

## AN ASSESSMENT OF **Language Vitality among the Mako people of Venezuela and the Importance of Participant Observation Data**



**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3**

11:30 – 1:00 pm | Anthropology & Sociology  
Building | Room 134  
6303 NW Marine Drive

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Mako, a Sáliban language spoken along the Ventuari River in the Venezuelan Amazon, has been reported as (critically) endangered and threatened (Mattéi-Müller 2006, Mosonyi 2003). These reports, however, rely on second-hand information and/or self-reported census data. In this talk, I present a vitality assessment of the language that relies on first-hand fieldwork data from 20 Mako villages. The analysis of the data—collected through informal interviews, two community censuses, and participant observation between 2012 and 2014—shows that the language is in fact vital in its local context but that the place of Mako in the regional/national context puts the language in a vulnerable position, recommending that steps be taken to ensure its presence in new domains. Methodologically, I show the importance—and argue in favour—of including data from long-term participant observation in analyses and reports of linguistic vitality because of the access this methodology provides to tacit knowledge (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011) about language use and attitudes.

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