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CBL Project Presentation: LiRA Translations

Rob Recio
Kenyon College, recior@kenyon.edu

Jessica Bolter
Kenyon College, bolterj@kenyon.edu

Maggie Stohlman
Kenyon College, stohlmanm@kenyon.edu

Ian Round
Kenyon College, roundi@kenyon.edu

Anne Malkoff
Kenyon College, malkoffa@kenyon.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Creators
Rob Recio, Jessica Bolter, Maggie Stohlman, Ian Round, Anne Malkoff, Patricia Mota Ms., and Amelia Dunnell
CBL Project Presentation: LiRA Translations

by Rob Recio, Jessica Bolter, Maggie Stohlman, Ian Round, Anne Malkoff, Patricia Mota, and Amelia Dunnell

Kenyon College
November 5, 2015
Project Overview

- Translating interviews of Latinos in Knox County
  - Spanish → English, English → Spanish
  - 2-3 interviews each
- General themes of interviews
  - Childhood/Journey to Knox County
  - Work
  - Family
  - Religion
  - Education
  - Latino representation in/contributions to Knox County
- Edited by Amelia/Patricia, then Professor Román-Odio
Jessica: Interview content

- Express happiness with their lives in Knox County, feel accepted
  - “When I arrived here it was a little more difficult for me because there weren’t many Latinos and I thought that here they aren’t going to like Mexican food. ... Now it seems that – I see it as here, I feel proud to be able to serve Knox County, that they like the food, that they like what we prepare here.” -Lupe
  - “I realized that they really valued me as a person here in Mount Vernon and I am very thankful to them.” -Irene, talking about community members writing letters of support for immigration
  - “Sometimes the thought enters, ‘I want to go back because I miss everything.’ But that’s what helps me, the people here treat you well even though you might encounter two or three that will treat you badly.” -Amneris

- Say that Latino representation is lacking
  - “I think that we are more closed off because I have had some experiences with a lot of friends who work by themselves and go from their job to their house and they are never, for example, at a get-together, in church, participating in different events that there are here in town.” -Lupe
  - “I think that the Hispanic community is... I don’t know if it’s small or very timid and that we have to give more information and encourage them so that they are represented here in Mount Vernon. Because the community is very timid and we simply have to give them a push.” -Irene
Jessica: Interview content, continued

- Express desire for changes
  - “Even though you are studying in Puerto Rico, which is part of the United States, it doesn’t matter – it’s like not having education and not having studied and they want to pay you like somebody that hasn’t had any of that, you see, that’s the only part that I would change.” - Amneris
  - “Permission to work, and a work permit, that’s everything. For me, everything is fine in Knox County, I wouldn’t change anything else.” - Lupe
Jessica: Project value & challenges

● Value
  ○ Provides holistic, but also individualized, portraits of Latinos in our community
  ○ Way to use privilege productively
    ■ create a space for others to speak
    ■ broaden their audience

● Challenges
  ○ Negotiating between conveying authenticity and conveying meaning in translation
Rob Recio: Interview Translations

- Translated interviews from three different people:
  - Kiana from Gambier, OH (English to Spanish)
  - Male Agricultural Worker from Mount Vernon, OH (Spanish to English)
  - Female Agricultural Worker from Knox County (Spanish to English)
  - Different perspectives
  - Various factors contribute to the interviews: age, gender, culture back home, current living situation (environment), religion, sexuality, way in which they arrived here
Rob Recio: Why is this project important?

Importance of the LiRA Project

- giving these individuals a voice that they may not necessarily have otherwise
- learning about the experience of individuals in a foreign environment
- being able to see similarities/differences between culture
- provides a lens to understand the Latino experience in a small place such as Knox County
- projects like this can continue to motivate people to spring into action and learn about the immigrant experience
- find more ways to help or improve the experiences
Here are some of the excerpts from the interviews:

- “That I’m not invisible. I’m always present but no one wants to talk to me (laughter). And you know that I like to get along with everyone. But I’m not liked by everyone, maybe it can be because of the way I dress or because I’m always working, but thank God, we haven’t had to ask for anything.” - Female Agricultural Worker

- “Um...I guess, again, this does have to do with the Latino community - more acceptance of different races, ethnicities, religions, sexualities, again that’s probably one of the most important things at this current time.” - Kiana
Rob Recio: Benefits and Challenges

Benefits: the project allows to continue to identify problems and solutions, the possibility of forming a connection between communities, finding ways to continue to improve the educational aspect, overall get a better understanding of the situation.

Challenges: the translations can become confusing, especially with differences in types of Spanish, there is a big need to help, being able to preserve the progress and keep a connection with the community of Latinos.
Anne

- translated transcriptions of three interviews from English into Spanish
- interviews of Gigi (Salvation Army), Mario (teenager) and Maureen (owner of apple orchard)
Common threads/themes in LiRA interviews:

- sense of belonging (to place and/or social group)
- family history
- community
- plurality of Latino experience
- specific needs/aspects of Latino community in Knox County
- access to resources in rural areas (or lack thereof)
Interview excerpts:

“...I guess I’ve always felt like Latinos are just hard-working people and I consider myself somebody who would be hard-working in a way, I guess, or at school in a way, that kind of relates better. So Latinos are just hardworking people who can contribute a lot to a community, in a way. And I think they’re just people who will only help our community. I guess that’s the best way I can answer that.” - Mario

“It’s been interesting, being here and being a Latina. At first, when I was told that this was where my husband and I were going to be coming, I said to myself, like, ‘Am I going to be the only Latino person there?’ Because, you know, it’s rural Ohio! It doesn’t seem like it’s very diverse...even when we first moved in, at first, I was like, ‘Oh my...like where is...like am I the only one?’ People were definitely really accepting of me though, I’ve never felt like I was looked down upon or a second-class citizen or anything like that.” - Gigi
Overall reflections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● being able to be a part of the LiRA project</td>
<td>● maintaining same “voice” and integrity of the interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● work is “permanent” in Kenyon’s digital archives</td>
<td>● translating complex terminology, especially w/ regards to apple orchard</td>
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<tr>
<td>● hearing voices of community members which are frequently not heard</td>
<td>● was not present for original interviews, interpretation may have been less accurate as a result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● practicing translation skills</td>
<td>● translation isn’t easy!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maggie

What I did...

• Translations- Spanish to English

• To be archived and displayed as a part of the LiRA project

• Three interviews: Female agricultural worker, Ivonne Garcia (Kenyon College Professor), Vanessa Avalos (OSU student)
Challenges

• Not paraphrasing
• Colloquial Spanish
• Coherence in English

• *Overcoming challenges*: Sought help from native Spanish speakers, meticulousness
Common Themes

• Importance of family
• Feelings of invisibility
• Education aspirations
• Want for visibility of Latino/a communities in Knox County
• Belonging to two countries at once
Differences

• Different occupations: Informed different experiences
• Length of response
• Connections with higher education
• Community engagement
“That I’m not invisible, I am always present but nobody wants to talk to me” - Agricultural Worker, on what she wants the community to know about her

Analysis: This quotes demonstrates the want for visibility felt by many Latinos in rural Ohio. In this context, the agricultural female worker also feels more invisible because of her job. As her job is not in the public sphere, she feels more isolated.

“So it’s a being, a state, of never feeling a sense of belonging.” - Ivonne Garcia

Analysis: This quote has to do with the feelings that come with belonging to two countries at once. When in Puerto Rico or when in the U.S.A. she never truly feels a complete sense of belonging.
“They think of us as immigrants who only come to destroy. ‘They are involved with narco trafficking’ —Because of that we have to do everything possible to maintain a good image” -Vanessa, what should be changed about Knox County

Analysis: This quote has to do with Vanessa’s perception of how Knox county views Latinos. She believes many negative perceptions are perpetuated by the media, thus she strives to help her community by creating positive images.

“No, I do not see latinos represented in the community. I know that there are many Mexicans in Knox County but I don’t see them, I don’t see them represented. And it’s like this in many places in Ohio, the same here in Columbus. It is still not usual, that will come but it has not come yet. ” -Ivonne Garcia

Analysis: This quote illustrates how the representation of Latinos in Knox County and greater Ohio areas belies their existence.
Quotes Continued

• “To start we can involve ourselves in the school, especially those who have children-help in your community, in the church.” - Vanessa

Analysis: This quote illustrates how Vanessa sees Latinos can help their communities in Ohio

• “Well, there are certain things that I don’t know much about because I’m always working, but they seem good to me” - Agricultural Worker, on the services in Knox County

Analysis: This quote was a response to a question regarding her perceptions of Knox County. It’s interesting to note how occupation affects one’s perception of their surrounding area.
Importance

• Translations make oral histories available to a bigger part of the population

• Affirmation of identity

• Illustrates a range of experiences, defying stereotypes

• Experiences that contradict dominant narratives
I translated three interviews from English to Spanish. Two were with José Avalos, who owns Fiesta Mexicana in Mount Vernon, and the other was with María Esmeralda Villa, a recent high school graduate whose parents are agricultural workers.

José loves Mount Vernon, and says he hasn’t experienced racism, but María hasn’t had the same experience. I think this has to do with economic systems. José is his own boss; being an agricultural worker is often exploitative and demoralizing.
“I want them to understand that we’re here for a reason and we’re trying to make this restaurant as good, make and cooperate with the town, you know, as much as they need from us. So we’re trying to give as well. So if somebody needs from our help, you know, donations, and from the police department, any place that we could help with, I want them to know that we’re here to help as well. Because we feel part of the community, we’re family now for 18 years, so that’s what I want people here in Mount Vernon to understand. And to thank them as well!”

- José Avalos
Patricia Mota: How do you think people react when you talk about being Latino in Knox county?

María Villa: It depends on the person you talk to, I know that when I talk to my friends they're always interested in it. They're like “that so cool,” but when you talk to let's say the wrong person. I don't want to give any names.

PM : Like certain people, like older people?

MV: Some older people and some younger, they don't really accept it, simply because of what their parents say. Simply because, I don't know, what their parents say.

PM: Not accept you being a Latina?

MV: Yes
Challenges: Creating a coherent translation out of stutters, space-holders (like, um, and you know) and incomplete sentences while remaining faithful to the speaker’s voice and personality. Deciding what to edit and cut and reorder was another problem.

Value: Translation is slow, and forced me to meditate on, compare and understand José’s and María’s experiences. The translator has to internalize the content and reproduce it in a way that is much different from transcribing audio.

I was able to use my privilege to help marginalized people without silencing them or changing their voices, and it allowed me to reflect on my privilege.