ABOUT

Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec, or Dixza as it is called in Valley Zapotec, is an endangered language in Oaxaca, Mexico. Professors at Haverford and Swarthmore along with a teacher in Mexico have been working on documenting the language and building a database of Valley Zapotec words, along with recordings of their pronunciations. Previously, this database was only accessible to the public as an online dictionary:

http://talkingdictionary.swarthmore.edu/teotitlan/

Now, with our app, users can look up words from the database offline. The app is built primarily as a tool for students of the language to be able to practice offline but we have also included tools to aid professors and linguists in their efforts to document and preserve the language.

THE DICTIONARY

Users can choose to have the app display in English, Spanish, or Zapotec.

Search is done with the search bar at the top. Users can also refine their searches by category.

Users can hear how a word is pronounced by clicking the play button.

LINGUIST TOOLS

The app includes tools that allow linguists to record audio on the fly and take pictures that would help make the dictionary more interactive for small children. These tools are password protected and only accessible to those working on the project.

CHALLENGES

A lot of time was spent discussing the design design and on the best way to implement that design. We then had to further refine the design when we found that certain aspects of the app were not clear to our test users. Setting up the database in our app for the dictionary and getting the search interface working was also a significant challenge, but once that was out of the way, our app started coming together.

NEXT STEPS

We have successfully created an app that allows users to search through the Valley Zapotec database in English, Spanish, or Zapotec, but there are a few issues we must resolve in the next two weeks, including:

- Hiding the keyboard when the focus is no longer the search bar
- Making the search bar more visible to users
- Updating the local database on a user’s phone from the app
- Uploading photos and audio somewhere easily accessible
- Ensuring the app does not crash, ever