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Mixe (Mixe - 209 words)
Tuguilá

I. L. V. TLALPAN LIBRARY

Mixe Phonemics

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mitla, Oax.,
Feb. 1947.

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Introduction.

The Mixes seem to be on the increase. In 1876 they are said to have numbered 26,000.^(1.) By 1900 they had increased to 31,736.^(2.) The census of 1930 credited them with 31,820—While as yet the Oaxaca figures of the 1940 census are not available, it seems certain this latest census will show a continued increase. During the past ten years, I have observed that many towns are steadily growing in size. An educated Spaniard,⁽³⁾ for thirty years a resident of the region, estimated the population in 1941 to be about 60,000. This figure is doubtless high since it was calculated on the basis of parochial birth records and probably ignored the deaths. A conservative estimate for 1946 would be between 40,000 and 45,000.

Living in the mountains of east-central Oaxaca State, the tribe is divided into two dialects (some authors say three) to which various authors have applied various terms.^(4.) This dialectical division, for the main part, seems to coincide with the physical division of the region by the mountain range known as "nudo de Zempoaltepetl" which runs roughly in a north-easterly-westerly direction. That group living north of Zempoaltepetl speaks what the Mixes term "Totontepec dialect", Totontepec being the principal town of the northern group. Those south of Zempoaltepetl comprise the larger of the two groups. The present paper deals with this latter dialect,⁽⁵⁾ especially as spoken in the vicinity of San Lucas Coatlan. The material herein is the result of numerous field trips and months of study in Coatlan from October 1936 to December 1946 under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

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- (1) García y Cubas as cited by Starr in his "Notes Upon the Ethnography of Southern Mexico" vol.I, p.52.
- (2) Belmar - "Estudio del Idioma Ayook" - Oaxaca 1902 - p.XVI bottom.
- (3) Don José Vásquez García, late of San Miguel Quetzaltepec and formerly of Cotzocon.
- (4) Fray Augustin Quintana - "La Instrucción Cristiana" - Puebla 1729 - prologo - "La lengua Mixe se divide en tres ramas, una es la lengua Mohtuau; otra es la lengua Cotún; y otra es la lengua Huhmáh."
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- Belmar - ibid. - XV, XVI.
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- Starr - ibid. - p.53 bottom - "The Mixe language is fairly uniform: Ayutla, Juquila, Ocotepec, Quetzaltepec, Camotlán, Ixcuintepec, Coatlán - the towns which we have visited appear to speak much the same. Totontepec is asserted to have a notably peculiar dialect."
- (5) It is notable that members of the southern group cannot carry on a conversation with those of the Totontepec dialect without resorting to broken Spanish. I have observed that much of the difficulty springs from vocabulary differences. The intonation pattern does not vary markedly. There are also certain phonemic shifts which make unrecognizable to those of the other dialect many morphemes which to the linguistic investigator are readily recognizable as the same morphemes.

Dialectical studies already made and extensive surveys planned for the future are designed to reveal the vocabulary variations, lexical changes, phonemic shifts and possible

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morphological differences not only between the two main dialects mentioned but also within the Camotlan dialect area.

5.

I. Chart of Phonemes

A.

Consonants		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	Vl.	p		t				k	?
	V.	b	w	d			g		
Affricates				r	c				
Nasals		m		n					
Spirants	Vl.		f	s	v	x			h
	V.		v		z	z	y		
Liquids				r	l				

B. Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ʌ	u
	I	ə	U
	e	a	o
	E	ɔ	ɒ

II. Description of Phonemes.

A. Consonants

1. Stops - There is a series of voiceless stops at bilabial /p/, dental /t/, velar /k/, and glottal /ʔ/ points of articulation. There is a series of voiced stops at bilabial /b/, labio-dental /w/, dental /d/, and velar /g/ points of articulation.

Allophones - The voiceless stops become aspirated in word-final position and also medially preceding stops. Glottal stop is released preceding affricates also.

Examples -

(póʔopʰ) /póʔop/ - white

(papʰkʰ) /papk/ - white pine

(tat̪kʰ) /tat̪k/ - ear

(hutʰ) /hut/ - cave

(tutʰkʰ) /tutk/ - turkey

(kóʔɔkʰ) /kóʔɔk/ - mamey

(ʔekʰʃoh) /ʔekʰʃoh/ - chayote

(ʔankʰ) /ʔank/ - cave

(mEʔty) /mEʔty/ - hawk

(chuʔchpy) /čuʔčpy/ - he eats meat

(puʔts) /puʔz/ - yellow

(wimbrondín) /wimbrondín/ - weasel, marten

(pə•b) /pə•b/ - Pablo

(chibí) /čibí/ - disgusted

(wEks) /wEks/ - comal

(win) /win/ - eye

(ʔewčɔts) /ʔewčɔz/ - clean

(tsow) /čow/ - side (of a place)

(*ɔdá·m*) /ɔdá·m/ - lip

(*pódye*) /pódye/ - because of that

(*se bó·d*) /se bó·d/ - José Pedro

(*ʃägō?h kʰ*) /xagō?k/ - rattle

(*hegóm*) /hegóm/ - afar

(*ʃägitíy*) /xagitíy/ - curved

2. Affricates - There is a series of voiceless affricates at dental /tʃ/, and alveolar /č/ points of articulation.

(*tsaps*) /tšaps/ - red

(*mats*) /mač/ - take it

(*?itsám*) /?ačám/ - pig

(*häč*) /hač/ - cornmeal mush

(*chibí*) /čibí/ - disgusted

(*chu?hchpy*) /ču?čpy/ - he eats meat

3. Nasals - There is a nasal series at the bilabial /m/ and dental /n/ points of articulation.

(*mó?onts*) /mó?onç/ - mud

(*hématy*) /hématy/ - let's go

(*tsó?om*) /tšó?om/ - banana

(*win*) /win/ - eye

(*no·ch*) /no·č/ - toad

(*?ená·*) /?ená·/ - lightning

4. Spirants - There is a voiceless spirant series at the labio-dental /f/, dental /s/, alveolar /š/, alveopalatal /x/, and glottal /h/ points of articulation.⁽ⁱ⁾

There is a voiced spirant series at the labio-dental /v/, alveolar /ž/, alveo-palatal /z/, and palatal /y/ points of articulation.^(j)

(fóke) /fóke/ - flashlight globe

(fugár) /fugár/ - to play

(fwes) /fwes/ - "judge"

(háč) /háč/ - cornmeal mush

(hášk) /hášk/ - back

(šoh) /xoh/ - oak tree

(tčeš) /tčeš/ - earthenware dish

(kwíš) /kwíš/ - blanket

(šyoš) /šyoš/ - his clothes

(šo-š) /xo-x/ - a large snake

(paš) /paš/ - antelope

(šáhk) /xáhk/ - beans

{ (avyónk) /avyónk/ - airplane

(chíve) /číve/ - goat

(devéres) /devéres/ - truly

(kwartíže) /kwartíže/ - 1/4 real (3 centavos)

(ladríže) /ladríže/ - brick

(seríže) /seríže/ - wax match

(nižúi) /nížúi/ - shirt

(hzus) /hzus/ - rose

(hzusalém) /hzusalém/ - Jerusalem

(yoʔkʰtʰ) /yoʔkt/ - neck

(yem) /yem/ - here, now

(?eyúkʰ) /?eyúk/ - Mike

5. Liquids - There is a voiced liquid series at alveolar /r/ (flap) and alveopalatal /l/ (lateral) points of articulation.

(lu-t) /lu-t/ - black buzzard

(pol) /pol/ - Apolinar

(armún) /armún/ - almud

(wimbrondín) /wimbrondín/ - weasel, marten

B. Vowels

1. Front - high close unrounded /i/

high open unrounded /I/

(pi?iš) /pi?iš/ - tail of an animal

(pi?Iš) /pi?Ix/ - blow it

(piš) /piš/ - cotton

(piš) /pix/ - a black bird

(mIn yem) /mIn yém/ - come here

(hi míny) /hi míny/ - there he comes

low close unrounded /e/

low open unrounded /E/

(yemy) /yemy/ - his vein

(yEmy) /yEmy/ - blown

(ke·ch) /ke·č/ - pulque

(kEpy) /kEpy/ - tree

(e·ch) /e·č/ - dance

(e·š) /e·š/ - crab

(tEš) /tEš/ - plate

(te·ny) /te·ny/ - ladder

2. Central - high backed close unrounded /ʌ/

(šihk^h) /xahk/ - bean

(níts) /náz/ - armadillo

(tsi?í) /tšá?í/ - older sister, aunt

high open unrounded /ə/

(?ek^h) /?æk/ - majahua (inner bark of a tree)

(pek^h) /pek/ - pigeon

(hem) /hem/ - let's go

('eks) /'eks/ - corn husk

low close unrounded /a/

(ká'ak^h) /ká'ak/ - run

('ená·) /'ená:/ - lightning

('oda·m) /'oda·m/ - lip

(aš) /aš/ - curl

low backed open rounded /ə/

(kó'ok^h) /kó'ok/ - mamey

(hom) /hom/ - lime

(ko'p^h) /ko'p/ - no

(pé'c) /pé'c/ - bank of a river

(poč) /poč/ - people with "mal del pinto"

3. Back - high close rounded /u/

high open rounded /U/

(muš) /muš/ - sprouted

(mUš) /mUš/ - mushroom

(mUtsk^h) /mUtsk/ - small

(mu·ts) /mu·t/ - make adobe

(putek^h) /putek/ - navel

low close rounded /o/

low open rounded /O/

(poš) /poš/ - a sickness

(poš) /pox/ - guava

(kOš) /kOš/ - strike with the hand

(koš) /kox/ - knee

(m0ts) /m0t/ - a wrapping

(poč) /poč/ - wall

(pot^h) /pot/ - to burst

(požo) /požo/ - moon

C. Prosodic Phonemes.

1. Length - (2)

- (noš) /nox/ - enter, pass
(no·š) /no·x/ -- ground
(šoř) /pxv/ - clothes
(šo·š) /xo·x/ - a large snake
(pat) /pat/ - a climb
(pa·t) /pa·t/ - Peter
(poš) /pox/ - guava
(po·š) /po·x/ - a knot (in rope, etc.)
(hut) /hut/ - cave
(hu·t) /hu·t/ - pull it out
(hit) /hat/ - a saw
(hi·t) /ha·t/ - a tree (certain species)
(hoiky) /hoiky/ - powder (for guns)
(ho·iky) /ho·iky/ - crow
(pit) /pit/ - roll it up
(pi·t) /pi·t/ - make thread
(tun) /tun/ - a hill
(tu·n) /tu·n/ - water gourd

2. Stress -

- (póčom) /póčom/ - sickness
(počóm) /počóm/ - on the bank (of a river)
(nyáhkižity) /nyáhkazaty/ - we'll give it to him
(nyohkižity) /nyohkazáty/ - I'll finish
(kí·hé) /ka·hé/ - is it cooked
(ki·he) /ká·hé/ - it is cooked

(1) /f/, /v/, and /z/ are found for the most part in Mixed loan words from Spanish.

(2) In the present paper, I have chosen to write the long vowels, as above, with the raised dot following them. For both scientific and practical ends they could also be written as double vowels.