Making 'Jásógònò néèyì': movie-making as field work

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FForum
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Making 'Jásógònò néèyì': movie-making as field work

- I'll say few introductory words.
- We'll watch the movie.
- I'll discuss why and how we made the movie – questions welcome along the way.
- You'll offer me specific and frank feedback on this movie in particular and the movie-making project more generally.
'Jásógònò néèyì' (Making masato)

- This 11'37" movie documents all of the steps of making yuca beer; it features a procedural narrative which documents a culturally and socially central activity.
- The audio is entirely in Máíjìkì, with subtitles in Máíjìkì and Spanish in one version, and Máíjìkì and English in another.
- The movie was storyboarded, filmed, edited, scripted, subtitled, recorded, dubbed, and premiered in Nueva Vida in July-August 2012.
- DVDs of the movie were distributed to the four Máíhùnà communities before we left Iquitos in August.
- The movie was made as part of the Máíjìkì Project.
Máíjìkì language

- Western Tukanoan language, previously known as Orejón.
- About 450 ethnic máíjùnà people, most of whom reside in four communities in northern Loreto, Peru.
- About 100 speakers, most over 40 years old; youngest speaker is ~30 years old.
- Range of knowledge: No remaining monolingual speakers; some elders are Máíjìkì dominant; some children, teens, and young adults have passive knowledge.
- Language life expectancy: Highly endangered but there is a burgeoning interest in the last decade among some community members to revalorize, revitalize, and document the language.
Máíjùnà communities
Máįįkì Project

The MP is a multi-year, team-based, community-directed language documentation and revitalization project based in Nueva Vida, Loreto, Peru.

- Seeds for collaborative project planted in 2006 by Lev and me.
- Convenios with FECONAMAI signed in 2009 and 2010.
- Pilot phase of fieldwork carried out in 2010.
- We expect the MP to continue beyond this phase.
Máíjìkì Project: Visiting team in 2012

(l-r) Lev Michael, Steph Farmer, Amalia Skilton, Grace Neveu, Kelsey Neely
Let's watch the movie!

English subtitles: http://youtu.be/hNVcu3R4hB0
Spanish subtitles: http://youtu.be/hVFCFNC0i78
The aims of this talk

1. I will explicate our motivations and goals in making this movie as part of our field work;

2. I will describe in some detail the process of making the movie while at our field site, including unusual situational constraints and affordances;

3. I will solicit specific and frank feedback from you on the movie and our approach to movie-making, in order to improve the production of the next one(s) during the MP's 2013 field season and beyond.
Why make a movie in Máíjìkì?

In order of immediacy of benefits:

1. Self-Education for movie maker(s)
   • Affords hands-on and ears-on learning through close involvement in an activity with speakers.

2. Relationship-building for all participants
   • Participatory activity with speakers and other community members.

3. Deliverable product
   • Concrete, tangible product deliverable to community members.
Why make a movie in Máíjìkì?

4. Documentation
- Linguistic and cultural documentation simultaneously.
- ... of situated, activity-directed language in use.

5. Preservation
- Relatively accessible and disseminatable type of linguistic and cultural record.

6. Revalorization and revitalization
- Tangible, durable product usable by heritage community in future years.
Why make a movie in Máíjìkì?

Language revalorization and revitalization

• Contemporary high-prestige medium.
• Revalorization (of both language and identity) in the eyes of young people in particular.
• People don't read but they do watch DVDs.
• Looking forward based on trends toward accessibility of this medium.
• An opportunity for new views on old stimuli – Máíjìkì doesn't have to be old-fashioned or out-moded.
Why make a movie in Máíjìkì?

Language documentation

- Like a 'text' in its affordances.
- Source for language-in-use data
- Classifier agreement
- Beautiful tone production in utterances
- Situated data on elusive and subtle constructions

Discovery tool

- Found some novel morphology and lexical material
- Richly multi-modal – useful learning tool.
Why make a movie in Nueva Vida?

• Finite time to complete project means no deferral of product.
• Daily access to community participants for collaboration.
• Immediacy of delivery and distribution of product.
• Other documentation products take a lot longer to be “finished” than a short movie does.
• Creates a positive impression locally by prioritizing start-to-finish movie-making in Máíjìkì – we piqued a lot of people's attention and curiosity through this.
Recording Equipment

- Sony HDR-CX580V Camcorder ~$850
  * with 32GB SDHC Memory Card, wide-angle lens, long-life battery, filters)
- Zoom Handy H4n Recorder ~$300
- Azden SGM-1X Shotgun Microphone ~$180
- Cavision Boom Pole ~$140
- XLR Cable, 15-foot ~$15
- www.bhphotovideo.com
- Sub-total: ~$1485
Production Equipment

• MacBook Pro with Mac OS 10.7.3 ~$1200
• Final Cut Pro X 10.0.4 ~$300
  * www.apple.com
• Handmade font for subtitling in Máíjìkì ~$10
  * www.yourfonts.com
• Sub-total: $1510

• Total investment: ~$3000
Phase 1 ~ At home before field trip

• Researched equipment and software.
  * Used trial versions of Adobe Premier Elements and FCPX.
• Designed and tested font.
• Purchased equipment and software.
• Learned basics of Final Cut Pro X – manual, tutorials
  *Make sure you download the manual!
• Did a test run of all equipment together.
• Brainstormed a list of possible topics.
Phase 2 ~ In Nueva Vida ~ Pre-shoot

- Decided on the general topic.
- Invited cast and crew to participate.
- Negotiated location, time, and shooting strategies with cast and crew.
- Got a good description of key elements of topic in order to storyboard it.
- Put together a rough storyboard of entire movie.
Phase 3 ~ In Nueva Vida ~ Shoot

- All cast and crew involved in successful shoot.
- Shot movie at three locations.
  * In the canoe.
  * At the chacra.
  * In and around Jesusa's house.
- Eight sessions on three different days.
  * Sony Camera and Zoom Handy (except in canoe).
Phase 4 ~ In Nueva Vida ~ Editing

- Imported all video footage to FCPX on MacBook.
- Made a coarse-grained assessment of usability of footage.
- Reviewed video many times, skimming and real-time.
- Reviewed audio selectively, based on viability of video.
- Reworked storyboard based on footage available.
- Selected, clipped, and sequenced clips.
Phase 4 ~ In Nueva Vida ~ Editing

• Wrote script for clips as subtitles in Spanish.
• Negotiated subtitles in Spanish and Máíjìkì with Jesusa.
• Reordered clips some for flow and comprehensibility.
• Went back and filmed a missing scene!
• Valuable assistance from Grace.
Phase 4 ~ In Nueva Vida ~ Editing

• Recorded voice-overs with Jesusa using Zoom Handy and Azden shotgun mic (incredible focus!).
• Imported audio to FCPX and married clips to video.
• Recut and rearranged clips based on audio recordings.
• Adjusted subtitles to match audio recordings.
• Proofread subtitles.
• Tweaked everything for clarity, flow, timing, pacing, aesthetics.
Phase 4 ~ In Nueva Vida ~ Editing

- Added credits, transitions.
- Struggles with contrast on subtitles.
- Checked subtitles with another speaker.
- Showed it to team for feedback.
- Premiered it to community members.
- Yes, this was a hugely time-consuming and sometimes tedious project. And yes, it was totally worth it to me.
Phase 5 ~ In Iquitos ~ Burn and distribute

- Final proofreading.
- Final adjustments.
- Exported movie in appropriate file format.
- Burned DVDs.
- Distributed them to all four communities.
Phase 6 ~ Back home again

- Made another version with English subtitles.
- Exported it in various file formats.
- Uploaded it to YouTube as unlisted video.
- Distributed the URLs selectively.
- Actively soliciting feedback from viewers in order to improve next year's movies
  * Hammock-making?
  * Canoe-building?
  * Ayahuasca preparation?
Biggest challenges in shooting

- Local participants' inexperience with movies made it difficult to get ample good footage.
  * Notion of performance, sense of pacing, patience.
- Most audio recorded in situ was unusable.
  * Ambiental noise, movements of speakers.
  * Pace and complexity of extemporaneous speech.
  * We ended up using more voiceovers than planned.
Biggest challenges in editing

• FCPX devours energy – so we finished in Iquitos.
• FCPX is fairly opaque to use, especially without online resources.
• Local participants' inexperience with movies made subtitling more challenging.

* Pacing, clarity, concision of speech; patience.

• Difficult to fit good subtitles and good translations into the available frame space.
Biggest changes projected for 2013

- Shoot longer clips of exact same activity, so there is more footage available for each scene.
- Slow down global pace of movie so viewers feel less rushed.
- Lengthen time that each subtitle is shown on the screen.
- Intensify contrast between subtitles and background.
- * Learn more about what FCPX can do.
- Workflow: be smarter about time allocation with collaborators during editing phase – larger number of shorter sessions.
Kásò jà.

• Many thanks to the other collaborators on this project.
• Many thanks to you for your feedback.
• More information available from me if you want it – cmbeier@gmail.com
Audience feedback

* How about making two versions of the movie, of different lengths and complexity (using ELAN), geared toward different audiences – one for community, one for linguists, for example?

* Pacing overall seemed good, actually!

* In the subtitles, better not to put anything in parentheses, just put the best English term.

* Consider advantages of involving more people behind the camera

* For next movie: People vote for canoe making!