Strategies for activating language practices & participation in a multilingual community: Results and challenges

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Overview

- Diidxazá sociolinguistic context
  - Bi/Multilingualism, rapid shift
- Ethnobotanical documentation project
- Strategies for promoting active Diidxazá use
- Results
  - Analysis of:
    - Opportunities & Motivations
      - Within the documentation project
   - Around the documentation project
- Discussion

SOCIOLINGUISTIC OVERVIEW

Regional context:
Diidxazá (Isthmus Zapotec, IZ, Otomangue)

- Most widely spoken of ~62 Zapotec varieties in Oaxaca (Ethnologue, 2014; INALI, 2012)
    - Est. 85,000-100,000 speakers across the Isthmus
- Undergoing a process of *extinción acelerada* ('accelerated extinction') in 20 out of 22 Diidxazá-speaking municipalities (Marcial Cerqueda 2014ms)
- Located in a historically multilingual region
    - In contact with Mixe, Zoque, Huave and Spanish (and historically with French and other European languages); influence of English

http://www.eumed.net/cursecon/libreria/mebb/grupos_etnicos.html
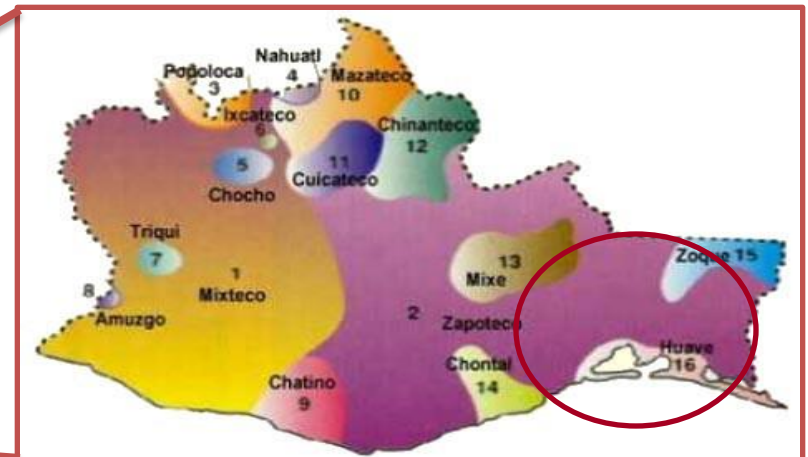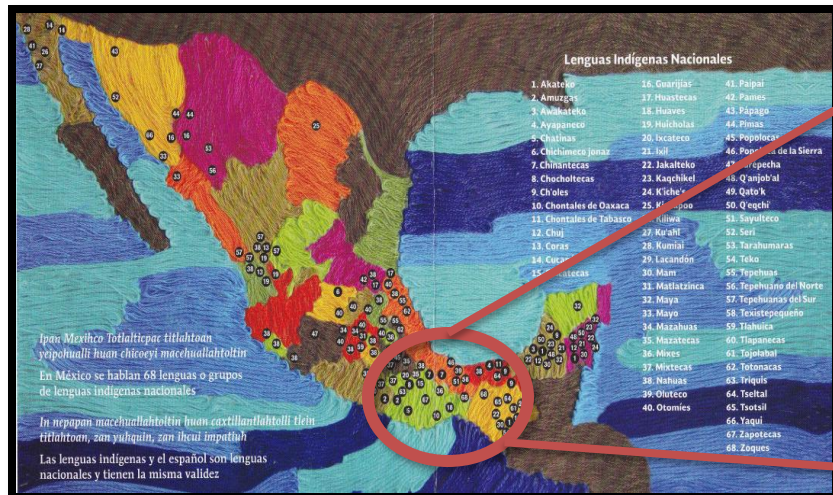
Language practices & attitudes

- *"Our parents didn't let us speak Zapotec because they said that we would get confused with Spanish."*
(20 yr old woman from La Ventosa, Interview 14/05/14)

- *"I don't speak it so much because, well my dad always spoke to us in Spanish, but since my grandmother always spoke Zapotec, it is by listening to it that I was able to understand it and can now pronounce it [...]. There are people who cannot speak Spanish here and you are required to speak Zapotec with them, and that is when I speak it, but well, not so much with other people. [...] Before [...] I was afraid I wouldn't pronounce the words correctly, or would pronounce them differently and give them the wrong meaning."*
(25 yr old woman from La Ventosa, Interview 13/11/13)

Local context:
La Ventosa, *Guidxi Riale Bí*

- 2736 in 4884 self-reported speakers of an Indigenous language (INEGI 2010)
- 3-generation shift pattern
- Elders: Diidxazá, some Spanish > Adults: Diidxazá & Spanish -> Children: Spanish, passive Diidxazá at most
- Immigration of non-Diidxazá speakers
- Spanish, Zoque, some English

INTERDISCIPLINARY AND PARTICIPATORY DOCUMENTATION

Ethnobotany documentation project

- Extensive documentation of
  - Plants, lexicon & associated knowledge
- Following the *Recovering Voices* model
  - Recovering Voices: Smithonsian Institute response to the crisis of language endangerment
  - Methods: Collaborative & interdisciplinary collections-based research

- 1 yr collection cyle
  - September 2013- August 2014
  - Research funds from *Recovering Voices*; Grant from the Smithonsian World Cultures Consortium

Guie' se'

Guie' xuba

Project rationale

- A language revitalization program that views language as a vehicle for the acquisition of knowledge valuable to the language community will prove more effective than one where the focus of the recovery effort is solely the language itself

Project goals

- Botanical & linguistic documentation

- Community collaboration

- Local retention of research

- Awareness raising of local ethnobotanical knowledge

- Valorize and promote Diidxazá use

- Create sustainability for the revitalization efforts and retention of research results

Project Team

- **Director:** Gabriela Pérez Báez, Smithsonian Institution
- La Ventosa Community members
  - **Collector/ knowledge bearer:** Fernando Sánchez López
  - **Data management:** Reyna López López
  - **Assistant collector:** Pedro Trujillo Vera
  - **Knowledge bearers**: Rosaura López Cartas, Velma Orozco Trujillo
- **Biologists:** Alberto Javier Reyes García, MEXU, UNAM; Kenia Velasco Gutiérrez
- **Photographic documentation:** Gibrán Morales Carranza
- **Applied linguist:** Haley De Korne, University of Pennsylvania

Diverse participant profiles

- Varied Diidxazá capacities among participants in project activities, including:
  - Estimated following Common European Framework of Reference (www.coe.int/lang-CEFR)

Data manager	
Age	30
Isthmus resident	+
Listening	C2
Speaking	C2
Reading	C1
Writing	C1

Collector/ consultant	
Age	50
Isthmus resident	+
Listening	C2
Speaking	C2
Reading	--
Writing	--

Workshop co-teacher	
Age	20
Isthmus resident	+
Listening	C2
Speaking	B2
Reading	B2
Writing	B1

Workshop student	
Age	9
Isthmus resident	+
Listening	B1
Speaking	--
Reading	--
Writing	--

Biologist	
Age	32
Isthmus resident	-
Listening	--
Speaking	--
Reading	--
Writing	--

PROJECT IMPACT ON DIIDXAZA USE

Analyzing project impact

- Strategies
  - What generalizable strategies were used to promote active language use?

- Results
  - What impact have these strategies had on Diidxazá use?
    - **Opportunities**
    - In what activities & capacities do participants use IZ more?
      - Speaking, listening, reading, writing
    - **Motivations**
    - How has IZ use been encouraged?
      - Integrative and Instrumental motivations (Gardner, 1985)

Analyzing strategies & results

- Domains of use (Fishman 1972)

- Within project
  - What strategies were used with what results?

- Around project
  - What strategies were used with what results?

Regional community & schools

Local community & schools
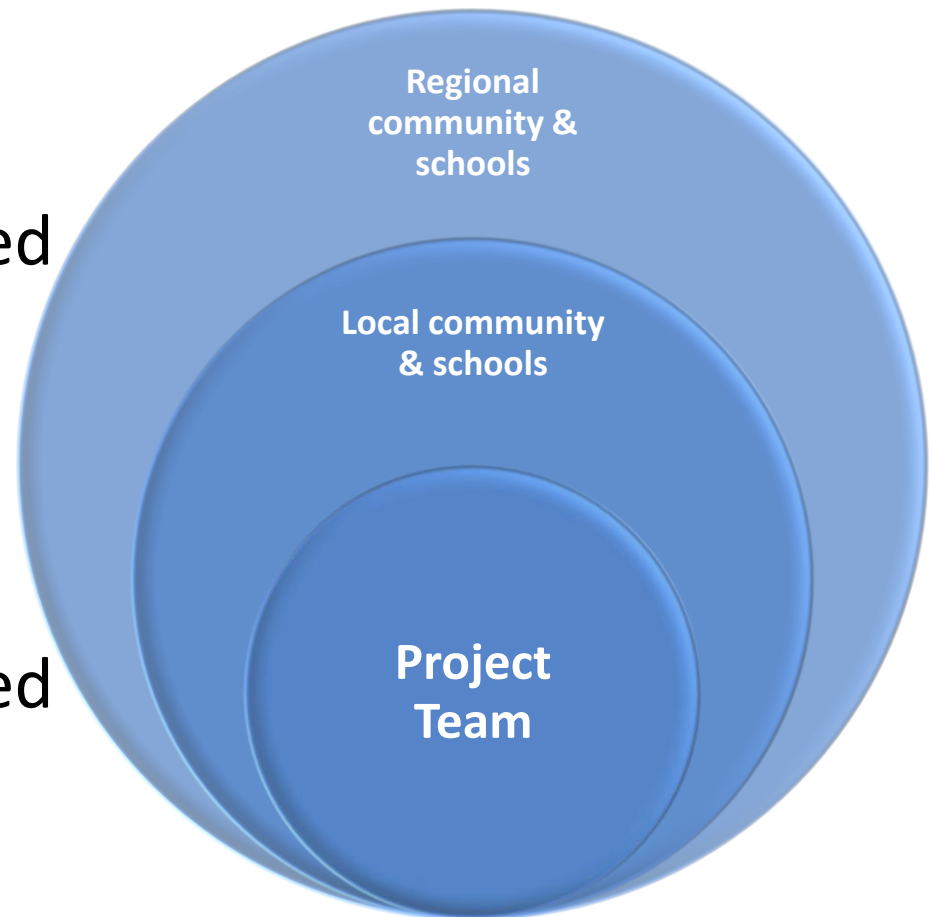
Project Team

Analyzing results

Domains	Opportunities				Motivations	
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Integrative	Instrumental
Project Team						
Local domains						
Regional domains						

Data

- Qualitative data
  - 15 months ethnographic observation, focusing on Diidxazá promotion activities across the Isthmus
  - Fieldnotes
  - Semi-strucutred interviews
    - Project domain (6); Local domain (10); Regional domain (61)
  - Audio recording of project meetings & workshops
  - Photo documentation
- Quantitative data
  - Participation & materials dissemination tallies

STRATEGIES & RESULTS

Strategy in project: Use of Diidxazá in documentation activities

- Results:
  - Diidxazá use maintained among speakers
  - Use encouraged among non-speaking team members
  - *"It's necessary, especially in communicating ideas, to refer to a particular plant we use names in Zapotec [...]. In the use of the database also, for example the colors."*
    - Biologist, Kenia Velasco Gutiérrez 9.20.14

3.- ZHI MÔDO NUÙNI

Zhi lani:	Forma biológica (esp):		
guixi bandaga	Hierba ✔ Árbol Arbusto Rosetófila Cactácea		
	Epífita Rupícola Bejuco Bejuco Herbáceo		
Zhi de die' guie' cá:	Zhi de die' cuananaxi cá:		Pà bia' nasoo:
naquichi'	naga'		30 cm
Pà bia' nuù:	Stallè ✔ nuù caadxì waxie'		

Strategy in project: Make project activities visible and audible

- Results:
  - Team works in public cultural center
  - Local children & some adults exhibit interest
  - Team interacts with community regularly
  - *FN 12.16.13: Fernando showed me that he'd taken the initiative to keep a few plant samples on hand among his equipment, because kids kept coming by and asking what they were doing, and he wanted to be able to show them.*

Strategy in project: Workshops for children by team & other community members

- Results:
  - 3 workshops, 8 community teachers, 15 hours instruction, around 100 children
  - Teachers expand their Diidxazá use into new domains; Children receive direct input & participate in Diidxazá use

- *"The best part was to see the result [...] that they could already put a name on their drawings in Zapotec. So that yes, they learned, [...] yes they enjoyed the class and what's the most motivating is that they tell you 'When's another class?'"*
  - Community teacher Diana Lenia Toledo Rasgado IN 05.14.14

Strategy beyond project: Create & disseminate learning materials

- Results:
  - Plant-themed Memorama & Bingo disseminated to 6 libraries, 8 cultural centers, 23 education institutions (Preschool – Higher education), & over 800 individuals across the Isthmus
  - *"This comes to help a bit so the student knows... their roots, right? [...] This kind of material is important"*
    - (School director, IN 03.18.14)

Strategy beyond the project: Local, regional & international outreach

- Results:
  - Presentations in La Ventosa, Oaxaca City, & internationally create visibility of project & valorization of Diidxazá for wider audience
  - 2 regional radio interviews & various press releases
  - Team members gain confidence in using IZ in formal domains
- *"It was easy for me to explain* [the project in a public presentation in August 2014]... *There were some nerves since I've never been in front of such important people. I have never had that experience except there in Oaxaca where we went* [to present the project in April 2014]. *That is where I got a bit of courage or experience for the public."*
  - Fernando Sánchez López, IN 11.19.14

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

Domains	Opportunities				Motivations	
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Integrative	Instrumental
Project Team	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐
Local domains	⭐	⭐	⭐		⭐	
Regional domains	⭐	⭐	⭐		⭐	

Discussion

Domains	Opportunities				Motivations	
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Integrative	Instrumental
Project Team	•All team members expanded Diidxazá use in some way, whether in perception or production •Speakers increased language use with children & in formal domains				**Instrumental:** Necessary Diidxazá use in documentation activities & workshop activities **Integrative:** Positive team atmosphere & affirmation of Diidxazá use	
Local domains	⭐	⭐	⭐			
Regional domains	⭐	⭐	⭐		⭐	

Discussion

Domains	Opportunities				Motivations	
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Integrative	Instrumental
Project Team	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐
Local domains						
Regional domains	⭐	⭐	⭐		⭐	

•Educational games widely disseminated, creating opportunities for active Diidxazá use.
•Direct invitation to participate in workshops

Outreach & valorization through personal interaction & project visibility

Discussion

Domains	Opportunities				Motivations	
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Integrative	Instrumental
Project Team	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐	⭐
Local domains	⭐	⭐	⭐		⭐	
Regional domains						

Educational games strategically disseminated, creating opportunities for active Diidxazá use

Outreach & valorization through media

Conclusion

- Increased listening, speaking, reading & writing among a variety of people in & around the project occurred, if only on a temporary basis

- Local team members gained confidence with public speaking & are now taking the lead in designing and imparting workshops & creating learning opportunities for local children

- These advances occured during the data collection phase of the project; we expect greater gains in the revitalization and retention of research phase beginning now.

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Thank you

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