

CHAAWI GA CHAAWI GA RINI' BEEDXE

'Slowly, slowly says the jaguar':

Giving collaborations time to develop

Gabriela Pérez Báez

National Museum of Natural History

Smithsonian Institution

gperezbaez@si.edu



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COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

- **Linguistic research has become increasingly collaborative over the last decade**
 - Benedicto and Mayangna Yulbarangyang Balna 2007
 - Cameron *et al.* 1992
 - Czaykowska-Higgins 2009
 - Grenoble and Furbee (eds.) 2010
 - Leonard and Haynes 2010
 - Rice 2006 and 2011
 - *inter alia*

COLLABORATION AS A CONDITION?

However, collaborations (subordination?) have come to be presented as a condition for research endeavors

- **Dwyer (2010:54)**
 - *Lone ranger linguistics considered of “marginal ethicality”*
- **Gerds (2010:191)**
 - *“The linguist will have to compromise long-range scholarly goals to meet the community’s immediate needs.”*

THESIS

- **Insufficient discussion about the conditions needed in order to develop collaborations of value to all involved**
- **I present a case study to advocate for considering collaborations as a goal of linguistic research rather than a condition for it**
 - Linguist-focused research (cf. Czaykowska-Higgins 2009) may be necessary and even the only appropriate model under certain circumstances
 - The researcher, the community and the research need time to evolve into a meaningful collaboration

BACKGROUND

Documentation of Diidxazá (Isthmus Zapotec, Otomanguenan)

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DIIDXAZÁ

- **Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec**
- **A.k.a. Isthmus Zapotec, zapoteco de la planicie costera, Juchitec**
 - Otomanguenan > Zapotec > Central Zapotec
 - VSO, head marking
 - CVCV canonical word shape, predictable stress in first syllable of a root
 - Agglutinative, morphology concentrates mostly around verb roots
 - TAM prefixes, pronominal enclitics
- **Complex phonological system with five vowel qualities and contrastive vowel types and tone**

LANGUAGE VITALITY

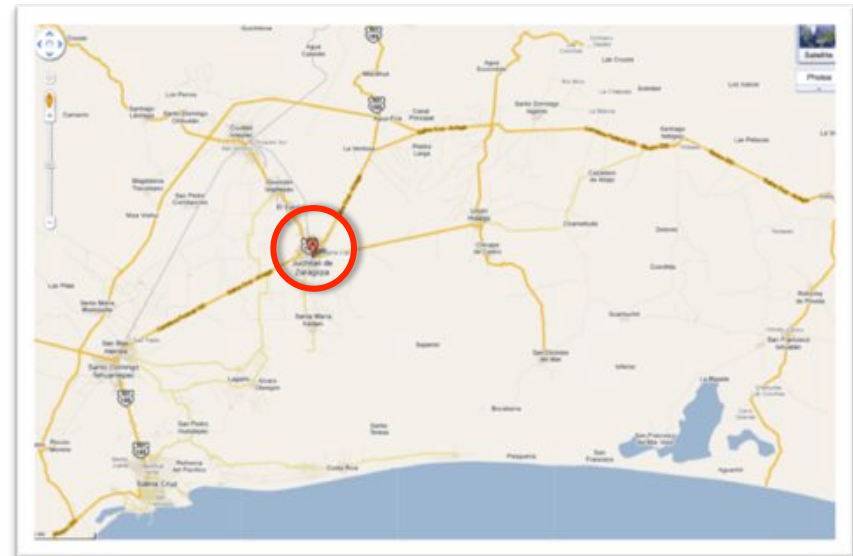
- 22 Diidxazá speaking municipalities
- < 100,000 speakers
- Literary and musical production
- No longer *lingua franca*
- Children generally do not learn it as L1
 - In only 2 of the 22 diidxazá municipalities is the speaker population growing



Municipalities in the Juchitán District (Marcial Cerqueda 2014)	Vitality
El Espinal	Accelerated Extinction
Ciudad Ixtepec	Accelerated Extinction
Asunción Ixtaltepec	Accelerated Extinction
Unión Hidalgo	Accelerated Extinction
Santa María Petapa	Accelerated Extinction
Santo Domingo Petapa	Accelerated Extinction
Juchitán de Zaragoza (incl. La Ventosa)	Accelerated Extinction
Santa María Xadani	<i>Slow recovery</i>

LA VENTOSA

- Belonging to the municipality of Juchitán de Zaragoza
- Wedged between the Transisthmian and Panamerican Highways
- *Extinción acelerada* ('accelerated extinction')
 - Pop: 4884 (INEGI 2010)
 - 2736 in self-reported speakers of an Indigenous language
 - Diidxazá, Zoque, perhaps other
 - Youngest speakers are mostly in their 20s



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FROM LINGUIST-FOCUSED RESEARCH TO COLLABORATION

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LINGUIST-FOCUSED RESEARCH

- **2003 – 2010 Project for the Documentation of the Languages of Mesoamerica (PDLMA)**
 - Lexical documentation for trilingual Diidxazá-Spanish-English dictionary
 - +/- 10,000 entries
 - Research center set up in designated location for the gathering of researchers and speakers of languages of study
 - Worked with **Rosaura López Cartas**
- **Observations**
 - High productivity; Solid acquisition of technical knowledge about Diidxazá
 - **Strong bond with Rosaura**
 - Not participatory; Lack of engagement with the community

J-MLD8	
VIEWX	-ache
VIEW2	
VPSH	
VPPX	POT g.ache!7 (I) [JLC,RGL03,RLC04], HAB r.ache [JLC,ND,RGL03,RLC04]
VPPQ	
UNDO	//atche// [JLC]
MEMO	
VARP	
IGRA	viC
ARG	verb subject location
IR00	1
IRTG	1
IRTL	1
USE	
ISPG	reventarse [JLC,ND,RGL03,RLC04]; reventarse -- el huevo empollado dando nac
ITWS	
ENG	to burst, to burst open, to hatch, to explode [GPB11]; to ejaculate [GPB11]; to
ITWE	
SEMF	
ISCO	
EXLX	1 ni-ya!che bere wiini [JLC,RLC11]
EXSX	1 ni-ya!che bere wiini [JLC,RLC11]
XSPX	1 se hubieran reventado los pollitos [RLC07]
XENX	1 the chick would have hatched [GPB11]
EXLX	1 gu.che kwe*te [RGL03]
EXSX	1 gu.che kwe*te [RGL03]
XSPX	1 trono* el cohete [RGL03]
XENX	1 the firecracker burst [GPB11]

EMERGENCE OF A COLLABORATION

- **2009 Spatial Language and Cognition in Mesoamerica (MesoSpace)**
 - NSF Award No. BCS-0723694
 - Field research for three weeks in La Ventosa
 - Emergence of Community-based Language research (cf. Czaykowska-Higgins 2009)
 - **Rosaura** was a participant in elicitation and experimental tasks but also **became a research assistant**
 - **Reyna López López**, a young woman trained by the PDLMA as a transcriber, was **participant, research assistant and transcriber**
 - **Edilberto López** was **participant and transcriber**
 - **Observations**
 - Collaboration was limited to research-driven tasks
 - Sojourn allowed for interaction with the broader community
 - Opportunity to display knowledge about language
 - Beginning to explore how to make research of use to community



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INCREASED PARTICIPATION

- **Plants module in dictionary with ~1,000 plant related entries**
 - Data was not satisfactory
- **Response**
 - Extensive documentation of the flora, associated lexicon and knowledge
 - 2012 pilot project
 - 104 specimens, audio and photography
 - Sponsored by the NMNH, Smithsonian



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POST-PILOT REALIZATION

The dictionary never got
anyone (other than
myself) excited...

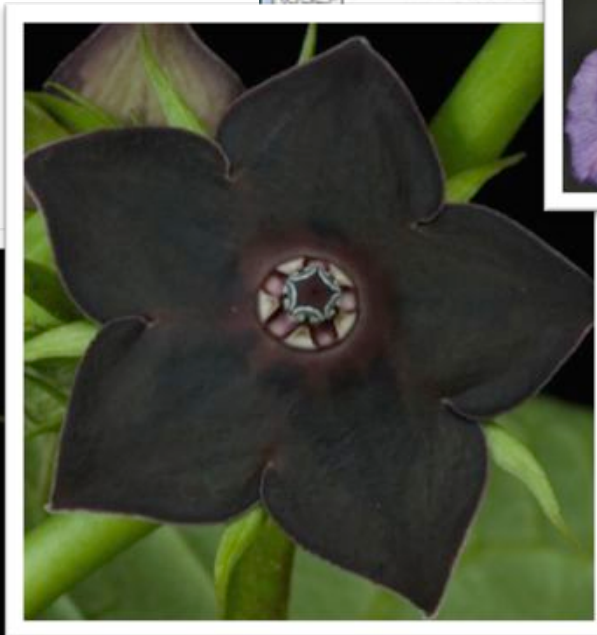
But plants did!

```

J-M.L.D.E
VexX -ache
VLEXZ
VPSH-
VPPX POT ga.che!7 (I) [J
VPPG-
VUND //atche// [JLC]
VMB-
VWAR-
VGRAB vtC
VARG- verb subject locatio
VROO 1
VRTGF 1
VRTGL 1
VUSE-

```

[RLC11]
[RLC11]
[politor [RLC07]
[ed [GPB11]
[11]
[RLC07]
[RLC07]
[1]
[1 ga.che +be* sa^ra-mpyo'n [RGL03]
[1 ga.che +be* sa^ra-mpyo'n [RGL03]
[1 le dio* sarampo*n [RGL03]; le brato* el sarampo*n [GPB11]
[1 he broke out with measles [GPB11]



LEXICO-BOTANICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

To respond to the extraordinary interest of the community in this line of research

- Documentation and Revitalization of the Language and Traditional Ecological Knowledge of the Didxazá-speaking Community
 - To build on ongoing lexico-botanical documentation
 - By developing a model for **local retention of research results** through **community stewardship**



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TEAMWORK

La Ventosa

- **Local experts:** Fernando Sánchez López, Rosaura López Cartas, Velma Orozco Trujillo
- **Data entry, project assistant:** Reyna López López
- **Field assistant:** Pedro Trujillo Vera

Botanists:

- Alberto Javier Reyes García, MEXU, UNAM
- Kenia Velasco Gutiérrez (Oaxaca)

Art

- Gibrán Morales Carranza (Oaxaca)

Educational linguistics

- Haley de Korne, University of Pennsylvania

Smithsonian

- Gabriela Pérez Báez, PI
- Vicki Funk (Botany), Manuel Gancedo (NMAI), Olivia Cadaval (CFCH)
- Kate Riestenberg



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COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Leonard and Haynes 2010

- Interview excerpt
 - “Linguists shouldn’t march in. They really need to be able to be quiet, sit and listen and be able to gain the knowledge of the people, and understand them first...” (p. 287)
- That was the opposite of what was expected of us!

August 2013

- Prior to grant preparation, meetings were held in La Ventosa, notably with the Comité Cultural Maria Chéu responsible for the Centro Cultural Bacusa Gui
- 2 hr. meeting; most strikingly: Haley de Korne and I **came in to listen to “community needs”**. Our interlocutors came in **expecting ideas from us**

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Leonard and Haynes 2010

- Highlights the need to involve research participants in the design of the research from the start but this is not always possible
 - Distance, deadlines, duration of discovery phase

Consultations

- Spring 2014
- Summer 2014
- Fall 2014
- March 2015
 - Follow up consultations under the direction of NMAI's Manuel Gancedo intended to solidify plans for a one-year cycle of workshops and to design a fundraising plan intended for long-term sustainability of the workshops

RETENTION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Language and ecology conservation workshops for children

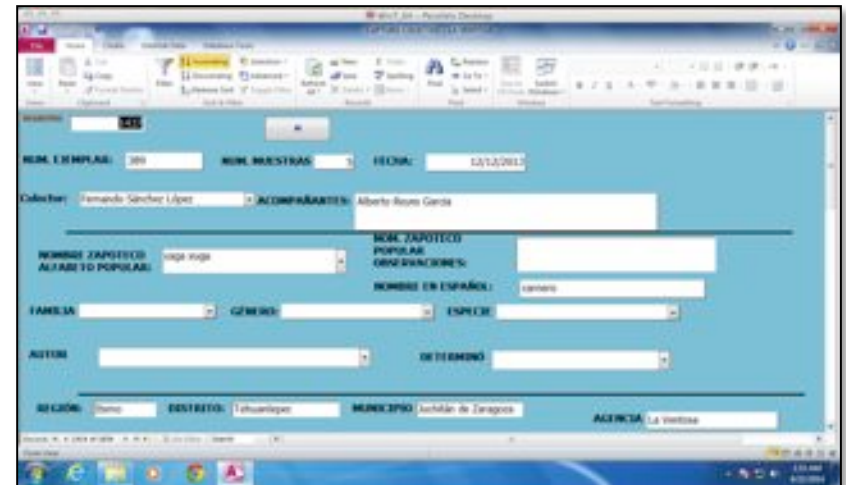
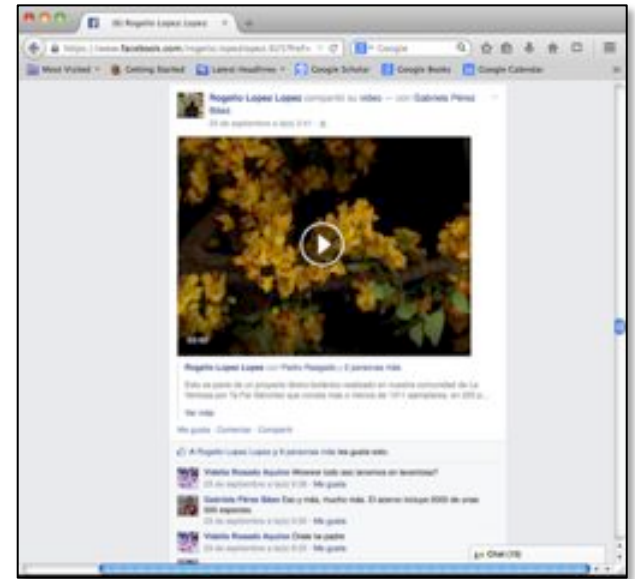
Writing workshops

Pedagogical materials

- Game set
- Writing manual (April 2015)
- Ethnobotanical Herbarium online in Diidxazá, Spanish, English (Winter 2015)
- *Infografías* (Summer 2015)
- Wikipedia page (Summer 2015)

Awareness raising

- Photo and poetry book



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COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

Initially, leadership came from outside

- First couple of workshops designed by external team members

3rd Workshop July 2014

- Design by Reyna López López and Fernando Sánchez López
 - And ever since
- Participation of several community members as knowledge bearers
- Assistance from Haley de Korne, Kate Riestenberg, Gabriela Pérez Báez in project planning, budgets, pedagogy of language acquisition, design of literacy manual

Sustainability of workshops resides in community commitment

Conference and community presentations

- Lead by or with participation of community team

Curation of photo book and *infografías*

- Spring 2015, by Fernando Sánchez López with contributions from community team





DISCUSSION

Conditions needed for collaboration

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CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR COLLABORATION

We have succeeded in developing a model of collaboration based on community stewardship and retention of research results

The collaboration was only possible when the following conditions were met:

- For me to have sufficient knowledge of the language to be able to earn the respect and acceptance of highly knowledgeable community members of social prominence
- Having sufficient sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge as to be able to identify opportunities for collaboration
- Be in a position to secure the funding to sustain the collaboration long-term.

READINESS: EARLY CAREER...



Not enough knowledge about the language to be entrusted with a language project

I had no track record of commitment to be trusted as a collaborator

I could not have secured funding for a meaningful, sustainable activity > one-off

I did not know the community, local culture, social norms, sociolinguistic profile, needs

- I would not have known how best to contribute to the community
- Could have failed in navigating a complex, conservative and male-dominated society with a bias against *mestizos*

RELEVANCE OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Guérin and Lacrampe 2010 who state that learning (about) the language was a factor enabling collaboration

Dobrin 2008 which describes various cases where a lack of understanding of the community leads to unproductive, unsuccessful and even problematic interactions

Crippen and Robinson 2013 for two damaging experiences by graduate students attempting to establish collaborations

Dwyer 2010:198 recognizes the “steep learning curve” but does not discuss it as part of the case studies presented

VS. MID- TO LATE CAREER...

Advocates of collaboration are often seasoned researchers with established lines of research and/or community relations

- Benedicto and Mayangna Yulbarangyang Balna 2007
- Dwyer 2010
- Cameron *et al.* 1992
- Czaykowska-Higgins 2009
- Dobrin 2008
- Grenoble and Furbee (eds.) 2010
- Rice 2006 and 2011

READINESS: RESOURCES

Often, the collaborations described in the literature are based on substantial pre-existing infrastructure in the community as well as funding

- Benedicto and Mayangna Yulbarangyang Balna 2007
 - Regional University URACCAN with an Institute of Linguistics (Rosita, Nicaragua)
 - Offers professionalization courses for teachers, bachelor's degree in Bilingual Intercultural Education
 - State-run bilingual school system
 - Funding from URACCAN, Purdue University, the European Union, the National Science Foundation
- Dwyer 2010
 - Kickapoo Nation School with a 20-year history
 - Ega (Ivory Coast) based on long term relations between the Université de Cocody (Ivory Coast), University of Uyo (Nigeria), University of Bielefeld (Germany), with oversight by the Ministry of Education
- Leonard and Haynes 2010
 - Collaborators are highly experienced, committed community researchers and language advocates Daryl and Karen Baldwin
- Czaykowska-Higgins 2009; Grenoble and Furbee (eds.) 2010; Rice 2006 and 2011

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CONDITIONS IN LA VENTOSA

- **Socio-political conditions**
 - Schools with highly politicized curricula and ethos
 - Political authorities change every 3 years; changes affect alliances and reflect on prior relations established
 - Basic infrastructure lacking (limitations in telecommunications and technology, space, banking, services)
 - Economic needs interfere with interest and dedication
- **Intellectual conditions**
 - Documentation in the 1950s
 - No prior concerted effort to revitalize
 - Limited to no exposure to linguistics, revitalization, pedagogy
 - Not all participants will be leaders
- **The conditions that have enabled the ongoing collaboration had to be cultivated over time**



CONCLUSION

(UN)REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Early career collaborations may not be able to accommodate for the process of development of resources and readiness for collaboration

- I coincide with Crippen and Robinson 2013 in that
 - Pressure on researchers initiating their field work to collaborate can be damaging to their academic progress, morale and even safety
 - Not every community might want to engage in collaboration or might be ready for it (cf. Pérez Báez under review)
 - Not every relationship with a community might have the conditions necessary for a collaboration

The linguist-focused model might be the most feasible model for linguists starting out in field research

- Allowing time to get to know the community (Leonard and Haynes 2010:275)
- Unless students are inserted into a collaboration
 - Ex. Haley de Korne, Educational Linguistics, U. of Pennsylvania in Isthmus Zapotec project

CHAAWI GA CHAAWI RINI' BEEDXE

‘Slowly, slowly, says the jaguar’

Being “ready” takes time

I advocate

- For allowing researchers – especially early career researchers – the time to develop and grow into collaborations
- Considering collaborations as a **goal** of linguistic research, when appropriate, rather than a condition for it



**XQUIXE PE' LAATU
THANK YOU**

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