

SPECIAL LANGUAGE IN SHOSHONI POETRY SONGS¹

LENGUAJE ESPECIAL EN CANTOS-POESÍA SHOSHONE

JON P. DAYLEY

RESUMEN: Jon Dayley analiza el lenguaje utilizado en los cantos-poesía o *newe bupia* de los shoshone, que contrasta con el lenguaje cotidiano shoshone, y muestra cómo se distingue el primero en cuanto a la morfología, sintaxis, semántica y pragmática, además de poseer un léxico consistente en palabras arcaicas u oscuras. El lenguaje de los cantos también incluye una serie de vocablos utilizados para completar el ritmo y cadencia de los poemas y para establecer el registro especial de los eventos en que se cantan. Otros procesos que describe, ilustrados cada uno con ejemplos de los cantos, incluyen, por ejemplo, el reemplazo de la primera de dos consonantes idénticas en un grupo consonántico con una nasal, el alargamiento vocálico, la simplificación de consonantes geminadas, la pérdida del oclusivo glotal y la introducción de semivocales para romper grupos vocálicos. El autor señala que los cambios en la pronunciación se utilizan para hacer más melódicas y rítmicas las palabras de los cantos. Alteraciones gramaticales identificadas incluyen la reducción de la sintaxis a las palabras de más contenido semántico por la eliminación de las terminaciones de inflexión y las partículas sintácticas. Dayley por otro lado describe la situación en que algunos de los cantos-poesía, aparentemente por su naturaleza arcaica, se interpretan de maneras completamente distintas por distintos hablantes nativos. Dos versiones y traducciones del mismo canto, *Oyon Tempi* 'Toda piedra' por Earl Crum, se incluyen al final, y la diferencia entre las dos interpretaciones es muy marcada. Dayley concluye su análisis con una llamada a otros estudiosos de lenguas amerindias a que consideren la existencia de contrastes, como los que él ha identificado, entre el lenguaje de los cantos shoshoni y el lenguaje ordinario, ya que es un aspecto etnopoético importante que en general no se ha descrito en otros estudios.

PALABRAS CLAVE: shoshone, cantos, lenguaje poético, etnopoésia, lenguas yutoaztecas.

SUMMARY: Jon Dayley analyzes the language in Shoshoni poetry songs, called *newe bupia*, showing several ways in which it differs from ordinary Shoshoni speech phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically and pragmatically, as well as in its use of archaic or obscure lexical items. The language also contains a number of words that are used to fill in and complement the rhythm and cadence, and to establish the special register of the events in which they are sung. Other processes described, with illustrations from the songs in each case, include, for example, the replacement of the first of two identical consonants in a consonant cluster by a nasal, vowel lengthening, simplification of geminated consonants, the loss of glottal stops, and the introduction of semivowels into vowel clusters. The author notes that the changes in pronunciation apparently are used to make the song words more melodious and rhythmical. Grammatical alterations include reducing the syntax to content words, eliminating much inflection and the use of syntactic particles. Dayley also discusses the fact that some

¹ The data presented in this article are from Crum, Crum, and Dayley (2001).

poetry songs, apparently because of their archaic nature, are given completely different interpretations by native speakers. Two versions of the same song, *Oyon Tempi* 'Every Rock' by Earl Crum are included at the end, and the difference in the interpretations is remarkable. Dayley concludes his analysis by asking other students of American Indian languages to consider the existence of contrasts such as he has found between Shoshoni song and ordinary language in the languages that they are documenting, since it is an important ethnopoetic feature that in general has not been described in other studies.

KEYWORDS: Shoshoni language, poetry songs, poetic language, ethnopoetry, Yuto-aztec family.

Introduction

The language in Shoshoni poetry songs, called *neue hupia*, may differ substantially from ordinary speech in many ways, phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically and pragmatically.

One minor but pervasive example is the diminutive-affectionate suffix *-ttsi*, often used on nouns and adjectives, which is almost always changed to *-ntsi* in poetry songs. It commonly indicates special emphasis denoting endearment, high esteem, reverence, affection, and warm feelings, as well as the notion of smallness. In both poetry songs and ordinary speech, Shoshonis often add the suffix to nouns to express their warm feelings for things in nature like *kamme(ttsi)*, 'jackrabbit', *yebne(ttsi)* 'porcupine', *yaha(ttsi)* 'ground hog', and *kwi'naa(ttsi)* 'bird', and for domestic animals like *satee(ttsi)* 'dog' and *punku(ttsi)* 'horse', but the use of *-ntsi* is much more common in songs than in ordinary speech.²

Poetry songs are also distinguished by the use of many obscure or obsolete words that are not used in ordinary speech and which many people do not know or understand, although some of the unique poetry song words may be understood in the context of the songs. However, sometimes even the singer doesn't know their meaning. Some examples of obscure words are given in (1).

1. obscure song word		cp. ordinary word
<i>paipaateeyonneh</i>	'killdeer'	<i>pantei</i>
<i>pimmaa</i>	'bovine'	< ? Comanche <i>pimínorua</i> 'calf'
<i>puiiawatsi</i>	'spy (on)'	<i>watsippuib</i>

² For the orthography used to write Shoshoni in this article, see Crum and Miller (1987) or Crum and Dayley (1993). The only unusual symbols are "e" for barred [i] and "ai" for [e] which often varies with [ai].

<i>totowaantsi</i>	‘stand (pl)’	<i>topo’ihka</i>
<i>waantsi</i>	‘wander’	<i>nemi</i> or <i>yeme</i> ”
<i>yewanipontsi</i>	‘track’	<i>nampuih</i> or <i>nayaa</i>
<i>wabniki(n)</i>	‘winnow’	<i>wettantani</i>
<i>wooyonipa</i>	‘splash’ or ‘worm’	<i>pakwittsu’ih</i> <i>wo’api(n)</i>

Other words like *bainna*, *hainneh*, *baainna*, *bainah*, *bainai*, *nai*, *yanna*, *ho*, and *noowaineh* are song words without meaning used to fill in and complement the rhythm and cadence, although some are also used somewhat like mantras to bless or make sacred the situation in which they are sung. And finally, sometimes *haiya wainna* and also less commonly *yaaya wainna* are used by singers at the end of songs to bless them, making them sacred.

In addition, many ordinary words used in poetry songs undergo various degrees of change in pronunciation. The most typical changes are illustrated below. One common change is that nasals pop into ordinary words, especially replacing the first consonant of an identical consonant cluster (as is the case with diminutive *-ttsi* changing to *-ntsi*). For example:

2. Song word		Ordinary word	
<i>buinsaantsi</i>	<	<i>buittsaa(ttsi)</i>	‘sage hen’
<i>huumpi</i>	<	<i>huuppi(n)</i>	‘stick, wood, tree’
<i>huuntukkantu</i>	<	<i>huuttukkan tuu</i>	‘under & through sticks’
<i>nointsai</i>	<	<i>noitsai</i>	‘sticky’
<i>patsiwankatete(n)</i>	<	<i>pasiwakkatete(n)</i>	‘sand dune’
<i>pintsi</i>	<	<i>pitsih</i>	‘suck’
<i>tuantsi</i>	<	<i>tuattsi</i>	‘baby, child, young’
<i>tuumpants uku</i>	<	<i>tuuppatsuku</i>	‘mink’
<i>waanka(n)</i>	<	<i>waakka(n)</i>	‘at the junipers’
<i>waimpentsi</i>	<	<i>wa’ippe(ttsi)</i>	‘woman’
<i>wenkatompi</i>	<	<i>wekkatookka</i>	‘spread out’
<i>winkum</i>	<	<i>wikkabku</i>	‘break away’
<i>yaanka</i>	<	<i>yaakka(n)</i>	‘hold’

Often geminate or double consonants between vowels become single, and therefore voiced. For example:

3. *kwipipi* < *kwippikke(n)* 'shake, shiver'
potoo(n) < *potto(n)* 'grinding stone'
tepana < *tepanna* 'on the side of'
waaka(n) < *waakka(n)* 'at the junipers'

Ss between vowels often become *ts*, phonetically [z]. For example:

4. *pasiwankatete(n)* < *pasiwakkatete(n)* 'sand dune'
totsa'' < *tosa''* 'white'
watsempi(n) < *waseppi(n)* 'mountain sheep'

Glottal stops almost always disappear. For example:

5. *aiwan* < *aiwa'ih* 'like this'
waimpentsi < *wa'ippe(tsi)* 'woman'
paan < *pa'an* 'above, over'
patui < *pato'ih* 'wade'
pomia < *pomi'ab* 'migrate'
toi < *to'ih* 'emerge, go/come out/up'
yewannan < *yu'aib* 'be warm'

Short vowels become long, even extra long, in syllables where the note is held. For example:

6. *opii* < *opi* 'there about'
paampintsi < *pampi (tsi)* 'head'
patakwiintsi < *patekwitsi* 'tender young plants'
potoo(n) < *potto(n)* 'grinding stone'
yotii(i) < *yoti''* 'fly, arise (pl)'

Vowel clusters are often broken with intervening semivowels. For example:

7. *wiya* < *wia* 'mountain pass'
mukuwa < *mukua* 'soul'

Sometimes words are shortened or attenuated in one way or another. For example:

8. *baai* < *binna* 'something (obj)'
ta or *tai* < *tamme(n)* 'we, our (incl)'
tuun < *tenaa* 'down'

A few words are obviously changed to make them rhyme with other words in the same verse. For example:

9. *annitan* < *a'ni(n)* 'black ant'
to rhyme with *hunnitan* 'red ant'
10. *nani* < *nanab* 'just, only'
to rhyme with *naniyuu* 'be at peace with oneself'

And many other words undergo seemingly patternless changes of one form or another. For example:

11. *aan kuantsi* < *aan kubattsi* 'buck'
mononoo < *monoob(kan)* 'hold in the mouth'
pintsi < *pinnab* 'but'
pipuntu < *pimpippu* 'go back'
pui-paa-woo < *pui-woo* 'little green fish'
weyuu < *weyaab* 'take'
yepatu < *yepani* 'autumn, fall'
yoo < *yuu(n)* 'soft, gentle'
yunka < *yunab* 'take'
yuwaa < *yewe* 'swallow'

All of the changes in pronunciation apparently are used to make the song words more melodious and rhythmical. Leanne Hinton (1984: 56) has called similar though by no means identical processes in Havasupai songs, "maximization of resonance". In Havasupai, maximization of resonance involves softening of consonants and a predominance of vowels, nasals and semivowels, not unlike what we have seen here in Shoshoni.

Some poetry songs can have completely different interpretations by native speakers. One example is the song entitled *Oyon Tempi* 'Every Rock' presented at the end of this article. Its two different interpretations are possible because the song contains words that are not used in ordinary language but are similar to different everyday words with completely different meanings. As is the case in all languages, speakers carry a mental dictionary in their heads, but when they hear words of their own language that they don't know, they automatically attempt to decode them in the best way they can, given the context. However, this process doesn't always result in the same outcome.

The first interpretation makes reference to skipping stones, especially small flat cobblestones *patsitempi*, around in the water. In both interpretations *aiwan* is the song form of *aiwa'ib* 'like this'. In the first version, *toi* is the song form of *tawuib* 'throw'. *Patemmam pii* is a song phrase wherein *patemmam* is the song form of ordinary *pakateten* 'body of water, pool' and *pii* is the song form of the postposition *pai* 'around (in an undefined area)'. *Wooyompa* means 'splash' and is a song word but not related to any ordinary word. The normal word for 'splash' is *pakuwitsu'ib*.

The second interpretation of the song is about turning rocks over in the water and watching white water worms come out from underneath the rocks. *Toi* is the song form of *to'ib* 'emerge, come up/out'. *Patemmampii* is a song word meaning 'water-rock creature' (< *pa-* 'water', *ten-* 'rock' plus *mampii* 'creature' not an ordinary word). *Wooyompa* is the song word in this interpretation for 'worm', and perhaps related to ordinary *wo'api(n)* 'worm, maggot'.

The two interpretations of the song are both compatible and possible because the song has words that are not used in ordinary language, but some are somewhat similar to different ordinary words, and therefore interpretable in different ways. And the song has two words that don't occur at all in ordinary language (i.e., *patemmampii* and *wooyompa*) and thus are open to interpretation.

Grammatically the songs often differ substantially in a number of ways from ordinary language. For one thing, they are usually attenuated in various ways making them more like telegraphese, with content words or morphemes predominating and with few or no function words and morphemes. For example, case suffixes on nouns and adjectives are often not marked and determiners such as demonstratives (of which Shoshoni has a rich array) are almost never used,³ and verbs usually have no or very few tense,

³ What may seem as a striking contrast between Havasupai and Shoshoni songs is that in Havasupai demonstratives are all pervasive, as Hinton (1984: 68) states: "The most pervasive lexical items in Havasupai songs are the demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative affixes." However, what I believe is important in both languages is the lack of use of full noun phrases in songs. In Havasupai apparently

aspect, and adverbial suffixes. And word order is often different from normal Subject-Object-Verb. For example, Object-Subject-Verb order may occur as in (12).⁴

12. Sai paa weyaa.
 boat water carry
Water is carrying the boat.

OSV is not unheard of in Shoshoni but is rare and would normally require a case suffix on *sai*, and both nouns would usually take demonstratives also marking case, and the verb would take tense-aspect suffixes. A normal sentence meaning the same thing would be something like (13).

13. Sute paa sukka sai'a weyaahpenni.
 that water that:OBJ boat:OBJ carry:PROG
The water is carrying the boat.

More commonly in songs, the subject is not mentioned at all but is either understood or left for listeners to interpret for themselves as in (14) and (15), and also (16) and (17).

14. Pia kuittsunna yewapontsi.
 big buffalo:OBJ track
He [some hunter] was tracking big buffalo.

15. Upii katete hunum ma tepui yantum ma.
 there.out.of.sight sit canyon in pine.nuts:OBJ winnowing.basket with
There she sits in a canyon winnowing pine nuts.

Sometimes there is no subject and no object at all as in (15), which immediately follows (16) in the 'Song of the Big Buffalo'. In normal speech, the use of a transitive verb without any object would be ungrammatical.

one cannot have "understood" noun phrases without any overt manifestation, so demonstratives are used to shorten or limit noun phrases by using demonstratives as pronouns. In Shoshoni it is possible in both ordinary and song language to have noun phrases not manifested at all but only understood. Apparently in Shoshoni songs, the preferred form is to have as many unmanifested noun phrases as possible, as examples below indicate.

⁴ For discussions of Shoshoni grammar, see Crum and Dayley (1993) and Miller (1996).

16. Pui'awatsi yuukite.

spy moving.away

He [big buffalo] spied him [the hunter], and he [the buffalo] moved away.

Verb-plus-Object constructions also occur in songs, but as far as I know, never occur in ordinary speech. For example, sentence (17) has two instances of VO order with only the second direct object taking an objective case suffix.

17. Yuwaa tuankam patewantsii yaanka yunkatu patewantsiia.

swallow taste large.grass.seed hold take large.grass.seed:obj

Taking seeds, holding them, tasting and swallowing large grass seeds.

In some cases, normal noun phrase-plus-postposition constructions become simply postpositions as in (18).

18. Paa tottsapikka tukkan naitu winkum mantu

water make.crashing.sound down.here from.[mountain] break.away toward

Water crashing breaks away downward from [the mountain] toward [us].

And sometimes the postpositions are omitted altogether as in (19). In ordinary speech postpositions would have to occur where the x's are indicated in (19).

19. Nean temapaia tetsimmuuka [x] paa yamani, huumpi [x].

my having.made sharp.point water cross.over wood

What I have made with a sharp point from wood crosses the water.

I should note that the language in *puba bupia* 'power songs' (also called *naisuntebai upia* 'prayer songs' or *nattabsu'u bupia* 'medicine songs') is much more like ordinary language, if not identical with it, than the language in round dance, bear dance, *natayaa* and other songs from which I have been illustrating here. I should also mention that Hinton's (1984) study is the only other one that I know of that has documented substantial changes in song language from ordinary language. I would hope that students of other American Indian languages would take notice if song language is substantially different from ordinary language.

OYON TEMPI
EVERY ROCK

EARL CRUM

1st Interpretation

1. Oyon tempi aiwan tempi
every rock this-like rock
2. Patemmam pii toi.
pool.of.water around throw
3. Oyon tempi patemmam pii toi
every rock pool.of.water around throw
4. Oyon tempi aiwan tempi
every rock this-like rock
5. Patemmam pii toi.
pool.of.water around throw
6. Oyon tempi patemmam pii toi
every rock pool.of.water around throw
7. Totsappaa wooyompa
white-water splash
8. Patemmam pii.
pool.of.water around
9. Totsappaa wooyompa
white-water splash
10. Patemmam pii.
pool.of.water around
11. Oyon tempi aiwan tempi
every rock this-like rock
12. Patemmam pii toi.
pool.of.water around throw
13. Oyon tempi patemmam pii toi
every rock pool.of.water around throw
14. Totsappaa wooyompa
white-water splash
15. Patemmam pii
pool.of.water around
16. Totsappaa wooyompa

- white-water splash
 17. Patemmam pii.
 pool.of.water around

First Interpretation (English version)

Every rock, rocks like this,
 Throw around in the pool.
 Throw every rock around in the water.
 Every rock, rocks like this,
 Throw around in the pool.
 Throw every rock around in the pool.
 They splash around
 In the white water,
 They splash around
 In the white water.
 Every rock, rocks like this,
 Throw around in the pool.
 Throw every rock around in the water.
 They splash around
 In the white water,
 They splash around
 In the white water.

2nd Interpretation

1. Oyon tempi aiwan tempi
every rock this-like rock
2. Patemmampii toi.
water-rock-creature emerge
3. Oyon tempi patemmarnpii toi
every rock water-rock-creature emerge
4. Oyon tempi aiwan tempi
every rock this-like rock
5. Patemmampii toi.
water-rock-creature emerge
6. Oyon tempi patemmampit toi
every rock water-rock-creature emerge
7. Totsappaa wooyompa
white-water worm
8. Patemmampii
water-rock-creature
9. Totsappaa wooyompa
white-water worm
10. Pateininampii.
water-rock-creature
11. Oyon tempi aiwan tempi
every rock this-like rock
12. Patemmampii toi.
water-rock-creature emerge
13. Oyon tempi patemmampii toi
every rock water-rock-creature emerge
14. Totsappaa wooyompa
white-water worm
15. Patenunampii
water-rock-creature
16. Totsappaa wooyompa
white-water worm
17. Patemmampii.
water-rock-creature

2nd Interpretation (English version)

From under every rock,
 rocks like this,
Water-rock creatures emerge.
From under every rock,
 water-rock creatures emerge.
From under every rock,
 rocks like this,
Water-rock creatures emerge.
From under every rock,
 water-rock creatures emerge,
White water worms,
Water-rock creatures,
White water worms,
Water-rock creatures.
From under every rock,
 rocks like this,
Water rock creatures emerge.
From under every rock,
 water-rock creatures emerge.
White water worms,
Water-rock creatures,
White water worms,
Water-rock creatures.

References

- CRUM, Beverly, Earl CRUM, and Jon P. DAYLEY
 2001 *Newe Hupia: Shoshoni Poetry Songs*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.
- CRUM, Beverly, and Jon P. DAYLEY
 1993 "Western Shoshoni Grammar", *Occasional Papers and Monographs in Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics* 1. Boise, Idaho: Boise State University, Department of Anthropology.
- CRUM, Beverly, and Wick R. MILLER
 1987 *How to Read and Write Shoshoni: A Book of Spelling Lessons, Readings, and Glossary for Shoshoni Speakers*. With three tapes in Shoshoni. Elko, Nevada: Humboldt Printer Publisher.
- HILTON, Leanne
 1984 "Havasupai Songs: A Linguistic Perspective", *Ars Linguistica Commentationes Analyticae et Criticae* 6. Gunter Narr Verlag Tibingen: Stuttgart, Germany.
- MILLER, Wick R.
 1996 "Sketch of Shoshone, a Uto-Aztecan Language", en *Handbook of American Indians*, William C. Sturtevant, general editor, and Ives Goddard, volume editor, pp. 693-720, volumen 17, "Languages". Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Recibido el 6 de marzo de 2012
 Aceptado el 17 de septiembre de 2012