

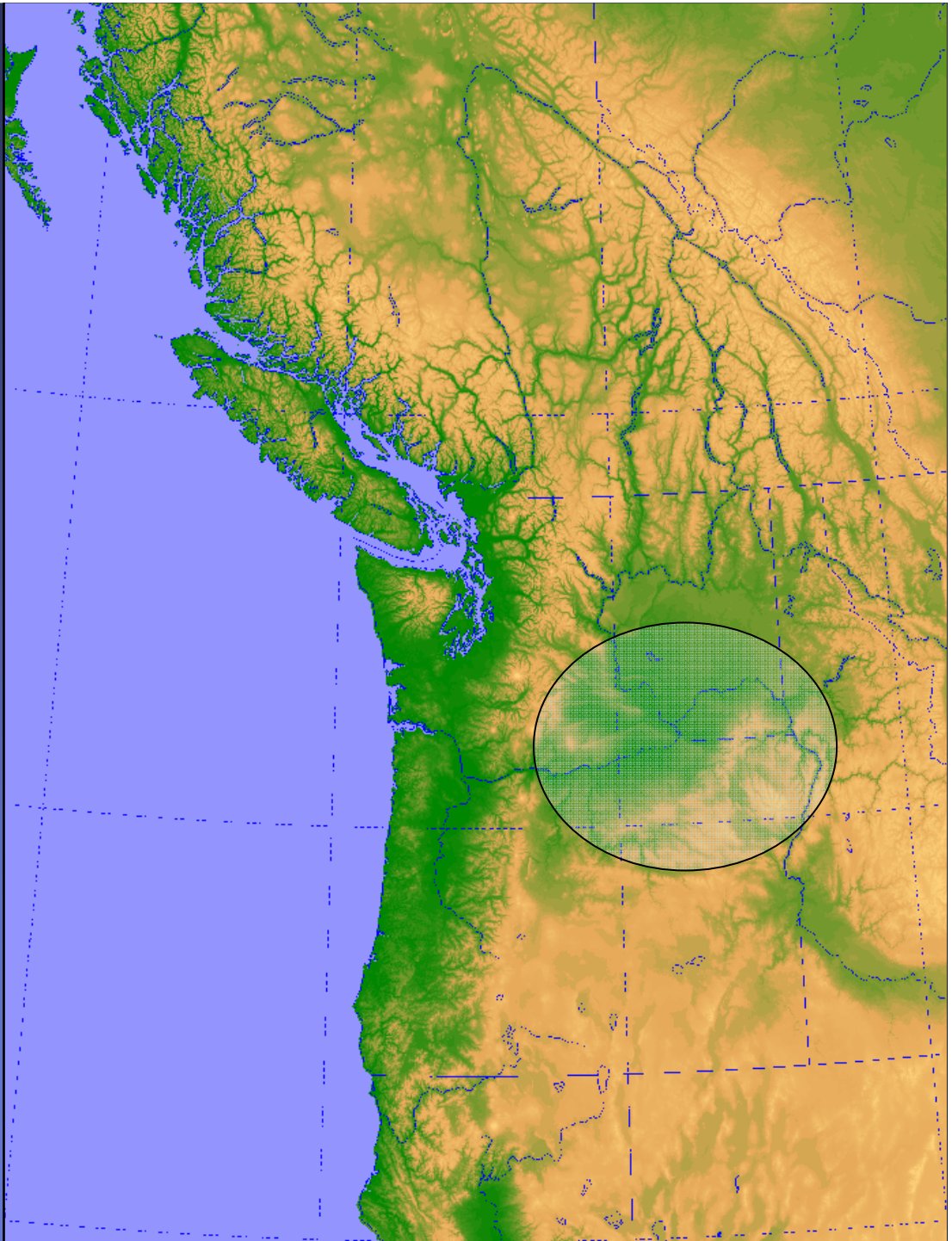
Documenting Language, Visualizing Culture:

Shooting Digital Video in Two Endangered Language Communities
in Western North America

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1. Introduction

Southern Columbia Plateau





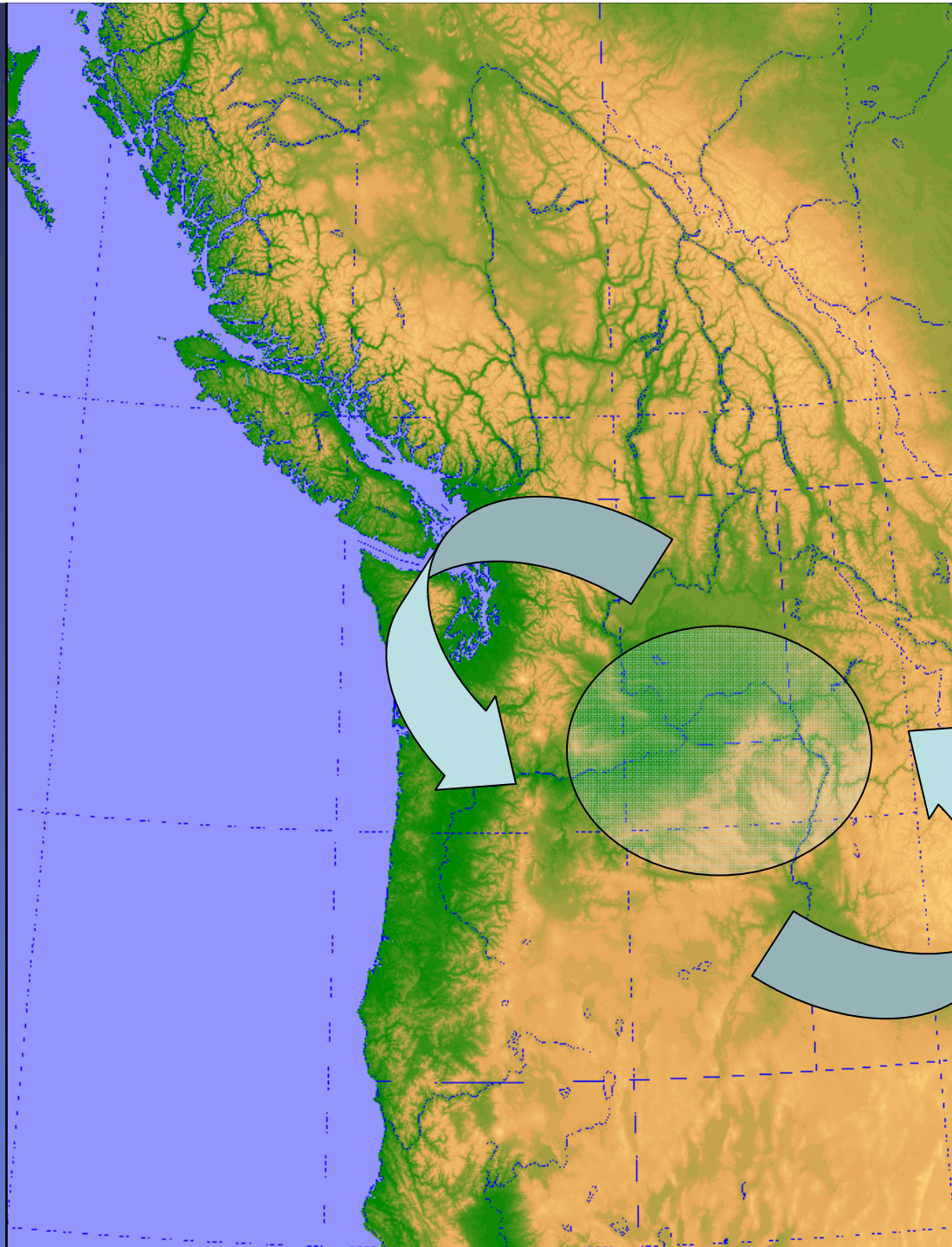
2. Language Documentation

Fieldwork

Language Documentation is a set of goal-oriented research practices which govern:

- *HOW data is gathered*
collaborative linguistic & ethnographic fieldwork
- *WHAT KIND OF DATA is gathered*
documentation of speaker behavior
- *WHAT TO DO WITH DATA collected*
the creation of multipurpose, legacy data resources

Seeking Fluent Speakers



1 Man Camera Crew



AGDVX100b Panasonic MiniDV

Sennheiser Boom Mike

Manfrotto Tripod

Marantz PMD660 Recorder

PowerBook G4 laptop

500 GB external hard drive

Lenovo PC laptop

MiniDV to DVD deck

Analog equipment

M-Audio Monitoring speakers

Hard cases





3. Language Endangerment

Nu·mí·pu· (Nez Perce)

Dialects: Upper and Lower River

An estimated 50 (1% of pop.) fluent speakers are accounted for. Majority are aged individuals (60+ yrs of age).

Current Status: *severely endangered.*

Ičiškín (Sahaptin)

Dialects: 15 with 3 major divisions

Sahaptin has an estimated 250 (1.7% of pop.)
fluent speakers. Majority are aged individuals
(50+ years of age).

Current Status: *severely endangered.*

Plateau Indian Sign Language

Distinct dialectical form (5 signers identified)

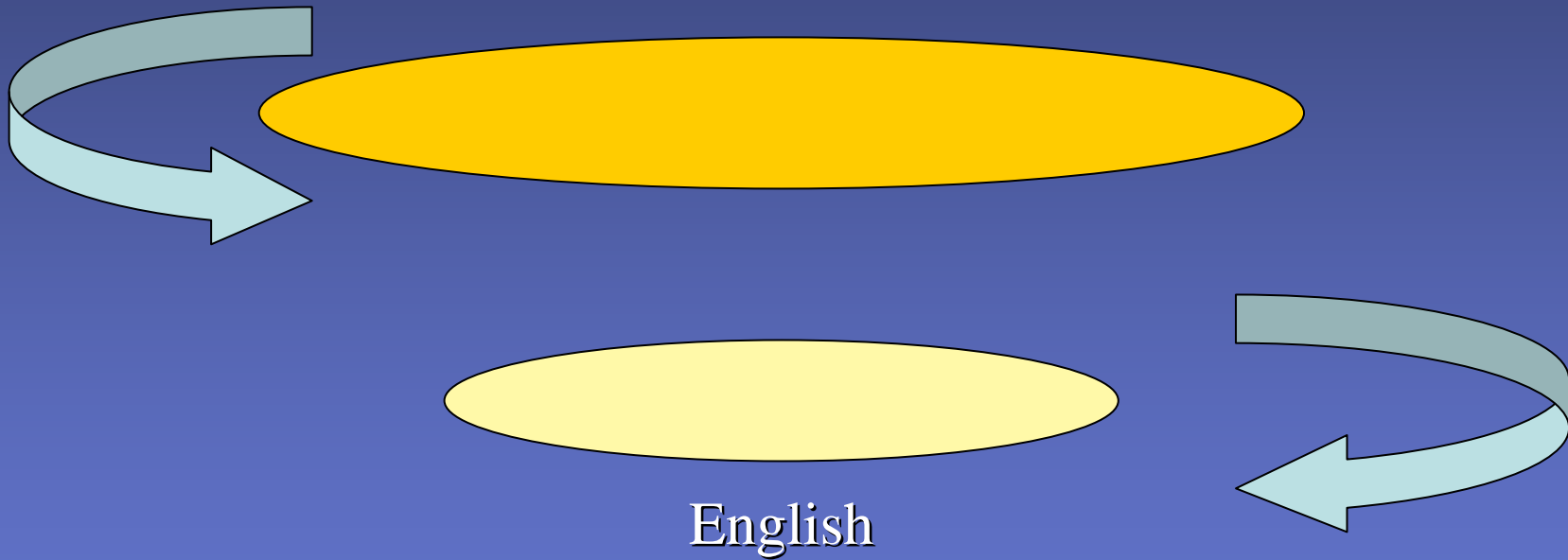
Current Status: *rare & severely endangered.*



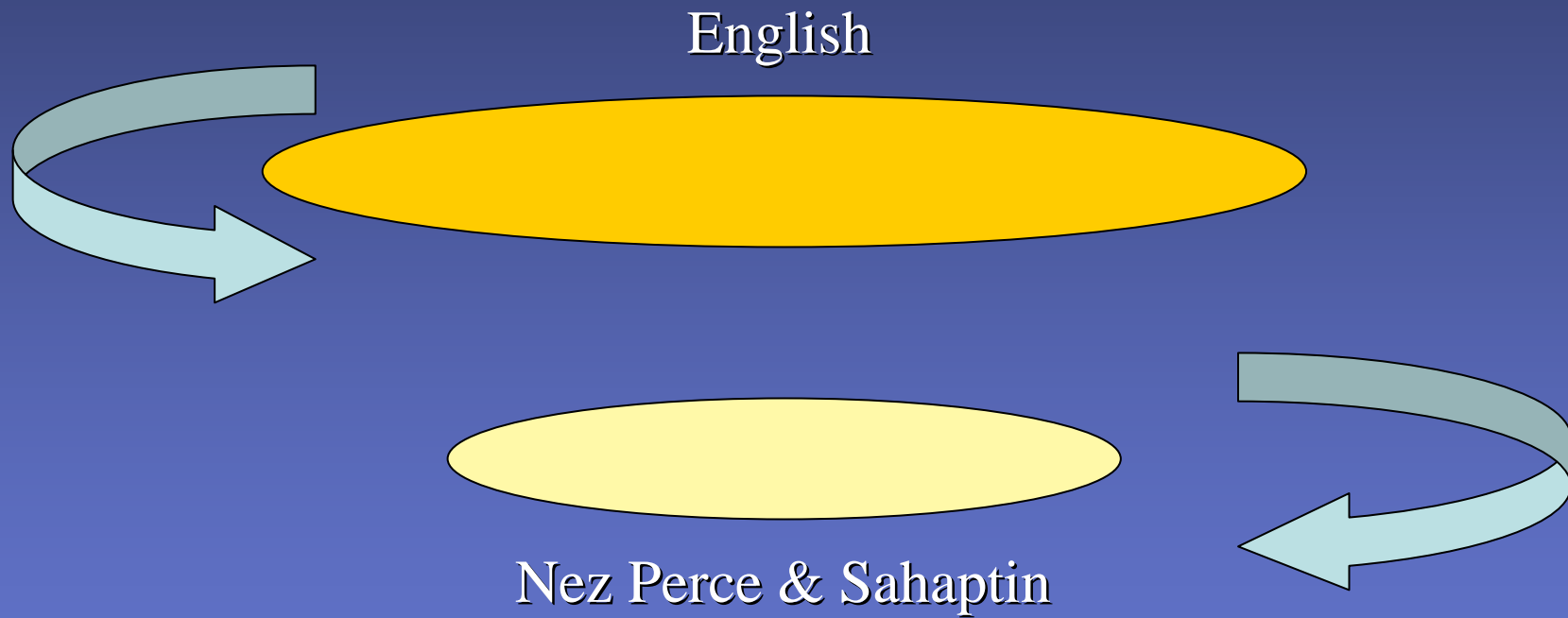
4. Language Use

Traditional Multilingualism

Nez Perce & Sahaptin



Contemporary Multilingualism



Restricted Usage

Ceremonial Language Use:

Longhouse ceremonies

Winter Ceremonies/Spirit Singing

Sweathouse

Subsistence activities

Public Language Use:

Classrooms

Tribal General Council

Intertribal dances (powwows, etc.)

Speech of
Cayuse Chief Jesse Jones

Celilo Village Longhouse, OR
March 18, 2006

Chiefly speech

interperformativity

(distributes attention and talk)

anticipatory discourse

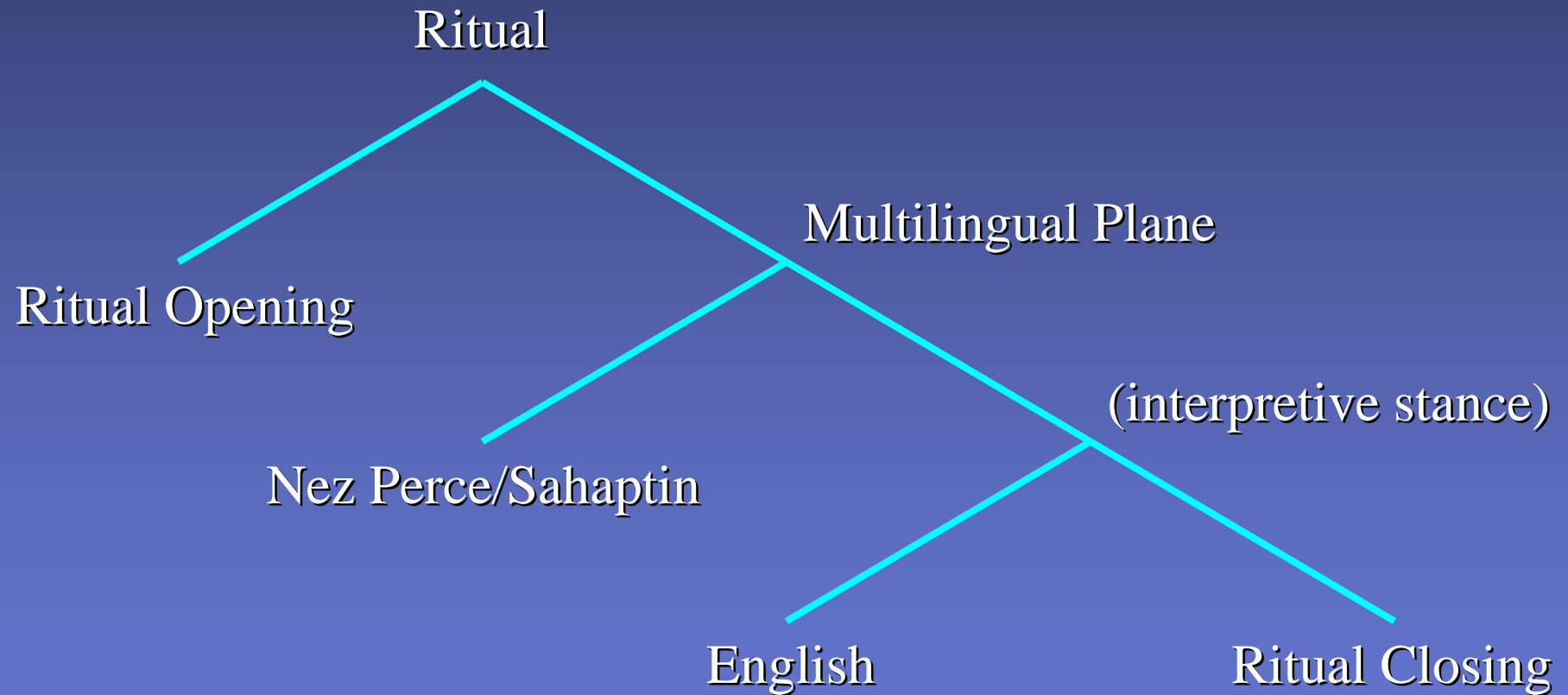
(projecting future good)

“trail of words”

(virtues of respect, leadership)

QuickTime™ and a
BMP decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

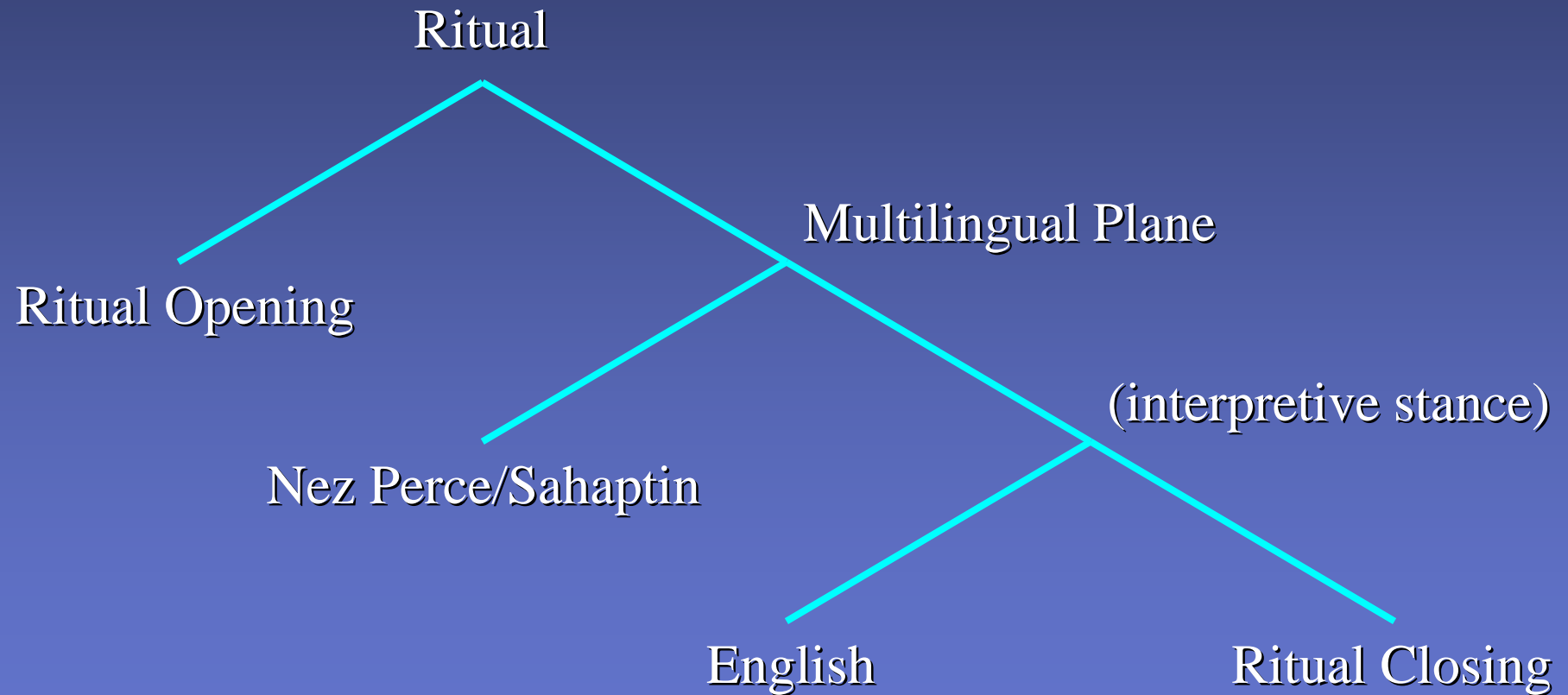
“Longhouse Talk”



Speech of
Josiah Blackeagle Pinkham

Honoring the Nez Perce Youth Buffalo Hunters
Lapwai, Idaho
March 25, 2006

“Longhouse Talk”



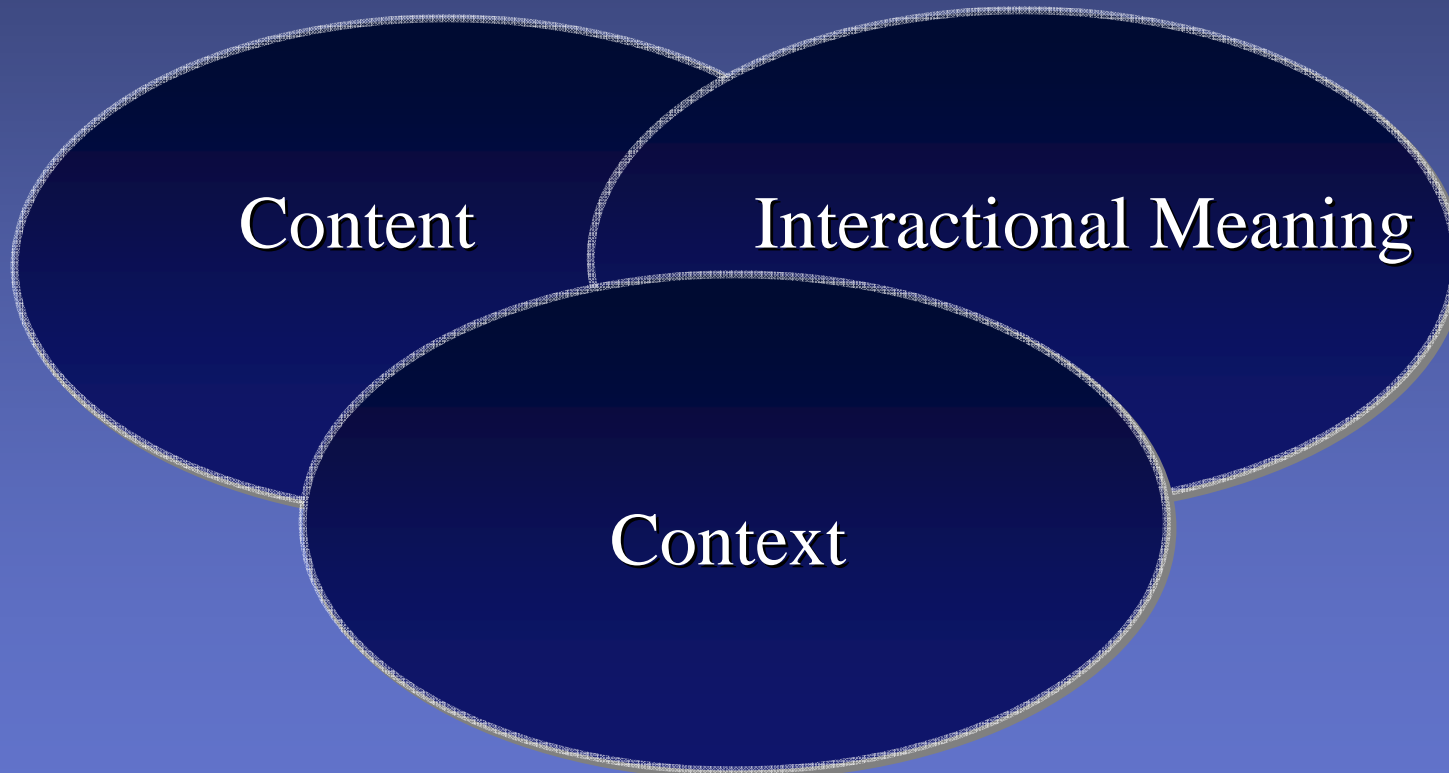
“Visualizing Talk”

Digital film has the added affordance of *visually capturing* the complexity and duration of spoken language samples.

Elementary units--*from utterances to discourse*--are directly linked to the context of their production.

Documentary process is broadened to allow speakers to *select, situate, and model* discourse as it emerges in the fieldwork setting.

“Visualizing Talk”



Mythic Narrative Performance
by
Thomas Morning Owl

Umatilla Reservation, Oregon
March 17, 2006

5. Conclusion

Filmic Language Documentation

Finding(s):

As a form of documentation, digital film reveals a dynamic and contingent relationship between discourse and action, one that is located at the nexus of social practices, identities, and social goals.

Citations

Bowern, C. (forthcoming) Field Work Methodology: An introduction to linguistic data elicitation methods in the field and the classroom.

Hanks, W.F. (1990) Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space Among the Maya. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.