The Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas

SSILA BULLETIN

108.1 CORRESPONDENCE

CD-ROM game techniques can be useful in language restoration

- From Julian Granberry (nalserv@svic.net) 4 Mar 2000:

I would like to add my voice to those who feel that Microsoft's suggestion of adding Native American cultures and languages to its games repertoire is a very positive gesture -- one which should not simply be rejected out of hand. I say this on the basis of our experience at Native American Language Sevices in our work with tribal education and cultural departments on the preparation of language restoration materials. We have found a tremendous interest on the part of Native American peoples in using CD computer games as a method of teaching their languages, particularly to their younger generations. We are currently working with a number of tribes on precisely this kind of project. In conjunction with a professional multimedia design firm, we are developing user-friendly CD language courses which do not use English as an intermediary medium and which teach grammar not overtly but through phrase patterns. These "courses" reward the learner with a variety of positive feedback techniques for the successful completion of various kinds of "exercises". The courses use video scenes filmed in the tribal territory with tribal members as speakers, and take the user on a journey through various aspects of tribal life, each aspect utilizing the vocabulary necessary for that particular life-activity. We find that users -- young, old, and in-between -- are fascinated by the "no pain" game technique used (dare I mention "French Without Tears"?). They are eager to try the CDs, internalize the materials rapidly, and, what is more, use their new information increasingly in everyday life.

If Microsoft can help us do this, my response would be "More power to them (and, not so indirectly, to us in our language stabilization efforts)!"

> ~Julian Granberry, Language Coordinator
> Native American Language Services
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> (nalserv@svic.net)

Case distinctions in URLs and e-mail addresses

- From John E Koontz (John.Koontz@Colorado.EDU) 4 Mar 2000:

I write in reference to the comment "It turns out that (at least some) web addresses are case sensitive" (Bulletin #107.7). The example, from the announcement of the Athabaskan Language Conference, was: http://faculty.washington.edu/sharon/ALC2000/ where "/ALC2000/" works, but "/alc2000/" doesn't.

I believe that host names (like "faculty", and "www" in many URLs) and domain names (like "washington.edu") are case free, and are usually, but not always, depicted in lower case. After this, punctuated by slashes (/), is what is called (in Unix, anyway) a pathname, or a list of directory names, ending -- optionally -- in a filename. The URL quoted above ends in a directory

name, since there is a following slash. Pathnames may or may not have significant case distinctions, depending on the operating system to which they are applied. In MS Windows of various vintages and varieties, case is not significant in filenames, although there are some case conventions (e.g., directory names usually start with a capital letter). In Unix, however, case *is* significant. Given a URL with case distinctions, it is wise to preserve them, at least from the first single slash on.

In e-mail addresses, however, case distinctions are never functional. This is presumably by design and enforcement, since Unix e-mail addresses are usernames and could therefore distinguish case. The capitalization that is often used in e-mail addresses (e.g., "Colorado.EDU") is not functional in the system. Although the practice might be intended to enhance readability, it is probably spread by example, like most other linguistic changes.

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~John Koontz
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Mystery phrase

- From Susan Georgion (sesilvertree@mindspring.com) 8 Mar 2000:

I wonder if a reader of the SSILA Bulletin can help me identify the Native American language that is the source of the phrase (transcribed as best I can) "Ya YaTah Yehu"? It is supposed to mean 'This too will pass'. My grandmother knew the phrase, but she never knew to which tribe her ancestors belonged. I've wondered about this all my 46 years. I hope someone can help me solve this family mystery!

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108.2 ...AND NOW A TLINGIT BARBIE

Although she is mute, unlike the Aztec cyberwarriors of "Age of Empire" (Bulletin #106.2) and Navajo Code Talker "GI Joe" (Bulletin #107.2), it is probably worthy of note that a Tlingit Barbie has recently joined the growing number of American Indian simulacra on sale at toy and game stores. According to a recent story in the New York Daily News, Mattel Corpration -- which began marketing "Northwest Coast Native American Barbie" in February -- has tried to make her as accurate as possible. Not only does she have black hair and an olive complexion, but she is decked out in clothing that was designed in consultation with the Sealaska Heritage Foundation. Not that compromises weren't made. According to Rosita Worl, the foundation's Tlingit president (and an anthropologist), "the folks at Mattel wouldn't use the traditional red and black colors because they believed it wouldn't sell....They said they needed to use the colors the general public likes." On the other hand, Worl advised Mattel not to be too accurate when it came to copying crests, since they are the private property of specific clans. "All in all", Worl said, "the doll will probably be educational. People are going to learn about Tlingits, or at least know that we're still alive."

108.3 WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Laura Graham on Xavante verbal performance

SSILA member Laura Graham (laura-graham@uiowa.edu) has had her work with Xavante expressive genres featured on NPR's "Pulse of the Planet" program. She discussed and illustrated her work with Xavante songs and ritual speech in five short segments that were broadcast in February. Descriptions of each segment are available on the Web at:
http://www.pulseplanet.com/Feb00.html

To hear audio recordings of the segments go to:
http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/pulseplanet/ and search for "Xavante".

108.4 LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT COLLOQUIUM IN GERMANY

An invitational colloquium on "Language Endangerment, Research and Documentation - Setting Priorities for the 21st Century" was held in late February in Bad Godesberg, Germany, organized by Matthias Brenzinger and supported by the Volkswagen Foundation. Presentations covered the situation of language endangerment in almost all the world regions, the processes leading to endangerment, and the possibilities and priorities for documentation. A book will result from the colloquium, to be published by Mouton. Reports on the native languages of the Americas were presented by: Michael Krauss (Arctic); Akira Yamamoto (North America); Colette Grinevald (Middle America); Willem Adelaar (Highland South America); and Denny Moore (Lowland South America).

108.5 BRIEF ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRECTIONS

- "Warrior in Two Worlds", an hour-long documentary of the life of Ely S. Parker (1828-1895), will be broadcast on PBS on Thursday, April 6 at 10:00 p.m. ET. Parker, a Tonawanda Seneca, was a prominent military and political figure in 19th century America, but is probably best remembered as Lewis Henry Morgan's friend and principal collaborator in Iroquois research. For more information on the program, check out PBS's website at <http://www.pbs.org/warrior/index.html>.

- From M. Dale Kinkade (mdkd@interchange.ubc.ca) 8 Mar 2000:
  The date of this year's Salish Conference is August 16-18, and it will be at Mount Currie, B.C., hosted by the Mount Currie Lillooet Band.

- From David S. Rood (rood@spot.colorado.edu) 13 Mar 2000:
  I have just received confirmation from the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes that they will host the Siouan-Caddoan meeting this summer. However, they want to change the date to one week earlier than previously announced, so we will be meeting in Anadarko, Oklahoma on June 2-3, 2000. Send titles and approximate length of time for a presentation (20-30 minutes recommended) by May 12 to: David Rood, Dept of Linguistics, U of Colorado, CB 295, Boulder, CO 80309-0295 (rood@colorado.edu).

- From Murielle Nagy (murielle.nagy@fss.ulaval.ca) 15 Mar 2000:
  The journal Etudes/Inuit/Studies has a new web site at: http://www.fss.ulaval.ca/etudes-inuit-studies

108.6 E-MAIL ADDRESS UPDATES

Anderton, Alice .... ToWordpath@aol.com
Davis, Cathlin M. .... cmdavis1@students.wisc.edu
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