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FACEBOOK AS A TOOL IN MVSKOKE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USE

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES

BY

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iv

List of Tables vii

List of Figures viii

Abstract ix

Introduction 1

Language Loss History 1

Mvskoke Language 3

Statement of the Problem 9

Purpose of the Study 10

Significance 11

Positionality 11

Review of Literature 12

Language Revitalization 13

Endangered Language Learning 17

Second Language Acquisition 18

Crosslinguistic Influences and Language Purism 19

Social Dimensions of "Endangered" Heritage Language Learning 21

Language Socialization Theory 22

Identity Theory 23

Technology and Language Learning 25

Conclusion 27

Methodology 28

Research Design 28
Data Collection 29
Sample 30
Limitations 30
Findings 31
Identity 31
Language Socialization 35
Language Ideologies 39
Language Revitalization and Technology 43
Discussion 45
Indigenous Language Paradigm 47
Ontology 47
Epistemology 49
Methodology 49
Axiology 51
Conclusion 52
Bibliography 54
Appendix: Terms List 56

List of Tables

Table 1. Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale 7

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Muskogean Languages 4

Figure 2. Map of MCN Tribal Members throughout the World 5

Figure 3. Map of MCN Tribal Members within the State of Oklahoma 5

Abstract

This paper explores and discusses the various factors in which Indigenous language learners obtain and interact with their heritage language. Specifically, the role of Facebook in language learning and use is analyzed. The methods in which Indigenous languages are taught are examined in relation to Indigenous worldviews. Within this analysis, traditional and constructivist teaching methods are compared and contrasted for their effectiveness in Indigenous language teaching. The worldview of learners is also considered in the process of Indigenous language learning and how better to instruct them.

Introduction

Oklahoma is a hotspot for Native languages, but many of these languages are in danger of extinction. In an effort to thwart language death and revive their tribal tongue, many tribes and language groups are establishing revitalization programs to both document authentic and meaningful language use, as well as provide a means for individuals to learn the language with the hopes of teaching it in the future. Some language revitalization programs have established immersion schools, community classes, and master-apprentice programs. The overall goal of these revitalization efforts is to create speakers that will go on to teach and maintain tribal languages by using them in various types of settings, both traditional and modern.

Language Loss History

Language loss occurs for numerous reasons, but the endangerment of Native American languages is deeply related to the systematic oppression and colonization of Native American peoples by the American Federal Government. Beginning with European contact in 1492, Indigenous peoples of the Americas were not appreciated for their differing cultures and the label "savage" was placed upon them. According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2014) there were over 300 Indigenous languages spoken during first contact with Europeans. Today, this number is estimated to be half, at around 150 languages (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica 2014). After the founding of the United States, the U.S. government developed various assimilation and removal policies aimed at gaining control of tribal lands. Removal policies resulted in many tribes being forcibly removed from their lands to Indian Territory (what is known

as Oklahoma today). In the late 1800s, government officials developed a means with which to eradicate Native American cultures, including the languages that accompany them, through education policies and the establishment of off-reservation boarding schools. Scholars have confirmed the detrimental effects of boarding schools on Native people and tribes across the country, particularly noting their impact on language loss (McCarty 2003; Reyhner 2007). Boarding schools sought to erase tribal cultures and this was often accomplished by prohibiting Native children from speaking their tribal languages and forcing them to learn and speak English. In fact, Native children often endured extreme punishment when using their Native language (McCarty 2003; Reyhner 2007).

Due to the importance of tribal languages to identity and culture, tribes have begun to revitalize their languages. Like many other Native American issues, this increase in language revitalization has caused the formation of legislation which aids in the process. With the passing of the Native American Languages Act in 1990, a resurgence of tribal cultures and languages has spawned. This act acknowledges the uniqueness of Indian languages and recognizes that the United States government must work with tribal nations to preserve their language, thereby saving their culture (Reyhner, 2007). When a language is lost, a great deal of information is at stake. In terms of culture, the language of that culture is best able to express the concerns, values, and ceremonies of the group of people associated with said culture. This cultural perspective of language reflects the idea that language influences thought and reality. Without that connection, knowledge is lost. This knowledge includes the understanding

of tribal histories, religions, the environment, and much more (Fishman 2007; Hinton 2001b; Reyhner 2007).

Mvskoke Language

Mvskoke (Muskogee, Creek, or Seminole) is a Muskogean language originally spoken in the southeastern region of the United States in Alabama, Georgia, and parts of Florida (see Figure 1). The language is most commonly known as Creek by non-speakers due to its affiliation with the Muscogee (Creek) people. Creek is a name given to them by Europeans. This name refers more specifically to the Ochesee Creek Indians, a group of Muskogeans that invaded Hitchiti lands. The name simply comes from their living distance to water (Gould 1933; Wright 1951). Mvskoke (like the names of many tribal groups) means "the people." However, some believe the name comes from maskek, an Algonquian word which means 'swamp' or 'marsh' (Wright 1951). Others tie its origin to the Choctaw language. The two groups came into contact through trade. Creeks were often referred to as 'm-uski-algi by the Choctaw. This translates to 'their cane people,' im-uski being 'their cane' and algi being the Creek suffix for 'people.' The Choctaw name for the tribe most likely comes from the Creek war group known as the Red Sticks, who carried red-handled war clubs (Wright 1951).

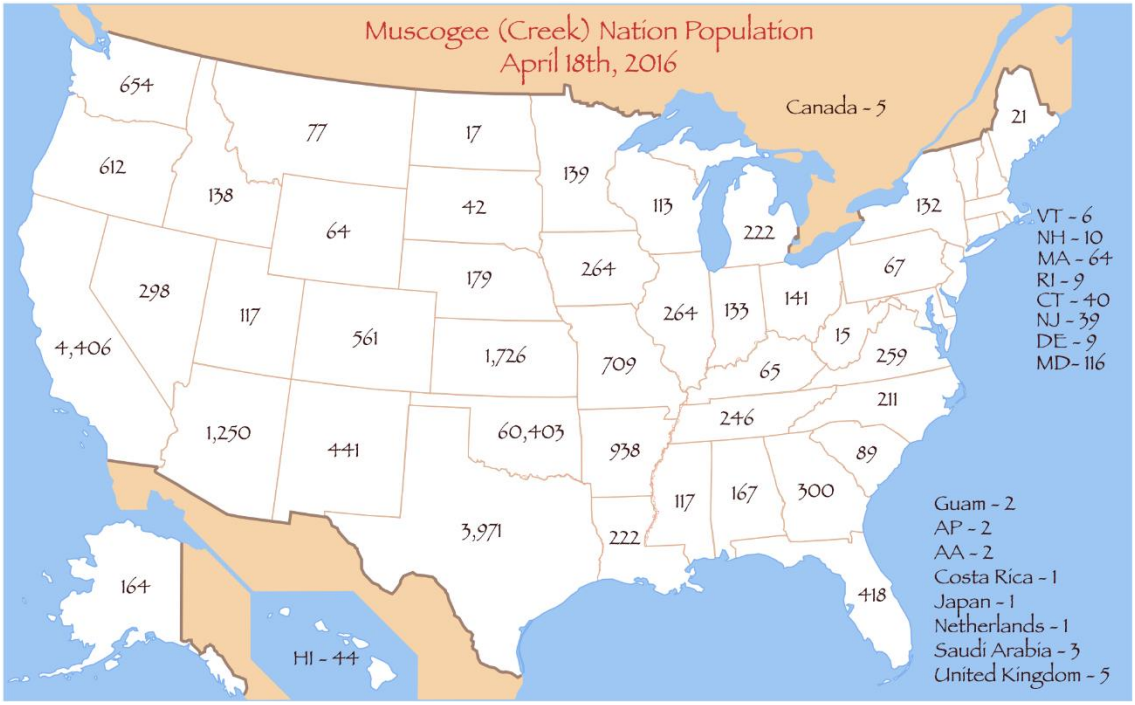
Figure 1. Map of Muskogean Languages



Source: "The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica" 2014

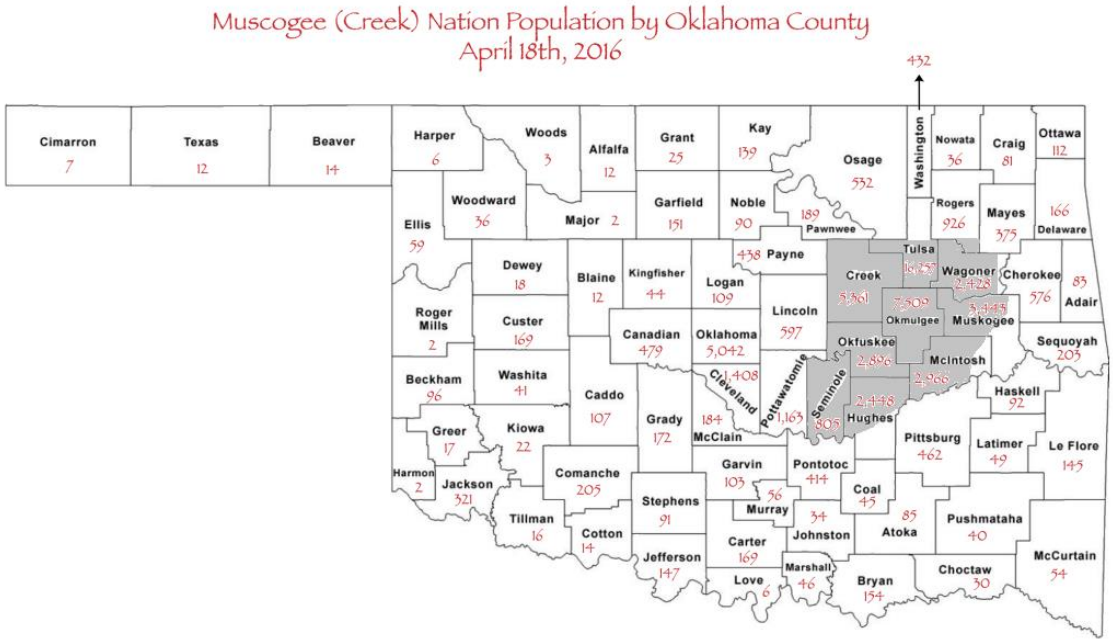
Currently, there are over 80,000 enrolled Muscogee (Creek) Nation citizens. Just over 60, 000 of these citizens live in the state of Oklahoma and less than 25,000 live with Creek Nation or Seminole Nation tribal boundaries (Muscogee (Creek) Nation 2016). (Refer to Figure 2 and Figure 3 for an illustration of Muscogee (Creek) Nation tribal member distribution. Shaded in gray in Figure 3 are Creek and Seminole tribal boundaries.) The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma has around 17,000 enrolled tribal member; 5,315 of which live within Seminole County (Seminole Nation of Oklahoma 2015). Statistics on where the remaining tribal members live is not available.

Figure 2. Map of MCN Tribal Members throughout the World



Source: "Muscogee (Creek) Nation" 2016

Figure 3. Map of MCN Tribal Members within the State of Oklahoma



Source: "Muscogee (Creek) Nation" 2016

According to Omniglot (Ager 2017), there are around 4,700 Mvskoke speakers—of various levels of fluency—total in Oklahoma and Florida combined today. However, Ethnologue (Simons and Fennig 2017) estimates that there are anywhere from 4,000 to 6,000 speakers in Oklahoma from both Muscogee (Creek) and Oklahoma Seminole backgrounds, and as many as 200 speakers in the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Those in Oklahoma are as young as 18-years-old, but those in Florida are in their 40s or older. However, a common understanding in the tribal community is that speaker numbers are much smaller. Mvskoke speakers estimate that the actual number of speakers ranges from 600 to 1,000 in Oklahoma; and in total, there are estimated to be 2,000 speakers within the United States. The majority of these speakers reside in Oklahoma and Florida, with a few in Alabama. Lewis and Simons (2010) developed an Intergenerational Disruption Scale, which measures the transfer of language between generations, rating from international use to extinct languages (see table 1). Mvskoke is classified as a 6b-threatened language, meaning it is used for face-to-face communication within all generations but the number of speakers is decreasing. Currently, there are language revitalization efforts in Alabama, Florida, and Oklahoma (quoted in Simons and Fennig 2017). These efforts vary depending on group due to the dialect differences in the language. There are three dialects total: the Muscogee (Creek), Oklahoma Seminole, and Florida Seminole dialects; they are mutually intelligible (Martin 2011; Martin and Mauldin 2000). With all of this in mind, it's important to note that there are various ways in which to assess the vitality of a language.

The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) shown below is just one example of how languages are assessed.

Table 1. Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Source: "Simons and Fennig" 2017

As mentioned previously, Mvskoke is a Muskogean language. There are two subfamilies, Southern Muskogean and Northern Muskogean. Mvskoke fits within the Northern Muskogean subfamily, while all other Muskogean languages are classified as Southern Muskogean. This includes Hitchiti/Mikasuki and the Southwestern languages,

which are made up of Alabama, Koasati, Apalachee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw. There are some noticeable similarities among Mvskoke and these other languages (Choctaw in particular), but they are not mutually intelligible (Martin 2011; Martin and Mauldin 2000). Culturally, there are several tribes closely related to the Creeks. These tribes speak a completely unrelated language, but many speak Mvskoke as well. Overall, the imposition of English through colonization and federal policy has decreased the use of the language due to Mvskoke's lack of prestige.

Increased availability and use of technology has provided new means for preserving and revitalizing the Mvskoke language. For example, social media sites such as Facebook have increased the use of Mvskoke in recent years. There are several Facebook groups and pages dedicated to Mvskoke language learning and use with varying characteristics. This study particularly looks at two different groups/pages: the Muscogee Word of the Day and MVSKOKE Word of the Day (2013). These pages were created with the purpose of disseminating Mvskoke within the Facebook community and reaching those interested in learning the language that may not have the opportunity due to distance. Content on both pages includes posts containing one or more words, their pronunciations (given phonetically), and their use in a sentence entirely written in Mvskoke. Specific to the Muscogee Word of the Day page are additional posts made by members relating to questions they have about the language, whether they be translations or general inquiries. Although there are other Facebook pages and groups relevant to the Mvskoke language, they are not solely for language learning. General Creek and Seminole cultural preservation and sharing is the basis for these additional groups. For this reason, they will not be focused on for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Although offering a way to learn for those interested is a great means of acquiring many Indigenous languages, providing materials for tribal members at large is difficult. Some tribes have created many written texts that can be purchased, but access to audio-visual resources is limited. Tribal members that do not have easy access to fluent speakers (due to distance) need to be able to hear the language to acquire it and be able to use it every day. Some tribes have utilized technologies that allow for audio recording, but little is known about how those impact language acquisition and communication among tribal members.

With a decrease in first language speakers and the prominence of English in daily lives, the use of Mvskoke becomes obsolete. Without creating new speakers, language death is eminent. Another concern is the ability of new speakers to keep the language alive. This is where consistent language use is vital. Currently, Mvskoke use is limited to cultural ceremonies, hymnal singing, and use in the homes of first language speakers. However, some first language speakers no longer use the language due to the lack of people with whom they can converse. In order for the language to move out of the "endangered" zone, more speakers must be created and language use must reach broader contexts (day-to-day communication, educational system, government, etc.). By expanding the boundaries of Mvskoke language use, it becomes easier for more Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Seminole Nation of Oklahoma tribal members to have exposure in general. This also allows tribal members outside of the tribal boundaries to learn Mvskoke when there may not have been the possibility previously. When use is limited to cultural ceremonies, it becomes difficult for tribal members to learn

Mvskoke. This is especially true for those that cannot attend these events for a multitude of reasons. While there is a general understanding that the use of Mvskoke language needs to expand to reach tribal citizens more broadly, what is not know is how this might be achieved. Furthermore, it is important to understand what role technology plays in providing exposure to language and how that might foster language use among tribal members. How do members use different technologies and perceive their helpfulness?

Purpose of Study

There is limited knowledge on the use of technology—like social media—in Native language acquisition and learning. For this reason, this study seeks to answer the question, "what role does Facebook play in fostering the use of the Mvskoke language?" Facebook in this instance refers to two Facebook group pages dedicated to the Mvskoke language; the Muscogee Word of the Day and MVSKOKE Word of the Day pages. Specifically, this study seeks to understand how group members interact with these pages and use the content produced, both on Facebook and in other platforms/environments. This particular technology is primarily used by adults, therefore this research will look at adult second language acquisition and overall language use. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Facebook in Mvskoke language learning and use.

Significance

Current literature on media (audio, video, social media—Facebook, Twitter, etc.) use in language revitalization is limited to the recording of languages and does not fully address the utilization of technologies as a teaching/learning tool. What is known about the use of technology in language learning and use is primarily linked to non-Indigenous languages. A few language studies (Hermes and King 2013; Miyashita and Moll 1999; etc) have been conducted on particular technological creations and how Native language learners have utilized these technologies. This study opens a door for Mvskoke language programs which allows them to expand their network of interested learners and foster language use in daily life. More specifically, knowledge gained through this study provides insight into how Facebook can be utilized to make language learning and use possible for tribal members throughout the United States and even across the World. In addition to this, it adds to the limited literary work related to the topic and provides a basis for more research on the use of modern technology and how it interacts with Indigenous languages.

Positionality

Before I go into the study, it's important to introduce who I am as a researcher. Camille cvhocefkvt owet mowis Kolehpa 'ste-cate cvhocefkvt os. 'Ste-Mvskoket owis. Hiyowat, Mvskoke opunvkv cokv-hecis. My name is Camille, but my Indian name is Kolehpa (Firefly). I'm Mvskoke (Creek). Currently, I am studying the Mvskoke language. Growing up, I knew I was Mvskoke but I did not have the opportunity to explore what that meant. This can be attributed to the lack of cultural transmission within my family due to assimilationist policies and the distance my hometown was

from our tribal complex. My aunt once told me that my great-grandmother said it wasn't cool to be Indian when she was growing up. She had to attend boarding school and decided that passing on our culture would not help my family in a Western dominated society.

For the longest time I was angry because there was a part of me that was missing, but then I found my language. Learning the Mvskoke language led me to the greater understanding of what it meant to be Mvskoke. From it, I learned how to think like a Creek person. This changed my worldview. As a Mvskoke person, I believe everyone has a role within my community; not one individual is more important than another. Everything we do should be for the greater good of our community. However, with this comes a hesitancy towards Western society. Because I know where my family fits within traumatic historical events, I have this natural tendency to question non-Indigenous ways of thinking as a means of decolonizing—both generally and as it relates to educating Indigenous peoples. It's a means of protection, of reclaiming my power as an Indigenous woman.

Review of Literature

Indigenous languages are the original languages that can be traced back thousands of years to the original inhabitants of a given place. These languages have been with a group of people since the beginning of their existence. Today, many Indigenous groups are minorities within the country of their community's location. This is often a cause of systematic oppression and settler colonialism. As a result, their languages often suffer from underuse. For many of these communities, language is closely linked to their

group identities and language shift threatens their culture and overall being. Because of this, great efforts have been taken to revitalize Indigenous languages. An important aspect of this process is the learning of the language itself. Language is complex and language learning is no different. Through the study of second language acquisition and language ideologies, language education professionals have been able to identify several areas in language learning which can indicate what makes for the most efficient means of learning a second language.

Language Revitalization

Language loss, or more specifically language shift, refers to the gradual decrease in language usage over time. This shift is most often due to the increased use of a more dominant language. In the instance of Native American languages, this would be English. Although language shift can happen in communities quite sizeable demographically, it is most common for it to occur in smaller communities with fewer speakers (Fishman 1997). Language ideologies are one of the major reasons for language shifts. Dominant society places a level of prestige on certain languages and this causes people to view all other languages differently, eventually resulting in a lack of language use (Ortega 2009).

In an effort to reverse language shift, many scholars and endangered language communities have begun revitalization efforts. Before I address these efforts, it is important to distinguish the difference between language preservation and language revitalization. Language preservation can be defined as the effort to thwart language extinction (Hinton 2001a). This is commonly done by way of documentation. Language documentation is vital for many reasons, but it is especially important for languages

with few speakers because these speakers may die out one day and language revitalization will become difficult. By documenting a language, there is hope that even languages without speakers can be revived Hinton 2001a). Hinton (2001) has done extensive work examining language documentation. Documentation can be done numerous ways, paper documentation being the most popular and reliable means. However, it lacks the ability to allow endangered language learners to hear accurate pronunciations. Technology (tape recordings and CDs) use in documentation is common, but these types of technologies can deteriorate more quickly and become archaic with changes in time. The purpose of documentation is to preserve language as authentically as possible. Storytelling, singing, and conversations are just a few examples of what academic linguists document for language preservation (Hinton 2001a).

Language revitalization, on the other hand, is the process of reviving a language that is no longer being used as the communicative language of a speech community. One of the goals of language revitalization is to create new first and second language speakers (Hinton 2001a). But what teaching methods work for endangered languages that have been traditionally disenfranchised? There are two types of linguistic learning environments in which an individual can learn a language: formal and naturalistic (Ortega 2009). Formal language learning is like that of the traditional classroom in which an instructor fluent in the language teaches a group of students. Naturalistic environments are similar to the informal way we learn to speak our first language. In this instance, it would be more accurate to label this as acquisition rather than learning because of the manner in which information is given. A great deal of listening and

imitation occurs without directly telling learners what each piece of information means (Ortega 2009). Krashen (1981) defines acquisition as a natural process that occurs through communication with native speakers of a language. He relates this to a child learning their first language, primarily through observation. Learning, on the other hand, he defines as an active process in which language learners look at different aspects of language, such as grammar and sound system. Krashen suggests that acquisition is more important because it focuses on communication rather than the memorization of the rules of language.

Immersion schools are the teaching method that language revitalization programs utilize to teach larger groups of students of an endangered language. Instruction in these programs is done completely in the endangered language, and this includes all subjects. Because the focus of many tribes is to create as many fluent young speakers as possible, immersions schools are viewed to be the most successful means of doing so (Hinton 2001d; Hinton 2011). Even though this is seen as being similar to traditional language education, students in these programs receive more quality exposure to the language because it provides several hours of access rather than the few hours a weeks in most high schools (Hinton 2001d; Hinton 2011). In addition to this, students are more likely to use the language outside of the classroom because they have more of an opportunity for authentic communication with other students (Hinton 2001d; Hinton 2011). Although formal education is often viewed negatively among Native communities due to the history of boarding schools, immersion schools are under the control of these Indigenous communities which helps ease this tension and promote cultural preservation as well (Carreira 2004; Hinton 2011; McCarty 2003). Examples of

successful immersion schools are those of the Maori and Hawaiian language programs. The Maori language program was the first to establish a successful immersion school and is the model for many language revitalization programs (Hinton 2011; McCarty 2003).

Language Nests and Master-Apprentice programs are the more naturalistic methods for endangered language learning. Language Nests are preschools for language learning that utilize the help of the grandparent generation (usually the last generation to produce fluent speakers before language shift) to provide exposure to children. Elders that take part in these nests speak the language to the children at these preschools, much like parents speak to their babies. This process often results in the acquisition of language (Hinton, 2011). When children are too old for Language Nests, they enroll in immersion schools (Hinton 2011). One final way of learning an endangered language is through Master-Apprentice programs. This type of learning is targeted towards gaining conversational competence by spending time with someone proficient in the endangered language at hand (Hinton 2001c; Hinton 2011). Master refers to the person proficient in the language while apprentice is the individual actively learning the language. There are no books or professional instructors involved. Language is taught by performing everyday tasks like shopping, hunting, and much more. With this in mind, there is a newer kind of Master-Apprentice program that involves immersion teaching and apprenticeship. Master-Apprentice programs reflect the importance of reciprocity (mutual exchange) within Indigenous cultures because often the apprentice is doing work for the master while learning. In many cases, cultural preservation is a part of this

process with the performance of ceremonies and traditions (Hinton 2001c; Hinton 2011).

Endangered Language Learning

Endangered language learning is often defined in terms of heritage language learning. Although there is some overlap in the definition of these two types of learning, certain characteristics of endangered languages differentiate themselves from heritage languages. The term heritage language encompasses Indigenous languages, along with immigrant and colonial languages. In general terms, heritage languages are those that differ from the language spoken dominantly in a given country (Carreira 2004; Hinton 2011; Valdes 2005). Carreira (2004) divides heritage language learners into three separate categories: those part of the ethnic community, those with a connection through family and/or ethnic backgrounds, and those with previous exposure to language. Heritage language learners (HLLs) that are members of an ethnic community simply have communal ties to a language other than the one dominantly spoken.

Heritage language learners with communal ties to a heritage language are more likely to be those from Native American communities with little to no speakers of the language itself (Carreira 2004). These learners are often concerned with preserving and revitalizing a language indigenous to a specific area within a modern-day nation-state. Many of these languages are often in danger of language death, or complete disappearance due to lack of use (Valdés 2005). Due to this specific characteristic, Leanne Hinton (2011) makes a distinction between heritage languages and endangered languages. More specifically, heritage languages may be endangered in a particular region, but still have use in another area of the World in which they are not considered

endangered. Another way Hinton separates the two terms is by stating the fact that endangered language learners may not have previous exposure to the language while heritage language learners often have previous contact with the language in some form. In extreme cases, these languages may have no living speakers and learning is part of the revitalization process, but this a rather loose use of the term. For this specific paper, I am referring to 'endangered' heritage language learners.

Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition, or SLA, is the field of study in which the ability of people to learn a second language after they have been established in their first is explored. SLA does not discriminate by age; simply, an individual's first language(s) must have been acquired. The field first began in the late 1960s as a conglomeration of different fields including linguistics, language teaching, psychology, and early childhood language acquisition (Ortega 2009). SLA looks at a vast array of phenomena that influence language acquisition.

With all of this in mind, it is important to note that the field of SLA does not always address the influence of cultural and community differences on language learning. More specifically, official language model utilized in teaching foreign languages does not necessarily work for endangered languages. The standard form of language is taught, meaning the accepted written form which is found in print and all other media (Shaul 2014). And more specifically, it does not work for Native American languages largely due to language ideologies. Very few scholars have written on the subject; however, those that have only scratch the surface. Two books in particular that do address this issue are *Linguistic Ideologies of Native American Revitalization: Doing*

the Lost Language Ghost Dance by David Leedom Shaul and the anthology *Native American Language Ideologies: Beliefs, Practices, and Struggles in Indian Country* edited by Paul V. Kroskrity and Margaret C. Field. In these texts, scholars offer up reasons as to why dominant language ideologies pertaining to language learning and use do not always apply in language revitalization cases. They relate the Native American experience (colonialism, oppression, etc.) to Indigenous ways of teaching and why Western ideas of education perpetuate the oppression of Native American cultures.

Sociolinguistics is the field of study pertaining to how languages are influenced by society and differing social groups. Within the field of sociolinguistics varying subjects are addressed, but the most important to this study is language ideology. Linguistic ideology (or language ideology) refers to the views about a language in a given social context. This includes language practices and speakers. These ideologies are shaped by politics, morals, and culture (Shaul 2014). Language ideologies in Native American communities are complex due to the divide between fluent speakers and members of the language learning community. This divide in language ideology can cause problems in both language use and language learning/teaching.

Crosslinguistic influences and language purism

Individuals learning a second language have previous knowledge of their first language when learning. This can often influence the production of that language. Hinton (2011) notes that several aspects of language are subject to change due to L1 influence. Depending on the age of a learner, endangered language learners are likely to have a non-native accent accompany the use of their heritage language. Children are less likely to be affected by this if they learn in an immersive environment in which they have

direct contact with fluent L1 speakers. Another aspect that can be impacted is grammar. Interlanguage refers to the intertwining of grammatical knowledge from one's first and second languages while using their second language. When an endangered language learner uses their second language, they are likely to blend aspects of their L1's grammar into the endangered language. Processes like this often result in a simplification of the second language (Hinton 2001b; Ortega 2013).

Unique to endangered languages is the learner's influence on how the language is spoken by the language community as a group. Due to the fact that many learners are taking responsibility for preserving the language, any changes that take place during this acquisition may stick because they often become teachers of that language. This process is known as pidginization (Hinton 2001b; Hinton 2011). Since these second language learners are trying to keep the language alive, they might create new vocabulary (individually or with a group of language 'experts' in the community) to appeal to more community members and allow the language to be used in modern contexts. This process of language modernization is likely to happen with many endangered languages, depending on the opinion of tribal elders. Language immersion programs often do this in order to teach subjects like math and science (Hinton 2011).

According to Ortega (2013), motivation refers to an individual's aspiration to learn a second language and the ways in which they continue that process of language acquisition. Over the years, several antecedents have been identified in relation to motivation. The ones outlined in this paper include integrativeness and orientations. Integrativeness will be investigated with relation to orientations and social dimensions of language learning.

Orientations are simply the initial reasons for learning a second language. They often are responsible for a learner's establishing of goals and means of maintaining motivation. There are five types, of which only two will be discussed in detail: instrumental, *knowledge*, travel, friendship, and *integrativeness* (Ortega 2013). Systematic oppression is more often than not the cause of endangering many Indigenous languages. Therefore, the main driving force behind 'endangered' heritage language learning is an effort to reverse the language shift caused by such oppression. Many of these learners feel it is their personal responsibility to preserve their language because it is a part of their culture (Fishman 2007; Hinton 2011). With many Native American languages, knowledge of varying types is lost with language loss. In this instance, the orientation of motivation is knowledge. This knowledge may be about that learner's own identity, the language itself, or the culture that accompanies that language. Similar to this is the desire for an individual to identify with a group of people. Integrativeness, as this is called, refers to belonging within a cultural community (Norton & McKinney 2011; Ortega 2013). As previously mentioned, language and culture are often tied closely together within Native American communities. Cultural revitalization is a process many tribes are encouraging their citizens to take part in. Many of these tribal members learn their language to bond with members and create this sense of belonging in relation to mutual efforts of cultural revitalization.

Social Dimensions of "Endangered" Heritage Language Learning

In the 1990s, the field of Second Language Acquisition took on a new perspective of the more social aspects of language learning. From this perspective, it was thought that studying an additional language was both shaped by the social context in which that

language is being learned, but also a linked to that specific context. More simply put, the environment (or context) in which a language is learned provides one representation of that language. If you place a learner in a context other than how they have been learning, the view of how proficient they are is going to change due to the new social system in which they are entering (Ortega 2013).

Language socialization theory

From the work of Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin in the 1970s and 1980s developed a theory within the field of linguistic anthropology known as Language Socialization Theory. Their work centered on the integration of children into their language communities through social interaction with fluent members of that community. Particularly, they looked at social routines used to incorporate these children into the community's "language, culture, and values" (Ortega 2013). Language Socialization Theory looks at the interaction between second language learners and the community in which their L2 is spoken. It focuses on the development of communicative competence through social interactions related to language and culture (Duff & Talmy 2011; Ortega 2013).

Language Socialization Theory is not specific to a given learning environment. These social interactions can take place in formal classrooms, among peers, or at work or home. The most important aspect of this theory is that L2 users are interacting with language users that are more knowledgeable or proficient in the language and are a part of that language community. Rather than simply focusing on language development, language socialization looks at concepts learned through language. These concepts include culture, social knowledge, ideologies, epistemologies (ways of knowing),

identities (of the L2 speaker), affect (expression of emotions), communicative routine, and social practices (Duff & Talmy 2011). This is relevant to endangered languages because learning language is much more than just being able to use it. In learning that language, they are also preserving a culture which includes these ideologies and epistemologies. The Master-Apprentice Model of language learning is based on this idea that language is a means of integration.

Identity theory

In the 1990s, research conducted on identity struggles spurred an interest in second language identity. This interest manifested itself in a research framework known as Identity Theory. Within this framework, linguistic development is linked to a learners' sense of self in relation to the language community with which the language they are learning is associated (Ortega 2013). In a broader sense, Identity Theory relates to one's understanding of where they fit in the world, how this is constructed in time and space, and how this impacts their future. From this definition, second language learners are constantly negotiating their identity with relation to others when they utilize their L2, or second language (Norton & McKinney 2011).

There are several concepts within Identity Theory. These concepts relate to investment and communities of practice. Right to speak is another concept, but it will not be introduced here. Investment refers to the notion that if a second language learner purposefully learns a language, they do so knowing they will gain knowledge which will benefit them in a cultural setting (Ortega 2013). This concept is closely tied to a learner's motivation for learning a second language. Investment, in terms of Identity Theory, is referring to integrative motivation, a concept mentioned previously. The idea

that learning a language will allow an individual to successfully become a member of their target language community. Rather than simply being a motivational aspect of language learning, investment considers both the desire to integrate into a language community and an individual's ability to renegotiate their identity as a result of language learning (Norton & McKinney 2011).

Another concept of Identity Theory is concerned with real and imagined communities. Real communities are simply those with which a second language learner aims to gain acceptance into, whether this be actual membership or general belonging. On the other hand, imagined communities exist purely in the mind of the learner. These communities are constructed on past experience and hopes for the future (Norton & McKinney 2011; Ortega 2013). As Norton & McKinney (2011) note, imagined communities may simply be a group of people in which a language learner desires to be affiliated, but cannot easily access due to distance. Imagined communities may not be tangible, but this does not mean they are any less real than those in which language learners interact on a consistent basis.

Imagined communities are very prominent among endangered language learners. Benedict Anderson, the man who developed the term "imagined communities," stated that nations are to be considered imagined communities because it is not plausible for an individual to know every member of that nation due to distance, but they are still viewed as part of the same community (Norton & McKinney 2011). According to this logic, endangered language learners have created their identity in relation to a community with which distance separates the members, but this does not discredit the imagined community in the least. Especially true with these 'endangered'

heritage language learners is their ancestral bond through language and culture, as well as their current ties through the desire to preserve their language.

Technology and Language Learning

With the advancement of technology has come a new area of research within the field of education and linguistics. Although relatively new, many of the studies related to technology use in language learning pertain to strict use within a classroom setting or among dominant World languages. Technology use in language revitalization is often limited to its use for documentation and not language teaching. With this in mind, some scholars have decided to look into the use of technology in endangered language learning. Even though this scholarship is limited, it is paving the way for more studies on the matter.

As Jack C. Richards (2015) notes, language learning happens both in and outside of the classroom. The purpose of language education is to provide instruction to students that will aid them in communication outside of that class. However, much of formal instruction only provides for classroom-based language use. Due to the limitations of classroom language learning, language education specialists have sought out the use of technology in the classroom to provide more authentic uses of language. With different types of media, learning tools have allowed for more interactive and social means of using language.

Language instructors have even gone beyond technology in the classroom and utilized existing mediums (chat rooms and social media) to encourage meaningful language use outside of class. Scholars suggest that the use of social media in language instruction has direct impact on language learning and provides a means of gaining

social acceptance in a desired language community (Akbari, Pilot, and Simons 2015; Richards 2015; Warschauer 1998). This is due to the fact that students have access to native speakers of their given target language and can utilize this technology at any time (Akbari, Pilot, and Simons 2015; Richards 2015). Richards (2015) also writes that social media can allow for collaborative learning between students. By having the opportunity to discuss interests not normally addressed in class, students can create a wider vocabulary and bounce these new words back and forth. In addition, this creates a more autonomous learning environment in which students can shape their language learning to be relevant to how they would use it in daily activities.

Encouraging people to learn endangered languages can be rather difficult due to the fact that many people view them as irrelevant and archaic. Because of this, language revitalization programs have tried to employ the use of technology in creating relevance (and motivating learners) while preserving the language, distributing new materials, and reaching more isolated groups of people wishing to use and learn the language (Warschauer 1998). This has been done widely through the use of the Internet. With relation to identity formation, technology allows individuals to explore their identity while using a language. For many without access to communities because of distance, they are able to invest in the cultural aspects of identity by communicating with members of the target language (Warschauer 1998).

While recent studies have demonstrated the usefulness of technology in language instruction and use, they have not explored Indigenous languages. Much of the scholarship pertaining to Indigenous languages and technology is related to language documentation. Few studies have looked at formal endangered language education and

media. Haag and Coston (2002) look at the use of online classes for the Choctaw language and how this has allowed for cultural solidarity and political prestige. In addition to this, it has provided the opportunity for wider use of the language throughout the state of Oklahoma. Other studies look at the use of language-specific programs for language learning and use at home. Hermes and King (2013) developed a software for Ojibwe language revitalization and looked at how that software impacted family language learning. However, this study still researched specific language learning that followed a formal standard of teaching through media rather than natural acquisition or learning through Indigenous means. What has not been examined is whether technology can provide a naturalistic means of endangered language learning through active learning and communication rather than following a lesson.

Conclusion

With the increased popularity in the field of language revitalization has come an increased interest in the study of endangered languages. These studies include revitalization techniques themselves, as well as how endangered language learners differ from learners of languages more dominantly studied. Because endangered languages are viewed as having less prestige in today's world, very little is known about them in relation to second language acquisition in comparison to languages like English, Chinese, and Spanish. Due to this increased interest in saving endangered heritage languages, more research needs to be conducted that relates specifically to them. One area of language learning studies that is fairly new relates to the use of technology. How does technology work with language revitalization and second

language learning? Not much is known about the marriage of all three of these fields together, but existing scholarship can shine a light into what could be.

Methodology

Research Design

This research utilizes a case study, qualitative design and is guided by Indigenous Research Paradigm. Case study is in-depth research in which conditions or events from individuals or groups of people are analyzed for their relationships to one another. An approach like this allows for more in-depth knowledge of participants' experiences (Creswell 2014). In this specific research, the Mvskoke language learning community's experience with Facebook language learning and use is described.

Indigenous Research Paradigm, as defined by Shawn Wilson (2008), is a way of researching that combines Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and axiologies. Indigenous research differs from Western research in that there is an acknowledged relationship between researcher and research. This relationship is acknowledged through how the researcher perceives reality (ontology), understands knowledge and ideas of knowing (epistemology), conducts research (methodology), and their purpose behind the research (axiology).

Within this research, I incorporate my worldview as well as the realities of my participants, along with the Indigenous perspective that knowledge is relational—knowledge is gained through relationships with people, ideas, and experiences—to analyze my data. In addition to this, research was conducted in a manner that honored Indigenous voices and experiences. An emphasis was placed on the historical, political,

and social aspects of life that influence how Creek and Seminole people experience language learning. As a Mvskoke second language learner, I am this research. My purpose for asking this research question was to see what other language learners were experiencing in their journey and offer up advice that would help them navigate some of the situations which I address in this paper. Language revitalization is something of importance to many Indigenous peoples and language revitalization research often focuses on language rather than people. This research gives a voice to those people that are often forgotten.

Data Collection

This study is guided by the following research question: What role does Facebook play in fostering the use of the Mvskoke language? Data was collected in two different ways. First, interviews were held with eight participants that used the Facebook pages targeted in this study. Interviews took place in person or on the phone and lasted from 30 minutes to an hour. Participants were asked questions about their backgrounds, their use of the Mvskoke Facebook pages, and their opinions on the pages including content and interactions. The interviews were transcribed and then analyzed for themes. Facebook posts published on these pages within the last three years were collected based on the themes established through interviews. Data related to language content produced and sought out was collected from these interviews. In addition to this, data about the use of the language in contexts other than Facebook (with its relation to acquisition/learning and language ideologies) was collected.

Sample

The eight participants of this study were chosen based on their interactions with both the Muscogee Word of the Day and MVSKOKE Word of the Day language pages, as well as their general involvement in the Mvskoke language learning community. In addition to this, they are all adult (aged 20-60) second language learners. Four participants are enrolled Muscogee (Creek), three enrolled Seminole, and one is non-Native. Each individual is at a different point in their language learning journey. Along with these participants, posts found on the Muscogee Word of the Day group page from the past three years were looked at for this study. Posts were divided into categories based on the themes established in the data collected through interviews. These categories include general inquiry posts about translations, grammar/structural language clarification posts, and opinion-based posts about the language and how it's being used/taught.

Limitations

Limitations of this study involve sample with relation to the Mvskoke language Facebook community and the overall presence of Mvskoke language Facebook pages. This study does not include various other Mvskoke language pages present on Facebook. This can have an overall impact on content production if participants are learning and producing their language on other pages. In addition, the sample consists of eight Facebook users which is a small fraction of those who use both pages.

Findings

Common themes found in this research relate to Second Language Acquisition's Identity and Language Socialization Theories. In addition to this, Native American language ideologies as they relate to the Mvskoke language community were recorded. Each participant interviewed addressed these topics and how they were portrayed on the Mvskoke language Facebook pages. In addition to this, the Facebook posts I looked at help connect what participants talk about to the actual content on the pages.

Being an Indigenous researcher and conducting my work within Indigenous Research Paradigm, I must acknowledge my relationship to this study. Throughout this section, I will be introducing each topic with my own language learning story because I feel it appropriately illustrates the concepts I address. Many of the experiences participants talked with me about were true to my own. Because of this, I feel it is important to note my positionality as a researcher and language learner as it relates to how I view others' experiences.

Identity

> *It was the final year of my bachelor's program when I started learning Mvskoke. Before that fall semester, I had taken General Linguistics with one of my mentors (Dr. Racquel Sapién) and learned that language was simply a puzzle that I had to learn where different pieces fit. Something I once avoided was now made easy to me because of linguistics. That fall I took her language revitalization class and met more Native people that had a desire to carry on their language. The difference between these other students and myself was that I had never heard my language, let alone did I know a single word. Being jealous of that connection they had with their identity, I began looking into my own heritage language.*
>
> *A new language class had formed in the Oklahoma City area and I forced myself to attend because I wanted to learn and it didn't matter that I didn't know anyone. At first, the classes were great. I learned the alphabet and was taught lists of familial terms and months. Yet something was still missing. I kept attending these*

> *classes, but I never actually learned how to speak. It seemed that every person that taught these classes just talked about the language and I loved it. But I couldn't speak.*

Identity was one of the most prevalent themes within the data. This relates to participants' identity as a Creek or Seminole person and how language is an assertion of that identity. Participants in this study mentioned that their initial desire to learn Mvskoke stemmed from their identity as a Creek or Seminole tribal member. For many of the participants, this assertion of their identity through language stemmed from their lack of growing up culturally Creek or culturally Seminole. A small portion of the participants related this to an absence of motivation to learn Mvskoke at a young age. These participants grew up with exposure to the language and had family members that spoke frequently, but it was not something they identified with at the time.

> "I try to get reconnected to more of the culture and language. Just learning and taking interest in something that's always been around. And now those ones that I could have asked aren't here anymore. And so that's something I really regret."

Several participants addressed how boarding schools impacted their family's use of Mvskoke which ultimately resulted in a lack of knowledge. Unlike the previous example, this lack of understanding was related to the parent and grandparent generations that went through boarding school. Language was not passed on due to the imposition of Western ideologies about Native languages on Native American people. In a sense, internalization of assimilation policies caused them to see their first language as inferior. As a result of this, language was not passed on. Participants that noted this gap between the boarding school generation and themselves expressed an urgency to

learn Mvskoke. This desire to learn the language is essentially their way of decolonizing themselves and taking back a part of themselves they feel they have a right to.

> "That's [Mvskoke] all my grandparents spoke when I was growing up—that's all they spoke until I hit about school age. I heard about the ceremonial ground though traditional ways, through the language. Heard Christianity through the language, all growing up. When school started—my grandma was one of the boarding school kids, so when we started [school] she wanted to make sure I understood English."

> "... I didn't have the chance to learn it when I was growing up because my grandfather, grandmother, and everyone, they—they weren't allowed to speak it. So they just stopped. And it kind of… that's a piece of my culture that I'll never get back. And that's a piece of culture that my children and their children will eventually not have."

Learning Mvskoke for these individuals is an assertion of their identity that they did not previously feel was accessible. Although forced assimilation and colonization during first contact did not directly involve them, they are still feeling the repercussions of these actions. Language learning did not naturally occur because their family was taught to hide and forget their cultural background which included speaking their Native tongue.

Other participants related their inability to speak to where they grew up. In the case of these individuals, they grew up outside of tribal boundaries. Those that mentioned this either grew up in the state of Oklahoma (just outside of tribal boundaries and without access to Mvskoke language) or in another state. For these individuals, their identity as a Creek or Seminole person was not necessarily emphasized until they began learning the language. In essence, learning is an assertion of their identity.

> "I was raised white. And I was told by my mother that we were the last of the Muscogee people and that there was no Nation anymore. And I grew up

> believing that, but knowing I was red. And I think it was 2014—I went to a powwow and saw someone with a medallion that was the Muscogee seal and I recognized it. I did some research and I found the Nation. It took me two and a half years to become an enrolled citizen."
>
> "I felt really disconnected to my culture and I felt that learning my language would help me feel more connected."

In addition to claiming their own identity, participants with children mentioned wanting to learn to language to help their children learn and assert their own identities. This is true for both the Native and non-Native participants. These participants included individuals that grew up with speakers but did not learn and those who did not grow up around Creek/Seminole culture or language. In their comments, these individuals emphasized sharing whatever knowledge they could with their children even if it was just basic words or language structure. Rather than the emphasis being on language itself, it appears that these individuals just want to pass on what it means to be a Creek or Seminole tribal member.

> "My purpose in wanting to learn the language and become a speaker was because I wanted my kids to know the language. I wanted my kids to know the culture. I wanted my kids to know where they came from. So many people ask me why I don't teach them about my side of the family. Well, my side of the family is very well documented. And they can find anything they want to about being an American, about being an English person. Being someone that came from across the sea—all of that is there."
>
> "We're a storytelling people. And if I could tell those stories like they were meant to be told—that's where we lost it at, I feel. It's in those stories. If I could share that with my kid and even if she didn't learn the entire language but she could learn those stories—from those stories I think comes the broader language."

Something noticeable in the majority of the participants' comments was their ownership of the Mvskoke language. There was no doubt about why they were learning.

It was simply a part of them that they were reclaiming. This sense of reclaiming one's identity is related to the suppressing of Native American culture caused by assimilationist policies established in the removal era. At the time, tribes were forced to assimilate to European culture and lost their language as a result. By learning Mvskoke, they are in effect regaining a part of their culture that was lost in this era.

> "I think your identity, your true identity, is tied to your knowledge of your language. It's always bothered me that I have spent all my life more comfortable with the, for lack of a better term, the oppressor's language than my own peoples' language."
>
> "... growing up I would hear that language was important, and that's who we were. Without the language, we weren't Seminole or Creek people anymore. So I feel like it's more of an identity issue also. It defines who we are."

Language Socialization

> *I wanted so much to learn, but nothing that was available to me was working. And then I met another language learner that was attending immersion classes. These were Bacone classes, but were held at Pumvhakv (Seminole Nation's immersion school). When I first went to visit, I was asked a series of questions about why I wanted to learn. I didn't think much about it at the time, but I was able to get a summer internship through Seminole Nation and was asked the same series of questions again. I thought it annoying because it felt like they didn't listen to me the first time, but I still answered them.*
>
> *After completing the internship, I got to become a member of the group which met every weekday of the semester. But once again, I was asked those same questions. At this point, I didn't feel worthy. The biggest question was why I wanted to learn. And it became clear that if I didn't want to teach the language, then I wasn't really worth teaching. However, this time I changed my answers to be like what I thought they wanted to hear because I was desperate to learn. And who were they to deny me that? Now I wanted to help others learn, but I wanted to do so in a different manner. I wanted to create the kind of materials that I craved because I didn't use to have that exposure to speakers. That's why I was excited about Facebook originally. But the more time I spent on these language pages, the more I saw a lack of compassion, desire, and constructive instruction.*

Users of both Mvskoke language pages expressed a desire to be connected to a community. This is especially true for those living not only outside of Creek and Seminole Nation tribal boundaries, but for those outside of Oklahoma. As mentioned previously, many participants mentioned that their language learning was motivated by their identity as a Creek and/or Seminole tribal member. All of the participants interviewed in this study live outside of tribal boundaries, although a few live mere minutes away from speakers. Every participant talked about joining these pages to reinforce their identity within their tribal communities, as well as to become a part of the language community.

> "When you're in a tribal town where that tribe's been based for a while, everyone pretty much knows everyone. But it seems like everyone in the group lives outside of a tribal town. So they are trying to find a connection back to somewhere they can all learn something that they are interested in."
>
> "The little cultural posts, I'm able to connect those to things I see in real life. When I go to social stomps and things like that, it means more to me. And I guess that's my use for it, to really be able to connect to what's going on."
>
> "People like me—I have never been out to the Nation. I have never seen Indian Territory. So it means a lot that, you know, we can still connect with the people over there."

As many participants indicate, the purpose of these Mvskoke language Facebook pages is to connect people to the language that may not have easy access for a multitude of reasons. However, location with relation to tribal boundaries and speakers appears to be the most common reason individuals joined the pages. Yet again, learning Mvskoke seems to be more than just about the language itself. In these instances,

learning Mvskoke is a way to connect individuals with other learners, as well as members of the tribal community in general.

Within the field of sociolinguistics is the concept of social grouping. This can take place on the macro-level, which includes whole communities, or the micro-level which refers to parts of communities. In terms of languages, the macro-level is the actual speech community while the micro-level may be a specific network of people who frequently interact (Shaul 2014). Many participants discussed their motivation for language learning by way of socializing at a micro-level. In these specific instances, they are talking about being able to use the language with family members both in their present world and when they pass on. This was also something that was prevalent in posts on the Muscogee Word of the Day page. One creator posted a story which sparked a great deal of comments pertaining to the desire to speak with family in Mvskoke.

> "Native guy is carrying a book about learning the Mvskoke language. Older gentleman says, 'Why do you want to learn your language? Ain't no good in today's society.' Mvskoke guy says, 'So when I get to the Creator's land, I can speak to my relatives.' Old man thinks about and says, 'What if you go to hell?" Mvskoke guy thinks and then say, "No worries there, I already know English.'"

This illustrates the common belief in many Native American communities that language is directly associated with family. For them, there is an emotional attachment to language because it represents both culture and kin (Shaul 2014).

Since language is seen as such a strong aspect of culture and a connection to one's people, many of the participants in this study mentioned their opinions about how the Mvskoke language Facebook pages both foster and hinder a sense of community.

> "I was added to the group when I was first wanting to learn the language, just because it was like—I thought anything I could get my hands on would help. But after a while it kind of seemed like they were—like the groups of those pages were kind of in their own way. Like someone would add something or someone would have a question about something, and it would be an argument—or they would be posting something that was unrelated to the point of the group."

Upon looking at posts on the Muscogee Word of the Day page, it's clear what this participant meant by the members of these pages getting in their own way when trying to disseminate language. When new members would make a post about their interest in the language and relate their lack of knowledge to growing up outside of Creek and Seminole tribal boundaries as well as not growing up culturally Creek or Seminole, these members often received a great deal of backlash comments. Other members would criticize them and tell them that they should have known this already and that if they were truly Creek or truly Seminole, they would have that knowledge. As we can see here, identity politics can get in the way of language revitalization.

However, the positive side of fostering a sense of community can be seen in the posts published to the Facebook pages. The majority of the posts have several comments on them with members trying to help one another. These are usually inquiry posts in which members ask the word for something and how to pronounce or spell words. In response to these posts, many members offer up several different answers.

> "How do you spell sunshine?"
>
> "When speaking to more than one person, is the correct was to say (you) choose *ensvtketv*?"
>
> "How do I say husband and my love?"

However, occasionally posts initiated arguments between members and created tension. Arguments generally centered on beliefs about who really knows the language and who has the right to learn the language. Many of these incidents related to whether or not someone grew up around the culture, creating an identity politics barrier to language learning. It's ironic that these are widely disseminated Facebook pages and yet people are still being criticized for living far away.

Language Ideologies

Individuals' views on language and language use was another concept that emerged in these findings. These language ideologies relate back to identity and language socialization as shown through learner and speaker interaction in these Mvskoke language pages. In addition to this, data also provides participants' (as well as Facebook page users') opinions on the status of the Mvskoke language and how the language should be portrayed.

Creating new words is important in order for languages to survive in the modern world. Neologisms, or words that do not currently exist in endangered languages, are not readily embraced by all speakers because it is "not the traditional way of speaking." Criticism is often given to those trying to create new terms or use language in a way that communicates new concepts (Shaul 2014). This is something that was heavily commented on the Muscogee Word of the Day group.

When asked to translate phrases like 'Happy Birthday' and 'Happy New Year,' the speaker who maintains the group and answers questions responded "Greeting phrases are typically not a part of traditional mainstream Mvskoke first language, however, certain second language speakers are providing literal translations. I don't do

that." As is common when languages evolve, words and phrases can be created and translated. This is especially important in language revitalization when endangered languages are struggling for everyday use. What is present here is language purism, the idea that there is one form of the language that is most pure and that any change threatens the use of that language. Now this is something that is understandable in Native communities due to forced assimilation and colonization. However, this often discourages younger language learners and thereby threatens the creation of new speakers. In addition to this, language use is kept in few contexts. These ideals operate under the official language model which does not necessarily work for endangered languages (Shaul 2014).

With all of this in mind, it is important to note that the use of technology in language learning can change ideologies. Facebook is not traditional; however, Indigenous peoples are using Facebook as a means of language learning and use. The speaker previously mentioned obviously sees the use in Facebook as a language tool, but there is still some hesitancy for other changes. Participants in this study also commented on how social media is a large part of many peoples' lives. It is especially good useful in introducing younger tribal members to the language and encouraging them to learn. If they see that their language can be used in the modern world, they will want to use it.

As Shaul (2014) and many other scholars suggest, the greatest problem in Native American language revitalization is creating new speakers in a Western dominant society. This is largely due to increased monolingual households. For Mvskoke language learners, having English is the majority of learners' first language

influences not only their worldview, but also their view on how language is formed. This is very evident in the posts members put in the Muscogee Word of the Day page.

> "... when is the Mvskoke language going to be updated? For instance, saying 'she is my sister,' or 'they are my sisters' without having to say elder or younger sister. Also, the difference in the way a man says sister and the way a woman says sister. There should be a way to say it that is non-gender connected."

Statements like this are problematic because of the lack of understanding about how languages evolve naturally. It is normal for speakers to shorten words and use slang, but changing a component such as the one mentioned is not common because it involves a change in worldview. What is actually happening in the language is not what this learner understands. There are terms for siblings—both older and younger—but these terms refer to siblings of the same gender or opposite. There are not actually words for sister, but rather clarifications for gender and "age." This is a unique component of Mvskoke and is entirely influenced by Mvskoke worldviews.

This specific post led to a long feed of comments among page members. As one of the participants mentioned previously, certain posts can lead to arguments; and this post was one of those instances. Many members responded with anger and criticism toward the individual who wrote these words. One individual commented, "I thought I had heard it all in this crazy world, but when I read this I was appalled! If everything changes to suit this generation's impulsive needs, there will be no truth left." As one can see, this ownership of the language (discussed previously) can cause strong feelings as it relates to change. However, this post also brought up the use of Mvskoke slang and teaching techniques in foreign language classrooms related to the official language

model. Many argued that you teach proper language in Spanish and French language classrooms.

> "I want to be able to say what I mean. Just plain, 'my sister(s).' We have accepted abbreviated words and have our Mvskoke slang words, why not let our language evolve?"
>
> "If you learn French or Spanish, they teach you the PROPER way, not slang. And both have feminine and masculine ways of saying certain words. Just like any language, there is always slang used."

The fact that some learners have complaints about Mvskoke not being similar to a language they are familiar with is not surprising. This is common among many second language learners when they are learning their first second language because they are comparing it to the languages they already know and understand. Although languages evolve, you cannot completely change the worldview of a language and how it influences language structure and meaning. Many of the members that responded to this post understand this and also don't wish for such a change because it wouldn't really be Mvskoke. I believe a great deal of this "no change" mentality comes from a decolonizing mindset. But once again, languages still evolve naturally and if they do not, they tend to become endangered.

> "By whose standards should we evolve? What determines more evolved or updated? Just because English has a 'plain' way of saying something doesn't mean it's more evolved."

Statements like this are important to note because they hint at the general worldview of Mvskoke learners and speakers. It is not uncommon for Indigenous peoples to oppose the language of the colonizer because it signifies a loss in their

identity. Dominant languages, like English, are seen to be more evolved because they have more prestige in dominant society. What this individual is saying further drives home the point that Indigenous peoples should be the ones controlling the fate of their languages. They cannot view their languages solely with Western ideologies because that is not a true representation of who they are.

Language Revitalization and Technology

> *After a little under a year of working with my language immersion group, we had to disband due to financial issues. Our language mentor was teaching us for free, but he needed to take on a second job in order to keep his family afloat. A few months after this decision was made, I introduced myself to the director of Creek Nation's language program. I came to the tribal complex that day to ask for help in learning more language. I had only had success being consistently around speakers and I hoped that they'd be willing to help. Upon meeting with them, it was pretty clear that the program's focus was on teaching children and language documentation. I offered to be an unpaid intern which would allow me to learn while helping the program, but the director made it evident that they did not want to and would not make time to help me in my language journey.*

When looking at these outcomes and the interactions on the Facebook pages along with the information provided in interviews with the participants, the Facebook language community consists of a larger number of people with linguistic appreciation. What is occurring on these pages is more of a metropolitan revitalization. This is "public, symbolic use of the heritage language in banners, mottoes and slogans, public signage, and other conspicuous, emblematic uses of the heritage language—and even extensions to print and broadcast media" (Shaul 2014, 33).

Linguistics and anthropology have largely been white-dominant fields. However, operating research and theory under a Western framework does not

necessarily translate to Native American research. In particular, Western ideologies pertaining to heritage language learning and second language acquisition do not work well in practice. But how can we use language ideologies to mold the ideal language learning techniques and environments for Native American second language learners? The information collected from these participants and Facebook pages can give some insight into what works.

Every participant noted that these language pages succeeded in what was probably their original goal: to help people get exposure to the language. However, they all also stated that you cannot learn the Mvskoke language from these pages due the content. Both pages focus on helping members gain vocabulary by way of creator posts or member inquiries. Although some participants indicated this was still beneficial, it was not helping them learn to actually speak and understand language in full.

> "So you see like, 'What does this mean?' or 'Can I give my baby this stupid made up Indian name?' You know? It's interesting. Kind of like shock and awe that someone would want to know that because you know they're going to use it for something dumb. And then there's the ones that are genuinely like, 'I want to be able to teach my baby to speak this,' instead of just using it briefly. I think that's an abuse of the language to use it so briefly as to just give a name. I think that if you've got a Creek name, you've gotta know Creek."

> "The interaction helps me. It's the lack of context that doesn't do anything for me."

However, something that each participant emphasized was the need to be around speakers and hear and speak the language consistently. A few participants have been exposed to communicative and immersive style teaching techniques and noted this was the only way they were actually able to use the language. Many attributed this to the

fact that language is given in context rather than in lists which is what these language pages tend to do.

> "The immersion style used is something I've never been exposed to before. And it's a whole different approach. Just the way that it forces you to draw on these things in just a moment's time. The necessity that it puts you in at a moment's notice. Quick thinking abilities and all of that. … I've got every book you can think of that's been put out as far as pertains to the language. And I think that's (immersion) been the most effective."
>
> "I would say I've probably learned more if I'm sitting at a table with people, like I was talking about (with elders). Sitting there, listening to their interaction and then following up on them. "
>
> "Studying it (the language) is your own responsibility. But you literally have to be in the classroom experiencing it. You have to be in the classroom, thinking on your toes."
>
> "Immersion. It's the best way to learn because you're forcing yourself to think and only think in Mvskoke. And reply in Mvskoke."
>
> "There's not a lot of interaction on it (Muscogee Word of the Day) anymore. It's just hard to learn without having someone to converse with."

As can be seen here participants do not feel as if Facebook provides enough to actually learn how to speak a language. It's clear that this platform gives access and exposure to the language in general and it places an emphasis on community which is important in Native American language learning; however, Facebook alone is not an efficient means of learning Mvskoke at its current state on these pages.

Discussion

> *Where am I now? I'm writing about the findings from my research with the hopes that Creek Nation and Seminole Nation will see these experiences and can benefit from them. Language revitalization is a hard experience, but it's even harder when tribal language programs don't know about the individuals that do want to learn*

and how they are struggling. This is why I conducted this research, because I wanted to create something that contributed to my community.

As we can see in this study, "endangered" heritage language learning is a rather complex topic. Although motivations behind language learning and revitalization are nearly universal, it seems that language communities have a rather difficult time deciding what practices are most useful due to dividing language ideologies. However, if entire language communities can come together to discuss these issues, maybe a solution can be made to fix these problems.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation (MCN) and Seminole Nation of Oklahoma (SNO) also provide aid for language learning. MCN has three language teachers that teach at tribal head start programs. Due to the young age of students that attend these programs, the most basic language is taught. SNO used to have an immersion school that ran in conjunction with the Seminole school district's schedule, but funding issues have caused the school to close down. During the summer, SNO also offered a four week immersion internship to anyone interested over the age of 16. Both language departments have Facebook pages, but SNO is the only one that uploads frequently.

With this in mind, it's important to note that neither of the Facebook pages discussed in this case study were created by tribal language programs nor are they maintained by them. However, it may be possible to improve the content of these pages by bringing in tribal language department employees and simulating their teaching techniques through posts on these Facebook pages. It is also important to determine what the language learning community needs in order to succeed. If creating new speakers is the goal, something needs to change.

Indigenous Language Paradigm

Language ideologies (which include identity and language socialization) largely influence the learning of Native American languages. These ideologies don't quite align with Western language ideologies and something needs to be changed about how the acquisition and learning of Native languages is done. The needs of the language learning community must be considered in successful instruction. I propose an Indigenous Language Paradigm based on Indigenous Research Paradigm that considers the following areas: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology.

Although Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) is a worldview that guides research, the four aspects of IRP can be looked at in relation to language teaching. It is not something commonly done though because of this idea of the official language model in foreign language teaching. As mentioned previously, the official language model follows this "one nation, one language" approach which places an importance on dominant languages because it deems them useful under a capitalist system (Shaul 2014). The study of foreign languages often reduces languages to a field of study rather than placing an emphasis on language learning to communicate.

Ontology

Within the field of Second Language Acquisition are what is known as the traditional and constructivist approaches to teaching language. The traditional approach focuses on the teacher as the master and the student as the unknowledgeable learner. In traditional language instruction, the curriculum is organized based on grammatical structures, beginning with individual words and then progressing to larger units such as sentences and then discourse (communication). A criticism of these approaches is the

decontextualizing nature of the language as it's presented. Constructivist approaches, by contrast, present the language in its discourse context with an emphasis on communication rather than memorization (Ortega 2009).

Of the two approaches, the constructivist approach is the most consistent with Indigenous approaches because it considers that there are multiple realities and students differ from one another. By examining language from the student's perspective, you can make content more meaningful for them. It's extremely important to note that "endangered" heritage language learners often choose to learn their heritage language for multiple reasons, but the end goal is to have the ability to hold a conversation with a first language speaker. When we look at the learning of more dominant languages, students' goals are more focused on studying a language rather than speaking it. Instruction must be different because of the end goal.

As they are now, the Mvskoke language Facebook pages do not have much of the language in context. However, this is an incredibly easy platform to allow for this. Due to the nature of being about to upload video, audio, and even simple pictures, Facebook has more means of giving context to language. Trying to learn a language simply by looking at words is not likely. You must be able to hear and understand the language to be able to produce it. By including videos on these pages, content creators can have a more meaningful role in guiding language learning among members. Members can hear and repeat phrases which often results in a broader understanding of how the language works. This is similar to how we learn our first language in which we listen and then repeat. Teaching of grammar doesn't come until much later.

Epistemology

There are concepts in many Indigenous languages that cannot translate to a more dominant language. This is largely because Indigenous ways of knowing are generally not accepted in the dominant society. However, the same can be said when you flip the situation. Many concepts in English don't readily translate in Indigenous languages. One of the most important Indigenous ways of knowing is through storytelling. Storytelling allows for the teaching of language along with cultural morals and values. It also ensures the development of one's identity in relation to their tribe and social environment. In addition to this, cultural ceremony, beliefs, and relationships are a part of how we know what we know.

Learning by doing is something largely emphasized in Indigenous cultures. Due to the communicative nature of language learning on Facebook, learners can have conversations with speakers in the language and don't feel the pressure of being tested on what they know. This incorporates the language socialization aspect of learning while also emphasizing community which relates to relationships and knowing. Facebook also allows for easier access to the cultural components of knowing, storytelling being one of the most important. Members of the community are able to share their stories of language learning, as well as stories in the language. Storytelling is very important in Native communities and Facebook is just another domain for doing so.

Methodology

If we refer back to the traditional and constructivist approaches, the actual teaching techniques differ greatly as well. Traditional teaching centers around a lecture with little

interaction while constructivist relies on interaction (Ortega 2009). Due to such a heavy interaction influence, immersive and communicative teaching styles/techniques are the most conducive for language learning under a constructivist approach. These techniques are often used for language revitalization. Another aspect that is important to note is peer interaction. Learning is done with others rather than alone (Ortega 2009).

The immersive and communicative teaching styles that the constructivist approach lends itself to incorporate discourse into language learning. Discourse refers to the written and spoken dialogue between speakers of a language (Ortega 2009). As indicate in the findings, language socialization is an important aspect of "endangered" heritage language learning. When a language instructor emphasizes discourse in their teaching, they allow their students to learn how to become of member of the language community. In addition to this, participants mentioned a strong need for natural communication in order to gain language in context. By having a mentor that works within this constructivist worldview, they gain more than just language. They gain the culture behind the language which is something that cannot be disconnected in Indigenous cultures. As was stated, language is their culture.

Access to speakers, the language community, and other learners is something extremely valuable that Facebook has to offer compared to the language classroom. Technologies like Facebook give instant access to information and people. This is not something readily available to traditional classroom language learners. However, this is especially unique for "endangered" heritage language learners because they are able to socialize on another level. It allows them to gain information on language and culture, as well as people willing to help them in their language journey. In addition to this,

Facebook enables them to continue use of the language at all times. Using language outside of the classroom is often difficult, but when your main source of learning is the internet, wherever you are is the classroom.

Axiology

Why do people learn Indigenous languages? What is the purpose of language revitalization? Why are Indigenous languages worth saving? These are the questions one must ask when deciding the value of endangered languages. As was made apparent in this research, many people learn Mvskoke because of their tribal identity and their desire to be a part of that cultural community. In addition to this, people learn Mvskoke in order to save it from complete extinction and total loss of Creek and Seminole culture. It's also commonly understood that Indigenous peoples have knowledge of animal and plant life that is only known in their language. Many would say that preserving and learning an Indigenous language adds to our scientific knowledge base.

These language pages have dual purposes: language revitalization and documentation. This is really useful because an informal archive of useful language (words and phrases) is being documented with the sole purpose of teaching learners. New phrases are also being made accessible through learner-speaker interaction. Certain modern saying are not always translated in existing language materials, but being about to ask a speaker how you might say something allows for the learning and documentation of that phrase. This also ensures that the language is evolving which keeps it in use.

Conclusion

In order for Indigenous languages to not only survive, but thrive in a modern era, you have to take into account that Indigenous languages are not like Western languages in many ways. This dichotomy of Indigenous ideologies versus Western ideologies is largely a result of colonization and the negative experiences surrounding assimilation. When working with historically oppressed peoples, you must consider that decolonizing practices are important in asserting their ideologies. This does not mean Western ideologies aren't valuable; it simply means that language learning and teaching practices need to go through an Indigenous lens to be more relatable to Indigenous peoples.

From this study, it is clear that the Muscogee Word of the Day and MVSKOKE Word of the Day Facebook pages don't provide enough to turn language learners into speakers. However, they do provide a means of exposure to Mvskoke language and culture. In addition to this, they act as communities for language learners in which general knowledge and experiences can be shared. Currently, these pages are a starting point for Mvskoke language learners, but there is a great deal of potential for Facebook acting as a medium of language instruction. Content and interaction need to change slightly for this to work more efficiently.

By incorporating more Indigenous practices in Facebook language instruction, these pages could be more successful in creating speakers—or at the least more advanced learners. Such Indigenous practices include ways of knowing: cultural ceremony and beliefs, relationships to others and the world around learners, and storytelling. These are all hands-on practices which are already used to teach culture,

identity, and the role of individuals in their community and the world as a whole. In addition to this, providing more context for language through these means and intentionally teaching the cultural meaning behind different aspects of language. Along with this, Western practices of grammar instruction would be useful.

With all of this in mind, it's important to establish that this study is only the beginning of digital language learning as it applies to Indigenous languages and peoples. More studies need to be conducted on Indigenous language ideologies that include a wider range of tribal communities. This will help identify any differences between language ideologies among communities of differing sizes. These communities need to include a wider array of Native peoples because current literature relates to Hawaiian, Lakota, Navajo, and Maori language revitalization. In addition to this, other online platforms and technologies need to be examined for comparison and contrast.

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Appendix: Terms List

Communicative Approach – method in which learning takes place through genuine communication

Constructivist Approach – method in which learners take a more active role in learning

Documentation – creating an archive of language materials

Endangerment – when a language is at risk for extinction due to language shift and speakers dying out

Extinction – when there are no longer speakers of a language

Language Loss – the suppression of a language

Language Revitalization – process of creating new speakers and increasing language use

Language Shift – use of one language decreases while use of a more dominant language increases

Linguistic Appreciation – the enjoyment of language and recognition of its qualities

Preservation – documenting and maintaining archived materials

Traditional Approach – method in which instructors control the learning environment