

# Native Language Curriculum for Adults: Experience with a University-Level Carrier Curriculum<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

Native language curricula are usually organized on a topical basis, with emphasis on culturally important vocabulary, primarily nouns, and common, fixed expressions. They typically include little coverage of the grammar. Once they are in place, improvements frequently consist of adding more of the same, or of flashier presentation, with more pictures, video tapes, CD-ROMs and so forth.

On the basis of experience teaching Carrier at university-level, I believe that this approach is fundamentally misguided and that grammar-based approaches can be expected to be more successful. The grammar is a central aspect of every human language; failing to teach it simply avoids the core of the language. This may be easier, but it does not lead to success.

I should emphasize here that I am talking about the *content* of the course, not the methods that are used to teach it. Whether or not to teach grammatical rules explicitly is a complicated issue, the answer to which, in my opinion, depends on the age and level of the students, the language, and other aspects of the language learning situation. My own experience, with adults, is that explicit grammatical instruction is very helpful, but I certainly do not advocate teaching primary school children in exactly the same way. And certainly, for all ages and levels, a good class will involve a variety of activities; even a grammar-based class will devote considerable time to activities other than the study of grammatical rules. The point that I wish to make here is that the grammar is a central aspect of the material to be learned, and that whatever methods may be used, if they do not lead students to learn the grammar, the students will not be successful in learning the language.

Let me make an analogy with learning to drive. When you teach someone to drive, you teach how to use the horn, the windshield wipers, the turn signals, and the radio. These are all useful things to know, and they are easy to teach about and to learn. But if you don't teach about the gas pedal, the steering wheel, and the gear shift, the student will never get anywhere. They are harder to teach and to learn to use, but learning to use them is critical to driving. You can improve the curriculum by teaching how to programme the CD-player or use the power door-locks, but this will make no contribution to getting the vehicle from one place to

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another. At some point, if the student is to learn to drive, he or she must confront the aspects of operating the vehicle that are most important to driving.

## 2. Background

In 1992 Tl'azt'en Nation and the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council decided to create a University-level Carrier language curriculum for the benefit of Carrier students attending the University of British Columbia.<sup>2</sup> I became involved in creating this curriculum. Later, I moved to the University of Northern British Columbia, where together with a series of four native speakers of Carrier: Walter Joseph, Sr. Violet Prince, Yvonne Pierrero, and Jean Tremblay, I taught first-year Carrier four times.

## 3. Motivation

Over the years Carrier has been taught at every level from primary school through first-year university. All of the previous curricula have been organized primarily in terms of cultural topics. None of them has included substantial coverage of the grammar. The students typically learn the sound system, the writing system, some vocabulary, some fixed expressions, and, in a few of the more sophisticated courses, a few very simple structures into which they can substitute new words. None of the previous courses has taught the conjugation of verbs or the formation of complex sentences. I have spoken with many of the students from such courses, ranging from primary school children to adults who took Carrier at UNBC in 1993-94, and have yet to find one who, as a result of the course, could produce or understand a sentence that he or she had not memorized beyond, occasionally, the most elementary substitutions of nouns, e.g. “I want tea”, “I want milk”, “I want coffee”, etc.

This is a problem, because the central fact about human language is that any fluent speaker of any human language can produce and understand infinitely many utterances, the great majority of which he or she has never heard before. If language courses do not give the student this ability, they are failing to teach the language.

One of the few things that all linguists agree on is that it is the grammar that enables fluent speakers to produce and understand infinitely many novel utterances. This is because it is the grammar that enables speakers to combine words in novel ways and the grammar that enables speakers to generate the numerous forms of words. Consequently, it is essential for the language learner to learn the grammar. Therefore, the university-level curriculum that we have designed is strongly focussed on the grammar, especially the verb.

The emphasis on the verb is the result of a central fact about Athabaskan languages, namely that the verb is the core of the language. Sentences may consist of nothing but a verb.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> There has never been any great likelihood of Carrier actually being taught at the University of British Columbia. The reason for wanting a Carrier curriculum was that, if a curriculum existed, students could meet their language requirement by taking and passing the final examination for the course.

<sup>3</sup> The Carrier examples in this paper are given in the International Phonetic Alphabet, not in the usual practical orthography, with which few non-Carrier people are familiar.

Sɣaitiʔaʔ. “He is going to give it to me.”

is a perfectly fine sentence all by itself.

A great many nouns are derived from verbs. These include nouns meaning “the one who does”, e.g. *hodΔʔeh-ʌn* “teacher”, nouns meaning “the ones who do”, e.g. *hodΔʔeh-ne* “teachers”, both from *hodΔʔeh* “he teaches something”, nouns meaning “the thing that does”, e.g. *nʌt'o-i* “airplane”, from *nʌt'o* “it flies around”, and nouns meaning “the thing by means of which something is done”, e.g. *bedʌgʌt* “saw”, literally “the thing by means of which it is sawed”.

Some deverbal nouns remain verbs inside and are internally conjugated. For example, “my teacher” *xʷʌsodʌʔeh-ʌn* is really “the one who causes me to learn”. That it is “my” teacher is indicated by an object marking prefix, not by a possessive prefix.

Verbs have a great many forms, expressing numerous subtle distinctions. For example, on the following two pages is a partial paradigm of the verb “to eat”.

There are nine subject forms, for first, second, and third persons in the singular, dual, and plural.<sup>4</sup> There are four modes: imperfective (I), perfective (P), future (F), and optative (O). Each of these may occur in the affirmative (A) or negative (N). Each verb therefore has a basic paradigm of 72 forms. With a transitive verb such as “to eat”, there is a form used with an overt object, the specified object form (e.g. in “I am eating bread”), and there is another form used when no object is mentioned, the unspecified object form (e.g. in “I am eating”). Yet another distinction is between habitual and non-habitual actions. The forms here labelled “habitual” are used in reference to a typical instance of a habitual act, such as eating lunch. Since the dimensions of habituality and specification of the object are independent, we may combine them freely, leading to a total of 288 verb forms.

Nor do these exhaust the possible forms of the verb “to eat”. For example, there are forms used to indicate that the action is performed customarily, and there are forms used to indicate that the object (in this case, what is eaten) is round, is stick-like, or is areal. These two possibilities alone multiply the number of possible forms by eight, for a total of 2304. In addition to the unspecified object form, there are forms for other objects, such as *sʌʔaʔ* “he is eating me”. In short, a Carrier verb may have thousands of forms.

It is impossible to speak Carrier without being able to produce and understand these verb forms, yet it is impossible to memorize all of them. Not only is this a virtually impossible task of memorization, but it is very unlikely that anyone has ever heard all of them. What makes it possible for a person to learn to produce and understand this vast number of verb forms is a knowledge of the grammar, specifically, of the pieces that make up a verb and the rules that tell us how to combine them. This is true whether it is a child growing up in a Carrier-speaking environment or an adult learning Carrier as a second language in the classroom.

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<sup>4</sup> In this, as in most verbs, the second person dual and plural are the same and the third person dual and plural are the same.

**To Eat (Unspecified Object)**

IA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔasʔal	ʔitʔal	ʔatsʔaʔal
2	ʔinʔal	ʔahʔal	ʔahʔal
3	ʔaʔal	ʔahaʔal	ʔahaʔal

IN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔeʔzasʔal	ʔeʔzitʔal	ʔeʔtsʔasʔal
2	ʔeʔzinʔal	ʔeʔzahʔal	ʔeʔzahʔal
3	ʔeʔasʔal	ʔeʔhasʔal	ʔeʔhasʔal

PA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔisʔal	ʔatʔal	ʔatsʔanʔal
2	ʔanʔal	ʔihʔal	ʔihʔal
3	ʔanʔal	ʔʌhanʔal	ʔʌhanʔal

PN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔeʔʌsʔʌʔ	ʔeʔitʔʌʔ	ʔeʔtsʔiʔʌʔ
2	ʔeʔinʔʌʔ	ʔeʔahʔʌʔ	ʔeʔahʔʌʔ
3	ʔeʔiʔʌʔ	ʔeʔhiʔʌʔ	ʔeʔhiʔʌʔ

FA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔʌtisʔʌʔ	ʔʌtatʔʌʔ	ʔʌztiʔʌʔ
2	ʔʌtanʔʌʔ	ʔʌtihʔʌʔ	ʔʌtihʔʌʔ
3	ʔʌtiʔʌʔ	ʔotiʔʌʔ	ʔotiʔʌʔ

FN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔeʔtʌzisʔʌʔ	ʔeʔtʌzatʔʌʔ	ʔeʔtsʔʌtisʔʌʔ
2	ʔeʔtʌzanʔʌʔ	ʔeʔtʌzahʔʌʔ	ʔeʔtʌzahʔʌʔ
3	ʔeʔtisʔʌʔ	ʔeʔhʌtisʔʌʔ	ʔeʔhʌtisʔʌʔ

OA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔusʔal	ʔotʔal	ʔatsʔuʔal
2	ʔonʔal	ʔuhʔal	ʔuhʔal
3	ʔuʔal	ʔʌhuʔal	ʔʌhuʔal

ON	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔeʔzusʔal	ʔeʔzotʔal	ʔeʔtsʔusʔal
2	ʔeʔzonʔal	ʔeʔzuhʔal	ʔeʔzuhʔal
3	ʔeʔusʔal	ʔeʔhusʔal	ʔeʔhusʔal

**To Eat (Specified Object)**

IA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʌsʔal	itʔal	tsʔaʔal
2	inʔal	ahʔal	ahʔal
3	aʔal	haʔal	haʔal

IN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔʌzasʔal	ʔʌzitʔal	ʔtsʔʌsʔal
2	ʔʌzinʔal	ʔʌzahʔal	ʔʌzahʔal
3	ʔʌsʔal	ʔʌhasʔal	ʔʌhasʔal

PA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʌsʔal	itʔal	tsʔanʔal
2	inʔal	ahʔal	ahʔal
3	anʔal	hanʔal	hanʔal

PN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔʌsʔʌʔ	ʔitʔʌʔ	ʔtsʔiʔʌʔ
2	ʔinʔʌʔ	ʔahʔʌʔ	ʔahʔʌʔ
3	ʔiʔʌʔ	ʔʌhiʔʌʔ	ʔʌhiʔʌʔ

FA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	tisʔʌʔ	tatʔʌʔ	ʌztiʔʌʔ
2	tanʔʌʔ	tihʔʌʔ	tihʔʌʔ
3	tiʔʌʔ	hʌtiʔʌʔ	hʌtiʔʌʔ

FN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔtʌzisʔʌʔ	ʔtʌzatʔʌʔ	ʔtsʔʌtisʔʌʔ
2	ʔtʌzanʔʌʔ	ʔtʌzahʔʌʔ	ʔtʌzahʔʌʔ
3	ʔtisʔʌʔ	ʔotisʔʌʔ	ʔotisʔʌʔ

OA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	usʔal	otʔal	tsʔuʔal
2	onʔal	uhʔal	uhʔal
3	uʔal	huʔal	huʔal

ON	sg.	du.	pl.
1	ʔʌzusʔal	ʔʌzotʔal	ʔtsʔusʔal
2	ʔʌzonʔal	ʔʌzuhʔal	ʔʌzuhʔal
3	ʔʌsʔal	ʔʌhusʔal	ʔʌhusʔal

**To Eat (Unspecified Object, Habitual)**

IA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naʔast'al	naʔit'al	naʔts'at'al
2	naʔint'al	naʔht'al	naʔht'al
3	naʔat'al	naʔhat'al	naʔhat'al

IN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naleʔzast'al	naleʔzit'al	naleʔts'ast'al
2	naleʔzint'al	naleʔzht'al	naleʔzht'al
3	naleʔast'al	naleʔhast'al	naleʔhast'al

PA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naʔist'al	naʔat'al	naʔts'ant'al
2	naʔant'al	naʔiht'al	naʔiht'al
3	naʔant'al	naʔhant'al	naʔhant'al

PN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naleʔast'ʌʔ	naleʔit'ʌʔ	naleʔts'it'ʌʔ
2	naleʔint'ʌʔ	naleʔht'ʌʔ	naleʔht'ʌʔ
3	naleʔit'ʌʔ	naleʔhit'ʌʔ	naleʔhit'ʌʔ

FA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naʔtist'ʌʔ	naʔtat'ʌʔ	naʔʌztit'ʌʔ
2	naʔtant'ʌʔ	naʔtiht'ʌʔ	naʔtiht'ʌʔ
3	naʔtit'ʌʔ	naʔhatit'ʌʔ	naʔhatit'ʌʔ

FN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naleʔtazist'ʌʔ	naleʔtazat'ʌʔ	naleʔʌztist'ʌʔ
2	naleʔtazant'ʌʔ	naleʔtazht'ʌʔ	naleʔtazht'ʌʔ
3	naleʔtist'ʌʔ	naleʔhatist'ʌʔ	naleʔhatist'ʌʔ

OA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naʔust'al	naʔot'al	naʔts'ut'al
2	naʔont'al	naʔuht'al	naʔuht'al
3	naʔut'al	naʔhut'al	naʔhut'al

ON	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naleʔzust'al	naleʔzot'al	naleʔts'ust'al
2	naleʔzont'al	naleʔzuht'al	naleʔzuht'al
3	naleʔust'al	naleʔhust'al	naleʔhust'al

**To Eat (Specified Object, Habitual)**

IA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	nast'al	nait'al	nats'at'al
2	naint'al	naht'al	naht'al
3	nat'al	nahat'al	nahat'al

IN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	nalazast'al	nalazit'al	nalts'ast'al
2	nalazint'al	nalazaht'al	nalazaht'al
3	nalast'al	nalahast'al	nalahast'al

PA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naist'al	naat'al	nats'ant'al
2	naant'al	naiht'al	naiht'al
3	naant'al	nahant'al	nahant'al

PN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	nalast'ʌʔ	nalit'ʌʔ	nalts'it'ʌʔ
2	nalint'ʌʔ	nalahht'ʌʔ	nalahht'ʌʔ
3	nalit'ʌʔ	nalahhit'ʌʔ	nalahhit'ʌʔ

FA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	natist'ʌʔ	natat'ʌʔ	naztit'ʌʔ
2	natant'ʌʔ	natiht'ʌʔ	natiht'ʌʔ
3	natit'ʌʔ	nahatit'ʌʔ	nahatit'ʌʔ

FN	sg.	du.	pl.
1	nal tazist'ʌʔ	nal tazat'ʌʔ	nalʌztist'ʌʔ
2	nal tazant'ʌʔ	nal tazht'ʌʔ	nal tazht'ʌʔ
3	nal tist'ʌʔ	nal otist'ʌʔ	nal otist'ʌʔ

OA	sg.	du.	pl.
1	naust'al	naot'al	nats'ut'al
2	naont'al	nauht'al	nauht'al
3	naut'al	nahut'al	nahut'al

ON	sg.	du.	pl.
1	nalazust'al	nalazot'al	nalts'ust'al
2	nalazont'al	nalazuht'al	nalazuht'al
3	nalust'al	nalahust'al	nalahust'al

**4. Course Content**

Here is an outline of the grammatical material covered. It is organized by topic, not by the order in which the material is taught.

## 4.1. Grammatical Topics Covered

- A. Background
  - 1. Where Carrier is spoken
  - 2. Dialects
  - 3. Relationship to other languages
  - 4. Differences from English
- B. Pronunciation and Writing
  - 1. Pronunciation
  - 2. Carrier Linguistic Committee writing system
  - 3. Carrier Syllabics writing system
- C. Nouns
  - 1. Plurals
  - 2. Possessive categories (1s,2s,3s,1p,2p,3p, reflexive, reciprocal, areal, indefinite, obviative, plural obviative)
  - 3. Stem changes in possessed nouns
  - 4. Possessive prefixes
    - a. Class 1 prefixes
    - b. Class 2 prefixes
    - c. Class 3 prefixes
    - d. Class 4 prefixes
    - e. Predicting noun class from noun form
  - 5. Narrower use of possessive forms than in English
  - 6. Inalienable possession
  - 7. Alienable possession of inalienables
- D. Verbs
  - 1. Valence prefixes
    - a. 0-valence
    - b. 1-valence
    - c. 1-valence
    - d. d-valence
  - 2. Imperfectives
    - a. 0-imperfective
    - b. in-imperfective
  - 3. Futures
    - a. i-future
    - b. a-future
  - 4. S-perfective
  - 4. Verbs restricted by number of subject
  - 5. Conatives
  - 6. Structure
    - a. Conjunct and disjunct prefixes
    - b. The two subject positions
  - 7. Noun classification

- a. Absolutive classifier prefixes
  - b. Introduction to classificatory verbs
- E. Phonological rules
1. Epenthesis (phonological and morphological)
  2. Combinations of the subject markers with *l* and *l* valences
  3.  $\Delta h \rightarrow o / \_\_\_ \sigma$
  4.  $ii \rightarrow a$
  5.  $t \rightarrow 0 / s \_\_\_ s$
  6.  $x^*i \rightarrow hu$
  7. D-effect
  8. Rounding movement
  9. Absorption of *i* by conative *u*
- F. Derivation of new words
1. Suffixes *-yaz* “little” and *-čo* “big”
  2. Subject/agent nouns
  3. Instrumental nouns
- G. Syntax
1. Use of plural verb prefixation
  2. Use of postpositions
  3. Pronominal inflection of postpositions
  4. Clause-internal word-order
  5. Order of clauses with “because, although, when”
  6. Obviation
  7. Subject relatives
  8. Like to/dislike to constructions

## 4.2. Vocabulary Covered

Although the curriculum is organized largely in terms of grammar, vocabulary is not neglected. The students learn over 400 words, including 60 verbs. The order in which vocabulary is introduced is determined in part by the frequency and cultural importance of the words, and in part by grammatical considerations.

For example, body parts and kinship terms are inalienably possessed. That is they cannot stand alone as words but must take a possessive prefix. For example, the stem meaning “arm” is *gan*, but this cannot be used as a word by itself. We must use *sgan* “my arm”, or *ngan* “your (one person’s) arm”, *ʔagan* “an arm, someone’s arm”, or some other possessed form. When body parts and kinship terms are taught before, or more commonly, without teaching the grammar of possession of nouns, students must either be taught some fixed possessed form or the bare stem. Teaching a fixed possessed form runs the risk of letting the students think that it is a generic form, and of course prevents the student from using it in any other form. This in turn prevents almost all forms of natural practice using these words. Teaching the bare stem is even worse; it prevents all forms of natural practice and runs the risk of teaching the students forms that can never be used as actual words.

We therefore introduce the body parts and kinship terms after covering the possession of nouns. This avoids the use of purely artificial forms. It allows the student to make free use of these inalienably possessed nouns and permits a wide range of natural exercises. Indeed, since it is so natural to use these words in their possessed forms, and they are such common and culturally important words, they provide excellent opportunities for practicing noun possession.

The vocabulary covered includes the following areas:

1. Living things
  - a. Animals
  - b. Birds
  - c. Insects
2. Food and eating
3. Clan system
4. Geographical terms and the Carrier territory
5. Colour terms
6. People (ages and sexes)
7. Ethnic terms
8. Pronouns
  - a. Personal
  - b. Intensive
  - c. Possessive
9. Demonstratives
10. Numbers (including classificatory forms)
11. Months
12. Days of the week
13. Kinship terms
14. Body parts
15. Illness and medicine
16. Verbs of motion

## 5. Results

At the end of the year, the students are able to understand Carrier sentences that they have never seen and to translate sentences like the following (taken from the final exam) into Carrier:

- (1) My older brother is happy because he shot two caribou Wednesday.
- (2) Your song was long but beautiful.
- (3) My maternal aunt dislikes my brother-in-law because he likes to sing for her.



- (4) My little sister likes to eat soup with her fingers but Mother likes her to eat soup with a spoon.
- (5) My stomach was upset but it got better because I went to the doctor.
- (6) My father is going to give me five salmon; I will give you one.
- (7) I like to dance with that young woman who is singing.
- (8) That boy who is working for me is my grandson.
- (9) My paternal uncle shot two geese with his shotgun today.

These students have a good deal more to learn before they will really be able to speak and understand Carrier, but they are well on their way. In addition to what they have learned, they now have enough knowledge to learn more on their own. If they ask how to say something, they will know what information they need, and because of their knowledge of the grammar, will be able, in most cases, to use the new word.

For example, in Carrier a single, randomly chosen form of a verb is not sufficient to provide the information necessary to generate other forms correctly. Verbs have different stems in different tenses and modes; unless the student can see that the new verb is one based on a stem-set that he or she already knows, he or she must obtain one form from each tense/mode category in order to find out what the full stem set is. Whether the student obtains this information by asking a speaker or looking up the stem-set in a dictionary, he or she must know that it is necessary. This first-year course does not cover all tense/mode categories, but since it covers several of them, and introduces the associated variation in stem form, students who have completed the course know that they need to find out what the stem is for each tense/mode category.

Similarly, in Carrier, as in other Athabaskan languages, many nouns have a different stem when possessed than when unpossessed. For example, a belt is *se*, but “his belt”, marked by the prefix *u*, is *uze*. When learning a noun, it is necessary to learn what its possessed stem is. The student who has completed our course knows about these stem changes and is aware of the need to learn both stems. He or she also knows about the principle ways of deriving nouns from verbs, is aware that nouns derived from verbs often behave like they are still verbs and cannot be possessed like ordinary nouns, and is in a position to figure out how a newly learned noun works.

As a final example, consider the plurals of nouns. Most Carrier nouns do not have a distinct plural form. *se* can mean “belt”, but it can equally well mean “belts”. The nouns that have plurals are either nouns that refer to people or dogs (covered fairly thoroughly in our course) or nouns derived from verbs. The student who has completed our course can guess very reliably whether a newly learned noun has a plural form and, in most circumstances, can guess reliably what it is if it does have one. The student who has not learned the relevant aspects of the grammar must simply memorize, for each noun, whether it has a plural and if so what.

This course has therefore succeeded at doing something that previous courses have not. This success is certainly not due to virtuosity on the part of the instructors. I am not a fluent native speaker of Carrier. Neither I nor my co-instructors are trained language teachers. For logistical reasons, the course has always met once a week, which is not optimal for language courses. The crucial difference between this course and other Carrier language courses is the emphasis on grammar.

## 6. Conclusions

The conclusion to be drawn is that a curriculum focussed on the grammar, especially on the verb, yields superior results to one focussed on vocabulary. This is what we would expect on the basis of our knowledge both of Carrier in particular and of language in general.

Why, then, is it that Athabaskan-language courses, and courses in other native languages, so often ignore grammar and focus almost exclusively on vocabulary and fixed expressions? Some people say that this is “the native way”. I know of no evidence in support of this. It certainly does not come from a native tradition of language-teaching; as in most cultures at most times in history, there is no native tradition of explicit language-teaching. Indeed, the older, more fluent, elders, who are more sophisticated in thinking about their own language, are frequently well aware of the fact that there is much more to knowing a language than knowing vocabulary. They frequently comment on syntax and on the use of aspects of the morphology, or the failure to use them.

I suggest that there are three real factors:

- (A) Language teachers often have not had relevant education and so do not understand very well how languages work, and in particular how their own language works. Not only have native people been largely excluded from higher education, but they haven’t even had the opportunity to learn the “school grammar” of their own languages. Schools that until recently prohibited the use of native languages did not teach their grammar. You can’t teach grammar if you don’t know it.
- (B) What knowledge about language most native people have received has been largely based on European languages, especially English, which are less strongly based on the verb, and where the grammar plays less of a role than in Athabaskan languages. The idea that what it means to know a language is to know the names of things is a bit of outdated European philosophy.
- (C) There is a widespread idea that native languages do not have a grammar. This was a favorite idea of European racists, who thought, and in some cases still think, that it shows that native languages are “primitive” and inferior to European languages. Some native people have been misled into adopting this idea.

Some people say that teaching languages purely on the basis of vocabulary and fixed expressions organized according to cultural topics is the native way and regard grammar as something foreign. I suggest that it is the other way around. Overemphasis on vocabulary at the expense of grammar is a legacy of colonialism. This mistaken approach, if not corrected, will help to achieve the colonialist goal of the extinction of native languages.