not to do the same. L1 users who are also educators seem to abide by the same philosophy as Nix. Durbin Feeling echoed this sentiment obliquely when he referenced a change in his approach to teaching the language.

The correction, that can sometimes be quite harsh, that Nix referred was referenced by every L2 user I spoke with during this research and is something that comes up often when L2 users share their learning experiences. It is certainly something that I have experienced personally as well. In 2007, I gave a talk on Cherokee language at the State of Sequoyah Conference in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Although once an annual event sponsored by Cherokee Nation, it is no longer in operation. At the beginning of this talk, I spoke very briefly in Cherokee to communicate my name, where I was from, and where I was in school. In 2012, I was approached by an L1 user who told me that she had heard me speak at the conference. She said she thought I did very well but cautioned that I shouldn't speak Cherokee because I sound like a ᄎᄎᄎ/yonega/white person. She said that I should stick to English so everyone will know how smart I really am. I was extremely shocked to be chastised for my, admittedly, quite imperfect Cherokee language use after such a long passage of time. It stung especially because I had been very open about my status as a learner in that talk. I thought my admission

would allow me the space to use the language without harsh criticism. Although I knew it would not ward off all criticism, being confronted with a critique five years later felt quite surprising.

When L2 users speak Cherokee at public gatherings, they are open to social critique. Patrick Rochford (2012a) related this story,

“I had a run-in that one time when I was talking up on the podium and this one guy that was, he was sitting somewhere off, and one of my friends heard him kind of talking about me, like that young boy, he's stealing our language, or something to that effect. I just feel like I wasn't raised here and I wasn't raised with the culture of the language so I don't know if I can call myself a speaker.”

The word ᏊᏊᏍ/yonega/white was used to describe Rochford and negate his ability to access both the language and his access to speakerhood in the crowd where he was publicly using Cherokee language. Rochford did not abandon his quest to better his linguistic skills nor did he cease using language publicly. However, he indicates that incident made him aware of how his language use might be perceived by others. L2 users seem to feel that imperfect Cherokee language use calls their cultural competency into question and reflects on their families and on their communities. This attitude that Rochford was confronted with seems to be boundary maintenance but it does affect revitalization initiatives by adding more pressure when language is used.

It might have initially seemed that L2 users were being chastised for imperfect language use but Rochford's story shows more. I contend that critiques of public language use by L2 users is related to the speakerhood matrix as well. In the speakerhood matrix, speakerhood is constructed through communicative competence, high proficiency language use, community ties, and kinship ties and as

illustrated in Chapter Four, speakerhood is also viewed as tied implicitly to L1 users. In the current state of the language, only users age 50 and above typically exhibit this confluence of skills allowing them to access speakerhood. Therefore, it appears that public use of Cherokee by an L2 user could be perceived as an attempt to shift social status accessing cultural capital only available to first language speakers who are elders.

For an L2 user to publicly use Cherokee, it seems an individual with limited knowledge is volunteering to take precedence over individuals with greater knowledge. While this challenge is present in language use in non-digital settings, it does not seem to be quite as prevalent in digital settings. Errors still occur in digital spaces and corrections still continue to happen. However, these corrections are typically done in Cherokee or by sending the individual who made the error a private message through e-mail or some other form of electronic communication. These corrections are not enjoyable to receive but it seems to be gentler to receive a written correction. In addition, Cherokee L1 users who access digital space are much more interactive with L2 users in digital spaces.

Cherokee L2 users are able to create communities in digital spaces, establish ties with one another through the use of groups and discussion boards, exhibit language use through the multiple platforms where syllabary is available, and can also show communicative competence through deference to L1 users corrections and in interactions with elders and L1 users. While digital domains are not a panacea for the issues of acceptance in speakerhood for L2 users, this space

shows that when L2 users have space for language use very positive impacts are made in revitalization initiatives.

This chapter presented a brief history of the Cherokee language technology initiative and the roles that L2 users are playing in driving this movement. A discussion of how literacy is affecting constructions of speakerhood in digital space was included. The speakerhood matrix presented in Chapter Five was applied to the use of language by Tsalageeks in digital space. Then, an examination of how mistakes in language use are critiqued was presented. The inclusion of language in digital spaces has created avenues where Cherokee language users, L1 and L2, have language at their fingertips available for everyday use. Although digital spaces are not a perfect environment as intensive critiques of language use can continue to happen, the innovation by L2 users provides a hopeful perspective on the positive impacts that L2 users can have on revitalization initiatives. According to Roy Boney, Jr. (Text message to author on November 3, 2012), having the language in technology is not what will save Cherokee language but it is a powerful tool in the fight.

Conclusion

The linking of Cherokee language use to Cherokeeeness is presented as a catalyst for language learning and revitalization initiatives but can also function as a deterrent to language use. In addition, this linking can also prevent individuals from feeling as though they have the ability to access language learning at all. This perspective also creates a conundrum where language use is necessary for

Cherokeeeness but where imperfect language use, which is a natural occurrence in second language acquisition, also negatively impacts Cherokeeeness. Errors happen during all second language acquisition regardless of the commitment level of the learner. Imperfect language use must be de-stigmatized within Cherokee communities and the negotiation of digital space for L2 use is a positive step in this direction. Support exists for L1 users in Cherokee Nation revitalization initiatives, and this needs to continue and be expanded. Yet, in addition to these spaces of L1 user support, there also need to be spaces for language use from L2 users. The frequency of language use from those who are acquiring Cherokee as a second language needs to increase alongside the expansion of domains for L1 language use.

At one time, Cherokeeeness was a social definition rather than one of biology. It rested strongly on linguistic knowledge in conjunction with other pillars of peoplehood in Cherokee communities (Wahrhaftig 1970). These pillars are land, language, religion, and a shared history. Despite the continuing shift from Cherokee to English, the role of language continues to be inextricably bound to the other pillars of peoplehood. However, the delineation of the speakerhood matrix, which has its roots in the construction of Cherokee peoplehood, elucidates how L2 users perceptions of speakerhood limit access to the category. For individuals who are not involved in language revitalization, it appears that these perceptions of speakerhood are limiting access to language revitalization programming. Rather than incur the high social risks associated with Cherokee language use, individuals choose to access a proxy version of speakerhood through familial relationships

rather than something they involvement or language use. This extension seems to indicate that the social definition of Cherokeeeness is shifting. The intensely complex negotiation of identity and the politics of identity in Cherokee communities seem to support this notion (Sturm 2002).

Negotiating Cherokeeeness in the high stakes arena of revitalization initiatives is a social, political, cultural, and emotional process. However, the burgeoning career path for speakers in association with the Cherokee Language Programs, the Cherokee Language Degree Program at NSU, the Cherokee Immersion Charter School, and the increasing prominence of the iconic Cherokee syllabary within the Tahlequah Cherokee community has made explicit the economic capital that is potentially associated with language use and language knowledge. Feeling (2012b) stated in an interview that he received resistance to his efforts at teaching Cherokee literacy. He received opposition from a number of people, and Feeling said, “One of them told me, if I learn how to read and write, that gonna pay my bills?” At that time, the knowledge of Cherokee language, Cherokee language use, and Cherokee literacy were seen as economic disadvantages. This has dramatically changed since that time period with career paths available for translators, curriculum specialists, teachers, language technologists, administrators, and support staff within revitalization initiatives thereby economically incentivizing language use and language knowledge.

Ultimately, the presence of L2 users in an endangered language community where a population of L1 users exists reveals how speakerhood is more than a negotiation of linguistic proficiency but also of social power, cultural capital, and

requires the addition of L2 user space. L2 users are becoming more prominent as active leaders within language revitalization initiatives, as evidenced by digital domains for revitalization in Cherokee Nation. The nurturing of spaces for L2 language use will create a more stable revitalization initiative that can carry the language forward into the future.

While the establishment of digital space as a safer avenue for language use, there must be more L2 user space actively constructed within the Cherokee Nation. L1 users have spaces like the Cherokee Speaker's Bureau and the Cherokee Language Consortium where language use is not just encouraged but expected. Establishing a second Speaker's Bureau type event that is specifically for L2 users would be a start in establishing L2 user space in the Tahlequah Cherokee community. The Tahlequah Cherokee community is the trendsetter for Cherokee language revitalization opening the first immersion school, the first university degree program, the first online classes, and is on the cutting edge of digitization initiatives. If Cherokee Nation pushes dedicated L2 user space without detracting from existing L1 user programming, it would send a clear message that Cherokee language use by L2 users will be included and supported. In addition, to address the gap in programming that is currently evident for individuals ages 18-40 who wish to learn Cherokee as a second language, the Cherokee Nation needs to institute a master-apprentice program as recommended by the 2002 ANA language survey. As noted by Raymond (2008), this program has yet to be instituted despite being a central recommendation by Cherokee Nation's own

team. The nurturing and support of Cherokee L2 users will be a positive contribution toward the future of the Cherokee language.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Core Group will be interviewed four times, scripts below

Interview Script – Core Group, Interview 1

1. Do you live within the Cherokee Nation?
 - a. How long have you lived here/When did you arrive/When did you return?
2. Do you have much family in the area?
3. What kinds of activities are most important for Cherokees culturally?
4. What type of job do you have?
 - a. If in Cherokee language revitalization, how did you come to the job?
 - b. Have you worked with Cherokee language in the past/Do you plan to work with Cherokee language in the future?
 - c. What brought you to your current job/career path/course of study?
5. Do you volunteer with Cherokee language activities?
 - a. What kind?
 - b. How often?
6. How would you rate yourself as a Cherokee speaker?
7. How did you learn to speak Cherokee?
8. What kinds of things do you do to try and be a better speaker of Cherokee?

Interview Script – Core Group, Interview 2

1. What are your personal ambitions within Cherokee language revitalization?
2. What do you think you need to do to make that happen?
3. What types of things stand in the way?
4. What kinds of things help you to meet your goals?
5. Are there any things/activities that made you more/less comfortable using the Cherokee language?

Interview Script – Core Group, Interview 3

1. What types of activities do you take part in during a typical week?
2. How about in a month?
3. What would you recommend to someone who wanted to learn to speak Cherokee?
4. What would you recommend to someone who wanted to become part of language revitalization programs?

Interview Script – Core Group, Interview 4

1. What does it mean to you when you hear the words “Cherokee language”?
2. Why is Cherokee language important/not important to Cherokee people?
3. Who should be doing language revitalization?

4. How should language revitalization be done?
5. What does language revitalization mean for the average Cherokee?
6. Why should it be done or why should it not?

Peripheral Group will be interviewed two times, scripts below

Interview Script – Peripheral Group, Interview 1

1. Do you live within the Cherokee Nation?
 - a. How long have you lived here/When did you arrive/When did you return?
2. Do you have much family in the area?
3. What kinds of activities are most important for Cherokees culturally?
4. What type of job do you have?
 - a. If in Cherokee language revitalization, how did you come to the job?
 - b. Have you worked with Cherokee language in the past/Do you plan to work with Cherokee language in the future?
5. What types of activities do you take part in during a typical week?
6. How about in a month?
7. What would you recommend to someone who wanted to learn to speak Cherokee?
8. What would you recommend to someone who wanted to become part of language revitalization programs?

Interview Script – Peripheral Group, Interview 2

1. What does it mean to you when you hear the words “Cherokee language”?
2. Why is Cherokee language important/not important to Cherokee people?
3. Who should be doing language revitalization?
4. How should language revitalization be done?
5. What does language revitalization mean for the average Cherokee?
6. Why should it be done or why should it not?

Appendix B: Example of Cherokee Nation Language Proficiency Certification

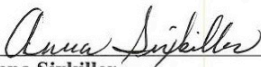


Cherokee Nation
Language Proficiency Certification
Cherokee Office of Language Translation,
918/453-5145,
Anna Sixkiller

I certify that *Candessa Tekee* (CN employee # 101326 has been tested and successfully demonstrated following level of Cherokee Language Proficiency:

- Novice: understand common words/phrases.
- Apprentice: speak common words/phrases.
- Competent: speak with a minimal vocabulary
- Fluent: understand and speak with an extensive and growing vocabulary
- Masters: ability to design and teach language tools.

June 13, 2012
Date



Anna Sixkiller
Manager of Translation Services