The Complexity of Simple Things: Cross-disciplinary Collaboration for Teaching Colors in Menominee

Monica Macaulay

Linguistics Department

Rita MacDonald
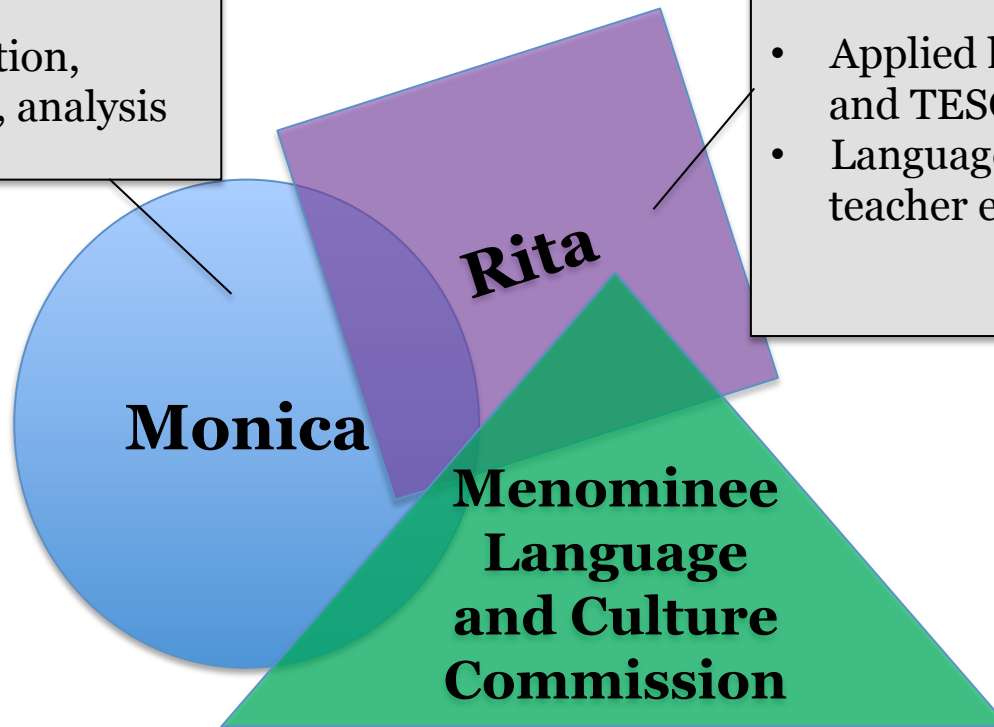
School of Education

Who we are

Language documentation, description, analysis

Applied linguistics, SLA and TESOL

Language teacher & teacher educator

Monica

Rita
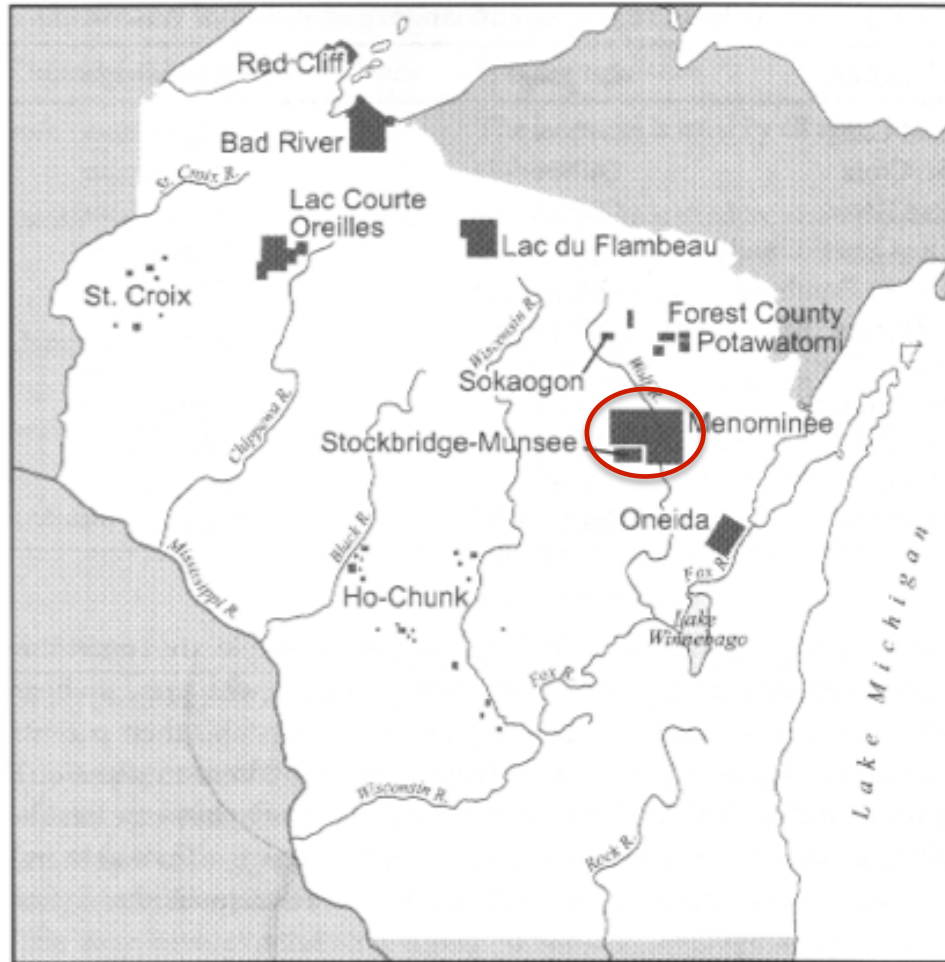
Menominee Language and Culture Commission

FIGURE 1.2. Tribal areas in Wisconsin (Boundaries have been generalized from geographic data available as 2010 Tiger/Line shapefiles from the U.S. Census Bureau)

Menominee Language

- Algonquian language of Wisconsin
- Documented 1921-1949 by Leonard Bloomfield
- MM: working with community since 1998

Menominee Language Revitalization

Current status:

- Fewer than 5 L1 speakers, all elderly
- Small number of proficient L2 speakers
- No external communities of speakers
- 2016-present: Tribal program to train teachers
    1. to speak Menominee (14 months)
    2. to become teachers for pre-school immersion

Menominee Language Revitalization

Current status:

- Fewer than 5 L1 speakers, all elderly
- Small number of proficient L2 speakers
- No external communities of speakers
- 2016-present: Tribal efforts to train teachers
  1. to speak Menominee (14 months)
  2. to become teachers for pre-school immersion

COLORS!!

Past Attempt: CL's lesson

- doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction
- interested in intergenerational transmission of language
- no training in linguistics
- some SLA training
- had idea of lesson on colors as sample lesson for teachers

Included sentences like these for me to translate:

- What color do you see?
- I see orange.
- What's your favorite color?
- My favorite color is blue.
- Touch someone wearing red.
- Touch someone wearing a red shirt.

I couldn't do it!!!
Colors are not simple in Menominee!

Color Terms in Menominee

Three strategies for expressing color:

1. Prenouns
2. Verbs
3. 'Looks like' construction

Prenouns

- Compound with following noun
- Limited set (just 4)
  - 'black, white, green, blue/dark-colored'
- Example:

  apēs-*awāēhsaeh* 'black bear'
  black-bear

Verbs

- Also limited but larger set
  - duplicates prenouns: 'be black, be white, be green, be blue/dark-colored'
  - adds: 'be red, be yellow/brown, be brown'
- Cross-cutting categories
  - different form for attributive vs. predicative use (so two forms per color)
  - verb must agree in animacy (so two verbs per color)
  - 2 × 2 = 4

Prenoun-Verb Comparison

1. Prenoun:

   ***apēs**-awāēhsaeh* 'black bear'

   black-bear

2. Attributive verb:

   *awāēhsaeh **apēsenet*** 'black bear'

   bear   **which.is.black**

3. Predicative verb:

   apēsen *awāēhsaeh* 'the bear is black'

   is.black   bear

'Looks like' construction

For any other color, you say that the object in question looks like the color of something else.

    e.g. 'purple' = 'looks like grape'

'Looks like' construction (cont.)

Nouns we've seen used in this construction:

- sōmen 'grape' (for purple)
- askāetāemen 'orange' (the fruit; for orange)
- kēsek 'sky' (for light blue)
- osōnamon 'vermilion' (a bright red)

'Looks like' construction (cont.)

Examples:

1. **Sōmen** esēnākosewak naqnāēhsyak

   grape   they.look.like mittens

   'The mittens are purple.'

2. Wiahkwan **askāētāēmen** esīnākwat.

   hat   **orange**   it.looks.like

   'The hat is orange.'

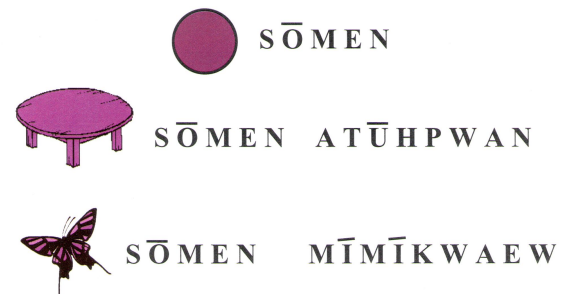| COLOR	PRE-NOUN	VERB: ATTRIBUTIVE		VERB: PREDICATIVE		"LOOKS LIKE…"	
		A	I	A	I	A	I
	black car (A) black hat (I)	black car	black hat	car is black	hat is black	thing looks like X	
BLACK							
WHITE							
GREEN		4 colors using 2 strategies (V and prenoun) but 5 different forms					
DARK-COLORED or BLUE							
RED							
YELLOW/ BROWN		3 with 1 strategy (V) but 4 forms					
BROWN							
ORANGE						4 with 1 strategy but 2 forms	
PURPLE							
LIGHT BLUE							
BRIGHT RED							

Current approaches to teaching colors

Various teachers:

- lists of colors

- treated as if they were English adjectives

- Menominee Language and Culture Commission wants colors taught "correctly"

ASKAĒTAEMEN

ASKAĒTAEMEN ATŪHPWAN

ASKAĒTAEMEN MĪMĪKWAEW

SŌMEN

SŌMEN ATŪHPWAN

SŌMEN MĪMĪKWAEW

8

Current approaches to teaching colors

Monica:

- prose descriptions of all the possibilities
- examples
- tables

Color	Prenoun	Verb: Attributive		Verb: Predicative		"Looks like…"	
example	black car/ black hat	black car	black hat	car is black	hat is black	thing looks like X	
		ANIMATE	INANIMATE	ANIMATE	INANIMATE	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
Black	apĕs-	apĕsenet, apĕsenetuaq	apīsĭk, apīsĭken	apĕsen, apĕsenok	apīsīw, apīsīwan		
White	wāp-	wāpeskenet, wāpeskenetuaq	wāpeskik, wāpeskiken	wāpesken, wāpeskenok	wāpeskiw, wāpeskiwan		
Green	askĕpak-	askĕpakenet, askĕpakenetuaq	askīpakik, askīpakiken	askĕpaken, askĕpakenok	askīpakiw, askīpakiwan		
Dark-colored/ blue	apāĕs-	apāĕhnenet, apāĕhnenetuaq	apāĕhnik, apāĕhniken	apāĕhnen, apāĕhnenok	apāĕhniw, apāĕhniwan		
Red		maehkōnet, maehkōnetuaq	maehkīk, maehkīken	maehkōn, maehkōnok	maehkīw, maehkīwan		
Yellow/ brown		osāwenet, osāwenetuaq	osāwĭk, osāwĭken	osāwen, osāwenok	osāwīw, osāwīwan		
Brown		onāwenet, onāwenetuaq	onāwĭk, onāwĭken	onāwen, onāwenok	onāwīw, onāwīwan		
"Looks like" verbs						esēnākosew; esēnākoset; āēsenakoset	esīnākwat; esīnākwah; āēsenākwah
Orange						askāĕtāĕmen	
Purple						sōmen	
Light blue						kēsek	
Bright red (vermilion)						osōnamon	

Current approaches to teaching colors

Monica:

- prose descriptions of all the possibilities

- examples

- tables

Color	Prenoun	Verb: Attributive		Verb: Predicative		"Looks like…"	
example	*black car/ black hat*	*black car*	*black hat*	*car is black*	*hat is black*	*thing looks like X*	
		ANIMATE	INANIMATE	ANIMATE	INANIMATE	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
Black	apēs-	apēsenet, apēsenetuaq	apīsĭk, apīsĭken	apēsen, apēsenok	apīsĭw, apīsĭwan		
White	wāp-	wāpeskenet, wāpeskenetuaq	wāpeskik, wāpeskiken	wāpesken, wāpeskenok	wāpeskiw, wāpeskiwan		
Green	askēpak-	askēpakenet, askēpakenetuaq	askīpakik, askīpakiken	askēpaken, askēpakenok	askīpakiw, askīpakiwan		
Dark-colored/ blue	apāēs-	apāēhnenet, apāēhnenetuaq	apāēhnik, apāēhniken	apāēhnen, apāēhnenok	apāēhniw, apāēhniwan		
Red		maehkōnet, maehkōnetuaq	maehkīk, maehkīken	maehkōn, maehkōnok	maehkīw, maehkīwan		
Yellow/ brown		osāwenet, osāwenetuaq	osāwĭk, osāwĭken	osāwen, osāwenok	osāwĭw, osāwĭwan		
Br...		onāwenet, onāwenetuaq	onāwĭk, onāwĭken	onāwen, onāwenok	onāwĭw, onāwĭwan		
						esēnākosew; esēnākoset; āēsenakoset	esīnākwat; esīnākwah; āēsenākwah
						askāētāēmen	
Purple						sōmen	
Light blue						kēsek	
Bright red (vermilion)						osōnamon	

Overwhelming!

INSTEAD...

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Pedagogical Support Team for New Trainees

Rita

Monica

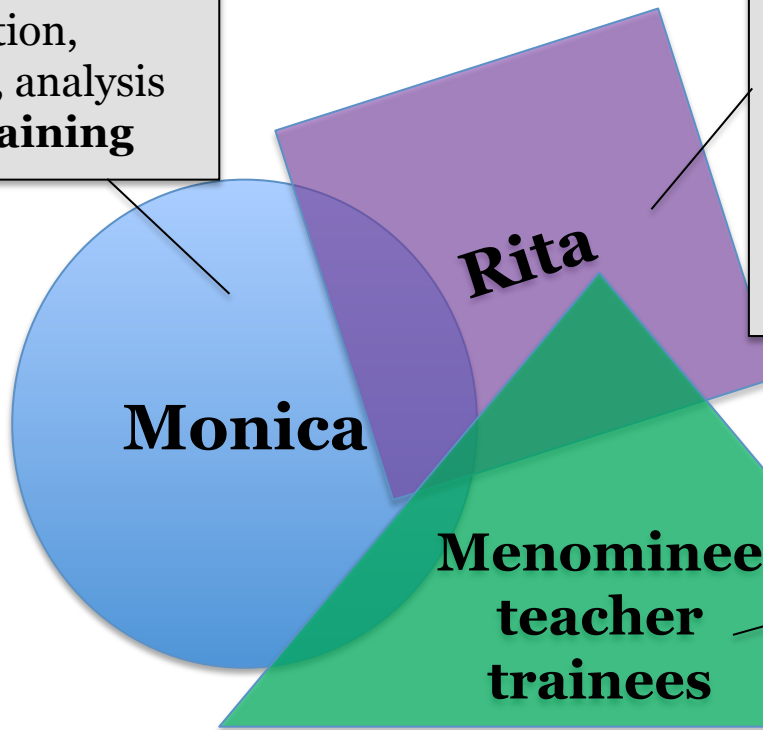Menominee teacher trainees
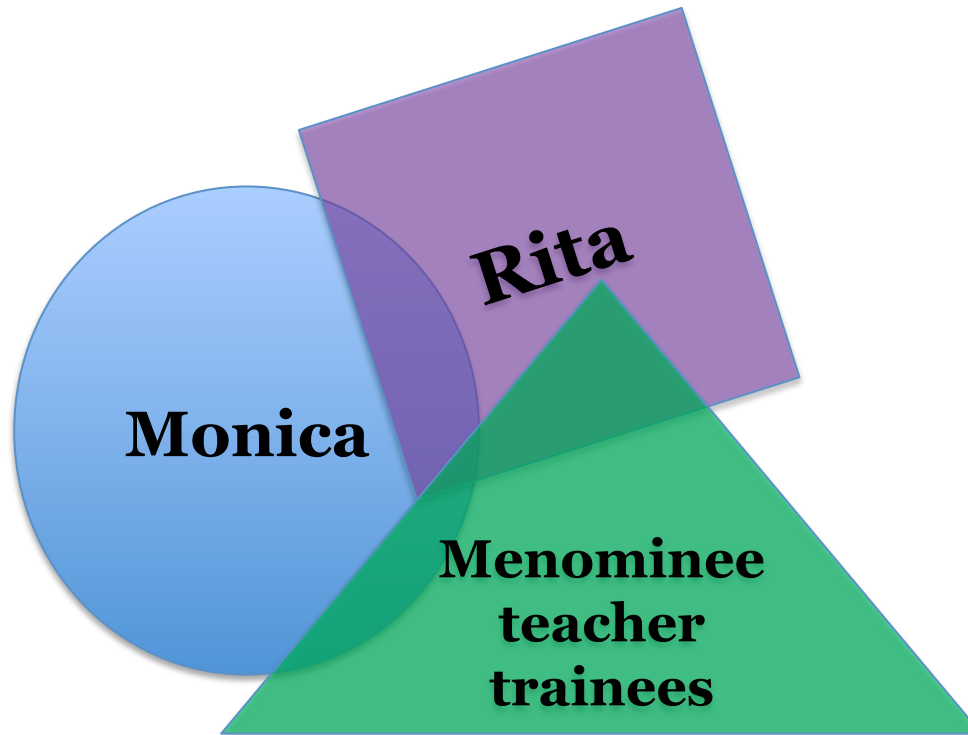
Challenge: little overlap in conceptual frameworks or meta-language

- Language documentation, description, analysis
- **No SLA training**

- Applied linguistics, SLA and TESOL
- Language teacher & teacher educator
- **Minimal structural linguistics, English-focused…forgotten!**

Monica

Rita

Menominee teacher trainees

- Community members
- Menominee as L2
- Basic public school English knowledge

Teaching colors to the future teachers:

APPLYING PRINCIPLES FROM LINGUISTICS AND SLA

Linguistics Principle

Always descriptive, never prescriptive.

SLA Principle

Attend to student's meaning over correctness.

Linguistics Principle

Always descriptive, never prescriptive.

~~X~~

SLA Principle

Attend to student's meaning over correctness.

~~X~~

Principles from SLA Pedagogy

1. Assess Prior Knowledge

- What shared knowledge? English fluency could be harnessed to learn English-like prenoun and attributive forms
- What shared meta-language? (Probably) "Adjective-Noun" from English

2. Build on Student Strengths

- Start with English-like patterns
- Determine their meta-language
- Use it to teach other forms

3. Focus on Function, Connect to Form

Systematic lesson series-Step 1: Attributive+Prenoun

1. Determine trainees' meta-language for English N-Adj pairing.
2. Use it to teach 7 color terms (attributive form, A and I) in Menominee.
3. Next, teach the short/simple (prenoun) form for 4 of those 7 colors. (Simple=no animacy agreement).
4. Dialogue practice to help remember which 4 colors can use simple form. (No known functional difference.)

COLOR	PRE-NOUN	VERB: ATTRIBUTIVE		VERB: PREDICATIVE		"LOOKS LIKE…"	
		A	I	A	I	A	I
	black car(A) black hat (I)	black car	black hat	car is black	hat is black	thing looks like X	
BLACK							
WHITE	3. Teach 'short/ simple forms' for 4 colors	1. Start in English. Determine meta-language					
GREEN							
DARK-COLORED or BLUE				2.Teach Menominee names using trainees' meta-language			
RED							
YELLOW/ BROWN	4. Dialogue practice						
BROWN							
ORANGE							
PURPLE							
LIGHT BLUE							
BRIGHT RED							

Systematic lesson series-Step 2:Predicative

1. Again, start with English, determine trainees' meta-language.

2. Card sort, in English: Distinguish attributive from predicative. Trainees <u>write</u> <u>their</u> definitions of the distinction, based on function, and discuss.

3. Use trainees' consensual meta-language for function to teach predicative forms in Menominee.

COLOR	PRE-NOUN	VERB: ATTRIBUTIVE		VERB: PREDICATIVE		"LOOKS LIKE…"	
		A	I	A	I	A	I
	black car(A) black hat (I)	black car	black hat	car is black	hat is black	thing looks like X	
BLACK							
WHITE							
GREEN							
DARK-COLORED or BLUE							
RED							
YELLOW/ BROWN							
BROWN							
ORANGE							
PURPLE							
LIGHT BLUE							
BRIGHT RED							

1. In English, develop meta-language (telling form?)

2. In English, sort sentence cards across these 3 forms, and justify to other group. Write personal definitions of chosen meta-language.

3. Use new meta-language to teach predicative forms in Menominee.

Systematic lesson series
Step 3: Function-Form Reinforcement

<u>Reinforce function: form pairing</u>

Write paired sentences moving between predicative and attributive forms.

English example:

- *Is that blue jacket yours?*
- *No, my jacket is black.*

Systematic lesson series

1. Determine trainees' meta-language~~sh~~-like N-V pairing (attributive f~~ ~~olor terms in Menomine~~ ~~
2. Teach the s~~ ~~for 4 of those 7 colors. (No anima~~ ~~
3. Dialogue practice to help c~~ ~~mple form. (No known functiona~~ ~~

----

1. Next, predicative form. Start with English, determine trainees' meta-language. ("telling form"?)
2. **Card sort, in English: distinguish attributive from predicative. Trainees write their definition of the distinction, based on function.**
3. Teachers use it to teach predicative forms in Menominee.
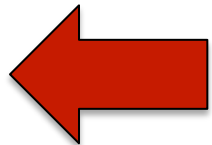
Reinforce function: form pairing by writing paired sentences moving between these 2 forms.

> Well, you know what they say about plans....

> Formative probe: Any merit to our approach?

Purpose of probe
Does this approach:

1. prompt movement into meta-linguistic space?
2. elicit 'natural' meta-language?
3. give us a natural meta-language that 'works' for others? Does it convey the same construct to others?

The real lesson, and what happened

Learning Activity 1: In pairs, sorted Menominee phrases (predicative, attributive) into categories and explained their rationale. No clues, no pre-set number of categories.

Results: One pair derived attributive/predicative sort immediately.

Learning Activity 2: In pairs, using same Menominee phrases with English gloss. Instruction: sort into "new categories."

Results: No pair did an attributive/predicative sort.

Learning Activity 3: Repeated for the group the meta-language one pair had used for the attributive/predicative sort: *"One just describes the thing. The other says something about it."*

Results: When asked to sort using only that meta-language with no other cues, every pair did it correctly.

Learning Activity 4: Unpacked the pedagogy behind activity, discussed trainees' learning and insights about future use.

Our conclusions

1. The sorting activity tapped/promoted a meta-linguistic focus for most participants.
2. We were able to derive meaningful meta-language from trainees quickly.
3. That meta-language made sense to others, and allowed them to construct similar meanings. Thus, there is strong potential here for future lessons.
4. The sorting and the effort to describe categorizations enabled trainees to notice things about Menominee that they had not yet been taught and had not yet noticed. Thus, there was additional learning ("noticing") at the meta-linguistic level.
5. Trainees had meaningful meta-linguistic understanding that could be brought into play to hasten their learning.

Meta-conclusion

- It's difficult for one person to fill all roles (a different kind of "lone-wolf" approach!)

- Linguists like Monica need help with all aspects of language pedagogy in order to be useful to a language reclamation project

- Linguists/educators like Rita need help understanding the language structures in order to be useful to a language reclamation project

- We need more interdisciplinary collaboration!

Thank you!

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN