

FRIDAY, MARCH 19: OPENING REMARKS AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS

9:00AM-10:30AM

*“Documenting and revitalizing endangered languages:
The significance of Indigenous methodologies and linguistic research”*



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ABSTRACT

Why do we care about documenting and revitalizing endangered languages? Languages are a fundamental part of our identity: we use them to convey our innermost self and to express and transmit our cultures and their values. When the language of a community is superseded by the language of a more powerful group, their knowledge tends to be lost and replaced with the cultural values and habits of the other group, rather than being refashioned in the new language.

Based on our own experience collaborating with the Guajajára communities in Brazil, this presentation has two goals: The first goal is to discuss and reflect on collaborative work with Indigenous

communities by bringing to the forefront the importance of Indigenous methodologies, which center on the participants and the communities. Sustained collaborative work with the Guajajára, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers all see themselves as community members, has proven fruitful in documenting and revitalizing their language.

The second goal is to share our findings from fieldwork on the typology of evidentiality in Guajajára (Maranhão, Tupi-Guarani). Evidential expressions allow individuals convey the source of the information that is communicated. Guajajára has a complex temporal-evidential system. Evidentiality can be encoded alone or fused with tense by means of portmanteau morphemes. We have identified three evidential categories in Guajajára: (i) firsthand/direct evidence, (ii) experiential/performed, and (iii) reportative. If the information is directly acquired either sensorially or experienced/performed, speakers use a set of portmanteau markers that make temporal remoteness distinctions. Reported events from a remote past are morphologically distinguished from reported events without temporal information.

Evidentiality is a particularly interesting phenomenon because it opens a window to world views: evidential systems reflect on community ideologies about language, knowledge, and sociality. Furthermore, the study of evidentiality underscores the importance of cross-linguistic research, the collaboration between fields like linguistic anthropology, language typology, and semantics, to name just a few.

SPEAKER BIOS

Pilar Chamorro is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Linguistics and the Department of Romance Languages at the University of Georgia. Her main areas of specialization are semantics and pragmatics. Within these fields, she is interested in cross-linguistic variation of form-meaning mappings. Her research explores temporal and aspectual reference, evidentiality, the mass/count distinction, plurality, quantification and polarity phenomena, focusing on Tentehar/Guajajára (Tupi-Guarani), Spanish, Portuguese, Galician (Romance), and Malayalam (Dravidian).

Fábio Bonfim Duarte is a Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. He has been collaborating and conducting field work with the Tentehar People since 2005. He has published both pedagogical and theoretical books and several articles on the syntax of the Tentehar language. His main research focuses on topics regarding word order, ergativity, differential object marking, the inverse system and argument structure.