

## Motivating the documentation of the verbal arts: Arguments from theory and practice

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For language documentation to be sufficiently extensive to cover a given community's language practices (cf. Himmelmann 1998), then including verbal arts is essential to ensure the richness of that comprehensive record. The verbal arts span the creative and artistic uses of a given language by speakers, such as storytelling, songs, puns and poetry. In this paper, I demonstrate the significance of verbal arts documentation in three other ways. Drawing from Indigenous language community contexts in the United States, I describe how the verbal arts are relevant to linguistic theory, revitalization and training. First, the influence by verbal arts on phonological theory is attested, affirming that the collection and analysis of verbal arts data plays a significant role in the phonological analysis of a given language and in theories of phonology. Second, the verbal arts generate extremely useful examples in training models for language work, since such examples can be used to cultivate phonological awareness in learners and teachers. Third, the verbal arts provide culturally meaningful materials for language revitalization.

**1. Introduction**<sup>1</sup> Poetry, song, nursery rhymes, lullabies, puns, storytelling, tongue twisters and wordplay, all of which I treat under the umbrella of the verbal arts, have contributed to linguistic theory at various points. For example, Burling (1966) argued for a universal metrical beat structure and Hymes' (1981) work analyzed the ethnopoetics of line and verse structure. Theoretical phonology and syntax have also long benefitted from the inclusion of verbal arts, drawing data from English (Kiparsky 1975, Hayes 1989), Finnish (Kiparsky 1968), Japanese (Poser 1990, Cole & Miyashita 2006), Somali (Banti & Giannattasio 1996, Fitzgerald 2006), Blackfoot (Miyashita & Crow Shoe 2009, Miyashita 2011), and Tohono O'odham (Fitzgerald 1998, 2002, 2012a), among other languages. These studies have played a varied role

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in theory to shed light on prosodic or phonological constituents, the regulation of line edges, the nature of the prosody-syntax interface, or the relationship between underlying forms and surface structure, to name a few.

A renewed interest in these genres, the so-called verbal arts, has become evident through the emerging field of language documentation. Himmelmann's (1998) call to document the full range of linguistic practices of a community has been supplemented in recent years with specific appeals to documenting the verbal arts. Barwick (2006) lays out a compelling case of the value of documenting song and musical traditions, while also outlining a rich list of what linguists might include in language documentation projects, such as ownership issues, differences between sung and spoken language, musical terminology and musical taxonomies. In a later paper, Barwick (2012) expands upon this while also robustly describing how iTunes offers solutions for metadata and easy local community access to playlists and recordings; her examples from the Australian context make clear how songs augment linguistic analysis and provide tremendous value to communities for language and cultural revitalization. Woodbury (2014) gives examples from corpora from the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) that include folktales, poetry, chants and more, while Woodbury (2015) gives examples of how documentation of the verbal arts can be mobilized in teaching materials and grammatical theory. Turpin & Henderson (2015) use the iTunes model to show a workflow for documenting and analyzing songs, while also providing additional motivation for documenting music.

This literature reinforces that documenting the verbal arts ensures that the linguistic record includes valuable creative and artistic uses of a given language, such as storytelling, songs, and poetry. In addition to being important for creating a comprehensive record of a community's language practices, verbal arts documentation also has significance in at least three other ways, as shown in this paper. First, they exert a significant influence on linguistic theory, affirming that the collection and analysis of verbal arts data enrich and deepen the analysis of a given language, while also fostering developments in linguistic theories, specifically here, for phonology. Second, they generate extremely useful examples in training models for language work, since they cultivate breadth in targeted data types when training in language documentation and fieldwork and cultivate phonological awareness in learners and teachers. Third, the verbal arts provide culturally meaningful materials for language revitalization.

Drawing from Indigenous language community contexts in the United States, I show the range of positive benefits in documenting verbal arts for three areas: phonological theory, training, and language revitalization. The record and analysis of a community's linguistic practices, especially those relevant to phonology and pronunciation, provide invaluable tools in understanding the language and in revitalizing it. This reinforces the validity of documenting verbal arts from theoretical and other perspectives.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, drawing from the Tohono O'odham language, an endangered language of Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, multiple examples from verbal arts are used to show the vital role they play in understanding the sound structure of a language. Particular attention is paid to how the phonological

documentation and analysis of verbal arts are influential for linguistic theory, particularly Generative Metrics. I will then turn to specific instances from the Oklahoma context, showing how documenting verbal arts supports training activities. Finally, drawing from several collaborative projects, I focus on the way verbal arts can be used in revitalization. Ultimately, I argue that these diverse cases motivate the documentation of the verbal arts.

**2. Implications for linguistic theory** Poetry, song and storytelling are all important resources for language communities and for phonologists. They encode valuable cultural information and practices, and they are enriching activities for learners to hear and to learn and perform. Verbal arts and wordplay also shed light on the key phonological properties of a language, and they have played an important role in the development of phonological theories. Tohono O’odham, a Uto-Aztecan language of southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, has a rich oral tradition, although some of it is accessible only in English. In prose genres, this includes traditional legends (Kroeber 1909; Shaw 1969; Saxton & Saxton 1973; Bahr 2001, among many others), personal recollections and autobiography (Mathiot 1991; Manuel & Neff 2001; Hill & Zepeda 1993; Underhill 1979; Underhill et al. 1979) including thoughts on traditional O’odham religion (Lewis & Bahr 1992), ethnohistory (Dolan 1972), ritual speeches (Bahr 1975), contemporary storytelling (Fitzgerald et al. 2012), and quite remarkably, a treatise on phonological terminology written in the language (Alvarez & Hale 1970). Tohono O’odham songs are just as rich, with early researchers studying the music, ethnomusicology, lyrics and their purposes and functions in O’odham culture and traditions (Bahr et al. 1997; Densmore 1929; Chesky 1943; Haefer 1977, 1980, 1981; Underhill 1993). Drawing from this song tradition, there is also modern poetry written and performed in Tohono O’odham, most notably by Ofelia Zepeda (1995, 1997) and a collection of writings termed “thoughts” (Zepeda 1982a, b), coming out of the 1980 Native American Language Development Institute by a variety of native O’odham speakers.

Of considerable interest is the way in which storytelling has been documented for Tohono O’odham and how that documentation has been argued to be of phonological interest. For example, Jane Hill and Ofelia Zepeda use data coming from a major dialect study that they conducted throughout the Tohono O’odham reservation to show how pulmonic ingressive airstream characterizes women’s usage as an intimacy marker (Zepeda & Hill 1998, Hill & Zepeda 1999), and in another study, that timing and mora count is a dialect marker with “fast” and “slow” parts of the reservation (Hill 1994). More recently, Fitzgerald (2013) draws from discourse data presented in the dictionary entries of Mathiot (1973), showing a pattern of progressive vowel harmony previously undescribed in the language. Mathiot’s dictionary entries are copiously detailed, often with multiple utterances exemplifying uses. These utterances, a number of which are drawn from collected narratives, transcribe connected speech and indicate corresponding citation forms in parentheses when there are differences between speech and citation forms.

The underlined examples in (1) show the harmony in the connected speech, contrasting it with the citation form of the same utterance just beneath it.

- (1) Vowel assimilation in connected speech (Fitzgerald 2013: 122)  
 ho < ha (the function word is /ha/, which marks third person object)  
 CONNECTED SPEECH: Nt o ho-ʔiʂa g ha'iču kai.  
 STANDARD SPEECH: Nt o ha-ʔiʂa g ha'iču kai.  
 TRANSLATION: 'I'll plant several kinds of seeds.' (entry: ʔiʂa in Mathiot 1973)

Mathiot's integration of narrative transcriptions in the dictionary make this finding possible, and shows how documentation can enrich linguistic findings and understanding of a given language.

Turning to conventionalized metrical genres in Tohono O'odham, the distribution of stress patterns and some other key facts instantiate a trochaic meter surfacing in degrees that vary by genre. A prototypical trochaic meter would favor initial strong syllables, strong syllables in odd-numbered positions, and a final weak syllable, while disfavoring strong syllables in the second and also the final positions of the line, both highly salient spots. In contrast, characteristics of an iambic meter would be the mirror image, for example, favoring a line that started with a weak and then a strong position. The meter of traditional songs displays a rigid regulation of where stressed syllables occur (Fitzgerald 1998), with an absence of strong syllables in both the second and final positions, and with evidence that reduplication is invoked to generate weak syllables where otherwise nontrochaic sequences would occur.

In (2), we see a contemporary poem by Tohono O'odham poet and linguist Ofelia Zepeda (Zepeda 1995, analyzed metrically in Fitzgerald 2003). A number of Indigenous traditions include poetry; Tohono O'odham has innovated this genre in modern times, an example of contemporary artistic uses of language where poets write in their heritage language. Zepeda's work invokes the trochaic rhythms of songs, but not enforced as rigidly as in the songs. The poem is shown in Americanist<sup>2</sup> phonetic transcription, using a series of Ws and Ss to schematize the stressed, or strong (S) syllables and unstressed or weak (W) syllables. Tohono O'odham songs and poetry do not regulate syllable count or line length, but they do regulate the distribution of stressed and unstressed syllables, with songs more rigidly restricting their distribution than poetry does.<sup>3</sup> In (2), I give a line of poetry in O'odham in the left column, with stressed syllables marked by acute accents, while on the right side, the column schematizes the O'odham line in terms of strong and weak syllables. Zepeda's poetry does allow iambic sequences (weak strong) to begin lines, while O'odham songs reflect more rigid constraints on stressed syllables and never do. Both genres allow lines to begin with two weak syllables or a strong weak sequence. The range of different sequences in O'odham modern poetry appears below.

<sup>2</sup>The Americanist, or American Phonetic Alphabet (APA) is a phonetic alphabet introduced in the late nineteenth century using symbols with diacritics or otherwise easily formed via typewriters. For example, the symbol /č/ in APA has /tʃ/ as its correspondent in the IPA.

<sup>3</sup>The metrical analysis of the poetry and songs in this section is discussed more fully elsewhere, including Fitzgerald (1998, 2003, 2012a).

- (2) Kacim şu:dagı by Ofelia Zepeda (Zepeda 1997, cf. Fitzgerald 2012: 445–446)

Text	Scansion
<i>S-wîgima lam ká:ç hářicu híósig</i>	SWW W S SWW SW
<i>S-çádaghim lam ká:ç hářicu híósig</i>	SWW W S SWW SW
<i>S-í:bhaghim lam ká:ç hářicu híósig</i>	SWW W S SWW SW
<i>lam ká:ç híg dá:m gîřî ká:çim şú:dagı</i>	W S W S SW SW SW
<i>Híg wúı łatt ři-úl g s-kîg hářicu çğitodag</i>	W S W W S W S SWW SWW
<i>Híg wúı łatt ři-úl g s-łáp tá:badag</i>	W S W W S W S SWW
<i>Híg wúı łatt ři-úl g řımdag</i>	W S W W S W SW
<i>lam łatt tát g gîřî káçim şú:dagı</i>	W W S W SW SW SW
<i>k łámřıd lam łaş ři-dágıto</i>	SW W W W SW

Red-colored blossoms  
 Green-colored blossoms  
 Purple-colored blossoms  
 All float above the laying water  
 Toward it we extend only good thoughts  
 Toward it we extend only good feelings  
 Toward it we extend kinship  
 We touched this laying water  
 And then we left it alone

The scansions in (2) shows that conditions that are impermissible in song meter, like a strong syllable in second position in a line, are permissible in Zepeda’s poetic meter. From a linguistic or literary perspective, these factors demonstrate the interest of the patterns to generative meter or its complexity in terms of literary traditions. But writing poetry also plays a role in revitalization, both as creative artistic expression, and to link sound, meaning and culture. It is an expansion of the language into new domains, a factor related to the vitality of a language.

Verbal arts in Tohono O’odham are part of a package of phenomena that are quantity-insensitive; in other words, the weight or quantity of a segment, represented by moras, does not play a role. In Fitzgerald (2012a), the metrical genres and their patterns are juxtaposed with a wide range of prosodic morphological phenomena best analyzed as quantity-sensitive, showing that Tohono O’odham demonstrates prosodic inconsistency, whereby rhythm and prosodic morphology offer different kinds of perspectives on the role played by quantity. This opposition, where a language splits its rhythm and prosodic morphology with one quantity-insensitive and the other quantity-sensitive, had not previously been documented for any language. This argument from Tohono O’odham constitutes a typological contribution possible in part due to verbal arts data.

Also important is how the understanding of a language’s phonological structure is furthered when establishing that there are oral traditions that draw on syllable count, alliteration, assonance, rhythmic patterns, repetition of key units like lines, or some other type of repetition or unit (cf. Fabb 1997). Analysis of oral traditions like poetry or song, whether traditional or contemporary versions, provides insights into

the sound structure. Moreover, theoretical phonology has been enriched by inclusion of data and analyses from poetic meter, alliteration, language games, songs and more, creating an argument from the theoretical perspective in favor of documenting verbal arts. Phonologically interesting patterns have come from Indigenous language games: for example, cases where games exhibit representational patterns unattested in non-game language (Bagemihl 1989).

Documentation and analysis of the phonology of a language thus provides a key resource for revitalization, because it is vital to understand how a language organizes its sound system to better support learners in terms of differences that impact second language learners of the heritage language. Phonologically complex and typologically rare features are challenging for learners in endangered language revitalization programs. Tohono O’odham serves as an example of a phonologically complex language where documenting (and creating via writing poetry) the verbal arts deepens the understanding of the language as a whole. Importantly, traditional songs especially offer ways to express culture that also promotes pronunciation usage and learning about the sound system. Learning songs and performing them are also a way to give back to the community and to honor the language in a public context.

**3. Implications for training** There is a growing literature on the role of training and its relationship with language endangerment, and training and capacity building as a response to language endangerment (Dobrin 2008, Jukes 2011, Genetti & Siemens 2013). Training plays a key role in sustainable approaches to documenting and revitalizing languages (Fitzgerald, to appear). Training activities are also relevant to diverse audiences, such as those being trained in language teaching, in linguistic field methods, in phonological documentation, and in community revitalization work. By highlighting how and what verbal arts are, how to elicit them, and how to deploy such materials in language programs, training activities provide concrete examples of the verbal arts. In this section, I outline phonological and phonetic training activities that draw on the verbal arts as resources, drawing from several actual workshops. These examples show how phonological documentation and analysis support language programs and community members engaged in language renewal at grassroots training events of short one to two day meetings.

Short training workshops have been a staple in Oklahoma since at least 1994, when grassroots activists created the Oklahoma Native Language Association (ONLA 2016),<sup>4</sup> a Native-run and Native-led organization to support Indigenous language communities in the state. Some have been organized under the auspices of ONLA, but others were offered to respond to requests by tribes for specific training and still others were possible thanks to available funding.<sup>5</sup> With thirty-nine Indigenous languages associated with the federally or state recognized tribes in Oklahoma, sto-

<sup>4</sup>ONLA co-convened with annual April events that occur as part of Northeastern State University’s Symposium on the American Indian, but curtailed most activities following the government shutdown and budget sequester during 2013.

<sup>5</sup>Many of the training workshops, including resources created (like the Powerpoint slides or activities), are available online.

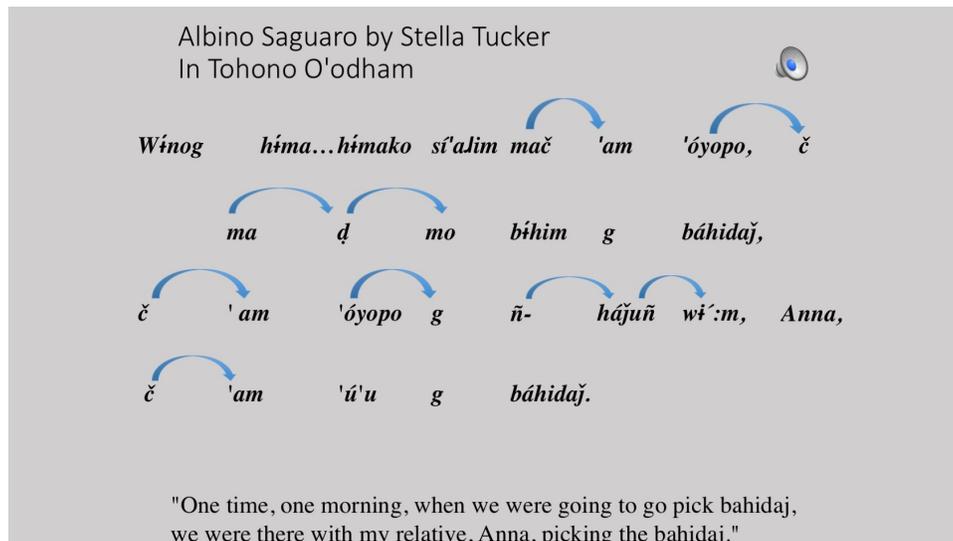
ytelling and traditional songs are part of the documentation record, as well as the focus for collection goals in newer projects.

Different kinds of training workshops focus on sound-related topics, such as technology training on audio, how to make high quality recordings, and how to process and edit them. A number of presentations have been training on language-specific aspects of sound systems and speech production, while others have raised awareness of phonological and phonetic resources, like verbal arts, and helped to create new resources. Finally, there have also been training workshops focused on decoding technical aspects of phonological resources and documentation, and making that information more accessible to community members, as part of the Oklahoma Breath of Life Workshops.

Workshops in Oklahoma generally have a diverse audience, with many attendees who are language teachers. Choctaw, Creek and Cherokee are typically the most-represented languages, and most often the participants from those communities are fluent speakers. Other language programs also participate, including the “smaller” languages, like the Sauk, the Osage, the Shawnee, and the Chickasaw. While fluent first language speakers are in the majority, the language situation in Oklahoma means that more and more second language speakers and learners are teachers, especially for these smaller language communities.

One way to integrate verbal arts is to offer up creative sources of language to teachers. Ideas for teaching and documentation projects included audio and video recordings, poetry, movies, prayers, hymns and storytelling. What is wonderful about using recordings of actual usage is that there are at least two functions for the resource, one as a revitalization tool. Such materials reflect authentic usage of one kind or another, like a traditional story with rich cultural information, a prayer to express spirituality and communicate with the Creator, or an expansion into a new domain such as poetry or rap. The range of storytelling and narratives in these kinds of verbal arts are incredibly valuable, and revitalization adds value by creating another function for such contentful language resources or others, such as oral histories from elders, stories about hunting, or subsistence food practices. But the second function for the resource is its role as a restorative medium for the community. The importance of repatriating recordings of elders and ancestors with communities of origin cannot be underestimated.

Since traditional narratives offer a way to embed culturally relevant knowledge in a language resource, showing how their use can enhance pronunciation teaching (or teaching syntax or morphology) gives language teachers a concrete way to take the knowledge back to their learners. Working through a story in an Indigenous language, using audio paired with transcriptions, is an effective way to do this. This can be done using the transcription, a translation underneath, and dynamic, animated arrows to indicate the cliticization and phrasal groupings in keeping with the temporal unfolding of the audio and utterances. Figure 1 is not dynamic as represented here, but represents a graphic version of how the elements can be constructed, in coordination with accompanying audio and the animation, to make phrasal breaks and clitic groupings salient to listeners, even those unfamiliar with the language.



**Figure 1.** Graphic to illustrate cliticization; adapted from Fitzgerald (2012b)

Going through a transcription with its accompanying audio allows discussion of fast speech phenomena, the prosodic phrasing and groupings of words into larger “chunks”, the pacing, the placement and usage of discourse markers, the cliticization and in fact, what and where the small function words get glommed on to content words or groups of function and content words.

Working with storytelling and other verbal arts offers an important opportunity to hear language in context. Learners (and fluent speakers) see that the printed words do not look like they sound. They see that words in context change considerably: there are deletions, sound changes, and some items are very prominent while others are significantly reduced. Especially important is seeing the groupings of words to facilitate recognition of how a language groups words into prosodic phrasings and utterances, and how one word “leans” onto another in speech. These kinds of demonstrations, which include the audiovisual elements, heightens metalinguistic awareness of prosody and other facets of connected speech that participants take back to their home language context, and can be abstracted from the examples even when the Indigenous language is one unfamiliar to the audience.

Other kinds of storytelling examples are useful to participants. For example, a series of related pictures from a totem storyboard (TFS 2012) was used to elicit narrative in the Alabama language in a field methods class, resulting in a print storybook and a movie (Fitzgerald et al. 2015). This particular storyboard focused on three chameleons, one of whom was unable to change colors in tandem with the other two; it is designed to elicit aspectual categories as the speaker narrates the events in their own language. For Alabama, the resulting story is now an entry into short fiction for the language, the kind of expansion into new domains that contributes to language revitalization. In training contexts, it is an example of how linguistic stimuli can create materials to develop listening skills for second language learners.

Training that includes examples like this demonstrates how to document linguistically tricky concepts, like aspect or tense, and to do so in a way where materials can find a secondary usage in language teaching and revitalization.

Verbal artistry and other sound-oriented phenomena can be used to raise metalinguistic awareness. For example, sound symbolism in Lakota invokes articulatory position in the mouth via consonant alternations, such that moving the place of articulation back in the mouth increases the intensity of the meaning (Mithun 1999: 33), as exemplified by some of the sets of words and corresponding glosses in (3). In (3a), the initial consonant moves progressively back in the mouth as the meaning intensifies from ‘clear’ to ‘hazy’ to ‘gray’. In (3b), the move from alveolar to eventually velar place of articulation in the initial and medial consonants corresponds with an intensification of meaning from ‘slight bruise’ to ‘badly bruised’ to ‘fractured’.

(3) Sound symbolism in Lakota (Mithun 1999: 33)

	Place of Articulation	Example	Gloss
a.	alveolar fricative	sóta	‘it is clear’
	alveo-palatal fricative	šóta	‘it is hazy, smoky, muddy’
	velar fricative	xóta	‘it is gray’
b.	alveolar fricative	-suza	‘it has a slight bruise, a single crack in a bone’
	alveo-palatal fricative	-šuža	‘it is badly bruised, flesh and bone are crushed together’
	velar fricative	-xuṣa	‘a hard round shell (egg, skull) is fractured’

The approach is to pronounce these words, then ask participants to say and then repeat them while simultaneously paying attention to where in their mouth there is contact as they pronounce the first consonant. This attentiveness is coupled with a movement in the place of articulation for the initial consonant: first it is alveolar, then the contact moves to alveo-palatal, and then velar places of articulation. This exercise raises awareness of the particular places of articulation, of pronunciation as a tool to identify articulatory descriptions, and of ways in which sound plays a role in grammar, wordplay and more.

Mitchell & Webster (2011) provide an example of expressive language use in Navajo, drawing from poetry by Navajo poet Rex Lee Jim. They argue that an expressive feature, the insertion of a velar fricative, serves as a poetic device in the untitled poem seen below. Each line has a sequence /chx/, where the /x/ is inserted. The insertion of the velar fricative is optional, and this usage is characterized by Mitchell and Webster as lending a pejorative stance and conveying a lack of control as regards the badger and other entities (and their actions) in the poem.

- (4) Poem by Jim (1995: 38), with translation from Mitchell and Webster (2011)  
*na'asbchxiidi*  
*bíchxíib*  
*ni'deesbchxidgo*  
*ni'iibchxii*  
*chxaa' bee*  
*naániichxaaad*

The badger's  
nose  
stretched round  
shitting  
with shit  
is full

Puns are an example of verbal artistry where phonological similarity and minimal difference operate to play with the phonological similarity, but difference in meaning, of two words. Playing with the kinds of similarity and difference in puns can also be used in training activities, for example to help participants to think of puns as a pedagogical method to help students in perception activities. The Seneca pun plays off the English loanword in (5a), with the form in (5b), where the underlying form plays with a bound morpheme that surfaces with the same phonological shape as the loanword, but means something entirely different. The phrasing and word parsing serves the effect of punning.

- (5) Seneca pun (from Chafe 1998, cited in Mithun 1999:292)

- a. *o?gi?* *da:g*  
*o?-k-i-?* *da:g*  
FACTUAL-1SG.AGT-say-PRF dog  
'I said "dog".'
- b. *o?gi?da:g*  
*o?-k-i?t-ak*  
FACTUAL-1SG.AGT-excrement-PRF  
'I ate excrement.'

Word play facilitates the training of participants into recognizing salient phonological categories in a given language. The Chickasaw pattern in (6), courtesy of Joshua Hinson, draws on the type of similarity effect of imperfect puns. Chickasaw uses ablaut on verbs to mark aspect and other categories. The example in (6) plays off the verb for 'to eat,' *impat* versus *ihímpat*, where the phonological differences between these two terms signals a difficult to acquire verb grade.

- (6) Chickasaw wordplay, Fat Guys (J. Hinson, p.c.)  
*Hattak nakni' niha' alhibat misba' binobt máakat impat kaniht tá'ha ba ihímpat  
 binobt máa katihmataa?*

TRANSLATION: 'Is that bunch of fat guys sitting over there finally done eating or are they still chowing down?'

Tongue twisters are also an example of verbal arts where the wordplay puts phonological elements in contrast. At one training event focused on the phonetics of consonants, Choctaw community teacher Betty Battiste offered the tongue twister in (7), which is using /h/ and /l/ in repetitive opposition.

- (7) Choctaw tongue twister (B. Battiste, p.c.)  
*Himona ma hattak bimitta yvt tali on toblolit tiblilit yakni ono tvllatok.*

TRANSLATION: 'Once, a young man jumping over a rock, missed, and fell to the ground.'

Examples like these are valuable for a training audience in which participants teach or speak different languages. Members often share or create examples in their own language to parallel these puns, tongue twisters, sound symbolism, onomatopoeia, alliteration or other verbal artistry in Indigenous languages. The example in (6) came while discussing tongue twisters during an ONLA presentation a few years ago, when Choctaw speaker and teacher Betty Battiste shared a number of Choctaw tongue twisters that she knew. Her actions then inspired Joshua Hinson of the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program to create Chickasaw tongue twisters, which have in turn been used in a revitalization context in their community (Fitzgerald & Hinson 2015).

**4. Implications for revitalization** Training teachers and documenters provides fruitful dividends in both revitalization and documentation initiatives for the verbal arts. The annual Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair (ONAYLF), organized by the Native American Languages Collection at University of Oklahoma's Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History,<sup>6</sup> offers compelling examples of the vibrancy in verbal arts when deployed for language revitalization. Categories include traditional and modern performances of a wide range of verbal arts in the Indigenous languages, with spoken or sung categories including song, prayer, skits, puppet shows, or stories, among others. With the advent of social media, the sharing of these performances by parents, performers and their teachers (as in this video on Instagram of a Kiowa language skit: <https://www.instagram.com/p/mfnDQLMwRk/?tagged=onaylf>), increases the range of their audience. The range of activities presented in this section shows how revitalization activities extend the use of both newly collected and

<sup>6</sup>More details are online at <http://samnoblemuseum.ou.edu/collections-and-research/native-american-languages/oklahoma-native-american-youth-language-fair/2016-fair/>.

archival verbal arts documentation, thus supporting language reclamation in Indigenous communities.

In this section, I look at two contexts. First, I outline examples from a longer, more intense, week-long Oklahoma Breath of Life Workshop, where participants represent several distinct languages, most of which have few or no remaining fluent speakers. Following that, I briefly discuss how the approaches above can be tailored to a particular language, drawing from a documentation project with the Chickasaw Language Revitalization Program.

Turning now to a longer and more intensive training environment focused on language reclamation of primarily sleeping languages, let us turn to the Oklahoma Breath of Life Workshop, an intensive week-long workshop that was held in even-numbered years from 2010 to 2014. The Breath of Life, Silent No More Workshops originated in California, coming out of a partnership between L. Frank Manriquez and the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival and Dr. Leanne Hinton and the University of California, Berkeley (Hinton 2001, 2011). The Breath of Life Workshops draw in members of communities where no fluent speakers of the heritage language remain, pairing them with a linguistic mentor to increase their linguistic knowledge of the heritage language. This model has spread from California to Oklahoma and has even gone national. The workshops support participants in reclaiming their language, especially in learning and teaching it.

In the Oklahoma Breath of Life Workshops (see Fitzgerald & Linn 2013 for more discussion), the first full day of the workshop starts the linguistic instruction. How is documentation of a language, whether it is a dictionary, archival notes in phonetic transcription, or some other form, accessible if participants do not know how to decode the symbols and their values? The phonologies of Native American languages are notoriously complex and typologically interesting, with ejectives, aspiration, phonemic nasal vowels, tone, and considerable morphophonology. Since these features are not present in English, decoding the phonetic value requires instruction about articulation, the phonetic alphabet, and phonemes and allophones. Because participants often enter the workshop not knowing how to decode the documentation, the first day of instruction focuses on phonetics and phonology, to teach participants the sounds associated with the symbols so they are equipped to move on to morphology, syntax and more. The start of the Breath of Life Workshop is sound-oriented so participants immediately start to speak their language out loud.

The phonetic and phonological instruction is specifically geared to the languages of the participants, with examples drawn from those languages or others in the same language family. Participants were given thumb drives of linguistic materials on their language, ranging from scanned field notebook pages to journal articles, and instructors had access to that same material. This enables discussion of standard phonetic symbols (usually in the Americanist Phonetic Alphabet) and how different material in the same language might use different symbols for the same sounds, a first step for helping participants decode the documentation. Facilitating the understanding of the phonetic writing system (or systems, as is often the case) of the language resources has an impact for the entire week's work, not only the phonetics and phonology section.

Beyond that, the instruction gives voice to the language and its community as participants read and speak their language aloud. This prepares participants to create final projects that integrate sound. Final projects take a range of shapes, depending on what the participants' goals are. Some of these projects draw on revitalizing and integrating previously collected verbal arts, while some projects expand the language and create something new. For example, one final project was the recording of a traditional Osage story to be used in the winter for youth classes; the excellent recording studio at Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, where the workshop was held, has excellent recording and sound editing facilities, making it possible for a high quality recording to be produced.<sup>7</sup> Given that oral versions of storytelling, prayers, and songs constitute some of the final projects presented in the Oklahoma Breath of Life Workshops, the positive impact of the phonetic and phonological training becomes clear by the end of the week.

Turning to a language environment that focuses on a single language, Chickasaw, we can see how integrating verbal arts in revitalization contexts works. Chickasaw is a Muskogean language spoken in south central Oklahoma, and the number of speakers is likely 60 or fewer, with perhaps 25 or so using the language regularly through a variety of activities organized mainly by the Language Program, or when they get together socially.

Chickasaw is a phonologically interesting language, and it presents a number of challenges to second language learners, since most of its phonological processes and categories are not present in English, such as vowel and consonant length. The phoneme inventory is almost deceptively English-like, however, with a phonemic orthography in which differences lie primarily in two phonemes, glottal stop and a voiceless lateral consonant, although /h/ is present but in a wider distribution than in English.

Hinson (2016) presents an overview of the oral tradition in Chickasaw, noting the loss of documentation of several genres. In part for this reason, narrative collection has been a key element of a larger collaborative documentation project on the Chickasaw verb, including through a series of narrative bootcamps<sup>8</sup> with onsite recording, transcription and translation of narratives. Storytelling collected by the documentation then gets integrated into learner-focused revitalization workshops (Fitzgerald & Hinson 2015) labeled Listener Workshops, which pair audio and transcriptions together to increase metalinguistic awareness of the language for learners. These Listener Workshops involve learners and fluent speakers, and have proven to be fun activities for the elders, as well as further developing relationships between elders and learners, which is a type of restoration of the intergenerational transmission of language.

Chickasaw prayers (cf. Chickasaw Language Revitalization Committee et al. 2012), sound symbolism, stories and songs create wide-ranging materials to draw in topics from the verbal arts, and it has become a venue where the Chickasaw tongue twisters

<sup>7</sup>This was Rebekah HorseChief's final project, and the recording was about 14 minutes long, an impressive length.

<sup>8</sup>For more on these workshops, see Fitzgerald & Hinson (2016). Fitzgerald & Hinson (2013) goes into more detail on the Chickasaw-UTA collaboration and its goal of revitalization-driven documentation.

(those created by Joshua Hinson, as noted in the previous section) are deployed into revitalization. Much like the techniques described above in §3, here the audio recording is partnered with visible transcriptions and translations. What is significantly different, however, is that the entire group gathered is focusing on a single language, and that the group includes fluent elders and second language learners – and both groups include people who teach the language.

Listening to the same audio more than once, alongside its transcription, facilitates practice in hearing and training the ear to pace, and to think about prosodic groupings, pauses and such. Tongue twisters highlight contrasts in the phoneme system or syllable position, useful in perception and for production.

Because many of the elders and the learners are teaching Chickasaw or using it informally in the home or other contexts, creating take-home materials for the participants helps them to think about how they might use them in the classes they teach. The language-specific focus benefits the community because revitalization-driven documentation is of interest to them, and it creates training materials for learners that feed into documentation by fostering ideas about what else could be elicited or recorded. Theoretical questions underlie the data collection, since we still have access to fluent speakers of the language. And the transfer of knowledge, not only to this community, but considering how these kinds of activities could be extended to other Native American language communities, allows us to do capacity-building and give back.

**5. Conclusion** A compelling case is made in Blevins (2007) for the importance of description and documentation of the sound patterns of endangered languages. She makes this case drawing on a historical perspective, in showing the importance to an areal and genetic understanding of the sound patterns and contact effects in regions and to language families; finally, she adds arguments on what she terms a “practical outlook,” much like what I have shown here specifically for verbal arts and how they can be used in revitalization and training activities. In fact, training and language reclamation crucially rely on the documentation, and the phonetic detail (whether good or bad) of the documentation. Capacity-building in endangered language communities increases with the participation of someone with phonological knowledge, and phonological documentation leads to the discovery of otherwise unattested patterns.

These same contributions occur by integrating the verbal arts specifically into language training, language revitalization and linguistic theory. Endangered languages have shown linguists that specialized knowledge domains are especially vulnerable to loss. Verbal arts are part of that loss of traditional and specialized knowledge, and thus are especially important to include in documentation projects. Recognition of the importance of these areas is rising. Examples of this come from CoLang 2014, where for the first time courses were offered on “Pedagogical phonetics” and “Phonological documentation” (CoLang 2014) and CoLang 2016, which included a course on “Teaching Pronunciation for Indigenous Languages” (CoLang 2016). Journals focused on documentation are also raising this issue; for example, the journal *Language*

*Documentation & Conservation* published Turpin & Henderson's (2015) paper on analyzing verbal arts in a field documentation project.

Returning to this paper, the examples presented here, drawing from different regions and languages like the Tohono O'odham of Arizona and the Chickasaw of Oklahoma, show the wide range of contexts where verbal arts are effectively deployed to support language conservation and the training of community members in the trenches, teaching their language. Moreover, the analysis of the verbal arts is useful to advance theoretical and linguistic knowledge. Advances in multimedia and documentary methods make this kind of documentation potentially even more powerful and able to reach a larger audience thanks to technology. The range of positive implications stemming from documenting verbal arts reinforces the validity of this endeavor, from theoretical and applied perspectives. Finally, this paper gives concrete examples of how a phonologist can make contributions beyond conducting phonological documentation and theoretical analysis by lending their expertise to revitalization and training, thus providing significant support of community language goals.

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