Notes on second meeting
3/4/10

met today at 2:00 for an hour at NALC
at the language center, J was also in the language center
Subject mentioned that he had brought a recorder but left it in his car. J found one in M's office but with no battery. We proceeded without recording.
Subject brought in Marc Okrand's grammar that he had in a binder.
He also brought in a paper he had found online about the Mutsun Language which he was excited to have found. He was excited because it was about Mutsun but we did not look at the paper
I shared that I had also found a paper on Mutsun while researching material for a lit review for the paper I am planning to write about our meetings.
It turned out the paper I had found was Okrand's grammar. So that settled the difficulty of potentially having to photocopy his hard copy for me to look at.

I started looking through the grammar, not sure where to start. I decided that morphology would be an interesting place to start so we could begin to understand how Mutsun was structured. We looked at the table of contents and it contained many sections on various suffixes and their uses and meanings. I could not find a section on basic verbal inflectional suffixes so I was at a loss. I attempted to show a bit of the grammatical structure from a section on another type of suffixation, but realized this approach was not productive since I could not quickly make sense of the grammar to say anything useful.

This lead however, to a discussion of the structure of words; roots, prefixes, suffixes. The subject understood because of his background in English teaching. At this point we were trying to find a way to start engaging the language but it still felt like I had no plan. I wanted to be less random about the approach. I told the subject I was looking for simple conjugations of verbs so we could see how that was done in Mutsun. He understood what I meant and said he thought there was a section in the materials he had that had a chart with that sort of thing on it. He found it. It was in the materials he had given me a copy of the previous week. (I had not done any work on it because I was working on term papers and dealing with organizing a trip to Europe for family matters) The chart then, was in *A Mutsun Language Textbook* by Natasha Warner. It was a chart of personal pronouns in Chapter 10. We went over them a bit still trying to find a good place to start working on the language. There were also possessive pronouns. Looking at the previous page in the textbook we worked with the material on the first page of Chapter 10. I used the examples to illustrate suffixation in Mutsun. We worked together analyzing the suffixes which were plural and accusative. this lead to an explanation of nominative-accusative case marking which I explained. I used words like the doer of the action and the thing the action is done to. I explained how in English, word order determined these things but in many languages case markings were used and it looked like Mutsun was such language. The subject understood the concepts. I also pointed out something which I noticed then that the "is" was not necessary in Mutsun when saying "this is a cat" "this a cat" was all that was needed. At this point, or later in the session, we talked about the mental

readjustment that a new language necessitates. He acknowledged that it was a new way to look at things for him. It seemed to make him apprehensive but not in a way that would alter his commitment. We went through the examples so he could see that the accusative ending worked the same way on all the nouns on the page. He got to the plural and noticed the difference, before we had realized it was the plural. I helped him see that it was the plural plus the accusative. At some point the subject commented that he liked the idea of looking at the structure of the language because then he could play around with the parts of the sentence and words and rearange them to make new words and sentences. This seemed like a promising avenue to use for future learning excercises.

While reading the examples, it became clear that the pronunciation was an issue. This seems obvious now but it became clear at that point that we needed to start at a much more basic level. I had wanted to show the subject how the language worked / was structured to provide a general idea of the language. Now we had found the place to really start engaging the language to start learning it rather than about it.

Thus we turned to the beginning of the textbook. We skipped the 1st chapter dealing with greetings and started at the 2nd chapter with basic vocabulary. All the vocab is in the form "this is..." so again I pointed out the absence of "is" in the Mutsun which the subject acknowledged. We went through the list of words and I realized that the subject was having trouble being consistent with the sounds. We also realized together that there were still some symbols we did not know the value of. We worked through the ones we were sure of and I explained double letters were to be said long. I also talked about the values of vowels. I asked the subject if he knew Spanish. He knew very little. I explained how English vowels have multiple values while spanish ones do not. I explained that the way Mutsun was written was more like Spanish where the vowels always had the same value. We continued going through the vocabulary. The subject still had trouble remembering to use the correct values. He said haay as a long "hey" using the English pronunciation instead of /ha:j/. He also said /utko/ for ootco. which should be /o:tso/ . Actually for this example we realized we still were not sure of the value of c. He said he would e-mail his contact for clarification and we made a list of the letters we were still not sure of; Y, y, c, and - separating parts of some words which occured in the "words we use all the time" sheets.

I suggested that he should work on trying to read and say the Mutsun words correctly for next time. I suggested that he did not need to memorize vocabulary since he had had trouble with that in the past. He said however, that now that he wasn't working alone, he felt he could learm much better and was going to learn the words. We dicusssed how learning the vocabulary would also be a pronunciation practice especially since all the words were body parts. We talked about how it would be good to record himself so he could hear if he was producing the sounds he thought he was. Also he could have a record of the correct way to say them. I suggested that it would be helpful if he could get one of the other speakers to record the words for him so he could listen to someone else say them correctly as well and he could listen to the sounds of the language and he would not be so self conscious about pronouncing sounds he was not used to.

At this point J joined the conversation and vounteered his experiences with recording himself in imitation of the recordings of the last speaker of his language. He suggested doing as he had done, which was to slow everything down. Say the words slowly. He suggested that English was spoken much faster than Indian languages which the subject agreed with and had experienced. J also suggested getting recordings of long passages even if he didnt understand them which would allow him to get more immersed in the sounds of the language. The subject thought the ideas about recordings were good. We suggested he should have recordings and listen to them on an ipod all the time as a way to get immersed as much as possible in the sounds of the language.

The assignment then was to work on the pronunciation, get the correct value for the mystery letters from his contact, and learn the first set of vocabulary words on the first page of chapter 2. Do some recordings if possible, get some from his contact if possible. I also at some point near the end suggested that it seemed to work well to do some general work on the language to better understand its structure, then to work on a more specific aspect which would be the lesson for the week and which would be learned as an assignment. This would provide context and a broader understanding of the way the language works while at the same time a task that advances acquisition. This way the work does not get bogged down in details or drudgery.

The subject told me he had started writing cremonial speeches but we did not look at them realizing we were not able to do anything with them yet. I suggested though that we could start to look at them and try to translate them which he agreed would be a good project to keep the work interesting and relevant to the subject's goals and interests.

He had not done any dialogue creation. But he had had a family emergency that week so he had limited time. I also realize now that that excercise was probably of limited usefulness at this point. But it really was just a way that I thought he could start engaging with the language. When he mentioned earlier that he would enjoy playing with word formation, I felt we had tapped into something anyway.

Will not be able to meet next week do to my trip. Possible meeting in 2 weeks but would have to be friday if at all, may have to wait one more week. I am to call him.