# Standards-Based Oral Assessments for Choctaw

## Roseanna Thompson, Jill Robbins

### From Standards to Oral Language Assessments for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

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## Abstract

Funded by a grant under the Bureau of Indian Education's 6111 grant to support the development of an Alternate Definition of Adequate Yearly Progress in Choctaw, The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians developed and approved a set of Choctaw Language Learning Standards in 2012. These are based on the ACTFL "Five Cs" in that they include the three types of communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational) in addition to Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. The presenters were members of a team developing Choctaw Language Learning Standards, ensuring they are horizontally and vertically aligned and reflect the traditions and cultural heritage of the Tribe.

Following completion of the standards, the presenters assisted in the development of a Choctaw Language Learning Standards-based model oral Choctaw Language Assessment for Grade 2. The process of developing assessments was initiated through workshops with Choctaw Assistant Teachers to identify domains of language use by students, consultation with an Assessment Development Team to identify speaking tasks, and consultation with a graphics artist to develop visual stimuli for the assessment. Development and translation of the administrator training manual and the structure of the pilot test administrator workshop is also discussed.

Pilot testing and subsequent analysis and revision of the standards-based assessment are addressed in this poster. An oral summary will explain the importance of choosing culturally relevant assessment tasks, aspects of the oral assessment administration, and the role of assessments in native language revitalization programs.

## Background

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, led by Chief Phyliss J. Anderson, operates the largest unified Reservation school system in the United States. The Choctaw Tribal School System has six elementary schools, one middle school, and one boarding high school on the Choctaw Indian Reservation in east central Mississippi. The Choctaw schools are scattered over a four-county area and serve more than 1,700 students.

**Tucker Elementary School, Philadelphia, Mississippi**

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## Choctaw Language Learning Standards

### STANDARD 1: COMMUNICATION
**Interpretive Communication: Listening/Reading/Viewing**

**1CLL-N.4 Read common Choctaw words and phrases without support.**

**Novice Level Progress Indicators: What will novice level learners be able to do in the Choctaw language?**

Understand short, simple conversations and narrative (live or recorded), within highly predictable and familiar context. Recognize highly predictable key words and phrases and familiar structures by using contextual clues with strong visual support. Rely on personal background experience to assist in comprehension. Rely on repetition for understanding. Determine meaning by recognition of cognates, prefixes, infixes, suffixes, and thematic vocabulary in a consistent, comfortable, and spontaneous manner.

### STANDARD 2: COMMUNICATION
**Interpersonal Communication: Speaking/Writing**

**2CLL-N.4 Initiate simple commands.**
**2CLL-N.3 Express personal needs, preferences, and feelings.**

**Novice Level Progress Indicators: What will novice level learners be able to do in the Choctaw language?**

Perform routine greetings, leave-taking, and introductions. Engage in basic spoken or written interactions with others, using concrete vocabulary in reference to everyday events. Express personal information (i.e., likes and dislikes and emotions) using memorized or formulaic structures. Use command form in speaking or writing to express requests. Broaden knowledge of culture through interpersonal interaction.

**2CLL-I.5 Use cultural terms in oral and written communications.**

**Intermediate Level Progress Indicators: What will intermediate level learners be able to do in the Choctaw language?**

Engage in conversations and/or written correspondence in which they provide and obtain information, and express feelings and emotions on limited topics. Exchange opinions that are supported by reasons. Give a series of commands. In writing and speech, use culturally appropriate vocabulary.

### STANDARD 3: COMMUNICATION
**Presentational Communication: Speaking/Writing**

**3CLL-N.5 Dramatize songs, poems, skits, or dialogues with teacher assistance.**

**Novice Level Progress Indicators: What will novice level learners be able to do in the Choctaw language?**

Give a brief informative talk on basic topics. Create written presentations on topics of personal interest. Act out traditional oral materials or songs. Give oral or written commands.

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## Choctaw Language Assessment Tasks

**1CLL-N.4 Read common Choctaw words and phrases with strong visual support.**
**Assessment Task: Say each word aloud. Then, find the picture that looks like it.**
Comment: Student puts a card with the name of an animal on it next to the picture of the animal.

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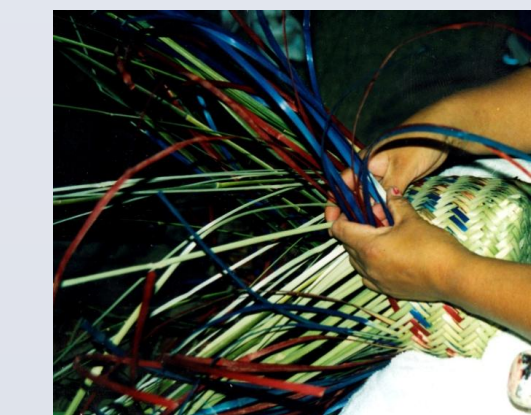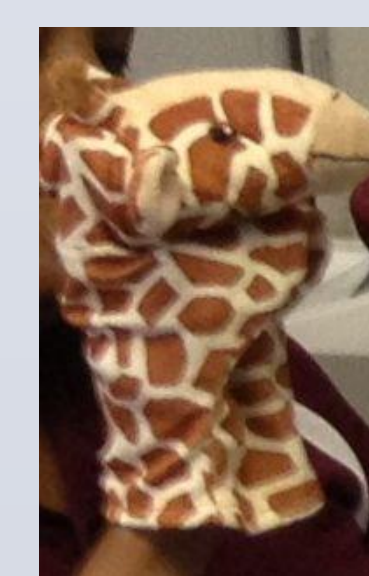
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**2CLL-N.4 Initiate simple commands.**
**Assessment task: Say the command that is being demonstrated in the photo: sit down; go away; come here; let's play.**

Comment: Along the lines of a Total Physical Response (TPR) activity, this task asks the student to say the command for an action. For example, one of the illustrations shows a child gesturing to a dog to 'go away.'

**2CLL-N.3 Express personal needs, preferences, and feelings.**
**Assessment Task: Choose and name a preferred activity.**
Comment: Images show stickball, fishing, singing, and beading.

**2CLL-I.5 Use cultural terms in oral and written communications.**
**Assessment task:** Test administrator acts out a short dialogue between two puppets, telling the student, "These puppets speak only Choctaw." The administrator models the conversation, then instructs examinee to respond using one of the puppets.

**3CLL-N.5 Dramatize songs, poems, skits, or dialogues with teacher assistance.**
**Assessment task: Sing the colors song and pick up crayons.**
Let's sing the color song. (After the song) Pick up the crayon to show me the color when you hear me say the name of that color.
homma, losa, tohbi, lakna, and yoshomali, okchamali, hommakbi
Comment: Administrator encourages student to sing along as the color song is sung. Then, the administrator names individual colors and the student picks up the card showing a crayon of that color.

homma

tohbi

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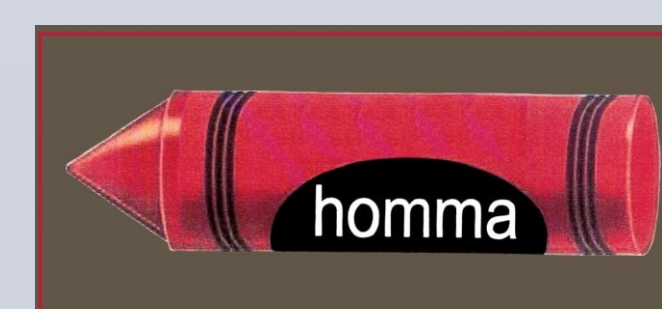
## Test Administration Manual

A manual for administration of the test was created in English and Choctaw. Both prompts and instructions to the student were translated into Choctaw by a translator working with the Choctaw Assessment. The manual includes the images shown to the student and is contained in an easel-style binder that sits on the table between the administrator and examinee. The standards and their representative tasks are shown below.

| CORRELATION OF TASKS WITH CHOCTAW LANGUAGE LEARNING STANDARDS | | |
|---|---|---|
| Task | Standard | Task Description |
| 1 | 3CLL-N.5 Dramatize songs, poems, skits, or dialogues with teacher assistance. | Color song – student sings and raises crayon |
| 2 | 1CLL-N.4 Read common Choctaw words and phrases without visual support. | Read word aloud and match with picture |
| 3 | 2CLL-N.4 Initiate simple commands. | Commands given by child: sit down; go away; come here; let's play |
| 4 | 2CLL-N.3 Express personal needs, preferences, and feelings. | Choose & name an activity you like |
| 5 | 2CLL-I.5 Use cultural terms in oral and written communications. | Puppet conversation: hello, how are you, thank you, you're welcome |

## Pilot Test Administration

Over three days, Choctaw Assistant Teachers participated in training that familiarized them with the test and the rationale for each task. Each teacher practiced administering the test in the workshop environment before going to their school and giving the test to a student. Each student being tested was videotaped. A daily follow-up session was held in which the teachers watched each others' videotapes and commented on issues that came up during the administration.

In all, the pilot test was administered to ten students. The average scores show that students are more proficient in vocabulary than in syntactic structures. Revision of the assessment into Pre- and Post-Test versions reduced the number of words and colors matched to shorten the length of the test. New images were developed for one of the "give a command" photo prompts, which had been unclear in its original form.

| Task | Task 1: Colors and Singing | Task 2: Match words and pictures | Task 3: Give Commands | Task 4: Express preferences and feelings | Task 5: Polite conversation | Overall Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Avg. | 93% | 75% | 53% | 34% | 50% | 61% |

## Development Team

Jill Robbins, Ph.D., Second Language Testing, Inc.
Charles Stansfield, Ph.D., Second Language Testing, Inc.
Isht Apesa Project/Choctaw Language Assessment Project

Division of Schools/Department of Education
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
Roseanna Thompson, *Coordinator*
Anita McCombs, *Translator*
Edna Cotton, Velma Henry, and Nancy Willis, *Pilot Testers*