

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)
Unit of Assessment: D28A (Modern Languages and Linguistics: Linguistics)
Title of case study: Helping to Preserve the Endangered Language and Culture of the Kiowa Tribe
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Researchers working on endangered languages have an obligation to produce work of lasting value to the language community. International collaborative research by QMUL on Kiowa (fewer than 30 fluent speakers) has substantially contributed to preserving and revitalizing this native language of Oklahoma. Tribal elders, grassroots language-class participants, grassroots self-learners and Kiowa cultural institutions have benefitted from new language-learning resources: specially designed booklets and an online community via Facebook and YouTube. Over 200 people are now learning Kiowa using real oral literature rather than made-up sentences. A vast amount of linguistic and cultural knowledge, which would otherwise have been lost with the last fluent generation, is now made accessible to the tribe. Tribal members not fluent in Kiowa are now accessing previously inaccessible cultural capital lodged with tribal institutions whose mission is enhanced. Individual tribal elders also report a sense of fulfillment in being able to pass on their culture.
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) The research was funded by (the then) AHRB, under grant APN17572, 'Information Structure and Word Order in a Polysynthetic Language', awarded to David Adger (QMUL). The grant ran from September 2004 to September 2007 and comprised an award of £192,000. Adger was Reader in Linguistics at the time, and was PI on the grant. His co-PI was Laurel Watkins (Colorado College), who is the world expert on Kiowa language. QMUL employed Daniel Harbour full time on the grant as Research Fellow, and subsequently in a 0.25 then 0.5 permanent position. Fieldwork was carried out in Anadarko and Carnegie, Oklahoma. All research was carried out under grant auspices. The primary aim of the research was to investigate how a free word order language like Kiowa uses information about speakers' expectations of each others' knowledge to structure discourse and grammar. Answering this underpinning question required the close collaboration of the last native speakers of the language (about 30 elderly people). The researchers used recordings collected between the 1950s and 1980s, working with fluent tribal elders to understand how grammar and discourse intertwine. This led to a level of detailed knowledge of Kiowa storytelling and language that would otherwise have remained forever inaccessible. They found that not only are concepts like topic and focus encoded by particular syntactic devices, but that specific regions of the Kiowa clause are used to mark important shifts in narrative expression. The research also led to new insights into and knowledge of Kiowa lexis, dialectology, grammar and narrative structure. Moreover, the research helped answer a hard, but fundamental, question about transcribing Kiowa oral literature: people don't speak with punctuation or in paragraphs, so where to insert such breaks is generally a choice that outsiders must make without proper understanding of narrative subtleties and conventions. Results can largely misrepresent native understanding. The research

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provided original and distinctive insight into how discourse structure is reflected in Kiowa syntax (Adger *et al*, 2009; Harbour *et al*, 2011) and, therefore, how the texts should be faithfully transcribed.

In addition, the researchers established a steering committee of Kiowas (elders and younger tribal members) during the research itself to ensure that the community could engage with our work and the team has sustained its connections with Elders and Kiowa Cultural institutions since the project finished, in order to be able to produce work of lasting value to the tribe. With the aid of these connections, the team has developed an ongoing collaboration, which has allowed them to make the stories that emerged from the research available in a way that is accessible and useful to the Kiowa tribe and beyond.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)**Key research outputs:**

- i. Adger, Harbour, Watkins. 2009. *Mirrors and Microparameters: Phrase Structure beyond Free Word Order*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- ii. Harbour, Watkins, Adger. 2011. Information structure, discourse structure and noun phrase position in Kiowa. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 78: 97-126. DOI 10.1086/662639
- iii. Harbour. 2011. Kiowa-Tanoan languages. *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Linguistics*. 18 manuscript pages.
- iv. Watkins, Harbour. 2010. The linguistic genius of Parker McKenzie's Kiowa alphabet. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 76: 309-333. DOI 10.1086/652791
- v. Adger, Harbour. 2007. Syntax and syncretisms of the person case constraint. *Syntax*. 10: 2-37. DOI 10.1111/j.1467-9612.2007.00095.x

Evidence of quality of research:

1. Grant APN17572 was awarded a grade of OUTSTANDING by the AHRC
2. *Mirrors and Microparameters* was well-reviewed in *Lingua* DOI:10.1016/j.lingua.2010.04.007
3. *Mirrors and Microparameters* and 'Syntax and syncretisms of the person case constraint' are REF2014/RAE2008 submissions respectively

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

There are 11,445 enrolled Kiowa tribal members but fewer than 30 fluent Kiowa speakers, and they are in the last decades of their lives. The tribe is committed to preserving its language; language loss has a huge impact on cultural identity. Because of this, the research team established a steering group during the research (from 2004) and engaged with the tribe after the research (from 2009), leading to the creation of useful cultural and linguistic materials, primarily booklets of stories (distributed from June 2012; 1,395 so far) and sound files on YouTube, digitized and edited by the research team. These are being used to help preserve and revitalise Kiowa. The Director of the Kiowa Tribe Museum says: 'There is a great need for language tools such as booklets, guides, CDs, apps ... the booklets ... will assist us in our fight to preserve and reclaim our language.' (letter 26/4/13).

The research findings led to an understanding of the recorded stories that allowed the researchers to present them in a way that makes the Kiowa language and Kiowa cultural memory accessible to the younger tribal members whose own control of the language is dysfluent or highly restricted, as well as to Kiowas with a stronger grasp on their language. The booklets are presented in a layout

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allowing multipurpose usage, combining Kiowa text for fluent speakers, word-by-word glosses for learners, and idiomatic English translations for non-speakers. They are structured in a 'flippable' fashion, allowing use of the two most common Kiowa writing systems.

The booklets are distributed by key tribal contacts and by agencies of tribal government, culture, media and education, including the Kiowa Tribe Museum, the Kiowa Elders' Center, the Anadarko Daily News (connected to the National Hall of Fame for Famous American Indians) and Jacobson House, a non-profit Native American centre. They are also downloadable from a Facebook group, established in 2012 by the researchers to engage the community in a sustainable fashion (www.facebook.com/groups/290180151091518). Harbour gave a talk on how the texts were to be made accessible to Museum and Elders' Center employees and was interviewed about this on Kiowa Voices Radio (4/13).

This work has impacted on four beneficiaries:

(1) Elders. The elders (aged over 70) are central to tribal identity as custodians of cultural memory and linguistic knowledge. Individual elders, as well as those responsible for their welfare, report personal and community benefits. The Director of the Kiowa Elders' Center says: 'All this work is appreciated by the leadership of the Kiowa tribe as well as by those of us who are working to learn our language', (letter 29/4/13). An elder says: 'You gave me the inspiration to learn my Kiowa language and to teach my half-Kiowa children our language.' (Facebook 6/7/13).

(2) Language classes. Life-long-learning, grass-roots language classes running weekly at Jacobson House, at Chickasha (taught by Dorothy Delaune, over 270 booklets distributed), and at Oklahoma University (Dane Poolaw) now have Listen-Read-Repeat resources, featuring whole stretches of discourse on culturally significant topics. Ms Neely, assisting Mrs Delaune in Chickasha, says: 'I love the booklets – you all did a great job! I'm so glad you're distributing them and getting them out into the community.' (Facebook 17/3/13). Mr Poolaw says: 'This is great! ... keep it up, this will be very useful ... help[ing] students and learners get to read and hear Kiowa and get used to pronunciation.' (Facebook 15/02/13).

(3) Self-learners. Grass-roots self-learners benefitted via a online community set up via the Kiowa Stories Facebook group (over 200 members including adult learners, organizations and students from local high schools), which distributes electronic materials and YouTube recordings (*A Kind Man* – 84 downloads; *Captive Woman* – 57, *Olden Times* – 30).

One member of the group, who lives away from the main Kiowa area, says: 'It is very helpful ... being able to hear the audio of the speaker and also reading along with them. I have downloaded the stories booklets to my phone and have also made recordings of the audio ... It is very important to me as a Kiowa to keep this language alive, I have also been helping my family on learning the Kiowa language. The Kiowa Stories Facebook page is also a great room, I know if I have a question on a word or phrase that would be the first place I would check ...' (email 22/06/13).

(4) Kiowa Tribal Museum. The Museum is a cultural resource and tourist attraction, featuring art, artefacts, and, audio(visual) recordings. Its mission includes preserving and providing access to cultural/linguistic heritage. The materials produced aid in this, making previously inaccessible cultural heritage available to speakers, non-speakers and learners. The Museum's Director says: 'One of the most frequent requests here at the Museum is for language materials. ... Currently, we do not have any language texts (apart from the booklets ...).' The researchers' sustained

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engagement with the museum, before, during and after the project, has led the museum to act as a hub, hosting sound files and distributing booklets. She continues: 'One of our long term goals [is] to create a language center ... the books that you sent will fit in well with that goal.' (email 18/4/13).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Director, Kiowa Tribal Museum (www.kiowatribe.org/kiowa-museum). To corroborate need for language learning materials and usefulness of booklets at cultural and institutional levels.
2. Fluent elder and language teacher, Jacobson House Language (www.jacobsonhouse.com). To corroborate usefulness of materials in language classes and individual benefits as an elder.
3. Learner and teacher of life-long learning language classes, University of Oklahoma. To corroborate usefulness of materials in life-long learning language classes for community.
4. Director, The Jacobson House (www.jacobsonhouse.com). To corroborate usefulness and cultural importance to the tribe of materials produced.
5. Director, the Kiowa Elders' Centre (www.kiowatribe.org/administration-on-aging). To corroborate individual benefits to Elders of research process and outcomes.
6. www.facebook.com/groups/290180151091518/ To corroborate photographs of booklets and acknowledgment of their distribution by various centres, number of members of Facebook group, sustainability of engagement, usefulness of materials to grass-roots self-learners, downloadability of resources.
7. YouTube availability of sound files and download numbers:
Captive Woman: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITjUj1kgi-w,
Olden Times: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep6vsHqqzPk&feature=youtu.be,
A kind man: www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_W72X0A0WM
8. Letters of appreciation from the Directors of the Kiowa Elders' Centre and the Kiowa Tribe Museum. Emails and facebook messages from Kiowa learners and teachers. Available on request.