Strategic Initiatives Final Report

Summer 2021

Award title: Student Outcomes & Experiences with Community-Engaged Scholarship   
in the Corpus Bilingüe del Valle (Bilingual Corpus of the Valley)

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The major goals of this project were twofold, (1) to further develop the Corpus Bilingüe del Valle (CoBiVa) and (2) to analyze the outcomes and experiences of students working with CoBiVa. Thanks to the Strategic Initiatives Grant, we have been successful in achieving these goals.

In terms of further developing CoBiVa, we currently have 105 fully transcribed interviews. Many of these were transcribed with funds from this grant, and other interviews were revised with this funding by research assistants during this past year and a half. We anonymize personally identifiable information, and each interview goes through at least three rounds of revision for accuracy. We have 27 interviews on the website, and we are on pace to have 50 on the website by August. Additionally, over 166 undergraduate and graduate students have participated in our project with over 1618 hours tracked on the Engagement Zone portal. In addition to funding from the Strategic Initiatives Transforming Our World grant, we have also received funding from the Engaged Scholar & Artist Award, and the National Endowment of the Humanities. To see our progress first-hand, we are including links for our website ([www.utrgv.edu/cobiva/](http://www.utrgv.edu/cobiva/)) and blog ([www.utrgv.edu/cobiva/blog/](http://www.utrgv.edu/cobiva/blog/)).

The second part of this project has been analyzing outcomes and experiences of students working with CoBiVa. In a large part, this project is a collaboration with former undergraduate student Ms. Aubrey Villanueva who received the Engaged Scholar Award in Spring 2020 to work on this project. An analysis of open-ended surveys has revealed four significant themes. First, many students discussed feeling an enhanced sense of community engagement as a result of interviewing community members. Secondly, students also reported an increased appreciation of local language varieties. Thirdly, the project allowed the students to further develop professional skills, and students also noted this in their surveys. And finally, some students reported a new interest in continuing sociolinguistic research in the future. These four themes were repeated and significant, because they were found throughout all 24 distinct survey responses. All responses mentioned at least one of the significant themes, and one interview included all four. Most survey respondents mentioned two or more of these themes. Overall, these results show that students reported overall positive experiences with 1) an increased sense of community engagement, 2) a greater appreciation of local language varieties, 3) development of professional skills, and ultimately, 4) the consideration of continuing research after their involvement in the community-engaged scholarship courses working on the CoBiVa.

Additionally, we would like to mention that we have presented this project at two national conferences and one regional conference. After integrating data from Spring 2021 students, we will submit our manuscript in August 2021. As a final side note, we have also been working on testing technologically-aided transcription methods for our federally funded National Endowment of Humanities grant. As a part of this work, we have tested the accuracy of 3 different transcription methods. One of these methods was Microsoft Stream which is a part of the Microsoft Suite, and if you upload a video there, it will create a transcript file. It’s auto-generated, so it still needs to be corrected. We worked with a coder Ms. Jessica Draper to develop two codes or scripts to revise Stream transcripts to WEBVTT format using Rstudio. We also have been testing this method and another manual transcription program for speed and ease of use this semester with students at UTRGV and the University of Arizona. Classes from UTRGV and UofA met on May 11 to describe their findings from their analyses. This mini conference was an exciting opportunity for students in these community engaged scholarship courses, making their final projects meaningful. Once we have finished problem solving and de-bugging, detailed instructions and scripts or code files will be posted on our blog. We hope that this information on technologically-aided transcription will be useful to scholars at UTRGV and other institutions.

We are so thankful for the people of the RGV who shared their voices, stories, and time with us, the many student researchers who have worked on the CoBiVa, and our funding sources that have helped to make this work possible.