

desire it to take charge of whatever further work is to be done on these Indians.

Very truly yours,

A Hrdlicka."

Mr. Marsh states that he intends to cooperate with the scientists in every possible way to facilitate carrying out the recommendations of the committee.

WHITE INDIANS HAVE SHORTHAND SPEECH, SAYS SMITHSONIAN LINGUIST

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"The language of the White Indians is the most melodious and smooth sounding variety of speech that can be found anywhere in the world, and is made up of the smallest number of sounds," is the statement of Dr. John F. Harrington, ethnologist of the Smithsonian Institution, who has been studying the language of the three White Indian children recently brought from the Darien region of the Isthmus of Panama to the United States by R. O. Marsh, explorer and engineer.

"It is an exceedingly easy language to learn. It has no sound in it that cannot be pronounced by anybody, without any training or practice. All of its sounds occur in the English language. The effect on the ear is much more pleasant even than that of the melodious Spanish, while by comparison English, French and Russian sound harsh and barbarous.

"The structure of the language is represented by the formula *cv*, *c* representing a consonant and *v* a vowel. It produces an alternating flow of consonant and vowel, consonant and vowel; no two consonants ever come together. This structure is responsible for the great melodiousness of the language.

"It has none of the clicked consonants so abundant in Maya and Hottentot, and it also lacks the difficult "tl" and "tz" combinations of the Aztec. It does not have the "intonation values" of Chinese; that is, the meaning of a word is not changed by the tone of voice in which it is spoken. The accent follows such regular rules that it is not even necessary to indicate it by accent marks such as are used in French.

"It is an analytical language, in which ideas are expressed by separate words. In this it is sharply contrasted with practically every other Indian language, which are of the 'agglutinative' type, building long, complex words by sticking separate roots and word-elements together.

"The number of sounds is very small; hence the alphabet will be the shortest one in existence, when the language is reduced to writing. It is the shorthand of languages. The sounds used consist of the five vowels, the two semi-vowels *W* and *Y*, and the consonant sounds *K*, *T*, *Ch*, *Sh*, *Ts*, *S*, *L*, *M*, *N*, *R* and *P*. This gives eighteen letters; the English alphabet contains twenty-six, and we use many other sounds, like *ch* and *ng*, that are not represented by single letters.

"The polynesian languages, for example the Hawaiian, have been thought of as being similar 'shorthand' languages. In print they do look simple, but then spoken they are full of 'choky' sounds in the throat that make them really difficult. These sounds are entirely lacking in the language of the White Indians.

"It may be asked how they can make a sufficient number of roots and affixes to carry on the business of a language with so small a number of sounds. This is done by a very ingenious device, similar to one employed in Finnish. Each sound has two forms, a short and a long. In this way the number of sounds is doubled. In learning the language that is the only thing that must be watched. If a double 'T' occurs it must be pronounced double, and not jammed together, as we frequently do in English.

"One of the most interesting things about this study has been the discovery that girls are taught a different pronunciation from that of boys. There is a distinct 'feminine' method of speech, which is softer and more lisping than the 'masculine' pronunciation. Where the two White Indian boys, Olo, and Sippu, use Ch, Margarita, the girl, uses Ts. For the masculine Sh she substitutes S, and she uses Y and L where they use the harsher K and R. It is somewhat reminiscent of the 'polite accent' that was taught to little girls in English and American 'genteel' society in the last century. Sometimes this 'feminine' pronunciation quite distorts a word. The word for 'chief', for example, is 'sakla'; Margarita calls it 'sayla'. This peculiar 'feminine lisp' makes it possible for one to tell the sex of a speaker even in the dark.

"A similar thing is to be noticed in the speech of animals told of in their folk tales. Each animal has its own 'lisp'. It is not necessary to add, as in English, that 'Bre'r Wolf said'; the listening youngster knows from the 'lisp' that it is a wolf speaking, or a turtle, or a fox. This makes the story more realistic.

"The language is very descriptive. Instead of seeking new stems for names of animals, they call many of them by descriptive terms. For instance the manatee or sea-cow is called 'ti moli', which means 'water cow'. The sea lion is 'ti achu', or 'water tiger'.

"The children are very eager to tell what they know. They will keep at the game so long and as late as there is any one to listen. They are at the same time very insistent that the words be learned correctly. If a word is mispronounced they will go back and say it over and over until they 'get it across'."

Dr. Harrington learns the language from the children by playing with them. He gets down on the floor, with toys, games and pictures; and the three children point out the various parts and objects and give the names, which he notes down. Many words for the dictionary of the Indian speech which Dr. Harrington is compiling were learned on a trip to the zoological garden, where the three children recognized and named all the animals native to their home. Dr. Harrington is continuing the study of the children's language, with frequent visits, and expects to build up a fairly complete vocabulary before they return to the tropics.

QUICK AUTO STOPPING NOT DEPENDENT ON SEX, RACE OR EDUCATION

When it comes to stopping an automobile quickly, race, sex, color or education do not count. But scientific tests for chauffeurs devised by H. H. Allen, automotive expert of the National Bureau of Standards, and Prof. Fred A. Moss, psychologist of the Public Personnel Administration of the Institute for Government Research in Washington, show that experience and natural quickness do affect the amount of time, required for the automobile driver to get his feet into action upon the brakes.