A NOTE ON ALBERT GATSCHET’S
LIPAN APACHE ELICITATIONS

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An analysis of the Albert Gatschet’s Lipan Apache notebook concerning color terms reveals something about the linguistic elicitation session between Gatschet and Apache John. In revealing something of that interaction, this note is a small contribution to a linguistically informed ethnohistory of communication.

[KEYWORDS: Lipan Apache, color terms, Albert Gatschet, elicitation, ethnohistory of communication]

1. Introduction. Recently, in looking over the Lipan Apache (ISO code: apl) notebooks of Albert Gatschet, I stumbled upon an interesting trace of the elicitation session between Gatschet and his Lipan Apache consultant, Apache John. In this brief note, I describe that finding. Since little linguistic research has been published on the Lipan Apache, this brief note seeks to augment our understanding of Lipan Apache (see Jung 2000 and Webster 1999; 2007; 2008).

2. Paper that is white, paper that is gray. The primary data for this note comes from Albert Gatschet’s 1884 notebook. Gatschet self-numbered the pages of his notebook and I cite Gatschet’s notebook by his self-numbered pages for ease of reference. I make some comparisons with materials that Harry Hoijer (1975) collected in the 1930s from Augustina Zuazua. For examples cited from Zuazua’s narrative, I cite the sentence number (e.g., S13 indicates Sentence 13 of the Lipan Apache version) as indicated in Hojer (1975).

On page 20 of Gatschet’s notebook, he lists a number of color terms provided by his consultant Apache John, including: geshtchánshe páhe (written on the left-hand side of the notebook), t clipá (written in the middle), and clípa-i (written on the right-hand side of the notebook), all for ‘gray’. t clipá is included in parenthesis, probably because he was unsure of the form.

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The longer form geshtchá’nshe páhe is interesting. This term is on the second line in the section on color terms and is directly below geshtchénshe káhi ‘white’. The final form, when compared with examples in Augustina Zuazua’s narrative (-ga- in S13, -gai- in S50, -gai- in S65) recorded by Hoijer (1975), Hoijer’s (1956:225) -gah, and with other Apachean languages, is most likely -ga ‘to be white’ and the nominalizing enclitic -hi. As with other Apachean languages, /k/ and /g/ distinguish not between a voiceless velar stop and a voiced velar stop but between an aspirated velar stop /k/ and an unaspirated velar stop /g/. It is understandable if Gatschet confused the two sounds at times. In any case, -káhi here is the verb stem and nominalizing enclitic and not an independent form. Under geshtchénshe, Gatschet wrote what I take to be the word paper. This explains why the next example is geshtchá’nshe páhe. By the third example he is already reducing it to gesh—and eventually he writes it merely as <g>. I cannot completely analyze the form geshtchá’nshe, but I note that on page 9 of Gatschet’s notebook he lists the following terms for ‘paper’: ke-eshá, dáltsōs (which is cognate with other Apachean terms for paper, and Zuazua uses a similar form beginning with an /n/ in S99), and késhtchan. Given Gatschet’s alternation of <k> and <g> and his use of both a superscript <s> and an <n> following the vowel to indicate nasality on the vowel plus what is likely the addition of the si-perfective prefix (the -she- that appears after the superscript <s> and the <n> in the example that follows) onto the verb stem, we would get the single word: geshtchá’nshepáhe ‘paper that is gray’. The -she- at the end of Gatschet’s independent form geshtchá’nshe appears, instead, not to be the end of the word but rather the si-perfective that attaches to the verb stem -pá ‘to be gray’ (likely -bá).

3. Conclusions. Here is a glimpse of the linguistic elicitation as a real-time moment between human beings. Anyone who has ever done any linguistic elicitation knows that a calibration of what is being asked to be elicited takes time. It is quite possible that Gatschet had colored pieces of paper and asked his consultant Apache John what they were called. Apache John replied “paper that is white” and then “paper that is gray.” After several such responses, Gatschet might have clarified what he was asking for because the form for ‘paper that is . . .’ is no longer noted and Gatschet often gets only the verb stem plus the thematic prefix forms. It also appears that Gatschet changed prompts from paper to “a bottle” for “emerald green” and “dark green” and encountered a similar issue (p. 20). Here, then, is something of the voice of Apache John in conversation with Gatschet as the two men sought common meaning through the linguistic elicitation.

In this note, I hope to have suggested something of the ways that one can still glimpse traces of the real-time interaction between Gatschet and Apache John. And this—this recognizing of the voices behind such text
artifacts—should be one goal of a linguistically informed ethnohistory of communication (see Silverstein 1996 and Webster 1999).

REFERENCES


