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*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE EUCHEE/YUCHI  
LANGUAGE PROJECT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF  
LANGUAGE PRESERVATION

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE EUCHEE/YUCHI  
LANGUAGE PROJECT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF  
LANGUAGE PRESERVATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Workforce Development Education

By

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Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, 2001  
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May 2011  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Native languages are disappearing quickly in this country, but there are many programs that are underway trying to save Native languages before they are gone. One such program is the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project which uses a modified version of the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MALLP). Elder language speakers, masters, and younger members of the tribe, apprentices, meet daily in a two-hour language session. The goal of the session is to immerse the apprentices in the language by using conversational Euchee/Yuchi in the form of lessons, props, and presentations, so they can learn the language quickly.

The purpose of this study was to discover the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project by using phenomenological methodology. Research was conducted using interviews and observation sessions. A theoretical concept based on constructivism, Knowles' principles of adult learning, and cognitive apprenticeships was constructed to frame the study within the adult education paradigm. Initial interviews, observation sessions, and follow-up interviews were used to gather data. The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project participants seem to realize the importance of passing down the language to the younger generation, which gives them pride in their tribal heritage. This finding is supported by the data. During the daily language sessions, props and gestures were used to learn new words. New language knowledge was built on existing knowledge because new lessons were taught each day. Observations and interactions were based on real-life situations through which the apprentices acquired new knowledge.

Based on the findings, a clear picture of the lived experiences of the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project emerged. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations based on the theoretical framework were prepared to enhance the lived experience of participants in the program. Recommendations for enhancing the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project included: (1) more structure in the learning environment, (2) a variety of class times, and (3) the use of real-life learning situations outside of the classroom. Final recommendations were made in the form of further research: (1) Administer a survey to the Euchee/Yuchi community and tribal governance to determine the importance of language preservation outside of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project and (2) Conduct a program evaluation of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project to determine if the most effective practices for language preservation and revitalization are being used.

This dissertation is approved for  
Recommendation to the  
Graduate Council

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am so grateful to my family for supporting me and loving me through this process. They have always been there for me and I could not have done this without them.

I want to thank all of the people that have helped me create and follow through with this dissertation. Thanks so much to my committee chair, Dr. Bobbie Biggs, who without her patience and thoughtful guidance, this dissertation would not have been possible. I also wish to thank Dr. Freddie Bowles and Dr. Kit Kacirek for their support and kindness and their passion for my topic.

Thanks so much to Dr. Richard Grounds and all of the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. Without your honesty, kindness, and openness, this study would not have been possible. The time that I have spent with each of you has truly changed my life, and I feel so blessed to have been a part of your language learning group.

I wish to thank Dr. Mary Linn with whom I would never have learned about the Euchee/Yuchi people and their beautiful language. Thanks so much to Dr. Leanne Hinton for helping create the master-apprentice learning program. May it help countless tribes fulfill their language aspirations.

## **DEDICATION**

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my family, especially my mother Pauline, my father John, and my brother John. I thank them for their support, love, and wisdom. I also give thanks to my ancestors that have passed, especially my grandparents Leo and Antoinette Ciucci, who will always be with me. I could not have done this without the help of my little fur guardian, my cat Merlot, who spent countless hours asleep on my computer, keeping me and my heart warm. I give thanks to Cory, who has shown me pieces of myself I had not yet discovered. I also honor my Native medicine teachers in New Mexico, Julie and Dona, who have shown me the beauty of Native spirituality that I have held so dear all these years. Julie, even though you have passed, you will always be with me. I love you all.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

Who will teach a Native language when all of the elders who speak it are gone? Native American languages are disappearing at a rapid rate across the United States. In 2000, there were approximately 380,000 people in the United States who spoke an indigenous language. One percent of those people were of Native descent. Of the 300 Native languages that were once spoken in North America, only 150 are still spoken today, mostly by elders in a particular tribe (Ashburn, 2007). In North America, more than 150 of the 190 historically tribal languages are no longer being taught to younger members of tribes. In Oklahoma alone, the last of the elder speakers of the Miami, Peoria, and Quapaw languages passed away in 1993 (Bilger, 1994).

One of the main problems with language transmission is Native American youth are turning away from traditional Native types of story transmission, meaning the oral transmission of stories and language, to a more modern style of information gathering such as the internet (White-Kaulaity, 2007). Locklear and Elliott (2002) talk about the scenario of Villiana Calac Hyde, a Luiseño elder from Southern California whose language is also endangered, saying “Mrs. Hyde learned her language the way all children ideally should: sitting on their parents’ or grandparents’ knees and listening...Mrs. Hyde’s was the last generation of Luiseño to do so” (p. 34). Native American traditional values place high importance on cooperation, sharing, modesty, interference, harmony, balance, a respect for elders, and the importance of the extended family (Herring, 1998). Tribal communities are often small and clustered with close knit personal relationships. Close and extended families are an integral part of the Native

American culture (Allison & Vining, 1999). For children to truly understand their heritage, learning the language is an essential part of their upbringing (McCarty, Romero, & Zepeda, 2006). The problem is that it is difficult for octogenarians to sit down on a regular basis with hyper two-year-olds to teach them the language for hours a day. This is where the master-apprentice program can be utilized as a teaching tool for adults in the area of tribal language preservation. Small groups of adults learn directly from the elders of a tribe and can then, in turn, act as hands-on teachers for small children in immersion classes or in daily life. Rather than trying to bring an entire group of adults to fluency, the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MALLP) focuses on one adult learner per elder speaker, creating pairs of masters and apprentices (Hinton, 1998). Although master-apprentice programs tend to be small in scale, they involve total immersion for adults into a particular tribal language (Hinton, 1998; Grounds, 2007b).

According to the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council (2010), the master-apprentice program is a way for young adults, teachers, and young parents to become proficient in their tribal language. The strategy behind the program begins with a one-on-one learning relationship between a master (elder speaker) and an apprentice (language learner or younger adult) who work together intensively for between 10 and 40 hours per week, speaking only their tribal language. The program is centered on the concept that people learn a second language best by being immersed in it for a significant amount of time without translations in English. The master-apprentice teams conduct regular daily activities together (working at home, in the community, or whatever they choose to do); only they speak exclusively in their Native language to encourage fluency (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999).



Different tribes have different requirements for the individual programs. For example, according to the Chickasaw nation web site (2010), approximately 20 individuals are selected for their master-apprentice program to develop 10 fluent Chickasaw speakers in 18-24 months. There is a formal application process. The commitment requires two hours per day for five days per week communicating in the Chickasaw language. While some of the time is spent in a formal classroom setting, the majority of the language learning activities are take place in informal settings in the form of daily activities.

The Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival ([AICLS], 2010) reports that over 70 teams in various tribes in California have graduated from their master-apprentice language program and 30 teams are currently in training.

### **Theoretical Sensitivity**

My interest in the Native American culture started several years ago when I became involved in the Native American powwow. As I have attended a number of powwows in Oklahoma each year, I have noticed how much pride and beauty exists within the family structure at these events. For the larger powwows, dancers from all over the state come to participate in Native traditional dance with elaborate regalia and dance movements. I learned that most of the time, the dancers' families were often the ones that made the regalia for the dancers to wear. It is a source of pride for their family, and it is a way for the culture and traditions to be passed down to younger generations. As I began to think more about this, I wondered if the passing down of other traditions such as language would elicit the same pride from the Native people. I then wondered what connection language had to the passing down of traditional values within a tribe and what

happens when a language does not exist anymore. I also wondered what role the adult tribal members played in passing down the language and tribal traditions.

I learned of the MALLP while attending a language symposium at Northeastern State University. The program had been widely used in California as a language preservation method, and I learned that it was being used in various tribes in Oklahoma. One of the tribes referred to at the symposium was the Euchee/Yuchi tribe that has very few elders that are fluent in the Euchee/Yuchi language. I continued to delve deeper into the situation and found, according to the Dr. Richard Grounds, a Euchee/Yuchi tribal member and the director of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, there are currently five fluent elder speakers of the Euchee/Yuchi language (Leutwyler, 2000; Grounds, 2007b). With the threat of their language disappearing so quickly, I thought this study would be a perfect opportunity to combine my love of Native American culture with the language preservation solution the Euchee/Yuchi tribe utilizes.

I feel I am the appropriate person to do this study because I believe in the importance of passing down of cultural values and traditions. As Moustakas (1994) mentions “in phenomenological research, the question grows out of an intense interest in a particular problem or topic...The researcher’s excitement inspires the search” (p. 104).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The master-apprentice language program has been examined for its effectiveness as a language preservation tool for dying languages within different tribes (AICLS, 2010), but no research has been found which documents the lived experiences of the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

With only five fluent elders in the Euchee/Yuchi tribe, the passing down of the language represents the passing down of culture and tradition. Language preservation and transmission generates pride among the elders in a tribe. If younger generations are able to see, hear, and read about the experiences of their elders working to preserve their language, a sense of pride and identity can develop, which will hopefully inspire younger tribal members to carry the language further.

### **Purpose and Research Question**

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to discover the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project; therefore, the research question for the study was: What are the lived experiences of masters and apprentices in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project in Oklahoma? The tribal members utilize a modified version of the traditional master-apprentice program as an adult-centered language preservation method for revitalizing their endangered Native language (Grounds, 2007b).

The mission of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project is:

To perpetuate the ancestral language of the Euchee people as a living language; by recording and revitalizing the language for future generations; by creating and providing opportunities that will enable our elders to share their rich and vast knowledge of the customs, language, and traditions of the Euchee people with younger tribal members; and by developing younger learners into Euchee language speakers through interactive language programs (“Euchee/Language Project,” 2010).

For the elder class, the masters and apprentices meet at the Yuchi House daily for two-hour immersion sessions with the elders. The apprentices congregate in the same room as the masters to learn the language as a group, and the classes are audio archived for the use of future generations (“Euchee/Yuchi Language,” 2010). Dr. Grounds (2007b) says:

To make the most of our available dollars and, above all, to maximize our elder speakers' time, we increased the number of apprentices, creating small clusters of learners for each master. The payoff here is that the cluster members can both reinforce each other's learning and also provide a cushion against any unforeseen attrition. (p. 2)

### **Significance of the Research**

Because it is so important for children to learn language at an early age, the question becomes how to best achieve this. Rosemarie Ostler (2000), a language and linguistics specialist at the New York Public Library states:

The definition of a healthy language is one that acquires new speakers. No matter how many adults use the language, if it isn't passed to the next generation, its fate is already sealed. Although a language may continue to exist for a long time as a second or ceremonial language, it is moribund as soon as children stop learning it. (p. 6)

Language loss is the loss of unique grammars, tribal meanings, great oral literatures, cultural knowledge, tribal identity, and self-respect. As a language dies, the bonds between the generations become thin (Hinton, 2000). Without language, it becomes difficult for tribes to participate in ceremonies, and often children have difficulties communicating with their grandparents. Many tribes even attribute their social disintegration to the loss of culture and language (Ambler, 2000; McCarty & Zepeda, 1998).

Language learning makes a positive difference for children on reservations. For example, on the Blackfeet reservation, teachers involved in their Head start program have noticed that children with behavioral difficulties are often transformed when they are connected with their language (Ambler, 2000).

According to the Intertribal Wordpath Society web site (2009), of the 26 Oklahoma Native languages that have been spoken, five were still being spoken by

children as of 2006: Choctaw, Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Kickapoo, and Chickasaw. The 13 languages the Intertribal Wordpath Society listed as having no more fluent speakers in Oklahoma as of 2006 were: Alabama, Delaware, Kaw, Mesquakie, Modoc, Seneca, Wyandotte, Cayuga, Hitchiti, Koasati, Miami, Natchez, and Tonkawa. The Euchee/Yuchi tribe is one of the eight tribes listed as having some fluent speakers left in Oklahoma. Fortunately, the Delaware, Kaw, Miami, Seneca, and Wyandotte have language revitalization programs that have begun to regain these lost languages. Dr. Mary Linn (2007) of the University of Oklahoma describes how “of the 38 federally recognized tribes and towns, 18 have no fluent speakers, many have only elderly speakers, and all are endangered, even the Cherokee language with nine thousand speakers” (p. 25).

There are only five elderly members of the Euchee/Yuchi tribe that are fluent in the Euchee/Yuchi language. Dr. Richard Grounds (as cited in Leutwyler, 2000) sees three vital steps that will be crucial in saving the Euchee/Yuchi language:

Documenting the language—including its vocabulary, grammar, sayings and stories—as it is spoken by the fluent elders; developing CDs that house the language; and creating training for teachers, volunteers, students and other elders so that they might pass the language on. (Leutwyler, 2000, para. 1)

Bilger (2000) states, “A single committed speaker can resuscitate a language, whereas a million suppressed or indifferent speakers can let their language die in a generation...Master-apprentice programs are a linguistic form of CPR” (p. 20).

By understanding the experiences of the masters and apprentices, the study explained the essence of the program using personal accounts and individual experiences of the people in the program. Although this study was with a small number of people, the applications of this study could span into other tribal communities to show the program as a method for language preservation, no matter how endangered a language may be.

## **Appropriateness of Methodology**

Although there are many qualitative research methods available, the phenomenological approach was used to achieve the goals of this study.

To understand the lived experiences of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project participants, the phenomenological approach and methods of Clark Moustakas were used. Moustakas (1994) describes the method by saying, “In phenomenological studies the investigator abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection” (p. 47).

One of the goals of the phenomenological approach is to have extensive engagement with the small group that is being studied. By spending considerable amounts of time with the small group identified, the researcher is able to understand the deeper meanings of the participants’ experiences through dialog and reflection (Rosman & Rallis, 2003). The idea behind the phenomenological approach is to “grasp the very nature of the thing” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). As Moustakas (1994) mentions, “Evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first-person reports of life experiences” (p. 84).

## **Assumptions**

One of the assumptions of the study was that the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project enjoy learning their Native language and feel it is an important part of carrying on the culture of the tribe. Another assumption was that the masters enjoy teaching the language to younger generations. I also assumed on some level that the apprentices enjoy teaching the Euchee/Yuchi language to the younger generation. During

the interview process, there was an understanding that there may be times when painful memories were evoked regarding the dying nature of the tribal language or the masters' experiences at boarding schools. It was also assumed that after prolonged participation in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the apprentices would be able to transmit the Euchee/Yuchi language to their children and use the language more in daily life to help with the preservation of the tribal culture and heritage.

### **Parameters**

One of the essential criteria for this study involved researching adults that are currently participating in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. Using the scope of adult education, the focus was on the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. Experiences of the individuals were documented in the form of interviews, face-to-face interactions, and quiet observation of the participants in their daily two-hour sessions. Since the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project is a total immersion program for adults, time was spent with the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project learning group in their daily sessions to observe and relay their human experience as they actively participated in the program. The study required travel to see the participants in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, where the Euchee/Yuchi tribe is based. There were four masters and four apprentices interviewed for the initial interviews. There were 10 observation sessions. There were three masters and three apprentices interviewed for the follow-up interviews. The goal of the study was to gain a more complete picture of the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

## **Depth versus Breadth**

The study examined the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project in the fall 2010 and spring 2011. Since only a small number of people in the tribe were studied, the results cannot be generalized to a larger group and may not reflect all traditional master-apprentice program experiences in different tribes. Since a phenomenological study represents an in-depth look at a small number of participants, generalizing the results to all participants in master-apprentice programs in the country is not possible (Lester, 1999).

As humans, we can never truly understand the experiences of other people. The dilemma has always been whether to look generally at a large group of people or look specifically at a smaller number of people. Using the phenomenological approach as a qualitative method permits inquiry into a subject using greater depth, which includes attention to detail and context (Patton, 2002).

## **Definition of Terms**

*Cognitive Apprenticeship:* A theory on the process where a master of a skill teaches that skill to an apprentice (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1987). In cognitive apprenticeships, the activity being taught is modeled in real-world situations (Edmondson, 2006).

*Constructivism:* The constructivist theory, originally conceptualized by Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, states that learners could actively learn and build new sets of knowledge based on prior knowledge that learners already have (Hoover, 1996; Huang, 2002). The learners interact with their environment directly and in turn are able to relate



to that environment and establish new and meaningful connections to new knowledge (Hein, 1991; Hoover, 1996; Thanasoulas, 2001).

*Euchee/Yuchi Language Project:* A 501(c)3 non-profit organization that works to revitalize the Euchee/Yuchi Language by creating new fluent speakers. Today, there are only five first-language speakers of Euchee/Yuchi, all of whom are over age 80. Classes are held with fluent elders on a daily basis to teach young learners the language and pass it on breath-to-breath. The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project staff is comprised solely of Euchee/Yuchi people as it has been since the beginning of the organization 15 years ago. Euchee/Yuchi is a language isolate, meaning it is not related to any other language. Some of the effective language learning methods used include master-apprentice teams, children's immersion programs, and language camps (“Euchee/Yuchi Language,” 2010). The Euchee/Yuchi utilize a modified form of the traditional master-apprentice program. The term Euchee and Yuchi is used interchangeably within this study.

*Master-Apprentice Program:* A way for young adults, teachers, and young parents to become proficient in their tribal language (First People’s Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010). The strategy behind the traditional program features a one-on-one learning relationship between a master (elder speaker) and an apprentice (language learner) who work together intensively for between 10 and 40 hours per week, speaking only their tribal language. The program is centered on the concept that people learn a second language best by being immersed in it for a significant amount of time without translations in English. The master and apprentice conduct their daily lives as normal (working at home, in the community, or whatever they choose to do), only communication is limited to their Native language (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999).

*Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program:* The formal name for the master-apprentice program. These terms are used interchangeably.

*Phenomenological Study:* A “strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). The method aims to understand the lived experiences through interactions to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. According to Moustakas (1994), the phenomenological research approach uses the analysis of participant statements, the generation meaning of units, and the development of the essence description of the phenomenon.

## **Chapter Two**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

There are many aspects of the Native American culture that tie the Euchee/Yuchi tribe and the history of Native language oppression and preservation together. In this review, the history of the Euchee/Yuchi tribe, the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, and the traditional master-apprentice language program were discussed. Native language and politics, as well as and learning styles were reviewed. Language loss and its effects on tribal culture, along with language preservation techniques were also examined.

#### **Euchee/Yuchi Tribal Language and History**

The Yuchi Indian tribe was traditionally a part of the Southeastern Indian cultural group. The earliest mention of the Yuchi people was found in Spanish de Soto expedition papers in 1539. Historically, there were three bands of Yuchi located on the Tennessee River, in West Florida, and on the Savannah River. Before 1715, the Yuchi lived in two different types of towns, referred to as red and white. In 1715, the remainder of the Yuchi tribe moved to the Chattahoochee River area and became part of the Creek Confederacy after a battle with the Cherokees in the upper Tennessee River Valley. Many members of the tribe perished in the battle with the Cherokee. The tribe numbered approximately 3,000-5,000 people at that time before the battle (Buchner, 1998).

The Yuchi people often referred to themselves as Tsohayá, meaning “children of the sun” (Buchner, 1998, para. 3). It has also been suggested that the term Yuchi might have meant “at a distance” or “sitting down” (Buchner, 1998, para. 3). After 1715 through 1790, because of “social disruptions caused by colonial pressures,” many Yuchi people abandoned their homes and moved west. After 1715, there is almost no record of

the Yuchi people living in Tennessee (Buchner, 1998, para. 1). From the period of the 1820s through the 1870s, many Native Americans were moved on the Trail of Tears to the Oklahoma territory. Some of the southeastern tribes, including the Yuchis, were sent to Oklahoma to make room for the white establishments on their homelands (Anderton, 2007).

In 1838, the Yuchi people established themselves within the Creek Nation in Oklahoma; however, they remained a culturally separate group within the larger Creek Nation and to this day are not federally recognized (Buchner, 1998; Linn, Berardo, & Yamamoto, 1998). The towns where most of Yuchi people currently live are Sapulpa, Bristow, and Liberty Mounds, Oklahoma (Linn et al., 1998).

The cultural and life traditions were similar to other southeastern tribes, and each settlement had a variety of buildings and dwellings for the tribal members. The Yuchi people were an agricultural tribe and depended on the harvest of corn, beans, and squash for their survival. They also hunted bear, deer, and elk. The Green Corn Ceremony is the most important event held annually for the Yuchi people. Jackson (2007) discusses:

Bestowed upon the Yuchi at the time of their creation, it represents an annual obligation of the greatest importance. Central to the event are songs and dances that renew not only the community but the entire world; thus human well-being, not simply Yuchi custom, hangs in the balance when Yuchi prepare to undertake this ceremony each summer. (p. 37)

The Yuchi language is unique in that it is a language isolate, different from any other language that exists (Buchner, 1998). It is actually the only southeastern isolate language to survive to the present time (Linn et al., 1998). The Yuchi language does bear some resemblance to other languages, but because of its difficulty, it was often classified using non-Yuchi names such as Hogologue, Tahogale, Chiska, Westo, Rickohockan, and

Tamahaita (Buchner, 1998). Today, there is a unified approach to saving the Yuchi language, and all members are working toward the same goal of revitalization, even though there are ongoing discussions on the writing system that would best benefit the language learners (Linn et al., 1998).

### **History of Native Language Oppression and Preservation**

The history of the study of Native American languages goes back many years. There has always been the need to homogenize and marginalize Native languages (McCarty, 2003). McCarty (2003) mentions that “genocide, territorial usurpation, forced relocation, and transformations of Native economic, cultural, and social systems brought on by contact with Whites, are all complicit in language attrition” ( p. 148).

Historically, the first attempt to gain perspective of the status of Native languages was the Powell inventory and classification of 1891. Results were often obtained through hostile means because of the national policy of assimilation at the time, and the motivations were considered “antiquarian and scientific only” (Krauss, 1998, p. 10). The first broad survey to document Native North American languages was undertaken by Wallace Chafe in 1964 (Krauss, 1998). Although there have been several attempts to try and document the number of Native speakers in this country at any given time, it is nearly impossible to determine. The language numbers in the U.S. Census are almost useless because many fluent speakers do not admit they are fluent in a particular language because of the lower class stigma attached to knowing a Native language. Some non-speakers who wished they spoke the language in some cases say they speak the language due to wishful thinking, thereby, compromising the data the Census could provide (Krauss, 1998).

In the 1970s, many Native communities created bilingual education programs within their communities as part of the national bilingual education movement that took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Literacy was the primary focus of the time. The federal government's negative ideas about national bilingualism created conflict within many Native communities. This conflict has followed Native American language preservation attempts for decades. At that time, many tribes did not recognize to what extent their languages were really disappearing. Tribal members hoped that the lack of transmission to younger generations could be solved by the schools, but due to insufficient training and support, English often became the dominant language in local communities (Hinton, 2003b). Although many tribes lacked formal writing systems for their languages, the writing systems became important in passing the language from generation to generation. This resurgence in bilingual learning shifted language learning policy so Native Americans could learn their languages without fear of persecution or dominance by the foremost language of this country which is English. Students could finally be proud of learning their languages (Hinton, 2003b).

There are many reasons why Native Americans choose to move away from their Native language on an individual basis. Some people in various communities consider their tribal language backward and of little use in today's society. Other people were often forced to assimilate to the dominant language at one point in their lives and do not want to relive their past. The reality is that the views of different language communities often interact with each other, creating an imbalance in language use (Yamamoto, Brenzinger, & Villalón, 2008). Language learning must take place on a community level if true learning and transmission are to happen (McCarty, 2003).

The cause of the language shift in this country has many diverse facets (McCarty, 2003). One of the problems facing language preservation and revitalization is that cultural, economic, and political globalization are keys in stifling the linguistic diversity of the United States (Hinton, 2003b; McCarty, 2003). For example, many Oklahoma Native Americans are in denial about their language preservation issues (Krauss, 1998; McCarty, Romero-Little, & Zepeda, 2006). At the Red Earth festival in Oklahoma City the Intertribal Wordpath Society set up a table on language issues facing Oklahomans. Many young Native Americans came to the table expecting to see their tribes with many more fluent speakers than there actually were. Anderton (2007) mentions:

More than 96 percent of Oklahoma Indians are not fluent in their tribal language. And the speakers who are lost are not being replaced. At the current rate of speaker replacement, there will likely be no more than four or five Indian languages left by 2030. (p. 2)

The primary problem is that the Native language is no longer the first language taught to children. Native languages are viewed by some as heritage languages or mother tongue languages of this country. The definition of a mother tongue language means the language learned is one that a person learns first in life. For example, each year fewer and fewer Navajo children are entering school knowing their language, even though it is the most spoken Native language in the country (Hinton, 2003b). As Lockard (1999) mentions:

It is a paradox of American Indian cultures that native languages are not being transmitted between the older and younger generations. Of 155 American Indian languages, 87% are spoken by adults who no longer teach them to their children. Many languages will no longer be spoken within a generation. More than one-third of American Indian and Alaskan Native languages have fewer than 100 speakers. (p. 68)

The mother tongue language is taught early in life and eventually becomes a person's primary communication tool. The notion of a mother tongue language instills a deep level of pride and connection in the person that speaks the language. Even though most Native American languages are no longer taught to children, the preservation of the languages is often started from the ground up. The languages are languages of identity and pride and connect the individual to their tribe and their heritage (McCarty, 2008).

The concept of "folklorization" also presents a challenge for language preservation and revitalization. "Folklorization" is the concern that languages can only be used in local contexts unrelated to modern society. When "folklorization" happens, the language must be de-folklorized so that it can be used in modern life in relevant and useful ways. Minority languages will only remain useful if they are used daily within the communities in which they are cherished (Yamamoto et al., 2008, p. 63).

Although there are many historical issues regarding language preservation and revitalization, two lessons have shown promise in the effort. The first lesson is that the spoken word is crucial to language preservation methods. Yamamoto et al. (2008) mention how "languages are spoken by individuals, but it is only through the community that they can flourish. However, knowing a language is a personal attribute that is of little use unless shared with others" (p. 60). The vitality of language depends on individuals. Individuals personally choose to abandon a language and shift to the dominant language thereby forgoing teaching the language to the younger generation (Yamamoto et al., 2008). Although linguists have helped develop written systems language based on the English language or otherwise, the act of recording the sound so other tribal members can see how a phrase is pronounced is essential. If the language is written down and not



spoken, the new speakers may not know how to pronounce a word if no one who speaks the language is able to show them (Toensing, 2007).

The second lesson is that language survival requires confident speakers that can speak the language fluently. Depending on the reservation, the level fluency of individuals is varied. On all reservations, however, the concern is not only for the limited number of fluent speakers, but also for the advanced age of the fluent speakers. For example, on the Fort Peck Reservation, the Dakota and Nakota languages were considered linguistically obsolete in 1997 because there were no fluent speakers under 37 years old. On the Blackfeet Reservation, 505 fluent speakers of their language were identified in 1994, but 102 of those speakers died in the same year. The loss of the elders is why tribes are urgently trying to train new speakers (Boyer, 2000).

#### *Why Don't Parents Teach the Language Anymore?*

It is often a myth that Native American people know their culture and history because they were simply born Native American. The children are not born with the natural knowledge of their heritage, and many do not know much about their culture (Fleming, 2007). Parents mistakenly think that the children will naturally acquire the language at home, but since Native language is often not spoken in the home, the transmission from parent to child is unsuccessful (Hale, 2000).

There are several reasons that families may not transmit their heritage language to their children. Fillmore (as cited in Linn et al., 1998) notes that some of the internal factors may be:

- (1) a belief that the language of wider communication (English in the US [sic]) is crucial to children's success;
- (2) the desire for children to do well in school and the concomitant fear that using the family language may prevent children from learning English well;
- (3) a belief or despair that the family language has no use

outside the home; (4) children's need for acceptance by peers and teachers; (5) a belief that the family language is symbolic of low social status; and more generally, (6) the belief that English is the key to acceptance. (p. 63)

One reason may be because many parents and grandparents grew up attending boarding schools that forbade speaking a Native language (Hale, 2000; Fleming, 2007). Parents also question the value of a Native language because they say it is economically useless. While some parents do not want to remember the pain associated with their language learning as children, others want to equip their children with a strong sense of self by teaching their heritage (Mithun, 1990).

Another reason why parents do not teach their children their Native language may simply be because the children's parents are of two different tribal backgrounds so the dominant language (usually English) is spoken because that is the language that everyone in the family can understand (Fleming, 2007). Many parents mistakenly believe that it is difficult for children to be bilingual, so conversely only English is taught to the children (Hale, 2000).

The attitude of the younger generation affects transmission between generations. With the encroaching dominant society came the allure of the younger generation to stray from their traditional teachings of the elders creating a rift between generations. Many youth today consider the task of language renewal a daunting one in terms of responsibility (Linn, 2007).

#### *Native Language Status before European Settlement*

Many of the Native languages that were spoken when Europeans settled in what is now the United States in the late fifteenth century are no longer spoken. It is not possible to determine the exact number of languages that were spoken before European contact,

but some estimate it to be approximately 1,800 languages. As a result of European settlement by the middle of the twentieth century, almost two-thirds of the languages that once existed in the Western hemisphere were dying (“Native American,” 2009). Linguists estimate that prior to European contact, there may have been 300 to 500 languages that were spoken throughout what is now the United States and Canada (McCarty et al., 2006).

Linguistic decline in California, for example, was a direct result of European contact. During the Gold Rush and mission eras, the population of Native Americans dropped from 310,000 to around 20,000. The Europeans introduced diseases which destroyed much of the Native population, and by 1845, California Native Americans were being killed by miners and farmers. Kidnapping was common and Native women and children were forcibly removed from their homes. This annihilation of the Native people subsided to some degree by 1870 enough for the survivors to begin to rebuild what they had lost (Hinton, 1998). Another example is the Zuni tribe which came close to disappearing altogether. By 1879 the number of people in tribe numbered barely 1,700 because measles and smallpox nearly decimated the tribe. Today there are over 10,000 Zuni people with 90% of them living on the Zuni reservation. Their language and heritage have survived. Dennis Tedlock, an anthropologist at State University of New York at Buffalo, mentions that “the Zuni’s complex social web seems to hold people. Their religion and language provide a point of ethnic identity” (Morell, 2007, p. 77).

In the case of California Native languages, linguists and anthropologists worked diligently to document the languages that were disappearing. For the languages that no

longer have any speakers, those documents are all that remain of a culture (Hinton, 1998).

### *Role of Linguists and Academics*

The field of linguistics originated as a branch of anthropology with a strong interest in documenting Native North American languages, even though the focus was documentation with little need of retention for speakers. Since 1990, the attitude has changed due to the issue of language endangerment. The priority became not only to document the languages, but to study them and minimize the loss and knowledge each language contains (Krauss, 1998).

The role of the linguist is to capture much more than just the words in a language. During their tenure with any given tribe, linguists are often exposed to unique oratories, stories, descriptions, and historical accounts of events that are documented. In many cases, linguists are able to capture descriptions of events from the past that may be the only memory certain tribes have (Mithun, 1990).

Many linguists working with Native American tribes and languages often have a blurred outlook of exactly what their roles and responsibilities are to these communities. Sometimes new versions of a language are created, which can create the problem of losing traditional legends and stories that are lost in translation. Decisions about what will be done to preserve a language ultimately lay with the communities themselves, the speakers, and their descendants. Even with communities that want to save their language, often opinions vary within the community itself (Mithun, 1990).

The role of linguists often falls within the realm of academia. As Fordham (1998) mentions, “As academia’s recognition of the social, cultural, and political aspects of the

language expands, scholars from diverse disciplines are engaged in inquiries about its many functions” (p. 41). Linn et al. (1998) mention that the “role of linguists and academic professionals has become increasingly visible and important” (p. 61). On an international scale, the United Nations and other academic organizations have made it a priority to document endangered languages (Linn et al., 1998).

Not all members of Native communities feel the same about the role of a linguist in language preservation and revitalization. One argument against linguists in academia is that the studies they produce are “esoteric and offer little assistance to communities” (Grounds, 2007a, para. 1). Sometimes their contributions to the Native community in which they are involved are said to be minor in comparison to the responsibilities they have to publish within the requirements of academia. The question arises about how much of the elders’ time should be devoted to passing down the language rather than simply documenting it (Grounds, 2007a). Ashburn (2007) mentions, “For many linguists, documenting Indian languages is as much about preserving cultures as it is about saving words” (p. B7).

### *Cultural Opposition*

Cultural opposition of Native American people by dominant groups within the United States has been very pervasive. White (2006) explains, “Historically, cultural opposition, enforced assimilation, government exploitation, and missionaries succeeded in reducing the use of many Native American languages. These efforts not only strove to eliminate Native American languages but the culture of their speakers as well” (p. 91).

As a result of this cultural opposition, a sense of shame among Native Americans often results (Ambler, 2000; Peacock, 2006). Children were forbidden to speak their

Native languages and brutality often resulted if the Native language was spoken (Peacock, 2006). If the tribal language is forbidden, the culture is not passed on to younger generations in traditional ways as it should be. As Hale (2000) mentions:

There is still a great deal of debate about whether culture and language are separable, and, even deeper, whether language forces you to think in particular ways. You can talk with many people—the Irish come to mind, for example who have adopted English as their language but still consider themselves to be part of their heritage culture. So it is clearly possible to have the culture. But language is clearly the most efficient carrier of a culture—it is virtually impossible to speak the language and not carry on the culture. (p. 15)

To some researchers, it seems the most favorable option is to have bilingual communities and have that be seen as the norm in our society. Even though English would possibly be used for day-to-day activities at times, being bilingual would encourage the culture to be passed down traditionally as it has through other societies throughout history (Hale, 2000).

The idea of multicultural education has been introduced as a way to provide younger Native American students with a more complete picture of their heritage. As Valencia (1992) mentions:

Multicultural education represents a medium designed to awaken Americans who have become relatively complacent about the basic rights that apply to all inhabitants irrespective of the ethnic or biological characteristics. It calls for Americans to be cognizant that it is not un-American to be dominant in a language other than English and to represent cultural traits that differ from those normally recognized as mainstream Anglo-American, and it supports the premise that the civil rights of ethnic minorities in the United States must not be denied. (p. 132)

The problem is the extent to which the goals and objectives of the Native groups in the schools can be met depends on the degree of commitment of schools to cultural identity and diversity (Valencia, 1992).

### *Missionaries*

One of the stereotypes of Native Americans throughout history was that they were uncivilized and needed to be “civilized” by the European Christians (Mifflin, 2008, p. M16). Explorers from around the world would move into Native areas and demand they cease all indigenous religious practices. For example, as far back as 300 years ago, a Puritan-leaning minister named John Eliot sailed from England and settled in Massachusetts where he then devoted his life to evangelizing to Native Americans, beginning with the Massachusett tribe. Puritans placed great value on reading the word of God directly and made large scale efforts to evangelize to the Native Americans at the time. Eliot, along with some of the tribal members he asked for help, translated the King James Bible into the Massachusett tribal language which took around 10 years to accomplish. His goal was for the tribe to give up their ancestral ways for the ways of European Christians. Eliot employed various propaganda techniques, such as using the word “witch” to refer to indigenous religious leaders (Mifflin, 2008, p. M16). At the time, severe illness was rampant within the tribe, which only served to aid to Eliot’s cause of demoralizing and disconnecting the tribal members from their heritage (Mifflin, 2008).

There are many stories like the Massachusett tribal story. As Ivanova (2002) discusses, “Barely a century after missionaries and teachers at government boarding schools rapped Indian children’s knuckles for speaking their Native tongue, all 11 of Montana’s Indian languages are in moderate to imminent danger of extinction” (p. 22). The role of missionaries often played into the larger picture of enforced assimilation through the use of boarding schools.

### *Enforced Assimilation*

Enforced assimilation was common, and there have been many forces that have come together to weaken and destroy Native languages, especially using the tactics of humiliation. Yamamoto et al. (2008) discuss:

In unbalanced contact situations where one group dominates, that is, one group is politically, militarily, economically or religiously stronger than the others, awareness of one's uniqueness is heightened and identity may become a contested issue. When power differences are not severe, milder forms of acculturation usually take place as cultures intermingle. More frequently, however, the weaker group has to unilaterally adjust and assimilate into the dominant culture. (p. 61)

The goal of the missionaries was simply to assimilate Native Americans to the dominant white culture. The U.S. government used the educational system to suppress the use of Native language and did not allow "barbarous dialects" to be spoken well into the 1800s (Ambler, 2000, p. 8). After the Civil War in the United States, President Grant assembled a commission for the purpose of determining ways to quell Native resistance because of the invasion of non-Native lands. The commission recommended that schools should be established that would help suppress Native cultural practices within tribes (Fordham, 1998).

European immigrants formulated initiatives for the conversion of the Native people because they were very aware of the impact language had on Native culture. By eradicating the language and culture, European immigrants thought that it was only a matter of time before the assimilation would be complete. Captain Richard Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, summarized his assimilationist philosophy with the slogan "kill the Indian, save the man" (Fordham, 1998, p. 43). Hale (2000) says:



You may hear the argument that it is actually more ‘useful’ for a given minority language group to just forget about its language and use dominant language in order to have better access to “success.”...But this is a total fallacy. It is true that some individuals succeed by assimilating—that is, by associating with the ways and language of the dominant group—but the majority, the group, the people, won’t. (p. 15)

Even after the wars and removals ended, what were left in their place were assimilationist policies. It was not until the 1960s that Native Americans were allowed to speak their tribal languages in school without fear of retribution (Lord, 1996).

In Oklahoma, most Native Americans are thoroughly assimilated into the dominant culture. Unfortunately, very few still speak their heritage language as a result (Anderton, 2007).

### *Boarding Schools*

With no one determinant to the cause of the disappearance of so many Native languages, the boarding school experience for many Native American elders remains a poignant memory of where their loss of language began. After the American Revolution, the U.S. government developed a plan to civilize what they called uncivilized Native Americans (McCarty, 2008). Beginning in the 1880s, boarding schools were established by the U.S. government and missionaries to accomplish the goal of assimilating Native Americans to the dominant culture (Hinton, 1998; Ivanova, 2002; Umbhau, 2009). White-Kaulaity (2007) mentions that “when missionaries and other evangelists introduced Indians to books and schools, it was to remedy a deficit” (p. 563). Although the underlying plan was to disperse more of the Native land to non-Native people, the government developed boarding schools as a way to steal the Natives’ land and enrich the culture at the same time.

After the federal government assumed the role of caretaker to Native educational endeavor in the late nineteenth century, the introduction of English-only schooling became the norm for Native people. There were many accounts of physical and mental abuse which displays itself as an intense distrust of Anglo-American education in today's society (Ambler, 2000; McCarty, 2008). It was not until the 1960s that many of the Native schools controlled by the federal government were returned to Native control (McCarty, 2008).

Boarding schools resulted in forced separation between children and their families (Hinton, 1998). By the end of the nineteenth century, over 80% of children living on Native reservations were taken from their homes and put into boarding schools (Ivanova, 2002). Children were made to feel ashamed of their heritage at school and their long-term identities as members of a particular tribe were diminished (Ambler, 2000; McBroom, 1995; White-Kaulaity, 2007). In many cases, it was the elders of a particular tribe that were responsible for keeping their languages alive at home because the children were being forced to forget their language at a boarding school (Toensing, 2007). The assimilation policies varied from reservation to reservation, but the policies on the Flathead reservation, for example, were seen as brutal. Thomason (2007) recounts a story told to him by a Bitterroot Salish elder:

A Bitterroot Salish elder in his late seventies, recounts what happened to him in the first grade, in a public school on the reservation. He and his friend Peter Pierre were talking Indian in the hallway of the school; a teacher heard them and broke her yardstick over Peter's head, then hit Louis with the biggest of the broken pieces. Next she took them to the principal, who said that if they spoke Indian again, he'd whip them with his belt. Louis complained to his father about the treatment and was told that he should do what the teachers wanted in the school, but go on talking Salish outside of school. "Don't throw away your language," his father told him. Louis didn't, but many of his peers did. (p. 25)

Many elders can recall a similar experience that is difficult to talk about even today. The elders were afraid to encourage their children to speak the language because they did not want their children punished like they were as children. Although the boarding schools were only in place for 50 years, the damage will take generations to repair (Harbold, 2005).

### *Government Oppression*

The roles of Native Americans as seen through the perspective of the U.S. government has varied over the years, but the fact remains that there are many complex matters affecting the Native languages of the United States (Yamamoto et al., 2008).

Typically in linguistically diverse societies, the group that dominates the culture usually wishes to have total control over the other minor groups within the population. Yamamoto et al. (2008) mention that “frequently in the name of national unity, the powerful group declares its own language as the national or official language of the State, relegating or even forbidding the use of other languages” (p. 64). Societies today are often socio-political entities that are comprised of diverse groups. Some of the societies often push smaller groups or tribes to assimilate to the dominant group, while others let the diversity among different groups remain strong (Yamamoto et al., 2008).

Because of the pressures of assimilation, there were many tribes that were forcibly moved to Oklahoma at the end of the nineteenth century. As a result of that movement, many of the tribes that relocated there needed to find ways to bond to some extent with neighboring tribes. At that time, individual tribes had their individual identities and over 40 languages within seven language families were spoken in Oklahoma. Neighboring tribes began to share their songs and stories as a way to survive

in the impoverished conditions of Oklahoma. As a result of the life changes that affected Oklahoma tribes at the time, many of the languages suffered and are no longer spoken (Linn, 2007). In Oklahoma alone, the last of the elder speakers of the Miami, Peoria, and Quapaw languages passed away in 1993 (Bilger, 1994).

National language policies enforced by the U.S. government were an effective way to oppress the languages spoken by tribes, in effect ignoring the process which other languages are transmitted to the younger generation. Yamamoto et al. (2008) discuss the national attitude on speaking a Native language:

They may decide upon a ‘one language, one nation’ policy for the sake of ‘national unity’, or out of a desire to strengthen their international status, or because they believe that a monolingual State guarantees a stronger front *vis-à-vis* other nations. Such policies obviously have direct and crucial implications for all ethnolinguistic minorities living in that State. (p. 64)

Although Native American mistreatment occurred regularly at the time, during World War II, many Native Americans were recognized for the services they could provide for the military as well as the diversity they could add to the armed forces. People who spoke Navajo, Lakota, and Comanche spoke their Native languages and German and Japanese forces could not decipher their codes. Ironically at the same time, R.C. Gorman, a Navajo artist, was being punished for speaking Navajo in school while his father was serving as a Navajo codetalker in the Marines (Ambler, 2000).

### **The Traditional Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program and the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project**

The traditional MALLP was developed in 1992 by the Native California Network (NCN) via suggestions from a Karuk speaker. Dr. Leanne Hinton of the University of California, Berkeley, is credited as conceiving of the initial design of the program, along

with Nancy Richardson, Mary Bates Abbott, and others. The program has been refined by the needs of the tribes that utilize the program (Hinton, 2001). Hinton has taken that movement to a different level by immersing language learners to produce new speakers. Masters and apprentices focus on spending time listening and speaking the Native language that is to be learned then incorporating gestures, pictures, and actions to go along with the words that are taught (Crystal, 2002).

Before 1990, language maintenance was the goal for many tribes. Traditionally, tribes have worked with linguists to preserve Native languages by writing them down and recording spoken samples of the language (Crystal, 2002). This meant that languages were preserved and the purpose of language maintenance was to keep the status quo for minority languages. For the language maintenance movement, the idea that languages were actually dying was not of high priority. In the 1990s, linguists and activists put forth a new effort to save dying languages. For linguists, to save a language means to document it before the last speakers pass away. For many of the Native activists, the goal when saving a language is to train new speakers and to find a way to communicate between generations before the elder speakers pass away (Hinton, 2003b).

The main reason language activists are adopting a new philosophy about language documentation and transmission is because there is a large gap in the actual conversations between elders and younger speakers. The general rules of address, polite conversation, and taking turns are conversations that have only been recorded on a rare basis (Hinton, 2003b).

## *Objectives*

The primary goal of the traditional master-apprentice language program is to take master language speakers and apprentices and put them together in teams where the apprentice learns to speak the Native language in the midst of everyday activities (Hinton, 1998; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999; Ross, 2003). Through the master-apprentice program, the philosophy and teaching tools remain the same, even though tribal languages differ (Ross, 2003). Masters and apprentices set up weekly appointments and learn the language in a more traditional setting, outside a formal classroom with textbooks and chalkboards. Extensive non-verbal cues are used so that English use is kept to a minimum, with the goal being no English use (Crystal, 2002). The program has had great success in California, where 50 Native languages are spoken. Native instructors learn new teaching methods and the children develop a sense of pride in their ancestral language because they are learning it directly from the elders (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999).

The master-apprentice program has challenges on the master and apprentice sides. It is difficult for master elders to teach a language that is unknown to the apprentice. The apprentice also has the difficult job of learning a language by listening to it using minimal English for assistance (Crystal, 2002). Another challenge for the apprentices is that it is difficult for them not to fall back into English if there is a question or something is confusing in the Native language (Tatsch & Drummer, 2004). Although learning a new language can be difficult, many of the apprentice speakers have modest goals of using their Native language in their homes, praying in their language, or telling traditional stories (Crystal, 2002). One of the keys that the AICLS has discovered is that repetition is

the key to learning the language, especially with the absence of books or written characters. Ross (2003) mentions:

A word needs to be said 20 times in 20 different situations, or 400 times, before the student will have it ingrained. Instead of enduring the dullness of rote memory, the language comes alive with fluid speech, even if it's in simple sentences. (p. 1)

#### *From Language Maintenance to Revitalization*

Since the emergence of the idea of language revitalization versus language maintenance, there has been a disconnect between the two ideas. The problem is that the needs of the linguist may not necessarily match the needs of the community. Grounds (2008) discusses the issue:

The implicit promise of support from academia for revitalizing Indigenous languages turns out to be difficult to harness directly to the urgent needs of Native communities seeking to develop new fluent speakers of their original languages. While linguists and community members can easily share a broad common goal of perpetuating Native languages, they operate out of surprisingly separate agendas. Many of the efforts from academia rely on long-standing strengths for producing lexicons and grammars, generally in the service of the demand for scholarly publications for career advancement. But for Native communities in the very late stages of language loss, with few resources and only handfuls of elderly speakers, much of the arcane academic output may be of little use in their hands-on, urgent struggle to pass their languages to the younger generation. (n.p.)

#### *Examples of the Traditional Program in Use*

In many cases, master-apprentice language programs are not successful, which is why examples of successful programs are studied extensively to find out what works well for the successful programs and what methods they used. Hinton (2003b) mentions:

Language revitalization is not an easy task, and many programs—perhaps most of them—fail to achieve their goals... Thus studies of revitalization programs that work well and the methods they use are very important, and several monographs in the recent literature focus on this matter. (p. 53)

One example of a successful traditional master-apprentice language program in use is a program utilized by the NCN called the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Programme [sic]. The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Programme [sic] pairs master speakers with language learners, and they work together for months at a time. For potential master speakers to be considered, they must have a clear interest in teaching and learning their Native language. Each team receives a small stipend and train using four principles: master and apprentice must use their Native language only; both the master and apprentice practice active communication; the emphasis is on the oral language versus the written language; and, the language learning must take place in daily life situations (McCarty, 2008).

Another example of a successful program is the Hupa tribal language program in California. The apprentices that have graduated from the master-apprentice program have succeeded by now being able to teach the Hupa language in high school and having it count towards a foreign language requirement for entrance to college (Ostler, 2000).

Western Carolina University (WCU) has a successful Cherokee language immersion program. In the summer of 2006, several WCU students took advantage of a summer opportunity to become immersed in the Cherokee language. The fluent Cherokee master speakers agreed to spend 45 hours one-on-one with the students to speak only in Cherokee. Many students reported that they were happy that they were getting more acquainted with their language and their cultural beliefs (“Western pilots,” 2006).

*Successful Language Learning Through Master-Apprentice Principles*

There are several tips and tools that master-apprentice teams can use to be successful in language transmission. Tatsch and Drummer (2004) discuss:



For the Master:

1. Be an active teacher; create situations, tell stories, and engage in conversation even when the apprentice cannot yet understand.
2. Don't use English; instead use gestures, actions, and objects to help the learner understand.
3. Understanding precedes speaking, so ask the learner questions and give commands.
4. Teach in full sentences and rephrase your sentences for simpler communication. This is similar to teaching an infant to speak. Add more vocabulary as your apprentice advances.
5. Be patient with yourself even though it is difficult when you have waited so long to use your language. Know that your apprentice is working hard and that soon he or she will be able to communicate with you. You are giving a gift.

For the Apprentice:

1. Be an active learner; learn to say "I don't understand" or "Please say that again." Learn how to ask questions.
2. Don't use English; instead repeat your teacher's actions or gestures or try some of your own to make yourself understood.
3. Understanding precedes speaking, so have patience with yourself and try to repeat what is said to you.
4. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. This is one of the ways in which we learn. We did it as children and felt no shame. Be willing to try; your goal is to be understood.
5. Practice everywhere; don't limit yourself to the times you are with your teacher. Practice self-immersion. Practice on your friends and family. Greet the postman in your language. Create your own language world. Call out license plates when you are driving, name objects you see daily. (p. 16)

### *Barriers to Revitalization*

Many speakers of indigenous languages have problems because in many cases, there is no strong literacy tradition for a language in the smaller Native communities. In language traditions where school-based teaching methods are used, such as learning the English language, written language exercises are more useful. In community-based language revitalization efforts, the written language takes a back seat to the oral transmission of the language. Hinton (2003b) explains:

Oral literature has as much artistic value as written literature, and carries the added impact of immediacy to its audience and the embellishment of nonverbal components. The retention or revitalization of oral literature is a key part of

cultural survival, and may be an important focus for language revitalization, in place of literacy in the narrow sense. (p. 52)

In some cases, language revitalization almost becomes impossible based on the specific traditions and practices of different tribes. Native people have always self-defined themselves as indigenous because they have different practices and languages. Hinton (2003b) mentions that “in the process of language revitalization, communities must keep in mind to what extent the maintenance or revitalization of cultural practices must play a role in the process” (p. 52). For example, the Cochiti tribe decided that writing their language is forbidden; thus, the Cochiti language cannot be taught in schools where literacy is a key part of the system (Hinton, 2003b).

Some people within the tribe itself do not see the value of language revitalization (May, 2003; Ostler, 2000). Many interested tribal members often face a “hard sell with their own tribal councils, who are indifferent about the fate of their ancestral languages and more concerned with other priorities such as getting health care and other community funding” (May, 2003, p. 1). There was the hope that the building of large-scale casinos would focus more of the revenue towards language preservation, but most tribes are still mired in the construction debt for their casinos (May, 2003).

#### *The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project*

The needs of large tribes that have many fluent speakers differ greatly to the needs of tribes that have only a few elderly speakers and smaller budgets. For smaller tribes, every language preservation decision is important and carefully weighed. As time passes and the fluent speaker group becomes smaller, the outlook for language preservation and revitalization becomes a challenging one. In the Euchee/Yuchi tribe, the grandparent generation often spoke only Euchee/Yuchi and no English. The parent

generation often spoke English and no Yuchi, so the generation gap has hindered the passing down of the language to the younger generation to some degree (Grounds, 2007b).

To meet the needs of the Euchee/Yuchi tribe, the standard model of the master-apprentice program has been tailored to meet their unique needs. Grounds (2007b) discusses how “the ideal model is to develop classrooms where young community members are immersed in the language all day, every day. If done right, this will produce parenting-age speakers who can then raise their kids as native speakers” (para. 5). The interested Euchee/Yuchi members investigated the traditional MALLP and decided that rather than to use one-on-one master-apprentice teams, the program increased the number of apprentices to create a “small cluster of learners for each master” (Grounds, 2007b, para. 7). According to Grounds (2007b):

The payoff here is that the cluster members can both reinforce each other’s learning and also provide a cushion against any unforeseen attrition. Our hope is that the learning process will not be overly diluted by having so many apprentices. (para. 7)

There are a variety of learning options available to the Euchee/Yuchi community members. A two-hour immersion class for toddlers is available during the day. There is also an after-school immersion session for older students. There are two-hour adult immersion/cluster sessions in the mornings. The adult apprentices from the morning session are responsible for teaching the children later in the day. Grounds (2007b) says that “we depend on this in-between generation to fill the gap between the elders and the youngest community members” (para. 9).

Funding for a small language program can be an issue. There is a common misconception that funds are not necessary to save a language. This is true if tribes

already have speakers of parenting age that can speak to their children from birth. For those tribes that do not have that option, real money is required to run a real language revitalization program. The Euchee/Language Project receives some funding from the Lannan Foundation. Grounds (2007b) discusses:

These groups only have a few speakers but also a limited number of supporters, both within and outside the community. Our Yuchi language work has received significant funding from the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma, where all of our present-day fluent speakers are enrolled. One of our enduring challenges has been helping members of the National Council to understand the need for significant and long-term financial support, and to appreciate the size and the complexity of the language challenge we are trying to tackle. (para. 11)

The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project also receives supplemental funding from Running Strong for American Indian Youth and from other smaller sources. Grounds (2007b) expresses that:

Saving the language of smaller tribes requires innovation, adaptation, and much hard work, and for programs to be successful, many serious obstacles will have to be overcome. The good news is that there are program designs that can be made to work for small language communities—but clarity and precision are vital since funds are so short and there is so little time left. (para. 13)

### **Native Language and Politics**

The Native American Languages Act (NALA) was a positive step forward in the language revitalization movement (PL 101-477, 1990). Leanne Hinton (2003b) mentions that “language policy plays an important role in language death and language revitalization” (p. 55). When the NALA was passed and signed into law in 1990, it stated that the government had a commitment to Native communities to help them revitalize and preserve their languages (Hale, 2000; Ivanova, 2002; McCarty, 2008; Umbhau, 2009). The goals of NALA included saving 30 or 40 languages throughout the country which would require a grant totaling \$15 million per year for 10 years. NALA also tries to

correct the mistakes of the past. Supahan (2008) mentions part of the NALA referring to Section 102, Nos. 5 and 8:

There is a lack of clear, comprehensive, and consistent federal policy on treatment of Native American languages which has often resulted in acts of suppression and extermination of Native American languages and cultures...Acts of suppression and extermination directed against Native American languages and cultures are in conflict with the United States policy of self-determination for Native Americans. (p. 12)

The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) oversees federal funding for NALA (Hinton, 1998).

Congress signed off on NALA in 1990, but failed to authorize the amount of funding required for the project. Congress waited two years after NALA was approved to disperse \$2 million in funding in the subsequent NALA of 1992 (Bilger, 1994; Hale, 2000; McCarty, 2008). They waited another two years after that to appropriate half that amount. No promises were made for future funding (Hinton, 1998). In 2002, President George W. Bush signed a reauthorization of federal education money to go to a program he called No Child Left Behind that further cut funding for Native language programs in public schools (Ivanova, 2002).

NALA encompasses minority and language rights which foster a change in attitude in the modern language preservation community that differs greatly to the attitude in the earlier part of the twentieth century (Hinton, 1998). Many Native language advocates agree that although fully funding NALA would help the Native language cause, it would not stop the disappearance of the languages. McCarty (2008) discusses how “for Native American communities, the stakes are high, for unlike immigrant languages, there is no external pool of speakers to help secure the future of Indigenous mother tongues” (p. 211).

Because so many language programs are hampered by funding, many language advocates approach the problem by creating the language program and worrying about the funding later (Bilger, 1994). When compared to funding that Canada provides for their Native peoples, the United States pales in comparison. According to Peacock (2006):

Another comparative figure that puts the \$2 million U.S. investment in Indigenous language revitalization in perspective comes from Canada, whose “federal government currently spends \$30M annually [and i]n addition, on December 19, 2002...announced a \$172.5M initiative over 10 years to work with Aboriginal people to preserve, revitalize and protect Aboriginal language and cultures” (n15). (p. 144)

NALA is an expression of Native American pride and determination (McCarty, 2008). It is also carries an expression of relief from many elders who before NALA was passed, had the sole responsibility of passing down tribal language through the generations (Krauss, 1998).

#### *Governmental Barriers to Language Preservation*

There are many factors that contribute to language loss in the United States, many of which are created by the U.S. federal government. There has always been confusion as to what role the federal government plays in tribal affairs. McCarty (1998) discusses the issue:

The US [sic] Constitution recognizes a special government-to-government relationship between tribes and the Congress that includes broad federal authority and trust responsibilities on the part of the US [sic] government. While this relationship constitutes the cornerstone of tribal sovereignty, it has also positioned tribes as the targets of federal policies intended to eradicate their languages and lifeways. (p. 29)

Two of the prominent issues facing tribal language preservation are English-only movements and problems with teacher credentialing.

Since Native families were given plots of land during the allotment of 1898, the state of Oklahoma has remained tolerant of their diverse tribal population, but each year, the Oklahoma state legislature introduces an English-only bill (Linn, 2007). The role of English-only media in the home in the form of television, radio, and music highlights what some call “incentives associated with the prestige of English” (Krauss, 1998, p. 16). In the past, English-only movements were often utilized to force Native Americans to conform to the larger society. Politicians often debate whether English should be the official language of the United States. Opponents of the English-only movements often see that limiting childhood education to English punishes children and robs them of their scholastic futures (Fordham, 1998). The opponents advocate for an “English Plus” approach where students receive instruction in school in their Native tongue and in English (Fordham, 1998, p. 41). Groups supporting the English-only movements say that since English is so widely used, the learning of Native languages only serves to threaten the dominant English-speaking society (Fordham, 1998). Proponents say English-only movements will reduce the number of languages, therefore creating less conflict in the United States (Thomason, 2007). As of 1998, the English-only movement had affected 23 states mainly because of the concern for increasing immigrant population (Rosen, 1998).

Yamamoto et al. (2008) discuss:

Through *national language policies*, many governments impose the use of a particular language on all citizens, ignoring in the process all the other languages that may be spoken in the country. They may decide upon ‘one language, one nation’ policy for the sake of ‘national unity’ or out of a desire to strengthen their international status...Such policies obviously have direct and crucial implications for all ethnolinguistic minorities living in that State. In addition to governmental language attitudes and policies, there are even more complex matters affecting the languages of ethnolinguistic groups. For instance, in situations where there are competing varieties of a language, their respective speakers may control access to

different *valued* resources. These could be economic, political, religious or emotional, and in general of a social and cultural nature. (p. 64)

Ambler (2000) mentions that “while Native communities must do the language restoration work themselves, outsiders must provide resources to help support their efforts—and avoid creating artificial barriers, such as English-only laws” (p. 8). Research shows that people who know more than one language have an advantage over people that speak one language, in terms of communications and other skills (Supahan, 2008).

Another barrier that has been created by the federal government is the credentialing of Native language instructors. Some states require that Native language instructors be credentialed through individual state processes. Not only does this limit the preservation methods, but it delays the teaching of languages in public schools (Supahan, 2008). The No Child Left Behind policy is making language education increasingly difficult in schools (McCarty, 2003; Owings, 2008). The language teachers, most of whom do not have teaching credentials, are often considered second-class staff at their schools. They contain the valuable and irreplaceable knowledge contained in their tribal languages but are not allowed to teach at all in many cases (Owings, 2008). Specifically, teachers that do teach their tribal language in many Navajo schools have been told not to teach the Navajo language and to “teach the standards” (McCarty et al., 2006b, p. 673). Evidence suggests that individual tribes should have the authority to certify their own teachers for language instruction in the public school setting. Sixteen states have recognized tribal sovereignty in the language teaching process, furthering their language preservation efforts while working locally with different tribes (Supahan, 2008).



Although English-only movements and teacher credentialing issues will always remain, the fact is that the importance of tribal knowledge and culture is clear. Fishman (2000) says:

For all the pressures and rewards of regionalization and globalization, local identities remain deeply ingrained. Local languages often serve a strong symbolic function in most communities as a dear mark of “authenticity,” which represents a sum total of a community’s history. They also foster higher levels of school success, participation in local government, and knowledge of one’s own culture and faith. (p. 13)

### *Sources of Funding*

Teaching Native languages requires considerable and consistent funding. For teachers to test the effectiveness of their methods over a period of time, consistent financial support is needed. Two-year and other small grants are helpful, but long-term funding is ideal. Many government agencies focus primarily on math and science funding for schools, so many do not provide adequate financial support for Native language preservation (Ambler, 2000). Hinton (2003a) speaks to this point:

At this point most Native American languages in our country cannot survive without strong measures of intervention by the communities to which the speakers and their descendents belong. In order to succeed, language-revitalization efforts need the support of funding and other resources, good linguistic documentation, and access to the best practices for language revitalization. (p. 24)

Within the tribes, tribal budget managers often focus on roads, housing, and other social services, which are often seen as more critical issues to the tribe rather than language preservation (Anderton, 2007).

In the late 1970s, bilingual education became a priority in terms of supporting Native language programming (Hinton, 1998). This was due in large part to the passing of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 which freed federal funding for language programs (Zepeda, 1998). In California, for example, there were many scattered Native

groups which made it difficult for some tribes to establish bilingual programs. Some were able to develop language programs so even when bilingual funding began to diminish in the 1980s, many tribes were able to sustain the language education efforts they had created. By the 1990s, new forms of funding became available from the ANA, which oversees funding for the NALA (Hinton, 1998).

Other states have also benefited from funding through NALA. For example, Montana received a \$3 million grant for K-12 education in 2002. Approximately \$2 million of the award funded Native language education on reservations and English as a Second Language training throughout the state. The remainder paid for teacher training programs that focused on teaching Native languages (Ivanova, 2002). Through the ANA, funding for certain language projects is usually guaranteed for three years, which again brings to light the problem of longevity of funding for language programming (Hinton, 2003a).

Even though smaller community and private organizations do receive funding occasionally, it is often not enough for an extended period of time. For example, there are special obstacles that small language preservation groups face. The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project has few fluent speakers and limited funders inside and outside of the community. Some of the language preservation work has received funding from the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma, where all of the fluent elders are enrolled (Grounds, 2007b). Grounds (2007b) mentions:

The funding challenge is best exemplified by the oft-repeated claim that you do not need funds to save your language. While the notion can be useful to spur communities to take immediate action on the issue, it is true only for those language communities that are fortunate enough to have fluent speakers of parenting age. They can pursue the natural process of language transmission by speaking to their children from birth...For small language groups there are no

simple or cheap solutions. Real money is required for effective programs. (para. 12)

Fortunately, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill by voice vote on September 27, 2006, that expanded the list of Native American language programs that can receive grants under an initiative administered by the Department of Health and Human Services called the Native American Programs Act (Zehr, 2006). By expanding funding opportunities, hopefully Native groups can more fully embrace the different options for funding their language preservation programs.

#### *Organizational Initiatives*

There have been organizations that have been created for the sole purpose of Native language preservation and revitalization. One of the successful organizations is the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) located in California. Another successful organization is the Indigenous Language Institute ([ILI], 2009) which is headquartered in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The AICLS began as a committee of seven California Native Americans that wanted to preserve and revitalize California endangered languages; the group has now grown to encompass many causes and programs (Hinton, 1998). The organization was created in 1992 with the purpose of helping California indigenous communities keep their languages alive (AICLS, 2010; McCarty, 2008). Along with the creation of the MALLP, the AICLS is responsible for creating the “Breath of Life, Silent No More” program to restore languages that have no speakers left (Hinton, 1998, p. 88). One of the many examples of work demonstrated by AICLS is the work the organization has done with the Nüümü Yadoha Program, a language revitalization program based in Bishop, California. The AICLS began their collaboration with Nüümü Yadoha in 2004 with the intent of

sharing master-apprentice learning techniques for their language, and the program has had much success (Drummer, 2005). There is also the yearly Language is Life gathering each year to discuss the progress of language preservation and revitalization in Native communities. The AICLS also uses their Circle of Voices program to teach California Native Americans how to document their tribal knowledge by using video technology (AICLS, 2010).

The ILI was founded in 1992 as the Institute for the Preservation of the Original Languages of the Americas (IPOLA). It was founded under the mission to serve all tribes in an effort to help them revitalize their indigenous languages. In 2000, the IPOLA was changed to the ILI to reflect the organization's new ideals of helping tribes on a global scale and showcase their intention to expand services to all Native Americans (ILI, 2009). With the name change, their focus as an organization changed from preservation to revitalization. The belief that language is a living thing has fueled ILI's initiatives to work with local communities using technology and other methods to foster community-based language learning while promoting public awareness of language preservation issues (Toensing, 2007). According to ILI (2009):

Today we are an organization that serves American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, First Nations of Canada, and [sic] reaching out to the international indigenous community. ILI provides the tools and training to help Native language teachers and learners help themselves in their efforts to bring language back into everyday lives of the People. The network of people and organizations developed through coming together at ILI seminars and workshops become continuing relationships for sharing experiences and knowledge with each other. ILI also builds partnerships with other organizations which have parallel and converging missions. (n.p.)

In 2008, at the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Annual Convention, the ILI and the NIEA established a formal partnership to advance the causes of Native

Americans in the United States. The two organizations will work together to “implement ILI’s training and information sharing activities to NIEA members to help schools, communities, and families to bring back our Native languages into everyday life” (Slaughter, 2008, p. 20).

### **Language Loss and its Effect on Tribal Culture**

The revival of Native languages helps younger generations establish a sense of cultural pride and identity by encouraging “achievement and self-expression throughout the generations” (Fordham, 1998, p. 44). Native people become proud of their individual tribal heritage when they know their language (McCarty, 2003). In some cases, children speak their tribal language, but are embarrassed or ashamed to speak it in front of other people because it looked upon as stupid or an act of the devil. It is a mindset based on self-hate and years of suppression that must be undone to build self-empowerment when speaking their language (McCarty et al., 2006a).

In order for Native peoples to heal the damage from the past, tribal members must return to the roots of their particular tribes to regain their identity. Chief (2000) mentions how “research has helped us realize that the language is a very important source of philosophical knowledge...The language holds much of what we need to know about ourselves” (p. 26). Harbold (2005) mentions how when languages are learned, the connections between generations becomes stronger and creates Native speakers who are firm in their tribal identities.

One’s identity is deeply rooted in the language (McCarty, 2008; Yamamoto et al., 2008). Yamamoto et al. (2008) comment on the dual nature of language:

It is intensely personal and at the same time deeply communal. Through language, an individual shapes thoughts and feelings, in other words, creates a world that is inevitably anchored in a particular human and natural environment. In this way, languages present and represent not only individuals and groups, but also their surrounding environment. (p. 68)

Languages within Native tribes make each tribe unique. For many Native people, the language of their tribes describes who they were, where they came from, and where they are going (McCarty et al., 2006a; Umbhau, 2009). For people who did not grow up speaking their tribal language, their identity within the tribe can be misunderstood.

Wilson (2000) discusses this problem:

From my childhood to today, I have no real name. Today I am fluent in English and use only words of my own language. Today I would not know if Great Spirit called my real name, because I do not have one. Today I would not know if Great Spirit walked down the dusty road seeking water or food—because I do not know the real language that Great Power speaks. I am essentially disarmed, naked before all of the communication powers of the universe. Alone. (Wilson, 2000, p. 19)

The language also connects each tribal member to other aspects of their own lives so when the tribal language is learned, it should be learned with reverence (“Little Priest,” 2000).

Even if efforts to save a heritage language are not successful, no effort is ever wasted. The possibility of revival is always present if grammatical descriptions, a dictionary, and a collection of narratives exists. The revived version will not be identical to the original version, but it is a place to start (Thomason, 2007).

Native American people also know the advantages of bilingualism. There is a difference between learning their mother tongue as an addition to their lives and learning versus learning the dominant language as a method to suppress their Native language (Fordham, 1998). Some Native Americans were fortunate to not have mainstream

educational policies change their behaviors or attitudes. They were able to maintain a strong connection to their Native culture while functioning in the dominant culture, which helped some Native Americans become teachers in their own community (Dick, 1998). There is also hope for educated urban Native Americans in that they will come back to their communities and spark cultural revival, even though this trend is in its infancy (Thomas, 1986).

Many Native Americans resonate with the idea of being loyal to their language not necessarily because it fulfills a practical purpose in their lives but instead because it confirms their identity as a particular tribal people. The language connects them to their past and to their community (Hinton, 2003b).

#### *Values, Beliefs, and Traditions*

The traditional way of teaching language is suffering. Traditionally, Native people learned to speak their languages from other speakers. If mistakes were made, the elders would gently correct the learner so learning could continue. Fluency is acquired by speaking the language, but many people have forgotten this. Often writing and grammar are emphasized over speaking which is modeled after the English language teaching model. The modes of teaching must change if contemporary Native Americans want to teach the younger generation (Littlebear, 2000b). Dick (1998) speaks about her experiences in learning Navajo:

At an early age I learned the values, beliefs, and traditions of my people. For instance, in Navajo we begin prayers with *shimá hahasdzáán, shítáa yáh dilhil*. By this we mean that we have the same relationship to mother earth (*shimá nahasdzáán*) as we have to the person who gave birth to us. The passing on of these values and of history, ritual, and family traditions was done through oral tradition. Navajo had been written in the 1800s by missionaries, but written Navajo had no practical purpose in our lives at the time. (p. 23)

Practical purpose has always been a consideration when debating the importance of learning Native languages. According to Thomason (2007), “Tearing down language barriers would streamline international business and tourism. But a language cannot be evaluated solely on grounds of efficiency. In a very real sense, you cannot say anything you want in any language” (p. 26).

One problem is that younger Native Americans are not interested in hearing about past times in their tribal history or stories from the elders. The values, beliefs, and traditions are being lost quickly because of the high level of distractions for young people today. The appreciation for oral literacy is not as prevalent as it was in the past (White-Kaulaity, 2007). The fact that the younger generation is not as interested in learning the old ways saddens many elders because they have no one to share their tribal knowledge with. Because of the declining interest in tradition, the preservation of community becomes vital to the survival of individual tribes (Patchell, 2005).

The complexity of meanings contained in Native languages is vast. The languages are more than simple lists composed by early explorers with limited knowledge about Native lifeways. As Kalish (2005) mentions:

Tribal languages are substantial, much more so than the simple lists produced by early explorers might lead one to believe. Tribal scholars who are contributing to the canon, and who are speaking about the depth of cultures and the deep relationships between the people and their knowledge as reflected in their language and cultural reifications, are beginning to sculpt the complexity of the landscape of Indigenous understanding. (p. 184)

Tribal people must be actively engaged in saving their beliefs and traditions if they are to survive for future generations (Kalish, 2005).



### *Role of Language in Tribal Sovereignty*

According to federal law and policy, Indian nations are sovereign nations (Allison & Vining, 1999; McCarty, 2008). Native tribes have always had a unique relationship with the U.S. government that has included treaties, statutes, and court decisions. In exchange for land, the government “agreed to provide tribes with education, health care and public safety, thus establishing legal obligations” (Allison & Vining, 1999, p. 193). The federal government repeatedly violates Native peoples’ trust with questionable adherence to education and language policy laws (McCarty, 2008). Although many things have been guaranteed to the Native population, language preservation has not always been a top priority of the U.S. government, therefore, threatening the sovereignty of tribal nations.

Tribal sovereignty can often mean finding ways for tribes to distinguish themselves from the larger culture. One of the ways tribes distinguish themselves is by continuing to have tribal meetings and ceremonies in the Native language. For example, the Navajo reservation in Arizona has approximately 170,000 Navajo speakers. Ashburn (2007) mentions how “conducting business in English would be like the U.S. government conducting business in French” (p. B15). By conducting business in the Navajo language, tribal members can have a feeling of sovereignty that may not be present if business was conducted in English. Yamamoto et al. (2008) discuss:

The group as well as the individual sense of identity is foregrounded when competing identities emerge. Members of small groups may have mixed feelings towards more powerful groups, feeling either threatened by or attracted to them, with various push and pull factors at work. In such circumstances, communities may develop differing internal strategies with contrasting aims: either retaining or even strengthening their own identity, or assimilating to the dominant group. (p. 62)

Many Native language learners look at learning their tribal language as an opportunity to leave their legacy behind for future generations. Programs such as the Breath of Life program in California are actively teaching languages to members of certain tribes who have no fluent speakers left. By creating the bond to the past, it makes the participants feel stronger to their tribal bond in the future (Ramirez, 2008). Ostler (2000) discusses:

We face two alternative scenarios for the future. In one, the world becomes increasingly homogenized as minority cultures and their languages are swept away in the oncoming tide of standardization. The accumulated knowledge of millennia disappears, leaving the world a poorer place. In the other scenario, minorities keep their cultural integrity, and minor languages continue to exist alongside larger ones. Which scenario comes to pass depends to a large extent on our actions now. (p. 6)

#### *Communication between Generations*

Among young Native Americans, the trend is to abandon traditional Native languages. When speaking of times past, Cajete (2005) says:

Tribal teaching and learning was intertwined with the daily life of both teacher and learner. Tribal education was a natural outcome of living in close communion with each other and the natural environment. The living place, the learner's extended family, the clan and tribe provide both the context and source for teaching. In this way every situation provided a potential opportunity for learning; and basic education was not separate from the natural, social, or spiritual aspects of everyday life. Living and learning were fully integrated. (p. 71)

Because traditional times have changed, these changes have resulted in internal conflicts between the elders feeling isolated and the younger tribal members no longer respecting them because of their language. In some cases, for example, language learning progress is often halted because two different dialects are spoken. On the Sarcee reservation in Calgary, there are two Athapaskan language dialects. One group routinely laughs at the other because they sound different, so progress is not made as quickly as it could be

(Fuller, 1993). Littlebear (2000b) mentions that “our elders must help us save our languages instead of ridiculing their grandchildren and other potential speakers who happen to make a mistake in pronunciation” (p. 18).

Within Native communities, it is difficult to teach a tribal language to other tribal members because in many cases, the groups have been colonized for so long. For example, for the Niitsitapi people, the elders and grandparents expressed concern about misrepresenting their way of life when a curriculum was developed to teach their language. They were concerned that certain meanings would be misrepresented and the integrity of the information might be compromised (Chief, 2000). Native American tradition is primarily based on oral tradition as a method for passing down traditional stories, so another method other than the one the elders are used to can be daunting for them. Luckily in many Native tribes today, traditional storytelling remains strong as a way to pass down stories and wisdom (White-Kaulaity, 2007).

On a similar note, language learners often see the elders as intimidating. They may have differing opinions on how the tribal language should be taught and may completely disregard any curriculum plans because of their oral traditions. In some cases elders just want the younger learners to listen to them talk to pick up the language in a more traditional way (Owings, 2008). Regardless of how language learners view elders, the elders are fountains of knowledge, so to come to a teaching and learning compromise between the elders and the learners would be ideal.

Language loss can be reversed, but it needs to happen at a community level involving all members of the community (Boyer, 2000; Hale, 2000). Individual families decide to stop using the language for many different reasons, but what many elders and

parents do not understand is that if the language is not spoken at home, chances are the children are not learning it. Elders and parents need to decide together to teach children a primary and a secondary language at home. Any anger needs to be replaced with compassion in terms of elders teaching and correcting language learners as not to develop an atmosphere of self-hate and ridicule (Hale, 2000).

### **Perspectives on Language Learning**

There are differing perspectives on how elder and young tribal members view the importance of language learning. The frequency of Native children entering the school system speaking English is increasing. There are ongoing research studies to try and determine how Native youth view the importance of learning their heritage language (McCarty et al., 2006b).

In general, the way knowledge is transmitted in Native tribes is different than the traditional way knowledge is acquired in the dominant society. For example, reading has not always been the best way for Native students to attain knowledge because passing down information through oral tradition is historically more standard for tribal communities. Native American people also have different ways of mastering skills. In mainstream society, a child's reading level is connected to their grade which is connected to their age. For Native students, the time to develop a skill is not connected to a child's age or a certain date of completion. Within any particular tribe, the adults are patient with children who need extra help and students are expected to find their own strength in their abilities (White-Kaulaity, 2007). The learning styles of Native people differ from that of mainstream society as does the language learning perspectives between elders and youth.

### *Language Learning from the Perspective of the Youth*

Native youth are deeply concerned about the status of Native languages today (McCarty et al., 2006b). Although most youth seem concerned about the future of their languages, “children’s language proficiencies, their attitudes toward the heritage language and culture, and the relationship of language proficiencies and attitudes to school performance are not well documented or understood” (McCarty et al., 2006b).

From the Native youth perspective, the importance of language learning can vary from person to person (McCarty et al., 2006b). For example, in one language study done with Navajo tribal youth, the attitudes on language learning ranged from pride to shame in learning the language. McCarty et al. (2006b) discuss:

In further conversations with youth, three related themes surfaced: the politics of shame and caring in school, the hegemony of English, and the iconic bonding of English with whiteness. These findings have led us to examine more closely the dynamics of shame, pride, and caring as they intersect with larger power relations to produce language ideologies and choices. (p. 38)

Youth in different tribes have different views on language preservation. In one study of Native youth from Beautiful Mountain, many of the youth and elders feel a sense of pride because they know their language, even though all younger members in the tribe do not feel that way. On the other hand, many of the youth and elders are aware of the dominant society in which they must live, so in many cases, it is easier for them to just speak the dominant language (McCarty et al., 2006a). Some Navajo youth are embarrassed to say they know the Navajo language because it denotes that they may be of a lower class (McCarty et al., 2006b). On the Blackfeet Reservation, the younger tribal members are excited to learn their language so that they will be able to teach it to their

children (Ivanova, 2002). Some of these examples provide the evidence of the broad spectrum in which Native youth perceive the importance of language preservation.

*Language Learning from the Perspective of the Elders*

The elder perspective on the importance of language learning is important to consider. Many elders consider the fact that since their particular tribe has survived at all is enough and language learning is secondary. Others take a different approach and say that if younger tribal members cannot speak their language, they are simply not a true member of the tribe because they do not understand tribal history and the significance of the tribal language (Dale, 2000).

One of the issues surrounding the elder view of language preservation is that many of them are simply in denial that the language preservation problems actually exist on their reservation. By the time tribal members realize that there is a true language preservation problem, the dominant language has already taken over (Boyer, 2000; Krauss, 1998). Other tribal members are hesitant to adopt a new language preservation program because they believe that it will be gone too quickly to be effective (Boyer, 2000). Krauss (1998) mentions:

The new parental generation is in no position to reverse the loss by itself, and the grandparents have much that is difficult to face. First there is the loss itself: loss of continuity with the past, of the tradition of their youth, of the cultural wealth of knowledge and spirituality, and the threat of continuity of ethnic identity. Second, there is loss of the language itself and severe ambivalence in most cases, as no one literally forced them daily to speak English and not their traditional language to children in their homes. That was their own doing, in accordance with the educational policy. They must be aware at some level that they are responsible for ending the transmission of their language. (p. 16)

Another issue is that many elders are simply frustrated that they cannot remember enough of their tribal language to pass on traditional stories to younger tribal members

(Ivanova, 2002). This is where the interaction between the elder and youth become crucial in determining the fragility of passing down a tribal language. Boyer (2000) mentions that “if the grandmother speaks her language, and the child listens and responds, there is hope...But what happens when the grandmother uses English with the boy or, more poignant still, quickly reverts to the English when he doesn’t understand her words?” (p. 12). It is very possible that elders do not realize how much is at stake or what role they have to play in the language preservation process, which may lead to younger tribal members feeling that they cannot learn the language (Boyer, 2000).

Elders are also concerned that their tribal way of life will be misrepresented and misinterpreted by younger language learners because of the risk of inaccurate information that could be passed down. Chief (2000) mentions how the Niitsitapi tribe struggles with their life way representation by saying how “it is a tough struggle to maintain the integrity of our way of life when we teach it to others, especially when our people’s minds have been colonized for such a long time” (p. 26).

Although youth and elder views on language learning may differ, there is hope for a connection between the generations. There must be intergenerational collaboration between tribal youth and elders so that fear of rejection can be replaced with hope and tribal pride (Wallace, 2009). As McCarty et al. (2006b) mention:

Language policies and practices are human-built and thus malleable to change. Youth have much to teach us about the strategies we might employ in creating policies and practices that support heritage-language retention. Our role, then, is to listen and to act. (p. 674)

### **Learning Style and Language Learning**

Native Americans are among the most misunderstood and isolated ethnic groups in the United States. This fact is mainly due to a lack of information that is based on other

people's direct experiences with Native Americans (Fleming, 2007). Unfortunately, because of the misinformation between the dominant society and Native groups, the learning style of Native people is often lumped into the same category as traditional learning styles (Little Soldier, 1989).

One of the main problems is that school personnel lack training in using educational models that incorporate cultural heritage as part of the curriculum. Becoming culturally knowledgeable on Native American issues and learning styles is often too much work for mainstream educators because it requires a change in their world views, which is how a person relates to the world and their place in the world. Robinson-Zañartu (1996) says that "understanding the Native American child necessitates, first and foremost, understanding that their belief systems are fundamentally different from those of non-Native Americans" (p. 375). As Little Soldier (1989) mentions:

Native Americans generally do not fare well in schools provided by the dominant society. They achieve at low levels and have high dropout rates and the longer Indian students remain in school, the wider becomes the gap between their achievement and that of the majority population. Certainly, cultural barriers between home and school are partly responsible for these problems. More specific, however, language differences are a major stumbling block to school progress. (p. 74)

Learning style is defined by Morgan (2010) as being "the cognitive process students used to process information" (p. 44). Different classifications are used to identify Native American learning styles. Morgan (2010) goes on to discuss:

A person's learning style is determined by the way he or she consistently responds cognitively, affectively, and physiologically to a given stimulus. Native American students view the world the way they do partly as a result of cultural values and early socialization experiences. (p. 45)

Although traditional learning methods of writing, reading, and conjugating verbs may be standard for mainstream society, Native learners learn better in different ways. For



language learning to be effective, the act of speaking the tribal language needs to be emphasized instead of writing. The languages must be taught orally and must not be taught in a way that imitates the way English is taught, which emphasizes grammar. They must be taught in the context of everyday conversation so that conversation skills can develop instead of learning isolated words. As Littlebear (2000b) mentions:

We all remember learning the tenses and parts of speech, conjugating verbs, and writing English, usually as punishment. Remember how tedious that was? Yet we persist in making our students do the same things in our own languages. Many language teachers teach writing even when that language has no writing system—and even when those teachers have minimal skills in writing in English or their own tribal languages. This is amazing for languages that were, up until very recently, primarily oral. (p. 18)

According to Cajete (2005), there are a number of elemental points about Native education that characterize the “expression of indigenous education wherever and however it has been expressed” (p. 70). Cajete (2005) explains:

The sacred view of Nature permeates and contextualizes the foundational process of teaching and learning. Integration and interconnectedness are universal traits. Relationships between elements and knowledge bases radiate in concentric rings of process and structure. Its processes adhere to the principle of reciprocity between humans and all other things. It recognizes and incorporates the cycles within cycles, that is, that there are always deeper levels of meaning to be found in every learning-teaching process. It presents something to learn for everyone, at every stage of life. It recognizes levels of maturity and readiness to learn in the developmental process of both males and females. This recognition is incorporated into the designs and situations in which indigenous teaching takes place. It recognizes language as a sacred expression of breath and incorporates this orientation in all its foundations. It recognizes that each person and each culture contain the seeds of all that are essential to their well-being and positive development. It recognizes and applies ordering through ceremony, ritual, and community activity. It recognizes that the true sources of knowledge are to be found within the individual and entities of nature. It recognizes that true learning occurs through participating in and honoring relationships in both the human and natural communities. It recognizes the power of thought and language to create the worlds we live in. It creates maps of the world that assist us through life’s journey. It resonates and builds learning through the tribal structures of the home and community. (pp. 70-71)

The educational principles that underlie Native society are deep and meaningful. There are many methods educators can use to serve young and elder Native learners.

*Methods for Teaching Younger Language Learners*

There are dangers in stereotyping all Native Americans. Although attention to differences between Native students and mainstream students is important, “research does not indicate that there is a unique Native American way of learning” (Morgan, 2010, p. 44). Teachers do need to understand; however, that Native students may perceive the world in a slightly different way. They need to incorporate a multicultural aspect into their classroom as much as possible (Valencia, 1992). Native students will often react and behave differently depending on the type of teaching strategy used. Unfortunately, some Native students do not want to defy the norms of their culture, so they will purposefully underachieve to avoid looking superior (Morgan, 2010).

There are many different approaches an educator can use to reach younger Native learners. One important idea to remember when teaching younger language learners is that every student’s background is unique, and each student wants to feel valued. It is important for educators to get to know their students and realize that each student has individual customs, cultures, and needs (Little Soldier, 1989; McCarty, 1998). It is important for educators to create materials that contain culturally relevant themes. Native American students are often visual learners, so creating materials that highlight their background is helpful in helping them succeed academically (Barber, 2009; Little Soldier, 1989; McCarty, 1998). Another suggestion for teachers is to provide an informal classroom with a supportive psychological climate. Allow the students to share control of the classroom so they feel their contributions are valued by playing games or using other

visual tools (Umbhau, 2009). Since Native American students are taught to value cooperation and sharing, encourage the students to interact as a group to enhance cooperative learning (Little Soldier, 1989; McCarty, 1998). Another suggestion is for teachers to avoid large group settings with the traditional lecture-style approach. Teachers should use generous amounts of positive reinforcement and plan a program that addresses the needs of the individual students (Little Soldier, 1989).

Teachers also need to develop an appreciation for the oral literacy traditions in many Native tribes. Children can bring a wealth of knowledge to the classroom in the form of stories and songs that can help bridge the gap between the school and home environments. Teachers should encourage the students to write their stories down and share them with the rest of the class (White-Kaulaity, 2007).

#### *Effective Adult Learning Methods*

Research shows that the lack of effective teaching techniques and materials is a direct contributor to why adults cannot learn a language (Kalish, 2005). Adults learn differently than children. In general, adult learners in mainstream society have several characteristics that younger learners do not have. First, adult learners are more likely to be pursuing a degree or certificate through a non-traditional program. Second, many adult students make it their goal to gain work skills in the continuing education process. Third, adult students see themselves as workers more than students. There are often outside obligations for adult learners, so balancing life responsibilities becomes an important aspect of an adult learner's life. Distance education is also important because many adults will participate in a program from varying locations (Compton, Cox, & Laanan, 2006).

There are several principles that educators can use to better serve adult students. In an institutional setting, outreach and career planning become important so the adult learners can have lifelong access to educational resources while attaining their career goals. It is important for institutions to have variable payment methods for adult students. The institutions should realize that adult students bring a great deal of life experience to an education setting (Compton et al., 2006). A Native learner must integrate life experience into the process of learning (Cajete, 2005). Multiple methods of instruction should be used so each adult can have an effective way to relate to the material being taught (Compton et al., 2006). Generally, adult learners learn from coupling their life experiences with the fact that they like to learn with each other in groups (Mauk, 2006).

The institution should also have access to up-to-date technology so that the access of information can be used to enhance the learning experience (Compton et al., 2006). When discussing relevant technology, for example, the Native Americans for Community Action (NACA) group in Arizona have an adult education program that is funded primarily through the Arizona Department of Education. The program's mission is to "offer basic adult education and GED preparation to all adults in a culturally appropriate environment" ("Web-based," 2002, para. 2). The program is very effective and friendly with the adult students the program serves ("Web-based," 2002).

Language learning as an adult is difficult because of the challenges of balancing life responsibilities. Ross (2003) mentions, "To learn a language as an adult requires a humility and patience to accept starting again...frustration is natural and the process requires patience, but eventually after two or three months, the student will break out on their own" (p. 1). In some cases, many educators infuse a particular tribal language and

history into existing courses they already have. In other cases, building a sense of community is important in passing down the Native language (Lockard, 1999).

Adult educators can adapt their teaching methods to Native adult learners by understanding that the adult students' learning experiences are often shadowed with experiences of discrimination (Lockard, 1999). By making small changes in their teaching methods, adult students can have a fulfilling educational experience.

### **Other Language Preservation Techniques**

One of the main tools used in assisting the effort to save Native languages is the development of practical writing systems. There are many Native tribes that do not have a formal alphabet for their language, so developing a writing system becomes a high priority. Many tribes have worked with linguists for years to develop a writing system that can be adopted by the tribe (Hinton, 1998). However, only a handful of languages have their own alphabet. According to Wallace (2009), "Most others adopted the English alphabet and added special marks to denote sounds specific to their language" (p. 18). In some cases, the resulting translation can be confusing to new learners because the shapes and symbols might not make sense (Wallace, 2009).

An example of a tribe for which a written language system has been developed recently is the Shawnee Nation. The Shawnee tribe developed the Loyal Shawnee alphabet as a writing system. At the beginning of the process, a committee was formed to identify possible alphabet symbols and ways which they could be written. The end result consisted of an alphabet book with examples that members of the tribe could refer to as part of learning the language. As part of a long-term plan designed to help the Shawnee Nation, an effective language curriculum was developed, language teachers were trained,

language learners were recruited, and the hope is that a new generation of speakers can be produced. The purpose of the Loyal Shawnee language project was not only to document the Shawnee language, but also to prepare language materials for potential language learners (Linn et al., 1998).

One of the larger tribes that have successfully developed a writing system is the Cherokee Nation. In an article about the Cherokee syllabary, Schlich and Schlich (1995) talk about Sequoyah, the creator of the Cherokee syllabary:

From an early age, Sequoyah was intrigued by the white man's ability to convey messages by means of mysterious symbols scratched on pieces of paper that Indians called "talking leaves." Sequoyah observed how eagerly the whites discussed what appeared in these messages and came to believe that the talking leaves gave the whites a distinct advantage over his people. He saw that through the talking leaves whites communicated with each other over long distances, shared news and information with unseen friends, and preserved their culture for future generations. Cherokees, by contrast, had to depend on person-to-person communication: their traditions and history had to be passed orally from generation to generation. (p. 38)

The finished manuscript resulted in the Cherokee syllabary, comprised of 85 characters, each representing a syllable in the Cherokee language (Harbold, 2005).

In smaller Native tribes, the development of writing systems can play a smaller role. Many of the tribal languages that were developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are often not established enough within individual tribes to compete with the dominant language. The newer Native languages are not well-supported in the school systems, so the result is orally-based community language programs that focus on oral immersion (Hinton, 2003a). When smaller tribes use orally-based language techniques, the "language is learned by hearing and speaking, not through reading" (Hinton, 2003b, p. 53).

### *Development of Written Materials*

The development of written materials is an equally important component of language preservation. The idea of creating and using a written language within a tribe has not always been as important as it is today. Historically, the emphasis was put on learning a tribal language orally. The majority of practical writing systems for Native languages have been developed only in the past 60 years. Some of the languages use traditional English Roman alphabet symbols, and some of the languages use symbols that are locally created within the tribe (McCarty, 2008; Wallace, 2009).

There are certain tribes in the United States that have bilingual language education programs. For these tribes, tribal members have become the directors of the language programs, sometimes hiring linguists as consultants or working on their own. In one example from the Karuk tribe in California, a pocket-sized phrase book has been developed for quick access to Karuk words. There is also audio-taped and online lessons and programming that the Miwok and Hupa tribes have found useful in preserving their languages (Hinton, 1998).

In many cases, words for a particular language must be developed where there were none before. For example, words for *internet* and *computer* did not exist many years ago when many aspects of a particular tribal language were conceived. According to Drummer (2005), the need for the development of new words varies depending on the tribe. If the language usage is primarily used for ceremonial purposes, the need for new vocabulary words might be minimal. If the goal is fluency for the language or creating new speakers, the need for accurate and contemporary vocabulary development might be great (Drummer, 2005).

In the case of small tribes, the development of a written writing system might not be as useful as with larger tribes. Hinton (2003b) explains:

In Native American communities where writing systems have been developed during the nineteenth or twentieth century, they are poorly supported by the school system and also tend to play a relatively small role compared to the English writing system, which is the dominating literary force in these bilingual communities. And in some cases writing of the indigenous language is actually prohibited by the tribe. Literacy is clearly an important part of school-based language education, but in community-based efforts to develop new speakers, literacy takes a back seat to orally-based language teaching and learning efforts. Given that conversational fluency is the goal of many language revitalization programs, the most effective teaching methods involve oral immersion, where language is learned by hearing and speaking, not through reading. (p. 53)

For many tribes, it often takes several weeks to develop written materials. The focus at the beginning of the development process is often basic language lessons generated from a database of sentences that may have been created at a previous time (Linn et al., 1998). For example, the tribal linguist Timothy Montler worked with the Klallam tribe to help establish written materials for use within the tribe. With the help of the tribe, Montler has produced a grammar word list, computer games, and transcribed stories that are used within the school system. According to Montler (2005), the “grammar has been continuously expanded and revised over the past eight years in response to teacher, student, and elder concerns” (p. 4). It is a common practice among Native tribes working on language preservation to update their dictionaries, grammars, and curricula with the changing times (Peacock, 2006). Yamamoto et al. (2008) discuss:

Oral as well as written language materials should be produced, such as dictionaries, grammars, stories, biographies, poetry, radio scripts, television programmes [sic], newspapers and so on. These products, as well as the documentation process itself, help promote the threatened language and often foster a positive attitude toward the heritage language both within and without the language community. (p. 67)



At times, the development of written materials creates opposition from people outside the tribes. Littlebear (2000a) discusses:

Whenever we as American Indian people develop curriculum materials, we tend to immediately confront a faction that opposes their use. Members of our own tribes have produced these materials locally. Yet some faction questions and demolishes our own home-produced materials. (p. 9)

Although there are differing views on the importance of creating written materials for tribal language preservation, groups like the ILI have developed workshops to help teachers, language activists, and other interested people preserve the language within a particular tribe if preservation is desired (Wallace, 2009).

#### *Language Classes at Schools and Tribal Colleges*

In many cases, Native American language classes are taught at schools and various tribal colleges. According to the Modern Language Association, tribal colleges have some of the largest Native American language education programs (Ashburn, 2007; Boyer, 2000). The enrollment in Native language programs has increased some 25% between 1998 and 2002. The interest in language learning in tribal colleges is expected to grow (Ashburn, 2007). Hinton (2003a) discusses:

Given that the languages are no longer being used at home, it is demonstrably true that the fastest and most effective way to get a critical mass of new fluent speakers of an endangered language is through the school—the same institution that was used to destroy these languages in the past. Only in the schools are there enough children spending enough time for the language to be effectively taught. (p. 24)

Related to the fact that many Native languages are no longer being taught at home, roughly one-third of the Native American population are children who attend public, federal, parochial, or private schools. Many of these schools are located in rural and reservation lands where the Native children are the majority of the student body, many of

the students attend mainstream schools where they comprise less than 25% of the student body. American Indian or Alaska Native teachers comprise less than 1% of teachers in these schools, which makes teaching the language even more difficult (McCarty, 2008). In some cases, where the language is only taught for an hour per day over a long period of time, the teaching of the language might be detrimental because the responsibility of teaching the tribal language is shifted to solely a school responsibility rather than the responsibility of family in the home (Krauss, 1998). There are some tribes that do have successful language programs for children. One of the programs is the Klallam Language program in California. There are three participating teachers covering pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school. As the students get older, they are exposed to more Klallam language and history. Over the past 10 years, more than 250 high school students have studied the Klallam language, with more adults learning the language in addition (Montler, 2005).

In Hawaii, where there is a revival in teaching Native Hawaiian to children, the students are learning their core curriculum in Hawaiian first. There are approximately 1,500 students between grades K-12 that participate in immersion programs. In later years, students can go on to earn a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a doctorate degree in Hawaiian studies at the University of Hawaii (Akaka, 2010). Dr. William Wilson, a leader in Hawaiian language education mentions that in the 3,000 students that have been in the Hawaiian language immersion program up to 2003, not one student has dropped out of the program before graduating high school. The acceptance rate to college for these students also falls at 85 percent (Hinton, 2003a; McCarty, 2003).

In Oklahoma, the increasing awareness of language preservation is becoming known at several mainstream institutions. For example the University of Oklahoma has offered Native language classes for credit since the 1990s. The University of Oklahoma offers classes in Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Kiowa, which are taught by members of those respective tribes. Northeastern State University offers Cherokee language and teacher training courses for Cherokee instructors. Each year, there is a Native American Youth Language Fair that helps Native children all over the state see the value in saving their individual language (Anderton, 2007). Anderton (2007) discusses that “while these institutional programs are welcome and helpful, efforts by tribes and individuals in the communities are the most elements for developing fluency and revitalizing language habitat” (para. 17).

For many tribal colleges, teaching Native languages is central to the core mission of the institution. For example, on the Blackfeet reservation, approximately 450 people are exposed to the Blackfeet language each year. Little Priest Tribal College involves parents and children in immersion sessions one weekend each month. Bay Mills Community College in Michigan provides a three-year summer program where Anishinabe instructors can teach their language throughout the region (Ambler, 2000; Dale, 2000).

There are still several unresolved issues that relate to language learning in colleges and universities and how those issues relate to the community, educational, and governing bodies. Often how these factions should work together is unspecified. There is also the issue of testing a student’s fluency if their language is primarily oral, therefore posing the question of how much college credit to award (Peacock, 2006). Even though

these issues are a continuing dialog, the important fact is that language options are being offered to a wider range of students. The emphasis for these programs seems to be about balance between living in today's mainstream society and remembering one's tribal past. Lynette Stein-Chandler, the White Clay Language Immersion School Director at Fort Belknap College, mentions how the college is "preparing students to compete academically but also instilling within them a sense of responsibility to the White Clay Tribe" (p. 27).

### *Immersion Programs*

One of the ways Native Americans are preserving their language is through immersion methods and programs, one of which is the master-apprentice method described earlier. Yamamoto et al. (2008) discuss:

The absolute number of speakers and the proportion of speakers within the community are important factors for the vitality of minority languages. Various strategies can be employed to increase these figures. In many linguistically vulnerable communities where small numbers of competent speakers still exist, the immersion approach is the most effective strategy to educate children and make them carriers of cultural and linguistic traditions to future generations. (p. 65)

For immersion in general, there are other ways tribal members can take advantage of language immersion opportunities to become fluent in their language. In some cases, there are formal gatherings such as immersion camps or programs, and in other cases, the meetings are more informal. The idea of an immersion program, whether formal or informal, is to use their Native language as much as they can during the program. The goal is to be immersed in the Native language to become more proficient at speaking that language (Hinton, 1998). Ryan Wilson, president of the NIEA, refers to the fact that

“language immersion programs are one of the few effective ways to create fluent speakers in Native languages” (St. Germaine, 2006, p. 1).

For the Euchee/Yuchi tribe there have been a series of immersion camps and gatherings where tribal elders and younger members of the tribe get together to talk Euchee/Yuchi (Linn et al., 1998). According to Anderton (2007):

What works is immersion, both in the classroom and in small, personal, master-apprentice arrangements...Intense, frequent learning periods work. Combining language and culture works. Creating a habitat for the language is essential. Fortunately, more and more Oklahoma language programs are now heading in these directions. (para. 14)

Immersion programs not only educate young tribal members about their past, but the programs help prepare young minds for further education. For example, in Fort Defiance, Arizona, the first Navajo immersion program was started in 1987. The program consisted of kindergarten reading in Navajo, with English reading and math introduced later in first grade. McCarty and Watahomigie (1999) explain that “this schedule was followed by a half-day each in Navajo and English in second and third grades and one hour of daily Navajo instruction in grade four” (para. 11). Wayne Holm, the director of the Navajo Language Project, reported that not only were the immersion students far ahead of the English-speaking students in math, but they performed equally well on English tests as those students who did not speak Navajo (McCarty, 2008; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999; Pelgrim, 2009).

Another tribe that has arguably the most successful immersion program in history is the Hawaiian indigenous immersion programs. Before the 1950s, the Hawaiian language was the primary language used in business, politics, religion, education, and other areas. By the mid-twentieth century, all but a few hundred Native Hawaiians ceased

to speak their Native language. After the initial decimation of the Native Hawaiian culture in 1778 due to Captain James Hook's arrival, Hawaii was illegally taken over by the U.S. military in 1898, disregarding the Hawaiian monarchy. In 1959, Hawaii became the fiftieth state. After the takeover, there were widespread bans on Hawaiian language instruction, which further stifled language learning in the younger generation. It was not until the 1960s that the "Hawaiian renaissance" movement started to emerge (McCarty, 2003, p. 153). It was during this time that a new generation of Hawaiian speakers began to emerge, eventually becoming the teachers of Hawaiian today. In 1978, Hawaiian and English were granted the status of co-official languages of Hawaii. Today, children begin the Hawaiian immersion programs in pre-school and have the option of continuing their education up through grade 12 entirely in Hawaiian. The schools have not only yielded a whole new generation of Hawaiian speakers, but the students' academic achievements are successful as well. The program did have many setbacks to get where it is today, but it serves a model for other indigenous languages that are struggling (McCarty, 2003). As Tatsch and Drummer (2004) mention:

Immersion is the starting point, but exposure to the language is one of the keys of successful language transmission. Creating an environment where the master and apprentice can enjoy their time together is essential to continued progress. The program encourages teams to find activities to work on together. Some gather basket materials, prepare the materials, and weave together. Others cook with each other or go on walks to identify plants and animals. The time we spend with our elders is what creates the memories we all hold dear. The creation of those memories will bring you back to your language when you are not with the master. Opportunities for immersion are the things we do every day. The mundane tasks of laundry or shopping or taking care of the house can all be accomplished within the language. (p. 14)

### *Tips for Successful Language Revitalization*

Preserving and revitalizing a Native language is challenging, but with a few basic tools and guidelines, tribes of different sizes have been able to initiate the process of keeping their language. As Linn et al. (1998) say, “A few dedicated individuals are more important than a hundred interested people” (p. 76). Knowing what the community and tribe needs in terms of language revitalization is crucial. The individuals must realize that what has worked for one tribe in the past will not necessarily work for another (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999). Even though there are specific steps used to incorporate language learning into tribal culture, there are five characteristics that all successful language programs share:

Intervening early in children’s lives; protecting the language from intrusions in English; blending authentic oral communication with academic content; validating the local culture and incorporating it into language instruction; and, making a strong commitment to involving teachers, children, parents, and elders in the language learning enterprise. (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999, para. 24)

There are also general steps tribes can follow to begin the revitalization process.

First, it is important to find a few tribal members that are concerned about the current state of the particular language. They need to be willing to spend some of their time and energy teaching and learning the language themselves. It is important to remember that there are often different dialects of a language, so a person must not assume that the way they speak the language is the only way (Linn et al., 1998).

Commitment to the venture is important and necessary to lay a good foundation for the language work (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999).

Second, the members of the team should attempt to persuade Native speakers of the language to join the group and help further the language (Linn et al., 1998). It is also

important for collaboration among groups inside and outside of the tribe. Collaboration between Natives and non-Natives, speakers and non-speakers, and school-based and community-based personnel is essential (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999).

Third, the group should make sure that there are basic supplies to accomplish the basic goals of either developing the language orally or enhancing written skills. The supplies may vary depending on the need of the tribe, but supplies could include paper, recording equipment, or dry-erase boards (Linn et al., 1998). It is important for the group to document whatever approaches and methods they use and use the appropriate technology to record anything for future use (Hale, 2000).

Fourth, the members of the language team should find a regular place to meet and speak the language often when the meetings are held. It is important to find a place where the speakers are comfortable and have minimal disruptions (Linn et al., 1998). It is also important to encourage the community to participate to any extent that they can (Hale, 2000).

Fifth, the group should set up a basic set of ground rules. Since the goal is fluency, it is important for all the group members to speak in the traditional Native language as much as possible. The group should also understand that learning the words individually does not help with fluency as much as learning phrases or sentences (Linn et al., 1998).

Sixth, remember to set aside time to review the things that were mentioned and learned. Have a discussion on what works and what does not work so that each language learning session maximizes the time available (Linn et al., 1998). Check documented material for accuracy (Hale, 2000).



Finally, do all things that involve the immersion experience together. From the planning to the implementation of the program, make sure all team members feel valued and heard (Linn et al., 1998). Collaboration is the key to success in terms of language revitalization even it means working through differences in opinion (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999).

#### *Other Language Revitalization and Preservation Programs*

There are many ways in which a language can be preserved or revitalized. Immersion is one technique, but other tribes are utilizing other methods to help further their language.

One of the larger scale programs, known as the Learning Lodge Institute, is an organization comprised of seven Montana tribal colleges. It helps direct and develop language programs to meet the needs of the individual tribes. They meet periodically to discuss progress and any necessary changes that need to be made in the programs. A Culture Leadership Program has been established by the Salish and Kootenai tribes to give language learners a more intense and culturally-based approach to language learning. The students are taught traditional cultural history and their Native language by an experienced elder. These programs often last a year or more and encompass learning about all aspects of tribal life (Boyer, 2007).

Another organization, the Kiwat Hasinay Foundation, is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the Caddo language, has digitized and archived old song and language recordings. They have held classes and have created a bilingual children's storybook and phrasebook for daily use (Anderton, 2007).

An important program that has been created through the AICLS is called the Breath of Life program. Too often, there are no speakers of a tribal language. For the Breath of Life workshop, Native Californians attend to find information and documentation of their languages. The tribal members “learn to read the materials and do fundamental grammatical analysis, and to extract ‘useful language’ from the materials for purposes of language revitalization” (Hinton, 2003b, p. 45). The goals of the Breath of Life workshops are to give tribal members the tools to learn their language if their language is no longer spoken. The workshops, through the University of California at Berkeley, have essentially four goals:

- (a) To guide participants to the university resources available for their use;
- (b) To help the participants identify and locate the published and unpublished notes and audiotapes made by linguists and anthropologists on their languages;
- (c) for participants to learn the fundamentals of linguistic analysis, including how to read phonetic writing; and
- (d) for participants to learn ways they can use linguistic materials and publications to create materials for language restoration. (Miranda, 2008, p. 14)

There has been much success with the Breath of Life program for various tribes around California. Miranda (2008), who attended the Breath of Life conference, discusses her experience:

In the course of seven days, I heard California Indians using their languages to speak prayers, sing songs, create original poems and stories, retell oral histories, croon lullabies, make jokes, and invent picture books or family scrapbooks. One woman even reveled in finding an expression of extreme displeasure in a colloquial phrase! I realized later that virtually every aspect of culture was present: religion, music, oral and written literatures, linguistic play...Don't try telling a Breath of Life participant that our cultures are dead. (p. 16)

Other language preservation programs such as the Circle of Life program help California tribal members document their language by recording their elders discussing the language and culture of the tribe through video (Hinton, 1998).

Although there are several options for language preservation, it is important to realize that tribes have different needs. For the language program to be successful, it needs to be something that the tribe can use on a daily basis.

### *Technological Attempts at Language Preservation*

Although tribal languages are historically passed down orally, there are technological attempts that are used to capture the stories and history of a particular language. Although relying on the elders is the traditional way to learn languages, there are new ideas to help record the delicate history and words of language while preserving it with today's technology (Owings, 2008). Kalish (2005) discusses:

Since Tribes are at this time focused more on speaking than on writing, these results are highly positive. The fact that context presentation in a technological format is highly effective should encourage the Tribes who have few fluent speakers, for the use of technology provides a way of making Elders' skill available to a much larger group than would be possible in one-on-one situations. (p. 201)

For example, the Tribal Digital Village (TDV) project is a program in California that provides tribes with electronic equipment and services such as computers, video cameras, tape recorders, and internet access. Through the TDV program, languages can be put online for learning and through secure access, the tribal members can access the information. With the help of a Hewlett-Packard grant in 1999, tribal people have access to training programs that help utilize the technology. The goal of TDV is to connect tribes to other tribes in the hope that through collaboration, different tribes' histories and languages may be preserved (Tells His Name, 2004).

The ILI also employs a variety of technological advances to help with language preservation. According to Toensing (2007):

The belief that a language is not a living language unless it is spoken drives the ILI's goal to help create speakers of Native languages. And, in the belief that computers are excellent language teaching tools, the institute has developed easy-to-use technology to facilitate community-based language revitalization initiatives, working with Native communities, organizations and individuals, and at the same time promoting public awareness of the importance of regenerating indigenous languages. (para. 4)

One of ILI's innovations includes Native-language keyboards, called the Languagegeek Native Keyboard and Font. The keyboard includes software that is compatible with Microsoft Word and Publisher, and it can be programmed for different languages which streamlines typing (Toensing, 2007; Wallace, 2009). The keyboards combined with the programs allow the tribal members to create illustrated histories and stories using their language. The ILI also makes its technology available on the road. Three-day intensive workshops are held around the country where participants learn to use the technology and are able to take it home to their particular tribe to further language learning and teaching (Toensing, 2007).

Although technology has its advantages for language preservation and revitalization, it is clear that children are not speaking the language in the home. Krauss (1998) mentions how "Children cannot produce the ancestral language; they can only reproduce it" (p. 18). Technology can help bridge the gap between traditional learning and the needs of today's tribes.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Beder (1989) suggests that adult education "exists as a field of practice and inquiry today because it serves a vital social function" (p. 38). Although the general principles of adult education are important to recognize in this study, the concepts of

constructivism and cognitive apprenticeships are also valuable when examining the practices of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project (see Figure 1).

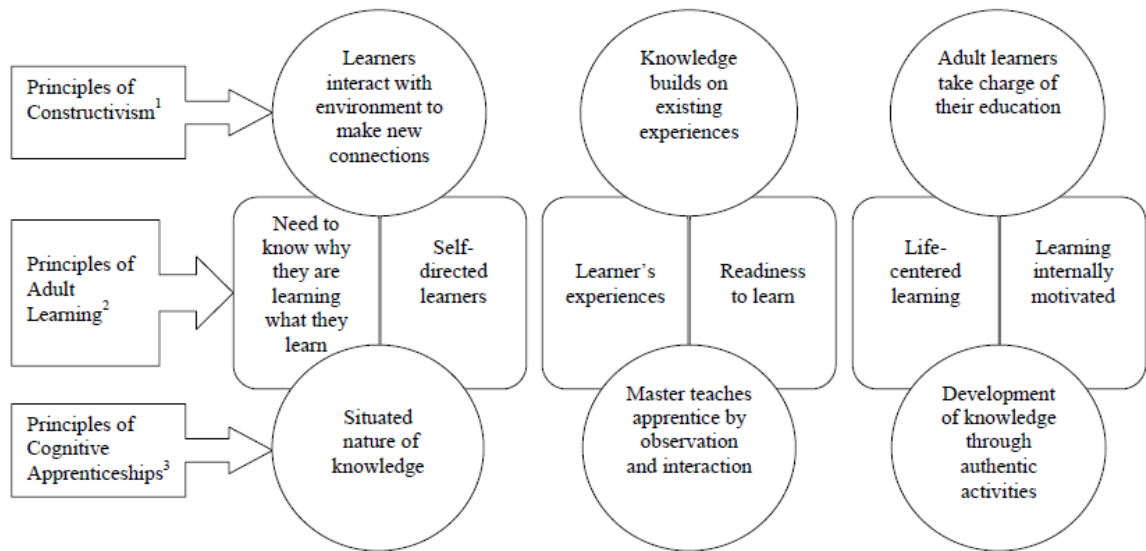


Figure 1. Model of the theoretical framework for researching the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

<sup>1</sup> (Hein, 1991; Hoover, 1996; Huang, 2002; Thanasoulas, 2001)

<sup>2</sup> (Kerka, 1997; Knowles, 1973; Lindeman, 1926; Merriam & Brocket, 1997)

<sup>3</sup> (Anderson, 2000; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Collins et al., 1987; Edmondson, 2006; Ghefaili, 2003; Wilson & Cole, 1991)

### *Constructivism*

The constructivist theory falls within Knowles' principles of adult education. The theories of andragogy and constructivism relate because they involve the learners taking charge of their education (Huang, 2002; Thanasoulas, 2001). The constructivist theory, originally conceptualized by Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, states that learners can actively learn and build new sets of knowledge based on prior knowledge that they have. The role of the instructor also changes from that of a teacher of knowledge to the facilitator of knowledge (Hoover, 1996; Huang, 2002). In the constructivist theory the focus is on the learner and not the facilitator. The learners interact with their environment

directly and in turn are able to relate to that environment and establish new and meaningful connections to new knowledge (Hein, 1991; Hoover, 1996; Thanasoulas, 2001).

Constructivism also relates to Knowles' principles of adult education because for both theories to be effective, learning should take place outside the traditional classroom setting. New knowledge is built by immersing the adult learning in real-life situations so that new knowledge can be constructed (Hoover, 1996; Huang, 2002). Huang (2002) suggests that "constructivist theory emphasizes that learning should be authentic, and that learning needs to meet real life experiences" (p. 33). In the case of the traditional master-apprentice program model, almost all of the learning by the apprentices takes place outside of the classroom. The apprentices build upon their existing knowledge by adding another language to what they already know, therefore constructing new knowledge and helping them learn the language "in situations where normal language transmission across generations no longer exists" (Hinton, 2003b, p. 45).

### *Principles of Adult Learning*

Adult education teaching and learning techniques that are utilized in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project stem from an adult education framework explained by Malcolm Knowles, who pioneered the concept of andragogy. Andragogy refers to the way adults learn (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Since the adult learner learns in ways different from younger learners, their expectations of the learning process are different from that of younger learners. The andragogical methods of learning are based on a set of assumptions about the adult learner. According to Knowles (Kerka, 1997; Knowles, 1973; Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam & Brockett, 1997), the first assumption explains

that adult learners need to know why they are learning the material that is presented to them. Adults are more likely to retain newly-learned ideas that they feel they need to know for a certain reason. Second, adults are generally responsible for their own decisions, so the practice of being a self-directed learner is important. Third, the role of the learners' experiences becomes important for the educator to acknowledge. Adult learners accumulate experiences over many years, so the ability of the educator to introduce new ideas to the learner becomes a challenge because biases are already established. Fourth, adults with a readiness to learn are able to learn more effectively because being willing to learn helps them cope with daily life situations. The fifth assumption for adult learning explains how an adult's orientation to learning is life-centered, meaning adults learn more effectively when what they are learning can be correlated to real-life situations. The final assumption Knowles makes about adult learning involves the learners' motivation. Adult learners are motivated to continue lifelong learning for a variety of reasons, but internal motivators play an important role in continuing adult learning (Knowles, 1973; Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam & Brockett, 1997).

By learning their Native language through the Euchee/Language Project, the apprentices utilize all of Knowles' principles of adult education. The apprentices know that they must learn their tribal language so their heritage and culture can be passed down to future generations. The apprentices are willing to bring their experiences to the program and learn in a group environment with the elders while improving their self-esteem and the feeling of connectedness within their tribe.

### *Cognitive Apprenticeships*

It is from the constructivist point of view that the idea of a cognitive apprenticeship emerges. There are many characteristics of cognitive apprenticeships that relate to the traditional master-apprentice model and the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. Ghefaili (2003) states that useable knowledge is obtained in learning environments with the following characteristics: “Authentic context that allows for the natural complexity of the real world; authentic activities; multiple roles and perspectives; and collaboration to support the cooperative construction of knowledge” (p. 2). The idea of a cognitive apprenticeship refers to the “situated nature of knowledge” (Brown et al., 1989). Cognitive apprenticeships are based on the development of new knowledge through continuing authentic activity that enables students to learn new activities. In the case of the traditional master-apprentice program, a new language is learned through real-life situations, such as cultural activities and social interaction (Brown et al., 1989; Wilson & Cole, 1991). Although the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project is a modified version using simulated real-life situations, methods within the learning sessions focus on learning items, objects, and phrases from daily life by using social interaction.

The idea of a cognitive apprenticeship also represents a process where a master of a skill teaches that skill to an apprentice. The theory states that masters of a skill can often fail to account for the fact that the traditional processes involved in teaching complex skills to beginning learners can be ineffective (Edmondson, 2006). The cognitive apprenticeships, according to Collins et al. (1987), “are designed, among other things, to bring these tacit processes into the open, where students can observe, enact, and practice them with help from the teacher...” (p. 4). This ideology parallels the concept of



the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project since the apprentices learn in a natural environment from active observation and participation.

The cognitive apprenticeships support three stages of skill acquisition: the cognitive stage, the associative stage, and the autonomous stage. In the first stage, learners begin to develop an understanding of the skill, in this case, language learning. In the associative stage, many of the mistakes and misinterpretations from the cognitive stage are found and corrected while critical components of the skill are strengthened. In the final stage, the learner begins to refine their skill and use it on an expert level (Anderson, 2000). Part of functioning on an expert level might include using the activity being taught in real-world situations (Edmondson, 2006; Wilson & Cole, 1991). The nature of the traditional master-apprentice program encompasses all of these levels of expertise as the apprentices learn from the masters. Using the Chickasaw (2010) example earlier, the goal of their program is to develop 10 fluent Chickasaw speakers within an 18-24 month period. To learn the new language, the apprentices will most likely go through all three cognitive apprenticeship skill acquisition stages to reach a point where they are fluent in the Chickasaw language. For the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the apprentices have ongoing exposure to language patterns and fully fluent masters so over time fluency in the language develops.

### **Summary**

Although the Euchee/Yuchi tribe is not federally recognized, they have historically faced many of the same issues that other tribes have faced. The Euchee/Yuchi communities are nestled within the Creek Nation, but they remain independent and have their own language (Buchner, 1998; Linn et al., 1998). Their language isolate is unique in

that it is not related to any other language, but that can also be a problem when the language is so close to becoming extinct (Buchner, 1998). Luckily, there is a unified approach to saving the Yuchi language, and all members of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project are working towards the same goal of language preservation.

Historically, Native languages throughout this country have been marginalized in an attempt to homogenize Native people into the majority culture (McCarty, 2003). Even though opinions vary within individual tribes as to the importance of language preservation, many tribes are creating bilingual education programs to increase linguistic diversity within the younger generation of tribal members (Hinton, 2003b; Yamamoto et al., 2008). The question becomes how to best preserve the languages after decades of missionaries, boarding schools, enforced assimilation, politics, and government oppression.

The master-apprentice program is one successful movement that has been created to combat the language revitalization and preservation issue. By putting master language speakers and apprentices together in an immersion experience, the hope is that a new generation of Native speakers will emerge (Hinton, 1998; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999; Ross, 2003). Researchers have shown that when Native people have knowledge and use of their Native languages, their cultural pride and identity is higher and they feel a sense of belonging to the tribe (McCarty, 2008; Yamamoto et al., 2008). Native people can distinguish themselves from the dominant culture and effective communication between generations becomes possible when the community becomes involved (Ashburn, 2007; Boyer, 2000; Hale, 2000). There are other solutions like the development of writing systems and written materials that are being developed in addition to the master-

apprentice program that will help tribes preserve their languages further (Hinton, 1998; McCarty, 2008; Wallace, 2009). Technological attempts are also being made to preserve language digitally to help bridge the gap between the generations (Owings, 2008).

Unfortunately, the traditionally oral ways of passing down a language are not as frequent, so Native elders and youth must come up with creative ways to pass down the language (Fuller, 1993). Native Americans today face the challenge of blending different perspectives on the importance of language preservation with the fact that elders and youth learn and teach in different ways (McCarty et al., 2006b).

Even though language preservation and revitalization will always be an issue for Native tribes that are at risk of losing their language, there are tools and guidelines that can be used to help slow or halt the language loss (Linn et al., 1998). Knowing what each community needs is essential as each community will have different language learning needs. Fluent Native speakers must be persuaded to participate actively in language programs and supplies should be provided to accomplish this. Finding a location for the language classes to take place is essential so that immersion experiences can flourish (Linn et al., 1998). Even though the task of language preservation and revitalization is immense, Native tribes can effectively save their languages with planning and a commitment from the people who speak it.

## **Chapter Three**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research has many different definitions. Rossman and Rallis (2003) mention:

Qualitative research begins with questions; its ultimate purpose is learning. To inform questions, the researcher collects data – the basic units or building blocks of information. Data are images, sounds, words, and numbers. When data are grouped into patterns, they become information. When information is put to use or applied, it becomes knowledge. (p. 4)

Qualitative researchers use what they see, hear, and experience to get answers to their questions in the real world (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). On a deeper level, qualitative research is a way to explore and understand the meanings of people or problems (Creswell, 2009). Regardless of the definition of qualitative research, the purpose of this study was to seek answers using the realm of human experience to answer essential questions. Through the lens of phenomenological research, I used the methods put forth by Clark Moustakas to establish the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

#### **Focus of the Study**

The focus of this phenomenological inquiry was to discover the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The tribal members utilize the program as an adult-centered language preservation method for preserving and revitalizing their endangered Native language.

#### **Research Design**

Methods of inquiry were based on phenomenological reflection of individual experiences with masters and apprentices within the learning group as an exploration of

the human experience as it related to participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. As Van Manen (1990) mentions, “Phenomenological research aims at establishing a renewed contact with original experience” (p. 31). Since the essence of Euchee/Yuchi Language Project has been observed and studied on a limited basis, the phenomenological method was an effective way to gain a perspective on the lived experiences of the people involved in the program (AICLS, 2010). Van Manen (1990) further describes phenomenology:

In other words, phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning of structures, of lived experience. A universal essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experience. (p. 10)

The phenomenological research techniques put forth by Clark Moustakas were used. The first step involved the researcher setting aside, to the best of her ability, any preconceived notions about the phenomenon at hand. By doing this, the researcher was theoretically more able to fully understand the experience from the participant’s point of view. In the second step of Moustakas’ process, the researcher analyzed every significant statement that is relevant to the topic. Each statement was given equal value and the researcher then wrote a structural description of the experience after a textural description was written. The structural description investigated how the phenomenon was experienced and looked at alternate meanings and perspectives. After the structural description, the imaginative variation process was used to review different perspectives. The third step was the phenomenological data analysis process where the researcher grouped ideas and concepts into similar groups or clusters (themes). Repetitive or overlapping statements were deleted. In general, the goal was to reduce the meanings of the experiences to their essential components and structure (Moustakas, 1994).

For the research, a mixture of interviews, face-to-face interactions, and observations were used to gain perspective on the human experience during the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project language classes. Because of these various research methods, a complete picture of the lived-experience of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project emerged.

### **Site and Sample Selection**

A phenomenological study of the masters and apprentices in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project in Oklahoma was conducted to understand the essence of the human experience as it relates to the program. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for the study. There were four masters and four apprentices interviewed for the initial interviews. There were three masters and three apprentices interviewed for the follow-up interviews. The number of participants in the observation sessions varied each week, but there was always more than one master and one apprentice for each observation period.

The subjects included in the study are current participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. Participants were interviewed and observed to gain a more complete picture of the experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

### **Ethics**

There are many ethical issues researchers must consider when conducting a qualitative study: trustworthiness of the study, value of the work, the rigor of the study, and usefulness of the study. Before researchers can examine specific ethical considerations of a study, they must consider the theory behind ethical behavior (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Some of the issues qualitative researchers encounter are: the benefit versus risk factor of the participants, confidentiality, and informed consent of

participants (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) mentions that “to gain support from participants, a qualitative researcher conveys to participants that they are participating in the study, explains the purpose of the study, and does not engage in deception about the nature of the study” (pp. 141-142).

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), “A researcher’s moral principles—what you consider to be *good* or *bad*, *right* or *wrong*—define your ethics and thus, your character, which guides your actions” (p. 71). Although intuition plays an important role in determining what is ethical conduct, researchers can use a set of theories to help determine if a study is ethical. The set of theories can help researchers decide what decisions are right and wrong. The theories of ethics encompass several categories: consequences, rights and responsibilities, social justice, and ethical care. When considering the ethic of consequence, the researcher must consider the rightness or wrongness of an action by asking what happens as a result of the action being taken. In general, the greatest good for the greatest number of people should be the principle that guides the research. Rossman and Rallis (2003) mention how the ethic of rights and responsibilities “considers the fundamental rights of an individual and the corresponding obligations (or responsibilities) that individuals have to protect those rights” (p. 71). The ethic of rights and responsibilities is important because it states that “all people have fundamental rights that may not be denied, even for the greatest good for the greatest number” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 71). When the researcher considers the ethic of social justice, the principles of impartiality and fairness are emphasized. In general, the ethic of social justice states that “differentiated treatment cannot be based on arbitrary characteristics” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 72). The final theory of ethics is the ethic of

care. Rossman and Rallis (2003) mention how the ethic of care “addresses the effect any action is likely to have on human relationships in the specific context of a given dilemma” (p. 72). A researcher should never exploit the people in the study for their personal advantage. Ethical dilemmas are not meant to be solvable; therefore, researchers must proceed through each situation using “intuition, personal values, standards within the profession, and moral principles” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 72).

Along with using ethical theories to determine if a study is ethical, researchers must consider the trustworthiness of the study, the value of the work, the rigor of the study, and the usefulness of the study. When determining if a study is trustworthy, researchers consider whether it conforms to the standards for acceptable and competent practice and whether the study meets the standards for ethical conduct. “Put simply, an unethical study is not a trustworthy study” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 63). One important component of trust is to maintain the confidentiality of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Researchers must also consider the truth value of the study. In qualitative research, there is no one absolute truth, so it is the responsibility of the researcher to pursue multiple perspectives about the phenomenon. Researchers understand that meaning is constructed while they observe the participants in daily life, so it is the researchers’ responsibility to make sure they “render an account of participants’ worldviews as honestly and fully as possible” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 65). To help with the truth value, it is important for researchers to gather data over a period of time rather than once. Researchers should also share their interpretations of the data with the participants and triangulate their research with other sources (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Third, researchers must consider if the study was rigorously conducted. For



a quantitative study, it means the results are replicable, but for a qualitative study, replicability is not possible due to the changing social world. To help determine rigor in a qualitative study, researchers must make their position clear at the beginning of the study and utilize multiple methods for gathering data, “therefore enhancing the complexity of what you learn in the field” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 67). The final component researchers must consider is the usefulness of the study. Rossman and Rallis (2003) mention:

To establish usefulness of a study, provide complete descriptions of your theoretical and methodological orientation and the process. Also provide thick, rich description of what you have learned. This description should include as much detail about the context as feasible. (p. 68)

Qualitative researchers have a responsibility to the participants in the study to ensure they are treated in an ethical manner. Although there are not often easy solutions for issues researchers encounter in the field, by using intuition, rules and standards, and personal values, researchers can think through any ethical dilemma that may arise (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Utilizing the methods and theories outlined by Rossman and Rallis, this study was conducted with the highest code of ethics.

### **Research Strategy**

Since the study utilized qualitative research methods, evaluation of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project consisted of initial interviews, observation sessions, and follow-up interviews. Van Manen (1990) mentions:

Rather than observing subjects through one-way mirrors, or by means of observational schemata and checklists that function symbolically not unlike one-way mirrors, the human science researcher tries to enter the lifeworld of the persons whose experiences are relevant to the study material for his or her research project. The best way to enter a person’s lifeworld is to participate in it. (pp. 68-69)

A set of open-ended questions was developed for the interview portions of the study to guide the interviews. Person-to-person interviews were audio-recorded for any common themes and feelings about the experiences. There were also observation sessions where the masters and apprentices were observed in their daily language session.

During the initial and follow-up interviews, open-ended questions were asked from an interview guide that promoted in-depth responses about the participants' experiences in life and in the program. These interviews helped construct a detailed picture of the lived experience of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project by recording their perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Data consisted of direct quotations and explanations of context (Patton, 2002). Transcriptions were checked by interviewees.

As part of the phenomenological interview protocol, there were initial and follow-up interviews for the masters (see Appendix A) and the apprentices (see Appendix B). The initial interviews inquired about the focused life history of the participant, and the follow-up interviews inquired about the details of the experience and a reflection of the meaning for each participant (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The guided questions that were asked during the initial interview with the masters were:

1. What was your experience like growing up as it relates to learning your language?
2. Would you talk about any experiences throughout your life that either encouraged or discouraged language learning?
3. Would you talk about the importance of the Euchee/Yuchi language being passed on to younger generations?

4. What lessons have the importance of language learning taught you throughout your life?
5. What do you believe others in the community view the importance of preserving the Euchee/Yuchi language?
6. What is your role in teaching the language to younger generations?

The guided questions that were asked during the follow-up interview with the masters were:

1. What does being a master in the master-apprentice group mean to you?
2. How does participating in the master-apprentice group affect other people in your life?
3. What feelings are generated when you participate in the master-apprentice group?
4. Given what you have said about your life before you were a participant in the master-apprentice group, how do you understand the role of the master-apprentice program and language preservation in your life?
5. Have you shared all that is significant as it relates to your experience in the master-apprentice group?
6. What have you learned from teaching the younger generation?

The guided questions that were asked during the initial interview with the apprentices were:

1. What was your experience like growing up as it relates to learning your language?
2. Would you talk about any experiences throughout your life that either encouraged or discouraged language learning?

3. Would you talk about the importance of the Euchee/Yuchi language being passed on to younger generations?
4. What lessons have the importance of language learning taught you throughout your life?
5. What do you believe others in the community view the importance of preserving the Euchee/Yuchi language?
6. What is your role in teaching the language to the younger generation?

The guided questions that were asked during the follow-up interview with the apprentices were:

1. What does being an apprentice in the master-apprentice group mean to you?
2. How does participating in the master-apprentice group affect other people in your life?
3. What feelings are generated when you participate in the master-apprentice group?
4. Given what you have said about your life before you were a participant in the master-apprentice group, how do you understand the role of the master-apprentice program and language preservation in your life?
5. Have you shared all that is significant as it relates to your experience in the master-apprentice group?
6. What have you learned from teaching the younger generation?

During the observation sessions, the aspects of observable human experience were recorded as field notes using rich and detailed descriptions. The context in which the observations were made were also recorded (Patton, 2002). While observing in the field, data included “fieldwork descriptions of activities, behaviors, actions,

conversations, interpersonal interactions, organizational or community processes, or any other aspect of observable human experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 4). During my time as an observer, I participated silently. The Field Observation Form in Appendix C guided my observational practices.

There were initial interviews before the observation sessions to learn proper introductory perspectives for the participants. After the initial interviews and observation sessions, follow-up interviews were conducted for clarification. Transcribed interviews were member checked.

Field notes and impressions were recorded by hand or computer during the observation sessions, and an audio recorder was used for the interviews. The interviews were transcribed from the audio recordings. Notes of any feelings or themes that arose during the actual observations and the physical interviews were hand or computer recorded. Content (notes on the setting) and reflective notes (notes on the feelings) were also recorded during the observation sessions (Weinberg, n.d.).

### **Data Collection**

To gain access to the study population, it was best to have someone familiar with the project make the introduction or someone who was already in an existing relationship with the people in the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Since the group’s relationship to the researcher was unfamiliar, the researcher utilized the contact name given by Dr. Mary Linn at the University of Oklahoma. She is currently working with the Euchee/Yuchi tribe on a Euchee/Yuchi language dictionary. Dr. Richard Grounds is the director of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project and was the gatekeeper with regard to the interactions with participants in the program. The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project elder session

meets each weekday morning for a two-hour session, which was where the observation sessions took place. The study included private, individual interview times with the masters and apprentices who were participating. Early in the research, I attended many of these language sessions without recording observational data to establish a comfortable presence within the group.

Audio recorders were used to record the individual initial and follow-up interviews. The four masters that were interviewed were coded using the pseudonyms Julie, Dona, John, and Sophia. The four apprentices that were interviewed were coded Lily, Leo, Thomas, and Joseph. For the interviews for all of the masters and apprentices, the coding indicated which master/apprentice was being interviewed and whether it was the initial or follow-up interview.

During the observation sessions with the language group during their daily session, notes were hand or computer recorded using the Field Observation Form in Appendix C as a template. The same members participated in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project session each day. The codes given to each participant remained constant throughout the observation and interview sessions.

### **Data Analysis**

Moustakas (1994) suggests that “evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first-person reports of life experiences” (p. 84). To truly understand the lived experience of a situation, Moustakas recommends going through several steps to understand then analyze data. In Moustakas’ (1994) description, the first process is called Phenomenological Reduction and consists of three steps. After the Phenomenological

Reduction phase, the Imaginative Variation phase and the Synthesis phases are used to understand data in a phenomenological study.

Before data analysis began, the researcher went through several stages to understand the data. The first stage of the Phenomenological Reduction phase is a process referred to as the Epoche. In the Epoche or bracketing phase, the researcher set aside any judgments, biases, or preconceived notions about the situation being studied. The process is seen as a way to set aside previous knowledge so that new knowledge about the situation can be acquired (Moustakas, 1994).

The second phase of Phenomenological Reduction is the “horizontalization” phase (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). When researchers horizontalize, each phenomenon is seen as having equal value so the researcher can discover its nature and essence. For this study, all data gathered that was not relevant to the topic was then discarded. From the “horizontalized” statements, the meanings were clustered into similar themes and repetitive statements were removed. The clustered themes were then used to develop textural descriptions of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). From the rough transcripts of the interviews, two tables were generated to begin to illustrate themes from the initial and follow-up interviews. The themes were then clustered and examined so common themes could emerge. From the raw observational data, a table was generated to begin to illustrate themes from the observation sessions.

The final phase of the Phenomenological Reduction process is to construct a complete textural description of the experience being studied. Moustakas (1994) explains:

Such a description, beginning with Epoche and going through a process of returning to the thing itself, in a state of openness and freedom, facilitates clear

seeing, makes possible identity, and encourages the looking again and again that leads to deeper layers of meaning (p. 96).

After the Phenomenological Reduction phase, Moustakas (1994) describes the Imaginative Variation phase. In this phase, the researcher sought “possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (p. 97). For this study, the purpose was to describe why the phenomenon is the way it is by looking at the underlying structural descriptions that were obtained in the Phenomenological Reduction.

The final phase of a phenomenological study is the Synthesis phase. This phase is “the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). The Synthesis phase represents a culmination of all of the work and interpretations gathered throughout the course of the study. From the rough tables generated by the raw data from the initial interviews, follow-up interviews, and observation sessions in this study, more concise tables were deduced and created to determine some of the broad themes that could be found throughout the information gathered.

There are also six stages that Bednall (2006) describes as part of the data analysis component in a phenomenological study. Bednall’s stages are more concrete in their methodology, so a combination of Moustakas’ and Bednall’s methods were used for this study. Bednall’s data analysis stages, called activated bracketing, have six stages for data interpretation. In stage one, each interview transcript was read repeatedly to flag items that might be answers to the original research questions. Possible themes were



highlighted in the rough transcripts of the initial and follow-up interviews. In stage two, the flagged items were constituted into a list to be clustered into topics of significance. In stage three, thematic linkages were established so common themes could be identified and clustered by coding them as major issues relevant to the study. Rough tables were generated for the initial interviews, follow-up interviews, and observation sessions to determine major themes or issues relevant to the study. In stage four, the flagged items were examined for meaning. At this stage, thoughts based on the researcher's past experiences and other hypothetical ideas about the research were inserted as memoranda to the major issues. In stage five, the Epoche/bracketing phase reached its climax. Up to this point, the information gathered was kept at arm's length as to not allow the researcher's own interpretations to contaminate the data. During the sixth stage, the information was integrated and prepared for the dissertation. Direct quotes were examined to tie textural and structural descriptions together to gain an accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied (Bednall, 2006). From the rough tables, more streamlined tables were generated for the dissertation to illustrate broad themes that were discovered during the research.

### **Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers often encounter issues of trust when conducting a study. Rossman and Rallis (2003) mention how "qualitative research involves building and sustaining relationships with people" (p. 77). Not only do researchers have to consider how they will gain access to their study population, they have to consider how they will maintain trust, ensure confidentiality, sustain relationships, and build a profile of the group they are studying. On one hand, the researcher is supposed to be a non-biased

participant, but in reality the researcher in a qualitative study becomes embedded in people's stories, even though the "interest is conditional and bounded" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 78).

One of the best ways a qualitative researcher can maintain trust is by using the principles of good practice. Many decisions are made over the course of a research study. Rossman and Rallis (2003) mention how "the challenge here is negotiating a relationship that is ethical, sensitive, and as natural as possible, given its temporary and artificial nature" (p. 165). Rossman and Rallis (2003) describe the principles of good practice:

1. Being comfortable with ambiguity,
2. Having the capacity to make reasonable decisions and articulate the logic behind those decisions,
3. Have interpersonal skills and a high level of emotional sensitivity,
4. Having ethical sensitivity of potential consequences to the individuals or groups in the study,
5. Possessing political sensitivity,
6. Utilizing self-discipline and perseverance, and
7. Understanding when to bring closure. (p. 84)

#### *Preparation*

Moustakas states (1994), "The first challenge of the researcher, in preparing to conduct a phenomenological investigation, is to arrive at a topic and question that have both social meaning and personal significance" (p. 104).

As qualitative researchers enter the field of study, they must realize that access to the group they are studying is an ongoing process of building meaningful relationships. The entrance process can take a short amount of time in some studies and a longer amount of time in others, but care must be taken in both cases. There are many strategies that researchers use to gain access to the group they are studying, so researchers must "draw on all their interpersonal resources and skills as well as their theoretical

understanding of social relationships and organizations” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 148).

By utilizing the proper preparation, the researcher can usually gain access to the group they are studying. Some of the preparatory methods in this study included meeting the gatekeeper and identifying potential obstacles. Dr. Grounds’ role as gatekeeper and director of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project was crucial to give the researcher access to the participants in this study. Once the initial contact with the participants was made, relationships continued to build on the premise of mutual respect and understanding. When the researcher had clearly constructed purpose and strategy for the study, entry into the group being studied became possible. The researcher had a clear purpose and was able to relay that purpose to the participants since it influenced the way the researcher was seen by the participants. Different participants would view the researcher in different ways, so it was important to use interpersonal skills to shape the way the participants saw the researcher and her purpose for being there (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

#### *Intended Involvement*

The intended involvement of the researcher was important to establish with the participants in the study. To determine the level of involvement, researchers often consider two things: how involved they will be in the setting and with the participants, and how they should portray their involvement to the participants in the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

For researchers to determine their level of involvement, they must decide what participatory role they want to play in the study. There are varying degrees of participation that are placed on a continuum of involvement. The degrees range from

spectator to limited participation to immersion to co-participation. Even though being a spectator is on the left side of the spectrum, the researchers that fall into this category are still thought to be fully engaged in the environment around them (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). For this study, participation ranged from spectator (observations of the language class) to immersion (participant interviews).

The other issue researchers must consider is how they portray their involvement to the participants in the study. For this issue, the continuum ranges from overt involvement to semi-overt involvement to covert involvement. Overt involvement happens when the participants in the study know research is happening and who the researcher is. Semi-overt involvement is somewhat different in that the researcher's role is known by some of the members in the group but not by everyone. On the opposite end of the spectrum, covert involvement describes how participants do not know that research is happening and that there is a researcher present (Patton, 1990).

For this study, all participants knew the full extent of the researcher's involvement and were fully aware of what was going on at all times. Practicing honesty was part of the principles of good practice which helped in building the ongoing relationships needed for this study.

### **Validation of Data**

There are many strategies that were used to assess the validity of this study. It is known that showing validity in quantitative research is not the same as showing validity in qualitative research. It is different from reliability in that this was a small study and the goal of the researcher was to check for the accuracy of the findings with the participants (Creswell, 2009).

### *Triangulation*

The first strategy that was used was based on the triangulation of data. The researcher triangulated different data from the different sources, in this case the masters and apprentices, and used the data to help themes emerge (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Themes emerged by comparing different things that participants said and did. The researcher was then able to see things from different perspectives (Creswell, 2007). By using triangulation, it helped the researcher “ensure that you have not studied only a fraction of the complexity that you seek to understand” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 69).

### *Member Checking*

The second strategy that was used was member checking. Creswell (2009) describes member checking:

Use member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate... This procedure can involve conducting a follow-up interview with participants in the study and providing an opportunity for them to comment on the findings. (p. 191)

Member checking is also known as participant validation. This method is helpful for “eliciting further information and with emerging analyses” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 69). Member checking helps to determine if any information is missing and helps increase the validity of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). For this study, the research findings were member checked by the masters and apprentices being studied. The section of the literature review that explains the history of the Euchee/Yuchi tribe was member checked by Dr. Richard Grounds, the director of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

### *Prolonged Engagement*

In qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to spend a significant amount of time in the field so they can grasp a more full and in-depth experience of phenomenon they are studying. Included in the concept of prolonged engagement are the aspects of “building trust with the participants, learning the culture, and checking for misinformation that stems from distortions introduced by the researcher or informants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 207). The longer the researcher is able to spend in the field, the more valid the study will be (Creswell, 2009). For this study, approximately six months were spent with the members of the Euchee/Yuchi tribe participating in the study. Since the study was phenomenological in nature, it was important to spend a sufficient amount of time with the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project participants so that not just a general snapshot was obtained of participation in the program, but a complete picture.

### *Use of Description*

The fourth strategy that was used was the use of rich, thick description to convey any findings from the study. With such a detailed description, the information gathered in the study can be examined by fellow researchers and readers to determine if it is transferable to different situations (Creswell, 2007). When researchers provide rich, thick descriptions, readers and fellow researchers can be transported to the setting and the results become more realistic; therefore, adding validity to the findings (Creswell, 2009). For this study, there were direct quotes, general comments and field notes, and interesting experiences noted to give the reader an enhanced picture of the participants’ experience in the program.

### *External Auditor*

The purpose of an external auditor is “to provide an objective assessment of the project throughout the process of research or at the conclusion of the study” (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). Prior to and during the research study, the chair of the dissertation committee, Dr. Bobbie Biggs, acted as external auditor, monitoring everything from a third-party perspective by providing an objective assessment of the goals and progress of the study. Dr. Biggs had no direct connection to the study.

## **Chapter Four**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Interviews, observations, personal notes, reflections, and direct quotes were gathered to gain a more complete picture of the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The coded data from the research field experiences are displayed in tables representing themes emerged from the raw data in the initial interviews, observation sessions, and the follow-up interviews.

#### **Initial Interviews**

There were eight participants who were interviewed for the initial interviews. For the masters, there were three females and one male all ranging in age from 80 to 90 years old. For the apprentices, there were three males and one female all ranging in age from 20 to 55 years old. For a theme to emerge, three of the four masters and three of the four apprentices needed to mention the item during the initial interview (see Table 1). Every person in the discussion section has been given a pseudonym which represents their given English name.

*Discussion of Question One: What was your experience like growing up  
as it relates to learning your language?*

The themes discovered among the masters for question one were that only Yuchi was spoken initially, the majority of them lived in a country setting as children, and they learned the language by listening to others. The literature reflects the validity of these themes because as Littlebear (2000b) mentions, Native people traditionally learned to speak their language by listening to other speakers. Spoken language is shown to be crucial in language preservation and the vitality of the language depends on individuals



Table 1

*Initial Interview Majority Emergent Themes*

Question	Master Themes	Apprentice Themes
1. What was your experience like growing up as it relates to your language?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only Yuchi spoken initially</li> <li>• Lived in country setting as children</li> <li>• Learned by listening to others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None spoke Yuchi initially</li> <li>• Did not live in country setting as children</li> <li>• Learned by listening to others</li> <li>• Exposure to Yuchi as children</li> </ul>
2. Would you talk about any experiences throughout your life that either encouraged or discouraged language learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not punished for speaking Yuchi</li> <li>• Yuchi spoken mainly in private as children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None attended boarding school</li> <li>• Encouraged to speak Yuchi</li> <li>• None spoke Yuchi at school</li> </ul>
3. Would you talk about the importance of the Euchee/Yuchi language being passed on to younger generations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth learning language is important</li> <li>• Their children were not taught Yuchi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth learning language is important</li> <li>• Expose children to language early in lives</li> <li>• Speak Yuchi in home to children</li> </ul>
4. What lessons have the importance of language learning taught you throughout your life?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate language into spiritual practices</li> <li>• Helps establish identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps establish identity</li> <li>• Incorporate language into spiritual practices</li> <li>• Enriches life</li> </ul>
5. What do you believe others in the community view the importance of preserving the Euchee/Yuchi language?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not think community views it as important</li> <li>• Community does not make time to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community is not supportive (time/difficulty of language)</li> <li>• Community should learn language</li> </ul>
6. What is your role in teaching the language to the younger generation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See themselves as teachers/consultants</li> <li>• Help with language when asked/needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See themselves as teachers/guides</li> <li>• Want to teach children as much as possible</li> </ul>

working to further the language (Yamamoto et al., 2008). Many of the masters in the study learned Yuchi as their first language when they were children, which historically, have validated the idea of the Yuchi language being a mother tongue language to the Euchee/Yuchi elders (Hinton, 2003b). Julie explained that “*Yuchi was our first language in our home and we never spoke any English.*” John mentioned “*I guess my mother*

*taught me how to use my language from day one. From the day I was born I guess she start talkin' to me in my Yuchi language."* Sophia mentioned that *"I was absorbing it because it was all that I heard."* Dona said:

*I learned to speak the Yuchi language just as soon as I could talk, I guess. That's all I ever knew was the...how to talk Yuchi. I never knew how to talk English until I had to start school, and I still didn't know how to talk English.*

The themes discovered among the apprentices for question one were that none of them spoke Yuchi as their first language, they did not live in a country setting as children, they learned by listening to others, and they had some exposure to Yuchi when they were children. According to Hinton (2003b), a Native language is no longer the first language taught to children. For the apprentices, members of their extended family spoke the Yuchi language, but they did not have continuous exposure to it in their daily lives. Joseph mentioned that *"as a child I would hear elders...on many occasions I was around people where I would hear the language. I didn't speak it myself, but I could...well, I knew some words, but I would be around it and hear it."* Lily said that *"I was an English speaker first, but I was exposed to Yuchi very early on and that gave me a strong foundation. In third grade, was when I started learning more intensively."* When Native language is not spoken in the home regularly, the children will not naturally acquire the language because the transmission from parent to child is unsuccessful (England, 2000). Although the apprentices had some exposure by listening, Euchee/Yuchi was not their first language.

*Discussion of Question Two: Would you talk about any experiences throughout your life that either encouraged or discouraged language learning?*

The themes discovered among the masters for question two were how none of the masters were physically punished for speaking the Euchee/Yuchi language at the different schools they attended, and the majority of the masters did speak Euchee/Yuchi in private and not in a school setting. This theme somewhat contradicts the literature because although two of the masters interviewed did attend Indian boarding schools, they were not punished as was usually the case at boarding schools (Ambler, 2000; McCarty, 2008). The schools the masters attended were English-only schools, but they were not punished for speaking their language. However they were encouraged to forget their language at school which does validate the literature (Toensing, 2007). Sophia mentioned:

*We went to a country school where there were a number of white children and of course when we were there, you know, English only (laughing). And so when we came home, you know, we were playing and speaking English and grandma was standing at the window listening. Finally she yelled at us and said 'you children will as long as you live in my house speak Yuchi only.'*

When asked if John spoke Yuchi only at home, he replied “*yeah, just at home.*” Dona talked about the experiences of other children in her boarding school by saying “*when they talked their language and they got caught for speaking in their language they would discipline them...they didn't want them to speak their language...then we talked English too and I guess that's why we never got caught.*”

The themes discovered for the apprentices for question two were that none of them attended boarding school, they were all encouraged to speak Yuchi, and none of them spoke Yuchi at school. According to McCarty et al. (2006a), some younger tribal

members are ashamed to speak their tribal language in front of other people because it is looked upon as stupid. When we talked about speaking Yuchi at school, Leo mentioned that “*mostly my whole life being I went to school that was kinda...it’s not racist, but there’s a lot of cowboys...I’ve always got teased. I didn’t get teased, they were just always doin’ that wowowowo (stereotypical Native call) you know, stuff like that.*” Lily mentioned how she was encouraged to speak Yuchi from a young age and said:

*I think the foundational experience would be my dad’s influence. He’s always encouraged the language for me and my brother. So I think that’s been the biggest influence in terms of my language development is my dad using the language with us and always encouraging us. When, I guess beginning in high school, I started to kind of be a little bit more recognized for speaking Yuchi in the outside world and that encouraged me.*

Encouragement is important because for the language to be successfully passed down, the elders must not ridicule the language learners but help actively save the language (Littlebear, 2000b). Any anger and frustration need to be replaced with compassion and understanding so to create an atmosphere of learning and not ridicule (Hale, 2000).

*Discussion of Question Three: Would you talk about the importance of the Euchee/Yuchi language being passed on to younger generations?*

The themes discovered for the masters for question three were that the youth learning the language is important to them, and their children were not taught Yuchi. The theme of the importance of the youth learning the language somewhat contradicted the literature that mentioned that some elders are in denial that their language is in decline whatsoever (Boyer, 2000; Krauss, 1998). The masters in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project are aware of the importance of language preservation and are aware that the language needs to be passed down to the next generation. As Julie mentioned:

*I said if you don't speak...if you don't try to speak that language now, you're not gonna speak it 'cause we're all older. At that time we were all in our seventies. I said our time is runnin' out. I said you have to learn it. You have to learn it now.*

John mentioned:

*Yeah, it's important...because it's just about to disappear. None of the young ones, except the ones around here have learned the language. We have to keep the language going...I guess because God gave us this language. We want to continue with it. There's only about four or five of us that know the language and speak the language. It's about to disappear.*

Some of the masters did not teach their children because they did not have a spouse that spoke the language. According to Fleming (2007), another reason parents do not teach their children the tribal language is that the parents are of two different tribal backgrounds. In the case of the masters, it might be two different backgrounds or tribes.

Usually English is spoken because that is the language that everyone can understand.

When asked if Sophia taught her sons the Yuchi language, she mentioned “*I perhaps didn't do that as well as I might have with my boys because I married a white man.*”

When asked if her children speak Yuchi, Julie replied:

*No, they don't. My son went to Haskell. We didn't have a regular Yuchi class going and he said 'oh I have nobody to speak to.' So he had to take a language, so he took Creek. His dad's Creek, so he took Creek. So he took the Creek language and he can speak the Creek language.*

The themes discovered for the apprentices for question three were that the youth learning the language is important, early exposure for the children is important, and speaking Yuchi in their homes to their children is crucial. The literature is somewhat contradictory in regard to youth interest in language learning. The literature is also somewhat contradictory to itself with regard to the level of interest of Native youth in language learning. According to White-Kaulaity (2007), younger Native Americans are not interested in hearing about past times or stories from the elders in their tribe. Leo

contradicted the literature by saying “*the way I see it is like my generation is the bridge for our kids to get over to the elders so they can live the old way.*” McCarty et al. (2006b) mentioned that the Native youth are deeply concerned about the status of Native languages today. The fact is there are ongoing studies to try and determine how important the issue of Native language transmission is to younger tribal members, and the level of interest will vary from person to person (McCarty et al., 2006b). All of the apprentices interviewed felt strongly about the importance of passing the language down to younger generations and speaking language actively to children in the home. Lily mentioned:

*I feel strongly about other children having that opportunity, you know as early as possible. I think it's the only way to keep our language alive is to start raising children in it again. You know, when I have my own kids, I plan to use as much Yuchi as I can with and, you know, not like teach them Yuchi, but just raise them in Yuchi and that's all they know so they don't have...feel...put upon like 'this is our Yuchi time and this is our other time.'*

Thomas commented about the importance of teaching the children:

*The importance is that, you know we'll...it'll still be alive. I figure now the young ones...the language that we teach 'em, you know, they'll have now and I mean, it's real cute and everything to watch 'em perform and do all this, but you know, it's not gonna be until they get older and they're gonna understand, you know, how to really make sentences and you know, carry on a conversation. I think it's important now so later on they'll remember now and then, you know, it'll kinda give 'em a little building block to grown on.*

With the agreement among the apprentices of the importance of teaching children in the home, their ideals support the literature that states that language spoken actively in the home makes the likelihood of successful transmission more probable (England, 2000). As Yamamoto et al. (2008) mention, the spoken word is crucial to language preservation.

*Discussion of Question Four: What lessons have the importance of language learning taught you throughout your life?*

The themes discovered for the masters for question four were that they incorporate their language into their spiritual practices, and their language helps establish who they are as Euchee/Yuchi people. According to McCarty (2008), the languages help establish identity and pride and help connect the individual to their tribe and their heritage. Native people become proud of their individual tribal heritage when they know their language (McCarty, 2003). Languages within each tribe make them unique and help describe where they came from, who they were, and where they are going (McCarty et al., 2006a; Umbhau, 2009). Julie mentioned that learning the Yuchi language “*is really important because you know who you are. Even though we’re enrolled as Creeks, we’re not Creeks.*” In terms of spirituality, one of the ways tribes distinguish themselves is by continuing to have tribal meetings and ceremonies in their language (Ashburn, 2007).

When talking to Julie about language and spirituality, she mentioned that:

*I’m gonna praise You in my language because You gave me that. I told our congregation so many times that when I sing the Yuchi songs, it really seems like the Lord is just so much closer to me. It’s just like He’s got his arms around me. I can just sing from the heart. I’m so happy that I made the decision to speak my language again because it means so much. God is so much closer to me. I love the English songs and everything, but they don’t do for me just what a Yuchi song does for me because I’m Yuchi.*

Sophia expressed that “*I have tried to translate portions of the Bible, those that I like, and right now I was trying to tackle the first chapter, Genesis.*” John commented that “*we have ceremonies here and there, but it’s all done in English. The language, Yuchi language, is not there and we wanna keep this going...I guess because God gave us this language.*”

The themes discovered for the apprentices for question four were that they incorporate the language into their spiritual practices, learning the language helps establish their identity, and learning the language enriches their lives. The revival of Native languages helps younger generations establish a sense of cultural pride and identity by encouraging “achievement and self-expression throughout the generations” (Fordham, 1998, p. 44). Joseph said:

*It's really important because...it's like my aunt, she instilled in us at an early age that we were Yuchi, and that our language is what makes who we are. And I still believe that today. That it is the language that makes you who you are. Without our Yuchi language, we're not Yuchi because, like, in our culture we have ceremonial dances. They are pretty closely related to other tribes. They're all basically the same. But it's our language that makes us different. It's like any Indian can put on a dress and go dance powwow. If you don't know the difference, but the language does. It really makes 'em who they are. It has enriched my life as a person...the fact that I can speak my language now.*

Lily mentioned that “I take on that responsibility to pass it on and I know that the other staff does too, so I know God is helping us do this work.” Leo mentioned that:

*It's important because it identifies who you are, you know. How the Yuchi people are separated from the Creeks, you know. That's who our banner is under. We have the same ceremonial life, sayings, clothing is close too, you know. It's close but our language is completely different. It's really identification, you know. You don't have to have no card, you don't have to have clothes, you just speak it and you automatically know that's not Creek or that's not Cherokee or that's not Choctaw or anything like that...I've learned some life lessons about learning my language...more self pride really 'cause I'm able to speak my language to my elders and to my kids.*

Thomas commented:

*I like everybody to know I'm Yuchi. That's how I wanna be identified. I wanna be identified as Yuchi so I figured if you got the language, then nobody can deny me that. Just having the language, you know, keeps my identity alive...keeps our identity alive...There's some places where, you know, that we shouldn't talk English. I mean we should keep our languages at the ceremonial ground, at the church, in our homes.*



*Discussion of Question Five: What do you believe others in the community view the importance of preserving the Euchee/Yuchi language?*

The themes discovered for the masters for question five were that they do not think the Yuchi community views language learning as important, and the Yuchi community does not make time to learn the language. Their views support the literature that says that many community members in Native tribes today consider their tribal language backward and of little use in today's society. Other people that were forced to assimilate to the dominant society in their past do not want to relive the past. The fact is that views differ on language differ in communities which is why there is an imbalance of language use in today's Native communities (Yamamoto et al., 2008). The values, beliefs, and traditions are being lost quickly because of the high level of distractions for young people today (White-Kaulaity, 2007). Julie mentioned that "*I think we are cheating our children if they don't learn the language.*" When asked if it makes her sad that more young people do not speak the language, she replied "*it really does. I'm really sad that my own daughter that lives with me, she understands a lot more, but she said 'mom, I'll just never be able to make a sentence.' I said you will if you try.*" Sophia's comments validate the literature because when younger generations do not express interest in learning the old ways, it saddens the elders because they have no one to share their knowledge with (Patchell, 2005). When speaking about the Yuchi community, Sophia mentioned that "*they really haven't made any effort to really learn.*" When asked about his views of the Yuchi community's lack of participation, John mentioned:

*To tell you the truth, I don't think...They don't care. They really don't care. Especially they won't come here...they would rather speak in the English language. They are used to speaking it, they came up speaking it. Maybe you*

*could pay 'em. They still wouldn't come. I think it's very important that the youth learn the language but they don't want to I don't think or they would be here.*

The themes discovered for the apprentices for question five were that the community is generally not supportive, and the community should learn the language. Many of the youth in Native tribes are aware of the encroaching dominant society in which they live, so in many cases, it is easier for them to just speak the dominant language (McCarty et al., 2006a). Joseph mentioned that:

*I think a lot of 'em view it as important...very important, but a lot of 'em I think they feel like 'oh I can't learn it, it's too hard' or 'I'm too far behind' or 'I didn't learn it as a child and it would take me forever to learn that,' you know. I think a lot of 'em want to learn, but I think a lot of them are real apprehensive about it because they feel like it would take so much time or that they're so far behind that they would never be able to do it...they see it is important and they wish they learned it as children, so they put their children down here, come go down there and learn to talk some Yuchi.*

Lily said:

*The parents of the children...we wish they would be a little more involved mostly, you know as far as becoming speakers themselves, but at least they are bringing their kids or letting us pick them up. They're supporting in that way and I think a lot of them see the value of the language.*

Leo commented about the Euchee/Yuchi community support of learning the language by mentioning:

*There's half and half I would say. There's half that would say keep 'em goin.' They got our back and they support us, you know. But then there's the other half sayin' it's dead...it's a lost cause tryin' to revive that language.*

Thomas mentioned “*there's a few percentage of people that really think that the language is important in our community...people think there's enough down there learning it now that maybe they can teach me later.*”

*Discussion of Question Six: What is your role in teaching the language  
to the younger generation?*

The themes discovered for the masters for question six were that they see themselves as consultants/teachers, and they are there to help with the language when needed. For some elders in some tribes, teaching the younger generation can be difficult because the learners have been colonized to white ways for so long and the elders do not want to misrepresent their heritage to the learners (Chief, 2000). Many times, the elders would prefer the learners to listen and pick up the language in more traditional ways (Owings, 2008). In some cases, elder teachers do not realize how much is at stake or what role they have to play in the language preservation process, which may lead to younger tribal members feeling like they cannot learn the language (Boyer, 2000). For language learning to be effective, the act of speaking the tribal language needs to be emphasized instead of writing. They must be taught in the context of everyday conversation instead of learning isolated words (Littlebear, 2000b). After asking Sophia what her role is in the language group, she said *“a consultant. That’s the way it is. We talk about something and we don’t know what it is or I think I know what it is and then I can help them.”* As for John’s response, he said *“I’m just one of the speakers. They ask me questions and I tell ‘em how to say it. They kinda depend on me sometimes.”* Dona mentioned:

*I’m not a role model. I try to do the best I can. I know they ask me how you say different words that they don’t know how. Sometimes I forget how you say that word that they want to learn and then I have to learn it myself all over again (laughing).*

The themes discovered for the apprentices for question six were that they see themselves as teachers/guides, and they want to teach the children as much as possible. For the apprentices, elders can often be intimidating and there may be differing opinions

on how the language should be taught (Owings, 2008). The important thing is that the vitality of language depends on individuals (Yamamoto et al., 2008). If the language is written down and not spoken, the new speakers may not know how to pronounce a word if no one who speaks the language is there to show them (Toensing, 2007). Knowing all of these intricacies makes the teaching relationship between the masters, apprentices, and children crucial for language preservation. Joseph mentioned:

*My role really is just to try and teach all that I can to whoever wants to learn, who's willing... 'cause you gotta have to have that desire to do it. You really have to have the want to. We need people to just be Yuchi. So, I think that's part of my role in teaching is just to carry on and try to be Yuchi. We may not be able to say everything the way that our elders say it, but we can beat around the bush and we get the point and we just talk and stay in Yuchi.*

Leo commented that his role:

*Is just to get it to at least my kids, you know, in the home. But my role is to help bridge that gap, you know, that generational gap that's there...trying to get it to the younger generations through the elders to me to the younger generation.*

Thomas said that “*I would say I'm a teacher, but I'm really not...hopefully people look at me as a good role model for our kids.*”

### **Observation Sessions**

The number of masters and apprentices in each observation session varied depending on the session. The age of the masters ranged from 80 to 90 years old. The age of the apprentices ranged from 20 to 55 years old. In all cases, there were more than one master and one apprentice in each session. There were 10 observation sessions. For each session, content and reflective field notes were recorded using the Field Observation Form in Appendix C. For a master, apprentice, or generic theme to emerge, it needed to be observed by the researcher in 6 of the 10 sessions during the observations (see Table

2). A generic theme is defined as a theme that is not observed as occurring with masters or apprentices, but with the group as a whole.

*Emergent Theme Discussion*

There are many facets to the master-apprentice learning technique. The masters and apprentices in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project exhibit positive and negative characteristics when compared to the proven techniques of successful master-apprentice learning programs.

Table 2

*Observation Session Emergent Themes*

Master Themes	Apprentice Themes	Generic Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro-conversations happened often between fellow elders and apprentices</li> <li>• Some always drank coffee</li> <li>• Some were asked for more translations than others</li> <li>• Individual elder participation varied depending on elder and day</li> <li>• Do not engage with apprentices freely most times unless asked</li> <li>• Translates all that is asked</li> <li>• Correct apprentice mistakes when necessary</li> <li>• Male speaks more than female</li> <li>• Elders respond more to some apprentices versus others</li> <li>• Speak varying amounts of Yuchi/English to each other and apprentices</li> <li>• Speak with their hands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Props often used to illustrate lesson</li> <li>• Each prepares different lesson for day</li> <li>• Different apprentices teach different days</li> <li>• Some do not speak as much as others</li> <li>• Micro-conversations happened often between fellow apprentices and elders</li> <li>• Teaching style varies by apprentice</li> <li>• Ask elders for translations when needed</li> <li>• Different activities are planned for different days</li> <li>• Individual apprentice participation varied depending on apprentice and day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic equipment used</li> <li>• Class starts late (~10-30 minutes)</li> <li>• Table in U-shaped design</li> <li>• Lessons often typed in Word document by apprentice</li> <li>• Traditional greeting of shaking hands and saying good morning in Yuchi is standard</li> <li>• Elders given most comfortable chairs</li> <li>• Group size varies depending on weather, day, and other various commitments</li> <li>• Staff wears some type of Euchee/Yuchi paraphernalia (i.e. hats or shirts)</li> <li>• Increasing the visibility of the program not discussed</li> </ul>

*Note.* Observation session dates were December 8, 15, 22, 2010, January 5, 12, 19, 26, 2011, February 16, 23, 2011, and March 2, 2011.

According to Tatsch and Drummer (2004), there are five general tips for masters that can be used to have effective language transmission in a master-apprentice atmosphere. First, the master needs to be an active teacher and create situations and

stories to engage conversation when the apprentice cannot yet comprehend what is being said. The languages must be taught orally and must not be taught in a way that imitates the way English is taught, which emphasizes grammar (Littlebear, 2000b). It is difficult for masters to teach a language that is unknown to the apprentices (Crystal, 2002).

Although the masters in this study would translate and correct mistakes whenever they were asked, most did not regularly engage in conversation unless asked by the apprentices. Also, some masters were asked for translations much more than others.

Second, the master needs to use the Native language more than English. They should use “gestures, actions, and objects to help the learner understand” (Tatsch & Drummer, 2004, p. 16). Extensive non-verbal cues should be used so that the use of English is kept at a minimum (Crystal, 2002). The Euchee/Yuchi language was used almost exclusively for each observation session; however, many of the masters would have personal conversations in English and go back to using Euchee/Yuchi only when the apprentices asked. It is important for language learning groups to stay in the traditional language as much as they can (Hale, 2000). The masters in the group spoke with their hands to convey new words or phrases to the language learners, which validates the second tip mentioned by Tatsch and Drummer. Third, Tatsch and Drummer (2004) mention that “understanding precedes speaking”, so it is important for the masters to ask the learners questions (p. 16). Since Native students are taught to value cooperation and sharing, the environment in the learning room should be considered a supportive psychological climate where everyone can share in collaborative learning (Little Soldier, 1989; McCarty, 1998; Umbhau, 2009). In the case of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the apprentices were the primary source of the questions instead of the masters asking the

most questions, which somewhat contradicts the literature. Fourth, Tatsch and Drummer (2004) say the masters should “teach in full sentences and rephrase your sentences for simpler communication...Add more vocabulary as your apprentice advances” (p. 16). Littlebear (2000b) mentions that the language must be taught in the context of everyday conversation so that conversation skills can develop instead of learning isolated words. For the masters in this study, the grammar is taught to the apprentices in fragments and full sentences. Although speaking any Euchee/Yuchi is progress, learning the words individually does not encourage fluency as much as learning phrases or sentences (Linn et al., 1998). Fifth, Tatsch and Drummer (2004) encourage masters to be patient with themselves since they have waited a long time to use their language. Tatsch and Drummer (2004) also mention for masters to remember that the apprentices are working hard to communicate with the masters in the group. In many cases, the elders in a particular tribe just want the younger learners to listen to them talk to pick up the language in a more traditional way (Owings, 2008). The Euchee/Yuchi masters had a great deal of patience with the apprentices and always answered translation questions that were asked of them.

According to Tatsch and Drummer (2004), there are five general tips for apprentices that can be used to have effective language transmission in a master-apprentice environment. First, the apprentices need to be active learners and let the masters know if they do not understand what is being taught (Tatsch & Drummer, 2004). Among language learners, it can be easy to fall back into old English patterns when something is not known, but it is important to stay in the language as much as possible using minimal English for assistance (Crystal, 2002). The apprentices in this study

always asked the masters for translations when they were needed, but they usually asked certain masters first before others. The development of written materials is also an important component of language preservation (McCarty, 2008; Wallace, 2009) The apprentices used props as teaching tools to illustrate and write their language to get new translations for lessons they planned. This differs from the small cluster of learners for each master that Grounds (2007b) mentions is used during the daily adult language sessions. Second, Tatsch and Drummer (2004) mention that the apprentices should not use English but instead “repeat your teacher’s actions or gestures or try some of your own to make yourself understood” (p. 16). The act of speaking the language can be much more effective for language learning than the traditional grammar-based English learning approach (Littlebear, 2000b). The apprentices in this study prepared different lessons, activities, and props for each day, and different apprentices spoke on different days. The third lesson Tatsch and Drummer (2004) mention is that apprentices should have patience with themselves and “try and repeat what is said to you” (p. 16). The teaching styles of the apprentices varied dramatically. One of the apprentices taught through laughter, which garnered a greater amount of participation from the group in general. A second apprentice taught by presenting the lesson and going around the room and asking everyone individually to repeat or replicate the lesson being taught. A third apprentice taught by engaging the entire group at once by doing the lesson and asking questions from all of the participants. The teaching styles were different, which probably helped the individual masters and apprentices understand the concepts being taught in a way that spoke to them. Even though the teaching styles varied, the important point is that the oral transmission of the language was emphasized, which increases the likelihood of



successful language transmission (Hinton, 2003b; Littlebear, 2000b). Fourth, Tatsch and Drummer (2004) encourage apprentices not to be afraid of making mistakes. Tatsch and Drummer (2004) mention how learning happens by making mistakes and encourage apprentices to feel no shame in wrong answers. As Hale (2000) mentioned, an atmosphere of support needs to be developed so that language learners do not feel ridiculed by the elders if they make a mistake. The apprentices were constantly encouraged to learn words and learn them correctly by the masters. The individual apprentices' participation varied by week, and some took notes a large percentage of the time while some spoke and took no notes, which validates the literature on the traditional master-apprentice program that time is spent speaking and listening to effectively learn a language (Crystal, 2002). Fifth, Tatsch and Drummer (2004) mention for apprentices to use the language outside of the master-apprentice learning group, and use the language with family and friends. As Ross (2003) mentions:

A word needs to be said 20 times in 20 different situations, or 400 times, before the student will have it ingrained. Instead of enduring the dullness of rote memory, the language comes alive with fluid speech, even if it's in simple sentences. (p. 1)

The apprentices in this study use the language not only within the group, but with their families and other people outside of the group. The apprentices from the morning session are also responsible for teaching the children later in the day. As Grounds (2007b) mentions, "we depend on this in-between generation to fill the gap between the elders and the youngest community members" (para. 9). It is important for all in the group to speak the language as much as possible and more importantly learn phrases and sentences rather than just individual words (Linn et al., 1998).

There were many generic themes that emerged from the observation sessions. Electronic recording equipment was used and lessons were often typed into a Word document using English characters and symbols. This supports the literature by illustrating how language preservation is becoming more technologically advanced. With today's technology, the elders' words can be preserved for generations to come (Owings, 2008). According to McCarty and Watahomigie (1999), members of language preservation groups should make sure they have basic supplies to accomplish the basic goals of their program. Supplies might include paper, recording equipment, and dry-erase boards, all of which are actively used in the language sessions. Other themes that were recorded were that class regularly starts between 10 and 30 minutes late, coffee is made by the apprentices for the group, and the masters are given the comfortable chairs in the learning room. According to Owings (2008), in many language groups elders are viewed as intimidating. To develop an atmosphere of patience and learning, any anger needs to be replaced with compassion in terms of elders teaching and correcting language learners (Hale, 2000). The literature supports the compassionate way the masters and apprentices treat each other within the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The members of the staff usually wear Euchee/Yuchi Language Project shirts or hats. Everyone in the group greets each other in the morning with a handshake and Euchee/Yuchi greeting to show support, which illustrates the sense of community that is crucial for language learning to take place (Hinton, 2003b). During the class observation session each week, the size of the group varied. The topic of increasing the visibility of the program was rarely mentioned. Language loss can be reversed, but it needs to start at a community level, involving all members of the community (Boyer, 2000; Hale, 2000). The question becomes how to

involve more members of the community. Many of the apprentices mentioned that involving more Euchee/Yuchi community members was a concern, but the topic was rarely discussed actively during the observation sessions which points out that individually they think about the issue but collectively did not discuss it during any but one of my observation sessions. Joseph mentioned:

*I think a lot of 'em want to learn, but I think a lot of them are real apprehensive about it because they feel like it would take so much time or that they're so far behind that they would never be able to do it.*

### **Follow-Up Interviews**

There were six participants that were interviewed for the follow-up interviews. For the masters, there were two females and one male all ranging in age from 80 to 90 years old. For the apprentices, there were two males and one female all ranging in age from 20 to 55 years old. For a theme to emerge, two of the three masters and two of the three apprentices needed to mention the item during the follow-up interview (see Table 3). Every person in the discussion section has been given a pseudonym which represents their given English name.

*Discussion of Question One: What does being a master in the master-apprentice group mean to you?*

The themes discovered among the masters for question one were that being in the master-apprentice group is a meaningful experience, and they can use the words and contribute to learning. In many ways, the themes discovered from the master interviews contradict the literature. Ivanova (2002) mentioned that many elders are frustrated because they cannot remember enough of the tribal language to pass it on effectively to the younger members of the tribe. Many elders are saddened because they have no one to

pass on traditional knowledge to (Patchell, 2005), but in the case of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the masters effectively pass down the language to apprentices who want to learn it. Sophia mentioned that *“it means a whole lot. I get to use my language and I learn... I also learn because there are words that we have no Yuchi words for,*

Table 3

*Follow-Up Interview Majority Emergent Themes*

Question	Master Themes	Apprentice Themes
1. What does being an apprentice/master in the master-apprentice group mean to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful experience</li> <li>• Can use words and contribute to learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn traditions from elders and pass them on</li> </ul>
2. How does participating in the master-apprentice group affect other people in your life?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does affect other people</li> <li>• Amazed at large knowledge base of apprentices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate family supportive</li> <li>• Allows them to speak at traditional and other community events</li> </ul>
3. What feelings are generated when you participate in the master-apprentice group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerned apprentices will not experience deep knowledge of elders</li> <li>• Some frustration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some frustration/challenges</li> <li>• Feel blessed to carry on traditions/make a difference</li> </ul>
4. Given what you have said about your life before you were a participant in the master-apprentice group, how do you understand the role of the master-apprentice program and language preservation in your life?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No general themes</li> <li>• Different roles in life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority in life</li> <li>• Realize importance of teaching children</li> </ul>
5. Have you shared all that is significant as it relates to your experience in the master-apprentice group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes feel lonely or misunderstood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel increased pride in teaching language</li> </ul>
6. What have you learned from teaching the younger generation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak language more often</li> <li>• Easier to speak again</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy teaching children</li> <li>• Harder to teach than previously thought</li> <li>• Do not want children to quit because of language difficulty</li> </ul>

*so sometimes we have to make up a word.”* John said *“it means a great deal to me. I feel*

*like I’m contributing a little bit.”* Julie expressed:

*To me it means that you have experienced these things. You lived them. You know something about the Yuchi tradition...because you lived it and you know it. That is why we are here to teach the younger ones who have never lived it*

The theme discovered among the apprentices for question one is that they learn traditions from the masters and pass them on to the younger generation. In some ways, their views contradict the literature and in some ways they do not. Some parents question the validity of teaching the language to their children because they say it is economically useless, while others want to equip their children with a strong sense of self by teaching their heritage (Mithun, 1990). The apprentices in this study fall into the second category because they want to learn the traditions from the masters and pass them on. Lily mentioned:

*Being an apprentice means waking up every day and knowing that I will have the chance to learn more of our unique language from our few living elders. It means I have the chance to do something that is not being done anywhere else in the world. I get to sit in a room with the five first-language speakers of Yuchi and try to learn as much of the language as I can, as quickly and efficiently as I can. For me, being an apprentice of Yuchi is kind of like digging for gold in a mine that is slowly caving in—we don't know how much time we have left to acquire this precious commodity but we are willing to take risks and work as hard as we can to collect as much of it as we can, while we have the chance.*

For Joseph, learning the language meant that “*I had the opportunity to learn something unique like our language...and then I have the opportunity to carry it on.*” Thomas said:

*It makes me feel real good...I get to learn from the older ones what it was to struggle and live back then...what they went through to keep our language here, so it's real good to be an apprentice.*

*Discussion of Question Two: How does participating in the master-apprentice group affect other people in your life?*

The themes discovered among the masters for question two were that language learning does affect other people in their lives, and they are amazed at the large

knowledge base of the apprentices in the master-apprentice group. Language learning bridges the gap between generations and helps members of the younger generation establish firm tribal identities (Harbold, 2005). The elders can become teachers in their own community (Dick, 1998). The preservation of that community becomes vital to the survival of each tribe (Patchell, 2005). Julie mentioned that participating in the program:

*Has brought us together. The young ones...the young adults and the youth and the children. And the children are real respectful. I see a big difference in them. I see them when they first came, they were quiet...didn't really wanna participate, but they thought they wanted to come here and just play. They didn't understand they were here to kind of learn. But as they came every day and as they got used to the teachers and got used to one another, then it became easier.*

When asked about the apprentices' knowledge base, Sophia expressed how:

*I've been amazed at the ones that you've met...that have been here...but I've been amazed at how much those people learned it and tried to use it regularly. They know we are a source of people who have a knowledge of things that they do not.*

The themes discovered among the apprentices for question two were that their immediate families are supportive of their language learning, and knowing their language allows them to speak at traditional and other community events. The apprentices' views validate the literature. Many Native language learners look at learning their tribal language as an opportunity to leave their legacy behind for future generations (Ramirez, 2008). Some Native people are able to maintain a strong connection to their Native culture while functioning in the dominant culture, which allows them to be teachers to others in the community (Dick, 1998). Joseph mentioned:

*I know it affects my children 'cause I'm always teachin' 'em Yuchi and I talk to them in Yuchi so they get to hear. And then other people that are around, it affects in that way that when they need somethin' done, if they want someone to pray in Yuchi, they're able to ask me...if they want some of the ceremonies that we perform at funerals, I know how to do that and it takes the language to do a lot of that stuff. It kinda allows them to carry on in that way. It allows them the*

*opportunity to be able to carry on those traditions and have someone that can do it.*

Lily mentioned about her family that *“they reinforce my language learning and encourage it. We all support each other and can use Yuchi outside of the Yuchi House. My mom supports my learning as well, even though she is not part of the Yuchi community.”* Leo said how *“it’s affected a lot of people that I know. Just by knowing Yuchi, you know...get caught and asked to say prayers somewhere. It affects a lot of people when they hear it.”*

*Discussion of Question Three: What feelings are generated when you participate in the master-apprentice group?*

The themes discovered among the masters for question three were that they were concerned that the apprentices will not experience the deep knowledge of the elders, and they are sometimes frustrated when teaching the language. It is often a myth that Native American people know their culture and history because they were simply born Native American. The children are not born with the natural knowledge of their heritage, and many do not know much about their culture at all (Fleming, 2007). The complexity contained in Native languages is vast (Kalish, 2005). Julie mentioned:

*Sometimes I think that they’ll never really experience the feelings, the deep feelings we have. This is what I tell my family, my children. I said that’s why our world today is that we don’t have respect for a lot of things because we’ve never really had to really live hard. You have not had to live hard like we did. The small things are very valuable. They’re more valuable than money. It can’t buy you happiness. You can’t buy experience because you have to go through it.*

Sophia expressed her occasional frustration by mentioning how *“I never know what we’re going to be doing. It’s always something different. I just come knowing that I’ll probably*

*learn something, but it helps me in speaking to them...or maybe an opportunity to tell them something.*” John shared his frustrations by saying that:

*There’s a lot of things I’d share with ‘em but they wouldn’t understand. You’d have to go way back there a ways. The things that I’ve heard...people told stories. I like to use that in the Yuchi language, but they wouldn’t understand me...it kinda frustrates me.*

The themes discovered for the apprentices for question three were that there is some frustration and challenges with language learning, and they feel blessed to carry on their tribal traditions and make a difference. For younger tribal members who did not grow up speaking their tribal language, their identity within the tribe can be misunderstood (Wilson, 2000). Many youth today consider the task of language renewal daunting in terms of responsibility (Linn, 2007). Joseph echoed this statement by mentioning that “*the more I learn, the more I realize I don’t know.*” Language learning programs help younger language learners form a bond to the past so their tribal bond in the future is stronger (Ramirez, 2008). When asked about his frustration in the group, Joseph mentioned:

*I experience that a lot. I mean I’m sure we all do. I just wish I had the recall that some of the younger ones do. All I can do is just try and learn it the best I can and like the more I use it, it’s easier. Another frustration I have is that we don’t have more people being active in this program. I just wish we had more of our community members that would really get involved in learning our language.*

Lily expressed that being an apprentice is:

*Challenging because there is no ‘how to’ manual for learning Yuchi...Sometimes it is frustrating because I don’t feel that we spend our time with the elders in immersion and English creeps in which is a lost opportunity to hear more Yuchi. It is also a challenge because the elder speakers are mostly passive during language sessions and wait for apprentices to initiate conversations, routines, or activities.*



Lily also shared:

*I also feel blessed to have this opportunity and I am doing something that I can see making a difference in the world on a daily basis. Each day I grow in my language skills and we, as a Yuchi community, grow closer to having a strong language again.*

Leo shared that being in the master-apprentice group “*feels like it’s my family. It makes me feel real joyous. My self-pride is a lot...that I know my traditional ways and now I know my language...that I can teach other people, you know...kids, other adults.*”

*Discussion of Question Four: Given what you have said about your life before you were a participant in the master-apprentice group, how do you understand the role of the master-apprentice program and language preservation in your life?*

The themes discovered for the masters for question four were unclear. Language preservation plays different roles in their lives so no clear theme emerged. This validates the literature because often there are differing perspectives on how elder and young tribal members view the importance of language learning (McCarty et al., 2006b). For Julie language preservation plays a significant role in her religious life. She mentioned how “*our fluent are in the church, and that helps me there. If I’m leading a devotion, all of my prayers are in Yuchi. Even though they don’t understand, I said I’m talkin’ to my God, so He understands.*”

The themes discovered for the apprentices for question four were that language preservation is a high priority in their lives, and they realize the importance of teaching the language to the children. The literature shows varying degrees of importance when related to youth and language learning, but the apprentices’ views are universal in their feelings of the high importance of language learning. The trend can often be for Native

youth to abandon the traditional language (Cajete, 2005). The opposing view of Native youth being deeply concerned about their language loss (McCarty et al., 2006) fits more with the apprentices' viewpoints. When talking about language preservation and its priority in his life, Joseph mentioned that *"it ranks really high because it's who I am. All I can do about it is...is make it very important in my life and teaching my children and then someday teach my grandchildren."* Lily mentioned that language revitalization has been:

*A big part of my life since I was a child...I plan to raise my own kids in the language when it comes time. Someday I see that I will have the opportunity to be the master to train other young apprentices.*

When talking about priorities, Leo mentioned:

*It's kinda like you know, God, then language (laughing). It's a pretty high priority in my life...I wouldn't give it up. I tell 'em they'd have to kick me out or drag me. I always tell my kids...there's only a few people in this world that speak this language...and ya'll are gettin' a chance of a lifetime to learn it.*

*Discussion of Question Five: Have you shared all that is significant as it relates to your experience in the master-apprentice group?*

The theme discovered for the masters for question five is that sometimes they feel lonely or misunderstood because there are so few people left that speak the language. In the traditional master-apprentice style learning technique, it is often difficult for the master elders to teach a language that is unknown to the apprentice. The apprentice also has the difficult job of learning a language by listening to it using minimal English for assistance (Crystal, 2002). One challenge for apprentices is that it is difficult for them not to fall back into English if there is a question or something is confusing in the Native language (Tatsch & Drummer, 2004). Because of the difficulties faced by the masters and apprentices on some occasions, learning the language can be confusing, which might lead

to the feeling of isolation and younger tribal members no longer respecting their elders because of their language (Fuller, 1993). When asked if she feels lonely after class, Julie said “yes, *I get that feeling when I’ve been here and we talk a lot. When I go home, I just wanna continue talking.*” In some tribes, the elders and grandparents express concern that certain meanings would be misrepresented and the integrity of the information might be compromised (Chief, 2000). John spoke to this point when asked if he felt understood in the group. John said:

*No because I can say alotta things. I tell it my way then some of ‘em says ‘well, I learned it different.’ Then we have that kinda word mix up around here...I try to explain things...what I’m sayin’ in English, but they don’t wanna hear it that way. Therefore I don’t think they know what I’m sayin.’ All they wanna know is just to hear the language, but still they don’t know what I’m sayin’ for a lot of the things that I’m sayin.’*

The theme discovered for the apprentices for question five is that they feel increased pride in being able to teach the language to the younger generations. Although it has been mentioned that the level of dedication varies among younger members of tribes (McCarty et al., 2006b), the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project apprentices were universal in their feelings about the importance of teaching the language to younger generations. The feelings of the apprentices support the literature because they have modest goals of using their Native language in their homes, praying in their language, or telling traditional stories (Crystal, 2002). Leo mentioned how “*my self pride is a lot...that I know my traditional ways and now I know my language...that I can teach other people, you know...kids, other adults.*” Joseph mentioned:

*When I go out among other Indian tribes, they kinda recognize me that someone will usually point out ‘oh well, he teaches the language’...and that kinda gives me an air of respect. They kind of look up to that...and when they hear me talkin’ my language or hearin’ me prayin’ in my language, it kinda lifts you up in their eyes, you know.*

*Discussion of Question Six: What have you learned from  
teaching the younger generation?*

The themes discovered for the masters for question six were that they speak the language more often, and it is easy to speak the language again. One of the keys that the AICLS has discovered is that repetition is the key to learning the language (Ross, 2003). Fluency is acquired by speaking the language (Littlebear, 2000b). Regarding going to the language class, Julie said:

*It's made it easier for me to speak it again. When I first came back to class, I had a time. I knew the words. I never forgot the words, but when I was in school, I was probably the only Yuchi there at that big Indian school.*

When asked about teaching the apprentices in the class, Julie mentioned:

*We need to know how much they know. If they never speak up, if they never talk, we don't know how much they know. We need to hear them talk more. We need to hear them get into the discussions.*

Sophia said how “*I learn new words or a different way to say something.*” John mentioned how “*I learned that I need to speak the language more. I need to speak the language more instead of using English.*”

The themes that were discovered for the apprentices for question six were that they enjoy teaching the children the language, the language is harder to teach than they thought, and they do not want the children to quit learning the language because of language complexity. Many speakers of indigenous languages face problems because in many cases, there is no strong literacy tradition for a language in smaller Native communities. In language traditions where school-based teaching methods are used, such as learning the English language, written language exercises are more useful. In community-based language revitalization efforts, the written language becomes a second

priority to the oral transmission of the language (Hinton, 2003a). Reading has not always been the best way for Native students to attain knowledge because of the traditional oral standard that has been used. Within any particular tribe, the adults are patient with the children who need extra help and students eventually learn their own strengths and abilities (White-Kaulaity, 2007). The findings support the literature because the apprentices are aware that oral transmission is essential for the children to learn the language. When commenting on the difficulty of teaching the children, Joseph mentioned:

*I've learned that I really enjoy teaching, but I learned that I'm not really that good of a teacher (laughing). You know, you learned that just because you're good at somethin' doesn't mean you can teach it. It's like a teacher...you can inspire these students. You can inspire them to want to embrace what you're teaching and that's really hard to do. The kids I'm teachin' are secondary grade. They've already been in school for six hours and then they come over here and I try to teach 'em again. By the time they get here, they're like...they don't wanna be sittin' here in class again (laughing).*

Lily mentioned:

*I really enjoy being around kids, and sharing the Euche language with them makes it even better. I see that if you are exposed to a language early on in life you automatically absorb it—you don't have to be intentional about 'learning' it. If the language is part of your environment then it becomes part of you and it's fun...I try to do things with the kids that I often wish the elders would do with me, such as staying in Yuchi even when the learner doesn't understand exactly what I'm saying. English is an easy shortcut, but it is not beneficial for learning.*

Leo commented:

*It's somethin' I'd like to really do the rest of my life...help kids, you know. I don't want all these kids to quit. I don't want them to quit 'cause I wanna keep learnin' who they are...keep learnin' their language especially.*

Leo also commented on the difficulty of teaching the younger generation by saying “it's a lot harder than I thought it was gonna be (laughing).”

## Chapter Five

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Native languages are disappearing at an alarming rate across this country. Today there are only 150 of the 300 traditional languages left that are spoken today in the United States, and most of those languages are only spoken by the elders in the particular tribe (Ashburn, 2007). One of the main problems is that the younger members of Native communities have varying opinions on the importance of passing down their Native language (McCarty et al., 2006b). Many are deeply concerned about the loss of their language while others are aware of the dominant English society in which they live, so it is just easier for them to speak the dominant language (McCarty et al., 2006a). Many elders in tribes think that the language is being taught in traditionally oral ways, when in fact it is rarely taught at all because it is no longer being spoken in the home, and many languages are no longer being taught to younger members of the tribe (England, 2000; Hale, 2000).

The fact that so many languages are disappearing prompted the development of a program called the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MALLP) in 1992. The main goal of the program is to take master speakers of a tribal language and pair them with apprentices to learn the language naturally in daily activities (Hinton, 1998; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999; Ross, 2003). The program has been refined to meet the needs of different tribes (Hinton, 2001). One example of a modified version of the original master-apprentice program is the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The interested members of the Euchee/Yuchi tribe investigated the traditional MALLP style and modified it to create small clusters of language learners, or apprentices, for language

masters (Grounds, 2007b). My research focused on the two-hour daily adult immersion session for the language masters and the language apprentices.

The effectiveness of the master-apprentice language program has been examined as a tool for language preservation among different tribes (AICLS, 2010), but no research has been found that documents the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. With only five fluent masters in the program, the passing down of tribal culture, tradition, and language becomes important because the apprentices have the opportunity to learn from first-language speakers.

The purpose of this study was to discover the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The program utilizes a modified approach to the traditional MALLP (Grounds, 2007b). The research question for the study was: What are the lived experiences of masters and apprentices in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project in Oklahoma?

As part of the phenomenological interview protocol, there were initial interviews of four masters and four apprentices, which consisted of a series of open-ended questions asking about their life history as it relates to their language. There were 10 observation sessions that were typewritten to convey rich description of the events in the daily language sessions. There were also follow-up interviews with three masters and three apprentices, which consisted of a series of open-ended questions asking details of the meaning of their individual language group experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). For this study, there were direct quotes, general comments and field notes, and interesting experiences noted to give the reader an enhanced picture of the participants' experience in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

To help with the validity of the data in this study, several methods were used: triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, use of description, and external auditor. The data in this study were triangulated among the two sets of interviews, the 10 observation sessions, and the data already established in the literature. All initial and follow-up interview transcripts were member checked for accuracy, and the interviewees were told they could change anything they wished for the final version of the transcript. To meet the objective of prolonged engagement, I spent over six months with the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, attending the adult session every Wednesday, to establish trust with the participants, learn more about the culture, and grasp a more in-depth experience of the phenomena being studied. Notes were typed during the observation sessions using the Field Observation Form in Appendix C. Reflective and content notes were recorded to establish a sequence of events happening in each session, as well as any hunches or personal reflections I gained during the observations.

During my time spent with the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, I engaged in a qualitative study by using initial interviews, observation sessions, and follow-up interviews to get a more complete picture of the experiences of the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. Various master and apprentice themes emerged from the initial and follow-up interviews. Many master, apprentice, and general themes emerged during the observation sessions. The resulting themes comprised the answer to the research question: What are the lived experiences of masters and apprentices in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project in Oklahoma?



For the initial interviews, the questions for the four masters and the four apprentices focused on their past experiences with language learning in their lives, the importance of language preservation in their lives, and the task of passing down the language to future generations. For the masters, several themes emerged. Only the Euchee/Yuchi language was spoken initially by all of them, and none of them were punished for using the language inside or outside of school. The masters believe that passing down the language to the younger generation is important, but the majority of their own children did not learn the Euchee/Yuchi language. The masters incorporate the language into their spiritual lives and see themselves as teachers of the language, but they do not feel that the community views language learning as important.

Several themes also emerged for the apprentices during the initial interviews. None of the apprentices spoke the Euchee/Yuchi language initially, but they did learn the language by listening to others speak it. They have been encouraged to speak Euchee/Yuchi throughout their language learning, and they believe that it is important to expose children as early as possible to the language. For the apprentices that have children, they actively speak the Euchee/Yuchi language to them in their homes. The Euchee/Yuchi language helps the apprentices know who they are as tribal individuals, and knowing the language enriches their lives. Although the apprentices believe the community is generally not supportive learning the language, mainly because of lack of time and difficulty of the language, they believe the community should be more involved in learning the language. The apprentices also see themselves as teachers of the language, similar to the masters.

For the 10 observation sessions, various master, apprentice, and general themes emerged. For the masters, even though they all translated language questions from the apprentices when asked, some masters were asked for translations far more than others. The masters see their role in the group primarily as teachers or consultants, and they always corrected mistakes when necessary. There were varying amounts of Euchee/Yuchi spoken, depending on which masters attended the session, and the participation of the masters varied depending on the day. Each of the masters responded differently and by varying degrees depending on which apprentice was speaking to them. Only when the masters were asked a specific question did he or she and the apprentices engage in open dialog in the Euchee/Yuchi language.

Several apprentice themes also emerged during the observation sessions. Props were almost always used to demonstrate the lesson prepared by each apprentice on any given day. Different apprentices led the adult class on different days, and some of the apprentices spoke more than others. The teaching styles among the apprentices varied, and some apprentices got more response from the masters than others. Different activities were also planned for different days, and the apprentices always asked the masters for translations.

General themes emerged during the observation sessions. Electronic equipment was usually used to record the language class for the day, and the translations were often typed in Microsoft Word for future access. Class almost always started moderately to extremely late (10 to 30 minutes), and the number of masters and apprentices varied by day. The traditional Euchee/Yuchi greeting and handshakes were exchanged each morning before class started. The masters were always given the most comfortable chairs,

and coffee was made for the group by the apprentices before class began. The staff members of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project usually wore either hats or shirts depicting the logo for the Euchee/Language Project. Depending on the day, there were usually micro-conversations in either Euchee/Yuchi or English happening among the group members while class was in session.

During the observation sessions, I had the opportunity to take reflective notes on what I noticed during each session. The atmosphere was always supportive and friendly, and it was obvious that every master and apprentice in the class is passionate about learning and passing down the Euchee/Yuchi language. There were always words or phrases for the masters to translate, but some apprentices asked for translations from certain masters first rather than others. The attention span of the class naturally waned toward the end of the class, so that, combined with fact that class usually began late, did not always make the most of the class time. Class participation varied by day, but some masters and apprentices participated more actively in the class than others. The masters seemed to respond better when the class had structure while the apprentices seemed to respond better when there was less structure and more of a fluid conversation approach. In all cases however, the masters and apprentices responded better to laughter in the classroom rather than rote learning. The level of organization of weekly lessons varied depending on the week.

For the follow-up interviews, the questions for the three apprentices and three masters focused on how participating in the master-apprentice groups affects them and other people in their lives, the feelings generated when participating in the group, and their role in language preservation and teaching the language to the younger generation.

For the masters, several themes emerged. Participating in the language group is a meaningful experience for them, and they enjoy being able to learn and use new words. The masters are amazed at the large Euchee/Yuchi language knowledge base of the apprentices, but they are concerned that the apprentices will not experience the deep knowledge that the masters offer. There is often some frustration when teaching the language, and the masters occasionally feel lonely or misunderstood because so few others speak the language fluently.

Many themes for the apprentices also emerged from the follow-up interviews. They are proud to be able to learn their language from the masters and pass it down to the younger generation, but worry occasionally that the children will quit the language because of its difficulty. The apprentices' immediate families are all supportive of them learning the language. Speaking the language allows the apprentices to speak at community and traditional events, so they feel blessed to carry on the traditions and make a difference in the community. Even though there are some frustrations and challenges in learning the language, it is a high priority in their lives. The apprentices realize the importance of and enjoy teaching the children the language even though teaching the younger generation is harder than previously thought. Being able to teach the children the language increases their pride in the Euchee/Yuchi heritage.

### **Conclusions Related to Theoretical Framework**

The things that I learned during my time with the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project correlate well, with the exception of one issue, with the model of the theoretical framework that was designed at the beginning of this study. Individually, each of the three pieces of the theoretical framework works because the individual tenets of each of

the three theories presented correlates to the participants' lived experiences in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project (see Figure 2). The issue lies with the fact that when the complete theoretical framework is considered as it relates to the adult learning atmosphere of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the aspect of real-world learning is missing. The principles of constructivism, Knowles' principles of adult learning, and the cognitive apprenticeship all work together because they focus on the adult learning or acquiring new information in a real-world setting or outside the realm of a traditional classroom, similar to the traditional master-apprentice language learning model. The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project utilizes only classroom learning.

For the principles of constructivism the primary tenets are that the learners interact with their environment to make new connections, knowledge builds on previous experiences, and adult learners take charge of their education. The Euchee/Yuchi language Project effectively displays the principles of constructivism. The masters and apprentices interacted with their environment to make new connections by using props and gestures to use as much of the Euchee/Yuchi language as possible. The masters mentioned how much they enjoy learning new words that did not exist previously, and the apprentices make new connections with the language daily by absorbing the extensive knowledge of the masters. The idea of knowledge building on previous experiences also coincides with the practices of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The apprentices are able to utilize the knowledge of the masters to establish new knowledge. Each day of learning contributes to the Euchee/Yuchi body of knowledge that can be drawn upon for class. The masters and the apprentices of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project take charge of their education which upholds the third tenet of constructivism, except for the fact that

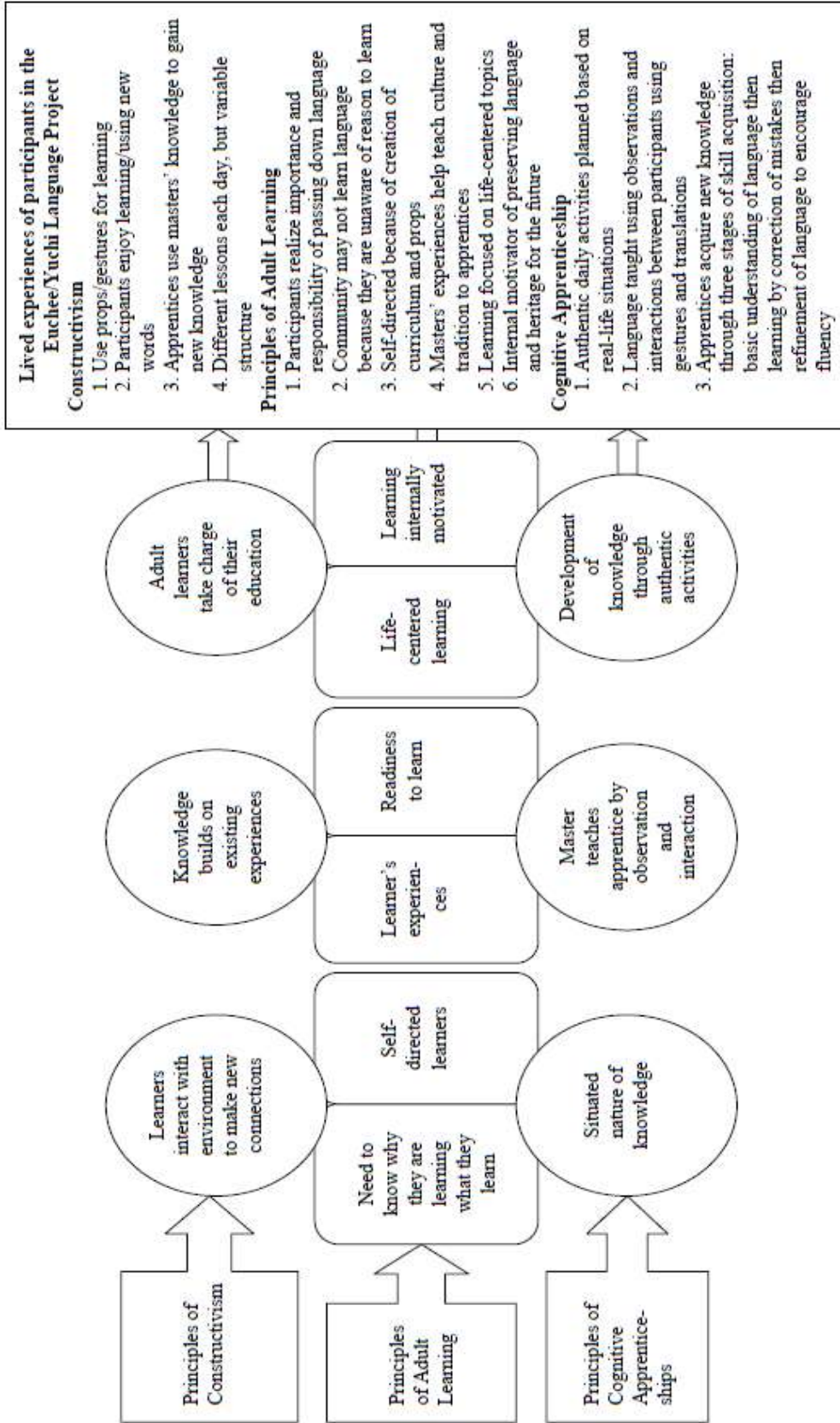


Figure 2. Model of theoretical framework related to the lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

there is less structure on some days than others. Different lessons are prepared each day and there are no limits to the curriculum; however, some days are less structured than others, which could be argued that the adults are not taking charge of their education.

For Knowles' principles of adult learning, adults need to know why they are learning something, they are self-directed learners, the role of the learners' experiences are important, their readiness to learn is important for success, learning is life-centered, and adult learning is usually internally motivated. The Euchee/Yuchi Language Project and Knowles' principles of adult learning correlate well. Adults are more likely to retain newly-learned ideas that they feel they need to know for a certain reason. For the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the masters and apprentices in the program seem to realize the importance of passing down their language to the younger generation, especially because there are only five fluent language speakers left. The masters understand the responsibility of teaching the language to the younger generation, and the apprentices understand their responsibility to the younger generation. Another issue that corresponds to the model is how the participants generally view the Euchee/Yuchi community as unsupportive of language learning. The Euchee/Yuchi community displays limited participation in language learning; therefore, they may not realize the importance of learning the Euchee/Yuchi language. Another facet of Knowles' principles explains how adults are self-directed learners. The participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language project create and use their own curriculum and props to understand the language, so they have a high level of self-direction on limited funding. The roles of the masters' experiences play an important role in helping teach the apprentices the Euchee/Yuchi language. The life experiences of the masters contain their culture, traditions, and history

of the Euchee/Yuchi tribe, which the apprentices understand is an important aspect of keeping the Euchee/Yuchi heritage alive for future generations. As the masters tell their stories, the apprentices learn their unique heritage from first-language speakers. The apprentices' readiness to learn is important for their success in learning the Euchee/Yuchi language. The majority of the apprentices attend the daily language session with the masters to encourage fluency and pass the language down to the younger generation in the afternoons. The apprentices understand their role in passing down the language and accept the responsibility. The Euchee/Yuchi language is used daily using life-centered topics as a focus for language learning. Props, books, photos, and the internet are used to learn different aspects of today's society in the Euchee/Yuchi language. The masters share their life experiences to further transmit the language and traditions. Although the traditional master-apprentice learning program is more life-centered because of the emphasis on time outside of a traditional classroom setting, the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project discuss real-life issues inside the classroom. The external motivation of the language disappearing forever is a huge motivator for the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The apprentices use the time with the master speakers to learn as much as they can to become fluent quickly. The masters and apprentices realize the internal motivators of knowing their heritage, traditions, and culture, as well as increasing their self pride as important reasons for learning their language.

The principles of cognitive apprenticeships focus on the situated nature of knowledge, how masters teach apprentices by observation and interactions, and the development of knowledge through authentic activities. The activities in the language



learning sessions are authentic in that they are planned by the apprentices each day, but they are not completely authentic because they do not take place in a real-world setting, even though they simulate real world lessons. The masters help teach the apprentices by the daily interactions they have within the class, but there is no one-on-one learning outside of the classroom setting. The masters do teach the apprentices the language based on observation and interaction. If something is not understood in Euchee/Yuchi, the masters use gestures either in Euchee/Yuchi or English to convey the meaning of a phrase or sentence to the apprentices. This ideology parallels the concept of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project since the apprentices learn in a natural environment from active observation and participation. The last aspect of the cognitive apprenticeship involves the learner acquiring new knowledge through three stages of skill acquisition: the cognitive stage, the associative stage, and the autonomous stage. In the first stage, learners begin to develop a basic understanding of the skill; in this case the apprentices began to develop a basic knowledge of the Euchee/Yuchi language. In the associative stage, the learners' mistakes from the cognitive stage are identified and corrected while the skill is being strengthened. For the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the masters corrected the apprentices when necessary as to strengthen their knowledge base of the language. In the final stage, the learner begins to refine the skill and use it on an expert level. The apprentices are constantly refining their language skills as to become fluent in the Euchee/Yuchi language as soon as possible.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, a clear picture of the lived experiences of the participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project emerged. Conclusions were drawn (see Figure 2) and recommendations based on the theoretical framework were prepared to enhance the lived experience of participants in the program.

The principles of constructivism are used effectively in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The participants in the program seem to enjoy using props and gestures to learn new words and knowledge. The apprentices in the program use the masters' extensive knowledge base to gain new knowledge based on existing experiences. The learners take charge of their education by presenting different lessons each day with varying degrees of structure depending on the day. Based on the statements of the masters and apprentices in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, the fact that there is not more structure is a point of contention among members of the group. The masters responded better on days when there was more structure, and the apprentices communicated in more of a conversation-style approach with less structure. *My recommendation for the program is to have more formal blocks of structure built into the learning sessions.* More structure would help the participants take charge of their time and presentations, which ties into the principles of constructivism. With a more formal structure in place, the learning sessions would more likely start on time and there possibly would be less distraction from internal and external constituents. When the sessions begin late, that is crucial time that is being missed with the master speakers. With a more formal structure, that time can be filled with valuable language learning.

The principles of adult learning are used effectively in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. The participants seem to realize the importance and the responsibility involved in passing down the language to the younger generation. The Euchee/Yuchi community displays limited participation in language learning; therefore, they may not realize the importance of learning the Euchee/Yuchi language. The participants are self-directed learners in that they create their own curriculum and props to further their language learning. The role of the masters' experiences helps teach the Euchee/Yuchi culture and traditions to the apprentices. Daily learning is focused on life-centered topics. The masters and apprentices learning the Euchee/Yuchi language have strong internal motivators of pride and tradition as a base for teaching the language to younger generations. *One recommendation that can be made based on Knowles' principles of adult learning concerns readiness to learn in the community. To encourage more members of the Euchee/Yuchi community to participate in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, more class times should be made available to accommodate the diverse schedules of potential participants. More evening classes should be offered with optional child-care services to optimize the level of participation of other members of the community. Classes should also be held in multiple locations to help accommodate scheduling difficulties. To increase the visibility of the program further, audio and video files, lessons, and documents should be made available to community members through the World Wide Web or DVD as a supplement to evening classes. Although it is understood that breath-to-breath language learning is the best way to transmit language, the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project is missing a key apprentice-aged audience by not*

having materials available online. Since adult learning is life-centered, the classes have to fit into the lives of the community members.

The principles of cognitive apprenticeships are used effectively in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. To situate the nature of knowledge, authentic daily activities are planned based on real-life situations. The language is taught when participants use gestures and translations within an environment of observations and interactions. The apprentices acquire new knowledge through the three stages of skill acquisition: basic understanding of language followed by further learning of the language by the correction of mistakes followed by the refinement of the language to encourage fluency. A key component missing in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project relating to cognitive apprenticeships is the semi-authentic nature of learning in a classroom. Although real-world situations are simulated in the classroom, the absence of authentic experiences outside of the classroom moves further from the proven practices of the traditional master-apprentice language learning program. To improve the lived experiences of participants in the program, *I recommend having a mixture of classroom and authentic activities in the community to further develop the knowledge of the Euchee/Yuchi language in a natural setting.* Not only will being in the community increase the visibility of the program, the language will be passed orally using true real-world situations.

Final recommendations are made in the form of further research. Since the masters and apprentices mentioned the lack of community involvement in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project as a key concern, *I recommend surveying community members and tribal governance to determine the importance of language preservation in*

*other areas of the Euchee/Yuchi community outside of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. I also recommend a full program evaluation of the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project to determine if the best practices in education are being utilized to their full extent.* It has been well-documented about the differences between the pedagogical and andragogical approaches to education, so a full program evaluation would help determine which method or combination of methods would be most effective for language preservation and revitalization within the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project.

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**Appendix A**

**MASTER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**INITIAL INTERVIEW AND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## **INITIAL MASTER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. What was your experience like growing up as it relates to learning your language?
2. Would you talk about any experiences throughout your life that either encouraged or discouraged language learning?
3. Would you talk about the importance of the Euchee/Yuchi language being passed on to younger generations?
4. What lessons have the importance of language learning taught you throughout your life?
5. What do you believe others in the community view the importance of preserving the Euchee/Yuchi language?
6. What is your role in teaching the language to the younger generation?



## **FOLLOW-UP MASTER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. What does being a master in the master-apprentice group mean to you?
2. How does participating in the master-apprentice group affect other people in your life?
3. What feelings are generated when you participate in the master-apprentice group?
4. Given what you have said about your life before you were a participant in the master-apprentice group, how do you understand the role of the master-apprentice program and language preservation in your life?
5. Have you shared all that is significant as it relates to your experience in the master-apprentice group?
6. What have you learned from teaching the younger generation?

**Appendix B**

**APPRENTICE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**INITIAL INTERVIEW AND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## **INITIAL APPRENTICE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. What was your experience like growing up as it relates to learning your language?
2. Would you talk about any experiences throughout your life that either encouraged or discouraged language learning?
3. Would you talk about the importance of the Euchee/Yuchi language being passed on to younger generations?
4. What lessons have the importance of language learning taught you throughout your life?
5. What do you believe others in the community view the importance of preserving the Euchee/Yuchi language?
6. What is your role in teaching the language to younger generations?

## **FOLLOW-UP APPRENTICE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. What does being an apprentice in the master-apprentice group mean to you?
2. How does participating in the master-apprentice group affect other people in your life?
3. What feelings are generated when you participate in the master-apprentice group?
4. Given what you have said about your life before you were a participant in the master-apprentice group, how do you understand the role of the master-apprentice program and language preservation in your life?
5. Have you shared all that is significant as it relates to your experience in the master-apprentice group?
6. What have you learned from teaching the younger generation?

**Appendix C**

**FIELD OBSERVATION FORM**

## FIELD NOTES

**Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Participants in language session:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location of the observation:** \_\_\_\_\_

<p><i>Guidelines for content part of field notes (Weinberg, n.d.):</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the setting. This may include pencil drawings of the space.</li> <li>2. Describe the activities that take place in the setting. Reproduce the sequence of events and behaviors.</li> <li>3. Describe the people who are taking part in the activities and their roles in the activities.</li> <li>4. Describe the meaning of what was observed from the perspective of the participants.</li> <li>5. Record exact quotes or close approximations of comments that relate directly to the observation activity.</li> <li>6. Describe any impact the researcher might have had on the situations observed.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Guidelines for reflective part of field notes (Weinberg, n.d.):</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include sentences and paragraphs that are subjective. These include a more personal description of what was observed.</li> <li>2. Emphasizes ideas, hunches, impressions, etc.</li> <li>3. Includes unanswered questions that have arisen from reflecting on the observation data as well as ideas for future action.</li> <li>4. Clarify points and correct mistakes and misunderstandings in other parts of field notes.</li> <li>5. Include insights or speculation about what is being observed.</li> </ol>
Content	Reflective comments relating to content

**Appendix D**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The lived experiences of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project: A phenomenological study of language preservation

Investigator:

Jessica Park  
Doctoral Graduate Student  
Workforce Development Education

Bobbie T. Biggs, Ph.D.  
Professor, RHRC  
479.575.6608  
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Administrative Contact Person:

Rosemary Ruff, Director  
Research Support and Sponsored Programs  
Research Compliance  
University of Arkansas  
120 Ozark Hall  
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479.575.3845

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ms. Park to investigate the lived experience of participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. All data collection will be at the Yuchi House in Sapulpa, Oklahoma. This statement describes the purpose, methodology, practices, and benefits of this research. This statement describes your right to confidentiality and your right to discontinue your participation at any time during the course of the research without penalty or prejudice. The applications of this study could span into other tribal communities to show the program as a method for language preservation, no matter how endangered a language may be.

Research Procedures

To be considered for this study, you must be regularly participating in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. You will have an initial interview, lasting no more than an hour, and a follow-up interview, lasting no more than an hour. There will also be observation periods during the language class that Ms. Park will be observing and taking notes. Notes will also be taken during the interview portions of the research. The interview portions of the research will be audio-recorded for accuracy. Once the audio recordings are transcribed, the participant will check for accuracy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. Code numbers will be given to all collected data; only the researcher will know the code number and will have access to the data. All data will be stored in a locked file cabinet; the key to the code



numbers will not be filed with the data. The raw data will be destroyed at the end of this study. The results of this study will be published; however, no name or other identifying information will be included in any publication.

Participation and Benefits

One of the benefits to this research will be an advantage to individual participants in the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project. A sense of cultural pride and identity could develop as a result of understanding the experience of passing the language down to future generations. The interview sessions could give insight into the lived experiences within the tribe and the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, which can then be used to convey the importance of language preservation in the classroom. If other tribes read about the experience of this research and the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project, other tribes might then be able to utilize the Euchee/Yuchi Language Project language preservation methods for their own language preservation needs. The research could also strengthen the beliefs in the importance of the language preservation project within the Euchee/Yuchi tribe.

Your involvement in this research study is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without penalty.

Questions Regarding the Study

If you have any questions about the research study you may ask the researcher; the email address is at the top of this form. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact Rosemary Ruff, the director of the Office of Research Support and Sponsored Programs at 479.575.3845 or via email at rsspinfo@uark.edu. You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The above consent form was read, discussed, and signed in my presence. In my opinion, the person signing said consent form did so freely and with full knowledge of its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix E**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER**

**Research Support and Sponsored Programs  
Institutional Review Board**

November 10, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jessica Park  
Bobbie Biggs

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 10-10-200

Protocol Title: *The Lived Experiences of Participants in the Euclidean/Yuchi Language Project: A Phenomenological Study of Language Preservation*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 11/09/2010 Expiration Date: 11/03/2011

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Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Compliance website (<http://www.uark.edu/admin/rsspinfo/compliance/index.html>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 120 Ozark Hall, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).