

Language Learning in the American Southwestern Borderlands: Navajo Speakers and Their Transition to Academic English Literacy

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Abstract

The premise of this paper is that teachers can gain insights by situating themselves as learners of the first and second languages of their students. The research for this paper was conducted at the University of New Mexico-Gallup, a campus committed to the development of literacy in both Navajo and English. The Navajo Nation would like to see a two-year Navajo language requirement for regional colleges; a language proficiency exam is required for the placement of teachers on the reservation. At the same time, a high level of English literacy is required for Navajo students who wish to enter the professions in which they are under-represented: the sciences, medicine, and law. This paper examines the situation of regional language learners through field studies and classroom practices. The author also draws on research on language attitudes, contrastive analysis of Navajo and English, and discourse strategies. This analysis is necessary for the development of authentic bilingualism in the Four Corners region.

As sovereign nation “islands,” Native Americans exercise their right to formulate language policies that will protect their endangered languages, and the culture embedded in their ancestral tongue. Of the remaining 175 native languages that have survived from the 300 existing at the time of European-Native American contact in the sixteenth century, Navajo is included in the estimated 20% of the ones that are relatively healthy (Linthicum, 1998, p. 5). In the Four Corners region, consistent and rigorous instruction in both Navajo and English is desirable for cultural survival and for the achievement of the English literacy required for those who wish to enter professions in which Native Americans are under-represented. Research indicates that strong bilingual programs facilitate long-term academic success and reduce the

number of years required to reach age and grade-level norms; seven to ten years are required for second language students in schools where all the instruction is given in English (Collier, 1995). Only a quarter of the students in the Gallup-McKinley school district serving the areas adjacent to the reservation have access to a Navajo educational assistant; not all of the aides are fluent in Navajo, and even fewer are adequately literate in their ancestral language. Initiatives by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights now require 45 minutes of ESL instruction to those with “severe” language needs. These programs are under-staffed, and there is a high student-teacher ratio. Politics and funding aside, the challenges of achieving authentic bilingualism/biliteracy are daunting. The difficulties language learners face as they make the transition from English to Navajo and from Navajo to English are described in this paper. Fluent Navajo speakers from traditional backgrounds typically reach a watershed with their advanced college-level composition skills as the merger between the conceptual templates of their two languages matures. This merger is evident in the attached writing samples from University of New Mexico students.

(Re)Learning the Tribal Language

While Native Americans agree that tribal languages need to be preserved, there is no general agreement on how this should be accomplished. The functions of literacy in the regional schools are clearly understood, though there are parents who prefer that the primary focus be on English. There is not a consensus on what (if any) functions literacy in ancestral languages should have in the community. The tribal council at the Cochiti Pueblo of New Mexico, for example, decided in 1997 to prohibit the development of a written version of their Keresan language; community members will learn through immersion programs under the direction of the elders (Linthicum, 1998, p. 5). The language is considered sacred, and the tribal members wish to protect the religion by withholding the language from the public domain. The last thousand speakers of Jicarilla Apache have such concern over the loss of their language that some are working with a University of New Mexico linguist, Melissa Axelrod, to compile a dictionary (Uyttebrouck, 2002, p. B1). In contrast, the Navajo tribe has a history of support for native language literacy dating back to John Collier’s leadership as commissioner of Bureau of Indian Affairs. Collier also helped to shepherd the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 through Congress. Louise Lockard documents the tradition of Navajo language literacy from 1940–1990, and indicates that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools worked in conjunction with linguists and progressive educators to produce bilingual materials. More recently, the small presses and university presses have adopted this function, though the number of new titles is on the decline (Lockard, 1998, p. 105). In addition to these bilingual materials, traders developed vocabularies, missionaries prepared translations of the Bible and prayers, and

anthropologists recorded traditional Navajo ceremonials and songs. Historically, the purposes of writing have been determined by educators, traders, missionaries, and anthropologists. With an estimated 175,000 speakers, Navajo is considered to be the most secure language, but the drift of the young toward the use of English strengthens the case for literacy.

Traditional leaders and educated Navajo are currently determining the uses of the language. The Office of Dine Culture-Language in Windowrock, Arizona has two objectives: to make the Navajo language available at all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation, and to develop an understanding of, and respect for Navajo culture. The standards will be reviewed and possibly approved by the Navajo Nation Council over the next few years. These initiatives are not new. In 1966 Rough Rock Demonstration School implemented strategies for language development in both Navajo and English. Texts have been developed by teachers and teacher assistants on themes relevant to the community (Dick et al., 1994, p. 35). There has been support for a two-year language requirement at regional colleges, and a Navajo proficiency exam, along with extensive curriculum, has been developed by Dine College. There are hopes that such efforts will result in more fluent teachers for local classrooms, as well as fluent speakers who can communicate in medical settings and translate in the court systems.

Language policies can be made, yet the onus is still on the individual speaker to prevent language shift. A policy requiring oral and written use of Navajo at all grade levels “to the greatest extent possible” was proposed by the Navajo Nation’s Division of Education and approved by the Navajo Tribal Council during the Peter Zah administration (1984). On a daily basis, however, the Navajo language continues to be used inconsistently in schools and the workplace. Even when conversations are initiated in Navajo, a switch to English is common, and there is a reluctance to acknowledge the shift toward English. A 1992 survey of “headstart” children indicated that 55% of the children were monolingual in English, 18% were fluent in Navajo, and 27% exhibited limited understanding of English and Navajo. In another policy effort to prevent more drift toward English, the Navajo Nation requires use of the native language in the “headstart” program.

In politics, however, Navajo remains the language of power. The language is used more consistently in chapter houses, the centers of decision-making in small, rural communities. The Navajo language is also heard more often in the tribal council chambers. In 1987, the chairman of the tribe spent ten thousand dollars to wire the chambers so that interpreters could simultaneously interpret Navajo and English. Time is required for adaptation to such a system. Nevertheless, the councilmen who were dominant in Navajo preferred to ask other councilmen to interpret for them rather than use the earphones. A study on language practices of the councilmen indicated that speakers of Navajo consistently held the floor for a longer period of time

than English speakers, and interpretations in English were two to three times longer than presentations in Navajo. While Navajo was spoken half as often as English, the length of the speeches resulted in the use of the two languages at equal times. More significantly, the Navajo speakers were more effective in achieving a goal. "When speaking to bilinguals and monolinguals in Council sessions, the speaker has a far better chance of accomplishing his objectives if he speaks first in Navajo" (Neundorf, 1987, p. 180).

As Navajos relearning the native language, students at the university face a number of difficulties: they understand that the language is associated with power, yet they may have few opportunities to listen to spoken Navajo. Introductory courses often focus on conversational Navajo and vocabulary. The language associated with the traditional storytelling and ceremonials of the tribe is less accessible to students who have not had instruction from their grandparents. With its multitude of vowels and complex systems of inflections and enclitics, Navajo is one of the most difficult languages in the world to learn. The number of Navajo speakers from outside the tribe is very limited. Many of the middle-aged students at the University of New Mexico-Gallup have emerged from the boarding school system on the reservation and they have vivid memories of the prohibition on Navajo language. The use of native language could have resulted in corporal punishment or tedious and punitive work assignments. While some of the mission schools attempted to integrate what students know about their ancestral language, the boarding schools engaged in total unstructured immersion. According to William Leap, "the students were surrounded on all sides with English-only discourse, were drilled in correct use of grammatical inflections and sentence forms, and were expected to apply the patterns they memorized through rote learning in daily language settings" (1993a, p. 158). Given these experiences, students approach language learning in both Navajo and English with considerable trepidation. Adequate time for listening and understanding should be provided in the Navajo and the English classrooms. This silent time allows "affective filters" to become low enough to allow input into the language acquisition device (Krashen, 1981, p. 62).

Students find that there is a variety in spoken skill-levels within a Navajo class, even with designation of classes for native and non-native speakers. Typically, fifty percent of the students are dominant in Navajo, using their language in their social lives. The twenty percent of the students who are dominant in English and the 5% who are monolingual in English usually place in the class for non-native speakers. The remaining 25% can be described as proficient in both languages. Some students with limited speaking skills prefer to be grouped with those who are completely unfamiliar with the language; others prefer to be grouped with fluent students who are taking the course to learn to write Navajo. The more fluent speakers in the class sometimes lose patience with the beginners, as the elders do with the younger generation, guided by the assumption that Navajos should know their language.

Attaining proficiency in Navajo presents challenges to all learners, even those who have heard the language spoken in the community. There are 48 varieties of four Navajo vowels: learners must hear and produce the appropriate tone, length, and, in some cases, nasalization of each. Furthermore, a series of thirteen consonants not present in English must be processed for language learners to comprehend Navajo speech. These consonants and vowel variations are difficult to hear and produce, and a native-like command of these phonemes is required for effective communication. As Navajo is a tone language, an error in tone or vowel length can be embarrassing to the listener. Given the challenges of the vowel system, a language learner's attempts at words are often only approximations to the Navajo-speaking listener. The syntax of the Navajo language compounds the difficulties for the language learner. The inflectional and enclitic systems of Navajo are complex, with ten different prefixes possible in the left positions, and seven different enclitic options possible after the verb stem. This requires the listener to process descriptive information before the speaker gets to the point.

Learning to read and write in Navajo is a painstaking process for all students. Since students are assumed to be at the most basic level, the reading materials are derived from the context of daily Navajo life—materials from the oral tradition are too complex for the beginning reader. Immersed in print culture, many language learners are sight-dominant, rather than hearing-dominant, so the written word is an important mediator for them. As students begin to write the language, they often transcribe and interpret stories from the oral tradition. The story in Appendix B documents the interest of First Man and First Woman in creating a social order that would reflect a cosmic order; the ritual language and stories take the participants back to the beginnings of the universe to provide a context for current phenomenon. This process requires a shift in orientation: the mass literate culture that has evolved over the last hundred years validates knowledge that comes from books, and values individual creativity over the collective contribution. The development of Navajo literacy creates an awareness of this Western preference for knowledge from literate specialists. The core of Navajo knowledge is collectively shared and transmitted through oral stories, and students are asked to render these in writing assignments. The recording of stories sharpens the awareness of knowledge that precedes language and speech. From the Navajo view, a language must exist before speech can occur, as form precedes substance. As Witherspoon suggests, "This world was transformed from knowledge, organized in thought, patterned in language, and realized in speech (symbolic action). . . . In the Navajo view of the world, language is not a mirror of reality; reality is a mirror of language" (1977, p. 34). Students who have not been exposed to the oral tradition have fewer resources in the classroom. While students may not have strong opinions about Navajo language and culture upon entering a class, they

typically leave with an understanding that preservation is imperative, and that bilingualism allows them to see out of two windows, rather than one.

The Challenge of Academic Literacy for the Navajo

Students dominant in Navajo typically require two or three semesters of developmental work in English to prepare for the freshman composition sequence. For those proficient in both the ancestral language and English, remediation takes less time. William Leap points out that ancestral language fluency does not always negatively influence the development of English, and that the percentage of Navajo speakers in some schools can be greater than the estimated number of “limited English proficient” students (1993, p. 27). With some exceptions, one can predict that most of the ESL students will have College Board Acuplacer scores in reading and sentence skills that will be close to the average for the college (58.44 and 65.84 respectively). Students with the lowest scores, interpreted as being at the seventh to eighth grade level or lower, may have to repeat developmental English classes to develop the writing skills and intellectual habits required for university work.

The performance of many students fluent in Navajo surpasses that of monolinguals by the second semester of freshman composition, suggesting that there is a convergence between their cognitive development and English skills development. Collier suggests that this convergence would occur much earlier if oral and written Navajo could be developed through the elementary school years and, ideally, beyond those years (1995, p. 2). High school and college remedial classes are often not directed at the students’ level of proximal development, and students are frustrated by repetition. After several semesters of college studies, students in the advanced composition classes show readiness for the difficult work of argumentation and research. The advanced class represents a watershed for many second language students. Those who are successful will typically flow in the direction of four-year and graduate programs. If the course involves the culture of students, cognitive work in the first and second languages can become coordinated, and the languages can be intertwined, forming a kind of double-helix.

As students gain a fuller control over academic writing, the non-native features of their Navajo English begin to diminish. Some characteristics of Indian English are pan-tribal and shared by both monolingual English natives and those who possess the tribal language; nevertheless, a description of a variety should be tribal-specific. William Leap argues: “If Indian English is a synthesis of ancestral language and English language detail, we should expect to find such differences in Indian English usage, one site to the next” (1993b, p. 48). As Navajo speakers make a transition between their first language and English, distinct phonological and grammatical features emerge in their oral and written performance. The “non-native” features may be evident in the speech and writing of Navajos even while they have been exposed to English

in the schools, community, and through the media; this use has been known as “fossilization” (Valdés, 1992, p. 103). The phonological features may be evident in the speech of the well-educated, but diminish as the speakers select and gain control over the academic-professional dialect. These features may include the substitution of *d* or *t* for *o* on minus-voiced or plus-voiced consonants, such as in the words *thin* and *then*. This would not affect spelling in English, however, nor would the insertion of a vowel between the final consonant in a cluster, such as in the word *deskez*, or the deletion of *d* at the end of a word such as *friend*.

Some features are transferred to the writing of Navajo English users, although the patterns are not consistent. Written texts are often characterized by a lower frequency of possessive suffixes, plural suffixes, and past tense markers (See Appendix A, lines 3, 24). The deletion of articles (line 14, 25) and copula deletion (lines 18, 24) occur in both writing and speech. Some of these same features are used by speakers of other English varieties, and Leap cautions teachers to look for all possible explanations. Since some sound combinations are not heard in Navajo, the lower frequency of noun inflections and plural and possessive suffix markings may relate to the acquisition of English as a second language. A Navajo speaker learning English may insert a vowel between the final consonants in a cluster, such as in the word [testes]. For the most part, these surface errors can be easily detected in the proofreading process and do not seriously detract from meaning. As the student writer gains control of these kinds of “errors,” she may over-extend the corrections, adding past tense markers to all verbs without evaluating their intent in each case, or adding the present tense marker “s” to another word. The organization of tense/aspect and the generation of word order in Navajo and English show contrasts that resonate on a deeper level, and require more complex negotiations for language learners. Young and Morgan point out that Navajo, like Japanese, Hopi, Korean, and Persian, is a verb-final language following a subject/object/verb pattern. A number of Native American languages have been described as “topic-comment” in nature. Leap prefers the term “left-branching” rather than “right-branching” to describe the syntactic base of Indian English grammar (1993a, p. 77). As the Navajo speaker makes the transition from the syntactic structures of his first language, he is likely to create non-native constructions, or cluster concepts without appropriate syntactic links in English (see Appendix A, lines 4, 5, 31).

The syntactic structures of written English are less likely to have been internalized by second language students in the region. Written compositions will show a familiarity with informal, spoken English. High school teachers in the district encourage fluency by accepting the vernacular in writing assignments, but this leaves students unprepared for academic writing on a college level. Of course, speakers of English from middle-class families will have an advantage in academic writing in that they “employ strategies associated with the literate tradition in the home” (Tannen, 1982, p. 3). Second

language students benefit from sentence-combining activities in the classroom. While there has been some debate over the effectiveness of such instruction, the exploration of syntax is welcomed by Navajo-speaking students and may contribute to fluency. Most importantly, English instructors should proceed from an understanding of the origin of Indian English features and develop a hierarchy and timetable to address the problems, so that there is adequate attention to the development of ideas and organization.

In terms of organization, the oral strategies employed by Navajo English users are part of the continuation of the “mind-set of primary orality” (Goody, 1982, p. 11). Oral performance in Navajo is copious, and the speaker provides a cultural context for the subject before circuitously arriving at the “point.” Jenny Degroat, the Navajo Bilingual Coordinator for the Albuquerque Public Schools, notes that speakers string their thoughts together in a way that challenge the listener to make connections; the speaker needs to “justify everything, then get to the main point” (1998). The Navajo view their own thought as originating from a center and moving out in a clockwise spiral; this direction in human thought is mirrored in the physical world in the coiling in a ceremonial basket or in the whorls on the fingertips or on the bottoms of the feet and toes (Schwarz, 1997, p. 88).

The indirectness of this approach relates to the pragmatics of the culture: the Navajo avoid speaking for another person or controlling the behavior of others. There is a preference for communication that does not threaten the autonomy and individuality of the other person. In personal interactions, social bonding typically precedes business matters or requests for help. These practices are consistent with the concept of *k'é*, a “preverbal element which refers to affective action and solidarity, encompassing such concepts as love, compassion, kindness, friendliness, generosity, and peacefulness” (Witherspoon, 1977, p. 84). The Western tradition of oral dispute and argumentative writing conflict with the noncoercive style of the Navajo. Students will admit they do not like to argue; they often find ways of diffusing tension in the classroom by allowing time to pass before introducing an opposing view, and they rely on the instructor to take the role of mediator. Ron Scollon and Suzanne Scollon found that the personal “display” required in argumentative writing (and interviews) was culturally inappropriate for the Athabaskan of Alaska, a tribe related to the Dine (1981). The adaptation a Navajo student must make in mastering academic literacy is not an easy one; the writer must be assertive and provide acceptable forms of evidence for an assumed audience. As Scollon and Scollon note, essayist literacy, with its “decontextualized presentation of a view of the world that fictionalizes both author and audience,” is derived from English discourse patterns (p. 52).

Strategies for Writing Instructors

Writing instructors can build on the strengths inherent in Navajo language and community experience. After several semesters of college work, the skills

development in Navajo and English often becomes coordinated. As students proceed through four-year programs and graduate work, their use of English is stretched to a point of translucency, and they become more adept at representing concepts learned originally in Navajo (Appendix C). The understanding of genealogies and Navajo cosmology may have prepared fluent speakers for cognitively complex tasks. The memories of those who are familiar with ritual language are likely to be highly developed. Situated in their history and culture, Navajo students often prove to be critical readers. Their writing shows a high level of engagement, though the indirectness of their argumentation requires the reader to engage in inference-making. These students show interest in embedding their argument in the context of their indigenous values and thinking, incorporating the narrative art of the culture as a form of support.

There are a number of strategies that English instructors can use to make the transition to academic writing comfortable for Navajo students. The association between power and essayist literacy has to be presented honestly; an instructor's preference for oral discourse styles and creative narrative can ultimately serve to insulate students from the requirements of academic and professional writing. The differences between oral and literate strategies can serve as a topic of discussion and can be linked to audience and purpose. Oral strategies can also be valued and used as an intermediate product in the writing process, or creatively integrated into a final product (Appendix C). The writer in this case is a graduate student and bilingual teacher; she creates a piece that follows the oral format of prayer in Navajo culture, and yet some of the terms derive from her formal education. She provides information on her clans, as is customary, and addresses the Holy Beings of the Four Directions and the associated mountains, as well as those of the Center. The writer is attempting to create ritual language in English. Navajo ritual language "recreates the world according to *hozho*=" ; the language is performative and functions to restore harmony, order, and beauty (Witherspoon, 1977, p. 44). With the references to the Four Directions and Four Sacred Mountains, the piece is formulaic and the persona of the writer is embedded in cultural beliefs and values. In fact, aspects of Navajo philosophy are expected to be integrated into rhetoric if one is operating within certain schools on the Navajo nation; it is desirable to situate oneself in space and time, and to draw on personal testimonial in order to validate a point being made (Braithwaite, 1997, p. 229). Alternatives to oral strategies need to be presented on numerous occasions with visual mapping. These "literacy scaffolds" from the academic tradition "make it possible for students to work in their zone of proximal development in reading and writing thereby challenging them to reach the next level of literacy" (Peregay and Boyle, 1981, p. 182). There are English instructors who believe that no one discourse style should be privileged in the college classroom. They encourage the writing of narratives and ask students to strive for authentic voice. If

argumentative writing is circuitous and inductive, the instructor is reluctant to ask that the thesis appear in the first paragraph. Native American students are demoralized, however, if they transfer from community, branch, or tribal campuses to four-year schools and are then required to return to developmental English to master academic English. Furthermore, the rate of failure for native students on standardized essay exams, such as the one used for the certification of teachers, is inordinately high. Instructors need to know what characteristics derive from the student's first language or cultural rhetoric as some problems may fall into the domain of basic writing. Academic discourse represents a specialized area of Western literary tradition, and so the strategies must be taught explicitly and with deliberation.

English instructors can also respond to the culture of Navajo students in the selection of texts and reading strategies. The freshman anthologies typically feature models of prose on controversial social topics. As cultural minorities contribute their voices to the form, the essay continues to evolve. Many editors attempt to include prose from such authors. Nevertheless, rural Navajo students often remain disconnected from the readings until they are actively engaged in the creation of meaning. Students can construct meaning from their existing cultural schemata if reading is "an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text," as reading specialists Carrell and Eisterhold suggest (1984, p. 556). This can be done through an investigation of meanings that may or may not be shared. For example, for most Americans "poverty" is associated with inadequacy in a material standard of living. Essayists define poverty, estimate the number of people living under such conditions and, explain its origins and consequences. If given an opportunity to situate the concept in their own cultural context, Navajo students are likely to suggest that income level does not determine poverty, and that other values are more important. A Navajo student wrote, "low-income family of four may lack the materialistic possessions like a big house on the hill, a fancy job with the government, and the means of electricity and running water, but the family has love, family ties, home, livestock, and are prominent members of the community." Navajos can be considered "poor" if they have lost their parents or are physically unable to support themselves; there was acknowledgement of such loss and charity under the traditional social system. Students have also pointed out that what is essential to one culture may not be essential to another—the traditional hogan should not have electricity, in fact, as it conflicts with the energy that is invoked during ceremonies. These investigations of meaning involve critical thinking and encourage students to generate their own topics for writing. When students have a choice of topic, they typically create a "language of advocacy," an important prelude to the development of critical analysis (Dyc, 1994). They are often moved to use Navajo words in their writing, though translation can be problematic, as the worldview of the culture is essentially non-Western. Another Navajo student wrote, "H0zh= is a state of much good in terms of

beauty, peace, and harmony. It is difficult to explain, often indescribable.” Many English words are used to describe h0zh= and the associated ceremony h0zh=j7, the “Beauty Way,” but none of these terms are adequate translation to a Navajo. Semantic exploration can lead to a deeper understanding of cultural distinctiveness and support language preservation.

Literacy is a technology that tribes are implementing for their own purposes. Writing allows for a distance and precision necessary for the development of science, law, and other professions, and Native Americans are eager to enter into the dialogue in these areas. As Navajo people embrace other cultures, they adapt elements to their own cultural schemata. Many Navajos attend the services of Christian churches, but continue to participate in their old, sacred ceremonies. They do not find the belief systems exclusive. Attendance at church services is equivalent to attendance at Navajo ceremonies, each designed to heal a certain condition. Literacy may also be creatively incorporated into the language practices of the tribe. Some of the texts created by Navajo show a distinctiveness that affirms the oral tradition and provides English speakers with a window into Navajo thought. Language teachers can best serve the population by understanding the historical and social environment of the learners. Remedial instructors at a college-level need to work within the students’ zones of proximal development, and anticipate that there will be an eventual convergence between their cognitive development and English skills development. Oral patterning can be identified and valued; other academic templates for writing should be persistently implemented in freshman composition. Navajo instructors need to be aware of the inhibitions of many of their students so as to create a non-threatening learning environment, and to make compensations for students who may not have received cultural teachings.

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Appendix A

Navajo English First Draft, Writer Dominant in Navajo

The feather has been our sacred Belief from the beginning of our creation. The Eagle feathers are used in most of the Navajo ceremonies to practice religion. In the Navajo history when we first emerge on mother earth, coming from the fourth world. The myth they called it, it's the only history they have today. The "Navajos" that's the name they got from the Spanish when they immigrated to the indigenous people's land. They prefer their ancient name "Dine." The Dine had lived in the four other worlds. The Navajos say this is the fifth world we're living in now or after the great flood. Our creation of Dine goes back to the fourth world. There were three holy people, all were the image: of the humans. The blue body and black body, each had a sacred buckskin and the white body had a white and a yellow ears of corn all completely covered with kernels and white and yellow feather. The black God placed a buckskin on the ground first, then the white god placed the yellow corn with the Eagle feather on the buckskin next to the other. Then white Eagle feather, at last the blue god placed the other buckskin over the two corn and the feather. The white wind blew from the east side of the skin, and the yellow wind blew from the west between the two buckskins. The yellow corn became of a woman and white corn became of a man. The Navajo version of the first man and first woman. Other sacred beings also have stories like the story of the twin boys called monster slayer born of the sun. The sun gave them the weapons to exterminate the monster on the land, which they feared most. When they defeated the monster, the parts of the monster became of an Eagle. The holy people told the twins, the Eagle was form for a purpose to our Dine people. The gods told the twins that the Eagle parts to be use in our ceremonies. Then the gods instructed and gave the ways of all ceremonies. Uses of the Eagles feather are for fan to pray, sacred dances, blessing way and holy way ceremonies, and enemy way. The flesh is also used which are mixed with the herbs and the corn for a medicine of different types of healing. The bones are also used like the Indian whistles. All ceremonies are different, some are for the summer ceremonies and some are for the winter ceremonies. These are the ceremonies where the Navajos uses the Eagle feathers. The Navajos cherish their feathers, protected and is the way of life. These ceremonies has been past on from generation to generation, as they teach never to forget their culture and tradition. Because god made them to be Dine, only Dine.

Appendix B

Composition in Navajo 101

Y3'3t' 44h. T1b22h1 nish[9 d00 Kiis'1anii b1sh7shch77n. K'ad 4iy1 w0t'11h sil17 baa hodeeshnih d00 nihi[b44dah0zin doolee[.

Ats4 Asdz11n d00 ! ts4 Hastiin sh99 sik4ego naa'ash. Aad00 sh99 ! [ts4 Asdz11n hodeez'3. ! n7, "Shoo ! ts4 Hastiin, n7l47 Din4 d00 hasht'e'go dik11hdah7g77, baa nits4skeesgo 7iniiz99'. Yik'ehgo dahin11 doolee[ii 1din.

Yik'ehgo n11diijah d00 n7da'ad99h d00 yik'ehgo n7da'ii[hosh d00 nidaalnish doolee[ii 1din k'ad."

"L3'22, j0 ! k0t'4," n7 ! ts4 Hastiin. "J0 Din4 bibeehaz'1anii h0l=-go sh99 daats'7 1bidin7?"

"Aoo'," n7 ! ts4 Asdz11n. "J0 [eezh d00 t0 d00 n7yol d00 k-' nihee h0l=. T'11 sh99 47 nizh0n7go bee hodoolee[go."

! ts4 Hastiin nits4kees. Haa l3 yit'4ego hodoolee[. Din4 b1 nizh0n7 yik'ehgo dahin11 doolee[l3? Yaa nits4kees, t'11 ch'44h 11t'88d.

N7t'44 Dooyildin baa y7lwod. "H1 h1 h1, shoo h47," n7 Dooyildin. "Ha'1t'77 l1 baa naah'aash h47?" n7igo neesghal.

Dooyildin 1n7, "J0 nihi y0d7 t'00 ahay07, t'11 47 [a' azkaad bikaa'gi ninohj11hgo, nizh0n7go nidaashch'22' d00 dadis-s7g77 47 bee haz'1anii Din4 b1 1dooln77[."

! ts4 Asdz11n d00 ! ts4 Hastiin beeldl47 niin7[kaad. Bik11'gi y0d7 a[aa's'47 niin7jaa'. Ay07 1danoolnin d00 dadis- sgo bee adin7d77ngo yan1a'1.

Dooyildin 1n7, "K'ad sh99 ay0o hodinohsin d00 ay0o haniih, t'11 nih7 hasht'ee[44h."

Aad00 ! ts4 Asdz11n d00 ! ts4 Hastiin h11hg00sh99 yaa nits4kees, yaa nits4kees. ! ts4 Asdz11n 1n7, "N7l47 w0t'1ahdi bee nashch'22'go, am1 d00 azh4'4 yee nida'nitin d00, hool'11g00."

"Aoo'," n7 ! ts4 Hastiin. "D77 t'11 t[44' b7ighah bee hodis-sgo, bee hahasch'22'go Din4 sin d00 sodizin bee bi[bee dah0zin doolee[." T'11 yinaha'1ago w0n11sd00 i'77'3.

Dooyildin 1n7, "D00 nahat'1 ch'44h 1ln44hgo e'e'aah da. Aad00 n1hidiitahii' beeldl47 yee y0d7 ah2 1yiilaa d00 d99di ye4go yismas d00 w0t'11h yiy77[kaad. Chaha[hee[h65 s-' t11doo bee[t'4h7g00 dis-sgo a[tso bee hoos'88d. Dooyildin 1n7, "S- w0t'11hde bee naashch'22'go yi[k11h doolee[hool'11g00."

Appendix C

Composition in Navajo, Translated by Alyse Neundorf

Greetings. I am of the By the Water Clan and born for Hopi Clan. Today I am going to talk about the Celestial objects.

The First Woman and the First Man were living together as man and wife. First Woman was thinking. She was about to plan. She said, "First Man, I have been thinking about the Dine (people). They seem unable to go forward in life. They have no set rules or plan to go by. They have nothing to tell them when to get up, when to eat, when to sleep and when to work."

"Yes, that is true," said First Man. "Perhaps you are talking about a set of rules or laws they need to tell them what to do."

"Yes," said First Woman. "We have earth, water, wind and fire. These things we speak of can be created from the things we already have."

First Man was thinking. How will we create something that the Dine can use? They need something to live by. He thought and thought but without success.

Just then the coyote came. "Ha, ha, ha. Hey there! What are you two doing?" he said, as he threw himself on the ground.

Coyote said, "Well you have a lot of precious stones and jewels. Spread a blanket on the ground and put the jewels on it. It should make a beautiful design, with all that sparkle. That should create what you had in mind."

First Woman and First Man spread the blanket on the ground and put all their precious stones and jewels in the center. There was a large pile.

The Coyote said, "Now, you probably have a lot of knowledge and know how. You create what you want from this."

Excited about the prospect, First Woman and First Man thought and thought.

First Woman said, "We could design the sky with these things so that mothers and fathers could teach their children about the celestial laws forever."

"Yes," said First Man. "The sky would light up and sparkle and the people would teach songs and prayers." They planned and planned until the sun went down.

Coyote said, "Regretfully, we must not let the sun set on these plans without any action." Then without further ado, he got up, gathered the blanket in his arms with the jewels. He spun around four times and threw the jewels into the black sky. The sky lit up and the stars sparkled. He said, "The sky will be designed and it will be alight with stars forever."

Appendix D

Personal Essay, Graduate Student, Fluent in Navajo and English

It is early morning as I leave the comfort of my home.

It is that time when all is quiet and calm, that moment between darkness and daylight.

I know that it is here that I will find order and meaning.

I have allowed too much time to pass since my last visit.

Therefore, I carefully organize my thoughts as I want to communicate with Talking God and the Holy People very purposefully.

I will begin my petition by reintroducing myself to the Creators.

Grandparents, it is I, Sylvia Largo, of the Ashii and Bitahnii people.

My roots extend from the Glizilahnii and Tlashchii clans.

Tree Springs is the place I call home.

It is where I grew up as a child and the place of my greatest teachings.

Towards the east sits Sisnaajini, White Shell Mountain.

I turn my attention to the East.

Thinking, knowledge, learning, and the future are represented in the east.

It also contains lessons of patience, wisdom, and understanding.

It is to the east that we ask for the ability to be creative in our lives.

I pray that I will be blessed with such attributes.

I also ask that I will continue to learn, understand, and carry out my purpose.

Towards the south sits Tsoodzil, Turquoise Mountain.

I send my thoughts to the South.

Health, recreation, rest, vigor, and stress management are represented in the west.

It also contains lessons of goal setting and strategic planning.

I ask that I will be blessed with good health and all that is symbolized by the south.

Understanding and applying such concepts will aid me in creating necessary conditions in which learning, growing, and developing will take place.

Towards the west sits Dook'o'oosliid, Coral Mountain.

I send my thoughts to the West.

Social life, communication, implementation and resources are represented here.

At this point, I think of the earth.

Our Mother the Earth continues to nourish and nurture our roots.

Teach us to respect and value all that has been created.

Keep our stalk strong so that we may endure.

Allow us to be fruitful.

I now focus on my marriage.
Grandfathers listen carefully.
I have learned that my duties as a wife can be challenging.
Make it possible so that we will continue to experience oneness.
This is important as we are taught that marriages reflect all that you have created.
I ask that you allow us to reach that place where neither of us are afraid nor ashamed
of being possessed by love.
We have both experienced pains and hard lessons in the past.
Help us to learn from those painful experiences.
Make it so that we will give ourselves freely to pure joy so that we may experience
the liberty of owning and being owned.
In such a manner help me in encouraging my husband's gifts and talents.
Help me in supporting his leadership of our family.
I ask that you provide me assistance and guidance in being a loving, caring, and
understanding wife.
As thank-you so much for blessing our lives with such a wonderful person.

I now think of our children.
I pray that our pollen, our children, will continue to be blessed and protected.
Holy Brothers and Sisters, keep them in your care.
Shield and guard them from all that is harmful, unsafe, and negative.
As their parents help us in ensuring that they live life as you intended.
Help us in understanding their gifts so that we can prepare them for their purpose.
And thank-you so much for these wonderful young people.

I think of my parents and grandparents.
Holy Beings continue to favor them as your children.
Meet their needs and grant them an abundance of well-being.
They are keepers of songs and prayers that were once taught to warriors and
peacekeepers.
From them we have learned to be patient, fair, loving, understanding, and unselfish.
Their teachings are now being used often to balance out life experiences as leaders,
educators, doctors, and other professions.
Their prayers have come to pass and today we are evidence of their beliefs.
So take very good care of them.

I now think of my extended family.
Holy People of the West carefully listen to my prayer.
Once again, balance out my life with relationships.
Being a wife, mother, daughter, granddaughter, aunt, niece, grandmother and friend
are all so wonderful and precious.
Allow me to continue experience such beautiful relationships.
Make my heart strong so that I am capable of loving, accepting, and forgiving.

Our community then comes to mind.

Lessons in communication, implementation of plans, and wise use of resources are my thoughts.

I ask my Maker to help me in becoming a person who can creatively communicate with others through writing and speaking.

I ask for help in arriving at sound decisions and conclusions.

I would like to possess attributes that will allow me to move steadily towards acting on thoughts that are well grounded, comprehensive, and extensive.

I ask to become a person who will carry out organized actions in a purposeful manner.

To the north sits Dibe Nitsaa, Black Jet Mountain.

Grandfathers of the North you now have my attention.

Spirituality, values of clarification, and evaluation are represented here.

I humble myself before you as you are keepers of the faith.

It is through lessons that are kept here that we learn about the universe and our relationships with all that surrounds us.

It is from northern lessons that I have learned to love my schooling, education, and learning.

You have taught me respect for world views that differ from my people.

Holy People of the North allow me to continue experiencing a renewed passion for learning again and again.

This is important to me because with each new learning experience, I find myself in awe of all that has been created for us to ponder about.

Characteristics of clarification and those that will assist me in evaluating decisions will greatly help me in living a good deliberate life.

Holy Beings without you as the starting point, all knowledge, learning, and being would be formless, purposeless, and error-prone.

Ahehee for containing lessons and teachings on standards of excellence.

Thank-you for holding such knowledge.

In the center sits Dzil Na'oodilii and Dzil Ch'ool'ii.

Grandfathers of the Center you now have my attention.

These are mountains representing Soft and Hard Goods.

I come to you and ask that you grant me a wonderful life.

Make it so that I am a child of this universe, such that I am at the center will relationships extended to all of the Holy People.

Bless me with a good and fruitful life.

Continue to acknowledge me as your grandchild.

Help me in understanding and applying your principles and teaching of life and living.

Be with me as I attempt to live this life in harmony with all of your laws.

With such thoughts sent to each of the directions I feel wonderful.

There is beauty before me, behind me, beneath me, above me, and all around me.

With such beauty all around me I return to the house that has been our home for the last three years.

Ya'ateeh. A'hehee. Nadiizah. Shil Hozhn.

(Greetings. Thank you. I'm well again. I'm in harmony.)

**Note:* The sacred mountain of the East is Mount Blanca; the Sacred Mountain of the South is Mount Taylor, the Sacred Mountains of the West are the San Francisco Peaks; the Sacred Mountain of the North is Mount Hesperus. Dzil Na'oodilii - is Huerfano Mesa; Ch'oolii is Gobernador Knob. These mountains represent the major parts of the traditional Navajo religious beliefs, helping them to live in harmony with both nature and their Creator.