

Swadesh Data

Morris Swadesh visited our people in 1937-38. He wrote his notes using a version of the phonetic alphabet. A partial guide is printed below. The slips below are representative examples of his work intended to document the continual presence of aspiration in the pronunciation of Mahican words, the use of /wə-/ third person prefixes on nouns and verbs, vowel sounds of Mahican and the wide variability of pronunciations of the informants, consistent with language decay. The data provided from speakers in this era paints a clear picture of deficits in their proficiency by the presence of aberrant grammatical forms and their inability to converse in the language. The continued presence of historically verified words and sounds contradicts the theory that there was a distinct 20th-century pronunciation of Mahican.

Partial guide to the symbols used in the field notes

[ç] = /č/ (choo choo)

[ɑ] = /ʌ/ (gut)

[x] = /x/ or /h/ (guttural or breath sound)

[i] vs [i·] dots after vowels indicate a protracted sound

[i] = <ee> as in 'eat'

[e] = <ay> or <eh> as in 'ate'

[i̯ o̯ u̯] = semi-vowels (sounded like separate syllables to Swadesh)

[ɔ] between /a/ and /ə/ as in 'thought'

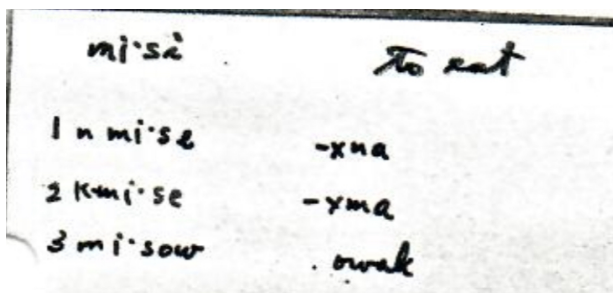
[t] is easily mistaken for [k] the way Sw writes it

/ɑ/ is written here as "a"

Slip 13:

aspiration /h/ and not a glottal stop /ʔ/

long [i:] <ee> as in 'eat' and not [e:] as in 'ate'



/nūm*iitsi*hnah/, /kūm*iitsi*hmah/ 'we eat, you pl. eat'

Slip 13:

aspiration

“h” is in parentheses to avoid confusion with “sh”

mi-shaman piitkaθoon patch a dress j139
mi-s(h)iika saw patch j131
mi-s(h)iika saw j138, 129

/miis'hamun piitkaθoon/

/miis'hiikah/

Slip 15: line 4

Final “h”

forward apostrophe on [ni:']

Numerous examples of [i:]

ni ma-wi ka-twa:c that's all of everything j140
neeh kōtoon oikēch in a year are j
neeh waukauman oikēch in a day are j
no xna ni θpamak ayan, tough ma-wi j142
ni: kwā:c wā:pa:yo near white j129
ni: ktak wi:kwā:m the other house j129

Slip 19:

/wə/ prefix on the word for ‘his heart’ /wtah/

The obviative suffix is missing. This is not an error as this word is attested in both animate and inanimate genders, across all time periods.

This slip also shows a /wə/ prefix on the word ‘he told him’ /Naakmah wtunaŋ/

Note the grammatical mistake in this elicited form (omitted obviative suffix)

na.kmā wəda? my father, his heart j134
na.kmā qətkwən his leg j135
na.kmā wə danā? he told him j135

Slip 21

Shows final "h" written once as /h/ and once as /ʰ/

Note differences among informants for the accentuation and vowels

/naa=wih/

/wih/ is the imperative of verb /wum/ Goddard 2008; 27c

/naa/ 'here' perhaps only used in idioms per Goddard 2008; footnote 67

na·weʰ, na·we here 5b, suggested 85b come here!
na·we, na·weʰ come here! 47a na·we
na·weʰ come here 7w
na·we j. come to me j135 come ar114
na·we mi·tʰ come eat j130
na·we ndemi·ka come in j

Note also the work /ndamiikah/ with its long /ii/ sound, a word passed on orally from elders to the present day - more proof that 20th-century speakers did not shift vowel sounds from /i:/ <ee> as in 'eat' to /e:/ <ay> as in 'ate'

Slip 19.2 line 4

The word for 'thank you' clearly written with a "w"

ni·weʰ thank 7w
kpi ni·weʰ I have plenty, thank you 7a
ni·weʰ recognized as 'thank you' ar.
ni·weʰ thank you j.
ni·wi I thank you Boy Siebert

won-iwi

thanks

--

w^oni-w^e, w^oni-w^e, w^eni-w^e, ni-w^e j 130, thank you.
 wneeweh I thank you 87e
 woni-w^e thank you j
 stak^tane w^oni-w^e don't thank me j.

Above is slip 75 written more carefully showing the “w” of /wuniiwih/
 87e is Jonathan Edwards version of the word using a long /i:/ vowel written as [ee]
 j is for Julia Palmer - her version is the last one spoken and recorded in writing
 This proves that there was no “language change” which replaced “w” with “o” and contributes
 more proof that later speakers used long /i:/ sounds <ee> as in ‘eat’

As is the case with many Mahican words, shortened “slang” or “informal” versions coexisted
 with properly pronounced words. In this case /niiwih/ ‘thanks’ is as good as /wuniiwih/ ‘Thank
 you!’

Slip 74 bowl

Carl Miller, father of Arvid Miller, gives this word with a “w”

On-line Mahican lessons say it and write with an “o” as [onāakan] (sic)

This word was John W. Quinney’s nickname and he spelled it with a “w” in 1854 (approximate
 birthdate of William Dick the last semi-fluent speaker of Mahican) Note that all informants said
 it with a clearly marked aspiration.

Julia Palmer (j) said it in a way which led Swadesh to write “o” as the first syllable then said it
 again another day with a “w”

won^okw^on
 w^ona^okw^on bowl; personal name (John Quinney).
~~s (Palmer), stak with s.~~ [Men. on^o-kan,
 F. ana-kani, net-o-na-kani]

w^ona^okw^on bowl; p
 on^ona^okw^on Quinney's Indian name; bowl j 27
 wa^ona^okw^on Carl Miller
 won^okw^on barrel or something j

Slip 24 Go inside!

Illustrates informant hesitancy (alternate vowel written above word entries)

Illustrate a final "h" in Webb Miller's (w) version (3rd line from the bottom)

Shows informant variability (No such thing as a 20th-century homogeneous pronunciation style)

Avery Miller (av) used /e:/ then /i:/ and so did Julia Palmer

Shows the preposterousness of the implication that the LCC is dishonoring elders by insisting on the correctness of final "h" sounds and the long /i:/ vowel sound.

nətəm-i ka to enter
na·wə ndiēmⁱe·ka come in j
šəma·n kiwa·n nətəki dəpətə ki·se də'metəg
wa'wikaywəkan, ski'pək dən-guθo ki·i capnəg
ki·se də'metəg wa'wə kay wə'kən Unless
you're born again you can[not] enter heaven.
zə'bi pi'dəz and guθo could hardly get in. 15a
təme·ka dəme·ka come in! 5b dəme·ga 83b
dəm·kək 7a
dəme·ka 22a, 57a, 23j
dəmi·kək come in a

More examples of the same observations, chosen randomly from hundreds of relevant Swadesh slip file field notes

Long /i:/

npi·sə·m medicine
-
-
-
bi·θo·n j 126 bi·θu·n j
bi·θo·n ar 127
bi·sún medicine Eggan

“w” at beginning of a Mahican word, proving “o” is incorrect

wsq·m(i) too much . s.wθq·mi, q.wsaam.
w^oθq·m*u* Too much j190
wsallm w12.12

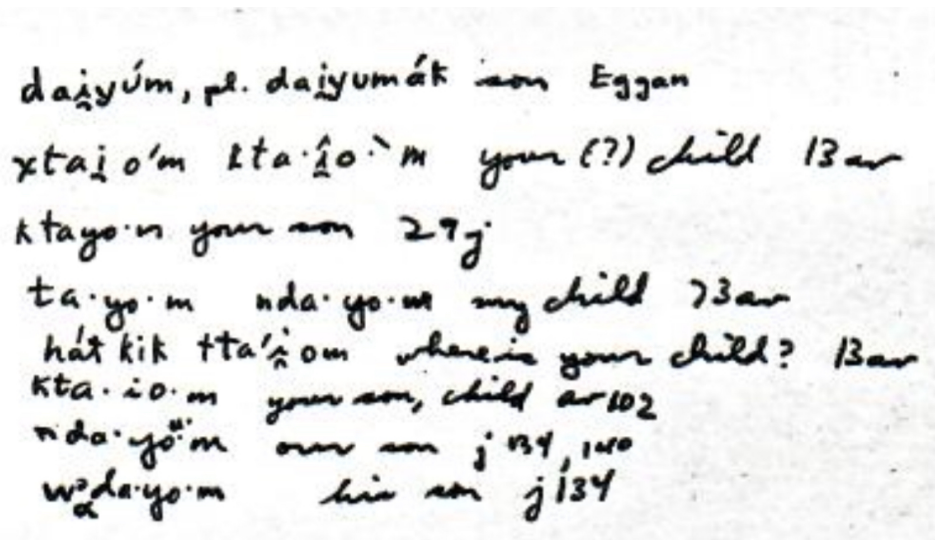
Vowel variability: choose a vowel from the ones the informants suggested among /o,u, a, y, a/
Which one exactly is the so-called 20th-century standard?

~~tu~~ ^{tot}panikan wagon
to·ntpane·kan wagon ar116
tu^{an}·npane·kan 27j
ta·tpane·kan j
tu·ntpane·kan 27ar
tutpani·ikan e 10.9 wagon

Slip 36

Shows a “w” third person prefix (last line) but the obviative ending /an/ is missing, indicating language decay. Properly it should be written as /wtayooman/

This slip also shows a word collected by Olive Eggan who interviewed William Dick in 1930. Grammatically, the possessive suffix /əm/ is present so the gloss should read “my son.”

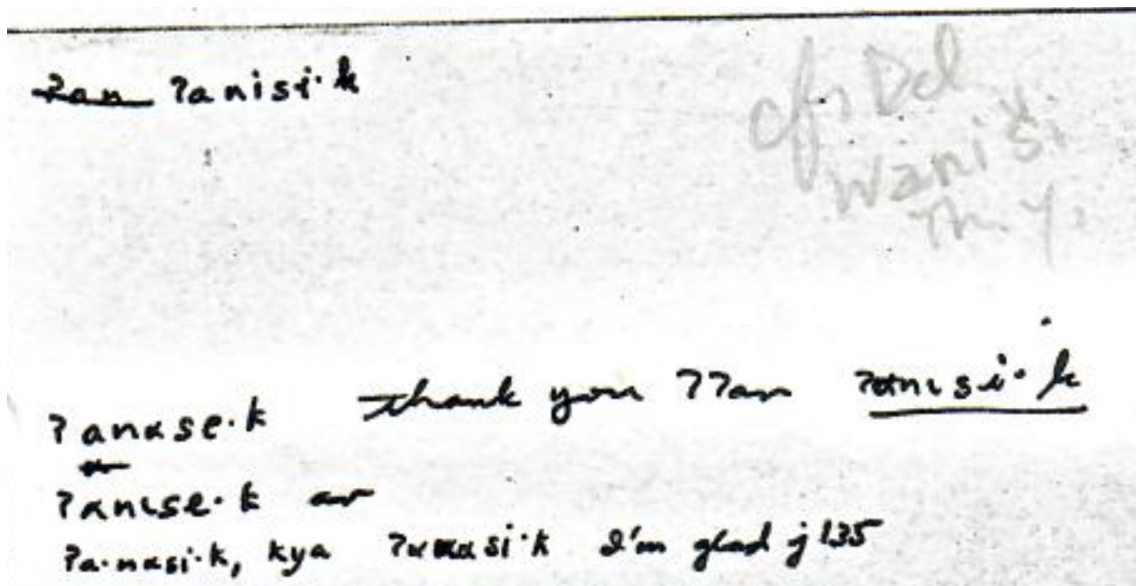


daiyúm, pl. daiyumát son Eggan
xtai o'm kta'io'm your (?) child 13ar
ktayo.m your son 29j
ta.yo.m nda.yo.m my child 73ar
hát kik tta'io'm where is your child? 13ar
kta.io.m your son, child ar 102
nda.yo'm our son j 134, 140
w_ada.yo.m his son j 134

Slip 54

Shows that Mohican elders in 1937 also used the word /anusiik/ to say ‘Thank you’

Word initial glottal stops frequently show up in the Swadesh data. It simply means that the word should blend with a preceding word as in English “say east” would be pronounced distinctly and not blended as “say yeast.”



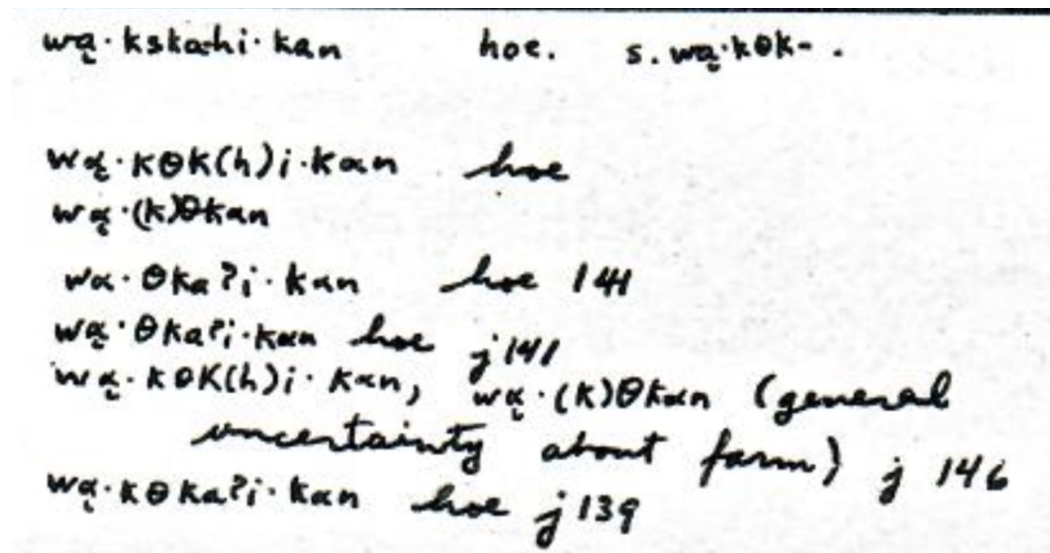
ʔan ʔanisiik
ʔanase.k thank you ʔʔan ʔanisiik
ʔanise.k ar
ʔanasiik, kya ʔanasiik I'm glad j 135

cf. Del
Wanisi
Th. Y.

Slip 102

Shows the interchangeability of the aspirated “h” with the glottal stop “ʔ” which is generally noted by Swadesh in words

Julia Palmer said this word in a way which led Swadesh to write both ways. In other words she sometimes pronounced the word carefully enough for the aspiration to be clearly heard. The notes indicate that she was uncertain about the form, and had a doubt about whether the “s” sound preceded the “k” or followed it. The Schmick Mahican Dictionary (Masthay) lists this word as /waaksahiikan/ (p83).



Slip 197

Julia Palmer says the word for salt using an aspirated “h” sound on three separate occasions. Avery Miller said it one with a protracted vowel and another time with a stop or a glide which Swadesh notated using a glottal stop symbol.

Bernice Robinson said the word which Swadesh wrote using a glottal stop. Frank Siebert also documented this word from Bernice (pronounced Bérnice, accent on syllable one) without a glottal stop. (b-s = Bernice by Siebert)

