DOCUMENTING LANDSCAPE USE IN SPATIAL REFERENCE IN DIIDXA ZA (ISTHMUS ZAPOTEC)

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OUTLINE

• The larger project
• Why landscape?
• *Diidxa za*
• Communities of study
• Tasks
• Mixed methodologies
• Future Plans
THE LARGER PROJECT

- Linguistic Relativity
- Role of language vs. non-linguistic factors on language and cognition (Li & Gleitman 2002; Bohnemeyer et al. 2012)
- Domain: spatial frames of reference
  - Conceptual coordinate systems used to locate and orient entities
  - Relative, Intrinsic, Geocentric frame types
- Topography: local landscape features
- Population geography: density
WHY LANDSCAPE?

• Ethnosemantics of landscape
• What terms exist in the lexicon?
• How is landscape categorized?
• Is there a conceptual domain for “landscape”?
• Burenhult & Levinson (2008); Mark et al (2011); *inter alia*
ISTHMUS ZAPOTEC (DIIDXA ZA)

• Otomanguean language; Zapotecan branch
• Tonal; VSO
• 100,000 speakers (INEGI 2010 census)
• Endangered in most communities
  • Shift to Spanish in younger speakers
• Strong preference for geocentric reference frames in La Ventosa (Pérez Báez 2011)
COMMUNITIES OF STUDY

• Isthmus of Tehuantepec
  • La Ventosa
  • Juchitán de Zaragoza
  • Santa María Xadani
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• Landscape Listing and Description Task (lexical inventory)
• Route Description Task (salience of landscape entities)
• Talking Animals (reference frames in language)
LISTING TASK

• Part 1: Listing
  • Name landscape entities
  • Listen to recorded list to create a written list of terms

• Part 2: Descriptions
  • Respond to questions about the features of each item and any other information they would like to add
LISTING TASK

• Lists
  • Analyzed for recurrence of landscape entities across communities
  • Establish salience of landscape features across populations
  • Contribute to documentation and revitalization efforts

• Descriptions
  • Used for semantic analyses
  • Contribute to documentation and revitalization efforts
### LISTING TASK DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La Ventosa</th>
<th>Juchitán de Zaragoza</th>
<th>Santa María Xadani</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bi - wind</td>
<td>Bordo – side</td>
<td>Bize - well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dani – hill</td>
<td>Dani – hill</td>
<td>Carreta – highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiigu – river</td>
<td>Guiigu – river</td>
<td>Esteru – marsh/swamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guixi – trash</td>
<td>Guiixhi – jungle?</td>
<td>Guiigu – river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mani’ – animal</td>
<td>Guixi – trash</td>
<td>Guiixhi – jungle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisa/nisa do’ – water/sea</td>
<td>Mani huinni – animal</td>
<td>Layu – ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaga - tree</td>
<td>Nisa – water</td>
<td>Nisa do’ – sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yaga – tree</td>
<td>Ranya - milpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuu - house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preliminary findings**
ROUTE DESCRIPTION TASK

• Guessing game
• Director describes route to a place so partner can guess the name of that place
• Audio- and video-recorded to observe gestures
ROUTE DESCRIPTION TASK

• Analyze descriptions for landscape entities used in direction giving
• Compare to landmarks used in Talking Animals
TALKING ANIMALS

• Matching game (referential communication task)
• Director describes to Matcher how to place toy animals
TALKING ANIMALS

• Analyze Director’s speech
  • Spatial reference frames
  • Landscape entities used
MIXED METHODOLOGIES

- Explore effects of local landscape on reference frame use
  - Lexical inventory (Listing)
  - Salience of landscape entities in local environment (Listing, Route)
  - Use of landscape in small-scale spatial descriptions (Talking Animals)
- Ethnophysiography of landscape
  - Lexical inventory for dictionaries and revitalization (Listing)
  - Descriptions of landscape entities (Listing)
  - Semantic analysis of terms and conceptualization of entities (Listing)
FUTURE PLANS

• Additional semantic analysis with speakers
• Collection of additional descriptions or relevant content for revitalization materials
THANK YOU!

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The UB Semantic Typology Lab
REFERENCES


