

## ***Homework 2 – Using, Explaining, and Decolonizing Grammar***

### **Option #1 – Identifying and Describing a Grammatical Feature**

Work with your team members to identify and describe a grammatical category/feature of your language, and be ready to describe it *as you would do so to somebody from your own community who is learning their heritage language*.

Here are some examples of the sorts of features that you could describe:

- a. What noun categories does your language have?
- b. How do pronouns work in your language?
- c. Does your language have tense? If so, how does it work? If your language doesn't have tense, what are the conventions of indicating when something happened?
- d. Does your language have number? If so, how does it work?
- e. Does your languages have adjectives? If not, how are ideas such as *big* and *small* expressed?

Here are some ways to do this:

(a) working with a grammar of your language:

Working with the rest of your team, find a topic of interest and read about it. Look closely at any example words or sentences given in the grammar that illustrate the grammatical topic you are investigating. Create a description of the item in a way that will be interesting and appropriate for language learners in your community.

(b) figuring it out yourself from fieldnotes, texts, or using example sentences from speakers in your group:

Find several sentences that translate with the feature you want to study. Then see if you can find what these sentences have in common. If you have been able to find a consistent pattern, you can probably apply your grammatical knowledge to create new sentences.

### **Option #2a (Beginner) – Constructing Sentences**

Work with your team members to identify and describe a basic sentence pattern for your language, and be ready to describe it *as you would do so to somebody from your own community who is learning their heritage language*. As part of this, use this sentence pattern with at least three different verb roots.

Here are some ideas:

- a. pattern for basic sentences (“I am singing.”)
- b. pattern for negative sentences (“I am not singing.”)
- c. pattern for commands (“Sing!”)
- d. pattern for confirmation (yes/no) questions (“Are you singing?”)

**Option #2b (Advanced) – Constructing Sentences**

Work with your team members to identify and describe a complex sentence pattern for your language, and be ready to describe it *as you would do so to somebody from your own community who is learning their heritage language*. As part of this, use this sentence pattern with at least three different verb roots.

Here are some ideas:

- a. pattern to make a negative command (“Don’t cry!” “Don’t sing!” “Don’t eat!”, etc.)
- b. pattern to make a sentence with both a **subject** and an **object** (“She helped **me**.”)
- c. pattern to make a **temporal (time-specifying) clause** (“When she arrived, I was cooking.”)
- d. pattern to make a sentence with a **subject**, an **object**, and a **benefactive** (“She baked **me a cake**.”)

*Remember that grammar is your friend because it allows you to create new sentences!*

**Option #3 – Decolonizing Grammatical Terminology and Categories**

Work with your team members to identify an iffy grammatical term or category that has been used to describe your language, and

- 1) explain why it’s iffy, and
- 2) propose a culturally and linguistically more appropriate way to name and/or describe it.