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Pena, Pinahua, and Prestige: Shame and Linguistic Insecurity in Upper Balsas Classrooms

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PENA, PINAHUA, AND PRESTIGE:
SHAME AND LINGUISTIC INSECURITY IN UPPER
BALSAS CLASSROOMS

by

Heather Thomas Flores

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science
in Anthropology

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December 2019

ABSTRACT

PENA, PINAHUA, AND PRESTIGE SHAME AND LINGUISTIC INSECURITY IN UPPER BALSAS CLASSROOMS

by

Heather Thomas Flores

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2019
Under the Supervision of Professor Bernard C. Perley, PhD.

This ethnography is a topical analysis of the Indigenous Education system in rural Guerrero, Mexico. The purpose of this research is to draw out the correlations between coercive monolingual ‘Spanish only’ language policies implemented during the mid 20th century and the systematic disintegration of the Nahuatl language within what were once monolingual Nahua communities in the Upper Balsas valley. The data presented in this paper is framed and analyzed through language ideologies discourse. The conceptualizations of language held within the cultural ideology allow for the complexities surrounding language loss and revitalization to be taken into consideration within their dynamic and fluid states. As an ethnography of the particular, this work compiles and analyzes data gathered from rural, historically Indigenous, and linguistically diverse populations in southwest Mexico. The foremost goal in this research is to determine if trans-generational shame is a plausible explanation and subsequently a contributing factor to Nahuatl language loss. The coercive nature of the language practices outlined in this ethnography, which caused, in my summation, psychological trauma due to the use of humiliation, shaming, which corresponded with a loss of agency, further stigmatized the Nahua communities. The secondary focus of the research is to look at the lasting effects or intergenerational manifestations of shame

and stigmatization as it pertains to the cessation of language transmission leading to language dormancy. This ethnography is structured through interviews from three generations within the target population to capture the generational effects of Spanish only and monolingual bridging policies, which undermined Nahua agency regarding language transmission from the 1950s to the present. Through interviews, surveys and participant observation, the work presented in this ethnography comes together to create a snapshot of language shift within the region focusing primarily on the bilingual classroom. The implications drawn from the research illustrate the varying levels of shame, stigma, value, and prestige placed on language usage and includes Nahuatl, Spanish, and English. The research presented takes note of the speech communities and contexts in which ideologies are maintained, making this study significant to ongoing research in the fields of Indigenous Language Education policy, anthropology, and sociolinguistic research.

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To my family,
for your continuous encouragement and support.

Tlaxtlahue, Noyolotsin, Nimitzneki Miak

Alice V. and Marguerite D.
forever remembered

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCI	<i>Centros Coordinadores Indigenistas</i> (Indigenist Coordination Centers)
CIS	<i>Centro de Integración Social</i> (Center for Social Integration)
CGEIB	<i>Coordinación General de Educación Indígena y Bilingüe</i> (General Coordination of Intercultural and Bilingual Education)
DGEI	<i>Dirección General de Educación Indígena</i> (Directorate General of Indigenous Education)
INAH	<i>Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia</i> (National Institute of Anthropology and History)
INEGI	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía</i> (National Institute of Statistics and Geography)
INI	<i>Instituto Nacional Indigenista</i> (National Indigenist Institute)
SEP	<i>Secretaría de Educación Pública</i> (Secretariate of Public Education)

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TLAZOCAMATE

Nimech tlazocamate nochtin onechpalehuiqui iuan onchanique deTulimán iuan San Juan Totolcintla, Guerrero. Pampa onechcelique ca milac tlacaitalistle iuan paquilistle. On oquichique ca cuale cocone nomachtia nechpalehuiqui ca milac, niquintlasocamachilia o me sansecan nomachtia cocone llo acique (quiahciqueh) ipan makuijli ojuepan on caltlamachtilo General Vincente Guerrero, Tulimán iuan Francisco Villa, San Juan Totolcintla canin milac niquintlasocamachilia, on quen nota Godinez Quiñones; nochtin oquichique tlin quichihuasquia, tlazocamate pampa o nechcelique ichan o nechitaque cuale iuan nech nujcatla nochipa can caltlamachtilo , niquintlazocamachilia.

-Tlaxtlahue

Chapter 1

Yancuic Tonalli: Nahuatlahtolli Tlayoltilia



Fig.1.1 Photograph of the Mezcala Bridge from Tula del Rio, Guerrero
(Photo: Heather Thomas Flores 2019)

Introduction

“Welcome to my country,” a familiar voice said in a thick accent. Somewhere behind me, among the crowd of people scrambling to claim their bags at the bus terminal in Cuernavaca, someone had spotted me. It was dark by this point and because I was keenly watching my bag as it was unloaded from the bus, the phrase, spoken in English with a thick Spanish accent, caught me off guard amidst the din of Spanish spoken all around me, it surprised me enough that I turn around to find Jr., my old roommate (Stateside), walking up to help with my bags. I hadn’t expected him to be inside the terminal waiting for me, but after the long trip, I was grateful to have some help collecting my belongings. So far things were off to a great start even though the preferred languages so far were English, and then quickly we reverted to Spanish for the remainder of the drive back to Tulimán.

Now that Jr. was back in Mexico, I had hired him to be my driver during my research project in the Balsas River Valley because he was very familiar with the territory and, being from the area, would not stand out to the locals which was to my advantage given the recent dangers of traveling as an outsider in this region. As we packed my bags into the car and prepared for the two-and-a-half-hour drive to my host family's house, Jr. and his brother asked how my trip had been so far.

I had left my house in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that mid-January morning at 7:30 AM, to catch a flight in Chicago. And I arrived in my field research destination of Tulimán, Guerrero at 11:00 PM. It took me over sixteen hours to get to my field research destination going from the metropolis of Chicago to a dusty "altepetzin"¹ tucked into a hillside just off the *Autopista del Sol* highway (Mexico 95).

The community of Tulimán is quickly becoming a busy town, although it lacks basic infrastructure such as paved roads (although they are paving more and more every time I visit) municipal water and sewage treatment plant. Tulimán still uses a system of water trucks, called *pipas*, to deliver water to families that don't have wells,

¹ **Frances Karttunen:** ĀLTEPĒ-TL pl: -MEH town / pueblo, o rey (M) The literal sense of this is 'water-hill,' those two elements being fundamental necessities for a community. When possessed, the elements of the compound generally separate, with the possessive prefix attaching to each one, -ĀUH -TEPĒUH. See Ā-TL, TEPĒ-TL.

Frances Karttunen, (1992) *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 9.

Horacio Carochi / English:

āltepētl = sovereign sociopolitical unit

Horacio Carochi, S.J. (1645) *Grammar Of The Mexican Language With An Explanation Of Its Adverbs*, translated and edited with commentary by James Lockhart, UCLA Latin American Studies Volume 89 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 2001), 78–79, 81 n2, 214–15 especially n5, 497.

Lockhart's Nahuatl as Written:

āltepē-tl = local ethnic state, sovereign sociopolitical unit, pueblo, altepetl. normal possessed form -āltepēuh. is actually a noun doublet, ātl and tepētl, in which the first is weakened but still bears a vestige of the absolutive ending. still occurs at times with the same meaning as ātl tepētl or in ātl in tepētl and even as possessed -āuh -tepēuh

James Lockhart, (2001) *Nahuatl as Written: Lessons in Older Written Nahuatl, with Copious Examples and Texts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press and UCLA Latin American Studies, 2001), 210.

many don't because the community is perched on a hillside high above the water table, therefore, and water scarcity is always a concern. The community has now grown to a size where distinct neighborhoods have formed (called *colonias*) and internet cafés popping up to keep up with the demand for connection to the outside world. This is such an interesting setting within which to observe and research because of the juxtaposition between the young teens with their cell phones and hair gelled to perfection walking in the street alongside the elders riding their donkeys laden with wood collected from the hills to fuel their kitchen cooking fires.

The majority of the homes are made of adobe block and covered with cement or lime stucco. Other newer homes are made of cinderblock and have gravity fed “running water” from cisterns located on the roof. There is electricity for most of the community although it goes out frequently and power stations are located in the central seat of the municipality, *Huitzuco de los Figueroa*, so it takes a while to restore power when a storm hits. As shown in the map below, San Juan Totolcintla - my second destination and one of six communities dotting the Balsas River and Tulimán is right on the *Autopista del Sol*.



Fig. 1.2 Google Maps Search “Tulimán” (Accessed 10.10.19)

The communities I visited for this research are not large enough to sustain a central market so traveling vendors move through the communities with their wares and announce them on loudspeakers as they drive the stone cobbled streets. Vendors provide door-to-door service for furniture, mattresses and other home-goods is the norm; this is quintessential rural Mexico, the kind of sleepy rural town depicted in paintings hanging on the walls of Mexican restaurants throughout the United States. The community also makes-up the lack of market by announcing locally grown produce, freshly butchered meats and other commodities through a series of megaphones perched atop a select few houses in each neighborhood. These megaphones or loudspeakers are attached to a cassette or disc player and are called *tocadiscos* (record players). The *tocadiscos* also announce the important news items of the day such as births, deaths, and religious proceedings/rituals taking place during the week. For example, the night I arrived in Tulumán, the *tocadisco* announcers were announcing the arrival of a mother and her dead child. The announcement served as a call for those that would accompany the family in the wake and vigil throughout the night and the following three days. Although I had been in Tulumán once before and knew that life was particularly precarious in this region I had not particularly thought through the implications of what life for three months with no local doctors, no priest (important for some), and without basic healthcare was going to be like, it was what the people there call rustic living. Thankfully I never needed any of those services during my fieldwork.

The Communities

I chose to begin my research in the community of Tulimán and move toward the Balsas river valley (about an hour to the south-west) because I have close ties with the community through personal relationships with a few of the prominent families in Tulimán and in San Juan Totolcintla. As mentioned above, my driver Jr. had been a roommate for six years in Wisconsin, he is a member of a well-known family in Tulimán and the general area surrounding the community. The family is known well because there are four teachers from the family and the patriarch Don Pablo was both teacher and the commissioner of Tulimán for many years. These connections have afforded me ease in travel, access to entry in the communities I chose to research, easy access to observation and data collection, and physical protection in an otherwise difficult area to work in, both geographically and socio-politically. It also gave me a sense of familiarity to hang out with people I had known back home.

The region of Guerrero I chose to collect my ethnographic data from consists of, up until three generations ago, fluent first language Nahuatl speakers. In contrast, the children in these communities are first language, many times monolingual, Spanish speakers. Because of this, I chose to break my research into three sections, focusing different questions toward different members of the generational divide. My ultimate goal was to better understand why and how the language was disappearing so quickly, more on that in the next chapter.



Fig 1.3 Google Map of Tulumán in Proximity to Balsas Valley Communities (Accessed 10.10.19)

Why I chose this topic and location

There are several life events that led me to choosing the research discussed in the following manuscript. The first is family history; I am the fourth generation in a consecutive line of women educators according to our oral history, our family matriarch moved off the reservation (St. Regis Mohawk Reservation) in upstate New York and into a farm in New England, in the early 1800's, to provide more and better opportunities for her family. Subsequently, both my Great Grandmother and her sister pursued degrees in education after moving to Brooklyn NYC; both worked in the New York public schools beginning in the late 1920's. In 1938, my great grandmother received a Master of Arts in Education from Columbia Teacher's College. Education opened the door for my family

into realms that would not, most likely otherwise, have been accessible to minority women during the early 1900's. Looking back over the last one hundred years, my family transitioned and moved in pursuit of better opportunities while leaving behind an identity that would, at that time, have held them back in their educational and economic pursuits. I was seeing this same trend happening within my chosen research location and therefore my interest turned to understanding the role of education, therefore, stemmed from this family history in conjunction with the strong belief that education is a human right and that the education system should promote the education and well being of the whole child while that child is in its care. This, as we will discuss throughout this paper, was not the case for the communities of the Upper Balsas.

I had the opportunity to study Spanish throughout my schooling, and personal circumstances led me to become a fluent Spanish speaker and interpreter. As I worked through my undergraduate degree, my focus eventually became bilingual education. I taught Spanish language courses in Wisconsin and received an ESL certification in preparation for travel to Guerrero, Mexico, where I began to work with primary school students in early 2009. I realized during this period that many of the indigenous groups I was researching and visiting throughout my undergraduate degree (Pemón, Aymara, Quechua), were going through a language shift within their own communities. I was intrigued by this because as I gathered life histories and spoke with the women in these groups, I felt that theirs were the stories I had heard my own family tell; movement away from ancestral land, learning new ways of living, being educated in a western sense and assimilating as best they could into a society that is sometimes unfamiliar.

These women I spoke with recounted the discrimination they faced as they attempted to find work in the cities they moved to. They told me that because of how they looked, dressed, and spoke they were considered ignorant and second-class. Many of them had become invisible within the city they now called home; they were the maids, the street cleaners, and the hired labor. Some of them were squatters, others had homes, and some sacrificed everything they had owned back in their own community to give their children better opportunities for education economic stability and a future.

During my year of teaching in Mexico, I noticed that there was a general usage of the word *indio* (Indian or native indigenous person) I realized this derogatory term was a reoccurring thread throughout much of my travels in Latin America and was backed up through media that was broadcast in the countries I visited [See: Cortéz & Velasco (1974; 2007) *La India Maria* in “*Tonta, Tonta, Pero No Tanto*”] [See: Cuarón (2018) “*Roma*”]. I was also drawn to this particular research topic because text (in the broad sense of the term) is the medium through which humans express themselves (written and spoken), explore and find meaning or belonging within the world and create connections within society. Language is not the only manner in which we do this but certainly one of the most unique ways. I particularly find it fascinating to observe and research how communities negotiate status and identity through the modulation and interplay of linguistic intersubjectivities (Perley 2009; 2011; 2013) (Scheff, 2016) especially pertaining in the interest of finding common or divergent meaning when engaging within social interactions. Language Ideologies (Kroskrity, 2009) are complex systems of beliefs and attitudes based on language and the context of language usage,

which play a crucial role in the formation of social structures. Socialization or instruction on proper social behavior and norms that children receive both at home and at school play a large role in the development of those ideologies. The passing down of information to younger generations through education (both formal and informal) is the means by which language, as well as social and cultural world views are passed to the next generation, and therefore I feel that it is in the classroom is where my research must take place. My initial research problem was posed as a question regarding linguistic prejudice and how students are taught to be inclusive or exclusive of their fellow classmates.

In light of my approach to social analysis through the lens of language ideologies, the research questions I've chosen to focus on for this ethnography have been drawn from references in my personal history and my work with Indigenous populations over the years. My research looks to determine the effects of systematic erasure of Nahua language and identity implemented through coercive monolingual Spanish education by the Indigenous Education system. The coercive nature of the language practices outlined in this ethnography caused in my summation a psychological trauma which occurred due the use of humiliation, shaming, and abuse which further stigmatize the communities who spoke Nahuatl in the Balsas region. The secondary focus of the research is to look at the lasting effects or intergenerational manifestations of shame and stigmatization as it pertains to language transmission.

This research, in part looks at how institutions and education systems communicate and impart value to their student population and the community they serve through a conscious or unconscious bias within the system. I chose to look at

schools specifically because these institutions are where children spend the vast majority of their time during much of their childhood; schools are a source of normative structuring and forming lifelong patterns and habits and social norms (DeMarrais and LeCompte, 1995).

Linguistic Interest

I chose to work in Guerrero for the previously mentioned personal and historical particulars along with my personal connection to the location. Apart from this, Guerrero is a state in the southwest of Mexico that is mostly known by outsiders for its pacific port and tourist destination, Acapulco. Guerrero is also known for its colonial silver mining town (Taxco de Alarcon). My interests tend toward the linguistic diversity and plethora of indigenous communities that dot the countryside of Guerrero which I will outline briefly in this section. The indigenous population of Guerrero was listed by the INEGI as 456,774 in 2010. There are four indigenous languages that are recognized in this part of Mexico, Tlapaneco or Me'phaa, Amuzgo, Mixtec, and Nahuatl (<https://www.inegi.org.mx/> accessed 09.19) which is the language I am most familiar with from years of connection with central Guerrero. I became interested in language revitalization programs while teaching Spanish and English in both the U.S. and Mexico. I came across Nahuatl for the first time in the market places in the coastal town of Zihuatanejo, Guerrero. The second occasion I heard Nahuatl spoken was from my roommates once I moved back to the U.S. Because of these early encounters with the Nahuatl language I decided to center my research on the Nahuatl speaking communities in Guerrero. Since I had been exposed to the Nahua culture and language

for many without even paying much attention, I was intrigued with the apparently hidden or invisible culture and language right within my sphere of work and social life.

The Nahuatl Language, Assessment, and Immersion

The map below shows the regions where Nahuatl was historically spoken indicated in yellow and where is spoken in present day, which is indicated in red.

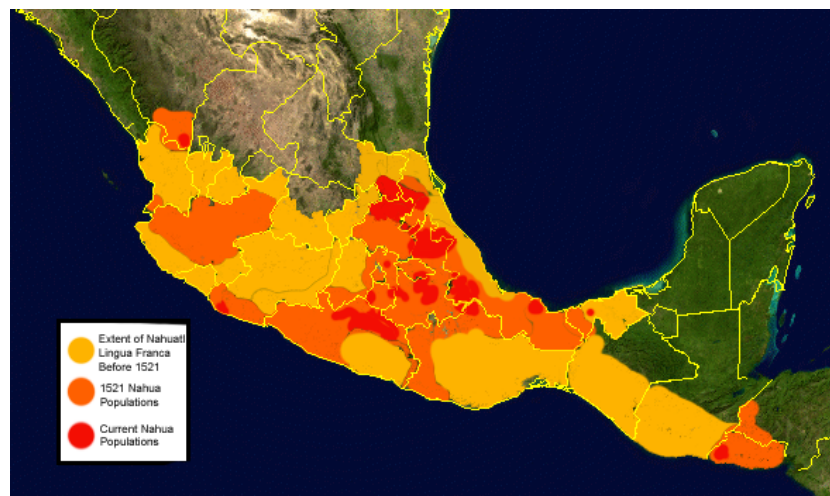


Fig.1.4 Map of Nahuatl Language Distribution. Public Domain 09.10.19

“Nahuatl is an agglutinative, polysynthetic, head-marking Uto-Aztecan language. As documented in its ‘Classical’ or sixteenth-century form, it employs compounding and incorporation, as well as derivation through the extensive use of suffixes and some prefixes. Its lexical categories can be divided into four basic structural classes: verbs, nouns, relational words (expressing spatial and other relations) and particles. Nahuatl has had a long trajectory in Mexico, going back at least to the first millennium A.D. It was likely one of the languages spoken in the influential empire of Teotihuacan and, after its demise, in the Toltec state. In the last centuries before European contact, Nahuatl was spoken in numerous Central Mexican communities and polities. Finally, drawing on its already established status as a lingua franca in many regions of Mesoamerica, it flourished as the dominant language of the Aztec empire. After the arrival of the Spaniards, it was the first language learned by the friars who soon realized that they could use it to communicate with both Nahua and non-Nahua groups. Therefore, the most extensive corpus of Mesoamerican ecclesiastical texts was created in this language, with members of the Nahua elite becoming the first disciples, collaborators and aides of Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, as well as civil officials of New Spain” (Olko, 2017)

There are many variants of Nahuatl, which are marked by geographic location Northern, Eastern, and Western Nahuatl. The western or Nahuatl Guerrerense (in the case of the speech community within my research area) is then broken up further into central, high mountain and low mountain (Personal communication with EG, 10.2019). The documented number of speakers is right around 1.5 million, but this number is misleading because the transmission of Nahuatl from the older to younger generations has all but ceased thus, thus in theory in theory, putting the language in danger of dormancy.

Table 1 . Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Table1.1. EGIDS scale (Lewis and Simons, 2010)

In the community of Tulimán the Nahuatl language is considered moribund (see above Table 1.1). The state of the Nahuatl language within the communities in the Balsas River valley would be classified as shifting. For this reason, I chose to use two separate locations to carry out my language research; I wanted to compare the different locations to better understand the pace and catalyst for the language shift.

Given the wonderful diversity within my chosen field site, I was provided early on with some basic language knowledge but hoped that I could find academic courses so that I could learn Nahuatl. My purpose in learning Nahuatl was twofold; the first is to understand the linguistic nuances, semantic particulars and organizational aspects of grammar in connection with overlapping semantic domains in both Nahuatl and Spanish (since so much of the language has been mixed with Spanish and vice versa, which has evolved into new lexical variations). The second reason for wanting to learn Nahuatl was to assure the community I am someone who wants to learn about and is invested in the community and its language.

In my search for accredited Nahuatl language courses I came across IDIEZ² and decided to participate in their summer courses held at the university of Utah in 2018 and 2019. These courses are important because I was able to speak with individuals from other Nahua communities who had similar experiences to those analyzed in the following chapters. All of our professors for this course were either young academics who grew up in small communities (in the Huasteca), speaking Nahuatl as their first language, or who are seasoned researchers who have dedicated their careers and lives to revitalizing Nahuatl language. These courses also had an impact, as I had hoped, on

² "IDIEZ" Instituto de Docencia e Investigación Etnológica de Zacatecas, A.C.
Institute of Teaching and Ethnological Research of Zacatecas, A.C.

the perceptions my subjects and communities had of me. The following excerpt from my journal reflects the value Nahuatl language learning bestowed upon me.

“As I walked up to the outdoor basketball court which served as a playground at Francisco Villa Primary school in San Juan Totolcintla, Principal Higinio Cruz motioned for me to come stand with him as the honors for the flag were given and the children sang the Mexican national anthem gave honors to the state flag and recited the pledge in both Spanish and Nahuatl. I was then introduced as a researcher who has taken courses in Nahuatl and is researching the use of the language in their school. This was an honor, as I was given prestige for being an outside researcher and for being interested in their culture, language and community.” (Personal fieldnotes, 01.21.19)

Days after this event I was invited to a Nahuatl poetry recital in the town plaza of San Juan Totolcintla. My driver parked in the shade at the end of the street and we walked up to the plaza I stayed out of the way as I wanted to simply observe the interactions at my first town-wide event. But Principle Cruz had other ideas, and I was motioned to come meet the members of the table of honor, including two women doctors, the superintendent of the school district and director of indigenous medium (curriculum), and lastly the town commissioner which was the highest honor. I was then instructed to be seated next to the commissioner and as the program began each of our accolades and titles were read. This was a very special event and I felt honored to be regarded with such respect (Personal fieldnotes, 01.24.19).

Returning back to my first summer of language study I quickly realized that there are a number of variants of Nahuatl (30 federally recognized variants according to the *Endangered Language Alliance* Website, 2012) and that I was learning the Eastern Huastecan variant when I needed the Nahuatl Guerrerense variant for my fieldwork.

Although I knew the variants are mutually intelligible and that I shouldn't have any issues once in the field, I started trying to learn both variants at the same time and making notes on how they differed from one another, which added to my preliminary data collection. After the first intensive course, I felt well equipped to give the basic salutations and ask the most necessary questions "*Cualli tonalli*" Good day; "*Na notocah Heather*" my name is Heather; "*quenihque tiitztoc?*" "How are you?". Although, upon arrival at my field destination, I quickly realized that although the Nahuatl variants may be mutually intelligible there were going to be a few issues. The first of those issues is that I had all the basic salutations wrong for the region. I relearned the correct ones and began to use them when and where I could, "*Na[ja] notocah Heather, quen tineme?*" "My name is Heather, how are you?"

Methodology

I then began to try basic introductions thinking this might serve as a great icebreaker for those who might want to hear what I had learned and that I was in earnest about learning Nahuatl. This idea was quickly sidelined by my first few interviews with the elders. The group of individuals I had chosen to interview was in their late sixties, early seventies and were what I would characterize to be "tough as nails" from scratching a living from the hot and dusty town they call home. When I came into a home I introduced myself in Spanish first. The elders, having been told about me and my interest in Nahuatl in advance, would rattle off a bunch of questions in Nahuatl at full conversational speed and then chuckle to themselves as I must have had a blank stare on my face while trying to work through the words, parse them out into morphemes, and then try to translate them before I tried to form some sort of verbal response. This process, of course, took too long and had I had pen and paper I might

have been able to understand about half of what they said, but alas...this was the field not the classroom. I failed their language test. My interlocutors would exchange looks with each other and my companion and then laugh and exchange remarks in Nahuatl, then say in Spanish, “*no, ella no sabe*” (no, she doesn’t know) meaning I don’t know how to speak Nahuatl and that I was presuming upon my language studies. This sort of initiation caused me to reevaluate my language usage in the field and, in the end, I used mostly Spanish as I realized that instead of endearing myself to this generation was quickly becoming the butt of their jokes.

The opposite situation happened with my own generation though, as I was introduced at the first school during assembly by the director/principal of the school. I was introduced in Nahuatl first and then in Spanish. I was introduced as a master’s student, a teaching professional and Nahuatl language learner. The students were encouraged to teach me as much as they could and to speak to me in Nahuatl when possible (neither of those requests were fulfilled as we will see further along in this text). I was looked at as a prestigious person in the community by both faculty and students. This prestige was afforded to me because of my academic background and career in teaching. I was surprised to have been given this honor in San Juan Totolcintla especially when in Tulimán I was welcomed in a very different manner by the elder generation.

After finding my language footing in each community, I proceeded to conduct my fieldwork and maneuvers through the different interviews I had planned. As you will see throughout this ethnography, I have tried to reproduce, as accurately as possible, the conversations I had with each of my interviewees or, as I term them in most of this

manuscript, collaborators or subjects. A few of the interviews I will paraphrase in English but will write the transcript in Spanish to preserve the interesting dialectal and phonologic variations of Spanish I came across in this region of Guerrero. Interviews will be first recounted in Spanish and then translated or interpreted in English below. The transcription reflects the attentiveness to the forms of speaking within my research area. Inconsistencies are not errors but examples of everyday speech. In this manuscript I endeavored to adhere to and preserve orthographic representations of actual language used in written and spoken communication with collaborators.

There were challenges that came along with writing this thesis in English after doing all of the interviews in Spanish and working with groups of individuals whose first language is Nahuatl. The largest obstacle was understanding the circular manner in which stories or past experiences were recounted by the older generation, it took me a number of reads through the transcript and then a consultation with my partner and other collaborators who understand the context and who grew up with this type of linguistic structure and manner of speaking. Many of the interviews were disjointed (in my analytical and data driven mindset) going off on asides and discussing with others before making a final answer statement to my interview question. I allowed the storyteller to continue their narrative in order to capture as much nuance of the dialect and to respect the integrity of the interlocutors' logic in answering my questions; this process was extremely collaborative as referenced above.

The data collection for this research is based on fieldwork involving participant observation, interviews, interaction with students and their teachers, as well as a paper survey given to students at both schools toward the end of my two-month session. My

previous experience in schools provides a working knowledge and background of the spaces involved within this research, I was however not prepared for the extreme shyness of the students in San Juan Totolcintla.

Doña Cleo, one of my interviewees, mentioned this in her narrative of working with the students:

“Si, pues porque son tímidos pues y más que no salen es un asunto más. A veces uno que sale pues dice pues no digo bien la palabra y después me van a criticar. A veces nos dicen, como profesionistas, no me va a criticar mi compañera- que no le dije bien; que no hablo Nahuatl, que no lo hablo bien.

“Yes, well because they are shy, they never leave that’s another thing too. Sometimes someone who leaves (or is it doesn’t leave?) says, “I don’t say the word correctly and later they’re going to criticize me. Sometimes they say to us, as professionals, my colleague will not criticize me that I didn’t say it well; that I don’t speak Nahuatl, that I don’t speak it well.” (Interview with Cleo 3.6.19)

To determine if linguistic prejudice or discrimination (profiling based on language) is indeed present, I had to first gain access to the classrooms I wanted to observe. As mentioned above, this was relatively easy because of the relationships I have created over the years. Once I was introduced to the schools and their administrators approved my research, I then tried to blend into the background of the normal school day routine. My hope was to allow the students to feel as though they could interact as they normally would on any given school day. This unfortunately was not as easy as I had anticipated because I looked very different from everyone else and I was of course always writing in my notebook- a few of the students would intently watch as I would write things down and then ask me what I was writing, review the page and then ask me if it was English or Nahuatl (they knew it wasn’t Spanish because they couldn’t read it). As I mentioned above, my initial research problem was posed as a question regarding linguistic

prejudice. I planned to assess if linguistic prejudice was present in the classroom by using the level of in-class participation of first language Spanish speakers as compared to first language or historically Nahuatl-speaking students, this was to be done across schools in a cross comparison. Included in the proposed data collection were the metrics on the level of interpersonal socialization (children connecting with each other) outside of the classroom yet still within the confines of the school grounds. I had hoped to gather this information from school rosters for student organizations and surveying the students themselves. Although the research plan was well formed, I was not able to carry out the research as proposed for a number of reasons: 1.) the schools were further away than anticipated and travel time cut down on in class observations. School started at 8 o'clock in the morning, but things usually got settled and actual instruction began at 8:30 am this was because the schools were organized differently than here in the US and recess/ breakfast occurred between 10:00-10:30. By the time students were settled once again and I was in the back of the classroom it was almost time for my driver to take me home for lunch at my host family's home. 2.) the student roster and grades were not as useful as I had hoped because many of the student were not even up to their grade level in basic subjects such as math and reading. I couldn't control for other factors and the data wasn't enough to gauge how grades were affected and if it was due to factors of linguistic prejudice or language barriers. 3.) The question I proposed became irrelevant once I was in the actual classroom. The administrators and teachers in San Juan Totolcintla all spoke Nahuatl (bar one who was from another city), and none of the teachers and administrators in Tulimán spoke Nahuatl fluently. I found I was dealing with two extremes in each research location.

After grappling with the apparent lack of specific evidence for linguistic discrimination (or even fear of such discrimination) I began to wonder if I was mistaken. I had been looking for something that I had only heard about as anecdotal evidence from preliminary interviews with adults aged thirty to seventy, but these experiences had not seemed to have occurred with the students I was interviewing in either school. I decided to instead compare and contrast the differences between the two classrooms and hand out the survey. Once I received the survey response, my research question fell apart, but a new possibility came to light. There was a common denominator in the surveys from the students in San Juan Totolcintla! When asked, the majority said they spoke Nahuatl (see graph in chapters three and five) but even on the first day I had visited them, they had refused to answer their teacher in Nahuatl and instead furtively glancing at me first, choosing to answer in Spanish. This was a completely new aspect of language loss that I had not considered; one that I describe as language insecurity. I was looking at what, upon further analysis, I propose to be the repercussions of historical language prejudice or stigmatization. I was intrigued and quickly sent a text to the classroom teacher, Miss Nancy, asking if we could discuss what had transpired in her classroom to see if we could uncover more about the language ideologies into which the students had been socialized. She briefly mentioned that her students had been nervous that I was in the class observing them and were normally more social and willing to speak Nahuatl. She said they were embarrassed (about speaking Nahuatl) and later I found she too had been embarrassed as a student to admit that she spoke Nahuatl. This was the pivot point then for my research problem and subsequent field research.

Outside of the classroom I made connections and tried to interview as many individuals as I could both formally and informally to gather data on the local ideologies around Nahuatl language education and language loss. I proposed to group my interviews into three categorized in order to track the responses and trajectory of language loss.

Generation A

I found that for the older generation it was considered backward or uncivilized (uneducated) to speak Nahuatl. These individuals grew up either using Nahuatl at home and almost exclusively within the community or could at least understand Nahuatl when being spoken to but were not fluent themselves.

- Doña Eusebia
- Doña Ana
- Don Pablo
- Doña Cleo
- Doña E

Generation B

The teachers or what I call the middle generation are the individuals within this study who are bilingual teachers or parents of young students. I argue that as a consequence of the shaming their parents received (during their formative years) this middle generations was never taught Nahuatl in Tulimán. The teachers and parents of the students in San Juan Totolcintla, from whom I collected data, learned Nahuatl in their home but once they left their community learned Spanish and then felt compelled to speak Spanish when outside of the community.

- Judy (non-educator)
- Miss Nancy
- Profesor Osmar

Generation C

- The 5th grade students of San Juan Totolcintla's Francisco Villa Bilingual Primary school
- The 5th grade students of Tulimán's General Vicente Guerrero Bilingual Primary school

I chose to arrange my research within the framework of the three generations in the hope that I would be able to capture a first-hand profile of forced language shift. The historical and collective memory recorded in the interviews of the oldest or what I sometimes refer to as the grandparent generation reaches back to stories or *cuentos* told to them as part of their oral tradition from parents and even as far back as their own grandparents. I took the opportunity to record and gather as much from the past as I could so that there was an ample timeline from which to draw my conclusions for this research. The following chapter outlines a brief history of the region looking back to the first inhabitants recorded and focusing on the centuries when Nahuatl first came into the region. I will preface that I am not an historian and that my efforts here in the subsequent chapters are to set a basic foundation and give reference to my claims that the current state of the Nahuatl language is due in great part to the Mexican state's efforts to erase that language and culture through Indigenous Education policies

Furthermore, the complexities involved in the formation of social identity are grounded within multiple spheres of social legitimacy and group status as relates to language ideology. Within these landscapes I draw out the interconnectedness of language identities, place-based identities and the ways that Nahuatl place names connect those two spheres in time and place. The Balsas region, as discussed below has been inhabited since the PreClassic period and Nahuatl has been spoken in the region since the time of the Aztec conquest of central Mexico around the 14th century.

Therefore, the complexities span not only current social and intergroup relationships but are affected by place and time.

Chapter 2: The Importance of Place: Linguistic Geographies, Indigenous Identities, and Historically Nahua Places

“The shapes and colors of contours of the land, together with the shifting sounds and cadences of native discourse, thrust themselves upon the newcomer with a force so vivid and direct as to be virtually inescapable.” (Basso, 1996:3 p71)



Fig 2.1 Old Homestead in Xintla, Tulumán (Photo: Heather Thomas Flores, 2019)

Bucholtz and Hall (Duranti, 2006) write in their introduction that linguistic anthropology is the study of language and identity, and that language is the most flexible cultural production of identity. The authors frame the chapter with the four semiotic processes of establishing identity which are: practice, indexicality (indexing or referring to an object or concept, which I discuss in depth in chapter three) and performance which will be discussed in this chapter briefly and then again in depth in chapter five. There are a multitude of complexities that go into creating identity. I cannot hope to even scratch much more than the surface of the various facets that are present within the Nahua communities presented in this ethnography, yet my focus for this chapter is an attempt to draw a connection between the people within the Nahua

communities, the places they live, and the historical continuity of those places which is represented in the place names.

The importance of place is evident within this text in the numerous accounts and narratives anchored with a named and knowable location. In many of my interviews throughout this ethnography my interlocutors reference the name and place they come from, the place they are speaking about and then reference a larger city or town to help the listener locate the general geographic positionality, all this to frame the geographic context for the narrative they are about to tell. An example of this, which highlights this connection between place and language, is outlined below, Doña E, who is a key interlocutor throughout this ethnography and who will feature prominently later in the text recounts the following:

“...yo trabaje en Chilapa en una comunidad que se llama Atenxoxola esta arribita-están los pueblitos juntos no más que están divididos arriba Español, abajo esta donde trabajaba en Atenxoxola en y más abajo esta otro pueblito se llama San Ángel. El jagüey de San Ángel hablaba español, pero este pastoreño no hablaban el español castellano que nosotros utilizamos, ellos hablaban el español pastoreño. Pero en ese pueblito donde yo trabajaba, Atenxoxola, hablaban el Nahuatl.”

“...I work in Chilapa in a community called Atenxoxola, there are two small towns together they are divided, the town above is Spanish, below is where I worked in Atenxoxola, and even further down this other little town is called St. Angel. The *Jagaey of San Angel* spoke Spanish, but this herding town did not speak the Castilian Spanish that we used, they spoke the Shepherd Spanish*. But in that little town where I worked, Atenxoxola, they spoke Nahuatl.” (Personal communication 8.8.19)

Finding Identity in Place: Don Pablo’s ‘The Naming of Tulimán’

As I sit in the kitchen at a long table which seats eight. I scan the cluttered surface where pans of highly seasoned delicious food rest on wooden trivets. A *Chiquihuite* (basket) of left over freshly prepared tortillas is covered with an embroidered cloth napkin, and a molcajete full of freshly macerated spicy chili paste gives off a pungent aroma. These

are the remnants of the just finished late lunch (as all lunches are in this and many other households in the area, I never could get the meal hours down in all my years of traveling this region). My host, Don Pablo, abruptly asks me, “Well, are you going to interview me or not? If not, I’m going to lay down.” Surprised by the abrupt request, I say, “of course” as I fumble to find the words to excuse myself to get my notebook and recording device and then run up two flights of stairs to my room to get the items I need and the questions I’ve painstakingly written for this interview, first in English, then in Spanish, and then in Nahuatl, just in case I’m feeling daring enough to venture along that route.... if things go well during the interview. I return with my accessories and a notebook and seat myself once again directly in front of my host and interviewee. Don Pablo sits at the table across from me and waits in silence, watching me intently as I arrange my things, and then we began the interview by discussing the history of the town.

“Tulimán ya lo modificaron, pero todos lo conocimos como ‘Toliman’ nada más la ‘U’ ya le cambiaron, o sea que viene de una, como vara,había un arroyo aquí.... [que] se llama tolin. Es como una, una vara como otate, pero no muy grueso, delgadon como vara -crecía le llamaban tolin y dentro de tolin había culebras ‘rabonas’, les dicen cortas, y la mordedura de esa culebra era mortal. Entonces, por eso, los caballeros cerraron el manantial, esa es la leyenda porque no hay pruebas; según usaron un metate.”

“Tulimán has been modified, but we all knew is as ‘Toliman’ only the ‘U’ was changed, as the name comes from a [plant like] cane or staff... there was a creek here... it was called *tolin* [the plant] It’s like a, like a cane like an *otate* (a thick cane or large reed or staff) but not very thick, it grew thin like a reed, they called it *tolin* and in the *tolin* there were ‘stub’ snakes, they call them short, and the bite of this snake is fatal. So, that’s why, the men closed the spring, that’s the legend, there is no proof; according to the legend, they used a *metate* [grind stone].” (Personal communication with Don Pablo, 2019)

This ‘legend,’ as Don Pablo refers to it, was recounted during an interview in response to a question about problems with pronunciation from individuals who speak

Nahuatl as L1 and have learned Spanish either as a second language or who are bilingual individuals, but speak with a strong Nahuatl accent. His example of the 'U' and 'O' switch is well documented by linguists (see Hill & Hill, 1986) and this particular phonological variation is a recurrent theme mentioned in at least three other interviews within this ethnography.

To round out this introduction to my field base of Tulimán. I've pulled some data from INEGI's census records to delineate the linguistic makeup of this small community. Tulimán is located in the Municipality of *Huitzuco de los Figueroa* in north central Guerrero. The following statistics were collected from the census data and was printed in 2006. During that time in Tulimán there were 3,570 inhabitants, with 44.93% of the population identifying as Indigenous (Native Indian ancestry) 21.15% of the population speaks an indigenous language (Nahuatl predominantly) .03% of the population doesn't speak Spanish at all, and 19.27% of the population is illiterate (<http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/gro/poblacion/> , accessed 09.27.19).

These statistics paint a fascinating picture of Tulimán, one that is not readily evident from the position of outside observer. There were no singular visible features (i.e. styles of dress, neighborhoods of residence, or physical features), which would denote any of the identities listed in the census data above. When I was there in the spring of 2019, only the elders spoke Nahuatl to each other and, even then, it was a simple greeting of "*nolte*" morning or "*kilte*" afternoon, in passing, or sometime whispering to each other as to who I was (so that I wouldn't know they were referring to me). This explains why the population of current speakers hovers at around twenty

percent, the number of individuals who are illiterate, nineteen percent; I propose correlates to the number who state that they speak Nahuatl. I say this because many of the individuals who attended school in Tulimán, in the 1950's and 60's, were forced to speak only Spanish and made to forget their Nahuatl either by coercion or shaming, which we will discuss more in chapter four.

Don Pablo

Don Pablo, of Tulimán, Guerrero, is a native first language Nahuatl speaker. His entire family spoke Nahuatl in part due to lack of formal schooling which meant that his parents were both illiterate and never fully spoke Spanish. To this day Don Pablo says that he likes and prefers to speak in Nahuatl with his brothers and the elders of the Tulimán community because it's the language he feels is a part of his identity, an identity which he makes very clear as he states with apparent pride, "*Soy Indio*" "I'm Indian" (Personal Communication 01.20 2019). Don Pablo was a primary school teacher for almost 45 years, he was the former *comisario* (*commissioner*) of Tulimán. He worked in five schools total throughout the entire state of Guerrero and is able to understand some spoken Amuzgo (through his travels in Guerrero as a village school teacher), can communicate in at least three variants of Nahuatl (*Montaña, Balsas, Centro*) and is fluent in Spanish. Don Pablo has worked in bilingual teaching but was never certified as, or worked in, a designated bilingual school (this distinction which I was unaware of at the time was made clear in subsequent interviews and will be discussed in detail in chapter four). He instead worked in indigenous/ bilingual rural schools because no one else wanted to work in those rough areas. He was a pioneer in the sense that he would work in some of the most remote non-Spanish speaking communities in the state of Guerrero and was able to bring formal education to those

populations. He is looked at as an elder of the community and an authority figure to this day. He still goes to the town hall and participates in the legal work involved in running the community.

When Don Pablo was around twelve years old, he decided that he would go to the boarding school, called an *internado*, to get an education because he didn't want to live in poverty forever. He was enrolled at San Gabrielito³ and made the journey to school on foot, from his home in Tulumán (which is about a fifteen-hour journey), each semester. Once at the school, Don Pablo quickly realized that he couldn't speak Spanish and, as he was illiterate, he had no real way of teaching himself. He knew he needed to learn to read, write, and speak Spanish fairly quickly if he wanted to stay at the school (students were kicked out regularly for not making good grades).

According to Don Pablo, the students bullied him constantly which led to him taking part in fights at school; he said this was because he couldn't speak Spanish. But with the help of a classmate it took him less than a semester to learn to read and write it also cost him his ration of bread as payment to the student who was tutoring him. Don Pablo was discriminated against for being indigenous and not being able to speak Spanish. Many of the same experiences related to me by Don Pablo seemed to be somewhat familiar, I referred back to the Truth and Reconciliation trial accounts (Canada) that many Native and First People attended and gave testimony during. Unfortunately, it confirmed that the boarding school experiences for Don Pablo and countless others seemed to be quite similar despite the differences in country of origin

³ San Gabrielito formally known as Centro de Integración Social de San Gabrielito, Municipio de Tepecoacuilco fundado en 1932 (Center for Social Integration of Saint Gabriel, Municipality of Tepecoacuilco founded in 1932). It was one of the first boarding schools for indigenous students in the state of Guerrero (González, 2009).

(see <http://nctr.ca/reports.php> and <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/education/us-indian-boarding-school-history/> accessed 11/20/19). The interesting component of this narrative and what sparked my interest in pursuing this thesis topic was that given the time period (1950's and 60's), during which the difficulty of travel compiled with little money for access to major cities, makes it highly probable that many of the students may not have spoken Spanish fluently or perfectly. The topic of discrimination and prejudice from within one's own school group and language community was very interesting to me. I heard the same responses from the ten-year olds dealing with the same type of language policing and bullying because of mispronunciations but in this instance not so much in Spanish as Don Pablo reported but in Nahuatl. As I listened to Don Pablo's history the themes of emic and etic perceptions of language, identity, and community became apparent quite quickly. I began to take note and ask questions where I could about language and Identity and cultural intimacy. These are themes that I will come back to as the major topic in this research.

Nahua Place Names and Historical Continuity

During this field research I spoke with local community members to gain a better understanding of the history of the community and asked if they could share some insights into the origins of their community or any other information they cared to share with me about their crafts and ways of earning a livelihood before the advent of the *Autopista del Sol* when the towns in the ethnography were sleepy villages on the river bank. Upon my return from the field I also researched the place names of the region as many of them are Nahuatl. The following place names are broken down into their parts and translated from Nahuatl to English. Many *Pueblos Originarios* (First Peoples) use natural features within the landscape to create place-based names, this is true for the

Nahua as well (Lockhart, 1992). The following is my attempt to highlight the significance of the Nahuatl place names and to impress upon the reader the importance of language and culture as it holds ancestral knowledge and local group identity. Lockhart (1992), one of the foremost scholars on Nahuatl language morphology, tells us that Nahuatl place names are based in flora, fauna, and sacred spaces; this is also briefly discussed in various other ethno-historians in works such as in, *Place-Names In Mexico-Tenochtitlan* (Mundy, 2014). The exercise below was an attempt to find the meaning of the five locations within the district I was researching. This was a collaborative effort during the 2019 summer IDIEZ program and I appreciated all of the wonderful discussion this activity elicited.

Nahuatl place names in the Upper Balsas Valley and their suggested meanings:

1. San Juan Totolcintla⁴ (Gerhard, 1993 p16-317)

tototl = turkey

totolcin = turkey corn

total-cin-tla(n) = place of turkey-corn

Amaranth seeds for feeding to (chickens) domesticated fowl = Petzicatl
this is not the same as the type of amaranth (huauhtli) named for birds:
totalhuauhtli
which is edible (by humans) see Sahagún A&D 1963 (v12, bk11):287

2. San Miguel Tecuixiapan (Gerhard, 1993 p317)

either or:

tecuicichtli = a kind of crab (Molina 1571:24 under cangrejo)

tehcuixtli = a winding thing

tecuixiapan = a winding river or a crab river

3. San Francisco Ozomatlán (“Osomatlan”: Gerhard, 1993 p317)

⁴ When I asked the people of each community about the specific place names, there wasn't a decided upon meaning, but it seems that Totolcintla might have been translated as “place of the birds” Tototl = bird; cin= ? tlan= “place of”. This would be a second version of the above translation and although it makes sense, the /cin/ morpheme is not accounted for and so I am partial to the above translation.

ozoma(tli) = monkey (see Sahagún, p254)

ozoma(tli)-tlan = city of monkeys

-tlan

-tlan/-titlan = city of; at the base of

-tlān

4. Ostotipan (Gerhard, 1993 p318)

ostotl = cave

osto-ti-pan = on the cave; in the caves; at the cave; etc.

5. Ahuetlixpan (possibly “Ahuelican”? : Gerhard, 1993 p317)

ahuehuatl = cypress tree (Karttunen, 1992)

ahuatl = oak tree (Molina 1571)

pan = in, on, place of or among, etc. (Lockhart, 2001 p229)

ahueatl + ixpan

a(tl) + huetlix-pan

I have included the town names and their potential meanings here because I believe that it is important to acknowledge the long history and indigenous knowledge recorded and kept in these place names. (Sources for above discussion: IDIEZ Summer Couse cohort, 2019

Holding on to Place: A Brief History

Carbon fourteen dating has shown that the area of northern Guerrero has been inhabited for at least nine thousand years (Ranere, et al, 2009). During the PreClassic period the Mezcala culture occupied the land that the communities in this ethnography now inhabit. I visited the site of Cuetlajuchitlan⁵ about thirty minutes from my home base of Tulimán and I was particularly surprised to see that the site is unoccupied, no guards are present, and the gates are not locked. As I walked up to the top of the mound where the archaeological site is perched, I was pleasantly surprised to see that all of the plaques and visitor information is written in Nahuatl, Spanish and English. This was a sign that the state was reassigning a sort of symbolic prestige to the Nahuatl language by having it represented at the archaeological site on formerly Nahua land. This seems like a great advancement in the state's promotion of Indigenous languages but in analyzing this geographic location and the politics around it we see that this move to promote the language is purely symbolic. Therefore, the apparent promotion of Nahuatl by the state in this instance is problematic; 1.) no one I spoke with in any community I visited knew the site existed. 2.) this stretch of the highway is not considered safe and most try to get through this part of Guerrero as quickly as possible if they are visiting from outside the state and driving through to the coast. 3.) those that speak Nahuatl are probably not going to be the ones to visit an obscure site at the top of a highway overpass. If you will recall the census data and the fact that those who speak the language fluently enough to read it are in their late sixties and older, they are also most

⁵ Rediscovered in 1991; part of the Mezcala culture. See Manzanilla López, Rúben, Talavera González, and Jorge Arturo (2006). Cuetlajuchitlán, Sitio Preurbano en la Región Mezcala.». *Arqueología Mexicana* XIV (82)

likely either completely illiterate or who are illiterate only in Nahuatl as it was not taught in schools except as a transition to Spanish language education. Therefore, the usage of Nahuatl at this site is a wonderful show of cultural competency and continuity and I know that INAH worked hard to have those languages present. But this does not necessarily mean that the state of Guerrero is working to return the prestige of Nahuatl to its communities. I say this in part because the locals are unaware of this archaeological site (I asked around) therefore, the plaques could have been simply a gesture of respect, by INAH, for the indigenous communities whose ancestors this site represents, or possibly for the benefit of those who knows the history of the location and made the effort to visit for research purposes.



Fig. 2.2 Cuétlajuchitlan, Guerrero. (photo: Heather Thomas Flores, 2019)

Eventually the region was dominated by the Aztecs and centralized which allowed for the transfer of language and culture between the different tribal provinces. This exchange led to a portion of Guerrero developing their own variant of Nahuatl,

which was referred to in colonial documents as a “rustic version of Nahuatl” called *Coixca*. Even though the Nahuatl language has dominated this region for thousands of years, the prestige this language once enjoyed as the *lingua franca* of the Aztec Empire and even after the Spanish conquest as the official language for legal documentation and Christianization within new Spain has dwindled into a stigma of poverty and ignorance⁶

The following is from Gerhard’s *“A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain”* (1993, 316-318) and gives a breakdown of the regional history from references to an older version of Nahuatl being spoken in preconquest times to the year 1743, about seventy eight years before Mexico's independence from Spain.

In the pre-colonial province under *Tepecuacuilco Tistla (Tixtla, Guerrero)* was home, in the north of the region, to a people called the *Coixca*⁷ who spoke a “rustic Nahuatl,”. The *Coixca* of *Tistla* surrendered to Cortes in 1521 and at some point, Totocintla became attached to the encomienda of *Tlalcozautitlan* (a neighboring district under Chilapa to the east). The area of Tistla became a Spanish focal point when they ‘discovered’ and began mining silver at the mines of Zumpango del Rio (west of Tistla proper). The mining camps at Zumpango (Tzonpango/Sumpango) were likely the earliest purchase for the Catholic church, at San Martin Zumpango, beginning in the 1530s. Following contact and the influx of Spanish and other miners, the area’s recorded tributary population remained consistent (roughly 3k tributaries from 1566-1600), until a “swift decline” in 1626 (down to 1350 people) and, finally, a gradual incline to 2,838 by 1743. Totolcintla’s San Juan Bautista church, a parish visita and church built sometime after 1605, was under the supervision of the *doctrina* of *Apango* (south of Totolcintla), and by 1743 a designated parish priest was stationed there. [...] In 1603, when Spaniards sought to reconstitute Native populations living on the banks of the Balsas, through the process of *recongregación*, the process was “called off when it was argued that Indians were needed at different places to ferry passengers and goods across the river. The “principal crossings of alternate Mexico-Acapulco roads were at Mexcala [in Iguala]... Tlalcozautitlan [in Chilapa],” and, significantly, **Totolcintla**. Surviving as pueblos in 1743 were Ahuelican, Amayotepec, Guacacingo, Oapa, **Osomatlan**, **Tecuisiapan**, and Tetelcingo.” In the seventeenth century, **San Juan**

⁶ Although this is not the case when looking at the work being done by Native academics in texts such as “*The Learned Ones: Nahua Intellectuals in Post conquest Mexico: First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies*.” McDonough (2014).

⁷ For more on the Coixca and Coixcatlalpan, see Gerhard, 1993 p111

Totolcintla passed from Tlalcozautitlan to Oapa, and **San Augustin Ostotipan** was taken from Huitziltepec before 1603. In the south, by contrast, several dozen *estancias* and indigenous towns existing in the 1570s under the *caberceras* of either Zumpango, Tistla, or Muchitlan were more affected by the *congregación* process. For a list of early sources, see Gerhard, 318.

Contemporary politics and geography of this region, what the people of this area refer to as, “El Rio,” or ‘The River’, is composed of much the same small communities described above. In fact, many of the place names have stayed the same through time and may have only changed in spelling and have had the Christian names attached dependent upon who was at the seat of the ecclesiastic central for the *encomienda* at the time of restructuring. The region called Balsas is now a part of the *Municipio de Martir de Cuilpan* and the municipal seat lies at Apango. In 2010 there were 17,702 in living in the municipality and a population of 2526 living in San Juan Totolcintla (INEGI.org.mx accessed 10.2.2019).

Revealing Identity Through Language

At points throughout my interviews and conversations with my collaborators, they would describe linguistic variations within specific geographic locations, as seen above with the comment on Pastoral Spanish (which I have never heard referenced). I sometimes received commentary, too, on the localist speech communities which reinforces the linguistic ties to the community or represented the norms within that speech community which makes them distinct, for example, one morning at the breakfast table of my host family, Don Pablo sits down and asks me to pass the jar of instant coffee, “ Pásame el ‘cañi’ ” he says as he chuckles to himself, I understand of course but wonder why he’s chosen to say “cañi” instead of “café” as it is normally pronounced in Spanish. His wife chimes in a repeats “cañi” and laughs, I realize there is a story behind this inside joke and don’t have to wait long to hear Don Pablo explain

that a group of people were sitting around a table each with a mug of boiled water waiting for the jar of instant coffee to be passed to them, once they've all had their turn and finished their coffee, someone asks if they anyone at the table wants more a man at the end of the table announces he's content with the amount of "*cafi*" he has had and tips his mug to show it's empty. Everyone at the table laughs because it is evident, to everyone at the table, his place of origin from his mispronunciation of *café* or coffee.

Don Pablo goes on to explain to me, as his wife chuckles to herself as she puts things on the breakfast table, that "*en el Rio asi hablan, en vez de 'é' al final le ponen i*"; "in the river [along the shore] that's how they speak, instead of 'é' at the end they add an 'i'."

This individual was laughed at (not in a malicious way) because he spoke with a distinct phonological marker that positioned him in a geographic location that everyone in the region knew and could identify.

This linguistic variation was made even more apparent, on a larger scale, when working alongside colleagues at the University of Utah's Summer intensive. The professors in that program use a different variant of Nahuatl the Eastern Huasteca or *Huasteca Veracruzana* variant, which is mutually intelligible with *Nahuatl Guerrerense*, but does have lexical and morphological and phenological variation as well as different orthographies for example the word Nahuatl in Guerrero is written Nauatl.

Other common words and their orthographies according to geographic location:

Table of Phonological Variation Based on Geographic Location

Nahuatl Guerrerense	Nahuatl Veracruzana (IDIEZ)	English Translation	Spanish Translation
Kanij	Canin	Where	Donde
Nikaj	Nican	Here	Aquí
Kuali	Cuali	Good	Bien/Bueno
Kemaj	Quema	Yes	Sí

Table 2.1 Regional Phonological Variations in Nahuatl

As I've highlighted above, language can index an entire speech community, variations in that speech community assist the listener to narrow down the speaker to a locality, and from the above table, it is evident that orthographic variations (although pronounced the same or very similar) can define the linguistic geography and grounds the language within a geographic region. This is the argument many sociolinguists have made including authors Irvine and Gal (Duranti, 2009). These linguistic identities and sociolinguistic systems are evidenced in many of the conversations presented in the following chapters.

The geography and landscapes that come into play in this paper are what help situate and maintain group identity, create a sense of belonging, and mutual reference. Margaret C. Field (Field, 2009) describes much the same concept in her chapter on the Kumiai of Baja California, she writes "Local dialects are linked to localist as well as variationist language ideologies which value local variation and link dialect to group identity, location, and geographic resources." (Field, 2012). I argue that this particular ideological reference is important in this research because it would seem that although

the language is fading within the research location communities, the value of place and the marking of connections to place through language variation, both in Spanish and Nahuatl, are still as strongly tied to geographic locations and place names as ever and are still commonplace in defining value and giving context while in conversation.

I have especially noted this type of reference to geographical and spatial positionality, during conversations in which my interlocutors are giving context to a narrative or remembering a particular story they wish to tell -- I say remembering here because my collaborators have tended to be the elders in my chosen communities and have had to remind themselves (and each other in some instances) of certain interaction to articulate them to me. But I also use remembering in the sense that Basso does in regard to place-making, he remarks, "Place making involves multiple acts of remembering and imagining which inform each other in complex ways" (Basso 1996). I have listened to my collaborators use place names, directions (especially up and down, never cardinal directions) and geographic markers such as the location of a town in relationship mountain or other recognized geographic feature like the river (*El Río*) as mentioned here in the above section and all throughout the text.

Returning from my fieldwork and beginning the research for this paper, I was surprised, when looking at the census data, at the small percentage of people who identified as indigenous within the region (especially in Tulumán) according to the statistics (<https://www.inegi.org.mx/>, accessed 9.9.19) which recorded that 45% of the populations self-identified as indigenous or Indian according to the census data. What surprised me even more was when I spoke to people within these communities, I got the sense that many didn't identify as Indigenous (although I never came out and asked

outright unless it was a formal interview). Individuals who knew why I was visiting the region would freely speak about their experiences with Nahuatl, but in the everyday routines and transactions I had within the communities, I saw no demarcation or marker of whether or not the person in front of me spoke anything other than Spanish or identified either as *mestizo* or *Indio* or *Indigena*. This was not necessarily the case in *El Rio*, where I was able to associate a style dress (sometimes) with language spoken, but this does not transfer necessarily to how the person identifies himself or herself.

I found this particular data point of interest in part because I have outlined in this text many of the kinship ties and presented them here as part of my ethnographic research. Although the focus this research is not one of kinship, my estimations toward the close of my fieldwork, is that around 75%- 80% of Tulimán is of some indigenous decent. When I brought this up to one of my collaborators, he replied that most people are of some indigenous decent they just don't consider themselves indigenous, "they think that being indigenous means dressing a certain way, acting a certain way, and speaking in Nahuatl" (personal communication GG 9.2019). Therefore, because the members of the community in Tulimán don't dress in traditional attire, have never learned or become fluent in Nahuatl; they don't consider themselves indigenous and won't mark it on the census. The practice of making a distinction between those who are *Indios/ Indigena* and those who are not is a conscious decision which was enforced, delineated or defined by those who speak the language the social attitudes toward language.

This distancing from an identity, which has had a long history of stigma, is a theme that carries throughout the following chapters. This census data also informs this

research in the linguistic indexing of identity through language choices. Claiming indigeneity on the census, indexing it by speaking Nahuatl or on hiding it in certain spaces and professing it in others suggests the multiplicity in identity and marks where indigeneity and Nahuatl are valorized and in what spaces it is stigmatized, this research touches on the navigation between and within those spaces and looks to uncover how these fluid social positions within the community and region can inform Nahuatl language revitalization efforts.

For now, I will close this section by underscoring the importance of language, landscape and the historicity of place. Each of them holds meaning and an identity, which help to construe and allow access to membership within a group. Dependent upon which identity one wishes to assume at any given time or location that allows for the fluidity and complexities of identity to move freely. My aim then, in chapter three, is to validate the claim made in this study that language, seen through the lens of shame and stigma, and if based in place, landscape, will be deeply affected in terms of its vitality in and within a community struggling to find their social identity, and sense of self while distancing themselves from any markers that would invoke shame.

Chapter 3

Perceptions of Prestige and Stigma: Bilingual Education Ideologies and Classroom Socialization

Prestige in Context

This study analyzes linguistic prestige and prejudice within the communities of the Balsas region's speech communities. There are various communities within this region as mentioned in chapter two, there are communities that speak both Nahuatl and Spanish equally and are just starting the shift from Nahuatl to Spanish with the current school age generation (i.e. Ahuetlixpan and Tula del Rio). There are locations such as Tulumán which have almost completely lost Nahuatl and only the grandparent age speaks or even understands the language. Given this rapid language shift prestige and stigma codes are in constant flux. Prestige is defined as the level of regard a language is afforded based on the ideologies of the speech community. Prestige is given to a dialect or language because it has been deemed superior or 'correct' as in the proper or official standard version. This superiority can be enforced or mandated by nation states through propaganda and the federal education system as is the case in this ethnography. The Nahuatl language (sometimes referred to by its speakers as *Mexicano*), once a language of prestige spoken by the great Aztec empire and clerics such as Fray Bernardino Sahgún, has been reduced, as we will see throughout the interviews presented here, to a stigma or marker of poverty, ignorance and being 'uncivilized'. The Nahuatl language for many triggers shame, shyness or embarrassment. Communities which have abandoned *Mexicano* are sometimes said to have become *civilizado* "civilized" (Hill & Hill, 1986, p431):

“...ya no queríamos hablar, incluso nos avergonzábamos no queríamos decir que somos indígenas porque si decimos que hablamos Nahuatl pues me van a decir india.”

“...we didn't want to speak [Nahuatl] anymore, we were even ashamed we didn't want to say that we're indigenous because if we say we speak Nahuatl, well, they're going to call me Indian.” (personal communication EG 10.2019)

Therefore, this research attempts to determine why school age children feel

shame when speaking Nahuatl when many of them, (at their own admission) have never experienced direct discrimination or prejudice because they speak Nahuatl or are of indigenous decent. I argue in this research paper, that the students are experiencing a sort of intergenerational shame, which they have developed from hearing the shift from grandparent to parent and then from having the experience of their parents either decide not to teach them Nahuatl or have their parents speak disparagingly about the language. Their students are creating their own language ideologies about the stigma of Nahuatl and the prestige of not only Spanish but more recently of English.

For anthropologists and sociolinguists, the conceptualization and perception of prestige within a language provide a window into the language ideologies held by the various speech communities. Code switching between Nahuatl and Spanish was used to illustrate points of narratives but also dependent upon the setting and specific social context within which my collaborators found themselves. There was also a performative factor in the use of Nahuatl within my research observations. The performances were given as illustrations to certain points the interviewees were making during one of our conversations, for example Don Pablo's telling of riddles at the dinner table after a meal or his use of Nahuatl first in telling a story and then translating it into Spanish for me, or there were public performances for public officials within the community or education system such as the public poetry recitation and the Nahuatl language celebration “*feria*

de la lengua materna” (first language fair) which was a region-wide one day celebration of Nahua culture and Language which showcased dance, poetry and local handicrafts. Each speech event was dependent upon the individual’s perceptions of language, their membership within particular groups and the social context.

Marking Prestige Within the Spanish Register

After interviewing, recording and transcribing the conversations with my subjects, I was able to compare them with interviews with individual representatives within each of the three generations (grandparent generation, the childbearing generation and the elementary school generation). Interestingly I found that in my interviews, four of the adults endeavored to speak in a more prestigious or authoritative manner, ‘proper’ or ‘academic’ Spanish was used, as much as possible, by my interlocutors as they switched their code from everyday vernacular to a formal register of Spanish to better match the language I used in my questions throughout the interview. Sometimes long pauses were taken when the individual worked to correctly remember and then retell the narrative in a more formal linguistic register than normally used in everyday speech.

The realization that this code switching was taking place happened as I reread and replayed the audio recordings of my interviews multiple times and wondered why, and for what possible reasons, my education professionals were seemingly having difficulties expressing their ideas in clear and flowing sentences. It seemed the individuals were trying to express and explain concepts using terminology that was not in their everyday vernacular. Once I had my partner review the transcripts, he clued me into the fact that three of the interviewees were noticeably struggling to make concise statements and were trying hard to stick to a specific “code”. Because I was formally

interviewing these individuals using academic terminology and using my best Spanish; my interlocutors kept within that code as much as possible too. For some of my interviewees it was noticeably harder to do than for others, as my partner pointed out, since he grew up in the community and knows the interviewees on a personal level and remarked that the interviews I recorded were spoken in a way that made the speaker sound like they were trying to use a wider lexicon and words that wouldn't come up in the everyday vernacular.

This revelation brought up the topic of prestige code and the context within which someone feels they need to speak differently or 'better' than they do in a common everyday speech event. To my partner the recorded speech sounded stilted and awkward as the interlocutor searches for the words they are looking for to best impart both a sense of professionalism but also to match my academic tone. Almost as if the intention is to prove that they too can use the proper terminology.

I, on the other hand, struggled with expressing myself fluently and concisely in Spanish because I was not used to the abruptness of the speech patterns in the area. I felt I had to repeat myself a few times in each question modifying slightly the way in which I asked the question because I was cognizant of the fact that 1.) not everyone speaks Spanish as their first language and that my Spanish is not as colloquial as theirs (and I admit that my Spanish is not perfect either) so, we are both potentially coming together as Spanish language learners, and 2.) not everyone is familiar with my research and the lexicon or terms that I am using to describe ideas and concepts.

With the continuation of my research in the field, I became aware that certain frames of reference for common terms were understood to hold different meaning

depending on who I was interviewing. In some of my interviews it quickly became apparent that when speaking about bilingual education and bilingual licensing the person in front of me might have a different notion of what these terms actually mean in my frame of reference. This was the case when speaking with Don Pablo about bilingual education. In chapter two, there is an excerpt from his interview where he explains that he went to a boarding school for indigenous students. When I asked him, in that same interview, if he had gone to a bilingual school, he stated that he had not gone to a bilingual school. I posed the same question to one of his peers, Doña E:

GG: *“Por ejemplo, le hicimos una entrevista a mi papa, le preguntamos, ¿’tu fuiste a una escuela bilingüe?’ ¿La pregunta lo que significa ser bilingüe? No es el título si no que la gente o los alumnos hablen dos idiomas en vez de lo enseñen los dos idiomas. Entonces mi papa dijo ‘no, no fue una escuela bilingüe’, pero después dijo que los niños hablaban dos idiomas entonces si fue escuela bilingüe...”*

GG: “For example, we did an interview with my dad, we asked him, ‘you went to a bilingual school?’ The question is then, what does it mean to be bilingual? It’s not the title, but that people or students speak two languages instead of teach both languages. Then my dad said, ‘no, it wasn’t a bilingual school,’ but then he said the children spoke two languages so then, yes, it was a bilingual school...”

DÑE: *“Sí, era bilingüe”.*

DÑE: “Yes, it was bilingual”.

In further analysis of the above conversation suggest a number of reasons why the discrepancy in understanding the term bilingual or bilingual education. I suggest that the first reason may have been my assumption that bilingual education simply meant a school who uses more than one language for instruction. My frame of reference, in the US, is that a dual-language model or the immersion school model which teaches classes in both languages or in one language (L2). When I speak of a bilingual school, I am referring to a school that teaches students in their first language to assist them to become fluent and reach their academic potential in the language of instruction.

Bilingual then, in my frame of reference, allows for two languages to be used in the classroom to advance the learning outcomes of students but that there is a preferred language of curriculum and instruction. Chapter four will outline the history and definition of bilingual education for rural Mexico, but to my understanding it is similar to, if not the same as the definition above. Therefore, my second conclusion to this confusion in terminology is that the concept of bilingual education is one that is ambiguous within the oldest generation interviewed, and although most of them were bilingual (speaking two languages) they were not all bilingual educators according to their school charter or teaching license. Of these two options, I propose that, most likely, the second explanation is why the data collected through interview appears to contradict itself.

In this next section I'd like to discuss shame and stigma in reference to language ideology. For this, though I must first define the term indexicality which is the identifying of ways in which social relations and language intersect (Ahern, 2017). Within the context of this ethnography I will use the term indexical to mean an icon, symbol, or other perceived aspect of one's characteristics as an indicator of social status and particular identity within that status.

As mentioned above, language and styles of dress are indexical, they point to or reference the identity of the individual. The language one speaks indexes an ethnic background, socioeconomic standing, education level, geographic location of origin and many other factors, giving the speaker a sort of calling card that can inform the listener (either correctly or incorrectly) of who they are conversing with, but this is problematic in that we base these markers on a stereotypical bias and our own language ideologies.

We are socialized to believe certain codes hold more prestige or power than others; this is the product of socialization and conscious or unconscious bias.

These same biases are at play here, in the Balsas region, when an individual speaks Spanish yet has an accent or other indexical marker which are representative of the persons indigeneity. I specifically asked individuals in my interviews why Nahuatl was disappearing and what were their thoughts on the language.

“...Fue tanto el convencimiento digamos en nuestro caso de los españoles hacia los indígenas ósea fue tanto se puede decir que hasta la humillación que hasta la fecha todavía se sigue viviendo. Si trajo consecuencias muy cómo le diría trauma[tico].”

“...We were so well convinced, in our case by the Spaniards and the humiliation of the indigenous that to this day we still live it. Yes, it brought consequences, I would say traumatic consequences.” (Personal communication with Miss Nancy, 02.19)

This phrase encapsulates local ideology and the lived experience of this particular individual. As you will see below, Miss Nancy outlines her personal struggle coming to terms with being Nahua and speaking Nahuatl. She has framed her embodied experience within today's terminology and understanding of the lasting effect of colonization. She goes on to talk about language loss within the communities because of this humiliation.

MN: “Y eso mismo a veces ha provocado que pierdan ósea no le dan valor pues a la lengua, ósea hasta a mí me paso, yo hasta los seis años estude en un pueblo ósea mi primera lengua fue Nahuatl de allí a los seis años me trasladan a la ciudad por cuestiones de salud de parte de mi mama y pues me quedó a vivir allí, ya no regrese a mi pueblo. Y pues allí con mi mama nos comunicábamos en Nahuatl.

MN: And that has sometimes caused them to lose [the language], they don't give value to the language, that is [to say], it even happened to me, until I was six years old I went to school in a small town, that is [to say] my first language was Nahuatl. from there, at six years old, we moved to the city because of my mother's health then I stayed to live there, I no longer returned to my small town. And well, there we still communicated in Nahuatl”.

Ahora, durante todo un ano, no me comuniqué con mis compañeritas porque pues todas ellas hablaban español y mi español era, digamos, mi vocabulario era muy pobre; no más decía “sí”, “no” y “no sé”. Y me preguntaba algo y si

entendía era al revés, a mí me pasaba al revés si entiendo el español, pero no sabía cómo contestarlo.”

“During that [first] year I didn’t communicate with any of the classmates because all of them spoke Spanish and my Spanish was, let’s say, my vocabulary was very small; I only said, ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘I don’t know’. They asked me something and I understood, it was the opposite-it happened the other way around for me, I understood Spanish, but I didn’t know how to answer.”

“Ahora lo que yo hice fue, como le diré, ahora sí que pues ocultar a mis compañeros que yo sabía hablar una lengua indígena. Jamás les mencione que hablaba una lengua así pase la primaria, la secundaria, la prepa la licenciatura y hasta que llegue aquí, pues ósea aquí me vi en la necesidad de volver a retOsmar[lo], no porque hubiera (interrupción) ósea yo le digo si lo hablábamos, pero en la familia.”

“So, what I did was I hid from my colleagues that I knew how to speak in an indigenous language. I never mentioned that I spoke a [indigenous] language as I went through primary school and secondary school preparatory school and my undergraduate degree; until I got here, and I saw the necessity to come back and regain it. Not because (interrupted by a student) that is, we did speak it but with the family...” (Personal communication with Miss Nancy, 02.19)

A little background on Miss Nancy, she is a fifth-grade teacher at Francisco Villa bilingual primary school in San Juan Totolcintla. She has been teaching for eleven years. She currently teaches fifth grade and is a bilingual Nahuatl Spanish speaker. Although Miss Nancy is not from Totolcintla, she came from another Nahuatl speaking community nearby and learned Nahuatl as a first language and used it until she was six years old, at which time her family moved to the city where she was met with the realization that she couldn’t communicate with her classmates. She said she could understand some of the basics of what her classmates and teacher would ask her but that she could only respond “sí”, “no”, or “no se” (Interview-Miss Nancy, 2019). Miss Nancy became a school teacher because her mother worked as a school teacher for the *Media Indígena* (Indigenous Education). When her mother retired; she gave Miss Nancy her *plaza* or teaching license or teaching license. She mentioned that in college

she never let anyone know that she spoke an indigenous language because she was ashamed of the stigma that went along with being able to speak Nahuatl.

Throughout the interviews with the students and teachers I found it most interesting that a common thread and theme across generations was that it was shameful or stigmatizing to speak Nahuatl. Academic research on patterns of language loss and revitalization elaborate on prestige, stigma, and language obsolescence and cite them as common themes in the field of language revitalization and cultural revival (Perley, 2009; 2012; 2013) (Olko, 2017) (Dorian, 1989; 1992). I found the “problems” with speaking Nahuatl were packaged differently in each generation, but that shame was at the core of much of the verbal and nonverbal sentiments expressed in the interviews.

The students interviewed in San Juan Totolcintla answered their surveys and quickly verified that they were not afraid of being discriminated against or humiliated in public and in fact they seemed to be unsure as to why I was asking the types of questions I was. It became more apparent in the written part of the survey that the students were shy and ashamed of speaking Nahuatl with each other. This refers back to the sense of belonging within a speech community and social context. The students, it seemed, were more afraid of shame and rejection within their own classroom by their peers than they seemed to be about discrimination in the streets of the capital city of Chilpancingo de los Bravo.

The aforementioned shift in topic regarding my research problem prompted me to modify my survey questions slightly, although the majority of the questions still addressed stigma and the varying degrees to which the students may feel stigmatized. I

was able to apply the survey to both classrooms within a week of each other. The students of San Juan Totolcintla answered their surveys with some difficulty, and only after numerous questions to clarify exactly what I meant and if certain scenarios they came up with could be used as answers.

As I collected their survey sheets and took them home that evening to read through each class's answers, I reflected on the difference in the classrooms and how the students had taken the surveys. The number of questions and type of questions each group asked were completely different from one another. The class in Tulimán's General Vicente Guerrero finished fairly quickly without asking many questions at all, while the class in San Juan Totolcintla was less sure of the questions presented on the survey and less sure if certain situations fit as a response to the questions. Students at Francisco Villa wanted constant assurance that what they wanted to put down was in fact a valid answer and in fact asked so many questions about the survey that I decided to read each question out loud to them and do the survey as a group.

Despite the fact that every student who took the survey affirmed that they had at least one Nahuatl speaker in the family (See Table 3.1) as I had anticipated, the school in San Juan Totolcintla had a high percentage of students who self-identified as speaking Nahuatl, whereas Tulimán's General Vicente Guerrero had only one student who identified as speaking Nahuatl (See Table 3.2) and this may have been done as a joke. I lean toward this explanation because the teacher, Profesor Osmar told me none of his students spoke Nahuatl.

Student Survey Data

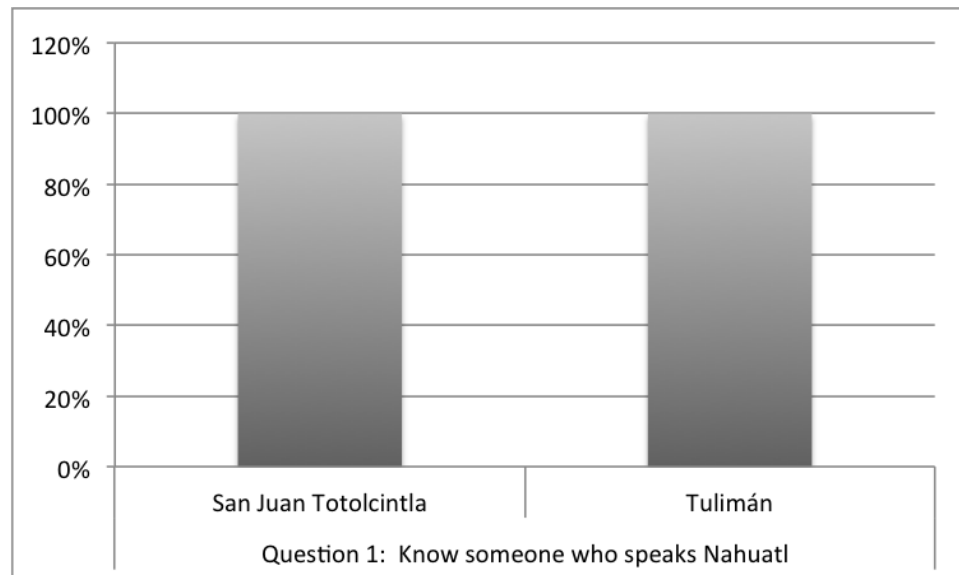


Table 3.1 Question # 1 from Student Survey

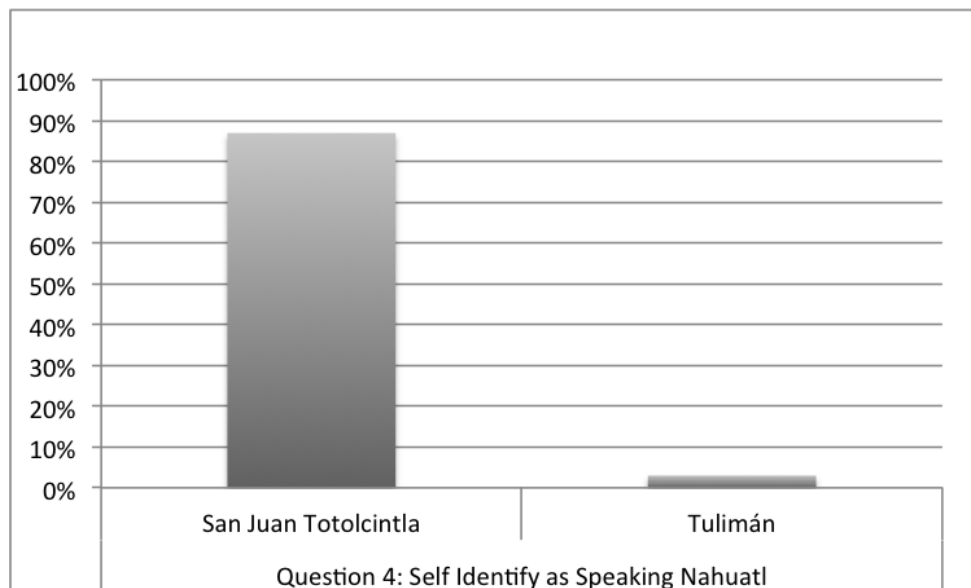


Table 3.2 Question # 4 from Student Survey

The survey also highlights component indicative of the current push for language revitalization. It is now “*de moda*” “fashionable” to want to rescue the language as E and I discussed before her interview. Others from the grandparent generation have commented similarly as they note the push from SEP and other federal agencies and

organizations for Indigenous language classes. This is, however, a representation of an ideal and the students and teachers as we see from the survey have not, in practice, delivered on this objective.

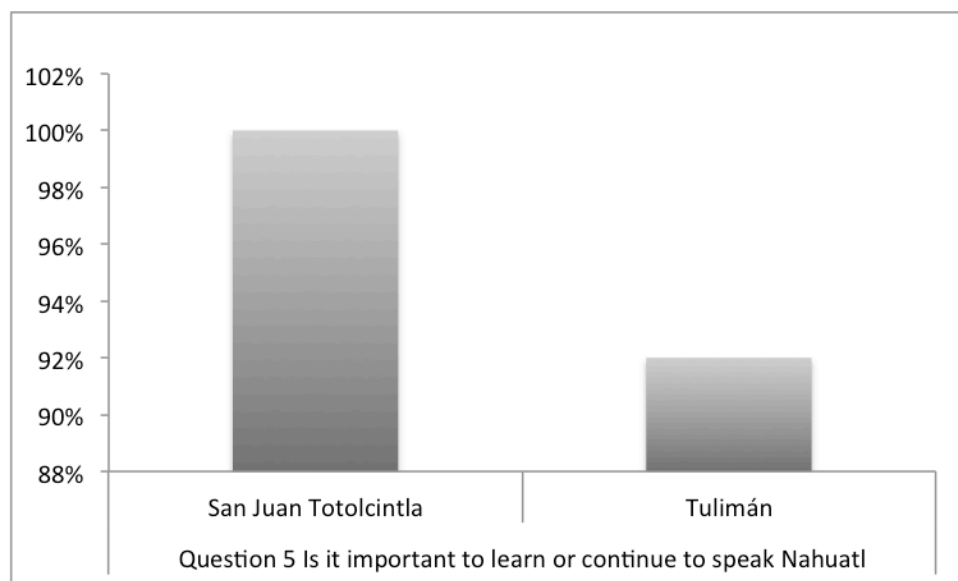


Table 3.3 Question # 5 from Student Survey

Perspectives Through Time: A Generational Comparison of Shifting Language Ideologies

I felt it would be easiest to understand the students ideological view if I was able to interview the students who were the most fluent in Nahuatl. I asked their teacher to give me a list of the students who would fit the description of most fluent or whose families still mostly spoke Nahuatl at home. Miss Nancy told me she had a short list and that I would be able to take the students outside the classroom and interview them.

I wasn't sure initially about interviewing the students myself and outside the classroom. Not that I couldn't interview them or didn't want to, but I had noticed that these students were very self-conscious and tended to be on the shy side. Doña Cleo had mentioned this in my interview with her- she says that the students there are a bit more reserved and tend to be shy, being that they are from a rural area where there are rarely strangers who visit. This combined with the students being pulled from class in

front of all their classmates made for an even more awkward interview session. I went ahead and gather the six students who were chosen to participate and quickly explained as we stepped outside the classroom that they were not in trouble but that I wanted to talk with them a little bit about Nahuatl.

As my little group of 5th graders walked outside and down the hill toward the little porch in front of the administration building, a place I chose so that their fellow classmates could not see them from the window of their classroom or distract them in any other way. I made sure that they knew I just wanted to chat with them quickly about Nahuatl and ask them how they felt about it. I asked them if they would be willing to participate in the little interview and told them that it would be recorded -- they started to giggle and smirk as I asked that they speak into the recorder as I asked them if they would participate. This formality caused the students to feel even more awkward, but I tried to lighten the mood, as we got further into the interview.

The four questions I focused on with the small group where: 1.) whether they spoke Nahuatl, 2.) whether they ever travel to larger cities or outside the community, 3.) whether they speak Nahuatl in places like the city market (outdoor market where most people from smaller villages come once a week to buy the items they can't get in the small villages that dot the countryside.), and lastly, 4.) whether they are ashamed to speak Nahuatl in those types of situations.

To the first two questions the students answered yes they speak Nahuatl and yes they sometimes accompany family members to the cities nearby (Huitzuco, Iguala, and Chilpancingo) so I began this interview with questions three and four and then let the students' answers determine what I asked next. For example, as the interview

progresses other questions came up and I tried to make the interview more casual and flexible so the students would feel they could open up to me. Here are excerpts from the interview:

H: “ *Por ejemplo, si vamos ahorita a Chilpancingo, y yo les hablo en Nahuatl, ustedes me van a contestar en español o en Nahuatl?*”

H: “For example, if we go right now to Chilpancingo (State capitol, about 2 hours away), and I speak to you in Nahuatl, will you guys answer me in Spanish or in Nahuatl?”

Students: (All chorus) “*En español*” (except one student who answered “*En nahuatl*”)

Students: In Spanish

H: “*Y eso porque?*”

H: “And why?”

Girls: “*Porque nos da pena [hablar en Nahuatl]*”

Girls: “Because we are ashamed/shy [to speak Nahuatl]”

2 boys: shake their head in disagreement saying, “no me da pena”

“I’m not ashamed”

H: *Entonces si yo te hablo en Nahuatl, y ustedes me van a contestar en español, ¿Entonces que exactamente piensan que van a decir si ustedes contestan en Nahuatl? Que pueden decir?*”

H: Then, if I speak to you in Nahuatl, and you guys answer me in Spanish, then what exactly do you think people are going to say if you answer in Nahuatl? What could they say?

Girl 1: *Van a quedar viendo!*

Girl 1: they’re going to stare

H: *Ah, sí, tal vez sí, ¿verdad? ¿Y por qué?*

H: Ah, yes, maybe right? And why?

Girl1: *Porque Seguramente piensan que somos de otra y le decimos groserías*

Girl1: Because surely, they think we are of another [place] and we are talking badly [about them]

The above exchange with the 5th graders of Miss Nancy's class shows that the students are still in the process of forming their own language beliefs and developing their personal language ideologies as well as claiming those of the surrounding community. The students in the interview wish to preserve the language as they have been told it's somehow important to do so, yet their parents are neglecting to teach them in some cases or their peers are teasing and shaming them for not being *legítimo* 'legitimate' (as in genuine or authentic) speakers (Hill & Hill 1986 p 55). I can only assume then, that if this is the case the students then decide that it's not worth it to work so hard to learn a language they have been told is being lost, as Judy in my next interview explains.

Judy

Judy is a resident of San Juan Totolcintla. She is a young mother of three and currently works braiding palm fronds as many women in the community do and have from many years. Judy speaks fluent Nahuatl but told me she never learned to write it. As I conducted a short interview with her, she mentions that she did not speak Spanish until she was in 6th grade. Judy's mother only spoke Nahuatl and Judy was not able to go to boarding school (San Gabrielito) because the school was full when she arrived there. She added that she didn't want to leave her mom alone either and this is why Judy never learned to write in Nahuatl. She stated that the school had teachers who

spoke Nahuatl and gave classes in Nahuatl and that was where she could have learned to write has she attended.

I ask her if her own children understood Nahuatl, she replied, “yes, but we are losing the language.” She said her eldest speaks Nahuatl but has a Spanish accent when she speaks. I concluded my short interview with a question about why the children in San Juan Totolcintla are ashamed to speak Nahuatl, her answer was, “the students feel awkward when they speak Nahuatl”. She went on to say that one child used to cry when her mother spoke Nahuatl to her because “she didn’t understand what her mom was saying.” She also said that students there in the community make fun of each other if they speak amongst themselves in Nahuatl -- this was exactly what I was hearing from the students in their interviews too.

This statement emphasizes the idea that there is a certain peer pressure amongst the students which urges the students to not use Nahuatl. Yet it seemed from these interviews that, at least within this community, there was an internal push for people to move on and discontinue using Nahuatl as their first language, and the students were discouraging each other from using Nahuatl fluently. In the interviews above we see that parents are unsure as to the prestige of learning Nahuatl over English and are reluctant to have their children learn Nahuatl even though Nahuatl is the parents first language.

The repression of the language is another common thread in many of the interviews, it is also important for me to point out here that this common thread traverses all three generations I interviewed, although it manifests in different ways in each generation. For example, Judy made it a point to explain that migration plays a

part in language loss as well. She said that her friend Juan “forgot” his Nahuatl in the two years he was away from the community. Judy seemed incredulous at the thought of losing your language after such a short time. The notion that being indigenous and speaking an indigenous language does not hold prestige and is, in fact, something to be ashamed of in many social contexts especially in larger cities, may have impacted this young man greatly and cause him to shift his ideological views on language and how he wished to express his identity.

I closed my interview with Judy by asking her if she thought Nahuatl had value, she responded that she felt it is important for people to know the language and that they pronounce things correctly. She did of course mention that there are days that the schools celebrate the day of [indigenous] language with poetry and riddles in Nahuatl, but she also acknowledges that the language is slowly being lost. She says she remembers when all the kids used to sit around listening to an elderly neighbor lady telling riddles in Nahuatl as they all braided palm leaves – that was how they were entertained as kids.

Judy’s recounting of her remembrances of when kids spoke Nahuatl with their grandparents and the elders as well as her statement that she felt it was important for the younger generation to learn the language even though it’s being lost, indicated to me that she has assigned symbolic value to the language. The symbolic value of Nahuatl as a representation of ancestry, romanticizing a prestigious past seems to be a contemporary element of production and presentation of the language. What I wish to highlight here is that during the poetry reading, there was an emphasis on Nahua traditional dress, at the celebration of mother languages on February 21, 2019 there

was an impressive display of Nahua culture and local traditions. Each community set up booths in which were displayed artisan crafts and handmade wares. Nahuatl language games and posters were displayed in many booths and there was an outpouring of local pride which revolved around the Nahuatl language and local cultural traditions from the Balsas River Valley. This pride in community was reaffirmed with the usage of Nahuatl as a signifier that those who spoke were legitimate members of the social group and Nahua community. During this celebration of indigeneity, it was considered prestigious to speak Nahuatl and dress in traditional clothing. Whereas, anywhere else and at any other time, the language of prestige would have been Spanish. Yet despite this yearly activity the children “grow up being led to believe in a supposed dividing line between the great cultures of the Aztecs (and Maya) and the “dirty Indians” who speak a language not considered real and legitimate because it is a mixture of Spanish and local dialects” (Olko, J. 2019: Interview).

This example shows that identity, linguistic stigma, and prestige are fluid based on context, and that there is a desire to show group memberships and belonging within whichever group is considered most prestigious at that moment. This particular celebration was a time to observe and commemorate the symbolic importance of the community ties to the Nahuatl language. The importance of controlling at least enough *Mexicano* (Nahuatl) to be able to present it as a badge of community membership is such that many young people relearn it in early adulthood even if their parents have raised them in Spanish.” (Hill & Hill 1986, p 121).



Fig.3.1 San Francisco Ozomatlán's booth at *Feria de la Lengua Materna*, Tula del Río, 2019
(Photo: Heather Thomas Flores 2019)

In the Following Interview, Osmar gives us a few key insights into what it was like for him to have to navigate multiple speech communities regularly. Osmar Godinez is a primary school teacher in the community of Tulimán and previously in San Juan Totolcintla. He followed in his father, Don Pablo's, footsteps and currently teaches at the Bilingual General Vicente Guerrero primary school. Osmar has over ten years of teaching experience and was recognized in person, for the achievements of his students, by the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon. Osmar has taught in two municipalities and has been active in teaching and learning within his district since he began his career. He loves teaching his students and the entire community looks up to him as a great teacher and authority figure within the community.

I've chosen the two answers Osmar gave that best encapsulate the unique language multiplicity and the navigation of insider vs outsider status within both of the communities presented here:

Profe Osmar:

8.-¿usted conoce algún caso en donde los alumnos suelen burlarse de un maestro por no hablar bien el nauatl aunque están asignados como maestros bilingües? Explique qué sucedió.

8.-Do you know of any cases where students often mock a teacher for not speaking nauatl well even though they are assigned as bilingual teachers? Explain what happened.

Al igual que pronunciar mal el español es causa de burla el pronunciar mal el nauatl también lo es aunque en menor intensidad sobre todo por las variantes que tiene por ejemplo cuando llegue a trabajar en la escuela de Totolcintla desconocía que ahí los pronombres personales eran nejua =yo, tejua =tu, yejua =el y en mi pueblo eran naja =yo, taja =tu, yaja =el así como para decir no en mi pueblo se dice amo y en Totolcintla yejka o la abreviación ka entonces los niños se reían de lo que decía pero no me comentaban nada hasta que me di cuenta de que ellos lo decían de manera diferente.

In the same way that mispronouncing Spanish is cause for mocking, mispronouncing Nahuatl is also is a cause for mocking, but to a lesser degree, especially because of the variants in the language [Nahuatl]. For example, when I arrived at the school in Totolcintla, I wasn't aware that the personal pronouns were different there (Nejua=I; Tejua=you; Jehua= he/she). In my home town, the personal pronouns are naja=I ; taja= you; yaja=he/she. Likewise, in my hometown, to say "no" it's "amo" and in Totolcintla it's "yejka" or the abbreviation "ka". That's why the kids were laughing at me and what I was saying but they didn't say anything, and I had to find out on my own that they say it differently. (Interview: Osmar 03.8.2019)

9.-¿Cuáles son las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el nauatl en su comunidad? como piensan sobre la enseñanza y continuación del uso del nauatl al diario, por ejemplo que es algo útil e importante o piensan que es algo pasado que poco a poco se va desapareciendo.

9. What are students' perceptions of nauatl in their community? how they think about teaching and continuing the use of nauatl to the journal, for example that it is something useful and important or think it is a past that gradually disappears.

Desafortunadamente en la comunidad la lengua nauatl dejo de ser funcional con el paso del tiempo, por la razón de que los padres prefirieron enseñar español en vez de nauatl a sus hijos no utilizaron la lengua nauatl para comunicarse con sus hijos a pesar de que la hablaban así que con el paso de los años se ha ido perdiendo junto con la mayoría de personas mayores que lo hablaban hoy en día quedan pocas personas que lo hablan entre ellos sobre todo personas de la tercera edad, pero no en personas jóvenes incluso padres de familia desconocen la lengua nauatl en su totalidad porque asistieron a escuelas monolingües todos

estos factores influyen para que los alumnos no la consideren importante preservar y se les dificulte resolver incluso las tareas que se dejan en clase para resolver en casa con ayuda de sus papas.

Unfortunately, in the community the Nahuatl language ceased to be functional with the passage of time. For this reason, parents prefer to teach Spanish instead of Nahuatl to their children. They didn't use the Nahuatl Language to communicate with their children, even though they spoke the language [Nahuatl] so, over the years, it has been lost along with the majority of older people who spoke it. Nowadays, there are few people who speak it among themselves, above all, [mostly] the elderly people- but not the young people, including the parents of the students; they do not know the Nahuatl language in its totality -this is because they attended monolingual schools. All of these factors influence the students so now they do not consider it important to preserve [the Nahuatl Language]. They even find it difficult to complete the homework left in class to be worked on at home with the help of their parents. (Interview: Osmar 03.8.2019)

Moving along to the oldest generation of interviewees, we can see first-hand how the language was stigmatized and the shift within this generation to Spanish. Cleo speaks here about her siblings; she says that only half learned to speak Nahuatl before the shift in language ideology was brought on in part by the arrival of formal education.

Doña Cleo

P: ¿Si Saben que importante preservar el idioma (Nahuatl), de donde sale esa pena de aprender o hablar el Nahuatl?

Pues, Desde la casa. Como hace rato yo le decía somos seis, de los seis, los que somos los mayores hablaron Nahuatl, así y ya los tres ya no.

Porque dicen no que en la escuela nos van a decir que son "Mexicaneros" y ya, pero ... pero pues es que también queríamos aprender, 'sí, pero pueden aprender de grandes.' Pero pues ellos desde chiquitos así les hablaban y nosotros no. 'La culpa son de ustedes, y no es mi culpa, ustedes ya son grandes pueden aprender'...pero pues si uno le gusta [puede] aprender de grande uno se le hace difícil. Así es.

Si los niños pues allí van aprendiendo ve que su mama a lo mejor no les habla en su casa. Ellos quisieron aprender, pero pues[...] el inglés.

Q: If they know that it is important to preserve the language (Nahuatl), where does the shame embarrassment to learn or speak Nahuatl come from?

Well, from home. Like a while ago I said we are six [siblings], from the six, we the older ones spoke Nahuatl, like that and the other three just didn't.

Because they say in school, {siblings} ‘they’re going to say that we are ‘*Mexicaneros*⁸’ like that, but well, it’s also that we want to learn [Nahuatl].’ {Doña Cleo} ‘yes, but you can learn as adults.’ But they, since they were little, have spoken/ were spoken to and to us no. “It’s your own fault, and it’s not my fault, you guys are adults you can learn.’ ... But well, if one would like to learn they can learn as an adult, but it seems too difficult, that’s how it is. If the kids over there are learning, see their mom may not even speak to them [in Nahuatl] at home. They wanted to learn but English. (Personal communication with Doña Cleo 03.6.19)

Doña Cleo does a great job of answering many of my questions with a story. She retells vignettes of conversations where parents and students are in conversation or school directors and fellow colleagues are discussing the importance of teaching children Nahuatl. In the above interviews, Doña Cleo is adamant that the current teachers coming in are not helping to preserve the language. She says that everyone in the community should be proud of the language and that everyone should learn to speak Nahuatl. In one of her interviews Doña Cleo jokes that because Nahuatl was the original language of the region, those who speak Spanish should be bullied since they are the ones who are not speaking the original or correct language.

Much of what Doña Cleo expresses in her interview were the requests from parents for their children to learn English instead of Nahuatl. Doña Cleo many times references that when she says she’s bilingual, parents automatically think Spanish/ English. She said students should learn their indigenous language first and then Spanish and then any other language they want afterwards. It is extremely apparently by these statements that Doña Cleo does not trust the current teachers to keep the

⁸ Individuals who speak *Mexicano*, the term used within many Nahua communities to refer to the Nahuatl language. See: Canger, Una (2001). *Mexicanero de la Sierra Madre Occidental*. Archivo de Lenguas Indígenas de México, #24 (in Spanish). México D.F.: El Colegio de México

Nahuatl Language alive and that she feels the school system is not working on strategies to preserve the language.

The above interview excerpts highlight an important aspect of the 'devaluation' of Nahuatl within the community. Doña Cleo is stating that the adults (in this case her younger siblings) don't want to put the effort into learning something that they see as possibly important culturally and a way to preserve something of the past but in the end, they don't see the monetary value of learning Nahuatl over learning, for example, English. They see that English hold higher prestige and give cultural capital as well as most likely monetary capital as we will see in one of the interviews later in this chapter.

During a section of the interview, I replayed my recording of the six children in San Juan Totolcintla for Doña Cleo and then asked her why she thought the students were reluctant and potentially ashamed to speak Nahuatl with me. When I asked this, Doña Cleo said it's because they are shy and tend not to leave the village (I assume she was trying to explain that they are not as gregarious and outgoing with strangers). She went on to say that possibly the students were worried that someone was going to criticize them if they were unable to pronounce something correctly in Nahuatl. In this case, the students are worried about being made fun of for misspeaking when using Nahuatl, whereas in many of the older generations whose first language is Nahuatl, they had trouble with speaking Spanish and were made fun of for those difficulties as you will see in the following interview with Don Pablo and which was brought up in the interview with Osmar in questions eight. I argue here that the teasing of the Nahuatl speakers for misusing Spanish has an undercurrent of stigmatizing the indigenous students as unintelligent and therefore incapable of learning to speak correctly, whereas the current

population of students make fun of each other because they are discouraging language use and stigmatizing those who use it.

Don Pablo

In the following section I have curated the most concise mentions of linguistic discrimination and the difficulties of maneuvering between two speech communities. Again, to reiterate my focus in this early interview was on language discrimination and prejudice (linguistic profiling) and so, many of Don Pablo's answers entail aspects of those instances in his personal life which reflect that.

5.-¿Alguno de sus alumnos pronuncia mal o incorrectamente el español(ejemplo: "yo no sabo") por el hecho de que su lengua materna es el Nahuatl o porque sus papas hablan el Nahuatl en casa más que el español?

5. Any of your students mispronounce Spanish (example: "yo no sabo" sabo being the incorrect conjugation, *saber* is an irregular verb) because their mother tongue is Nahuatl or because their parents speak Nahuatl at home more than Spanish?

"Pues a mí me paso, Yo tuve problemas para dicción y la pronunciación del español, yo no sabía hablar el español, si se presentan problemas para el que habla Nahuatl."

That happened to me, I had problems with diction and pronunciation of Spanish- I didn't know how to speak Spanish. Yes, [Spanish] presents a problem for those who speak Nahuatl.

No sé si tú te has dado cuenta allí donde vas hay unas palabras que no las pronuncian correctas como luna dicen 'lona' y muchas otras... hay muchas palabras.

I don't know if you've realized, there where you go [Totolcintla] there are some words that they don't pronounce correctly. Like [the word] moon "luna" they say "lona" and many others...there are many words [like that].

Calzón por ejemplo dicen 'Nocaltzon' hay mucha confusión entre la 'u' y 'o' nuestro medio, en nuestra lengua indígena confundimos algunas palabras. Hemos sufrido ese problema en la dicción y si se nos dificulta.

Underwear/calzon for example, they say 'nocaltzon'⁹ there is a lot of confusion between the 'u' and 'or' our medium, in our indigenous language we confuse some words. We have suffered that problem in diction and it's difficult for us.

⁹ 'No' is the first-person possessive prefix in Nahuatl. The word *nocaltzon* literally translates to "my underwear." In Nahuatl articles (in this case clothing) are possessed. This is an interesting example of Nahuatl grammar (L1) being used in Spanish language (L2) constructions.

8.-¿usted conoce algún caso en donde los alumnos suelen burlarse de un maestro por no hablar bien el nahuatl aunque están asignados como maestros bilingües? Explique qué sucedió.

8. Do you know of any cases where students often mock a teacher for not speaking Nahuatl well even though they are assigned as bilingual teachers? Explain what happened.

Si, si en todo mientras no agarren práctica. Yo, al menos, empecé hablar un poco mejor cuando aprendí a leer [en español].

Yes, yes in everything if they don't practice. I, at least, started to speak a little bit better when I learned to read [in Spanish].

Cuando no sabía leer esto me paso una vez a mí, una persona me pregunto una vez veníamos a las ofrendas yo no sabía hablar español bien y dije voy a echarme mi 'chicolatazo' en vez de 'chocolatazo' y un carbón me escucho y ahora se acuerda y platican ahora ya es profesor per antes no podía pronunciar 'chocolatazo',

When I didn't know I didn't know how to read one time this happened to me, a person asked me... one time we were going to the *ofrendas*¹⁰. I did not know how to speak Spanish well and I said I'm going to drink my 'chicolatazo' instead of 'chocolatazo' and a guy heard me, he still remembers this and says, "now he's a teacher but before he couldn't even pronounce *chocolatazo*¹¹!".

Pues, la mera verdad, a veces no sabía bien uno; yo hablaba y a ver que salía. Y esa persona contaba la historia a más gente y una vez me pregunto una mama de mis alumnos si era verdad esa historia.

Well, in truth, sometimes one doesn't know; I just spoke and watched what came out. This person retold the story to more people and one time she asked me -my student's mom- if this story was true.

Casi todos que hablamos lengua indígena nos pasa, tenemos problemas con el español. Una camisa que nos pusieron a fuerza¹² la mera verdad, pero bueno, ha habido muchos problemas con eso de la pronunciación la verdad.

It happens to almost every one of us who speaks indigenous language, we have problems with Spanish. It's a role we were forced into to tell the truth, but oh well, in reality there have been many problems with pronunciation.

¹⁰ Day of the Dead ritual where individuals lay offerings or *ofrendas* in Spanish, at the altar and grave of a loved one who has passed on welcoming them to the altar as they return home on this one night each year. See Brandes, S. (1997). Sugar, Colonialism, and Death: On the Origins of Mexico's Day of the Dead. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 39(2), 270-299.

¹¹ Hot chocolate beverages are traditionally served during the syncretic ritual event of *ofrendas*, the term *chocolatazo* is the word chocolate with the suffix 'azo' used as an augmentative and can also be used to denote a hit or blow, so using this term means he's going to throw back a big mug of hot chocolate.

¹² 'Una camisa que nos pusieron' is a turn of phrase or colloquialism, which imparts the idea that something was forced upon someone, in this case Don Pablo, is referring to linguistic imperialism and the way in which indigenous people were forced to speak Spanish when they already had a language.

The two interview questions clearly depict that Don Pablo was subject to criticism for not speaking Spanish correctly. He mentioned, on more than one occasion, that he had difficulty learning Spanish and that many indigenous people suffer the same difficulties when transitioning to the majority language of Spanish.

I began this research to uncover the ways in which phonological errors in speaking, made due to Indigenous students learning Spanish as a second language, brought about discriminatory acts and biases from both students and faculty within the school. I had gone in with a preconceived notion that students who spoke with a thick Nahuatl accent would be targeted and ostracized by other students or faculty and would therefore be less likely to continue in school and have a higher likelihood of being discriminated against both inside the classroom and out (in fact I had heard this same sentiment expressed, in the past, from different fieldwork sites).

Instead, what I found was that, in this case, Don Pablo went ahead and continued to speak Spanish but was made fun of up until he was an adult for words he had mispronounced as a child. Although Don Pablo does not state that he felt ashamed of his language and is not the type of person to admit he was bullied or felt in any way emotional over the treatment he received while growing up, yet I believe the experiences he had as a child has had an effect on his character. I say this because he never taught his children to speak Nahuatl, is always the one to have the upper hand in any conversation and is careful to choose his words carefully. He also seemed to find it extremely amusing to claim he couldn't understand some of my Spanish pronunciations and would ask his wife to translate; he has become very adept at picking up accents

and mispronunciations and I wonder if that is because of his experiences as a child being caught between (and having to navigate through) two speech communities in the midst of a language shift from Nahuatl to Spanish.

Conclusion

In summation of this chapter I'd like reiterate the continued devaluation of the Nahuatl language to the point of near dormancy. Through intergenerational comparison and analysis of the interviews presented within this chapter, it is evident that the shift being experiences in the communities of the Balsas region are due to the stigmatization of the language as a marker of indigeneity which, given the racial stratification of Mexican culture, is considered to be uncivilized, uneducated and economically disadvantaged. The rural communities of Guerrero began to see the perceptions of language and prestige codes change as the formal education system began to infiltrate and systematically force the adoption of 'Spanish only' in schools. As those born in the 1950's have re-counted, with rural and Indigenous Education came conflicting ideologies. The conflict was whether to speaking Nahuatl because that is all the community knew of heed the school teacher's warnings to only speak Spanish to their children in order for students to do well in school and become 'civilized'. The use of humiliation and shame as a means to control the rural population is what I have termed coercive language education policy. The conflation of shame, linguistic profiling, and stigma in the rural Nahua population is what has promoted and perpetuated, over the past three generations, the current ideologies regarding the Nahuatl language. The steady devaluation of the language over time (not only the three generations presented here but after the revolution as well as is discussed in chapter 4) has created the language insecurities I have documented here in this ethnography, and is especially

evident in the children's language preferences. The children are not keen on learning a language that ties them to their past, they want progress and prestige, they want to be 'cool' as one of my young interviewees said during a debate, "*No está chido [el Nahuatl]!*" "*Nahautl isn't cool!*".

Chapter 4

The Language of Education: Linguistic Coercion and Education Policy



Fig 4.1 Photo of Classroom at Francisco Villa Bilingual elementary school, San Juan Totolcintla, Photo: Heather Thomas Flores, 2019)

In 1570, Phillip II decreed that Nahuatl would serve as a universal language for all natives requiring that the clergy learn Nahuatl. As the colonial period progressed, Philip IV issued a decree, in 1634, obliging the clergy to teach the indigenous population in Spanish. While in 1693, on order of the viceroy, schools for Spanish language instruction were to be established in all provinces of New Spain. (Suárez,1900)

"I Blame the Government!" Remembrances of Indigenous Education Policy in Guerrero.

As Doña E stirs a boiling stew pot and tends the stove, I venture to ask if I could interview her about her childhood, language journey and why she became a teacher. She says yes, but that she has to stay near the stove; so, I agree to settle in the kitchen as we are able to easily conduct what turned out to be over an hour-long interview, while she keeps busy. There were five of us in that tiny Midwest apartment kitchen that evening. My partner and I, Doña E, her adult son Silver, and Sal my partners brother. The men at the table are cousins, Doña E is making her own farewell dinner this particular evening because she is scheduled to travel the following day. I began the interview with a few biographical questions to set the general foundation for the

interview. The men at the table eventually commandeer the interview, I allow for them to lead the discussion knowing most of my questions would be answered through spontaneous conversation because the familiarity between family members, which kept the interview causal and the beer flowing.

One of the first statements Doña E made, when I asked her why students these days don't speak Nahuatl and why Nahuatl is being lost at such a rapid pace, was "well, I blame the government". She went on to explain her views; formed through her first-hand experience within the education system as a student under the SEP Indigenous and rural education policies in the 1950's all the way to the early 2000's when she retired from teaching. For the sake of clarity on her point of view a follow-up question was asked, "Did the Government set out to extinguish it [Nahuatl]?"

¿El gobierno se propuso extinguirla [El Nahuatl]?

DÑE: "más bien el gobierno fue quien prohibió a que se hablara más las lenguas allí en Tlatzala. Muchos de los maestros fueron monolingües, pues cuando ellos llegaban a la escuela uno no le entiende para nada, porque nos este no hablamos nada de español por esa misma razón pues aprendimos a fuerzas casi a 'chingadosos' el español. Ese es el motivo, uno, como motivo fue eso. Otra cosa que los mismos padres también en ambas apoyaron. ¿Por qué? Por la misma causa de que muchos iban a México o salían de otros pueblo --si no más yo cuando salí de [a] trabajar como promotora tenía yo 16 años. Yo no sabía hablar el español que apenas una que otra yo entendía, sabía leer y escribir, pero mas no sabía hablar español y aun así me contrataron para trabajar como promotora cultural bilingüe, pero para castellanizar no para enseñar matemáticas, español toda la cosa hay únicamente yo...

DÑE: Rather the government forbade the speaking of the languages there in Tlatzala. Many of the teachers were monolingual, because when they came to school, one did not understand the teacher at all, because we spoke nothing of Spanish. For this same reason, we learned almost by force; Spanish was pretty much pounded into us. That's the primary reason or motive [Spanish was forced]. Another thing was that the parents also supported both. Why? For the same reason that many went to Mexico City or came out of other Communities. When I left for work as a 'promoter' I was 16 years old. I did not know how to speak Spanish and one way or another I understood, I knew how to read and write but I did not know how to speak Spanish. Even so [despite this] I was hired to work as a

bilingual cultural promoter, but to be a '*Hispanicizer*' (promoters of Spanish), not to teach mathematics, Spanish entirely and just me there [alone in the classroom]. The comments from the excerpt above clearly sum up the key points I wish to discuss in this chapter. Doña E states that Spanish language was forced on the students by monolingual teachers sent to the villages (such as her community of Tlatzala) to promote the Spanish language and convert the students to Spanish monolingualism. Doña E then continues her narrative by stating that she was recruited at the age of sixteen to become a teacher but that she was still not able to speak Spanish (this shows that the efforts of the teachers to force Spanish on the students only worked to point.) At such a young age, and not yet speaking Spanish fluently, it seems that she was not well qualified to become an educator and much less for what they actually recruited her for, which was to be a Spanish promotor in another town close to Tlapa (and later Chilapa). Lastly, she speaks about the fact that she was instructed to only speak Spanish with her students much as the teachers she had as a child been told to do when teaching. This progression of events illustrates the systems of erasure put in place by education policies termed Indigenous Education, and gives the first-hand account presented here of the experiences Doña E went through as a member of the first generation to be exposed to these forms of rural and Indigenous or as some say 'bilingual' education. this narrative also presents the standards for teacher training in the 1950's and 1960's in the state of Guerrero.

DÑE: "fue mi maestro que es el primo de mi papa; ese maestro estudio en Ayotzinapa, era normalista, se visitaban los dos, mi papa y él fue a la casa a visitar y le dijo 'porque les hablas a ellos, Rómulo (se llamaba mi papa) porque les hablas a ellos en Nahuatl ya no les hables, no les hables, ya mejor, este, deja eso ya no les hables porque eso no les sirve para nada. Únicamente eso lo hablan aquí, en cambio, el español se utiliza nivel nacional',- a nivel mundial a nivel internacional a como tú quieras.

Y mi papa, 'no pues es que no quieren, yo les hablo', incluso como quince días mi papa nos empezó a hablar el español [con nosotros]. Pero nunca le hicimos caso y la que dominaba allí era mi mama, mi papa siempre estaba en el campo, entonces mi mama es la estábamos juntos, mi mama no sabe hablar el español y nunca aprendió. Entiende muy bien, pero nunca lo pudo regresar. Entonces es ahí y fui se quitó las lenguas allí ese año..."

DÑE: "My teacher was my dad's cousin; that teacher studied in Ayotzinapa¹³, he was a normalista¹⁴, they visited each other, my father and [he], he went to the house to visit and said, 'Why do you speak to them [in Nahuatl], Romulus (my father's name) why do you talk to them [in Nahuatl] don't speak to them, no longer talk to them, better to leave it and no longer speak to them because that [language] is useless to them. We only speak that way here, on the other hand, Spanish is used nationally,' -worldwide at the international level to however you want [to put it].

And my dad [said], 'well no, they don't want to, I speak to them [in Spanish]', like two weeks later my father start speaking Spanish [with us]. But we never paid him any attention, the one who was in charge was my mother, my father was always in the fields, so then we were [always] together [with mother]. My mother doesn't know how to speak Spanish and [she] never learned. She understands very well, but she could never [answer] speak it back. So then, that is how the languages were lost there that year."

(Personal communication with EG 10/19)

Doña E is a first language Nahuatl speaker from the 'mountain region' of Tlapa, Guerrero. She was the first woman in her community of Tlatzala to leave the community in pursuit of higher education. She became a Spanish language and cultural promotor, as she terms it, at the age of 16. Later in the chapter I will outline the requirements for this position and what is encompassed under the umbrella of these terms, for now, I will mention only that the individuals chosen for this work were of Indigenous descent and able to speak one of the five indigenous languages used in the State of Guerrero. From the above excerpt we can see that knowing how to read, write and speak the Spanish language were not enforced requirements. EG, who is familiar with Tulimán and the

¹³ Escuela Normal Rural Raúl Isidro Burgos or better known as Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa is an all boys boarding school college for teachers called "normal superior" founded in 1926. This school is known for preparatory program for educators.

¹⁴ Student teacher or person attending "normal superior"

other communities along the Balsas River basin because of her marriage into the family (Don Pablo's). Both she and her husband were indigenous educators in the 1970's until the late 1990's.

Through the next few pages of this chapter my intention is to give a brief history of Indigenous Education (bilingual or otherwise) in the state of Guerrero. I will do this by using mostly first-hand experiences recounted to me by my interviewees; their lived experiences, I have found, are much more revelatory when discussing policies mandated from the top down as is the case here. I say this because many times there is a disconnect between policy makers and the those the policy is created to serve. The experiences I have recounted here and in previous chapters and help to explicitly lay bare the undermining of Nahuatl autonomy and intentional use of coercive education policies in the intent to replace Mexico's indigenous languages in three short generations, if not nationwide then at least within the communities that I'm researching. Lastly, I aim to discuss language revitalization in real time what education is doing currently, if anything, to preserve Nahuatl through the bilingual policies currently in place.

A Brief History of Indigenous Education in Mexico

In order to better understand the history behind Indigenous Education this section, I believe, must begin with the Mexican revolution 1910-1920 as it set into motion many of the nationalistic yet discriminatory policies that have had a domino effect throughout the generations as I will come to in the following paragraphs (Postrero & Zamora, 2004) The Federal Congress of Mexico enacted, in June 1911, The Schools of Rudimentary Instruction Act, which authorized the President of Mexico (at that time Francisco I Madero) to establish schools within the Republic of Mexico to teach the

entire population but focusing on the indigenous people, assuring they could speak, read, write and execute basic arithmetic operations in the Spanish Language (Quintero, 1913).

Then, in 1921 the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* was founded which to this day is the governing branch of the education system within Mexico.

“Álvaro Obregón, (1920-1924) encargó a José Vasconcelos rescatar de las ruinas el sistema educativo mexicano. Vasconcelos - un convencido de la federalización entendiéndola como el compromiso del gobierno federal de formar a los niños y jóvenes mexicanos- será el principal promotor de la creación de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). A partir de ella y una vez nombrado secretario en octubre de 1921 pondrá en marcha su objetivo: crear un ministerio con jurisdicción federal para establecer un sistema educativo nacional.”

"Alvaro Obregón, (1920-1924) commissioned José Vasconcelos to rescue the Mexican educational system from ruin. Vasconcelos - is convinced of federalization understanding it as the commitment of the federal government to train Mexican children and young people - will be the main promoter of the creation of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP). Once appointed secretary in October 1921 he will launch his goal: to create a ministry with federal jurisdiction to establish a national education system."

After many years of being relegated to rural margins as agriculturalists and laborers, the indigenous people saw, in Vasconcelos, what they hoped would be the beginning of a new chapter which would incorporate them into the discussion of primary education for all. In 1939, an assembly met in Mexico City to decide the future of Indigenous education.

“Primera Asamblea de Filólogos y Lingüistas que se reunió en 1939 en la ciudad de México, en cuya ocasión la asamblea decidió crear el Consejo de Lenguas Indígenas, que se encargaría de programar las acciones futuras de la educación en zonas indígenas en lo referente al uso del idioma autóctono en la educación.” (Rojas Hernández, 1997)

"The first Assembly of Philologists and Linguists met in Mexico City, on which occasion the assembly decided to create the Council of Indigenous Languages, which would be responsible for programming future actions of education in indigenous areas with regard to the use of the indigenous language in education." (Rojas Hernández, 1997)

As part of the 1939 momentum for indigenous education programming, the SEP started a bilingual program as referenced in the quote above, where indigenous schools were taught in the local language and transitioned to Spanish. This was the first program of its kind in Mexico and was used to acculturate indigenous communities, in particular, children, to form a united national identity (Postrero & Zamosc, 2004). The following quote is a primary example of the work that was being done in the mid 1960's, at the state level, to coordinate programming mandated at the federal level but left to the individual states to decide how best to execute those legislative goals within the state of Guerrero.

"Con la creación del Instituto Nacional indigenista (INI), en 1948, y la creación de sus centros coordinadores indigenistas (CCI) en los diferentes estados de la república, principalmente en aquellos con población indígena, se inició junto con ellos, la educación bilingüe bicultural, y en particular en el estado de Guerrero. el primer CCI que funcionó en el estado fue creado en Tlapa de Comonfort en 1963, cuyo coordinador en turno se dio a la tarea de visitar escuelas y comunidades en busca de personal indígena para incorporarse como promotores bilingües, y a partir de julio de 1964, se inicia el primer reclutamiento. En este sentido, la educación bilingüe bicultural, o educación indígena, que es como se le conoce, da inicio en Guerrero." (González González, 2009)

"With the creation of the National Indigenous Institute (INI), in 1948, and the creation of its Indigenous Coordinating Centers (ICCs) in the different states of the republic, mainly those with indigenous population, bicultural bilingual education was established, particularly in the state of Guerrero. the first CCI that worked in the state was created in Tlapa de Comonfort in 1963, whose coordinator in turn was given the task of visiting schools and communities in search of indigenous staff to join as bilingual promoters, and from July 1964, the first recruitment starts. In this sense, bicultural bilingual education, or indigenous education, which it is known as, begins in Guerrero." (González González, 2009)

The above quote indicates that a regard for Indigenous education and the populations that system served came into its own in Guerrero in the late 1940's and that by the 1960's the key goal continued its focus on the use of Bilingual or Indigenous Education as a vehicle to recruit and send out Spanish promoters (The term was not

used here but from my interview with Doña E, we see that this was the case). This is not to say that I am against the teaching Spanish in rural indigenous communities, in fact I myself have tutored children in rural communities in their learning of Spanish. I realize too that learning Spanish is one of the only ways to promote economic mobility within these groups. I am simply pointing out that instead of the SEP and the so-called Bilingual Promoters focusing on eradicating Nahuatl as they so adeptly did during this era, the education policies put in place could have worked to truly create a bilingual system where all languages were welcome and valued. But this was not the case.

“En septiembre de 1978 se crea en el nivel nacional la Dirección General de Educación Indígena y es a partir de la década de los ochenta, cuando se empieza a cuestionar los programas de educación en las zonas indígenas; sin embargo, dicho cuestionamiento no fue atendido por las instancias de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, solamente se trató de introducir la elaboración de algunos materiales didácticos en lenguas indígenas, como una especie de paliativo, para que no se pensara que no había interés en la educación en las zonas indígenas.” (Rojas Hernández 1997)

"[i]n September 1978, the Directorate-General for Indigenous Education was created at the national level, and it is from the 1980s on, when education programs in indigenous areas began to be questioned; however, this questioning was not addressed by the bodies of the Secretariat of Public Education, it was only a question of introducing the elaboration of some teaching materials in indigenous languages, such as a kind of palliative, so that it was not thought that there was no interest in education in indigenous areas." (Rojas Hernandez 1997)

The mission and vision of the DGEI, as found on their website, is presented here in the following quote:

“La Dirección General de Educación Indígena (DGEI) se crea en 1978 para reconocer la pluralidad étnica, cultural y lingüística del país, bajo la premisa de reivindicar las lenguas indígenas como nacionales. Desde esta perspectiva impulsa actualmente el programa editorial educativo en lenguas indígenas más amplio con más de 500 títulos monolingües, bilingües y plurilingües, así como, el desarrollo de la Asignatura Lengua Indígena para todo el Sistema Educativo Nacional.” (DGEI website accessed 10.11. 2019)

The Directorate-General for Indigenous Education (DGEI) was created in 1978 to recognize the ethnic, cultural and linguistic plurality of the country, under the premise of claiming indigenous languages as national [languages]. From this

perspective, it currently promotes the largest educational publishing program in indigenous languages with more than 500 monolingual, bilingual and multilingual titles, as well as the development of the Indigenous Language Subject for the entire National Education System." (DGEI website accessed 10.11. 2019)

Here, outlined in the two quotes above, we see once again the seemingly ambivalence of the SEP regarding the incorporation and usage of indigenous languages as on a par with the Spanish language, in education policy. The DGEI states that in 1978 they recognized and promoted the linguistic plurality of Mexico and since that date have focused on the publication of monolingual and bilingual educational materials to promote the didactic use of Indigenous languages within the rural classroom. This, however, was not made evident in my interviews. Doña E mentions numerous times in her interview that the placement of indigenous bilingual teachers was strategically planned to put rural teachers in villages where they would not be able to speak their native language with the students, in a placement where the *lingua franca* had to necessarily be Spanish. Doña E's example may very well have been the norm in her region in the 1960's and early 70's, but it would seem that the incorporation and promotion of linguistic diversity in the classroom hadn't changed much in the 2000's as Miss Nancy speaks about in her interview.

Ahí le decía, allí primero alfabetizábamos en Nahuatl y después en español. Inclusive allá, la clase completa era casi más Nahuatl primero, segundo año eran más Nahuatl que español y ya conforme iban subiendo de grado ya se les iba quitando más el Nahuatl y poquito más español..." (Nancy, 02.2019)

There I was telling you, there first we taught literacy in Nahuatl and then in Spanish. Even there, the whole class was almost more Nahuatl first, second year was more Nahuatl than Spanish and as they went up grades, they were getting less Nahuatl and a little more Spanish ..." (Nancy, 02.2019)

Moving forward to the year 1982, there is a marked underscoring and reinforcing of indigenous language education within the school system and its policies (see Acuerdo 69 published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, April 1982). Again, these

are legislative actions and school policies that are handed down to the rural and community schools but by this point in time the damage had already been done. As Miss Nancy mentioned she hid the fact that she could speak Nahuatl from the time she was in primary school until she graduated from college. In one of our conversations, Don Pablo told me that he had done a disservice to his children by not speaking to them or teaching them Nahuatl. My suggestion, then, is that the generation born in, and growing up in the 1980's was already too far removed from the language (proximity) or ashamed to speak the language as it would identify them as indigenous in public, they wanted no part in learning it or using it in public spaces.

Again, Doña E blames the parents as culpable in the loss of the language (after first blaming the government). The parents of the students in my research survey were born in the 1980's. I can say this with certainty because Osmar's daughter was in his 5th grade class which I surveyed, she along with her classmates were the ones who answered that they didn't know Nahuatl but thought it important to preserve.

This lack of transmission whether in school or within the home is due to the systematic eradication and stigmatization of the language as an identifier of indigeneity and therefore of "an emblem of low status in a class stratified society and has become the adjective used with the unsophisticated and uneducated" (Friedlander 1975: 71-74).

In 2001, the CGEIB was created, which stands for the General Coordination of Intercultural and Bilingual Education. And in 2003 the Mexican Congress passed legislation called "The Law of Linguistic Rights." This law recognized the legal coexistence of Spanish with 63 other Native American languages for all official purposes within the country [Mexico]. Article 7 in The Law of Linguistic Rights states: "The Mexican indigenous languages would be valid, to the same degree as Spanish, for any issue or public procedure, and also in order to access to the public procedures, services and information."

(<https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/30119/DerechosLinguisticos.pdf>)

“ARTÍCULO 11. Las autoridades educativas federales y de las entidades federativas, garantizarán que la población indígena tenga acceso a la educación obligatoria, bilingüe e intercultural, y adoptarán las medidas necesarias para que en el sistema educativo se asegure el respeto a la dignidad e identidad de las personas, así como a la práctica y uso de su lengua indígena. Asimismo, en los niveles medio y superior, se fomentará la interculturalidad, el multilingüismo y el respeto a la diversidad y los derechos lingüísticos. Artículo reformado DOF 15-12-2015”

"ARTICLE 11. Federal educational authorities and federal educational entities shall ensure that indigenous people have access to compulsory, bilingual and intercultural education, and shall take the necessary measures to ensure that respect for education is ensured in the education system dignity and identity of people, as well as the practice and use of their indigenous language. Interculturalism, multilingualism and respect for diversity and linguistic rights will also be promoted at the middle and higher levels.

The above law, which put into motion the protection, and defined the legal status, of indigenous languages within Mexico, simultaneously acknowledged the indigenous populations as groups who have not faded into the mists of time or national memory, but identified them as vital peoples who are active participants in their country's economy and politics. This is a big piece of legislature and certainly a step in the right direction, but this was only sixteen years ago. It's sad to think that the Mexican government is just now realizing what it has done and just now making a feeble attempt at some sort of reparations. As Doña E said, she blames the government, and this is where we are today with the government and the public education system in regard to the teaching of indigenous languages and the preservation of specifically Nahuatl.

As Hernandez puts it, it's not fair that for well over 500 years after the "discovery" of this continent, there is still a sentiment that indigenous cultures are of little value or importance when in reality they've demonstrated the contrary.

Language Shift Through Coercive Language Education and The Intergenerational Transmission of Shame

In the above sections of this chapter I have outlined how the Mexican Government has had a dualistic view, at best, of the Nahuatl language within the realm of education and schooling. Lopez (2004) states, "In Latin America, indigenous education has always been looked upon with concern and distrust, practically from the moment our countries became independent and adopted the principles of classical European liberalism... sociocultural traits, practices and even types of social organization were seen as instruments for the denial of indigenous ancestry and the consequent configuration of and unifying single nation." (Lopez In Hornberger, 2004) In the following excerpts from my "middle" generation interviewees, I will highlight the effects of the coercive education policies that Doña E so pointedly addressed in her interview at the start of this chapter. I am beginning with Miss Nancy's remarks on bridging the language via the use of L1 and then transitioning to L2. This methodology of teaching literacy to small children is mentioned by a few of my interviewees¹⁵ and is also mentioned in Hornberger's case studies presented in *"Can Schools Save Indigenous Languages? Policy and Practice on Four Continents"* (Hornberger, 2008). The following segment was taken from the audio recorded interview with Miss Nancy where she speaks about her resistance to using the Nahuatl language until it became a means for gainful employment and how she doesn't necessarily feel like teaching is her vocation, it's just a job.

"...Pero ya aquí, pues digo, de hecho, yo ni siquiera pensaba en ser maestra. Yo estaba estudiando Ingeniería en Computación este así fue que mi mama era maestra de aquí del medio (medio Indígena¹⁶) este se jubila y me dice sabes que, pues te paso mi plaza para que no andes batallando con el trabajo. Y dije, bueno como que me resistía porque yo siento que como de maestra pues como que no tengo vocación.

¹⁵ Miss Nancy, Profesor Osmar, Doña Cleo, and Doña E.

¹⁶ Context of Indigenous Education

Pero este igual cuando llego aquí esta comunidad ya casi ya no hablaba Nahuatl. Las otras comunidades del otro lado allí si es más Nahuatl que español. Allí le decía allí primero alfabetizábamos en Nahuatl y después en español. Inclusive allá, la clase completa era casi más Nahuatl primero, segundo año eran más Nahuatl que español y ya conforme iban subiendo de grado ya se les iba quitando más el Nahuatl y poquito más español...”

“...Well actually, in reality, I didn’t even think about becoming a teacher. I was studying information technology, um, and it was that my mom was a teacher here in the (through the medium of Indigenous Education) Uh, she retired, and she said to me, ‘well I’ll give you my license so that you don’t have to struggle to find work’. And I said, well I resisted because I feel that I don’t really have a calling as a teacher. But, uh, when I got here to this community, they almost didn’t speak Nahuatl. The other communities on the other side (of the river) there yes, more Nahuatl than Spanish [was spoken]. There they said first we teach them to read in Nahuatl and then in Spanish. There classes were almost completely in Nahuatl first and second grade were more Nahuatl than Spanish, as the students moved up in grade level, they [the teachers] were [transitioning from Nahuatl to Spanish], using less Nahuatl and more Spanish. (Personal communication with Miss Nancy 02.2019)

Miss Nancy admitted that she was neither prepared to teach professionally or personally interested in teaching but did so because she wanted job security. I found this to be a nuanced response to my seemingly straightforward interview questions regarding preparedness and requirements for becoming a bilingual teacher. Miss Nancy mentioned to me on our first meeting that she had been teaching for eleven years (we started teaching the same year and I made a comment to that effect). She seemed to feel it was her duty to teach but it was not her calling, she said that she was given the bilingual license her mother used (a common practice, apparently) and because her mother spoke Nahuatl it was a bilingual educators license. Miss Nancy speaks Nahuatl fluently (as mentioned in her interview) but had to recall it, she told me. This is evidenced further as I notice her scrolling through the notes on her cell phone as she looks up the spelling of words throughout her Nahuatl lesson.

Miss Nancy is a classic example of the economic factors of job stability and not having to finish her IT degree to pay yet more money for her studies. These

opportunities were overpowering and led her to take her position as teacher. Her own struggle with linguistic shame may reflect in her bias during teaching. She only taught three language lessons in Nahuatl, which were, I believe, initiated because I was announced as a long-term observer. Later, in private, I asked the students if they had Nahuatl everyday as a subject and they claimed they didn't. In the interview questions I also asked Miss Nancy's students where they learned more Nahuatl, at home or at school. They all answered at home.

So, in conclusion, Miss Nancy, a thirty something year old teacher whose first language is Nahuatl, hid the fact from her classmates until she was an adult and is now back in an indigenous community and in front of the classroom as a bilingual teacher; not because she is passionate about teaching, but because it was convenient for her to take on this role. She was not given the pedagogical foundations for bilingual education, or indigenous bicultural competencies, (not that many of the teachers in the area count on this kind of preparation as we will see in a moment with our next interview excerpt.) I feel this is a vital point to get across in this research. The education system in part is only as good as the teachers that are in the classrooms. Even if the SEP and DGEI policies were enforced and made accessible to all communities, would the teachers be able to competently carry them out? I'm not calling out the specific teachers in this research but addressing a larger problem of preparation and narrowing down my focus to the specific points of shame, humiliation due to stigma, and discrimination as the backbone of why teachers in these rural communities are not passionate about their Nahuatl language roots and therefore cannot not inspire passion and an appetite to learn within their classrooms.

The following excerpt was taken from my interview with Profesor Osmar and uphold the statements made by Doña E about the parents being the ones to blame for not transmitting the language. Again, restating this lack of transmission is because the language is not valorized or thought of as prestigious any longer. Only the elders speak Nahuatl and because the parent generation didn't learn it from their own parents (the grandparent generation) the students are now not only reluctant to do their homework but many have no one to help them with their Nahuatl homework.

H: *¿Cuáles son las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el Nahuatl en su comunidad? Como piensan sobre la enseñanza y continuación del uso del Nahuatl al diario, por ejemplo, que es algo útil e importante o piensan que es algo pasado que poco a poco se va desapareciendo.*

H: What are the students' perceptions of Nahuatl in their community? What do they think about the teaching and continued daily usage of Nahuatl? For example, [do they think] that it is something useful and important or [do they] think it is something in the past that is gradually disappearing?

“Desafortunadamente en la comunidad la lengua Nauatl dejo de ser funcional con el paso del tiempo, por la razón de que los padres prefirieron enseñar español en vez de Nauatl a sus hijos no utilizaron la lengua Nauatl para comunicarse con sus hijos a pesar de que la hablaban así que con el paso de los años se ha ido perdiendo junto con la mayoría de personas mayores que lo hablaban hoy en día quedan pocas personas que lo hablan entre ellos sobre todo personas de la tercera edad, pero no en personas jóvenes incluso padres de familia desconocen la lengua Nauatl en su totalidad porque asistieron a escuelas monolingües todos estos factores influyen para que los alumnos no la consideren importante preservar y se les dificulte resolver incluso las tareas que se dejan en clase para resolver en casa con ayuda de sus papas.”

“Unfortunately, in the community the Nauatl language ceased to be functional with the passage of time. For this reason, parents prefer to teach Spanish instead of Nauatl to their children. They didn't use the Nauatl Language to communicate with their children, even though they spoke the language [Nahuatl]. So, over the years, it has been lost along with the majority of older people who spoke it. Nowadays, there are few people who speak it among themselves, above all, [mostly] the elderly people, but not the young people, including the parents of the students; they do not know the Nauatl language in its totality; this is because they attended

monolingual schools. All of these factors influence the students so now they do not consider it important to preserve it [the Nahuatl Language]. They even find it difficult to complete the homework left in class to be worked on at home with the help of their parents.” (Interview with Profe Osmar 03.2019)

Although this is a long passage, I feel that it's important to include Osmar's entire answer to the question when discussing intergenerational language transmission. This quote focuses on two key elements: the first being that Nahuatl language is not valorized within the community because it has ceased to be functional. And the second being that the students find it difficult to complete the homework left by the teacher. I will take both of these key components separately and describe what I observed within the classroom and community of Tulimán. The language ideology within the community of Tulimán was discussed in Chapter Three, and this statement from Osmar is basically confirming that the community no longer values or sees benefit in the usage of the Nahuatl language. This, in great part, is due to a Spanish language promoter who worked in the community in the 1960's and forbade the parents from speaking Nahuatl to the children. This teacher worked in the community for ten years and within that decade put a halt to the transmission of the Nahuatl language within Tulimán. The general idea behind that concept, as I have mentioned earlier in this paper, was a common myth that speaking L1 to small children would prevent them from excelling at L2.

Taking into consideration, too, the anecdotal evidence from Doña E, we see that the government purposefully and systematically sent educators out to promote Spanish endeavoring to create unity and a hegemonic identity within Mexico and among its rural communities. In an effort to do so, communities that would not conform were labeled as

backward and uneducated. The humiliation and stigma of being indigenous, with the language as the greatest identifier put into motion an effort to create a new identity (a civilized community) within Tulimán and other areas.

The second interesting statement out of this passage is that the students have trouble with their Nahuatl homework. I asked in Tulimán if any of them spoke Nahuatl in the survey and only one student marked in the affirmative, and underneath qualified it as “*poco*”, “a little”. At the level of fifth grade I would expect more progress from the students if they had been attending a truly bilingual school since kindergarten. So, this tells me the students aren’t actually learning Nahuatl at school. This comes as no surprise, as in the above paragraphs neither Osmar or Miss Nancy are eager to teach a language they see as not valuable to their student's success or future way of life. This statement about homework also made me reflect back on the comments of Don Pablo who had mentioned he had done a disservice to his children (one of them being Osmar) by not teaching them Nahuatl. I asked Osmar about Speaking Nahuatl and he never gave me a straight answer. He was able to read a few lines (with difficulty) from my Nahuatl language workbook, but said it was a different variant and quickly put it down, it was a different variant, yes, but they are said to be mutually intelligible with or without the orthographic standardization differences¹⁷ I would have hoped that someone who was a bilingual Nahuatl/Spanish teacher for fourteen years would have 1. enjoyed (or at least attempted) discussing language lessons and applications with a researcher studying that very topic, and 2. been able to explain the nuances or differences between the variants. These observances I made when interacting with Osmar and his class

¹⁷ An example found in this ethnography is the written word Nahuatl which Profesor Osmar writes “nauatl”

caused me to further examine my assumptions of bilingual education, in Mexico as a whole, and to then look at the probability or likeliness of schools such as these being able to preserve or revitalize The Nahuatl language. Lastly, while I was observing classes at General Vicente Guerrero, Nahuatl language homework was never given in the class I attended and although there was an entire shelf of curriculum books in the back of the classroom (where I sat during my observations) those books looked as if they had been collecting dust for the entire school year if not longer. This brings us to the actual question of requirements for becoming a bilingual educator in this region.

H: *¿Cuáles son los requisitos necesarios para trabajar de maestro bilingüe?*

H: What are the requirements needed to work as a bilingual teacher?

Contar con el perfil académico de licenciatura en educación primaria indígena hablar alguna de las cinco lenguas indígenas que se hablan en el estado de Guerrero, presentar y aprobar el examen de conocimiento y de bilingüismo.

To have the academic profile and degree of indigenous primary education, [one must] speak [at least] one of the five indigenous languages that are spoken in the state of Guerrero; take and pass the content exam and the bilingual exam.

H: *¿En su experiencia, los papas de los alumnos apoyan a sus hijos en aprender Nahuatl o continúan hablando su lenguaje?*

H: In your experience, do the parents of the students support their children in learning Nahuatl or to continue to speak the language [if they already speak it]?

“Desafortunadamente no hay mucho apoyo de parte de los padres de familia por aprender y desarrollarse en lengua Nahuatl los que lo saben quieren que sus hijos aprendan español correctamente y los que no lo hablan, prefieren no meterse en problemas por considerar que no tiene importancia o porque en el futuro ven pocas posibilidades de emplearse en un trabajo donde hagan uso de la lengua Nahuatl”.

“Unfortunately, there is not much support from parents to learn and develop in the Nahuatl language. Those who know it want their children to learn Spanish correctly and those who do not speak, prefer not to get into trouble because they

consider it unimportant or because the future sees few possibilities to be employed in a job where they use the Nahuatl language.” (Interview with Osmar, 03.2019)

H: *¿Por qué los padres de familia eligen mandar a sus hijos a una escuela bilingüe? ¿Hay algún beneficio aparte de ser una escuela bilingüe que los atrae?*

H: Why do the parents elect to send their children to a bilingual school? Is there some benefit gained apart from being bilingual that is gained from doing so?

“Para aprender un poco de la lengua Nauatl, aunque no los apoyen como padres por otro lado en comunidades con alto nivel indígena las escuela bilingües tuvieron mejores resultados que las escuelas monolingües por que en estas últimas los maestros desconocen la lengua de los alumnos y esto no permite que aprendan, en contraste con las escuelas bilingües los docentes hablan la lengua y están contextualizados con el medio en que se desarrolla el alumno porque la mayoría de los docentes provienen de comunidades indígenas.”

“In order to learn a little of the Nauatl language, even if they do not [receive] support from the parents (on the other hand) in communities with a high indigenous [population], bilingual schools had better results than monolingual schools because in the latter the teachers do not know the language of the students and this does not allows them to learn, in contrast to bilingual schools [where] teachers speak the language and are contextualized with the environment in which the students develop because the majority of [bilingual] teachers come from indigenous communities.” (Interview with Osmar, 03.2019)

H: Cuénteme sobre sus experiencias en la escuela cuando usted era estudiante.

¿Asistió usted a una escuela bilingüe? ¿Había discriminación por parte de sus compañeros o maestros?

H: Tell me about your experiences at school when you were a student. Did you attend a bilingual school? Was there discrimination on the part of your classmates or teachers?

Yo estude en escuelas monolingües. tuve compañeros en la secundaria que hablaban el Nahuatl y en ocasiones al leer o platicar, causaban risas entre los compañeros se burlaban más de ellos fuera del salón de clases o en la calle. recuerdo que de estos alumnos muy pocos terminaron la secundaria la mayoría dejaba la escuela en el primer año. y la discriminación ha estado presente en la sociedad por los medios de comunicación hacen pasar al indígena mal llamado indio, como una persona pobre ignorante o tonta de la cual se mofan ridiculizándolo, como si no se dieran cuenta que el hablar dos idiomas es difícil y no todos lo logran que tienen una gama de conocimientos ancestrales transmitidos de generación en generación, es decir, solo exhiben sus dificultades pero no muestran sus cualidades por ello se menosprecian y se aíslan como personas inferiores.

“I attended monolingual schools. I had classmates in middle school that spoke Nahuatl and on occasions when they read or spoke, they would be laughed at and made fun of by their classmates [both] inside the classroom and outside of school. I remember that very few of these students finished middle school; the majority would leave in the first year. Discrimination has been present in society because the media presents the indigenous as “Indian” [synonymous with] like a poor ignorant or foolish person whom they mock ridiculing them, as if they [the media] did not realize that speaking two languages is difficult and not everyone can achieve that. They [the indigenous] have a range of ancestral knowledge transmitted from generation to generation, that is, only the media exhibits their difficulties but does not show their [the indigenous peoples] qualities; for that reason, they are despised and isolated as inferior persons.” (Interview with Osmar, 03.2019)

It is my impression that all four of the above excerpts clearly outlines the ideologies behind why language loss is happening so quickly within the community of Tulimán and within the region as a whole. Osmar neglects to go further into detail of how he became a teacher (without knowing the Nahuatl language or any indigenous language). But I was made aware that he paid for his license while he was in the process of finishing his teaching degree. He eventually matriculated but had been working in the field by the time he did so. This is also evident in Doña Cleo’s discussion with me on bilingual teachers these days.

Ellos pues son curiosos, te preguntan con sus cuadernos una palabra, ¿“cómo se dice...”? tienen ganas de aprender le digo, y nosotros qué? Nosotros no queremos aprender dice “si pues, ¿verdad?” pues sí le digo, este, nosotros aquí echamos a perder todo y tenemos todo acá. No es que los maestros que apenas van entrando pues no hablan, español puro español, no hablan el Nahuatl y esto para mí- y hemos practicado con otros compañeros, para nosotros la culpa son de las autoridades porque permiten eso.

They are curious; they ask you a word with their notebooks [in hand] “how do you say...?” They want to learn, and what of us? We don’t want to learn they say, ‘well yes, true.’ well yes, I said, we let everything go to waste and we have everything here. It’s not that the teachers that are just entering [the profession] don’t speak [Nahuatl], Spanish only Spanish, they don’t speak Nahuatl. To me, this is- and I’ve spoken to

other colleagues, for us the culprits are the authorities [school officials] because they allow this. (Personal communication with Doña Cleo, 03.2019)

It seems from my conversations with my interviewees and collaborators that the position of bilingual teacher is more sought after because it is what is needed in the field currently. I had not thought to pose the question during my field research itself but would be interested to find out why the position of bilingual teacher in particular is in high demand both governmentally and locally as teachers are vying for placement and buying their licenses as they are able.

Osmar ends with a statement that the media only portrays indigenous people as unsophisticated, and uneducated. He makes it clear that the stigma of being “Indian” is passed through the media outlets and that is why the general population adheres to the ideology that knowing indigenous language makes one indigenous and therefore uneducated, bullied, made fun of humiliated and seen as inferior people. This section also connects back to the interview with Doña E where a brief comment about media and children's interaction with of social media has influences their language preferences and language ideologies regarding self-identifying with certain speech communities. They perceive as prestigious (highest being English, 2nd being Spanish and the least prestigious, Indigenous languages which may themselves have a ranking but I have not made an inquiry for the present research).

The Present state of Bilingual/ Indigenous Education in Central Guerrero

This short excerpt from the student's interview shows us the potential future of language revitalization. The students, unsure of their future relationship with the language, looked to me for cues as to whether I thought it was a good necessary thing

to preserve the language or not. The future of the Nahuatl language here in the River Balsas basin is precarious at best and the way the education system takes up the theme of bilingual or dual language education is still reminiscent of the outdated policies of the past. Notice that one of the students is only concerned to the extent that her future children are literate which could point to a notion that the way the current system works, students can complete their education without actually being literate in Spanish not to mention even speaking or learning Nahuatl.

H: Then, when you guys have kids in the future, far future, are you going to teach them Nahuatl?

Alumnos: *(en coro) Si!*

Students: Yes!

H: *¿Tú crees que sí?*

H: You think you will?

Students: Silently thinking

H: *¿O vas a enseñar puro español para que aprenden más en español?*

H: Or are you going to teach them only Spanish, so they learn more Spanish?

Alumnos: *(en coro) En Nahuatl!*

Students: Nahuatl

One girl whispers to another: “*Que sepan escribir,*” which means “as long as they know how to write...”

H: *Van a escribir en Nahuatl; ¿ustedes saben escribir en Nahuatl?*

H: they’re going to write in Nahuatl? Do you know how to write in Nahuatl?

Alumnos: (*en coro*) No (*algunos poquito*)

Students: “No” (others said they could, a bit).

The education system in rural central Guerrero is struggling, the schools are hard to access, economically impoverished and the students many times do not have the school supplies they need. Some of the teachers feel they are unequipped or ill prepared (potentially because they purchased their teaching license) to take on the work of being a classroom teacher in these rural areas. None of my collaborators complained about the conditions they worked under or the lack of resources and infrastructure, but I observed first hand that the school materials were not in ample supply and the lack of infrastructure had a part to play as well; for example, when the outhouse overflowed and the classroom smelled of raw sewage if the wind picked up. The following excerpt is a summary of some of the issues that occur currently in Indigenous rural schools throughout the region (and across Mexico as is discussed on the quote below).

Además de las deficiencias presupuestales, los docentes señalan que existe discriminación a través de la relación que se establece entre educación indígena rural y baja calidad educativa. También señalaron una cultura de discriminación hondamente enraizada en la sociedad, la cual es reproducida también por los docentes y estudiantes indígenas. Señalaron que la prueba ENLACE es un ejemplo institucional de discriminación, ya que su propuesta de evaluación mediante pruebas estandarizadas es contraria a la política de atención a la diversidad propuesta por la Dirección General de Educación Indígena. Obtuvimos testimonios de padres y madres que se expresan negativamente de la calidad del sistema educativo indígena, de sus docentes e incluso de la enseñanza bilingüe. Su participación en el sistema educativo indígena tiene que ver más con la cercanía de la escuela que con su afinidad con criterios lingüísticos, culturales o pedagógicos.

In addition to budget deficiencies, teachers point out that there is discrimination through the relationship established between rural indigenous education and low educational quality. They also pointed out a culture of discrimination deeply rooted in society, which is also reproduced by indigenous teachers and students. They pointed out that the LINK test is an institutional example of discrimination, since

their proposal for evaluation through standardized tests is contrary to the policy of attention to diversity proposed by the Directorate General for Indigenous Education. We obtained testimonies from fathers and mothers who express themselves negatively about the quality of the indigenous education system, their teachers and even bilingual education. Their participation in the indigenous education system has more to do with the proximity of the school than with its affinity with linguistic, cultural or pedagogical.” (Jimenez-Naranjo & Mendoza-Zuany,2016)

The above quote parallels what I found to be true in the field. My research shows that in the case of my own interviewees’ experiences much of what is described by Jimenez and Mendoza is, indeed, also the case for the Upper Balsas region’s schools. Doña E’s experience with coercive (forced) language acquisition, and then becoming a Spanish language promoter for a time, is now seeing the system seemingly pivot once again to try to save the languages it was so intent to destroy only two generations prior.

DÑE: *Otra vuelta lo están rescatando...*

DÑE: They are once again rescuing the language

GG: Pero, por ejemplo, lo que hable con mi papa y también que se medió molesto porque estábamos hablando y le digo ahora quieren otra vuelta que todos los niños aprendan Nahuatl, le digo, pero todos los maestros que mandan no lo hablan. Digo, por ejemplo, mi hermano Osmar es maestro bilingüe y no habla Nahuatl, su esposa no habla Nahuatl también, pero por ejemplo son los maestros que están re -ensenando el Nahuatl.

GG: But for example I spoke about it with my dad and he too kind of got upset because we were talking and I told him that now they want once again for all the children learn Nahuatl, I said, but all the teachers they send (the district) do not speak it [Nahuatl] I say, for example, my brother Osmar is a bilingual teacher and does not speak Nahuatl, his wife does not speak Nahuatl also but for example they are the teachers who are once again teaching Nahuatl.

DÑE: *ahí es el grave error...* There is the big mistake...

Silver: *Elvi, también según es bilingüe.*

Silver: Elvi, is also supposedly bilingual.

DÑE: *Es un grave error, ellos no intentan. por qué? Porque no les interesa incluso tienen libros de Nahuatl esos maestros, pero como no les interesa rescatar la lengua no lo aplican, no lo aplican. Mi hija E, no es porque sea mi hija, es “cabrona” – cuando llegó ella no sabía nada. No sabía nada una que otra palabra, pero ahora si tú quieres me gana para escribir Nahuatl. Porque está trabajando en una escuela bilingüe, aja, y como ella es de educación indígena ella ya aprendió incluso una vez dice, “mama, ayúdame” dice, “vamos a traducir” [le dije] “ya no me*

hables de eso ya te dije que yo no lo puedo escribir-no lo puedo leer, tú puedes más; vete con tu tía Carmela.” Y mero se venía bajando mi hermana y dice, “que paso, que se están peleando” y le dije, “está loca, quiere que le ayude y ya no quiero.”

DÑE: It's a serious mistake, they don't try. Why? Because they don't even care they even have books in Nahuatl, those teachers, but since they're not interested in rescuing the language, they don't apply it, they don't apply it. My daughter E, it's not because she's my daughter, she's “bad ass” – when she came, she didn't know anything. She knew a word here or there, but now she is better than me at writing Nahuatl. Because she's working in a bilingual school, aha, and since she's from indigenous education she's already learned. Once she says, “Mom, help me” she says, “Let's translate” [I told her] “I don't talk to me about it anymore, I already told you I can't write it-I can't read it, you can better than I can; go with your Aunt Carmela.” And my sister was just coming down [the hill] and says, “What happened, you're fighting” and I said, “She's crazy, she wants me to help her and I don't want to.” (Interview with Doña E, 10.2019)

I added this last exchange between family members because the dialog, once again, highlights this need for bilingual teachers, but also underscores the lack of preparation those teachers historically have received as they go into their programs of study. Examples of this are the small detail of Osmar being called out, so to speak, for not speaking Nahuatl; the separate incident of Doña E's daughter requesting to learn Nahuatl, yet when she asked for help from her mother she gets rejected and must go to her aunt for help. The above quote where Doña E confesses she can't read or write Nahuatl and did not want to help her daughter, points back to my statement at the outset of this chapter that the government, through coercive education policies was thorough in its policy to transition the Indigenous communities to Spanish and halt the transmission of indigenous languages from the older generation to the younger and it started back when the older generation was in school. Doña E went to a bilingual school and yet was never even taught to read and write in Nahuatl this means the full focus and intent of the bilingual school was to force Spanish on to the community as quickly

as possible. The programs may have been named bilingual or indigenous language programs but the end result is evident with the knowledge that Doña E not only doesn't know how to read and write (well or at all) she refuses to help her daughter learn. There is a detachment in that interaction and the statements made which I had been reflecting on for a while. The apparent acknowledgement and even pride of being Indigenous but the refusal to transmit the language to the younger generations is one of the underpinning narratives of this ethnography and a question I was keen to answer.

Lastly, in the section below, I'd like to share Doña Cleo's discussion why teachers aren't prepared for bilingual education:

"...meten personas porque se están pagando o pues que se mete aquí ya saben que es por pagó. Quieres tu plaza vale 200 o hasta más dicen. y aunque no sepa hablar en Nahuatl. pero quién está le dijo pues más que nada educa siendo el medio indígena ellos son culpables y nosotros por permitir. y esto le digo deberíamos a valorarla más, Pues ya no es, le digo, del sistema en original, le digo, porque ya no se habla la lengua no más recitemos. ¿Hasta eso a veces ni queremos decir en qué escuela Trabajamos ni quiere decir si es bilingüe pues a veces le digo bilingüe [y me preguntan] "tú sabes en inglés?" y le digo," no, hablo Nahuatl el inglés no!"

They let people in because they pay or well, they put people here and people knows it's because they paid (speaking of bribes)." You want your teachers license? It's worth 200 (pesos) or more, they say. And they don't know how to speak Nahuatl, but who's to say well, more than not the *medio indígena* they are at fault for this and we are for letting it happen. We should value the language more, well it's not the original system, because no one speaks the language they just recite. Even sometimes we don't even want to say which school we work at or if it's bilingual. Sometimes I say bilingual [and they ask me], "you know English?!" and I say, "No, I speak Nahuatl not English!" (Personal communication with Doña Cleo, 3.6.19)

The current efforts made toward Nahuatl Language revitalization, from my observations in the field, are wrapped up in ceremonial or symbolic prestige. What I mean to say by that statement is that the community celebrates its heritage language with public poetry readings, festivals revolving around the language, among other

outward displays of admiration for the language. But those are simply moments in time when the language is venerated or given prestige. At those particular times, speakers of Nahuatl come forward as the knowledgeable ones, they are the honored representatives of a nostalgic past, giving the welcome speech or a blessing at the beginning of an event. Whereas, the everyday usage of Nahuatl, especially by the students, is just not there and when someone does use Nahuatl in the everyday it is not seen as prestigious or enviable.

Another example of this disconnect of which I am speaking, occurred during a math decathlon. As I intently observed students of all ages and from each of the seven communities in the town plaza of San Juan Totolcintla, I listened for anyone younger than fifteen who spoke Nahuatl, unfortunately, I did not hear any of the students use the language causally in conversation amongst themselves. This was disappointing; I had hoped that the students would have shown some interest in using the language given the reportedly distinct levels of Nahuatl usage and fluency within each individual community.

Teaching Nahuatl In Schools: Why Students Are Reluctant, And Parents Are Unsure

Doña Cleo referenced the lack of qualified professionals in the field to be one of the root causes of language loss and lack of proper bilingual education in schools. As Recendiz (2008) makes note, in his chapter on strengthening bilingual teaching in Mexico City, “None of them [teachers] understand, speak, much less right in Hñähñö. Neither do they have any experience of working with bilingual indigenous students; nor do they have any specialized pedagogical knowledge in bilingual education” [Recendiz

in Hornberger (2008) p110]. The same seems to hold true for this region of Mexico as well. From the above interview and also from Miss Nancy's interview we are given clear examples of how teachers are trained and how they are given their posts in rural communities.

The lack of sufficiently trained teachers is a crucial aspect of the equation, which needs to be taken into consideration when the bilingual programs are failing to connect with students on a meaningful level. In this case, the majority of the students speak some Nahuatl but do not learn it at school and instead learn it at home. A couple of my collaborators had mentioned the same outcomes when I asked them first if they learned or taught Nahuatl in the classroom and where more Nahuatl was spoken, at home or at school. The answer was always at home.

English Please!

Another aspect of language loss is the replacement of one language for another. The English language is considered by many, in the region, as a sign of prestige. This is the case because many family members have emigrated to the US and have come back with money and new cars and clothing and speaking English (albeit sometimes not fluently or even correctly). The shift in prestige comes from outside forces pressing in on the small communities presented here in this ethnography, but also come from within, as we have seen throughout this chapter, in the form of parents not wanting their children to learn Nahuatl but instead wanting them to take English.

DÑE: *Allí lo que pasa es el grupo que entrevistastes está muy enajenado a los medios, está muy enajenado a la lengua española o español o castellano para más nosotros hemos manejado castellano porque es lo que hablamos, porque español no lo hablamos. Entonces, allí es una enajenación que esta tal vez lo*

transmitieron los padres, “ya no hables porque oyes, te vez mal” por una parte influyen mucho los papa. Te vuelvo a repetir, es que muchos padres de familia son orgullosos, no les permiten que hablen ya sus hijos porque saben lo que se están comendando ahorita actualmente ya no hablen el Nahuatl, ni mixteco, ni tlapaneco, porque van a los estados unidos ya no pueden hablar el español menos van a poder hablar el inglés. Mejor aprendan inglés, incluso ve que en las escuelas el gobierno está metiendo el inglés, ahí en la escuela indígena esta un párrafo donde meten ya la calificación del inglés porque es el pudiente, la lengua inglesa, ingles es una lengua pudiente. En cambio, mi manera de ver las lenguas indígenas se considera como inferiores, como que no sirve, como que no te ayuda, ¡como que no te ayuda pues en nada!

DÑE: There, what happens is, the group that you interviewed is very alienated to the media, it is very alienated from the Spanish language or Spanish or Castilian and more we have used Castilian because that is what we speak, because we do not speak Spanish. So, there is an alienation that may have been transmitted by the parents, "No longer speak because, hey, you look bad" on the one hand the parents are very influential. I repeat to you, many parents are proud, they do not allow their children to speak [Nahuatl] anymore because they know what is currently commendable, and that is to no longer speak Nahuatl, nor Mixtec, nor Tlapaneco. Because they go to the United States and if they can't speak Spanish they have even less of a chance to learn English. Better to learn English, you see that the government is putting English in schools now. the indigenous school [system] there is a paragraph where they already put the English qualification because it makes money, the English language, English is a wealthy language. Instead, my way of seeing it is indigenous languages are considered inferior, as it does not function [broken], as it does not help you, as it does not help you at all!

H: ¿Económicamente?

H: Economically?

DÑE: *Es eso de que no te ayuda para nada, a ver ahorita, necesitas un trabajo y vas aquí a este restaurant lo primero que te van a preguntar son inglés, el cuestionario va a ser de inglés. Si vienes de Tlatzala, mi pueblo a México, las preguntas te las vas a preguntar van a ser español no te lo van a hacer en Nahuatl. Entonces aquí, yo mi punto de vista, es [que] se va más uno con las lenguas pudientes, y es el español o otras lenguas que se utiliza a nivel general, en cambio las lenguas indígenas que es mixteco, tlapaneco, no es general. Llegas a una tienda “dame esto”, o “véndame tanto”, “véndame esto,” en Nahuatl lógico no te van a entender.*

DÑE: It's that it doesn't help you at all, see right now, you need a job and you go to this restaurant the first things they're going to ask you are English, the application is going to be English. If you come from Tlatzala, my town to Mexico, the questions you're going to ask are going to be Spanish they're not going to ask you in Nahuatl. So here, my view, is [that] it goes more than one with the affluent

languages, and it is the Spanish or other languages that is used at a general level - instead the indigenous languages that is Mixtec, Tlapaneco, is not general. You get to a "give me this" store, or "sell me so much," "sell me this," in Nahuatl, of course, won't understand you.

Sal: *Y lo contrario al Nahuatl, si hay una persona que habla inglés se siente orgulloso decir que, "okay, yo hablo inglés" en cambio es todo lo contrario con el Nahuatl ósea como que no hay alguien pudiente que llega a decir, "yo puedo hablar Nahuatl".*

Sal: And the opposite with Nahuatl, if there is a person who speaks English they feel proud to say that, "okay, I speak English" instead, with Nahuatl it is completely the opposite, I mean, as there is no wealthy person who says, "I can speak Nahuatl".

The above except from a conversation between representatives of the two oldest generations provides an illustration of the changing language attitudes within the communities. As I argue, the language loss, which occurred in this area within a span of three generations as I have outlined thus far, was set into motion by the coercive, systematic, and institutional oppression of linguistic shaming and profiling which had placed a stigma on the Nahuatl language and the people who speak it.

In summary, chapter four covers a brief history of indigenous education in Mexico and, as is pointed out in the text in recent years, there has been an indigenous resurgence and to fight for the right to self-determination and language autonomy, Mexican education system assumes indigenous education to be an integral part of the public-school system. The actual application of bilingual education methodology is extremely lacking within the region of my field study. As was pointed out above there are a number of reasons for this, the first and most important is the transmission a shame and stigma throughout the generations. The social emotional repercussions of being labeled inferior due to ethnic and linguistic differences has had an impact on my

specific demographic. the second, is the systematic undermining of Nahuatl language transmission both in the school and in the home as Spanish promoters moved through the rural communities in the 1950's and 1960's to eliminate indigenous language usage within those populations. Doña E's anecdotal information about her uncle telling her father to stop speaking Nahuatl with his children is the perfect illustration of how this was systematic and long term. It would seem then, that the education system's complicity in the fostering of linguistic eradication has all but achieved its goal. the students no longer wish to speak or learn Nahuatl, the teachers or not given the proper professional development, do not speak the language themselves and many times have been known to purchase their teaching licenses. All of these factors combined bring us to the present-day state of the Nahuatl language, which is on the verge of disappearing along with the grandparents of these communities.

The communities along the Balsas River, from what I have seen and experienced through firsthand observation and participation throughout this short research project, have slowly been stripped of their linguistic identity. This has happened through coercion and by force and in the name of education, and yet is not enjoying the benefits of conforming to societal pressure to become less indigenous; this in part is due to the virulent racism that is a part of the Mexican culture which has also been passed down through the generations.

I'd like to conclude this chapter with an interesting sentiment from Lopez which examines the notions that "people consider it the government's responsibility to reverse language shift yet it is the government which fostered linguistic eradication as the privileged instrument of ethnocide" (Lopez in Hornberger, 2008). He goes on to say,

“they are aware that they might only reach a level of symbolic revitalization, but this does not prevent them from pursuing their aims” (Lopez in Hornberger, 2008). In the case of my field research and the schools involved, I believe recognition of the importance of language revitalization has not yet been fully acknowledged. Simultaneously, there has not been a full recognition of the government’s role in controlling language through forced assimilation into Spanish society, “and yet have not gained the equivalent status, as a group, to that of non-indigenous status” (Friedlander,1975).

Chapter 5

Social and Emotional Effects Of *Pena* On Language Vitality



Fig.5.1 *Feria de la Lengua Materna*
group photo, faculty at San Juan Totolcintla
Photo: Heather Thomas Flores, 02.21.19

Defining *Pena* and *Pinahua*

Throughout the previous chapters I have outlined the various language ideologies within the communities of Tulimán and San Juan Totolcintla, specifically that of power structures and perceived power relations based on whether an individual speaks Nahuatl or Spanish. Each generation has a different perspective on the importance of language maintenance and bilingual education based on their personal socialization experiences, in the classroom and within the community, and contingent upon their phenomenological perceptions in regard to learning and using the Nahuatl language.

As Morgan argues in her chapter on *Speech Community*, “the concept of speech community often incorporates a shift in attitudes and usage...” and that, “it is within the

speech community that identity, ideology, and agency are actualized in society (Morgan in Duranti, 2009). In this chapter, I analyze the relationships between agency, Indigenous identity, language attitudes, and the multifaceted concept of shame. By implementing the lens of language ideology on the narratives presented here in this text, I have endeavored to narrow my research focus to take up the question of shame.

The following paragraphs are definitions that are key to understanding how my argument holds together. The first definition is that of agency, I chose to use Duranti's chapter on *Agency In Language* (Duranti, 2009), where his definition, " (1) Agency is here understood as the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities' (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. In terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)." Simply put, agency can be defined as individual agency, agency by proxy, and collective agency as within a community such as in a speech community. Agency, although important in and of itself, must be looked at within the context of social structures within the communities of the Balsas Valley. Teachers hold a prestigious role within the community, many of the families look to teachers moral and intellectual pillars of society. Therefore, agency is important to my argument in that the power relations and intersubjective discourse between SEP education policies, the Spanish promoters and bilingual teachers have influenced and undermined the agency of the individual student and family unit. As discussed in chapter four, students in both the past and the present are transitioned to be predominantly Spanish monolinguals. For the remainder of this chapter, I propose to further explore this aspect of undermined agency as a result of coercive language policy

because of which resulted in the internalized ideology that Nahuatl is intrinsically a negative attribute. I again propose that the use of shaming and the resulting expressions of shame are the direct and tangible results of language coercion within the education. In this chapter, I argue that social structure is directly informed in many ways by the education system. Since students in Mexico spend an average of between twenty-five and thirty hours a week in school, which is a significant enough percentage of their time to be molded by their surroundings and develop their worldviews based on what is being imparted in the classroom both directly and indirectly.

In chapter four, I discuss the institutional norms of bilingual education; I outlined the various objectives of the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) and DGEI. If we look critically at the contributions of my collaborator and interviewees, while taking into consideration the indigenous education benchmarks highlighted in my brief summary above, it is obvious that there is a disconnect between education policy ideals and what is taking place in practice within the various communities discussed in this paper.

Discrimination and marginalization are prevalent within the education system, this is a theme that ran through most of my interviews and was pointed out specifically by my interlocutors. As the graphic in chapter four, and the one below, depicts “discrimination is not a game” and “discrimination is not tolerated here.”



Fig. 5.2 Discrimination Isn't a Game (Retrieved from <https://educacionbasica.sep.gob.mx/> 10.03.19)

In the following sections I will attempt to draw out the correlations between discriminatory practices (see block quote below) within the education system, which has had an observable impact on the linguistic ideologies of the community this continued shift informs and perpetuates the attitudes and ideologies regarding language.

Throughout this ethnographic text the term “*pena*” is used in reference to the usage or non-usage of the Nahuatl language as well as the incorrect pronunciations of Spanish or Nahuatl words due to a bilingual background. My collaborators used *pena* to describe a sense of shame or shyness regarding the use of Nahuatl in certain spaces; it is a sentiment that runs through all three generations interviewed for this manuscript, and was an overarching and recurrent concept that eventually changed the direction of my entire research project. The verb *penar* (infinitive) in the context of my research and for purposes of my thesis is defined as, to be embarrassed or literally, as seen below, to suffer from sadness or to grieve. Because *pena* or *penar* is such a linguistically symbolic and nuanced word, I have drawn an illustration to help the reader understand the many facets of this word in order to better evaluate the linguistic richness of the

interviews in the following sections. As I've illustrated in Fig 5.3, there are over ten usages of the word *pena* and that was just the handful that I was able bring to mind.

Semantic Associations For The Word *Pena*

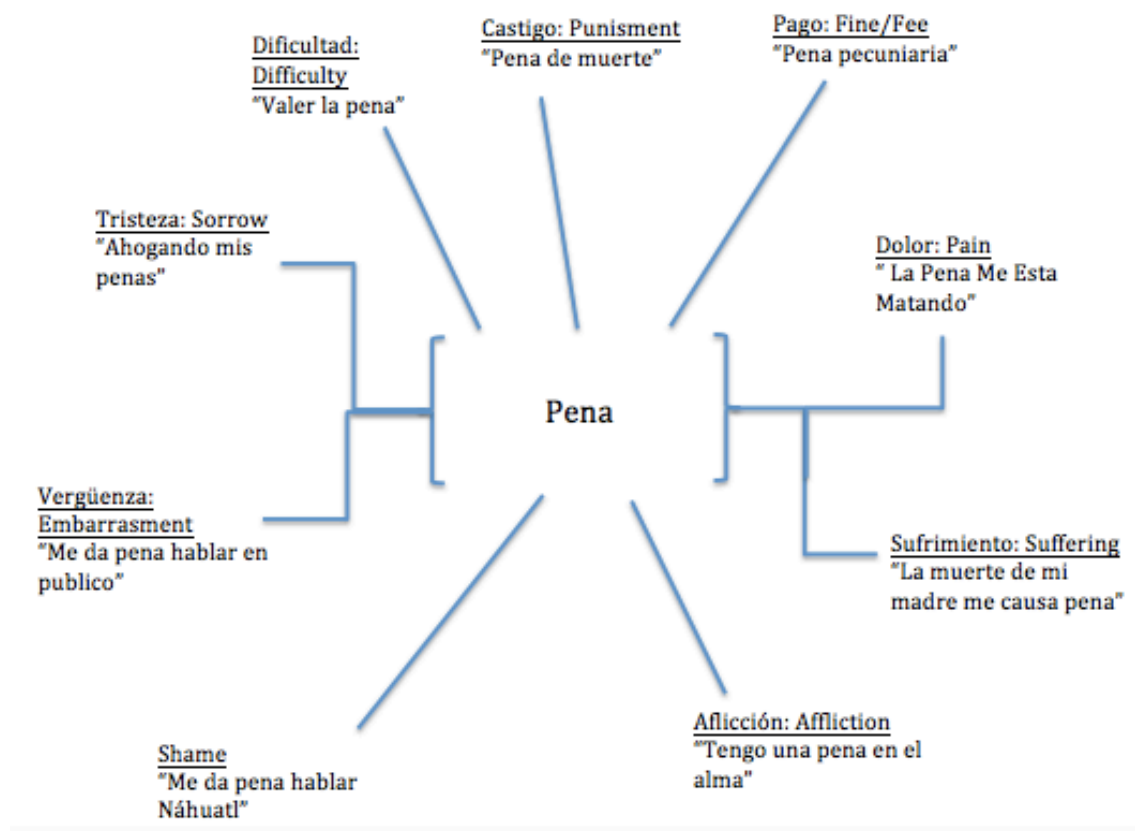


Fig. 5.3 Semantic Associations for the Word *Pena*

The Spanish word *pena* is a semantically rich and nuanced term, which evokes, in each case of its usage, a deep emotional experience. I have attempted to represent a snapshot of this in the figure above. To explain the relationship between the word and the emotion behind its use, I have added some of the most common usages of *pena* such as, “*ahogando mis penas*” or “drowning my sorrows” to demonstrate how the various ways in which the word is interpreted changes dependent upon context, phrasing, and tone. Although many of the meanings are quite similar, the word *pena* is none-the-less a versatile and dynamic word attached to strong sentiments which are

relevant to this research in that the goal of this ethnography is to prove a correlation between shaming, which cause a decline in Nahuatl language prestige which has led to the subsequent and marked decline of language usage in the past sixty years or so. The deep connections between the ideas of pain (whether physical or emotional) expressed in such cases as a song lyric "*la pena me esta matando*", "the pain is killing me"; affliction, "*tengo una pena en el alma*" "My soul is afflicted"; and shame which was repeated to me on numerous occasions in variations of the expression "*me da pena hablar Nahuatl*" "I'm ashamed/embarrassed to speak Náhuatl."

The following exchange I have used numerous times as a reference to this idea of shame throughout the text, but seems the perfect (and easiest) example with which to highlight the fact that the fifth-graders (at least some of them) are ashamed to speak Nahuatl and don't even know why.

Girl 2: "*Mi Hermana quiere que hable Nahuatl pero ya me da pena*"

Girl 2: "My sister wants me to speak in Nahuatl but I'm ashamed/shy"

H: "*¿Y porque te da pena?*"

H: And why are you ashamed?

Girl 2: "*No se*"

Girl 2: "I Don't know"

In the instance above we see that *pena* is a very real sentiment and yet it is not understood or, it may be instinctively understood but not able to be articulated as such, especially by the fifth graders in my survey. My interlocutors consistently spoke about *pena* as part of their natural response to using Nahuatl in certain spaces. I endeavored to understand this concept of shame in a more profound way. I was given the opportunity to do so during a summer intensive with native Nahuatl speakers at the University of Utah. During the two summers I spent in preparation for this research I

was able to discuss my research questions with both colleagues, and professors from "IDIEZ" Instituto de Docencia e Investigación Etnológica de Zacatecas, A.C.. From those conversations, I was able to connect the feeling of shame to the Nahuatl word for shame or shyness, *pinahua*. Interestingly this word holds many of the similar meanings in Nahuatl as it does in Spanish. The following is the definition of *pinahua* as defined by the IDIEZ online dictionary.

The Definition of 'Pinahua'		
Pinahua	Pena	To be Ashamed
IDIEZ def: Macehualli mahmahui huan axcanah quinequi zaniloq quemman tehuanya monohnotza zo quemman quipano zo quiitta ce acahya.	IDIEZ def. español: Una persona tiene miedo cuando habla con otra, o cuando pasa o ve a alguien.	My translation in English: A person is fearful when he/she speaks with another, or when he/she passes or sees someone.
IDIEZ: "Floricelda tlahuel pinahua quemman ompaxaloah ichan imachicni huan pampa axquemman moitztoqueh."		
IDIEZ: "Floricelda tiene mucha vergüenza cuando va a visitar a sus primas en su casa porque nunca se han visto".		
My Translation: " Floricelda is embarrassed when she visits her cousins a their house because they've never seen each other [never met].		

Table 5.1 Defining *Pinahua* (Created using data from IDIEZ, 2012)

I bring the word *pinahua* (personal sense of shame) or *pinahualtia* (someone who causes embarrassment to another) into my analysis for two reasons, the first being that

in an effort to represent the multifaceted concept of emotion behind *pena* I wanted to also illustrate that the word *pinahua* although not related to the word *pena* has a similar connotation and dependent upon how the morpheme is used in larger word constructions. In the above table (which I created from the IDIEZ dictionary entry under “*Pinahua*”) I outline examples of how the word is used in context. I will add that in the Nahuatl definition box the usage of the word *mahmahui* to be afraid – if this is indeed the best choice to represent *pinahua* in a sentence, then we can compare the semantic associations between both *pinahua* and *pena* as versatile encapsulations of strong feeling.

The second reason I chose to add the above explanation and table is to incorporate as much of Nahuatl into this ethnography as possible. Unfortunately, none of my collaborators used the word *pinahau* or *pinahualtia* as the majority of them spoke almost exclusively in Spanish (including the grandparent generation) and when I specifically asked if they, as elders felt embarrassment/shame or *pinahua* (I asked them in Náhuatl to see if I could illicit a response in Náhuatl or observe reactions to hearing the word in particular.), but all of them answered no, this is how we learned to speak, this is our language. I then asked if they would feel the same outside of the community and the responses changed a bit. Many of them imagined that they would be embarrassed or be shamed by people in the city, but none of them really knew for sure because they hadn’t traveled or told me they don’t leave the community anymore. One of my collaborators said she supposed that people would make her feel ashamed, but that she doesn’t leave the community. She thought on it a little and then nodded her head as if agreeing with her answer (Personal communication with Ana, 02.19). This is

the perfect example of how prestige changes with context, and an illustration of how one might feel proud of their language within the community and refrain from using it once outside the confines of their speech community for fear of stigmatization and discriminatory treatment.

Ashamed of the Ancestral Language

The communities presented in this research have been confronted by various sociolinguistic factors as was briefly detailed in the previous chapter. The indigenous communities, in Guerrero, have been living on the periphery for a very long time, this is evident in the history of the region (which I briefly outline in chapter two) and is also made clear in the school policies addressing rural and indigenous education. My collaborators have made mention of the fact that their towns were cut off from the 'outside world' until the construction of the Highway in the 1990's. The relative seclusion and limited language contact preserved Nahuatl to a degree, but a language shift has been slowly sweeping the area since 1950's and even before then as was discussed in depth by Doña E.

My interlocutors from the oldest generation – most born in the early 1950's – told me that a few of their parents were bilingual Spanish/ Nahuatl, although Nahuatl was still the preferred language of communication within the family unit. As an interesting aside, the mothers of this generation were reported the least likely to speak Spanish, while on the other hand the men, given that they were the ones traveling to the towns to work or buy and sell agricultural surplus, were the ones that tended to be at least somewhat bilingual.

There is documentation that in an effort to create a sense of nationalistic identity, Spanish was seen as the language of prestige and of the newly formed country, therefore Spanish was made mandatory in schools and public office and other public spaces. This ties back into the sociolinguistic factors of dominant and subordinate languages and the perceptions invoked by the use of a particular language in public. Dr. Olko, an ethno-historian, of the University of Warsaw, Poland writes extensively on the history of language contact and the unbalancing of Spanish Nahuatl Bilingualism beginning with the pre-conquest to present day. She argues in various publications that the sense of shame is based in trauma, “Descendants of the Aztecs have a multigenerational trauma of linguistic and ethnic discrimination. They do not feel the heirs of the great ancient culture” She goes on in her radio interview to state that, “today, 1.5 million people still use Nahuatl, but 90 percent of them are over fifty years old.” (Olko, 2016). The intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl from elder to younger generations is halting and even in a bilingual school setting such as Francisco Villa, the students, although encouraged to speak the language would rather not.

In my analysis of Miss Nancy’s experiences with Nahuatl growing up, I proposed that she may be ashamed to teach the language or may not see the practical use of it. She had mentioned to me that she hid the fact that she was a native speaker of Nahuatl throughout her entire academic career and only once she was back in a Nahuatl speaking community did, she decide to start using the language once again. This reluctance shows that there is some lingering stigma or sense of shame in regard to the language. My question has been throughout this paper has been, where is the shame coming from and how are the children picking up on this and manifesting it through the

continued devaluing of the Nahuatl language despite the newly implemented language revitalization programs?

As mentioned in chapter three, I found in reviewing the data, that the students are ashamed to speak Nahuatl for a number of reasons. On the surface, their answers - because their fellow classmates make fun of them for not speaking it correctly, seem to be rather benign, the students don't want to risk being laughed at by their peers so prefer to speak in Spanish or stay silent instead. But I postulate that this sense of shame goes much deeper than derogatory remarks made between fifth graders during a classroom discussion. Miss Nancy mentions in her interview with me that there is a historical foundation for this sense of shame:

“...”Fue tanto el convencimiento digamos en nuestro caso de los españoles hacia los indígenas ósea fue tanto se puede decir que hasta la humillación que hasta la fecha todavía se sigue viviendo. Si trajo consecuencias muy cómo le diría trauma[ítico].”

“... “We were so well convinced, in our case by the Spaniards and the humiliation of the indigenous that to this day we still live it. Yes, it brought consequences, I would say traumatic consequences.”
”

Returning once again to the topic of shame, the students in Miss Nancy's class felt a sense of embarrassment or shame when asked to speak Nahuatl, and during an impromptu debate set up within the class the students were divided into teams labeled “for” Nahuatl language or “against” Nahuatl language usage. The following are some of the highlights of that debate:

Miss Nancy: “Por qué no quieren hablar Nahuatl?”

Miss Nancy: “Why don't you want to speak Nahuatl?”

Niño (Contra Nahuatl): *“Nos puede dar vergüenza”*

Boy (against Nahuatl): “It can cause us embarrassment”

Miss Nancy: *“Qué le puedes decir a la persona que dijo, ‘nos puede dar vergüenza’?”*

Miss Nancy: “What can you say to the person who said, ‘It can cause us embarrassment’?”

Otro Niño (en favor a Nahuatl): *“Quema!”*

Another Boy (on the Pro Nahuatl side): “Yes!” [in agreement with the statement] spoken in Nahuatl

Miss Nancy: *“Por qué no hablas Nahuatl?”*

Niña: *“Porque se van a reír de nosotros”*

Girl: “Because they’re going to laugh at us”

Miss Nancy: *“¿Por eso no deben hablar Nahuatl, porque van a reír de ellos?”*

Miss Nancy: “For that reason, you shouldn’t speak Nahuatl, because they’re going to laugh at them?”

Aside from the obvious concerns noted in the above exchange, the students had to be prompted numerous times to answer in Nahuatl (if they were on the side that was in favor of speaking Nahuatl) and their teacher, Miss Nancy, had them translate each other’s statements into Spanish (if they could) this made the kids shy and nervous and they sometimes came to her to clarify before they spoke Nahuatl in the microphone. The simple classroom dynamic of having to speak in front of the class in Nahuatl and have their fellow classmates listen to them seemed to make some students extremely uncomfortable. I was reminded of this debate in one of my interviews with the students

when she told me she answered in Nahuatl and one of the students who, apparently, spoke better than she made fun of her and she felt badly about it afterward.

The student, in the above example, felt saddened and ashamed that she hadn't answered correctly in Nahuatl (mispronounced the word) - this might indicate that there is a high standard held for those who speak Nahuatl or are learning Nahuatl, but my personal observations while attending the classes in San Juan Totolcintla could not confirm this argument. In reexamining the incident through the lens of childhood psychology regarding shaming, I attempted to explain why some students are reluctant to continue with their Nahuatl usage and why, at the same time, some are policing their peers to supposedly speak better Nahuatl. I used the method of participant observation to determine the tone and nature of the teasing and shaming taking place and made note of the context in which these events happened. I then referred to best practices in classroom management regarding teasing; what is considered inappropriate and what is normal classroom banter. Finally, I looked at multiple scholarly sources among them (Lewis, 1992), (Dolezal, 2015), (Scheff, 2016) on shame, human emotion, childhood psychology and how these relate to teasing and the effects humiliation and shame on childhood development and social interactions.

In going a step further to build my argument which associates teasing and shaming amongst classmates to the broader societal shaming, I have outlined instances where students are teased and shamed for mispronouncing Nahuatl. This mispronunciation occurs because of inexperience with the language yet I have also captured recollections of teasing due to mispronunciation of Spanish due to it being a second language. Given the prevalent nature of teasing in the communities, which by

now may be apparent, I have considered that teasing may be a way in which boundaries are contested and maintained within these communities. As postulated by Herzfeld (2014), teasing could in fact be a presumption of familiarity or of cultural intimacy. Over the three-month period of research, I noticed that teasing occurred in all age groups and in all seven of the communities. Herzfeld defines cultural intimacy as the recognition of aspects that are considered a source of external embarrassment (outside of the community) but that are symbols of an officially shared identity within the community and provide insiders with the assurance of common sociality (Herzfeld, 2014). I agree that certain types of teasing are, in fact, expressions of cultural intimacy, but I suggest here too that the type of teasing and the derogatory and racist comments made may function as both a sign of community membership within the Balsas River valley, but may also serve as othering dependent upon the context and remarks made.

Osmar writes that speaking incorrectly or speaking with a different accent has been the object of jokes and mocking in many classrooms, which is reflected, above all, in schools where students from different places live together particularly boarding schools. He goes on to say that that students are discriminated against for being different from the student body majority. This is where I would argue that shaming for mispronounced words should be construed as a form of 'othering' or shaming instead of a purist argument, which may attempt to correlate the linguistic policing by some students or the feelings of inferiority expressed by others for not knowing Nahuatl fluently, as not inherently because the students strive for Nahuatl language proficiency, but because the students are potentially widening the rift between Spanish and Nahuatl by bullying and teasing by their peers.

My argument is further upheld by the fact that there seems to be a gradient of teasing within the classroom. When the students were required to speak Nahuatl for the debate, there was a lot of giggling poking fun and mocking going on, the students were carrying on and not being serious about the debate or the topic being discussed. Yet, an hour beforehand the students were participating in a poster project where they were using English (the language of instruction) and writing everything down, there was still an amount of banter back and forth but less obvious and less directed at one student or another and certainly not for linguistic register. And finally, when I was in charge of the classroom (which only happened a handful of times) I proceeded to teach them a few English words at their insistence. The students were very quiet and paid attention to me and the words I was saying, they mouthed each word and said things like “tree,” “flower,” and “blue,” to each other and to themselves, there were giggles but never any teasing or name calling because of a mispronunciation although they themselves realized that they were mispronouncing the words and asked for clarification. I maintain that this gradient of teasing reflects the gradient of language prestige and that because of the societal internalization of the notion that Nahuatl is a useless language and English a highly useful one, the students act accordingly as is evident in the vignettes I have illustrated above.

I believe that the teasing specifically happening in the classroom in San Juan Totolcintla serves as a shaming event to further devalue, undermine and create a separation from the teased students’ usage of Nahuatl. I believe it is also a way for students to assert their superiority with language. Language attitudes are learned behaviors; I suggest then that the children in San Juan Totolcintla are both testing the

boundaries and expressing those norms within the classroom as they maneuver through complex ideological viewpoints within the greater community.

My hypothesis then, is that the sense of shame the students feel about speaking Nahuatl are the repercussions and consequences of the humiliation Miss Nancy speaks about in the quote at the beginning of this section. Speaking very generally, it would seem that the humiliation, shame, and stigma which began during the colonization of Mexico by Spain in the 1500 has had a ripple effect that has diminished linguistic agency and resulted in the current language crisis. We can see this express itself linguistically in the interviews recorded by Hill and Hill in *“Speaking Mexicano”* (1986). In the 1970’s, when the interviews were recorded for research being conducted on the Malinche volcano, the interlocutors invoked a sense of change through the passage of time. Nahuatl speakers are considered backward where Spanish speakers are considered modern; “communities which have abandoned ‘Mexicano’ for some time said to have become civilized” (Hill & Hill 1986, p. 430-431). If this is the legacy that has been passed down through language socialization, then it's of little surprise to hear the students explain to me that they are embarrassed to speak a language that has for generations been thought to be backward and uncivilized.

The Effects of Shame and Humiliation on Children

“Shame is regarded as being a negative emotion that arises when one is seen and judged by others (whether they are present, possible, or imagined) to be flawed in some crucial way, or when some part of one's self is perceived to be inadequate, inappropriate or immoral. It is what is called a self-conscious emotion in that the object

of shame is oneself and, furthermore, it involves an awareness of how other people view the self.¹⁸ ¹⁹Shame experiences are varied and multiple in their expression. The resulting 'shame' is often used as an umbrella term to indicate an entire range of emotions from a mild twinge of embarrassment to the searing pain of 'mortification'²⁰. Hence, shame variants include a wide array of negative self-conscious experiences such as embarrassment, humiliation, chagrin, mortification, feelings of defectiveness or low self-worth²¹ "The intensity and expression of a shame experience depends on an extensive constellation of factors including one's culture, background, family experiences, personality and the immediate context. In general, shame is distinguished from guilt by a focus on the person rather than the act" (Dolezal & Lyons, 2017)

Shame is what researchers call a social emotion, "it is generated when we perceive or experience ourselves in a social context, in relation to others, families, peers, communities, and even countries" (Bath, 2019). And although shame effects all of us at some point in our lives, repetitive occurrences of humiliation or unresolved shame can leave a lasting mark on one's feelings of self-worth, identity, inclusion, and belonging into a social group. Shame is seen as a response to the external judgment of

¹⁸ Lewis, M. (1992) *Shame: the exposed self*. New York: The Free Press.

¹⁹ Zahavi, D. (2014) *Self and other: exploring subjectivity, empathy and shame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁰ Nathanson, D.L. (*Shame and pride: affect, sex and the birth of the self*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company

²¹ Dolezal, L. (2015) *The body and shame: phenomenology, feminism and the socially shaped body*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Gibson, M. (2016) Social worker shame: a scoping review. *Br J Soc Work* ;46:549–65.

others (Lo & Fung, 2011) and according to the literature if shame is internalized it can leave a lifelong feeling of unworthiness or disconnection.

Consider Don Pablo's interview in which he recounts his mispronunciation of "Chocolatazo", I find it interesting that after all these years he still remembers the incident as vividly as it happened recently. Even if he managed to forget it, as he noted in the interview, his friend would no doubt remind him, the same friend who jokes Don Pablo on becoming a schoolteacher (someone revered in the community), but still remembers when Don Pablo said '*chicolatazo*' instead of the proper *chocolatzo*. Although, Don Pablo laughs about it now, it may be that he felt a sense of shame for mispronouncing the unfamiliar Spanish word. To use this example, although Don Pablo does not state in the interview that he felt shame per se, we can see that moments of awkwardness and feelings of inferiority can indeed last a lifetime. We also this shaming in a narrative relayed to me by Doña E:

Pero en ese pueblito donde yo trabajaba, Atenxoxola, hablaban el Nahuatl. Entonces, cada que nos íbamos, íbamos en un carro guajolotera- de los autobuses esos carros que están en el terminal en Chilapa. Bueno, nos subíamos ahí, todos no íbamos, íbamos nada más en esa escuela íbamos nada más nosotros bilingües éramos cinco maestros bilingües en esa comunidad. Porque esa escuela es bilingüe porque ese pueblo hablan el Nahuatl, por eso es bilingüe, (y arribe eran monolingües hablaban el puro Español por eso mandaban este maestros monolingües). Pero te estoy hablando en aquel tiempo entonces si ya cada maestro mandaban de acuerdo a su lengua, en cada comunidad. Ya se quitó eso de que estábamos revueltos entonces ya se marginó por completo. Entonces estos maestros siempre cada que nos íbamos se iban burlando de nosotros los maestros; siempre decían , por ejemplo en Nahuatl, nosotros, muchos de los niños o nosotros mismos maestros, nos confundimos mucho la "O" y la "U" para decir este- un ejemplo "pelota" muchos dicen "peluta", entonces los maestros siempre iban diciendo eso, siempre iban diciendo, "ándale", dicen, "maestros ya vamos a jugar la 'peluta', ya vamos a jugar la 'peluta'!"

“In that village where I use to work, Atenxoxola, they spoke Nahuatl. Therefore, every time we went, we went in a “rural route” bus²²- the buses, those that are always at the station in Chilapa. Well, we used to get on the bus there, we all went, all five of the bilingual teachers went together because we all taught together. The school is bilingual, because in that town [Atenxoxola] they speak Nahuatl (the town above [above Atenxoxola] was monolingual, they only spoke Spanish, that’s why they sent monolingual teachers). But I’m talking to you about that time, when they [school district] sent teachers according to the language in each community. By this time, they had left behind the mixing [Hispanization]. Then, those teachers every time we went [the monolingual Spanish teachers] they would make fun of us [the bilingual] teachers; they would say... for example in Nahuatl we... a lot of kids and ourselves the teachers, we always confuse the “O” and the “U” to say things like ‘*pelota*’ (ball), many say ‘*peluta*’, so then the other teachers were always saying, ‘let’s go’, they say ‘teachers we’re going to play ball ‘*peluta*’ (pronounced with a strong Nahuatl accent.)!”

In researching more on shame and coping mechanisms I found Doñald Nathanson’s description the four characteristics of how individuals cope with shame in his publication “Compass of Shame” (Nathanson, 1994).

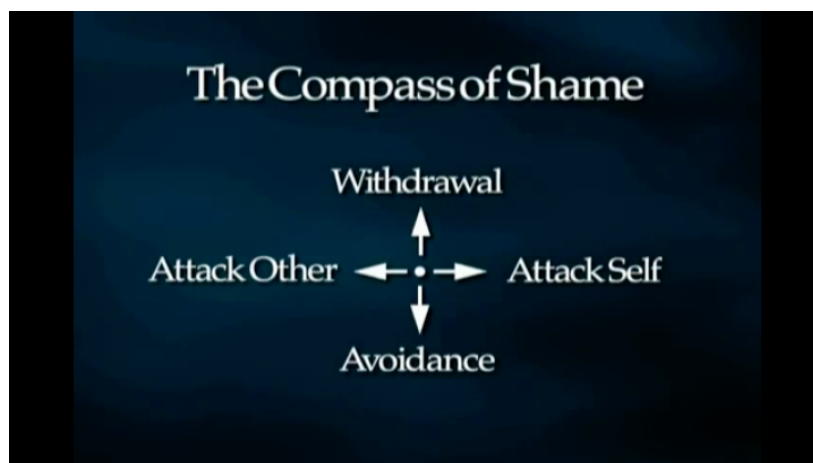


Fig5.4 Compass of Shame (Nathanson, 1994)

The four points of the compass he assigns as withdrawal (Nathanson, 1994 p 315-325) as a characteristic of managing shame- one of the aspects of withdrawal is not engaging verbally and this might well be what the students described when they discussed not speaking because the other kids make fun of them or because they feel

²² *Guajolotero* roughly translates to ‘one who/that has turkeys’ but is colloquially known as cheap bus transportation where people (and sometimes farm animals) are tightly packed for the trip into or out of an urban center from more rural or suburban areas.

ashamed to speak Nahuatl in the classroom. Another point on the compass Dr. Nathanson's compass is attacking others; we see this happen with the students' name calling and making fun of each other for mispronouncing Nahuatl words during the debate.

But where does this sense of inadequacy or disconnect (either intentional or unintentional) come from? Let me suggest that the sense of shame, which has threaded its way throughout my interviews, is the result of longstanding stigma of those of Native descent. Stigma, as defined by the discipline of sociology is the social phenomenon or process whereby individuals that are taken to be different in some way are rejected by the greater society in which they live based on that difference; stigma are labels that associate people with unfavorable or disapproved behavior and characteristics. In the case of my research, this stigma would include language and manner of speaking, as was illustrated above as well as other characteristics such a physical features and style of dress.

So, in summation, the students themselves have told me that they are ashamed to speak Nahuatl because their peers make fun of them, the elders in the community have noted that when word pronunciations are incorrectly produced in Spanish, as a result of speaking Nahuatl as a first language, they were made fun of and are reminded of or remember those mistakes to this day. To go even further with this theory, I will further illustrate the pervasive effects of stigma associated with speaking Nahuatl and even suggest intergenerational socialization processes of stigma and shame with the following excerpt from my interview with Doña Cleo. Doña Cleo, in one of my first

interviews with her, starts by giving an example of an exchange between a student's mother and herself.

Doña Cleo:

¿Y porque quiere aprender inglés? y su propia lengua se apena?

Doña Cleo:

"And why does he want to learn English? Is he ashamed of his own language?"

Doña Cleo (citando):

"Al decir, unos dicen es que no quiero que sufra como yo sufro. cuando me voy te empiezan a criticar o hablar mal de ti, qué por qué están hablando el dialecto," Doña Cleo dice, "ellos dicen el dialecto". Dices sí, pero es que mi hijo no quiero que los discriminan, le dijo, no es discriminación- al contrario, hay que discriminar a ellos los que no hablan [el Nahuatl]."

Doña Cleo (quoting the parent):

"like some people say, I don't want my son to suffer like I did. When I leave, the people start criticizing me or speaking badly about me because I speak [dialect]. I don't want them to discriminate against my son."

Doña Cleo continues her narrative by saying that she and her colleagues speak Nahuatl, which she hoped would help press the point of the benefits of bilingual education during these exchanges with parents from the community. Doña Cleo answered the mother of a student by responding, "Yes, I do speak [Nahuatl], if you want, we can chat in Nahuatl!" Then Doña Cleo goes on to recount a parent asking if everyone in the group (principal, school personnel) and Doña Cleo herself in her position as district supervisor also spoke Nahuatl. "Yes, I speak it" said the principal, "All my personnel speak it [Nahuatl]," replied the principal, "that is why we are here."

Doña Cleo: *¿Sí, pero usted no habla? Si, sí quieres platicamos en Nahuatl- pues y lo hablo, la directora personal dice, "si mi supervisora si lo habla," dice, ¿y usted? "Pues y también lo hablo todo en mi personal lo hablan por eso estamos aquí."*

"Yes, but you don't speak? "Yes, I do speak [Nahuatl], if you want, we can chat in Nahuatl!" Yes, I speak it" said the principal, "All my personnel speak it [Nahuatl]," replied the principal, "that is why we are here."

Doña Cleo:

"Bueno, pues entonces pues sí, dice que, trabaja usted con cantos [en Nahuatl]." Then the mother replies, "well then, he can learn some songs [in Nahuatl]."

Doña Cleo finished this section of her narrative by stating:

Por qué con trabajos si, no se ahora cómo está, no aceptaban [enseñar Nahuatl en la escuela], pero por lo [que] vimos que ahí luego empezaban las críticas con las personas, cuando íbamos a Iguala y cómo no pude pronunciar bien las cosas Los esos no pueden hablar, le digo, pero sí pueden hablar, es que le digo pues ellos a lo menos se le dificulta, pero ¿qué pues hablan puro español y aquí no, y ustedes hablan el Nahuatl?

“It took some convincing, I don't know the situation now, but before they [the parents] didn't accept it [the learning of Nahuatl in the classroom]” The parents said for the same reasons I mentioned before, we have already been through that, then the criticisms started; when we went to Iguala, they said, ‘those people can't speak, they don't pronounce things correctly’.” (Personal Communication, Doña Cleo 03.06.2019)

How Shame Affects the Vitality of Minority Language Usage: Data Collection and Analysis

The following is a representation of the survey given to both classrooms, Francisco Villa in San Juan Totolcintla and the second in General Vicente Guerrero in Tulimán. Both classes, as mentioned previously, are 5th grade classrooms and the students are aged ten (give or take a few months). A comparison of the affirmative answers is represented in Table 5.2.

1.) ¿Hay alguien en tu familia que habla Nahuatl? Si ____ No ____

1.) Is there someone in your family who speaks Nahuatl yes ____ No ____

2.) ¿Hablan en Nahuatl contigo? Si ____ No ____

2.) Do they speak in Nahuatl with you? Yes ____ No ____

3.) ¿Sí la respuesta es si, entiendes lo que dicen en Nahuatl? Si ____

No ____

3.) If the answer is yes (to the above questions) do you understand what they say to you in Nahuatl? Yes ____ No ____

4.) ¿Hablas Nahuatl? Si ____ No ____

4.) Do you speak Nahuatl? Yes ____ No ____

5.) ¿Crees que es importante aprender e/o seguir hablando el Nahuatl?

Si ____ No ____

5.) Do you believe it is important to learn and/or continue to speak Nahuatl?

Yes ____ No ____

6.) *¿Sí hablas Nahuatl, tienes pena de hablar el Nahuatl con tus compañeros de la escuela; con tus maestros; cuando hay extranjeros presente? (sí respondiste "sí" a algunos de estas preguntas escribe en el espacio abajo la razón porque).*

6.) If you speak Nahuatl, are you ashamed to speak Nahuatl with your classmates; with your teachers; when there are strangers present? (if you responded 'yes' to any of these questions write the reason why in the space below.)

7.) *¿Alguna vez alguien se ha burlado de ti por hablar Nahuatl? (sí la respuesta es "no" o no hablas Nahuatl, simplemente indica "no") Si _____ No _____*

7.) Has anyone ever made fun of you for speaking Nahuatl? (If the answer is 'no' or you don't speak Nahuatl, simply mark 'no'). Yes____ No____

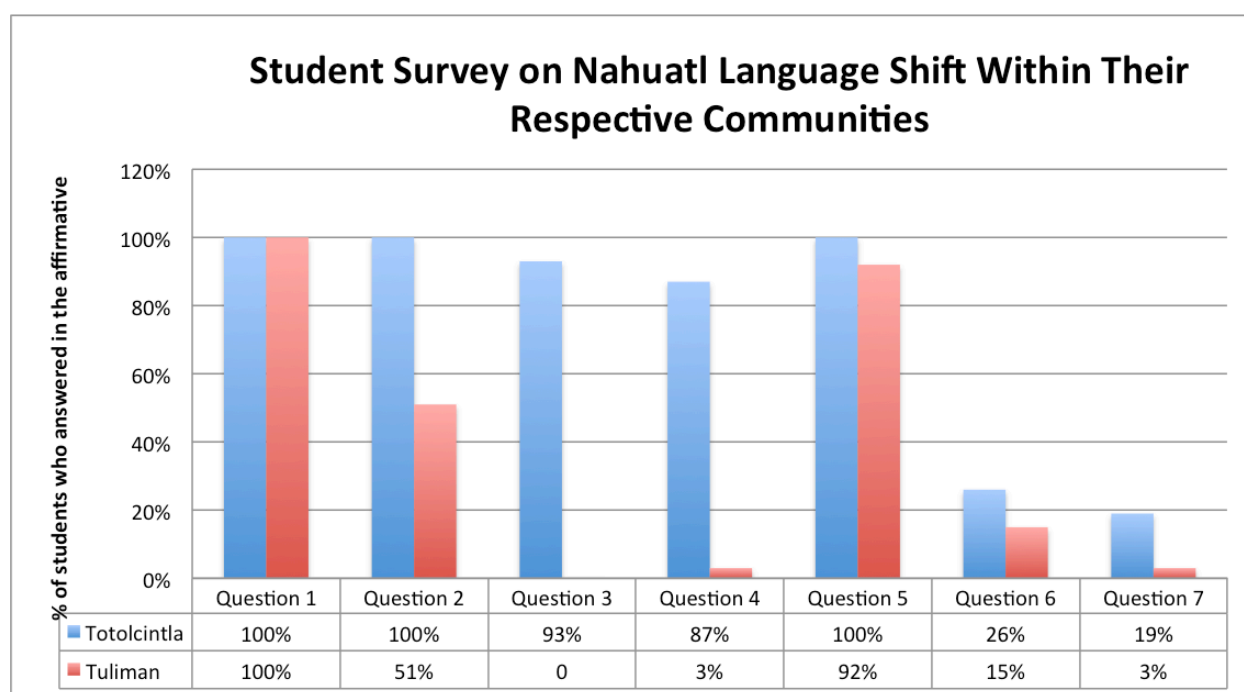


Table 5.2 Student Survey on Nahuatl Language Shift Within Their Respective Communities

From the table 5.2 we see that the first few questions of the survey help to give context to what the language landscape is in both classes. Every student in each class affirmed that they have Nahuatl speaking family members. Compared with the 51% of the students in Tulimán have had some exposure to Nahuatl in the form of hearing it

spoken to them by family. In San Juan Totolcintla, every student has been exposed to Nahuatl and we see the 87% of students speak Nahuatl in San Juan Totolcintla and one child claimed to speak 'some' Nahuatl in Tulimán. The key metrics important to this research are questions 5 through 7 which give insight into the notions of shame with a data driven emphasis on which students are the ones experiencing shame and in which context that shame is most prevalent (with teachers, classmates, from outsiders, etc.).

Question 5 asked the students if they believed Nahuatl was important to them, almost unanimously, in both classes, the students said that it was important to them, many of them stating 'this is our language' or "this is how we speak" others from Tulimán stated that they thought it was important because they can speak with our grandparents or elders or because it is a part of their history or culture. One of the few students who was opposed to keeping the language vital was a student from Tulimán, who wrote it's not important because "*ya casi no existe el Nahuatl*", " Nahuatl almost doesn't exist [anymore]". This sentiment is one that may not have been expressed in the classroom by others, but I have definitely heard from others when discussing language loss in this region.

Question 6 asked if the students were ever ashamed to speak Nahuatl. For this answer I asked that they write a sentence or two explaining if 'yes' why- this was particularly pertinent for the students in San Juan Totolcintla as those were the students who had a better handle on the language and used it on a semi regular basis. The responses I received were:

- "*No lo hablo mucho luego me trabo y se burlan de que no lo puedo hablar bien*"
I don't speak it a lot because I mispronounce [the words] and they make fun of me that I can't speak well.

- *“Si tengo pena hablar con mis compañeros, pero en los maestros casi no porque mis compañeros se ríen y los maestros no se ríen y te contestan”*

Yes, I’m ashamed to speak with my classmates, but with the teachers not really because my classmates laugh at me and the teachers don’t laugh, and they answer.”

- *“[Si] Porque mis compañeros se burlan”*

[Yes] Because my classmates make fun [of me]

- *“[No] Porque es nuestro idioma y es muy importante aprender Nahuatl”*

[No] Because it’s our language and it’s important to Speak Nahuatl

As illustrated above, there are a number of reasons given for either being ashamed to speak or not being ashamed to speak the language and although 26% of the students said they were in some way ashamed to speak Nahuatl, the reasons given were unexpected from what I had previously recorded in preliminary interviews preparing for this research. I was prepared to hear that the students were feeling pressure from the older generation to focus on Spanish as it would help them academically and in the job field in the future, but this peer pressure for classmates was an aspect of the research I was unprepared for and wanted to find out more about. In question 7, I was able to illicit a little bit more on the topic of getting made fun of for language choice as I asked specifically is, they were laughed at or made fun of for speaking Nahuatl. The affirmative answers I received were only 22% of the 58 students polled, their answers seemed to fit the pattern of feelings of shame and being considered different or as an outsider in their own community because of not being able to speak well and being laughed at. These are the responses (from the same surveys as above) from students in San Juan Totolcintla.

- *“Que hablo diferente y no puedo estar con ellos”*

“That I speak differently, and I can’t be with them”

- *“Me sentí triste y me dijeron que nunca podre hablar Nahuatl”*

“I felt sad and they said I would never [be able] to speak Nahuatl”

- *“Me sentí mal porque me dijeron que no puedo hablar bien y me sentí mal”*
“I felt very badly because they said that I couldn’t speak well, and I felt bad”

- *“A veces se burlan de mi la verdad te vas a sentir muy triste”*
“Sometimes they make fun of me, actually, you would feel very sad”

These responses give a glimpse into the feelings of inadequacy the students are experiencing in regard to speaking Nahuatl within the school setting. The students’ choice to use Spanish over Nahuatl make more sense after hearing that they are made fun of by their peers and is understandable under the circumstances.

I will acknowledge at this point in the chapter that some bullying and fun making is normal in any classroom and this could fall under that category, but in my observations with the students I hear on numerous occasions the students mispronounce words in Spanish and they were not joked or ridiculed for the mistake (that I was aware of or could audibly hear). This doesn’t mean that the students aren’t also made fun of for speaking Spanish incorrectly, but the data seems to point directly to an underlying sentiment that bullying someone for Speaking Nahuatl either correctly or incorrectly is something that is acceptable to do amongst each other.

Combating the Effects of Historical Shame in Language Revitalization Programs

Because my argument involves the school system’s history with institutionally promoted shaming and coercive Spanish language programming, the natural next step is to address what the damages are suggest means by which the communities can recover. I will start here, when McCarty was asked whether schools can save indigenous languages, she remarked, “we must bear in mind that schools are peopled institutions just as languages are peopled symbolic systems [...] we are talking about

human agency.” “We cannot depend on schools and institutions alone to save our indigenous languages we must also recruit the communities the families and the children themselves as actors/ agents in the movement to revitalize their language” (McCarty, in Hornberger 2011: p 174).

This brings the argument full circle in addressing, once again, the aspect of agency. If the highly prevalent attitude, passed down through the generations, is that indigeneity is synonymous with poverty, low intelligence, and many other undesirable characteristics, then each generation will work to distance itself from indicators such as language that would mark one as being indigenous. This then reflects the aspect of language loyalty with the intrinsic sense of identity and how individuals wish to present themselves to the public and dependent upon their context and socialization both in school and in the larger community. Therefore, in order to help shift the language ideology of a community who has, for centuries been told they are expendable and their languages have no value, to an ideology of renewal, the speech community should be moved from the margins to the center of focus within the larger society. Institutions need to develop new ways of defining the nation with a framework of inclusive identity and one where reparations are made for past wrongs. The speech community should be at the table deciding school policy and language policy (which is becoming more and more the case in Mexico) and new modes of language dissemination and learning applications would go a long way in reviving languages that are not being transmitted in the traditional ways and passed down through families.

Throughout this chapter I have endeavored to outline and define the linguistic contexts of the Balsas River basin and highlight the particular language ideologies at

play within the area of my research. The concepts of historical shame and humiliation play a vital role in the prolonged corrosion of the Nahuatl language. Tulumán is at the point that Nahuatl is all but lost as a living language it would be considered by linguists to be 'moribund' at this point in time as it is not being actively passed down to younger generations. The answers the students gave to my survey and interview questions, regarding language loyalties, and Nahuatl language usage in the future, were interesting in that the disconnect between ideal and action was ever-present. And although the students verbally affirmed that Nahuatl was important to them, their everyday actions, in-class responses, and comments during the debate, the survey, and interviews made it clear that not enough is being done in the school system or by the community itself to raise the prestige and create equality of the language and preserve the language past the current generation. What is being expressed therefore, is a dichotomy between co-existing language ideologies which is to say language equals cultural capital as an identity marker but that the Nahuatl language as such is also a stigma which prevents the speakers from attaining certain prestige both inside and outside of the speech community. I suggest that shame needs to be mitigated where applicable and countered with child-centered activities that focus less on performance and more on social and emotional ties to the language. In doing so, the community can break the cycle of intergeneration shaming for the use of Indigenous languages (or shaming of those misspeaking Spanish as a result of their (L1) being Nahuatl), which in essence, is forcing the Nahuatl language and culture to be lost in order to stamp out the stigma attached to indigeneity.

Significance and Repercussions

My hope is that my research builds upon the work being done by researchers and scholars across the globe and adds to the compilation of data that clearly draws the connection between language choice, language ideology, and historical shame; in a region and “Society which inflicts the fiercest sort of discrimination upon people who “speak Mexicano” (Hill & Hill 1986 p. 440), language is deeply linked to “primordial ‘racial’ qualities, of backwardness and stupidity, or of advancement and intelligence” (Hill & Hill 1986 p.438) this is linguistic discrimination and carries through even into 2019 the International Year of the Indigenous Language- this is the heart of the real research problem.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have explored the feelings of shame as an historical legacy of nationalism in Mexico in the early 20th century. I Used references from my own interviews regarding education policies that used the bilingual school as bridge mechanism to quickly move indigenous students into using Spanish as their *lingua franca*.

This chapter has also touched on the aspects of shame and stigma and why language loyalties are corrupted/corroded when humiliation is a reoccurring phenomenon in situations where Nahuatl is used in public. This corrosion of the language has affected the collective community and has shifted language sentiments in favor of the colonizer’s language; Spanish. Doña Cleo’s interview illustrated that parents were less willing to have their children learn Nahuatl and more enthusiastic about their learning English, in this scenario English is the prestige language because it is viewed as progressive and English has the ability to allow individuals the opportunity for economic growth whereas Nahuatl is seen as primitive and uncivilized. The two

interviews I used at the end of this chapter were taken from the Malinche volcano region in Puebla (a few hours' drive from my research site), but serves to highlight and corroborate my finding in the field by reiterating the speaking of Nahuatl comes with a stigma. The humiliation and shame of that stigma is what parents are trying to avoid as well as the desire to have their children spend time in school learning a language that is associated with progress not with the stigma of poverty.

Chapter 6

Moving Forward: Expanding Linguistic Domains

Niquitoa

Niqitoa ni Nezahualcóyotl:
¿Cuix oc nelli nemohua in tlalticpac?
An nochipa tlalticpac:
zan achica ya nican.
Tel ca chalchihuitl no xamani,
no teocuitlatl in tlapani,
no quetzalli poztequi.
An nochipa tlalticpac:
zan achica ye nican.

Yo Nezahualcóyotl lo pregunto: ¿Acaso de veras se vive con raíz en la tierra? Nada es para siempre en la tierra: Sólo un poco aquí. Aunque sea de jade se quiebra, Aunque sea de oro se rompe, Aunque sea plumaje de quetzal se desgarrar. No para siempre en la tierra: Sólo un poco aquí.	I, Nezahualcóyotl, ask this: By any chance is it true that one lives rooted in the earth? Not always in the earth: Here for only just a while; Though it be made of jade, it shatters; Though it be made of gold, it breaks; Though it be made of quetzal plumage, It shreds apart. Not forever here on earth; Here for only just a while.
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Fig. 6.1 “Yo Nezhualcótotl lo Pregunto”

“Mictlán: Un Viaje al Mundo de Los Muertos” is the title of a 2018 commercial touted as the first ever nationally televised (Mexico) commercial in Nahuatl. The commercial opens with men, painted as skeletons, dancing in an apparent ritual as the

narrator in an omniscient voice recites the poem ‘*Niquitoa*’ by tlatoani, architect, and philosopher Nezahualcóyotl²³.

Mictlán²⁴ is the Nahuatl word for the underworld, “a place where the dead fight to reach eternal rest” as stated in the commercial. These timeless spirit warriors fight, on screen, through the nine trials or levels of the underworld as momentous music plays in the background. The imagery is powerful and aims to evoke a sense of pride in the Aztec warriors of long ago reminding the viewer of what Mexico once was and connecting them in time during that particular celebration to those that have gone before us. The release of the commercial, during the celebration of the *ofrendas* or *Día de Los Muertos* (see chapter three) which coincides with the Catholic traditions of All Saints Day and All Souls Day (and the secular observance of Halloween) is one of the most celebrated holidays in Nahua communities and especially in those that I have presented in this ethnography (I have even had a visitor from this community come to the US and then cut her stay short in order to be home for the preparation of the *ofrendas*). *Día de los Muertos* is equally important throughout Mexico where it is not uncommon to see national news channels display live aerial views of some of the largest cemeteries at night during the festivities.

This television commercial seems to attempt to unite the viewer, if only for a moment, with the deeply rooted Nahua traditions of the past and refers to a shared heritage in those who claim Mestizo ancestry (it also encourages the purchase of beer products which has another uniting factor in the *compadrazgo* system²⁵). The

²³ Martínez, José (1972). *Nezahualcóyotl, Vida y Obra*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. p. 11

²⁴ Mictlán/ miktla:n/ s : Lugar donde los muertos luchan por alcanzar el descanso eterno.

²⁵ Sidney W. Mintz and Eric R. Wolf *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 1950), pp. 341-368

references made in this commercial seek to evoke a sense of connection to the ways of the ancestors and the language of the Aztec kings. The use of the poem written by a highly prestigious and well-educated Nahua ruler gives this advertisement an air of prestige and intellectualism for those who understand the reference used and, for those who don't, the narration along with the on-screen visuals of the stanzas floating across the background looks visually appealing. I believe that the beer company is tapping into the current trend in Mexico's pop-culture of Indigenous language revival and revitalization. This minute-long advertisement is an interesting look at the potential that media has to influence viewers by striking a nerve with Nahuatl speakers and intellectuals alike calling attention to the prestigious past of the Aztec Empire and reawakening that sentiment (even if only for a moment) in order to make beer sales.

The above-mentioned advertisement is only one of the many, more recent, expressions of the efforts to promote Nahuatl language expansion to new media in recent years. Such outlets include YouTube interview videos about Nahua language and culture, dubbed syndicated children's television programs such as Sesame Street (*Tianquiz Paquiliztli* or happy plaza) and dictionary apps and twitter hashtags (#nahua) focused on Nahuatl language usage. These types of creative expansion into new linguistic domains will, I hope, create a renewed interest in the Nahua culture and return some of the prestige to the language. In an interview I had with one of the elders, someone from the middle generation overhearing the conversation interjected into my conversation that media has a huge influence on the community and especially the children:

Sal: *Pero yo pienso que tiene mucho que ver, aparte de todo lo que usted ha dicho, la televisión...*

Sal: But I think that the television has a lot to do with it, apart from what you've said.

DÑE: *No, esos son medios.*

DÑE: No, that is media.

Sal: *No, sí, pero tía yo digo por experiencia propia por ejemplo en la televisión solamente vez gente que habla español y nadie habla Nahuatl, entonces incluso entre la misma gente y hasta los mismos niños ya están en grupo- el desmadre.*

Sal: No, yes, but aunt, I say from my own experience for example on television we only see people who speak Spanish and no one speaks Nahuatl, so even among the same people and even the same children are already in a group- the 'desmadre' (expletive for disaster).

The above interjection was made by Sal, a father of three teenage boys who were raised here in the US (yet both parents are from Tulumán), who knows first-hand that social media and television greatly influence kids and adults alike; his argument above is that the kids (in Totolcintla and Tulumán) only see Spanish speakers on television and media outlets, which are influenced by pop-cultural trends, hence assigning Spanish as the rightful language and, going one step further, giving prestige to those who speak a certain type of Spanish. Taking that into consideration my sincere hope is that the evocation of past prestige is not simply a sales ploy of paying homage to the once revered race which is now 'extinct', as in the nostalgic rememberings of a powerful race that once was the way many observed the Native Americans of the Old West here in the United States.

Concluding Thoughts

The research topic for this ethnography started out as a question concerning linguistic prejudice and quickly became a question regarding the correlation between humiliation and shame reported by all three generations interviewed for this project. In researching claims made during my interviews, I learned that Mexico's formal education system has had a long history of discrimination despite the seemingly benign program

titles of indigenous or bilingual education, and that it in fact has perpetuated what I refer to here as coercive language policies of erasure. I found that the education system, from its inception had policies in place to homogenize communities through rural public-school programming which of course was used to create a population of monolingual Spanish speakers. As outlined in chapter four, the Mexican education system ran a campaign of erasure by implementing coercive language education policies and compounded that effort with the use of humiliation, shaming, to further reinforce the stigma surrounding indigeneity and Nahuatl speaking communities. The education system devalued the language and damaged the self-esteem and sense of identity and agency of the students and communities who were first introduced to this form of schooling. This created social stresses in traditionally close communities and disrupted the transmission of indigenous knowledge retained in language. The subsequent generations of Nahua people were forced to disassociate with their linguistic and cultural past as they distanced themselves from the shame of being considered *un indio*. These aspects of the education system created traumatic experiences for the students involved and, as I argue in this paper, have been passed down through the three generations represented in this text.

Through the trans-generational interview comparison and subsequent analysis of the semantic associations of the multipurpose use of the word *pena* or shame, which was presented in chapter five, I argue that the rapid language shift from Nahuatl to Spanish in the communities of the Balsas region of Guerrero, Mexico (are currently experiencing) is due, in great part, to the stigmatization of the Nahuatl language as a

marker of indigeneity, which, given the racial stratification of Mexican culture, is thus considered uncivilized, uneducated and perpetually economically disadvantaged.

My hypothesis, that the sense of shame students feel about speaking Nahuatl is in fact a lingering effect and direct consequence of the humiliation and shame my collaborators recounted in their interviews regarding their life experiences going through the indigenous schooling system as first monolingual Nahuatl and then bilingual members of their respective communities. In drawing my conclusions about the validity of my arguments, I began by drawing from the distant past to show the continuity and historical progression to back up my claim. Speaking very generally then, it would seem that the humiliation, shame, and stigma, which began during the Conquest has had a ripple effect throughout the generations. This was confirmed by Miss Nancy's statement that colonization by the Spaniards was so effective that it created a lasting impact that has had lasting consequences, which are felt to present day society. The public education system perpetuated, augmented, and accelerated that process during the years following the Mexican Revolution, which we can see expressed linguistically not only in my interviews presented here in the ethnography, but also stated quite plainly in the interviews recorded by Hill and Hill in "*Speaking Mexicano*" (1986). During the 1970's when the interviews were recorded for research being conducted on the Malinche volcano, the interlocutors invoked a sense of change through the passage of time. The statement that was recorded encapsulated ideology that Nahuatl speakers are considered backward where Spanish speakers are considered modern; "communities which have abandoned '*Mexicano*' for some time are said to have become civilized" (Hill & Hill 1986, p. 430-431). If this is the legacy that has been

passed down through language socialization, then it's of little surprise to hear the students explain to me that they are embarrassed to speak a language that has for generations been thought to be backward and uncivilized.

Children are perceptive and pick up on the subtle expressions, comments, and sentiments of adults around them. When Doña E told her daughter that Nahuatl isn't useful and she can't be bothered to teach her, she was sending a clear message to the next generation that Nahuatl has no value to anyone. This attitude, coming from a woman whose first language is Nahuatl and who was monolingual Nahuatl into late adolescence is an example of how criticism of the language was internalized and is now accepted as truth. The example here of Doña E and her daughter discussing Nahuatl shows clearly the ambivalence of this older generation. In her initial remarks during our interview she says she speaks the language and considers herself Nahua, her tone, difficult to capture here, was one tinged with pride or at least one of security in her identity. Then, toward the end of the interview, as she is recounting a story about Doña E's daughter wanting to learn the language which would give her an advantage in her academic and professional career, Doña E is reluctant to teach her daughter much of anything citing her own trouble with Nahuatl language literacy as the main reason she won't help. But as the next quote reveals she has bought into the ideology that Nahuatl is useless.

DÑE: *allí lo que pasa es el grupo que entrevistastes está muy enajenado a los medios, está muy enajenado a la lengua española o español o castellano para más nosotros hemos manejado castellano porque es lo que hablamos, porque español no lo hablamos. Entonces allí es una enajenación que esta tal vez lo transmitieron los padres, "ya no hables porque oyes, te vez mal" por una parte influyen mucho los papa. Te vuelvo a repetir, es que muchos padres de familia son orgullosos, no les permiten que hablen ya sus hijos porque saben lo que se están comendando ahorita actualmente ya no hablen el Nahuatl, ni mixteco, ni*

tlapaneco, porque van a los estados unidos ya no pueden hablar el español menos van a poder hablar el inglés. Mejor aprendan inglés, incluso ve que en las escuelas el gobierno está metiendo el inglés, ahí en la escuela indígena esta un párrafo donde meten ya la calificación del inglés porque es el pudiente, la lengua inglesa, ingles es una lengua pudiente. En cambio, mi manera de ver las lenguas indígenas se considera como inferiores, como que no sirve, como que no te ayuda... ¡como que no te ayuda pues en nada!

DÑE: There, what happens is, the group that you interviewed is very attached to the media, it is very attached from the Spanish language or Spanish or Castilian and more we have used Castilian because that is what we speak, because we do not speak Spanish. So, there is an attachment that may have been transmitted by the parents, "No longer speak because, hey, you look bad" on the one hand the parents are very influential. I repeat to you, many parents are proud, they do not allow their children to speak [Nahuatl] anymore because they know what is currently commendable, and that is to no longer speak Nahuatl, nor Mixtec, nor *Tlapaneco*. Because they go to the United States and if they can't speak Spanish, they have even less of a chance to learn English. Better to learn English, you see that the government is putting English in schools. In the indigenous school [system] there is a paragraph where they already put the English qualification because it makes money, the English language, English is a wealthy language. Instead, my way of seeing it is indigenous languages are considered inferior, as it does not function [it's useless], as it does not help you, as it does not help you at all!

To sum up what I believe we are observing from Doña E's statements, I believe

that she is expressing the long-term consequences and results of the systematic school policy of erasure of the Nahuatl language, but also expressing her internalization of the uselessness of the Nahuatl language in the economic arena. As I very briefly touched on in chapter two, the Nahuatl language was not always considered useless. It was in fact the *lingua franca* for years following the Conquest. Many court documents and religious texts were written in Nahuatl as the commonly spoken language of the people of New Spain. The delegitimizing of the indigenous languages came later and was accelerated, as I have mentioned before, with the independence of the Mexican state and then the reunification efforts after the revolution.

The second generation I interviewed about language shift and ideologies of linguistic inferiority is those of childbearing age; Miss Nancy's generation. To sum up

her responses to my interview questions regarding linguistic discrimination, language loss, and shame, she recounted her childhood as a shy student who spoke very little in order to hide the fact that she couldn't speak Spanish. She then went on to university and still neglected to tell anyone she spoke any other language than Spanish. She was ashamed to identify as a Nahua person or speaker of Nahuatl and the only reason why she is a bilingual teacher is because it is a means of gainful employment, but she plainly states that it is not a calling and she only began speaking the language again because she needed to once she returned to her community and was in the job market. Only then did she find a use for the language and decide to openly identify with the culture and language. The economic incentive gave the language a type of prestige in the state education system.

Osmar, who also belongs to this middle generation, stated that the discontinuation of language transmission occurred within his generation. He witnessed first-hand the transition from his grandparents speaking Nahuatl fluently, his father Don Pablo a monolingual Nahuatl speaker until fifth grade and then Osmar himself was not taught the language at all. His family members spoke the language around him, but no one ever endeavored to teach him or his siblings. His mother, Doña Eusebia, told me that there was a strong sentiment which started in her generation that speaking Nahuatl to children was detrimental to their learning Spanish and that Nahuatl was a useless language. The teachers prohibited parents in Tulimán from speaking to their children in Nahuatl using this tactic to dissuade the transmission of the language.

Desafortunadamente en la comunidad la lengua nauatl dejó de ser funcional con el paso del tiempo, por la razón de que los padres prefirieron enseñar español en vez de nauatl a sus hijos no utilizaron la lengua nauatl para comunicarse con sus hijos a pesar de que la hablaban así que con el paso de los años se ha ido

perdiendo junto con la mayoría de personas mayores que lo hablaban hoy en día quedan pocas personas que lo hablan entre ellos sobre todo personas de la tercera edad, pero no en personas jóvenes incluso padres de familia desconocen la lengua nauatl en su totalidad porque asistieron a escuelas monolingües.

Unfortunately, in the community the Nahuatl language ceased to be functional with the passage of time. For this reason, parents prefer to teach Spanish instead of Nahuatl to their children. They didn't use the Nahuatl Language to communicate with their children, even though they spoke the language [Nahuatl] so, over the years, it has been lost along with the majority of older people who spoke it. Nowadays, there are few people who speak it among themselves, above all, [mostly] the elderly people- but not the young people, including the parents of the students; they do not know the Nahuatl language in its totality -this is because they attended monolingual schools.

Yo estude en escuelas monolingües. tuve compañeros en la secundaria que hablaban el nauatl y en ocasiones al leer o platicar, causaban risas entre los compañeros se burlaban más de ellos fuera del salón de clases o en la calle. recuerdo que de estos alumnos muy pocos terminaron la secundaria la mayoría dejaba la escuela en el primer año. y la discriminación ha estado presente en la sociedad por los medios de comunicación hacen pasar al indígena mal llamado indio, como una persona pobre ignorante o tonta de la cual se mofan ridiculizándolo, como si no se dieran cuenta que el hablar dos idiomas es difícil y no todos lo logran que tienen una gama de conocimientos ancestrales transmitidos de generación en generación, es decir, solo exhiben sus dificultades pero no muestran sus cualidades por ello se menosprecian y se aíslan como personas inferiores.

I attended monolingual schools. I had classmates in middle school that spoke Nahuatl and on occasions when they read or spoke, they would be laughed at and made fun of by their classmates [both] inside the classroom and outside of school. I remember that very few of these students finished middle school; the majority would leave in the first year. Discrimination has been present in society because the media presents the indigenous as "Indian" [synonymous with] like a poor ignorant or foolish person whom they mock ridiculing them, as if they [the media] did not realize that speaking two languages is difficult and not everyone can achieve that. They [the indigenous] have a range of ancestral knowledge transmitted from generation to generation, that is, only the media exhibits their difficulties but does not show their [the indigenous peoples] qualities; for that reason, they are despised and isolated as inferior persons.

The third generation presented in this ethnography is that of the ten-year old 5th graders attending school in both Tulimán and San Juan Totolcintla. I have used student quotes throughout this work to highlight the many situations where the word *pena* is

used to describe sadness, shame or embarrassment, which I discussed in chapter five, in reference to Fig. 5.3. I did this to show that there is indeed a correlation between the semantic associations of the word *pena*, and the responses gathered from the students, and that this shame is why the students are reluctant to continue with their Nahuatl usage. This was most definitely the case in San Juan Totolcintla and Miss Nancy specifically told me on one of my first days in observation of her class that the students were shy or embarrassed to speak Nahuatl around me and that she was working hard to get them to speak more in class for the benefit of my research.

In going a step further to build my argument associating teasing and shaming among peers in the classroom in relation to the broader societal shaming carried out by the teachers in public education, I have outlined throughout this ethnography instances where students are teased and shamed for mispronouncing Nahuatl words or generally speaking and seem to feel much more ashamed to speak the language in San Juan Totolcintla where Nahuatl is still used daily. My arguments for this type of teasing as connected to the historical shaming and denigration of the language are complex and are not defined in the actual act of teasing itself but are found in the reasons behind the teasing. First, to frame teasing in general, which is pretty common in the classroom setting, teasing is how students attempt to rank themselves, it can be a power play, it can play up common social attitudes and perpetuate an us versus them mentality where students side with the one doing the teasing by laughing and joining in or take the side of the one being teased by defending them or telling the teacher. This aspect of childhood seems to be almost a universal characteristic and is seen in classrooms around the world. But as more research is being done in the fields of childhood

psychology and education, researchers are finding that teasing is detrimental to the overall social-emotional well-being of the children being teased.

I believe that the teasing specifically happening in the classroom in San Juan Totolcintla functioned as shaming events in order to devalue and undermine the teased students' usage of Nahuatl. I believe it is a way for the Spanish dominant speaker(s) to not only assert their superiority because of either their perfect usage of both languages or their preference to only speak Spanish, but also to demarcate which peers are not one of the/their group because those students being teased misspeak when using Nahuatl (or in some cases Spanish also due to the phonological variation because the teased is L1 Nahuatl, as stated in Don Pablo's narrative and also commented on in Osmar's remarks on his peer in Middle school). This may seem abstract but the overarching point is that these attitudes are learned behaviors the children are testing out and expressing within the classroom, and are built upon ideological viewpoints within the greater community which has, over the period of eighty years, internalized the inferiority of Nahuatl language usage and now defines the way adult individuals interact within the community and carry out their daily lives in contact with one another.

As discussed in chapter five, shame and humiliation have a detrimental effect on emotional wellbeing and social development of children. The act of shaming triggers a response in a child, one of four outlined in the *Compass of Shame*; I have proposed in this ethnography that my interpretation of the student's reluctance to speak Nahuatl is in part due to the use of shaming as a way to dissuade individuals from doing something considered 'bad' or socially undesirable. In the quotes I have pulled from the surveys (see chapter five), the students state that they feel they will be laughed at for

mispronouncing Nahuatl, and therefore are discouraged from speaking and more reluctant in future to attempt to speak in front of their peers. I have come to this conclusion because in observing the students interact with each other this seems to be a reasonable explanation for why the students feel ashamed of a language for which they have never been directly discriminated against. In my participant observations I have noted that when I played the telephone game with the students in English, they had no shame in the production of English words no matter how incorrect they sounded. The students listened intently and parroted back each word I said. There was little teasing going on; most would say the words in English (example: tree or flower) to themselves a few times and then to a companion or back to me for correction. They wanted to learn and were eager, no shame in how they sounded or who said it better. Therefore, language ideologies and perceptions of value play a huge role in language transmission and active acquisition within the schools I visited.

Further supporting my claims are the first-hand accounts which Osmar, in his interview, notes regarding students who make fun of each other for making mistakes in both languages, but in fact tease each other more for speaking Nahuatl. Don Pablo stated the same basic pattern when speaking about his time at the boarding school. In support of my hypothesis, this teasing relates back to the students' sense of identity and how they ranked themselves within their various overlapping speech communities given the overlapping ideological viewpoints within these communities of the Balsas Region. I am therefore arguing, as stated above, that the students are teasing each other about the language in an effort to discourage the usage of Nahuatl within their peer group. They do this because 1) they see it as odd or outdated- kids laugh at and make fun of

anything that is different. 2) the students have heard other adults speak disparagingly about the language and therefore have formed an opinion at a young age that Nahuatl has little value and those who speak it are ignorant or backward. Their parents may be 'proud people' as one of my interviewers put it and refuse to let their children learn the Nahuatl language, again going back to the original argument for trans-generational factors of shame and humiliation. The students may have internalized the middle generations language ideology that Nahuatl is inherently backward, and associated with humiliation and ignorance, the students would therefore attempt to distance themselves from those who speak Nahuatl through teasing and laughing at those who do. The child who blurted out 'Nahuatl isn't cool' in the middle of our classroom debate was, according to his teacher, from a household who spoke Nahuatl at home. This therefore suggests that he is distancing himself from the language he and his family spoke. I questioned the origin of this attitude in a ten-year-old and how he decided that the community's ancestral language is not cool? My response is that he learned it from someone, he must have had an experience, or his family has had discussions in the past about the language which he has picked up on. The parents or grandparent generations are therefore transmitting this ideological view that Nahuatl is inferior and Spanish as superior. The State-run school system brought about those ideological views and, as Doña E stated, the teachers pounded those views into the students. In my observations of the coercive language ideologies maintained by both state and federal education policies, I was able to correlate the practice of local agency significant decrease as these views and attitudes curtailed Nahuatl use in public spaces. Now, two generations later, those fifth graders would rather learn Spanish and English and forget

Nahuatl. I propose then that this is the outcome of direct cause and effect. And lastly, 3) the students who make fun of the other students may not be doing so because they speak Nahuatl fluently, but if they are, they are signaling to the other students receiving the teasing that they are not true members of the culture because they do not speak the language correctly. This particular explanation relates to the students feeling either inferior or superior based on language production. This teasing goes both ways and, in both languages, as I have presented above because if Spanish is mispronounced, it is attributed to the identity of the student. If they say something in Spanish incorrectly it's because the student speaks Nahuatl as L1 and is unable to pronounce Spanish correctly because of it (the reason teachers admonished parents to only speak Spanish in the home to facilitate their student's Spanish language acquisition). If Nahuatl is spoken incorrectly it is because the student is ignorant (given that they are of an indigenous background and are then lower in the hierarchy because they do not speak fluent Nahuatl. Shame and humiliation have a trans-generational and lasting impact. The teasing and banter between the students presented here at the outset seems to indicate that the students are ashamed to make mistakes in either language and eager to engage in teasing due to cultural factors and lax classroom control. I agree, that very well may be the case, to be fair, who feels comfortable making mistakes and what school room is forgiving enough to let even small mistakes slide? But as I have summarized here, this teasing goes deeper than the topic appears from the exterior. In the many conversations I held with local members of numerous communities within the region and with the academic discipline of Nahuatl language revitalization, each has added a piece to this research and helped to back my research with lived experiences.

In summary, rural communities of Guerrero experienced a shift in the perception of the Nahuatl language and recognized the significant privileging of Spanish which was directly set into motion following the Mexican revolution. As the formal education system began to infiltrate these outlying communities, there was a systematic and forceful initiative for the adoption of Spanish only under the guise of indigenous and bilingual education efforts within the federally funded school system. The sense of shame expressed by the students about speaking Nahuatl is now a long-term consequence of the suppression of indigenous populations by Spanish colonizers who sought to unite the Mexican state and the rural indigenous populations into one monolingual people.

As those born in the 1950's have related through their interviews presented in this text, with rural education came the conflicting ideological views of speaking Nahuatl, which is the only language these communities communicated in, or ascribing to the progressive views of the federal school teachers who admonished parents to speak Spanish to their children in order for them to do well in school and become civilized. I will interject here that speaking Spanish is necessary for all communities and that I am in no way stating that the Spanish education is unnecessary or unimportant. Instead, what I am proposing here is that the use of humiliation and shame as a means to control the Nahuatl speaking population within these communities as well as the coercive language education policy of transitioning students through force to speak Spanish or drop out of school was extremely detrimental to the social fabric of the community and helped propel Nahuatl to the brink of disuse. The use of shame, linguistic profiling and stigma against the rural Nahua population is what has promoted and perpetuated over the past three generations, the current ideologies regarding the

Nahuatl language as useless and without intrinsic value to its native speakers. The steady devaluation that the language has been subjected to over time has created the language insecurities I have documented here in this ethnography, and now reside in the current generation of children who are unsure if the language can benefit them or is it better to forget and move on to other languages such as English. It would seem that the children are not keen on learning a language that ties them to their past as they want progress and prestige. They want to be 'cool' like their relatives who have come back from *El Norte*, where English is spoken, with new clothes and nice cars. This new ideology is that the English language means economic prestige.

I acknowledge that the current effort at creating a global landscape is pushing for English to be the dominant language and that the young generations of today will have a greater opportunity for economic and class advancement if they can speak English, but at what cost culturally? There is no limit to the ability of our young learners to learn and retain multiple languages. Why then, was it imperative for the SEP and Indigenous Education system to eliminate the Indigenous languages (for my purpose, Nahuatl) in order to teach Spanish? If the groups discussed in this ethnography are aware of the advantages of speaking English for economic advancement why then would they have not been aware in the 1940's and 50's? The answer is that the communities were aware, and that had the education system approached their duty without an intolerant and racist agenda, Spanish and Nahuatl would most likely be spoken equally as much across much of the Balsas region to this day.

I have recorded accounts here, in this ethnography, from individual who are representing the past eighty years of language education in the Balsas River valley. My

hope is that the information presented here will help to add to the body of knowledge on the topics of Indigenous Education Policy, of language revitalization within the Nahuatl communities especially within the Balsas region, and expand the discussion for documenting and collaborating with the children and community members to bring about new spaces for emergent vitalities (Perley, 2012; 2013) to spring to life.

Future Research and Projects

This research has become the lynchpin to many relationships both professional and personal throughout the past three years. In that short span of time I have connected with people all along the Balsas river valley, I've made friends with Nahua sisters who have moved to the *Costa Chica* of Guerrero to open a Nahuatl language school. I made lasting connections with colleagues who studied at the University of Utah with IDIEZ and have tapped into the wider academic sphere of Nahuatl language instruction and education at both the collegiate level but also at the level of my little 5th graders in rural Guerrero, Mexico.

As an educator, first and foremost, my future projects will center around the children in the Balsas region. My hope is to collaborate with the schools presented here in this text on projects that endeavor to expand the linguistic domains of Nahuatl by giving the students the tools to create their own geography and natural science curriculum within a dual language framework. With this type of project, I would set out to capture the Nahuatl language as it corresponds to geographical features of the landscape around the school, while simultaneously teaching history in a meaningful manner that builds excitement. My goal with this project is to instill pride in the children with a sense of ownership as the creators of this new material. In theory, this type of

collaborative work would extend beyond the classroom because of the deep understanding the family members of each student carry in oral tradition and could pass along to their students throughout the development of this material.

This research has also propelled me to further my knowledge of the region presented in this ethnography and to dive deeper into the rich history of the locations named above. I have a number of maps from the late 16th century that I would very much like to include in future iterations of this manuscript. I'd like to define more clearly the correlation between 'cartographies of erasure' (Perley, 2009) and the way in which the individuals in each town define themselves and identify with their place names. I was not thinking along these lines when I first interviewed my collaborators, but after discussing my research on place names with the historians in the 2019 Nahuatl cohort at the University of Utah, I was made aware that there is a very long history of Spanish interference with the native Nahua population along the Balsas (see chapter 2) although I was not able to include much information on this aspect in the ethnography as it is presented here. I would like to state that future work on this particular point of interest would begin with research on when the place names were modified to incorporate Spanish saint names (e.g. San Juan Totolcintla as opposed to Totolcintla). A key part of this secondary research would be to ask each community how they refer to themselves or rather their town to be specific and then to further uncover the reasons why those place names have been passed down through the generations. I know that many of the individuals in Tulimán refer to the Balsas river basin towns by their Nahuatl names (Totolcintla or "Totol" for short) except for San Francisco Ozomatlan which everyone in Tulimán calls "San Francisco". This secondary research question I suspect would

uphold my initial statements made in chapter two about the connections between identity and place. The usage of Nahuatl place names instead of the adoption of the Spanish names could be rooted in the Nahua attachment to place and place-based knowing. The imposition of the Spanish and religious place names would serve to further highlight the systematic undermining of Nahua people, place, and language.

And lastly, as my close proximity to these communities allows me the opportunity to continue to work with the Nahuatl speaking populations of the Balsas region, my goal is to become fluent in the language to demonstrate to those there that the language has value and is not a dying language. Taking the example set by IDIEZ, I believe that the students who see English as the high prestige language will benefit from dual language courses in Nahuatl and English. In this manner, students are allowed to master Nahuatl while at the same time learning the language they so keenly wish to acquire: English. I believe that this methodology would benefit the mission of the SEP and its Indigenous Education Programing. By combining stronger advocacy for language acquisition and better implementation of current progressive language policies, I believe that dual immersion models are able to strengthen students' skills in Nahuatl while continuing to teach Spanish, while simultaneously offering English as a foreign language. In this manner the Nahuatl language is help on to and passed on to future generations, Spanish is learned to help individuals communicate and find work across Mexico and beyond, while providing the much sought-after English languages courses as parents prepare their children to participate in a global economy.

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