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# FIELD LINGUISTICS

A Guide to Linguistic  
Field Work

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HOLT, RINEHART AND WINSTON

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## APPENDIX

### LEXICOSTATISTICAL WORD LIST

Provided below is a list of words which has been widely used in the comparative study of languages and dialects, particularly by those who have used the glottochronological method of Morris Swadesh. It is assumed (a) that there is a basic core vocabulary which is much less subject to change than general vocabulary, (b) that the rate of retention for this basic core is relatively stable through time, and (c) that the rate of loss of this vocabulary is constant for all languages. (For a discussion of glottochronology see Swadesh 1950, 1951*a*, 1955; Gudschinsky 1956; Hymes 1960; in these and in Hymes 1964 other references are listed.) The selection of this basic vocabulary is critical to the technique; after considerable experimentation the words listed below were chosen. Hence, it has been dubbed the Swadesh list. There are several redactions of it, depending on what list was available to a particular worker at a particular time and what adaptations had to be made to fit the local situation ("ice" would not be appropriate in the Central African Republic). The practice has been to start with the largest list and reduce it whenever problems arose.

The lexicostatistical word list has come in two forms: a 200-word list and a 100-word list. These are given below, with the qualification that the longer list here contains 218 items, because it is a conflation of

Swadesh 1955 (where the words are listed both by semantic groups and alphabetically) and Gudschinsky 1956. Words missing in Gudschinsky are marked by (\*); she also adds "heavy" which is not in Swadesh. The 100-word list was supplied by Swadesh (and used by permission), although I am responsible for its present form.

These lists are recommended to the field worker, not because of the validity of the claims for glottochronology (about which I prefer to be neutral here), but because they are the most widely known. Moreover, in comparative studies it is desirable to have as much uniformity as possible. Future work will be greatly facilitated if field workers would make certain that their lexical collections contained these words. For other purposes—for example, in the determination of dialect differences—one will certainly want to add other words, because one's goal is as much to measure change in cultural vocabulary as it is to measure retention of the basic vocabulary.

Because these words can be used for different purposes, they must be elicited in different ways. For glottochronological purposes it is the most common conversational equivalent that is desired. (On the problems involved in getting these equivalents see the works cited above and Taylor 1959.) The most common equivalent for "animal" in Gbeya is *sad'e*, a word which does not reveal the language's membership in the Niger-Congo family. Further elicitation, however, would reveal the word *nám*, which is used of feline animals in the expression *nám-wéey* (literally, "animal of male"). A collection of vocabulary will be richer and useful for more purposes if the field worker will take the time to ask for other ways that an object can be designated; after the words are collected, he is advised to get other ways in which they can be used. For example, Gbeya *nú* is "mouth," but it is also used for "edge" and "tip."

It is generally easier to collect words in phrases or sentences than in isolation; for some words, such as "at," "because," it is absolutely necessary to do so. Paradigmatic frames are useful for certain kinds of words: in the Gbaya-Ngbaka-Manza languages it was easier to get body parts in the phrase "an animal's ——— (back, eye, leg, etc.);" than in "my ———." One can include several items in a sentence: "The dog bit my child." An instrument for the elicitation of lexical data must be compiled with great care and experimentation. For further suggestions see the recommended reading on dialectology; Swadesh 1954 is extremely valuable for its detailed description of an intensive project for vocabulary collection.

## I: 200-Word List

all	eight*	if	rightside	tail
and	eye	in	river	ten*
animal			road	that
ashes	fall	kill	root	there
at	far	knee*	rope	they
	fat/grease	know	rotten	thick
back	father		rub	thin
bad	fear	lake		think
bark	feather	laugh	salt	this
because	few	leaf	sand	thou
belly	fight	leftside	say	three
big	fire	leg	scratch	throw
bird	fish	lie	sea	tie
bite	five	live	see	tongue
black	float	liver	seed	tooth
blood	flow	long	seven*	tree
blow	flower	louse	sew	turn
bone	fog		sharp	twenty*
breast*	foot	man/male	shoot*	two
breathe	four	many	short	
brother*	freeze	meat/flesh	sing	vomit
burn	fruit	moon*	sister*	
	full*	mother	sit	walk
child		mountain	skin	warm
clothing*	give	mouth	sky	wash
cloud	good		sleep	water
claw*	grass	name	small	we
cold	green	narrow	smell	wet
come	guts	near	smoke	what?
cook*		neck	smooth	when?
count	hair	new	snake	where?
cut	hand	night	snow	white
	he	nose	some	who?
dance*	head	not	spear*	wide
day	hear		spit	wife
die	heart	old	split	wind
dig	heavy	one	squeeze	wing
dirty	here	other	stab/	wipe
dog	hit		pierce	with
drink	hold/take	person	stand	woman
dry	horn*	play	star	woods
dull	how	pull	stick	work*
dust	hundred*	push	stone	worm
	hunt		straight	
ear	husband	rain	suck	
earth		red	sun	ye
eat	I	right/	swell	year
egg	ice	correct	swim	yellow

\* This word is not in the Gudschinsky list.

## II: 100-Word List

English	Spanish	French	German	
I	yo	je	ich	
thou	tú	tu	du	
we	nosotros	nous	wir	
this	este	celui-ci	dieser	
that	aquel	celui-là	jener	(5)
who?	quién?	qui?	wer?	
what?	qué?	quoi?	was?	
not	no	ne... pas	nicht	
all	todos	tous	alle	
many	muchos	beaucoup	viele	(10)
one	uno	un	eins	
two	dos	deux	zwei	
big	grande	grand	gross	
long	largo	long	lang	
small	chico	petit	klein	(15)
woman	mujer	femme	Weib/Frau	
man	hombre	homme	Mann	
person	gente	personne	Mensch	
fish	pez	poisson	Fisch	
bird	pájaro	oiseau	Vogel	(20)
dog	perro	chien	Hund	
louse	piojo	pou	Laus	
tree	árbol	arbre	Baum	
seed	semilla	semence	Samen	
leaf	hoja	feuille	Blatt	(25)
root	raíz	racine	Wurzel	
bark	corteza	écorce	Rinde	
skin	piel	peau	Haut	
flesh	carne	viande	Fleisch	
blood	sangre	sang	Blut	(30)
bone	hueso	os	Knochen	
grease	grasa	graisse	Fett	
egg	huevo	oeuf	Ei	
horn	cuerno	corne	Horn	
tail	cola/rabo	queue	Schwanz	(35)

English	Spanish	French	German	
feather	pluma	plume	Feder	
hair	cabello	cheveu	(Kopf-) Haare	
head	cabeza	tête	Kopf	
ear	oreja	oreille	Ohr	
eye	ojo	oeil	Auge	(40)
nose	nariz	nez	Nase	
mouth	boca	bouche	Mund	
tooth	diente	dent	Zahn	
tongue	lengua	langue	Zunge	
finger nail	garra/uña	griffe	Nagel	(45)
foot	pie	piéd	Fuss	
knee	rodilla	genou	Knie	
hand	mano	main	Hand	
belly	barriga	ventre	Bauch	
neck	cuello	cou	Nacken	(50)
breasts	senos	sein	weibliche Brust	
heart	corazón	coeur	Herz	
liver	hígado	foie	Leber	
drink	beber	boire	trinken	
eat	comer	manger	essen	(55)
bite	morder	mordre	beissen	
see	ver	voir	sehen	
hear	oír	entendre	hören	
know	saber	savoir	wissen	
sleep	dormir	dormir	schlafen	(60)
die	morir	mourir	sterben	
kill	matar	tuer	töten	
swim	nadar	nager	schwimmen	
fly	volar	voler	fliegen	
walk	andar	marcher	gehen	(65)
come	venir	venir	kommen	
lie	acostado	être couché	liegen	
sit	sentado	être assis	sitzen	
stand	parado	être debout	stehen	
give	dar	donner	geben	(70)
say	decir	dire	sagen	
sun	sol	soleil	Sonne	
moon	luna	lune	Mond	
star	estrella	étoile	Stern	

English	Spanish	French	German	
rain	lluvia	pluie	Regen	
stone	piedra	pierre	Stein	
sand	arena	sable	Sand	
earth	tierra	terre	Erde	
cloud	nube	nuage	Wolken	(80)
smoke	humo	fumée	Rauch	
fire	fuego	feu	Feuer	
ash	ceniza	cendres	Asche	
burn	arder	brûler	brennen	
path	camino	chemin	Weg	(85)
mountain	cerro	montagne	Berg	
red	rojo	rouge	rot	
green	verde	vert	grün	
yellow	amarillo	jaune	gelb	
white	blanco	blanc	weiss	(90)
black	negro	noir	schwarz	
night	noche	nuit	Nacht	
hot	caliente	chaud	heiss	
cold	frío	froid	kalt	
full	lleno	plein	voll	(95)
new	nuevo	nouveau	neu	
good	bueno	bon	gut	
round	redondo	rond	rund	
dry	seco	sec	trocken	
name	nombre	nom	Name	(100)