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Ute Reference Grammar

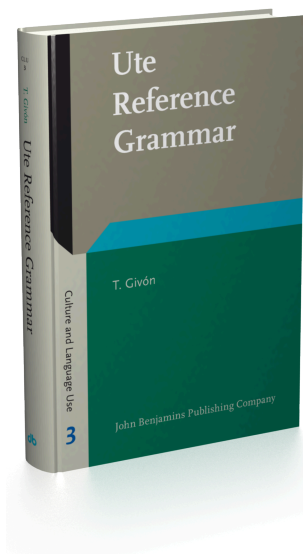
T. Givón

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Volume 3

Ute Reference Grammar
by T. Givón

Ute Reference Grammar

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To the memory of Sunshine Cloud Smith

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Preface

This is the first of a three-volume set describing the Ute language – grammar, texts, and dictionary. All three volumes are much revised and expanded renditions of the three-volume description (1979, 1980, 1985) produced during my work on the Ute Language Project for the Southern Ute Tribe. From the start, we knew we faced an emergency, with the language rapidly approaching extinction. This motivated the frenetic pace of our work in the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in descriptions that were somewhat flawed and incomplete. I have been struggling to undo the damage ever since.

Many people contributed to the Ute Language Project in various way and at different times. First and foremost are the charter member of the Ute Language Committee for the Southern Ute Tribe, 1976–1985: Lorraine Cloud Baker, Edna Russell Baker, Annie Bettini, Fritz Box, Frances Buck, Pearl Casias, Julius Cloud, Mollie Buck Cloud, Neil Buck Cloud, Ralph Nash Cloud, Bertha Burch Groves, Martha Burch Myore, Eva Taylor O’John, Georgia McKinley Pinnecoose, Sunshine Cloud Smith, Euterpe Taylor, LaVeta Vigil.

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One person should perhaps be singled out for his role in initiating the Ute Language Project, in supporting me with advice and encouragement during the early years of the project, and in otherwise making my life on the Rez as rewarding, enjoyable and mind-blowing as it has been for the past thirty-eight years – the late Leonard Cloud Burch, long-time Chairman of the Southern Ute Tribal Council. Together with long-time tribal attorney, the late Frank “Sam” Maynes, and the Superintendent of the Ute Agency, the late Raymond DeKay, Leonard guided me through the thickets and booby-traps of life on the Rez, nudging me gently, forgivingly and by example towards a better understanding of what this enterprise was all about.

I am indebted to three friends for their patience and encouragement: Zarina Estrada Fernández, Pam Munro, and Marianne Mithun. Describing the language of other people, especially an endangered language of tenacious, patient survivors such

as the Utes, requires an equal measure of tenacity and patience, the latter of which I cannot claim to have matched. For better or worse, I fell in love with the country, the language and the people thirty-eight years ago, and have been in love ever since. I will remain ever in the debt of the Ute people for allowing me access, however frustratingly limited at times, to a beautiful country, a beautiful language, and the tantalizing vision of a beautiful, fast receding way of life.

T. Givón
White Cloud Ranch
Ignacio, Colorado
September, 2010

Foreword

In the summer of 1975 the Southern Ute Tribal Council authorized the start of the Ute Language Program. Our language had been retreating slowly, our young had ceased to learn and use it. Unless something was done soon, we felt, the Ute language was in grave danger of disappearing from the face of the earth. No people can maintain their cultural identity without a language, the vehicle of their thoughts, dreams and aspirations. If we are to remain Ute, we must protect our language from dying out, we must help it regain its rightful place in our lives, and in the hearts and minds of our people, especially our young.

Our first task was to gain an accurate description of the language as it is, meaning an alphabet, a dictionary, a grammar book and a story collection. On such a description we could then base any further work of teaching and maintaining the language. This book represents the first tangible results of our Ute Language Program. It is the product of cooperation between our Ute Language Committee and our tribal linguist, and I would like to congratulate them all on their efforts, dedication and fine work.

This book is just the beginning, it is not a final product. We hope that it will stimulate discussion, debate, and the interest of our people in our Ute language. We hope that it will draw comments, corrections and suggestions, so that it may become a firm foundation upon which we can build further; so that the next edition of this book may be a more complete one.

We would like to share the work we have done here with our brothers and sisters of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Northern Ute Tribe. We all speak the same language, we are the same people, and ultimately our language should be written as one language for the entire Ute nation; so that it may live in the hearts of our children and their children after them, just as it lived in the hearts of our fathers and their fathers before.

Leonard C. Burch, Chairman
Southern Ute Tribal Council
Ignacio, Colorado
September 1979

Namu-máy-vaa-tu

'ícha-'ura núu-'apaghapi 'áa-pə'əqwatu 'ura-'ay. Kách-'ura pə'ə-na-aqh púupa núuchi tuvuchi 'apagha-ta-na. 'áavu-'ura núu-'apaghapi nasu'a-ruka-kwa'ay. Táwi tuachi-u-vaa-chugwa-av ka-núu-wáygya-wa-tu-mu. Toghosapa-'ura núu-'apagha-pi ma'ay-ti-kya-paani, 'úvwayaqh-'ura 'iya-tukhwa miya'ni-vaani.

Námu-ga núu-'apaghapi pə'ə-qwa-paachi tuu-'ásti-kya-y, 'umu míi-mhpu chi-u puchuchugwa-qha-paaku, súuvatu-mu-aani núuchi-u pu-punikya-vaaku, pu-puchuchugwa-vaaku, náagha-tu tavay 'umus máa-pani pə'ə-qwa-paa-tu-mu-sapa 'ura-'ay, kách-'uru tásapa púupa núuchi tuu-wáygya-ta-na-av sumua-qha-paa-'wa-ni.

'ícha-'ura 'anó-pə'ə-qwa-na-aqh 'ura-'ay, súuvatu-ni-'ura piya-yis 'ura-vaa-tu. Súuvatu-mu-ni núuchi-u núu-'apagha-na-av piyomhchi-kya-y, ma-vaa-tu púka-tu su'a-qha-paachi.

'áavu-'ura tuvuchi núu-waygya-ru-mu ka-'ava'na-wa-tu-mu miya'ni, náagha-tu tavay-'ura ká-miya'ni-vaa-'wa-tu-mu. 'úru-'ura pə'ə-kway-ku-aqh, núu-'apagha-piu ka-ma'ayh-paa-'wa-tu. Togho-sapa-'ura námu pə'ə-qwa-y-aqh.

Núu-wáygya-ru-mu

First word

This is our new book of the Ute language. The way it is to be spoken rightly has never been written down before. Now our language can be looked at, written and read. We have stopped speaking Ute to our children. For this reason our language is in danger of dying out, it may go away from us.

We would very much like to have our language written down, so that the young ones will learn it, so that other Utes will see it and come to know it, so that some day they too may write it like this, so that the way the Ute language should be spoken will never be forgotten.

This one is only the first book we have put together, others will follow. Other Utes love the language too, so we hope they will find this book to their liking.

There are few speakers of our language left now, and some day they will not be walking the earth any more. This is why we must write it down, so that our language will not be lost. For this reason, we have written this book.

Ute Language Committee
Southern Ute Tribe
Ignacio, Colorado,
August 1979