Documentation of Sign Language Diversity in Peru

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Peruvian Sign Language (LSP)

• official language of Peru (2010)
• 30,000 signers (0.1% of the population)
• threatened by educational policies, attitudes, transmission, ASL
• documentation just beginning
Fieldwork (2014)

- 2 months (Lima, Pucallpa)
- Discussions with PUCP linguists, Deaf leaders, Ministry of Education, researchers, educators
- LSP data collection and interviews (25 hr)

MAP OF PERU
Overall Impressions

• a lot of variation (by age, education, region, social group)
• influence from ASL, BSL, LSE (20-70%)
• more positive attitudes in Lima
• interest in documentation and education within the community
Challenges

• finding informants
  – conflict, long-distance networking

• interpretation
  – small group, all in Lima, established relationships

• variation
  – dialect, Spanish/LSP fluency, education, attitudes

• elicitation
  – no common language, consistency, abstractness
Solutions: Informants

• become visible and recognizable
• hang out
• relax- schedules are relative
• show interest in tangible ways
• name-drop
• use liaisons to contact schools and higher authorities
Solutions: Interpretation

- learn the language
- don’t expect to have an interpreter during elicitation sessions
- ask educators and other researchers about basic usage
- beware of friends and family members
- watch out for answer-feeding
- support interpretation programs
Solutions: Variation

• find out each participant’s educational background, fluency, attitudes, and fingerspelling as soon as possible
• use many modes and find what works
• use variation to spark discussion
• ask for descriptions, not answers
• “I like to see different signs”
Solutions: Elicitation

Session Structure

- metadata interviews first
- short sessions (11-36 numbered items)
- organized by semantic domain
- mix of individual items and longer descriptions
- one video per “session”
- large individual images/concepts with Spanish
- printable
- individual or group
- be present to discuss and clarify
agua

zancudo

mojado

seco
Solutions: Elicitation

Abstract and Longer Items

- reuse symbols
- give sample answers
- find each participant’s strength
- comic strips
- “teach me how to…”, “do you like…”, stories
- group sessions

Consent

- discussion format, ideally interpreted
- “I want to see YOUR signs”
¿Cómo preparas pescado?

día 1

día 2

días 2
Ongoing and Future Work

• lexical and phonetic comparison
• Quechua-based variety?
• phonological and syntactic analysis
• educational materials and policy
• community projects
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