

Santander International Exchange Bursary Programme

RESEARCH TRIP REPORT

Recipient of bursary: Josep Cru, School of Modern Languages.

Date of trip: 11 August - 8 September 2014

Expenses

The amount of 1,000 £ of the bursary has been spent on transport from the UK to Mexico: a return trip from London to the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, where the research is being carried out. The total cost of the plane ticket (London-Cancun-London) was 1,060 £. I paid myself for the train Newcastle-London-Newcastle and self-sustenance and accommodation in Mexico and a 3 day trip to Mexico City to visit CIESAS.

The fieldwork

Further to previous fieldtrips to complete my PhD thesis, the aim of this trip was to gather data through interviews to better understand what motivates young rappers in Yucatan to use Maya as a language for artistic expression. The goal was to gauge the impact that hip-hop in Maya is having on the ongoing revitalisation movement in Yucatan. Also, I used the trip to strengthen academic links with various institutions and particularly with CIESAS, a research centre on social anthropology, both in Merida and Mexico City, and the Unit of Social Sciences of the Autonomous University of Yucatan (UADY).

I have been able to interview half a dozen people, both youngsters and adults, who are all involved in one way or another in the promotion Maya in Yucatan through music and particularly hip hop and rap. One of the main goals of my research is to analyse the language ideologies expressed by this committed group of youngsters, since my hypothesis is that they may be influential in grassroots language initiatives that are currently being developed in Yucatan to revitalise the Maya language. The interviewees are all amateur artists in their early twenties, most of them studying at university level, and who are using a specific music genre to promote Maya.

As for the geographical scope of the ethnographic work, all the interviews have taken place in Merida (and outskirts), the capital city of Yucatan and the place where the main events to promote Maya culture take place. Apart from doing fieldwork in Yucatan, I had the opportunity to visit CIESAS in Mexico City to meet a group of anthropological linguists who all working with indigenous languages (Margarita Valdovinos, UNAM, Jose A. Flores Farfan, CIESAS, Genner de Llanes Ortiz, CIESAS).

This is a summary of the institutions visited and the activities in which I have been able to participate in this last fieldtrip:

- Visiting and interviewing Jesus Lizama, anthropologist working at CIESAS Peninsular and rapper Pat Boy, one of the most successful rappers in the Peninsula.
- Visiting and interviewing Miguel Gomez, anthropologist working at Autonomous University and one of the coordinators of the Independent Festival of Maya Culture to be held in Yucatan in October, <http://www.chaanilkaaj.org/>

- Attendance to the talk 'Los Aluxes' (Maya mythological figures) by anthropologist Silvia Teran and Bernardo Caamal at Pinacoteca Juan Gamboa, Merida, 21 August and interview with agronomist engineer and activist Bernardo Caamal.
- Attending a hip hop concert in Merida in memory of the late young rapper El Cima Atte, 23 August, Parque Reina de la Paz, Merida Sur. Interviews with rappers Pat Boy, El Maya and El Poeta (programme below).
- Attending the presentation of the FIC Maya 2014, International Festival of the Maya Culture organised by the Government of Yucatan state, <http://www.ficmaya.com/inicio/>
- Visiting to Indemaya, a regional institution devoted to the promotion of Maya in Yucatan. Interviews to staff at Indemaya to learn more about the call for a second contest of Maya songs for youngsters (U k'aayil in kaajal).
- Interview with journalist, blogger and activist Jose Ic Xec, aka el Chilam Balam. <http://elchilambalam.com/>
- Visiting Dzibilchaltun with Pat Boy and photographer Keith Dannemiller to take some pictures for the Canadian Magazine Macleans.

Apart from all these institutions, I have had a good number of informal conversations with Yucatecans both speakers and non-speakers of Maya which have been most useful to better understand the use of Maya in music and the ongoing process of language promotion. The outcome of this fieldwork will be a chapter on hip hop and language revitalisation in Yucatan to be published in the book 'Juvenopedia, Mapeo de las Juventudes Iberoamericanas' edited by C. Feixa and P. Oliart.



Hip hop concert in Merida, 23 August 2014, rappers El Maya and El Poeta performing in Maya and Spanish.



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Sangre Maya

concierto de hip hop

A la memoria de El Cima Atte

Pat Boy
2FC
El Maya
Las Hermanas Nah
Templo Maya Crew
Tay el Cuentacuentos

Sábado 23 de agosto
Parque La Reina de la Paz
Emiliano Zapata Sur II
19:00 horas



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Flyer of concert in Merida in memory of late young rapper El Cima Atte.



Pat Boy at the Rap&Accion concert in Merida, 29 August 2014.



Flyer of rap concert in Merida, artists performed both in Maya and Spanish.



Pat Boy posing at Dzibilchaltun, Maya ruins at the outskirts of Merida for Macleans magazine.