

Alexis Palmer
University of Texas at Austin

alexispalmer@mail.utexas.edu

In 2001 I entered the PhD program at the University of Texas at Austin; I am now in my fifth year. My primary research interest is the application of techniques from computational linguistics to tools for language documentation and to the analysis of less-studied languages. I am also interested in the theoretical implications of accomplishing statistical analysis without an abundance of data. Earlier in my studies at UT, I developed an interest in Ojibwe, and I have written several analyses of inverse agreement in Ojibwe. Through this work I began to feel a strong pull toward the indigenous languages of the Americas. I have taken courses in Mayan languages and in Chatino (spoken outside of Oaxaca, Mexico), and I have visited a field site and assisted in teaching a newly-developed writing system to Chatino children. At the same time I have been pursuing work in the growing computational linguistics program at UT. My research interests have grown directly out of my desire to continue working in both of these areas (indigenous languages and computational linguistics).

One current project involves working with data from Q'anjob'al, a Mayan language of Guatemala. My colleague B'alam Mateo-Toledo is currently on a year-long field visit and will return in August with a large amount of transcribed data. At that point we will begin work on developing a corpus of Q'anjob'al texts, and I hope to employ machine learning techniques to facilitate the corpus development. For now I am exploring possibilities of modeling Q'anjob'al morphology with minimal human input.

UT Austin is unique in its combination of great strength in documentary and descriptive linguistics and its relatively new but highly-active program in computational linguistics. The department has a strong commitment to pursuing ideas at the intersection of these two fields, and I am very happy to be right in the middle of that effort.