

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Western Apache-English Dictionary: A Community-Generated Bilingual Dictionary. Edited by Dorothy Bray, in collaboration with the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2zt538mw>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 24(4)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

**Author**

Samuels, David

**Publication Date**

2000-09-01

**DOI**

10.17953

**Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Masayesva's passion for the Hopi language reinforces his belief that Native communities must preserve their own oral and written records. Why should outsiders edit and decide the fate of his community?

Ironically, some of J. Edward Chamberlin's work needs serious editing; the piece, "Doing Things with Words: Putting Performance on the Page," begins with an offensive quote, courtesy of Lenny Bruce. And while Chamberlin may have used the quote to entice his audience, it seems awkward and intrusive in the context of a scholarly collection. My suggestion is to start reading Chamberlin's essay at the bottom of the fourth page (p. 72). The rest of the essay has some valuable insights, especially concerning Chamberlin's work with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and his concept of overturning the idea of "privileging . . . *events over words*" (p. 84).

Even with Chamberlin's overzealous writing, *Talking on the Page* comes highly recommended. The collection challenges many assumptions, issues, and dilemmas facing the editing of aboriginal oral works. It features a variety of authors, from poets to scholars to filmmakers. Certainly *Talking on the Page* is a rich resource for those invested in the study of oral language.

*Paul Brooke*

Grand View College

**Western Apache-English Dictionary: A Community-Generated Bilingual Dictionary.** Edited by Dorothy Bray, in collaboration with the White Mountain Apache Tribe. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press. 485 pages. \$20.00 Paper.

In 1972 the White Mountain Apache Cultural Center published a small English-Western Apache dictionary. A number of years later, the building in which copies of the dictionary were stored burned down, and since then the few copies that remain have circulated among bilingual teachers, cultural activists, and scholars. A reverse Western Apache-English dictionary, printed by the White Mountain Apache Tribal Education Department in 1978, is even harder to find. So the publication of this handsomely packaged volume, which combines this earlier work with the work of approximately two dozen volunteer collectors and lexicographers from the White Mountain community, is a welcome occasion.

The text is a labor of love, the product of more than a decade of work by a dedicated group of volunteers and consultants. Dorothy Bray's preface states that the dictionary is "intended primarily for the Apaches who are learning to read and write their own language." Another goal of the dictionary is to "help standardize the written form of the language" (p. ix).

The dictionary contains more than 10,000 entries, although approximately 40 percent of these record g/d and d/n variants between White Mountain and San Carlos Apache dialects. For instance, *idindlaag* and *idindlaad*, "sunlight," and *nadá' nasdil* and *nadá' nayiznil*, "he scattered the corn around," are all given separate entries with cross-references to each other as dialectal variants. (The latter example shows that the goal of standardized written representation is still problematic.) The sources for the dictionary

entries, besides the older White Mountain Culture Center dictionary, include entries recorded by the volunteer committee members; a list of business terms compiled or devised by students at the Whiteriver Vocational Skills Center in 1981; and a list of place names contributed by Keith Basso. I think, as well—although the editors do not mention this—that a number of entries were taken from the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in translating the New Testament into Western Apache. The late Faith Hill, the SIL linguist who worked most closely on the Western Apache Bible, was one of the linguistic advisors for this project.

As a compilation of a great deal of the Western Apache language material that has accumulated over the last few decades, this dictionary is an important resource for anyone interested in learning, studying, or revitalizing Western Apache (or other Athabaskan languages, for that matter). As a dictionary, however, it is somewhat less successful. For one thing, the lexicographic organization on the Apache side does not consistently separate out words. Now, there is an arguable and justifiable case for not separating out the radical elements of Apachean verbs. That argument would be that the prefixes of the verb complex are inseparable from the stems they modify. In Western Apache, for example, *nadish'aa* glosses as “I will pick it up,” whereas *hadish'aa* glosses as “I will sing it.” Both verbs are based on the stem, *-aa*, used to reference the handling of a singular bulky object. Given the editor's goal of compiling a translation source that was to be interlinguistically compatible, their decision to list verbs by their salient prefixes rather than as a reference grammar of verb stems seems justified.

But this organization causes other problems with lookup capabilities, and it is not clear that Bray was sufficiently sensitive to what these problems might be. I was puzzled to find, for example, that while the Western Apache-English dictionary runs 280 pages, the reverse English-Western Apache section is only 204 pages long. This disparity in length suggests that something happened. And as it turns out, the latter section is in fact organized by stems and roots. One can look up the English word “talk,” for instance, and find a list of twenty-five ways in which the verb is used in Western Apache—from the simple “he talks” to the more elaborate “I am talking to all of us.” The entry does not actually provide the interlinguistic Western Apache verb stem corresponding to “talk,” however, and in the Western Apache-English section, one cannot find the stem for talking. Instead, one finds the twenty-five uses of the verb listed separately. Because of the decision to list Apache verbs by their prefixes, the listings of the verb “talk” are scattered throughout the dictionary—some located under “a,” others under “b,” “i,” “l,” “n,” and “y.” The effect—and I know this was not intended by the editors—is to make English appear logical and organized, whereas Western Apache seems to be somewhat arcane, with lots of phrases for talking about “looking,” but no actual word for the action.

There is a similar difficulty by which nouns are often listed according to their indirect object or their possessive pronouns. The naïve reader would be surprised, I think, to find that Merriam and Webster had listed “beard” under “h,” for “his beard,” or “food” under “m” for “my food.” Actually, there are separate Apache listings for “food” and “my food,” “baby” and “my baby,” and

the like, as well as for “famous,” “city,” and “famous city,” which cut down on the number of separate items listed in the dictionary. I think the editors may have been tripped up by the desire to “standardize bilingual interpretations” (p. 280), one of the places in the dictionary where the SIL “meaning-based” approach to interpretation is more prominent. In fact, one of the interesting facets of this dictionary is the way in which its entries manifest the various agendas of past translation projects—education, missionization, and the like. There is no one-to-one correspondence between English and Western Apache in that sense, so making the dictionary a first step in that search carries a number of difficulties with it.

The dictionary includes useful prefaces on the organization of the Apachean verb complex, the various forms of handling verbs, pronouns, and particles. A less useful section is the pronunciation guide, which only offers pronunciation assistance for twenty-eight of the forty-six Western Apache phonetic sounds represented, and seems to assert that the International Phonetic Alphabet only has orthographic representations for nineteen of those sounds.

Of course, if this dictionary helps to revive Western Apache in the Fort Apache and San Carlos reservations, it will have contributed value far beyond the technical niceties of presentation, and all these complaints will be just quibbles. I hope its publication will be an event that can spur the development and publication of further works in bilingual education and other pedagogical resources to combat the disappearance of this beautiful language.

*David Samuels*

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

**Your Fyre Shall Burn No More: Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701.** By José António Brañdao. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 375 pages. \$60.00 cloth.

In this study, Brañdao examines the relationship between the Five Nations Iroquois (they did not become the Six Nations until approximately 1714) and the French and their Native American allies from the mid-1500s until 1701. The author attempts to refute what he refers to as the “old myth” that the Iroquois fought France’s Indian allies for economic reasons; that is, for control of the fur trade. To understand why the Five Nations went to war, Brañdao argues, one has to examine Iroquois culture.

The author begins with an analysis explaining why old ideas about the so-called Beaver Wars (economic warfare) do not stand up under scrutiny. Francis Parkman, the nineteenth-century historian, established this economic thesis, providing numerous material reasons for Iroquois hostilities against the Algonquins and Hurons particularly. Parkman’s greatest mistake lay in the fact that he applied European motives to Iroquois desires to control the fur trade. He failed to look at the tribes’ cultures and their effects on warfare. Thus Parkman did not comprehend the context of Iroquois behavior.