Notes on 1st meeting with Mutsun Learner 2/24/10

Met for 1hr.

Subject brought materials: dictionary, phrases, songs on cd

Subject said he felt more comfortable learning using written materials than oral only.

I suggested that not knowing how the language worked made the learning of phrases meaningless and nearly impossible

The subject had attempted to learn the language before using labels on items in the house.

Asserted that he was not a good self learner.

I asked him what som of his goals might be. He said he had always been impressed going to conferences when speakers would open the conference speaking their language with an opening prayer, wished he could do that and I suggested that that should be a goal to work towards. I gave him a task of writing the things he would like to say in such opening and closing oratories. I assigned him this task todo at home for our next meeting.

I also suggested that conversation and interaction are important ways that we can learn and be engaged in learning. We talked about how he had trouble learning the names of objects even in a context such as his house where they could be labelled and always seen. I suggested that perhaps a locational context was not enough to help him retain the words and that a social context was also important. Since there are no other learners in his area, I suggested that he could use the phrases he had to construct dialogues between two people. I suggested that this activity would perhaps give a sort of social context for the words since they would then be integrated into a fictitious conversation and the communicative function of language would be highlighted. He agreed to come up with some conversations. We will see if this helps him get more engaged in the material. The second possible benefit to the dialogue creation is that the subject would interact with the material in a creative way when creating these dialogues and he may find it enjoyable since he already indicated that he preferred a written form of learning.

The other thing we did was to call his friend (or relative, get name) on the phone who is a more advanced speaker. The materials he brought were created by this friend. He was initially calling her to ask if there was a grammar available for the language. He remembered that he had one. Earlier I had suggested that we really needed to find out how to pronouce the language properly and I had asked him if any recordings of native speakers existed. He said he thought the last ones were done by Harrington in the 30s. So when we had his friend on the speakerphone we asked her how to pronounce the sounds of the language. There were a few capiatlized letters and we learned what sounds they represented. Also all the other letters were explained. I told the subject to worl on the

sounds as an assignment. Fortunately, we agreed with his friend, the language does not contain any really difficult sounds.

I suggested that it will be very helpful to learn some basic grammar so the subject could start forming sentences on his own, and also understand the phrases on the list as a set of words rather than just memorizing them as a sequence of sounds. The subject wholeheartedly agreed that that would help him a lot given his experience and background as an english teacher.

Status: no fluent speakers since the 1930s
3 other ex students with a limited proficiency; about 20% according to subject.

Meetings are scheduled for 1 hour per week. My role is to help subject learn his language.

Meeting took place at the NALC 2-3pm

Subject gave me cd of songs and spoken language as well as the dictionary on cd rom for me to copy to my computer.

Subject has a background in education teaching english and ESL. Is currently retired and would like to take the time to learn the languge. Asserts that he is committed to the endeavour.

Subject asked if I minded if he taped the meetings and I responded that I had intended to ask him the same thing, but had forgotten. We agreed that he would record the meetings and we would each get a copy of the recording.

Important concepts that I am hoping will help him learn:

providing a context where the functional aspect of language as a communication tool is highlighted (conversation excercise)

Personnal goals with the language (opening speech excercise)

Personnal learning style - written rather than oral (focus on grammar, dialogue excercise)
this also allows the subject to spend more productive time with the language.