ZAPOTEC LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION
WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH A TWO WEEK SUMMER SCHOOL?

I am honored to work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded land of the Ohlone people.

Julia Nee
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Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec (TdvZ)

- Mexico has 282 living indigenous languages (Simons & Fenning 2018) that are divided into 68 linguistic groupings (INALI 2008)
Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec (TdVZ)

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- Zapotec is one of those groupings
- TdVZ is one variety within Zapotec
Why does TdVZ need to be revitalized?

- ~3,601 speakers (198 monolingual) in Teotitlán (Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca 2010)
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- “Definitely endangered” (UNESCO 2010)
- History of violence against students speaking Zapotec in school → parents chose not to teach Zapotec to their children
- Efforts already in place for revitalization:
  - Diidxih baa xte gulaas
  - Preschool and high school classes
  - Cultural center
Questions for today

1. What is the place of an outsider in language revitalization?
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2. How can a classroom-based language program foster interaction with native speakers beyond the classroom?
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4. How can we measure the effects of such small interventions on long-term development of language skills?
What is the place of an outsider in language revitalization?
Why I am involved in this process?

- Long-term commitment to TdVZ
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• Training in pedagogy
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- Ability to commit time and energy to the project
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• Long-term commitment to TdVZ
• Training in pedagogy
• Ability to commit time and energy to the project
• Different expectations from community members: less expectation of perfection
Development of the summer camp program

- 2016 – Summer camp with Kalinka Velasco Zárate
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- 2016 – Summer camp with Kalinka Velasco Zárate
- 2017 – Summer camp with me (16 hours)
- 2018 – Summer camp (20 hours) and pilot evaluation with me
- 2019 – Winter camp (20 hours) and evaluation with me
How can a classroom-based language program foster interaction with native speakers beyond the classroom?
How do we develop a curriculum for Zapotec?

**Resources**
- Research on language documentation, acquisition, and pedagogy
- Funding for classroom materials
- Teacher with experience
- Students
- Native Zapotec speakers
- Parents
- Municipality

**Activities**
- Classroom-based language instruction
- Field trips to converse with native speakers
- Discussion and classroom visit with parents
- Radio announcements

**Outputs**
- Daily production of materials in Zapotec for use at home
- Daily use of Zapotec games
- 10 hours of classroom learning
- 10 hours of interaction with native speakers
- Attendance

**Outcomes**
- Increased contexts for Zapotec use
- Increased confidence in using Zapotec
- Acquisition of language skills
- Increased awareness of Zapotec language endangerment
- Increased interest in speaking Zapotec

**Impacts**
- Greater use of Zapotec among children and adults
- Natural intergenerational language transfer
- Long term commitment to learning and using Zapotec

**Goal**
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How do we develop a curriculum for Zapotec?

**Resources**
- As much research as there is for commonly taught languages, or even LCTLs
- Many examples of Zapotec in the media
- Pre-made didactic materials
- Established orthography
- Large team of language teachers
- Comprehensive grammar
- Large grants

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**Goal**
Designing the curriculum

- Communication based instructional framework (Supahan & Supahan 2001)
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- Culturally relevant material
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Curriculum overview

Winter camp 2019
- Days 1-2: Introductions
- Days 3-5: The mountain
- Days 6-9: Weaving
- Day 10: Parents’ Day

Summer camp 2019
- Day 1: Introductions
- Days 2-5: Candles and candlemaking
- Days 6-9: Farming
- Day 10: Parents’ day
Designing the curriculum

- Day 6: Carding wool
  - Exposure to relevant vocabulary and grammar through **comprehensible input** as we read a story about a little girl who makes a rug from wool
  - **Guided practice** on how to use the vocabulary and grammar through interactive games
  - **Independent practice** through a field trip to talk with one or more Zapotec speakers who will teach students how to card wool
Designing the curriculum

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- How can a classroom-based language program foster interaction with native speakers beyond the classroom?
  - Expose students to the grammar and vocabulary they need to speak Zapotec in a particular situation
  - Create that situation so that students can continue to practice once the course is over
What issues arise as one attempts to create culturally authentic materials?
Designing materials

- Few materials exist in TdVZ
- Creation of materials can be time consuming, especially when done in a large group
Designing materials

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- Creation of materials can be time consuming, especially when done in a large group
- Three methods under consideration:
  - Creation of unique materials
  - Translation of pre-existing materials into Zapotec
  - Presentation of Spanish-language materials and creation of Zapotec versions in class
The day I became a plant
By Nick Carrick and Isela Peralta

The Family Book
By Todd Parr

Brown Bear, Brown Bear
By Zapotec students
Designing materials

Unique materials

- Materials can be used as comprehensible input
- People from outside the community have the time, effort, and resources to carry out the project
- Time consuming to design
- Outsider teacher can shape the materials in a biased way
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Translation of Spanish materials
- Materials can be used as comprehensible input
- Less time consuming to design
- Outsider teacher can inject cultural bias through selection of materials
- Students are exposed to Spanish-language materials already

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Student creation of materials
- Students are creating their own materials with less culturally biased input
- Results in a product that reflects students’ own understandings of their environment
- Cannot be used as comprehensible input
- Pressure on students
Designing materials

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By Nick Carrick and Isela Peralta

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Brown Bear, Brown Bear
By Zapotec students
How can we measure the effects of such small interventions on long-term development of language skills?
How can we evaluate the effects?

Resources
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- Natural intergenerational language transfer
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Goal
- Natural intergenerational language transfer
How can we evaluate the effects of the language camps?

- Why is it important to evaluate?
  - Limited time & resources
  - Potential misunderstandings of what students & families will get out of the camp
  - Align everyone’s goals and manage expectations in the best way possible
- Deliberative democratic evaluation (House & Howe 2000)
- We anticipate the changes to be very slight – so how can we design an instrument that is sensitive enough that any changes will be noticed?
Methods of data collection

- Semi-structured interviews with students, parents, and community members, with answers entered into a Qualtrics survey form in a pre-test/post-test design
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- Self-report of activities and languages used (King 2000)

What are you doing each hour of the day and what language are you mostly speaking?

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<th>Zapotec</th>
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<td>6-7am</td>
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<td>7-8am</td>
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- Self-report of activities and languages used (King 2000)
- Indirect questions

| How hard do you think it would be for a kid to speak in Zapotec? |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                   | Extremely easy    | Somewhat easy     | Neither easy nor difficult | Somewhat difficult | Extremely difficult |
| with their parents while on a hike? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| with a relative or neighbor about their weaving? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| with someone they pass on the street? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| with their friends in Zapotec class? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
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- Naturalistic day-long recordings with students in a pre-test/post-test design
  - How does actual language use differ from reported language use?
  - Pilot study has revealed interesting behaviors
Methods of data collection

Xi runia zhizhiite  What I do everyday
rabania rika xoon [xdilih]  I get up at 8
rudeda xigo dmain  I feed the animals
Ruki’inia sihab  I drink atole (a corn drink)
Rukua’ banih  I take a bath
Runia seen  I make dinner
rasiá rika tzi [medih]  I sleep at 10
rini’ xkala  I dream
Conclusion

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   - Mixed methods design with indirect and self-reports of language use, plus natural recordings
Next steps?

- Implement winter camp in January
- Offer more courses! Collaborate with more people!
- Include parents and community members in the conversation
- Implement the evaluation
- Build and reinforce contexts for Zapotec use between children and adults in the community
Xtiuzeng Yubtu – Gracias – Thanks


