

# Linguistics Department Update

January 2018



## WORKSHOP ON THE LANGUAGES OF MESO-AMERICA (WLMA)

---

UCSC linguists have always held that theoretical work on language should be shaped not only by the major world languages but also by the languages of those who have struggled historically to make their voices heard. [WLMA](#) (Workshop on the Languages of Meso-America) is a new initiative which continues that tradition. Convened by [Pranav Anand](#) and [Maziar Toosarvandani](#), WLMA builds on [Judith Aissen's](#) work on Mayan and with Mayan communities, but its focus is broader.

Faculty and students affiliated with WLMA have recently focused on the Mixtec and Zapotecan languages of Oaxaca and many diaspora communities across California. The goal is to document the languages (many are threatened) and to gain theoretical insight from that documentation. But WLMA is also deeply engaged with the communities -- developing writing systems and instructional materials, running classes and summer schools (on campus and off) to provide instruction in the languages.

With [SENDEROS](#) and in partnership with the communities, WLMA organizes so-called NIDO DE LENGUAS -- a series of summer camps, classes, cultural events, and performances whose goal is to celebrate and share the beauty and importance of Oaxacan languages -- with the communities themselves and with the broader community of the Central Coast. The important work being done by WLMA embodies the ideal that theoretical work and community engagement can and should go hand in hand.