

## **‘Associated motion’ in Ese Ejja (Amazonian language of Peru and Bolivia): An experimental investigation**

The description of little known languages keeps uncovering exceptions to language universals. The study is about the Ese Ejja language, spoken in the Amazon basin, a region that displays an extremely high linguistic diversity but a low level of scientific documentation. It focuses on the language’s intriguingly complex system of ‘associated motion’. These verbal suffixes encode a motion associated to an action. To date such systems have only been reported in Australian and Amazonian languages.

Building on the descriptive study of the Ese Ejja ‘associated motion’ system that I have conducted for my Ph.D., the goal of the present project is the elaboration of a kit of visual elicitation tools that will establish the discourse and pragmatic constraints of the category. Existing stimuli are however often produced by cognitivists little aware of their informants’ reality. The stimuli to be elaborated for the task will take into account the ecological and cultural specificities of the Ese Ejja speakers, so that the data obtained should better reveal their world perception and the way it is encoded in their language thanks to these ‘associated motion’ morphemes.

The kit will be elaborated at the University of Berkeley and will be discussed with several specialists in indigenous languages and/or in the domain of Space. Data will be then collected and transcribed in three Ese Ejja communities; they will be analyzed when back to the University of Berkeley. Three papers will be written – one on methodology, a descriptive one and a cognitive one.

The fine description of such systems will, on one hand, enhance experimental methodology and, on the other hand, feed into investigation on the human language complexity, in taking into account the various world apprehensions possible.