Language documentation: Perspectives from Amazonia

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Language documentation

- "Documentary linguistics [is] conceived of as a fairly independent field of linguistic inquiry and practice that is no longer linked exclusively to the descriptive framework." (Himmelman 1998: 161)
- "There is a dialectical relationship between corpus and apparatus – the corpus informs the analytic apparatus; but analysis – including everything you bring to the table when doing grammatical and lexical elicitation – in turn also informs the corpus." (Woodbury 2003)

Language documentation: Advances in the field

- Emphasis on strong community collaborations
- Multimedia documentation, prioritization of video
- Ethnographic grounding and interdisciplinary approaches
- Emphasis on natural discourse; attention to conversation, multilingual language use, etc.
- Open-access archiving

(e.g. EMELD 2005, Czaykowska-Higgins 2009, Grenoble & Furbee 2010, Seyfeddinipur et al. 2019)

Variation among communities and regions

- Community infrastructure and organization
- Divergence/convergence in value systems and priorities among community members, researchers, and other actors (Dobrin 2008)
- Interest in and/or commitment to maintenance/ revitalization initiatives
- Degrees of formal education, literacy, and/or computer literacy within the community
- Accessibility of a contact language between researchers and community members
- Access to basic amenities electricity, internet, health care, etc.

Language documentation is *not* a one-size-fits-all endeavor

Fundamental need for **participant observation** in documentation:

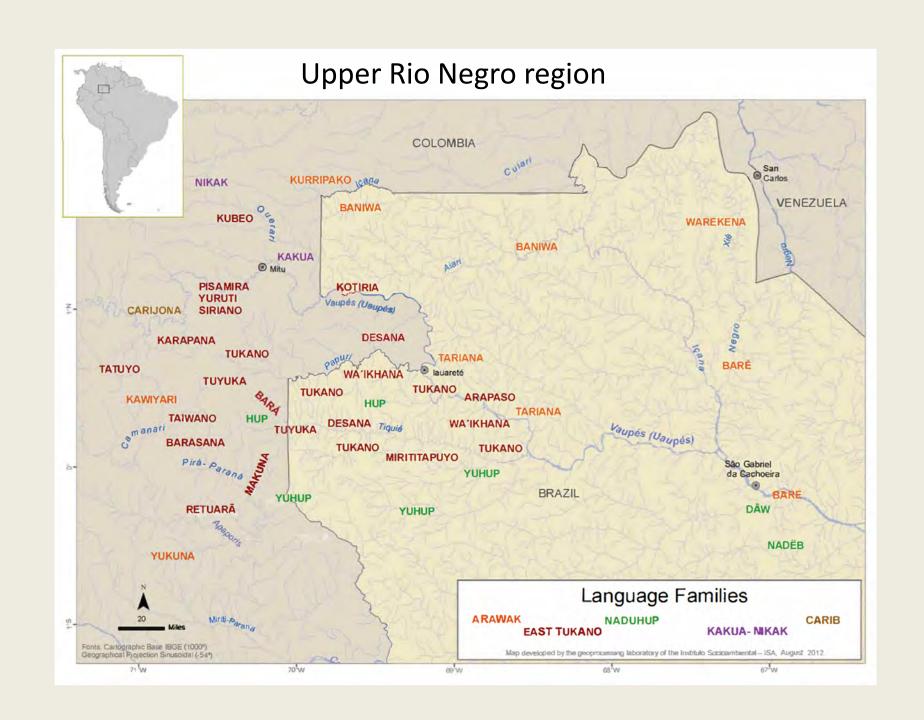
"Because it ties knowledge production directly to the development of social relationships across difference, participant observation can help documentary linguists think fruitfully about the social approaches they take in their fieldwork, whether these ultimately come to involve formal collaboration or some other form of reciprocity." (Dobrin & Schwartz 2016)

Language documentation in Amazonia

Particular challenges, particular opportunities

"The particular features of the Amazonian milieu exhort of us not only a deep awareness of the social and cultural contexts that are home to the language(s), but also a methodological approach that invests in achieving some communicative competence, makes time for participant-observation within the community, and makes a commitment to ethnography as part of the documentation process." (Beier & Epps 2018:323)





Naduhup peoples of the Rio Negro region:

Hup, Yuhup, Dâw, Nadëb







Fieldwork: getting there...











Living there...

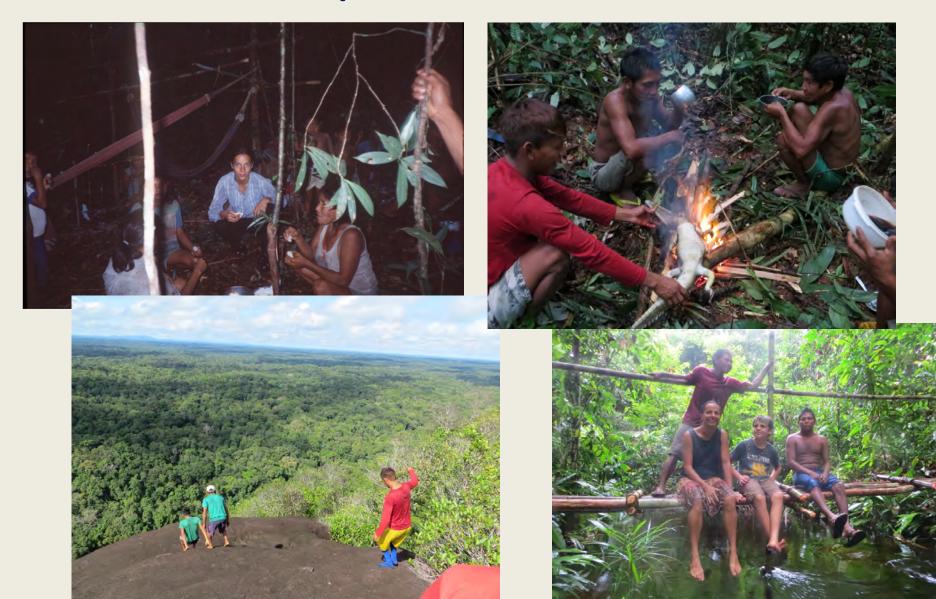








Participant observation



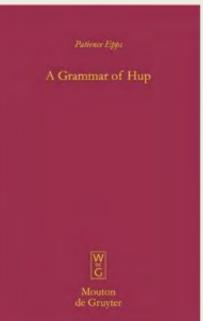
Language documentation



Plulgd'ak

1	Hohôh hatib' tëh-in pinig	1
2	Batib' b'óyn'an kikip pinig	3
3	Dôh-ấy ayúp-ấyan un'up pinig	6
4	Batib' d'ô' k'êtêp pinîg	10
5	Sanà pô basb*	14
6	Mih tih nih pêj wedep pinîg	16
7	Batib'an yo'mòy yököp pinig	25
8	Húpnúh bahadap pinig	29
9	Sohó ya'áman kāwāg wötöp pinig	32
10	Batib' yam pinig	36
11	Möhổy wád nih pinig	38
12	Táhan ayup-ấy yo mòy yököp pinig	47
13	Wá' K'èg Téh téh-inan töhöp pinig	51
14	Him.ly Dib.lyon wid down rinte	57





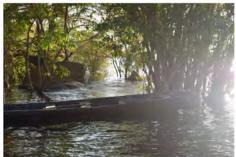




Dicionário

Em andamento

Dâw - Português - Inglês



Documenting Hup incantations



Epps & Ramos 2018
Epps & Ramos fthcmg
Ramos 2018





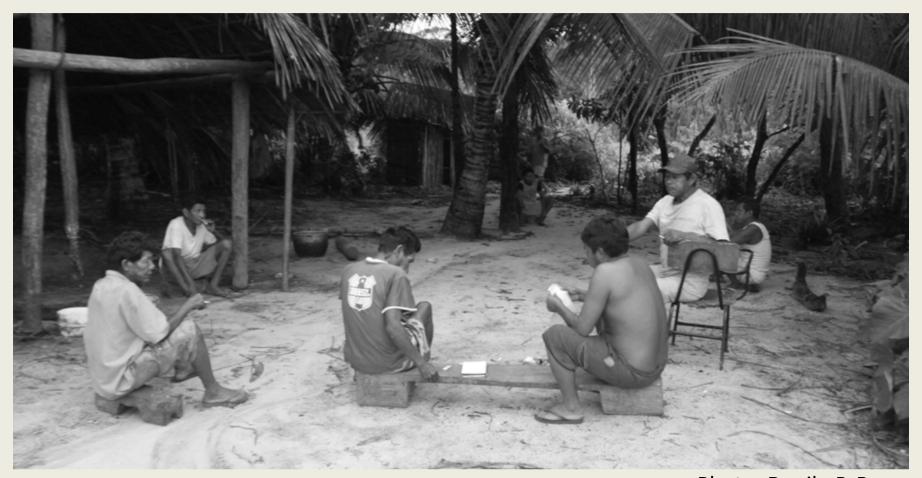


Photo: Danilo P. Ramos

Coca circle, Tat Dëh community

Path-traveling incantation



(fragment; Ponciano Salustiano, 2011)

Yɨ́ no yö', yúwàn yɨ̃ no yö' b'ay, nɨ ɨb' b'è'ét ãh hitã' yet ham d'áhäb'ay, tɨhɨ́y n'àn.	Having said thus, having said that part, I lay down my fish-fence (pari) of life to surround the snakes.				
Nɨ ɨb' b'è'ét hɨdàn hitã' yố', wèd, hɨdan, ãh wèd nó'ayáh.	Having surrounded them with my fish-fence of life, food, I offer food to them (the snakes).				
Pũ'ằk, tàk pũ'ằk b'ò', pãhấy tàk pũ'ằk b'ò', mòt tàk pũ'ằk b'ò'.	(I offer them) coca, the gourd of latex-coca, the gourd of sorva (Couma guianensis) latex-coca, the gourd of rubber-tree (Hevea sp.) latex-coca.				
Yúuwút yúp tɨhɨy n'àn, nɨd'äh b'áw n'an, b'áwàn, yầy mòyan ùy ĩhàn, dềh hàtàn, sá' mòyan ùy ĩhàn, töd mòyan ùy ĩhàn, hm, mòyan ùy ĩhàn, dềh hàtàn ãh nóop b'ay.	With this, to these biting snakes, to the common lanceheads (Bothrops atrox), to the common lancehead, to him of the small root-clump house, to the water lancehead (Bothrops sp.), to him of the aerial root-clump house, to him of the hollow tree house, to him of the house, to the water lancehead, I speak (to them).				

Manioc-bread incantation



(fragment; for parents of newborn; Ponciano Salustiano, 2011)

Yɨt nọ yö', ayup tehẹ pặt b'ok, yẹc pặt b'ok, moytud pặt b'ok, tug pặt b'ok, sɨb pặt b'ok, deh-sɨb pặt b'ok...

Hỹ n'ạn, wayrö' n'ạn hỹ' yɨ'ɨy.

Yëç n'an, moytud n'an, sɨb n'an, yɨ' d'äh nɨh hɨdɨh nag s'id yö' pɨd, tɨh nem d'äh nɨh hey'-b'ah, hɨd ta' yɨ' pɨdɨ b'ay. Hɨ' ap hũ d'äh nị ten, wayrö' hū d'äh, sɨb d'äh

Yɨt nọ yö' mah, yụp tụy hỹ n'ạn b'ạy.

K'aj n'an, met n'an, yɨ' d'ähan, nág s'id pɨd, hɨd hey'-b'ah, hɨd nem, hɨdan ta' d'äh hi yɨ' pɨdɨh. Noyha'.

Yɨt nọ yö' b'ay [pöhöy hỹ n'an] hũ n'an nọ yö', Tụ hũ n'an, tõhöt (?) n'an hĩ' ap ɨn wẹd kẹy n'ɨh n'an.

Hũyãw n'ạn, mohoy n'ạn, bɨg n'ạn, tạh n'ạn yɨ' d'äh nɨh, hɨdɨh hup sët hẹh hɨd tạ' yɨ'ɨh. Hɨd yam pihạ hɨd tạ' yɨ'ɨh.

<u>Nọyhạ'.</u>

Having said that, I list the anteater hair vessel, guan feather vessel, night curassow feather vessel, guariba monkey hair vessel, curassow feather vessel, brown-rumped-curassow feather vessel...

(I list) all the flying animals (birds).

The jacundás, the night curassows, the curassows, having washed their oil,

I then surround the scissors of their lice.

(I list) all the flying animals (birds), the curassows. Having said that, (I list) the (animals that eat) the ucuúba fruit.

The green acouchis, the agoutis, all those, I wash their oil, their scissors, their lice, I surround and send these down, I say.

Having said that, having spoken about all the animals that dwell in the trees, (I go on to) the ground animals, the collared peccaries, all those that we eat.

The pacas, the deer, the anteaters, the tapirs; those ones', I surround their hup-sët disease material.

I surround their piha song. I say.

Incantation for removing magical spines



(fragment; Ponciano Salustiano, 2011)

Dềh hiyö'öy, m'às töhö mòyan uy ĩhan, weg yòh mòyan uy ĩh nɨh, hồp hup ãy nɨh, tɨnɨh dëh yấh b'ah dếw, wah náw b'ah.

Yúp ãh bab' ni dö'öp, hõp ków, hõp ków tëg b'ah, pu ág tëg b'ah, bíy' tëg b'ah, dëh hiyö' ni n'ɨh, bíy'.

Dëh póh ùt tëg b'ah, ãh do' nenep, ãh do' neneh, të!

Hĩ'ap dềh, dềh mi hiyö', ãh do' nenep, të! dëh k'et yòh ham k'ët yɨ'ɨh.

Yúwan b'ɨyɨ' do' yö', tɨh wɨ' d'ö' nɨh ten, nusö', s'ùg sö' ãh sopop b'ay.

S'ùg sö', sẽhếk, s'ùg húp ĩh, sẽhếk hup ĩh nɨh, tɨnɨh d'apbuy yup tɨh bɨ' nip, sẽhếk b'ah tɨh bɨ' nip, wahnáw b'ah, dëh sɨsɨw, sɨsɨw dố b'ah, sɨp säsäw, tɨh bɨ' nip. Those of the lower part of the river, (the fish-master) of the white mud house, (fish-master) of the sand house, the fish-woman's, her water-vacu splinter burl, her water-abiu splinter.

These I list together, fish pimenta, fish pimenta tree splinter, genipapo tree splinter, pupunha (type) splinter, those of the lower river, pupunha.

The deh-poh-spine tree splinter, I list those (to come out), list those out, until!

All those from the lower river, I list them out, until! I get to the headwaters.

Having listed all this, if it doesn't listen (i.e. the illness continues), I go up into the forest.

The forest lord of the paricá, the paricá-lord's, the weapon he made (i.e. the patauá spine), the sadap splinter he made, the abiu splinter, the water-brazil-wood splinter, the red brazil-wood, he made (all trees with very hard wood)....

Path-Traveling incantation: Textual structure

Section	Movement	Entities elaborated
Opening		
A	Movement 1: Laying down the mussurana snake canoe	Types of canoes/trees they are made from A. Introduction
В	Movement 2: Engaging and subduing the venomous snakes Movement 3: Engaging and subduing the stinging insects and other malignant creatures Movement 4: Engaging and subduing the tree-people	Common lanceheads, water lancehead, water-duck lancehead, bushmaster Black bees, wasps, worm lizards B. Subduing malignant entities Those of the major non-riverine ecotomes: caatinga, forest, swamp, hill
	Movement 5: Engaging and subduing the dance-staffs	Those of the tree-people, the shadow/spirit- people
С	Movement 6: Engaging and embodying the tobacco-caterpillars	Tobacco-caterpillars, also marbled swamp eels, lizards, sparrows, seed-finches
	Movement 7: Engaging and embodying the marbled swamp eels	Marbled swamp eels' bodies, cigars, weapons C. Embodying benign entitie
	Movement 8: Engaging and embodying the squirrels and ocelots	Grey squirrel, red squirrel, ocelot, stump jaguar
D	Movement 9: Shaman hides himself within the passionflower	D. Conclusion
Closing		

Parallelism

```
hup- hut =teg -ni- ye- k'ét-éy, 'Possessing a cigar, (I) enter and stand,

RFLX tobacco =CL:stick VRB enter stand-DYNM
hup- käd -ni- ye- pem-yi'-ih possessing a stool, (I) enter and sit...'

RFLX stool VRB enter sit-TEL-DECL (lines 138-139)
```

(2)					
			pũ 'ữk,		'(I offer them) coca,
		100	coca	Contraction (Contraction)	
		[tàk	pũ'ũk]	b'ò',	the gourd of latex-coca,
		latex	coca	gourd	
	[[pãhấy	tàk]	pũ'ữk]	b'ò',	the gourd of sorva (Couma guianensis) latex-coca,
	sorva	latex	coca	gourd	
	[[mòt	tàk]	pũ'ữk]	b'ò'	the gourd of rubber-tree (Hevea sp.) latex-coca.'
	hevea	latex	coca	gourd	(lines 22-25)

Complex verbal constructions

- 3) hɨd-nɨh mòy số pɨd yãhã'-yë-k'ët-yɨ'-ɨy

 3PL-POSS house LOC DIST cast.down-enter-stand-TEL-DYNM

 '(I) cast down (their staffs, to cause the beings) to enter and stand inside their house.'
- 4) Ów-meh-d'äh nɨh, hɨd-nɨh sáp-át, hup-sap-ni-yö' lizard-DIM-PL POSS 3PL-POSS body-OBL RFLX-body-VBLZ-SEQ The small lizards', with their bodies, having embodied myself

(in them)...

Strategic use of evidentials and markers of speaker authority

```
hib'áh-tẽh=ấy=d'äh
                                                                   k'öd-öt,
5)
                             sop-k'ët-áy-ë'-ní-p
                                                           mòy
                             ascend-stand-VEN-PERF-ASSM-DEP house
    origin-offspring=FEM =PL
                                                                   inside-obl
                   k'öd ni-sop-k'ët-áy-yö',
    húp
            mòy
                             be-ascend-stand-ven-seq
                     inside
            house
```

person

```
k'ët-hup-käd-ni-sop-k'ët-áy-yö', pɨd ãh d'öb-yɨ'-bɨ-h,
                                                                    nóha'.
stand-RFLX-pass-be-ascend-stand-VEN-SEQ again 1SG descend-TEL-HAB-DECL I.say
```

"...inside the house where the ancestral women apparently went up to stand, (the child's spirit) goes up to stand inside the house, (I) cause (it) to be transformed and come up from the river to stand, then I go down to the river again, I say.'

Metaphorical associations

Shaman's engagement with entities is based on principle that their worlds are metaphorically parallel to that of humans – similar enough that humans can interact, but disjunct such that the interaction is powerful and/or dangerous (cf. Viveiros de Castro 1998).

Path-Traveling Incantation:

- Movement 1: shaman encloses the length of the path within a canoe that is simultaneously a mussurana snake (Clelia rustica)
- Movement 3: bees' sting is their ayahuasca
- Movement 7: shaman embodies the marbled swamp eels (Synbranchus marmoratus)





Tobacco caterpillar



Bushmaster



Marbled swamp eel



Ocelot



Amazonian red squirrel



Passionflower



Wasp

Incantation as shamanic action and encyclopedic ontology

Lays out intricate taxonomic relationships among flora, fauna, spirits, and other entities; details their properties, locations, and associations within an ecological and cosmological matrix.

In verbally artistic discourse "the potentials and resources provided by grammar, as well as cultural meanings and symbols, are exploited to the fullest and the essence of language-culture relationship becomes salient." (Sherzer 1987: 296)

Conclusions

Work with Hup incantations highlights some of the particular challenges and opportunities of documentation in the Amazonian context:

- Deep ethnographic engagement
- Long-term collaborative work that attends to particular community priorities, including particular perspectives on maintenance/revitalization
- Need for extensive monolingual fieldwork and deep understanding of the grammar

Language documentation calls for flexibility, creativity, and open-mindedness...

There is no single recipe.

