

**Ripples of Modernity:
Language Shift
And Resistance in
The Valley of Etna**

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Introduction:
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Zapotec is sung.
It's practically a language in song—Lydia, age 51, Zautla

El Zapoteco es cantado.
Practicamente es una lengua cantada.

For us Zapotecs there are two world: the world of Spanish and the West and our world. So I, for example, dream in Zapotec, not in Spanish. They're two differnt things. Different worlds—Felipe Froilán, Mazaltepec

Para nosotros los Zapotecso son dos mundos: el mundo del Español y Occidental y nuestro mundo. Entonces, yo por ejemplo sueño en Zapoteco, no sueño en Español. Son como dos cosas diferentes. Son dos mundos.

Two Zapotec Communities:

As the smoggy dusk fell upon the *Central de Abastos*, Oaxaca City's biggest *colectivo* taxiⁱ hub, people rushed to their respective taxi stops. I meandered through the crowds, nearly stepping into a large hole in the sidewalk, until I found the stop for Zautla. There was a long line but no taxi. I counted ten people in front of me, but did not recognize any of them. Many carried large plastic or woven sacks filled with the day's purchases. A few of them chatted in Spanish. I looked around and saw a little taco stand that was selling *jamaica*, sweet tea of hibiscus leaf. I was thirsty after my long day of travel, from Michigan down to Southern Mexico, but I stayed focused on the task at hand—I was trying to catch a taxi to San Andrés Zautla, a semi-rural community about fifty minutes from the city. The ten people in front of me would fill two taxis. Would a third even come?

I looked across the street to the taxi stop for Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, a community right next to Zautla. The Mazaltepec taxis, in fact, pass right through Zautla.

At that stop there was no taxi, but there was a shorter line so I took a gamble and walked across the street, almost being crushed by a negligent bus driver, and established my position at the rear of the line. Here, there were only seven people in front of me, so I was guaranteed a spot on the second taxi, if it came. I asked two young men in front of me if a second taxi would arrive. They reassured me that a few more taxis would still arrive, so I waited.

A minute later the two of them turned and asked me where I was from. I must have looked amusing carrying my enormous orange backpack. Plus, I spoke a different Spanish. “Michigan,” I said. “It’s near Canada in the United States.” I told them that I was beginning an investigation into Zapotec in Zautla and Mazaltepec. One of them seemed excited and told me that they both spoke Zapotec. His friend spoke two different variants of Zapotec, the one of Mazaltepec and another one from the Sierra Norte a different Zapotec region where he had lived. They also told me that many Mazaltecos speak Mixtec, another indigenous language. This caught me off guard. I knew there were sixteen languages spoken in Oaxaca and over fifty variants of Zapotec alone (Munro 2003:1), but I had forgotten the fluidity and complexity of multilingual environments. I had come to think of each community as closed off and isolated from surrounding communities. This is not the case.

So there I was standing at the taxi stop with Mazaltecos that had come to the city for school, work, shopping, or for whatever reason and were now ready to go home to their families. This was a daily endeavor for many. I knew the taxi would pass through Oaxaca City and its urban sprawl, then through ETLA, Reyes ETLA, Alemán Zautla, then San Andrés Zautla, all before arriving in Mazaltepec. Some people might get off in these towns before Mazaltepec. Other

people would take their place, making sure the taxi was always packed with five or more passengers. Into this taxi we would squeeze different worlds and different languages: urban and rural; mestizo and indigenous; Zapotec, Mixtec, Spanish, and English.

By the time I could consider this any further a group of older women from Mazaltepec arrived with their sacks of city goods. Unlike the two young men, they spoke in Zapotec between themselves. As I stood there, still dumbfounded, they moved past me in the line. I realized I wouldn't make the second taxi now, but I did not put up a fight. I looked over and saw that a taxi had arrived from Zautla and the line was shorter. So I said goodbye to the two men. They invited me to the community saint's day festival that night and we exchanged cell phone numbers, mainly as a formality because service in Mazaltepec is very limited (there is only one hill that has good reception). After shaking hands I crossed back over the road to the Zautla taxis.

Zautla and Mazaltepec are neighboring communities in Oaxaca's Central Valley region. One can walk between them in fifteen minutes. They have much in common: both are *pueblos originarios*, original Zapotec communities;ⁱⁱ both are municipal centers;ⁱⁱⁱ both were subject to colonialism; and both are experiencing rapid social change today. Many people in the communities identify as *campesinos* or cultivators,^{iv} but others, including the growing middle class, have found new forms of employment in the capitalist sector of their community or in the city. Others have migrated to Mexico City or the U.S., and send remittances to supplement their family wealth and maintain their social status.^v The communities have a long history of intervillage conflict (since the 17th Century) that is well documented by Phillip Dennis (1987:49). The conflict (primarily agrarian) has calmed down since the 1970s. Zautecos and Mazaltecos can visit the other community with no problems. They even work on projects

together, send their kids to school in the other community, and practice intermarriage. The remaining tension has been reduced to intercommunity microcultural differences, which have their own pernicious effects that I will discuss in throughout this thesis.

Both communities are located in the Valley of Etna, about fifteen miles Northwest of Oaxaca City (a forty-five minute *colectivo* taxi ride). San Andrés Zautla has some four thousand inhabitants, virtually none of whom speak Zapotec. Spanish is the language of life in Zautla. Santo Tomás Mazaltepec has about two thousand residents and is mostly bilingual (Zapotec/Spanish) (INEGI:2010).^{vi} This language difference, while not unique between Oaxacan communities, was the original motivation for this study. How did the unique pasts and presents contribute to language loss and preservation? Why did Zautla lose its language, Zapotec, but Mazaltepec did not? And how was this connected to other aspects of community history and social life? These questions will be addressed in Part One. In Part Two, I will address some of the efforts to save or revitalize Zapotec and local culture. Overall, my aim is to document, understand, and give voice to the struggle, within and between the communities, of preserving Zapotec and community culture.

I chose to work in Zautla and Mazaltepec because of the interesting sociolinguistic dynamics, but also because I had previous experience in both communities and people knew me. This was important with my short (one-month) time frame for field research because it can take time to gain the trust of community members. Further, an outsider often needs formal recognition from community authorities before undertaking a project. I was able to procure this support prior to leaving the U.S. only because I already knew people in the communities. My prior contacts made the research possible. In both communities I stayed with families that I knew from before. They helped me to involve myself in community life—during my first week alone I attended five

weddings and a quinceañera, all through family invitations—and to meet their friends, family, and fellow community members. Many of these people contributed a great deal to my research.

Language shift is the focus of this thesis. However, I see language and culture as inseparable. Furthermore, they are entangled in social, political, economic, and ideological processes and institutions that influence their expression in everyday life. Thus, this thesis goes beyond language. In Chapter 1, I explore the connection between Language and Ethnicity in Oaxaca. In Chapter 2, I discuss institutional education, a primary motivator of language shift. In Chapter 3, I discuss the disjunctures of language shift and culture change. And, in Chapter 4, I discuss revitalization and resistance from within Zautla and Mazaltepec.

Shifting Languages, Dying Languages:

Over the last century indigenous languages in Mexico have become increasingly endangered. According to the 2000 census, 16.1% of people in Mexico spoke an indigenous language in 1895. By 2000 this number had dropped to 7.1% (INEGI 2004:4). Likewise, rates of monolingualism within the indigenous population have dropped significantly. In 1930 52.7% of indigenous language speakers of Mexico were monolingual. In 1980 this had dropped to 22.7% and by 2000 it had dropped to 16.6% (INEGI 2004:21). This paints a bleak picture for Mexico's sixty-eight language groups (INALI 2008). A large sector of the indigenous population holds onto their language, but, for many, Spanish has become predominant. Why are languages lost and what does this mean? Conversely, how are languages maintained and even revitalized? These are questions that I explore throughout this thesis. In this section I provide a basic framework for thinking about the interrelated processes of language shift, maintenance, and revitalization.

Language death and shift have become major concerns around the world. Linguists suggest that over the next century at least half of the world's 5,000-6,700 languages will be lost (Nettle and Romaine 2000:7). Many argue, myself included, that the loss of language goes hand in hand with the loss of culture and a way of life (Nettle and Romaine 2000:7), not because the deep grammatical structures of language influence how people think about themselves and the world they inhabit (itself a controversial theory coming out of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis), but because language is so intimately tied to social life and social processes.

Language shift and death occur as a response to pressures of various types—social, cultural, economic, and even military—on a community. Every time a language stops performing a particular function, it will lose ground to another that takes its place. Death occurs when one language replaces another over its entire functional range, and parents no longer transmit the language to their children. (Nettle and Romaine 2000:7)

Because of this, I see language shift as a fundamentally social process that “cannot be explained as motivated through linguistic explanation alone, but instead demands external explanations” (Messing 2007:557). In this thesis I do not address the structural effects (within language) of language shift. These have been well documented (mainly by linguists) and do not capture the social, political, economic, and ideological forces at the root of language shift and loss. Instead, following Jacqueline Messing, I focus on the ways “in which individuals react to social changes that in turn affect their linguistic ideologies, language use, and social identities” (2007:557).

Language shift, the central concern of this thesis (and of revitalization workers in Zautla and Mazaltepec), can occur in many ways. There is no one size fits all explanation for how or why a linguistic community begins to use another language. However, the process is well

documented, especially amongst minority language groups that come into contact with the dominant culture, and some general characteristics have been highlighted. The most significant cause of language shift is *differential power* between cultural and linguistic groups, “resulting in one group dominating the other(s) in many domains, including language” (Tse 2001:680). In the Americas, differential power is related to colonizing practices aimed at assimilating indigenous and other minority populations into “mainstream” society (Meek 2010:4). Linguist and anthropologist Barba Meek writes: “[u]nderscoring all of these practices of assimilation has been a focus on language. Early linguistic domination happened in several ways, through both direct and indirect colonial practices, from forced assimilation to genocide” (2010:5). Many colonizing practices use language policies implicitly and explicitly designed to eradicate indigenous languages (Tse 2001:680). As we will see in Chapter X, many of these policies revolve around institutionalized education (Hamel 2008:311; Loyo 1996:101; Meek 2010:5). Behind assimilationist policies is the common belief that indigenous languages (and peoples) are “liabilities or problems that need to be eradicated rather than as resources” (Tse 2001:680).

Differential power is key to understanding language shift and loss—research (mostly in linguistic anthropology) on the social, political, and economic processes that contribute to language shift have provided key insights—but it is not sufficient (Meek 2010:46). Meek argues, “*language endangerment is not just a repercussion of colonial assimilationist tactics—it is an affect of contemporary sociolinguistic practices, ideologies, and disjunctures*” (2010:52). To get at these we need to look at language vitality. In 2002 UNESCO listed nine factors that contribute to language vitality. Some factors may be more relevant depending on the particular language situation (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:4).

Factor 1: Intergenerational language transmission

- Factor 2: Absolute number of speakers
- Factor 3: Proportion of speakers within the total population
- Factor 4: Trends in existing language domains
- Factor 5: Response to new domains and media
- Factor 6: Materials for language education and literacy
- Factor 7: Governmental and institutional language policies, including official status and use
- Factor 8: Community member's attitudes toward their own language
- Factor 9: Amount and quality of documentation

The first three factors (1-3) relate to speakers; factors 1, 4, and 5 relate to sociolinguistic practices; factors 5, 6, and 9 relate to materials; factors 7 and 8 relate to support (Meek 2010:44). I did not have ample time to research all of these factors in Zautla and Mazaltepec. Therefore, I researched the factors that seemed most relevant to the language situation in Zautla and Mazaltepec. These were factors 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8. My findings suggest that factor 7 initiated language shift. It also incited negative attitudes towards the language (8). This contributed to reduced intergenerational transmission (1). This led to fewer speakers (2, 3). However, there was constant interaction between these factors; it was not a one-way process but rather, a dialectic feedback loop. For instance, fewer speakers in the communities (2, 3) changed the way that people think about the language (8) and influenced community politics and institutions (7). Furthermore, because Zapotec literacy has yet to develop in either community, this thesis is geared primarily towards *oral* language shift. This, in itself, is an important aspect of language vitality because it limits the domains in which the language can be transmitted (5, 6) and documented (9). I will not rely heavily on this framework throughout my thesis. It is simply a tool to help conceptualize language vitality and, thus, language shift.

Meek shows that most research in linguistic anthropology has focused on “the political-economic context, the hierarchization of languages, and the disempowerment of speakers in contact situations...this scholarship has approached shift unidirectionally toward loss and

domination” (2010:46). Conversely, linguistics “tends to overlook interactional practices and their preservation, instead focusing primarily on lexical and grammatical changes (Meek 2010:47). Neither of these offers an adequate explanation for language loss or revitalization. Meek argues, “missing from our understanding is a detailed investigation of the social, political, and ideological conditions that mediate the above factors and within which these linguistic and interactional changes are taking place” (2010:46). While my study does not reach Meek’s level of analytical complexity, her theories run throughout this thesis.

I also follow Meek in suggesting that language shift (like revitalization) is *disjunctive*. For Meek, “all situations of language endangerment and revitalization have points of discontinuity or contradiction, moments where practices and ideas about language diverge (2010:50). Meek does not locate these contradictions in the past (2010:54). Nor are they results of globalization or Arjun Appadurai’s “[macro]-scapes” (Appadurai 1996:33; Meek 2010:51). Rather, *sociolinguistic disjuncture*, Meek’s term, refers to

the *everyday* points of discontinuity and contradiction—between social or linguistic groups, within discourses, practices, or between them, even between indexical orders—that interrupt the flow of action, communication, or thought... They are the everyday disruptions or inconsistencies that cause people to pause and reconsider a pronunciation, a word choice, an education technique, or the punch line of a joke.^{vii} (2010:x, 51)

In this thesis I explore sociolinguistic disjunctures between Zautla and Mazaltepec, within each community, and between competing discourses, practices, and language ideologies. While these disjunctures may be remnants of the colonial past, they are continually reproduced in the present. I argue that these disjunctures are, today, the primary cause of language shift and barrier to language loss in Zautla and Mazaltepec. Disjunctures weave throughout this thesis, but surface most clearly in Chapter 3.

Here I have provided a working framework for thinking about the social process of language shift, maintenance, and revitalization. Throughout this thesis I focus on differential power, but also on the everyday discontinuities and contradictions that I found in Zautla and Mazaltepec. My theoretical framework has been most influenced by Jacqueline Messing (2007) and Barbra Meek (2010).

Lastly, why should we care that languages are dying? Language, as we will see in Chapter 1, is a key aspect of a person/people's identity. The loss of a language signifies a loss in human diversity and knowledge: "linguistic diversity gives us unique perspectives into the mind because it reveals the many creative ways in which humans organize and categorize their experience" (Nettle and Romaine 2000:11). Languages also contain unique knowledge about the natural environment in which their speakers live. Thus, they can help scientists to better understand and protect both human and natural diversity Nettle and Romaine 2000:10, 56). Furthermore, all people have the right to their own language, "to preserve it as a cultural resource and to transmit it to their children" (Nettle and Romaine 2000:14). This is a major political concern of indigenous peoples around the world. Despite substantial political pressure from indigenous peoples, the United Nations did not codify language rights into international law until 2006 (under article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People) (UNDRIP 2008). Perhaps the key event in Mexico was the Zapatista indigenous rebellion that resulted in the San Andrés Accords of 1996. Here the federal government agreed to value indigenous languages as equal to Spanish (INALI 2008:31). But, beyond these arguments we must recognize that the question itself is based on a Euro-American perspective. Meek states: "it requires those concerned with language endangerment to validate their concerns through a

practical and moral framing familiar to a general (“western”) audience, forcing the audience to buy into a common ideological ground with the government” (2010:43).

Methodologies

In 2010 I worked and lived with community members in San Andrés Zautla on a “Digital Culture” project with the aim of promoting community culture amongst young Zautecos. This was a four-month trip. As an outsider I had to be careful not to impose my values or standards onto the project aims or methods. Thus, it was a participatory project in which community members dictated the path towards the revaluation of their own culture and language. I returned to Oaxaca in 2012 to work in Oaxaca City, again for four months. During this time, however, I returned to Zautla to visit the community. This is when I first found out about the conflicts within the community and with neighboring Mazaltepec. I also had a chance to visit Mazaltepec for the first time on this trip and I was able to establish a few enduring relationships. The experience of these trips and the subsequent support of Zautecos and Mazaltecos made this thesis possible. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

But, my research did not truly begin until late 2012 when I returned for a third time, specifically to Zautla and Mazaltepec. This trip was less than a month, from late December 2012 through mid-January 2013. Time was the biggest constraint of my fieldwork. Yet, in this short time I was able to integrate into community life—going to community fiestas, community meetings, community work projects, etc.—and be not only an observer, but also a participant. I travelled between the communities, sometimes daily. In Zautla I lived with the family of Lydia González, a revitalization worker in her community. In Mazaltepec I lived with the family of Irma González (not related to Lydia), a tortilla maker and health promoter in her community. To

both families I am extremely grateful for the support they gave me every single day with this project.

Besides participant observation, my primary methodology was interviews. I recorded nearly one hundred hours of interviews with over seventy people in Zautla and Mazaltepec. I had many other non-recorded conversations that also contribute to this thesis (I recorded these as soon as possible in order to best remember their words). All quotes used in this thesis were recorded unless otherwise noted. Prior to arriving in Zautla and Mazaltepec, I created a survey designed to measure language socialization (with the help of Barbra Meek). The one real use of this was done orally with school kids in Mazaltepec (see Chapter 2). However, few people wanted to or were able to (because of illiteracy or some other reason) fill out a survey. Rather, they preferred interviews. I interviewed people of all generations, and from many different backgrounds and lifestyles. This resulted in a wide range of perspectives, often conflicting, that I make use of throughout this thesis. The idea of this thesis is not to tell the story of Zautla and Mazaltepec—sometimes I fall into this trap—but rather to dialogue with community members so that they can tell their own story when possible. I want to give them voice as much as possible so as to avoid misrepresentation and further colonization of knowledge.

Findings

I find that language shift is caused not only by modernity—the social, economic, and political processes connected to capitalism and nationalism—but also by the ripples of modernity that flow and ebb through everyday discourse, practice, and ideology of Zautecos and Mazaltecos. People in both communities are not passive recipients of modernity. Nor do they

only resist it. Rather, every community member actively reproduces national and regional discourses within their everyday lives.

The primary historical events that created this environment of competing ideologies and multiple discourses (see Chapter 3) can be dated back to early colonization do not date back to early colonization of the communities. The Spanish arrived in Oaxaca in 1519 and conquered the Central Valleys within one month (Barabas et al 2003:130, 132). Zautla, if not Mazaltepec, was under colonial administration at least as early as 1599 (Dennis 1987:54). During the colonial period and early “post-colonial” period in the 19th Century Zautla was a more central community than Mazaltepec. People in Zautla told me that language shift (not loss) began with the Church, but also with the political centrality of Zautla. Mazaltepec, they said, remained relatively untouched by Spanish officials.

Yet, language loss did not occur during two hundred years of colonial imposition. It did not even occur in the first century after Mexican independence in the early 19th century. Rather, it has occurred in the last century as a result and reaction to modernity. In Zautla the language was lost in the early 20th century, mainly in relation to institutionalized education. In Mazaltepec the language is being lost today in relation to capitalist expansion into the community itself in conjunction with education. Again, however, it is not these social processes themselves that *cause* language shift. Rather, it is the reproduction of their ideologies within and between the communities.

Chapter One
Language and Ethnicity in
The Changing Lives of
Zautecos and Mazaltecos

I think that you can change the way you dress, the huaraches, the huipil.^{viii} These can be lost. But Zapotec, it's something genetic. It is the only treasure that has to be present and has to be conserved—Tomás, age 47, Mazaltapec

Creo que se puede perder el vestuario, los huaraches, el huipil, se pueden perder pero el Zapotec, pues como algo genético. Entonces el unico tesoro que se debe estar presente y se debe conservar.

The language [Zapotec] is a part of our culture. It was spoken by our ancestors and, still today, it's sad that it's been lost amongst the youth. Now, hardly any one speaks, but I think it's important that we conserve it. It's what identifies us as a *pueblo* [town], as a nation. It identifies our culture—Diana, age 17, Zautla

[El Zapotec] es parte de nuestra cultura. Esa lengua se hablaba por nuestros ancestros que, hasta ahorita, es un poco lamentable porque ya se ha perdido con los jóvenes. Ahorita ya casi no se habla tanto, pero yo pienso que es bien importante porque todavía debes de conservar eso. Porque eso nos identifica como pueblo, como nacion. Identifica a nuestra cultura.

Even if you know your community is ugly, for you it's the most beautiful community in the world. You don't recognize the problems—Jesús, age 28, Zautla

Y aun si sepas que tu pueblo esta feo, para ti es el pueblo más hermoso del mundo. Y no reconoces los problemas.

As Tomás suggests, there are many markers of indigenous identity, but language is the most important. He is a middle aged Mazalteco that, unlike many from younger generations, continues to speak *Tizá*, a variant of Zapotec spoken in the Northwestern valleys of the Central Valley region of Oaxaca.^{ix} Today language is one of the primary expressions and markers of indigenous identity in Mexico, but it is not the only one. I met many people in Zautla and Mazaltapec that identify themselves and/or their community as indigenous whether or not they spoke Zapotec. Conversely, I met Zapotec speakers who do not identify themselves or their

community (in Mazaltepec) as indigenous. This pattern can be seen in indigenous groups in both urban and rural areas of Mexico (INEGI 2004:119).

Tizá is the Zapotec name for the variant of Zapotec spoken in the Northwest region of the Central Valleys (ILI 2008:76). It is one of sixty-three variants of Zapotec that are recognized by the Institute of Indigenous Languages (ILI 2008:69). In this thesis I will mostly use “Zapotec” and “language” to refer to *Tizá*, simply because that is how my Spanish-speaking informants talked about it (*Zapoteco, lengua*). I will use the words “variant” and “variation” to discuss differences between the Zapotec languages or between the *Tizá* spoken in Zautla and Mazaltepec. I will also use the Spanish words *idioma* and *dialecto* and their English translations (language, dialect) when they are used by community members in quotations. Otherwise I will not use these words.

But *Tizá* is quickly being lost. It has all but disappeared from Zautla (there are only about five speakers left in Zautla) and is greatly threatened in Mazaltepec. The other four municipalities in the region, San Agustín Etla, San Pablo Etla, Santa María Atzompa, and Villa de Etla (Etla Center) (ILI 2008:76) have already lost the language or are undergoing rapid language shift to Spanish. As we will see in this chapter, language shift arises from differential power between indigenous peoples and the Spanish speaking world. But it also comes from decisions and actions within and between communities, usually motivated by outside ideas, institutions, and politics. In this Chapter, I will also give a background on language and ethnic identity in contemporary Mexico as well as Zautla and Mazaltepec.

Language and the Construction of Ethnicity:

Language tells us a great deal about whom we are as people. It is one way in which we express, but also build our identities, individual and group. It is also an indicator that others use to describe us as people. Other people, groups, and institutions are bound to make assumptions based on the manner in which we speak or the language that we speak.^x I have found this to be true in Zautla and Mazaltepec, where language is closely connected to indigenous identity. It is also true in Mexican discourse and politics. Here I will discuss the ways in which ethnicity has been constructed through language both locally and nationally/regionally. Later in this thesis I will argue that language shift is fundamentally connected to the ideologies of personhood (see Chapter X).

Oaxaca has the greatest ethnolinguistic diversity of any state in Mexico: of Mexico's sixty-eight indigenous language families, sixteen are recognized in Oaxaca (INALI 2008). Zapotec is one of these, and, while people (myself included) talk about it as if it is a language, it is in fact a language *family* with over fifty mutually unintelligible variants (Munro 2003:1). For instance, my informants in the valley told me that they could not understand Zapotec varieties of the mountainous Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca. But, even within each variant, there are socially significant alterations. For instance, *Tizá*, the Zapotec spoken in Zautla and Mazaltepec, is (was) nearly the same, but people quickly point out minor phonological and syntactic differences. Because of such micro-sociolinguistic variations, it can be said that there are as many variants of Zapotec as there are Zapotec speaking communities (Munro 2003:2). Phillip Dennis who did ethnographic research in Zautla and Mazaltepec in the 1970s and 1980s writes that "in the case of Zapotec...it seems clear that one significant language boundary is that of the community itself, and that the subdialect of Zapotec spoken in the village, like other cultural differences, reflects the importance of the village as a social grouping" (1987:19).

The great sociolinguistic diversity of Zapotec is closely tied to ethnicity. Language is the most common identifier of “indigenous” identity or “Zapotecness.” This is true in Zautla and Mazaltepec, but also in Mexican national politics. Indigenist policies, those geared towards indigenous peoples and communities, use language to determine who is indigenous and where (INEGI 2004:10). People that speak an indigenous language are indigenous and those that do not speak an indigenous language are not. This extends to the community level: a community is a) “eminently indigenous” if over seventy percent are indigenous language speakers, b) “predominantly indigenous” if between fifty and seventy percent are indigenous language speakers, c) “half indigenous” if between thirty and fifty percent are indigenous language speakers, or d) “dispersed indigenous” if less than thirty percent are indigenous language speakers (INEGI 2004:9).

But, there is significant discrepancy between those that self-identify as indigenous and those that speak an indigenous language. The 2000 Mexican census shows that in the country there are 5,258,852 people that self-identify as indigenous and, of these, 1,101,316 do not speak an indigenous language (21%). Conversely, of the 79,461,697 people that do not self-identify as indigenous, 1,955,885 speak an indigenous language (2.5%) (INEGI 2004:119). This is likely related to the negative stigma of *lo indio*, or “indianess” or to other personal or professional reasons (INEGI 2004:119). In the state of Oaxaca, 37.4% of the population speaks an indigenous language, but 42.3% self-identify as indigenous (INEGI 2004:121).

Besides language, the Mexican government has used other indicators of indigenous identity. Language as well as other indicators often have added implications for indigenous women who, for instance, are more likely to be monolingual in an indigenous language than indigenous men (INEGI 2004:23).

In 1940, in accordance with the government's endorsement of the 1940 Inter-American Indianist Congress, census officials removed overt referenes to ethnicity. Instead, ethnic categories were reconstituted as cultural categories. In the 1940 census being "Indian" was correlated with speaking an Indian language; sleeping on the floor or using a *petate* (mat) or hammock; not wearing shoes of "Spanish" type; and eating tortillas rather than bread... Despite the absurdity of the cultural categories used to measure Indian identity among Mexico's indigenous population in 1940, such categories did create a national picture of indigenous women as existing on the margins of civilization—poor, barefoot, monolingual, illiterate, sleeping on the floor, and eating tortillas." (Stephen 2005: 133)

Stephen notes "while this characterization [in the 1940s] was originally a baseline from which the indigenous population was to be pushed toward modernity, in the packaging of Indian identity for sale to tourists, such marginality was converted into tradition and exoticism" (2005:133).

There are numerous problems with such "cultural" and linguistic indicators of indigenous identity. First, they misrepresent the indigenous population and construct an imaginary "Mexican Indian." This reaffirms the economic and social inequality of indigenous peoples in the country, especially when these indicators are used to create policy and ideology. Moreover, the use of linguistic indicators in particular does not acknowledge the colonial and state oppression that produced language loss in the first place. Another problem is that these indicators do not always correspond to local conceptions, lived experiences, or self-identification of ethnicity. Thus, indigenous identity and politics have been largely constructed by the state, and not by indigenous

peoples themselves. Lastly, as Dennis suggests, “discussions of ethnicity in Oaxaca that focus on large language categories may be misleading insofar as they neglect the basic unit of social organization in the area, which for many centuries has been the village community” (1987: 22).

But it is not only the government, but also anthropologists, that continue to use language as an indicator of ethnicity. Stephens herself writes: “with 1,120,312 speakers of an indigenous language over the age of 4 in the 2000 census, Oaxaca has the most indigenous people [of any state in Mexico]—37.11 percent of the state’s total population (INEGI 2000)” (2005:93). Other indicators can drastically change census data. Using ancestry, for instance, shows us that “roughly 70% of the inhabitants of the state are of indigenous origin” (Norget 2007: 79).

Language and Ethnicity in Zautla and Mazaltepec

Many ethnographers, not just Dennis, argue, “that ethnic identity in Oaxaca has been constituted not at a regional level—as “Zapotec,” for example—but at a much more localized, even community level” (Stephen 2005:27). Stephen argues that this has changed as a result of globalization and national movements for indigenous autonomy that have led to indigenous and state promotion of pan-ethnic identities (Stephen 2005:27). I will discuss this specific identity, discourse, and ideology and its implications in Chapter 3. But, most of my informants from Zautla and Mazaltepec did not talk in these terms. This does not mean that broader national and regional discourses are absent in these communities; to the contrary, such discourse is central to community ideologies today, as I will show in Chapter 3. Rather, it means that community members continue to talk of themselves, first, as members of their community. One teenage girl in Zautla, Janet, proudly stated “First I am Zauteca. Then I am Oaxacan and then Mexican [*Primero soy Zuateca. Después soy Oaxaqueña y después Mexicana*]. After she said this she and

two of her cousins started chanting “Zautescos!, Zautescos!, Zautescos!” Janet describes “ethnicity,” not in terms of “Zapotecness,” but in terms of community identity, followed by regional and national identity. Another Zauteco, Jesús (age 28), says:

Community comes before everything. It comes before the district, the state, and it comes before the country. If someone asks ‘where are you from?,’ you don’t say ‘I’m Mexican.’ You say “I’m Zauteco.” This is the value of identity, the principles of identity. An indigenous person, or someone that lives in a community, doesn’t see themselves as an individual. That person sees themselves as community, nothing more.

Se antepone la comunidad a todo. Se antepone al distrito; se antepone al estado; se antepone al país. Si te dicen ‘tú ¿de dónde eres?,’ no dices “soy Mexicano,” Dices “soy Zauteco.” Es ese valor de identidad, los principios de identidad. El indígena, o el que vive en una comunidad, nunca se ve como individuo. Nunca se analiza como individuo. Se ve como comunidad, solamente.

Jesús explained this further:

Here, the country in itself, it’s not that it’s not important, because it is important, but the country is not what represents us. What represents us is our land. And by our land, I don’t mean Mexico, but rather the land of Zautla. These values come before everything. The principle value is our community, and then the country. First your *pueblo*, then the state, then the country. If you say ‘I’m Mexican,’ well, those from Durango, Chihuahua, from Ciudad Juárez are also Mexicans. But I’m not a *Norteño*. I’m from the south, I’m Oaxacan. I’m sure it’s like that everywhere. You say ‘I’m from my community, my state, and then my country,’ but here it’s very integral: culture, politics, the economy, everything is community first. Here, I eat what I plant. Where I work is here in my community. Where I live, in my community. With whom do I eat, with the people of my community. Community is first. That’s the communal vision of the *pueblos*.

Aquí, el país en sí, no es que no nos importe, porque sí nos importa pero el país no es lo que nos representa. A nosotros nos representa nuestra tierra. Y nuestra tierra no digo México, sino nuestra tierra digo Zautla. Entonces los valores anteponen a todo pues. El valor principal es nuestra comunidad, y después es el país. Primero tu pueblo, luego tu estado, y luego tu país. Porque si dices “yo soy Mexicano” sí, pero también los de Durango, los de Chihuahua, los de Ciudad Juárez también son Mexicanos. Sí pero yo no soy Norteño. Yo soy del sur, yo soy Oaxaqueño. Creo en todos los lugares pasa eso. Es como tu dices “yo soy de mi comunidad, de mi estado, y después de mi país” pero aquí se ve de una manera muy integral: la cultura, la política, la economía, todo primero del pueblo. Porque

aquí como lo que siembro. Donde trabajo es aquí en mi comunidad. Donde vivo en mi comunidad. Con quién como, pues con pura gente de mi comunidad. Pues primero es la comunidad. Esa es la visión muy comunitaria de los pueblos.

Jesús suggests that individual identity is inseparable from community identity, a concept explored in depth by Oaxacan anthropologists called *comunalidad* or “indigenous communalism.” *Comunalidad* also explains the close connection to the land that Jesús describes. I expand on *comunalidad* in Chapter 3. For now, the important point is that people (in Mazaltepec too) draw their identity from the community, not from a broader ethnolinguistic group. I often had to ask a leading question (like, “do you believe that this is an ‘indigenous’ community?”) before people would even talk about “Zapotecness,” or indigenous identity.

When people in Zautla and Mazaltepec do talk about “indigenous” identity, it is often equated with language, on a community and individual level. For them, Zautla is no longer an indigenous community, but Mazaltepec is. Likewise, a monolingual Spanish speaker is not indigenous, but a Zapotec speaker is. I asked Tomás (see above), a Zapotec speaker in Mazaltepec, if he thought the community was indigenous. “No,” he said. “Not anymore because people don’t like to speak Zapotec anymore. They’re ashamed to consider themselves indigenous.” [*No. Ya no, porque ya no les gusta hablar Zapoteco. Les da vergüenza considerarse indígena.*] Here, Tomás notes the negative stigma attached to indigenous identity. He also highlights language as a key indicator of this identity. Such devaluation of indigenous identity and (subsequently) language creates a hostile environment for those that wish to maintain Zapotec. I discuss stigma in Chapter 4.

But oftentimes, indigenous identity is not so black and white. In Zautla and Mazaltepec a person or community can be *más indígena*, “more indigenous,” or *menos indígena*, “less

indigenous.” Most Zauteκος that I talked to say that Mazaltapec is more indigenous than Zautla, or at least imply this by saying things like “Mazaltapec is more marginalized” [*más marginada*]. Some people couldn’t quite define even their own community as indigenous or not. Here is an excerpt from a conversation that I had with three young Zauteκος: Diana (age 17) and her cousins Janet (age 17) and Leonardo (age 11).

Mackenzie: Do you think Zautla is still an indigenous community?

Janet: Well, not indigenous. Not indigenous or very...

Leonardo: Marginalized.

Diana: Modern.

Janet: Yea, not marginalized or modern. But we’ve entered civilization.

Mackenzie: ¿Ustedes piensan que Zautla es todavía una comunidad indígena?

Janet: Pues no indígena. No indígena ni tampoco muy...

Leonardo: Marginada.

Diana: Moderna.

Janet: Sí, no marginada ni tampoco muy moderna. Pero ya entramos en la civilización.

Here, the descriptors “marginalized” and “modern” are situated at two ends of a spectrum in which Zautla falls in the middle. “Marginalized” is often used to insinuate indigenous, or more negative Indian (*Indio*), identity. It is often connected to geographic isolation and economic underdevelopment. “Modern,” or “civilized,” on the other hand, implies Western identity and economic development. I discuss modernization in Chapter 3. After the three were done describing the identity of their community, I asked what this meant for the identity of *people* in the community. This brought up the question of *being* indigenous and *living* indigenous. They consider themselves to be indigenous because of their “roots,” but, like the vast majority of people in both communities, they do not speak Zapotec or wear huipiles.

Diana: We are indigenous because our root is indigenous. But an indigenous *pueblo* [community], as you see, not anymore because we're very modern now. We are, well it's changed. Everything changed.

Janet: Not much.

Diana: But our roots are indigenous. Yes we are indigenous, because we're indigenous people by root, but living...

Leonardo: In language and dress, no.

Diana: Not like indigenous people before. Much has been lost, sadly.

Diana: Somos indígenas porque nuestra raíz es indígena. Pero un pueblo indígena, como verás, ya no es porque ya estamos muy modernizados ya. Ya estamos, ya cambió pues, todo nuestro alrededor cambió

Janet: No mucho

Diana: Pero nuestros raíces son indígenas. Sí somos indígenas, porque indígenas de persona de raíz te digo que si somos, pero de vivir...

Leonardo: De idioma, de vestimento no.

Diana: Así como indígenas antes no ya no. Ya se perdió mucho, lamentablemente.

In this conversation Diana, Janet, and Leonardo highlight three indicators, besides language, that relate to indigenous identity: economic underdevelopment (marginalization), ancestry (roots), and dress. In Zautla and Mazaltepec each of these is commonly connected to indigenous identity of people and of communities. Economic underdevelopment (**class?**) is usually the most pejorative indicator. Someone (especially in Mazaltepec) living in underdeveloped housing is often called *Indio* in a derogatory sense, regardless of whether they speak Zapotec, dress in huipiles or huaraches, or follow any other indicator/stereotype of indigenous identity. On the community level Zautecos connect “more marginalized” with *más Indio*, “more Indian.”

Ancestry and heritage are also connected to indigenous identity. A teenage girl in Mazaltepec stated: “we are indigenous because it is our heritage” [*somos indígenas porque es nuestra herencia*]. But, unlike economic underdevelopment, ancestry is mostly construed positively and many people told me they were proud of their ancestry and heritage. An eighty two year old Zauteca named Tia Cuca stated: “with much pride we are Indians.^{xi} We have been from our parents until today” [*a mucha honra somos Indios. Fuimos desde los papaces desde*

ahorita]. However, the fact that someone was born and raised in an indigenous family and community does not mean that they will self-identify as indigenous. If ancestry corresponded to self-identification then almost everyone in Zautla and Mazaltepec would self-identify as indigenous. This is not the case. Thus, indigenous ancestry is something that everyone shares but many leave behind.

The last indicator of indigenous identity that I will highlight in this section is dress. When talking about dress and indigenous identity people most often refer to huipiles and huaraches (see footnote i). Because dress is so visible it is (in some ways) the most obvious indicator of identity. When I talked more with Janet about community level identity she told me how Zautla had changed relative to Mazaltepec.

Janet: Mazaltepec is still taken as marginalized and indigenous from their way of dressing and speaking. We dress different now. They dress in their huipiles and everything. We dress normal, like any other place. We're not marginalized or indigenous.

Janet: Mazaltepec, todavía, según lo toman como un pueblo todavía marginado e indígena por su forma de vestir, por su forma de hablar. Porque nosotros ya vestimos de otra forma. Ellos visten con huipiles y todo. Nosotros ya vestimos de otra forma pues, pues ya normal, normal como cualquier otro lugar. Y nosotros no somos marginados ni tampoco indígena.

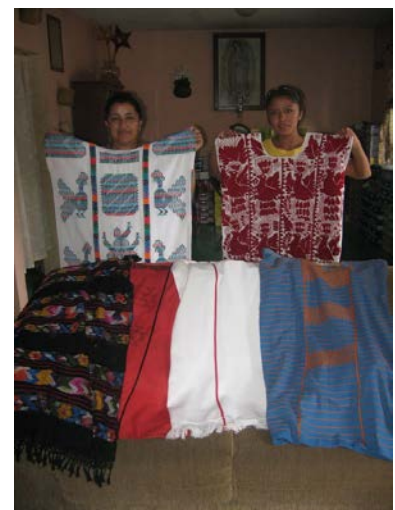
Janet sums up a few important points from this section; language, underdevelopment, and dress are all important indicators of indigenous identity. Many people are proud of their particular huipiles and would show me them when I visited their homes. This is very different, however, from wearing a huipil on a daily basis: only a few people in Zautla, and older women in Mazaltepec do this. (More people wear huaraches on a daily basis.) It is important to note, however, that the huipil is an indicator, not just of indigenous identity, but also of community identity. Every community is said to have its own traditional huipil. In Zautla and Mazaltepec

these are proudly displayed in the community festivals, which people relate to community *tradición*, “tradition,” but not “Zapotecness.” Further, in both communities people told me that people in the other community had stolen designs from their huipil, just as they had stolen fiestas and other traditions. Irma González, with whom I lived when I was in Mazaltepec stated:

They [in Zautla] don’t do their traditional fiestas like here. So when Mazaltepec started to rescue all of its culture, as far as I know, Zautla robbed the cultures of Mazaltepec. They robbed the dress [huipil] from Mazaltepec. That’s what I know. There is a little bit of conflict for being neighboring communities.

Tampoco hacen sus fiestas tradicionales como aquí. Entonces cuando Mazaltepec empezó a rescatar todo otra vez, hasta donde yo sé, es que Zautla le roba las culturas a Mazaltepec. Le roba el traje a Mazaltepec. Es lo que sé. Que hay un poquito de conflictos y también por ser comunidad vecina.

People in Zautla said nearly the same thing. Lydia, with whom I lived in Zautla, for instance, told me that the traditions of Zautla are much older and that Mazaltepec “has robbed many traditions from Zautla...even the fiestas in Mazaltepec are based on our fiestas that are older” [*le ha robado muchas tradiciones a Zautla...las fiestas de Mazaltepec se basan en nuestras fiestas que son más viejas pues*]. I will expand upon this in Chapter 3, when discussing purity.



Left, Irma González of Mazaltepec in her huipil after a community fiesta. Right, Lydia and friend displaying their collection of huipiles from Zautla.

These examples highlight another key facet of community and personal identity—“microcultural” differences between (and within) communities. Most of my informants focus on difference between the communities instead of similarity. This is clearly not a “pan-ethnic” identity, but again a community-centric identity. I agree with Dennis “[that] villages continue to pride themselves on their own particular variety of marriage and fiesta customs, and they patiently explain to outsiders that their version of Zapotec or Mixtec is clearer and easier to understand than versions of neighboring communities” (1987:19). Zautecos who are interested in language still describe their Zapotec like this, even though they do not speak it. Dennis goes on to say that “there is always a “bad” village a short distance away...[and] only in the village at hand is the native language spoken without an accent” (1987:20). But microcultural differences are not just about language. Dennis writes: “In each community [Zautla and Mazaltepec] I was told that people in the other were scoundrels and witches, and were completely untrustworthy” (1987:7). In 2013 people in both communities continued to make these and other accusations (like stealing tradition and culture).

There are two related points I want to make here. First, that pan-ethnic identity continues to be the minority view in Zautla and Mazaltepec. While there is no longer an agrarian conflict between Zautla and Mazaltepec, there is a microcultural and ideological conflict. For many Zautecos, Santa María Peñoles, a nearby Mixtec^{xii} community, is seen more positively than Mazaltepec. Dennis suggests that Zautla and Peñoles maintained this positive relationship throughout the twentieth century, while Zautla and Mazaltepec were themselves feuding (1987:21). This is quite common in Oaxaca. Stephen points out: “a tendency to conflict is often seen between communities that share a language and are defined by the state as belonging to the same ethnic group” (2005: 30). Second, it is important to note that Zautla and Mazaltepec are not

homogenous communities. Microcultural and ideological differences exist within each community. Even within Mazaltepec, for instance, many people discriminate against Zapotec speakers and those that wish to preserve the language (see Chapter 2 and 4—on education in Mazaltepec). Furthermore, there is no consensus in either community on who is indigenous or why. Nor is there consensus on the value of indigenous identity (see Chapter 3).

Chapter Two
Education and
Language Shift
Yesterday and Today

I didn't know I was indian until I went to school—Elder lady in Mazaltepec

Ni sabía que era india hasta que me fui a la escuela.

Indigenism and Education:

Education is at the core of Mexican indigenist politics^{xiii} (Hamel 2008:312). It is also central to the loss and revitalization of culture and language. In this chapter I will outline some major moments in indigenist education in Mexico and Oaxaca. I will then look at the history of education in Zautla and Mazaltepec. Finally, I will examine the education system of Mazaltepec today in relation.

There have been two basic education strategies in Mexico since colonial times. These reflect the broader policies towards indigenous peoples and languages. The first, and dominant, strategy “considered the assimilation (i.e. dissolution) of Indian peoples and the suppression of their language as a prerequisite for the building of a unified nation state” (Hamel 2008:312). The second “favoured the preservation of Indian languages and cultures in the process, without giving up the ultimate goal of uniting nation and state” (Hamel 2008:312). A third type of education comes from within the community itself.

The main programs of indigenist education in twentieth century Mexico focused on the assimilation of indigenous peoples into the national culture or, as it is called in Mexico, the *alma nacional*. The stated goals were to homogenize, civilize, and castilianize (make the speak

Spanish) the large indigenous population so that Mexico could become a “modern” country. Indigenous peoples (and pluriethnicity in general) were seen to hinder national unity and progress (Loyo 1996:100) because they were “backwards” and “traditional.” Education, seen in this section as a secular state institution, was the primary means of promoting cultural and linguistic assimilation.^{xiv}

In Oaxaca, as in much of Mexico, there was an increased interest in indigenous populations after the 1910 Revolution (Barabas et al 2003:110). Despite the 1890 declaration of education as “uniform, secular, obligatory, and free” (Loya 1996:101), most rural communities (including Zautla and Mazaltepec) had no established schools or access to them. After the revolution, education programs were designed to pull indigenous youth from communities into boarding schools. This ‘incorporatist’ strategy was developed under President Calles and Minister of Education José Vasconcelos in the 1920s. They thought that indigenous peoples were important to the development of Mexico, but only if they were civilized and spoke Spanish (Loyo 1996:102).

The most notable incorporatist program was “The House of Indigenous Students”^{xv} (1925-1932), a boarding school in Mexico City that brought indigenous youth from across the country together with creoles and mestizos from Mexico City. In its first year the school had nearly two-hundred students from twenty-four indigenous groups, including eleven Mixtecs and nine Zapotecs from Oaxaca (Loya 1996:107)(Barabas et al 2003:110). The school had two goals. Educational officials first wanted to submit the “pure” indigenous to “civilized modern life and annul the evolutionary distance that separated the indians of the time by transforming their mentality, tendencies, and customs”^{xvi} (Loya 1996:107). These students were to return to their communities to teach Spanish and this “superior” way of life (Loya 1996:107). Second, the

school was a social experiment to test the physical and intellectual qualities of indigenous peoples (Loya 1996:107). Graduates of “The House of Indigenous Students” went on to lead education in the second half of the 20th century (Barabas et al 2003:110).

Between 1934 and 1946 there was another incorporatist boarding school program. This consisted of boarding schools in twenty regions of Mexico.^{xvii} In Oaxaca there were two schools that hosted hundreds of indigenous youth attended these schools (“196 Mixtecs, 188 Zapotecs, 66 Mazatecs, 33 Mixes, 6 Zoques and 2 Chinantecs in 1945-46”)(Barabas et al 2003:110). This program faced similar problems to “The House of Indigenous Students.” Most importantly, it was seen to have little effect on modernizing the large indigenous population. Manuel Gamio, a critique of incorporatist policy and a proponent of bicultural education, said:

Once the learnings of the schools are assimilated many kids won't want, with all justification, to live with their families and their neighbors who they consider inferior in all senses, as they really are...If the kids go back home their parents reimpose their primitive and backwards way of life and being on the kid whose new culture and progresive ambitions seem rediculous and even depressing^{xviii} (Loya 1996:124).

Soon, this system was dismantled and a new one was put in its place. The new system didn't suck kids from communities, but rather, emphasized community schools.^{xix} It was based around two programs developed in the 1940s and 1950s: integrationist and intercultural education. Intercultural education evolved into what is today the “Bilingual Intercultural” education system. This system was, and is, more accepting of indigenous cultures and languages. Yet, in practice, it is rarely bilingual (Barabas et al 2003:112) and it is often criticized as being another type of assimilationist education because it does not “maintain and foster indigenous languages” (Hamel 2008:316).

Today's “intercultural bilingual education” system (formerly “bicultural and bilingual”) began in the 1970s and “consists of two pre-school years plus six grades, the same as the general

primary system in the country” (Hamel 2008:315). While the the system is administered by state government (since 1992) schools must follow the same curriculum and use the same textbooks as all public schools in Mexico, bilingual or not. The “textbooks are oriented towards monolingual Spanish speaking children, mainly in an urban context...they are not adequate for bilingual education and the teaching of Spanish as a second language” (Hamel 2008:315). Some other problems with bilingual education in these schools are general disinterest of teachers (one bilingual teacher told me that most teachers are just looking for a job and do not care or even try to teach the language); teacher placement in regions where they do not speak the language; and lack of indigenous language materials. Furthermore, there are few bilingual secondary schools where students can continue their education. It is a new program that ran a pilot project between 2004 and 2007 (IEEPO).^{xx}

The integrationist approach to education, formed in 1948, was headed by the National Indigenous Institute (INI).^{xxi} It was part of a larger policy of ecological, social, and political development that aimed to integrate indigenous peoples into the nation by br (Lepe Lira 2008:103).^{xxii} Two of the INI’s aims, under Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, were were “ideological integration” and “ideological mobilization”:

Ideological integration refers to the possibility of equal participation of all social classes, indigenous and non-indigenous, in the development and progress of the nation...Ideological mobilization claims to end the hidden forms of indian exploitation, providing support to strengthen a national consciousness^{xxiii} (Beltrán Aguirre, 1992:213) (Lepe Lira 2008:103).

Integrationist thinkers like Beltrán believed that pluriethnicity would slow “evolutionary” progress; “plurality sterilizes indigenist action...a movement that proposes to modify an undesirable situation”^{xxiv} (Beltrán Aguirre 1992:230).^{xxv} Education within rural communities

played a central role in breaking plurality. It was and still is, after all, the most far-reaching type of assimilationist education.

Education in Zautla:

Education in rural and indigenous communities began in 1911^{xxvi} and was systematized in 1922. This is the system that was first established in Mazaltepec and Zautla. The early system consisted of three years of primary school and was led by a teacher from outside of the community. The job of a teacher included adult education as well. This tended to focus on “literacy, nutrition, gardening, medicine, carpentry, sewing, and community lifestyle” (Lepe Lira 2008:105).^{xxvii}

I had trouble finding accurate historical information on Mazaltepec, but I came across numerous primary documents in Zautla’s cultural center. I also found a book written in 2000 by a Zauteco, Celerina Martínez Sosa, that briefly documents the community history of the twentieth century.^{xxviii} I am a little skeptical of some dates in this book, but it is useful nonetheless. Another source of historical data for the communities is Phillip Dennis’ ethnography of the conflict between Mazaltepec and Zautla (1987). Lastly, I talked to community elders about their experiences with early education.

Education by outsiders has a long history in both communities that predates the rural school system (there may not have been much of a distinction between the two communities until the late 17th century (Dennis 1987:49)). It is likely that religious (Catholic) education began in the 16th century shortly after the arrival of the Spanish (Dennis 1987:183). By 1819 (and as early as 1804) there was a community school in Zautla that taught “the Christian

doctrine” to the few who applied (Martínez Sosa 2000:4, 7). The important point is that the school taught kids how to read and write in Spanish (Martínez Sosa 2000:4).

Secular education in Zautla began in the 18th century (this likely had a religious agenda as well). In 1745 a teacher came to Zautla to teach reading and writing to community children (Martínez Sosa 2000:21). This teacher, like the religious ones, charged individuals to come to class, even though few could afford it. By 1851 all community members between sixteen and sixty years old were charged a small tax to pay the teacher that taught young kids. But few kids went to the adobe school house for these lessons. Zapotec was still the language of the community.

Most Zautecos say that the first school in Zautla was the one established in 1919.

Martínez Sosa discusses this history.

At the beginning of the twentieth century our school was run by a teacher paid by the people. In 1919 the school was called “Economic Elementary School No. 32.” In 1925 it was recognized as “Official Primary School.” In 1935 it was called “Mixed Rudimentary Primary School Forward” and today it is called “Federal Revolution Primary School.” The kindergarden was officially recognized on March 2nd, 1982 and the Tele-Secondary School^{xxix} began to function on October 21st, 1983 (Martínez Sosa 2000:21).

A principio del siglo XX nuestra Escuela era atendida por un Maestro particular pagado por el pueblo; en 1919 la escuela se llamaba “Escuela Económica Elemental No. 32”. En 1925 fue reconocida como “Escuela Primaria Oficial”. En 1935 se llamó “Primaria Rudimentaria Mixta Adelante” y actualmente se llama “Escuela Primaria Federal Revolución”. El Kinder se reconoció oficialmente el 2 de marzo de 1982 y la Escuela Telesecundaria, empezó a funcionar el 21 de octubre del año de 1983 (Martínez Sosa 2000:21).

The oldest people I talked to (between eighty and ninety years old) would have gone to school in the 1930s and 1940s. This was the first generation that was monolingual in Spanish. Some of their parents were the first to attend the “Economic School” in 1919, and were the first

generation of parents not to teach Zapotec to their kids. In Zautla there is a clear correlation between the first school and language shift.

Teachers played a key role in the shift from Zapotec to Spanish from the 1920s-1930s. Even though they weren't from the community, teachers and priests (sometimes the same person) were the ultimate authorities in Zautla. Teacher's influence extended well beyond the classroom. They were "politicians, doctors, advisors," an older Zauteca told me. "They were big figures, the true authorities of the community" [*eran políticos, médicos, consejeros, curas...eran grandes figuras. Eran las autoridades de la comunidad*]. All community decisions had to pass through the teachers and priests. They also influenced family and personal decisions (e.g. the teacher and priest had to ratify all marriages).

In the classroom teachers struggled to understand Zapotec speakers. At times they told students not to speak Zapotec or ignored kids that spoke Zapotec. Here is an excerpt from an interview with a woman named Refugio Luiz Neri, age 82, that goes by Tía Cuca.^{xxx}

Mackenzie: And what did the teacher do if a kid spoke in Zapotec?

Tía Cuca: Just ignored the student. And there *were* kids that spoke Zapotec. And that's how the language was lost more and more until it was lost completely. That's how it was destroyed.

Mackenzie: So the teachers contributed too?

Tía Cuca: Exactly. That's what's sad. It wasn't valued.

Mackenzie: ¿Y que hacía el maestro si un niño hablaba Zapoteco en clase?

Tía Cuca: No los tomaban en cuenta. Y había niños que sí hablaban el dialecto. Y en eso se iba acabando más y más hasta que se acabó, aunque había muchos niños que hablaban el Zapoteco. Así fue como se destruyó.

Mackenzie: Entonces los maestros contribuían?

Tía Cuca: Exactamente. Ese fue la tristeza. Que no se valoró.

Teachers even had an indirect influence on home language use in their meetings with parents.

This is important because language vitality depends so much on speaking at home (Tse 2001:681). Soon it was not just teachers that promoted Spanish, but also parents and kids

themselves. Between 1925 and 1935 many kids did not learn Zapotec in their homes, and they lost interest in the language, even when it was promoted by a teacher.

Tía Cuca: Everyone in the community spoke Zapotec. *Everyone. Everyone.* Our parents spoke too, but we didn't even try.

Mackenzie: Why was that?

Tía Cuca: We didn't like it. A teacher came. He was from the Cañada (a region in the north of Oaxaca) where there are lots of towns. Only dialect [he spoke], but very different. And he said 'why don't you want to learn?' In school they said 'learn because it's beautiful. Someone is going to talk to insult you in Zapotec and you won't even know. And they just laughed that we didn't want to learn. But it never interested us. We said that it was confusing and we couldn't pronounce the words. And everyone said 'why would you learn Zapotec? Soon that language will be gone so, why learn it?'

Tía Cuca: Todos los señores de antes, toda la comunidad, hablaban puro dialecto. *Todos. Todos.* Nuestros papaces hablaban también. Y nosotros ya ni siquiera hicimos el intento.

Mackenzie: ¿Por qué?

Tía Cuca: Porque no nos gustó. Vino un maestro. Era de rumbo de la Cañada, por ese rumbo de por allí porque hay muchos pueblos. Puro dialecto pero muy diferente. Y decía ¿por qué no se interesa por aprender? En la escuela nos decían, 'aprendan porque es bonito. Al rato pueda ser que se están dirigiendo a ustedes una grosería y ni saben. Y no más risa nos daba a los niños de la escuela porque querían que aprendieramos el dialecto. Y nunca nos interesó. Decíamos que no nos gustaba, que era muy enredado, y que no sabíamos como pronunciar. Y todos decían '¿para qué van a aprender eso? Al rato se va a quitar eso del dialecto y ¿para qué van a aprender?'

Tía Cuca's husband, Facundo Martínez Lopez, age 87, who goes by Tío Facundo,^{xxxii} is one of the last five or so Zapotec speakers in Zautla (they are all over eighty years old). He said that, even if you wanted to learn, there was no one to teach: "there were no men or women that said 'come here kid, we're going to teach the dialect [Zapotec]'" [*No había señores así que dijeron 'vente muchacho, te vamos a enseñar el dialecto'*"]. In this way, the Zapotec of Zautla was lost (largely) in one generation. (SEE DENNIS (21) for MORE).



Facundo Martínez Lopez, age 87, is one of the remaining five Zapotec speakers in Zautla. He was president of Zautla in the early 1990s, before political parties entered the community (Chapter 3). Here, he and his wife, Refugio Luiz Neri, age 82, rest at their home in Zautla.

Education and Language in Mazaltepec:

As mentioned, I could not find exact dates for the establishment of education in Mazaltepec. However, there must have been a school by the mid 1940s considering the age of my informants. Of the people I talked to, Fernando Froilán (73) was the oldest person that had attended school. It sounded like the school was still being organized in the 1940s. There was only one teacher who was not very competent. Furthermore, this teacher did not speak Zapotec. He told the kids not to speak Zapotec [*que no hablen idioma*], but many kids did not speak Spanish. Fernando understood Spanish at the time—he had learned in the community—but still did not stay in school. He couldn't afford the books and he needed to work on the land. Despite a knee injury, Fernando works the land to this day.

Soon after he left, however, more teachers came. “There were three, four, and then five teachers” [*había tres, cuatro, hasta cinco maestros*]. It was in these years that education began to seriously impact the community. It changed the way people thought about themselves. One lady in her sixties told me: “I didn't know I was indian until I went to school” [*ni sabía que era india hasta que me fui a la escuela*]. It also, surely, led to language shift and loss. While I have no data to support a direct correlation between the two in Mazaltepec, some people (including teachers) seem to think that schools were the main cause of language loss.

But, as Fernando's son Felipe (who I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4) told me, there was resistance in Mazaltepec. Not everyone wanted to speak Spanish.

There was a time in Mexico in which people thought that a community that spoke an indigenous language was backwards. The community authorities and the teachers, said ‘we need to forget our language. We're not going to talk anymore.’ In Zautla they obeyed and even between themselves they spoke Spanish with their

kids. They didn't teach them Zapotec. The people in Mazaltepec didn't obey the authorities. They kept talking. They kept teaching their kids. That's why we still have Zapotec here.

Entonces vino una época en Mexico en que se pensaba que el pueblo que hablaba una lengua era un pueblo atrasado. Las autoridades de los dos pueblos, con los maestros, dijeron, 'saben que, hay que olvidarnos de la lengua, ya no vamos a hablar.' Y los de allí obedieron. Y ya entre ellos mismos se hablaba Español con sus hijos. Ya no les enseñaron. Los que vivieron de este lado no obedieron a las autoridades. Siguieron hablando. Siguieron enseñando a sus hijos. Y por eso aún se conserva aquí en la comunidad

However, despite continued resistance, Zapotec is quickly being lost in the community. Today, nearly every Mazalteco over fifty years old is bilingual in Zapotec and Spanish. Even the oldest Mazaltecos speak some Spanish. The generation between thirty and fifty has begun to lose Zapotec (I would estimate that half of this generation is bilingual and half is monolingual in Spanish). Mazaltecos younger than thirty are mostly monolingual in Spanish.

Still, many of the older Mazaltecos that I interviewed refuse to believe that the language is being lost. Fernando told me "we still speak the language and that's why it won't be lost...even the little kids speak it" [*Lo estamos hablando y por eso no se va a perder...Los chamacos chiquitos hablan idioma*]. An eighty year old woman argued about language loss with her son.

Woman: No. The language won't be lost because even babies speak it. Yea, it hasn't been lost yet.

Son: [Takes a breath after chopping some wood] Yea it has ma. Many people don't speak it anymore.

Woman: Many, but most people that live here use Zapotec. It hasn't been lost and neither have the customs.

Mujer: No. No se va a perder porque hasta los bebes hablan Zapoteco. Sí, no se ha perdido la lengua.

Hijo: [Cortando leña, respira] Sí ya se ha perdido ma. Ya muchos no la hablan.

Mujer: Muchos pero casi la mayor parte de las personas que viven aca, todos ejercen el Zapoteco. No lo han perdido y las costumbres también.

Besides these elders, who lived mostly in their houses, no one denied this reality. Even so, I wanted more data to show the extent of language shift in the population.

To do this I conducted surveys in the three schools of Mazaltapec: the general primary school, the bilingual primary school, and the telesecondary school.^{xxxii} The general primary school consists of six grades. Besides first and second grade, each grade is divided into two classes (for a total of ten classes). The class size ranges from fifteen to twenty-three students. Three of the ten teachers are from Mazaltapec and two speak Zapotec. The telesecondary school has three grades (seventh through ninth grade) with two classes each. Both of these are monolingual (Spanish) schools, but, as we will see in Chapter 4, some professors want to teach Zapotec in them. The bilingual secondary school has one class for twenty students in all six grades; it is a multigenerational school. I was able to visit every class in these three schools to observe and conduct the survey (see table on page X).

My survey data shows that Zapotec is in great danger of being lost in Mazaltapec. Of the 274 kids that I surveyed only 19 claimed to speak Zapotec fluently.

School and Class	Total # Students	# Speak Zapotec*	# Speak some Zapotec	Total # Speak Zapotec	% Speak Zapotec	# Understand Zapotec***	Total # Speak and Understand	% Speak and Understand
Gen: 1	16	0	1	1	6.3%	N/A****	N/A	N/A
Gen: 2	18	2	3	5	27%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gen: 3 A	15	1	0	1	6.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gen: 3 B	23	4**	0	4	17.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gen: 4 A	22	0	8	8	36.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gen: 4 B	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gen: 5 A	16	1	1	2	12.5%	6	8	50%
Gen: 5 B	15	1	1	2	13.3%	5	7	46.6%
Gen: 6 A	13	1	6	7	53.8%	1	8	61.5%
Gen: 6 B	14	0	5	5	35.7%	4	9	64.3%
Sec: 7 A	17	1	0	1	58.8%	6	7	41.2%
Sec: 7 B	20	2	5	7	35%	0	7	35%
Sec: 8 A	19	1	5	6	31.6%	8	14	73.7%
Sec: 8 B	20	0	3	3	15%	9	12	60%
Sec: 9 A	13	0	5	5	38.5%	5	10	76.9%
Sec: 9 B	13	0	4	4	30.8%	4	8	61.6%
Bilingual	20	5	3	8	40%	5	13	65%
Total #	274	19	50	69	25.2%	82*****	151	55.1%
Total %	—	6.9%	18.2%	25.2%	—	29.9%	55.1%	—

* This is mainly first-language speakers, but not exclusively. Some learned Spanish or another language (English, Mixtec) alongside Zapotec.

**Possible that some of these speakers should be in the “speak some Zapotec” category.

*** This does not include speakers or partial speakers.

**** N/A (not available) means that I did not collect this data.

***** Assumes the average # for each N/A in column.

***** Total % for each relevant column compared to the “Total # Students” column

This survey is a useful way to see the present reality in Mazaltepec. While over half (55.1%) of students between the ages six and sixteen understand some Zapotec, only 6.9% are fluent speakers. This corroborates my observational data that kids speak Spanish even in Zapotec-speaking households. I estimate (along with my informants) that there is a Zapotec speaker in well over half of the households of Mazaltepec. Every household that I visited had at least one Zapotec speaker. This suggests that parents, grandparents, and other adults are not teaching Zapotec to children.^{xxxiii}

This survey itself is very limited. First, I conducted the survey, not a teacher or community member. This leads to an inherent bias in the questions asked and the answers received. Furthermore, it was run in Spanish. Second, it was conducted orally and in public. In some cases this helped. For instance, in talkative classes everyone would shout the answer to my questions; or one or two students would answer my questions, but others would correct them if they were wrong. In some cases, however, students did not disclose their language capabilities. A few helpful teachers stepped out of class to give me more complete data, but in other classes this did not happen (sadly, I did not mark this in my notes and therefore it does not appear in my survey). Third, the survey is limited because it records only perceived, not actual, language capabilities. To capture actual language capabilities would require linguistic and sociolinguistic behavioral studies. Furthermore, it records perceived capability on a limited scale. For instance, I only asked kids to identify themselves as full language speakers or partial language speakers. Fourth, I was unable to ask every question to every class. This is reflected in the large N/A (not available) sections in the table. Lastly, not every student in Mazaltepec schools is from Mazaltepec. While Mazaltepec inhabitants account for the vast majority, students also come from other nearby communities including Zautla. Conversely, some Mazaltepec youth attend a school outside of Mazaltepec, both primary and secondary.

Despite its limitations, this survey confirms all of the other data that I collected during my fieldwork, namely, that kids are rapidly losing their *lengua materna*, Zapotec. The survey also gave me time to talk to students. I asked the Zapotec speakers if they use it outside of their homes and they all said no. None of them speak it with their friends (this is what students told me, but I have no observational data).

Then I asked students, speakers and non-speakers, what they think about Zapotec. Many students told me that the language is “pretty” or “good.” These were the most common responses in all schools. Others told me that it is “our ancestry,” that “it should be preserved,” or “it is being lost.” Others told me that “it doesn’t matter anymore,” “it’s of our parents and grandparents, but not us,” and “it is of the elders.” I compile a sample of student responses in the table below. All responses come from students in the general primary and secondary schools. Responses in the bilingual school did not differ greatly. These results demonstrate conflicting language ideologies amongst young Mazaltecos. I will discuss conflicting ideologies in Chapter 3.

In the survey I also asked about other languages in the community, in particular English. Overall English is not spoken as much as Zapotec. However, in some classes I found as many first-language English speakers as first-language Zapotec speakers, if not more. Most of these were kids that had grown up, at least partially, in the United States. People also learn English in language schools in Oaxaca City and in community schools. English is a part of the national curriculum for all Mexican public schools. But the students who only take classes at the community schools rarely learn to speak English. Most learn just to read and write. (I will discuss English in Chapter 3).

Zapotec Viewed Positively	Zapotec Viewed Negatively	Other
Pretty [<i>bonito</i>]	It doesn't matter anymore today [<i>no nos importa hoy</i>]	It's being lost [<i>se está perdiendo</i>]
Good [<i>bueno</i>]	It's of our parents and grandparents, but not us [<i>es de los padres y abuelos pero no de nosotros</i>]	Only twenty-five and up speak it [<i>solo los de veinte y cinco para arriba hablan Zapoteco</i>]
It should be preserved [<i>se debe conservar</i>]	It shouldn't be conserved [<i>no se debe conservar</i>]	It's being extinguished [<i>se está extinguiendo</i>]
Zapotec is more important (than English)	English is more important (than Zapotec) [<i>el inglés es más importante</i>]	Both are important (English and Zapotec)
The language is important [<i>la lengua es importante</i>]	The language is important (laughing sarcastically) [<i>la lengua es importante</i>].	We/they/I are/am embarrassed to talk [<i>nos/les/me da vergüenza</i>] [<i>da pena hablar</i>]
Inherited from our ancestors [<i>idioma heredado de los antepasados</i>]	Why learn Zapotec? How will it help us? [<i>¿para qué aprender Zapoteco? ¿Cómo nos va a ayudar?</i>]	Another way to communicate [<i>otra forma de comunicar</i>]
It's what defines us [<i>es lo que nos define</i>]	It's backwards to speak Zapotec [<i>es un atraso hablar Zapoteco</i>]	It's not being lost because we're embarrassed, but because our parents don't teach us [<i>se está perdiendo porque los padres no nos enseñan. No es por vergüenza</i>]
It's tradition to speak Zapotec [<i>es tradición hablar Zapoteco</i>]		It's to say personal things [<i>para hablar cosas personales</i>]
It's our mother tongue [<i>es nuestra lengua materna</i>]		More intimate [<i>más íntima</i>]
		It's used for vulgarities [<i>se usa para groserías</i>] Some are born with Zapotec, but others aren't [<i>algunos nacen con el Zapoteco, otros no</i>] It's like any other language. It's for communicating [<i>es como cualquier otra lengua. Sirve para comunicar con los que hablan.</i>]

Conclusion:

Today's students in Mazaltepec are part of the first monolingual generation. They speak Spanish in school, but also in their homes, with their friends, and in the larger world to which they are connected. Most of them understand Zapotec because it is spoken in their households and amongst elders on the streets, but they do not speak the language because their parents talk to them in Spanish. One kid in the survey told me, Zapotec is “of our parents and grandparents, but not us.” This reflects a general belief that Zapotec is a remnant of the past, but not an integral part of the future. This change in *attitude*, from “peasant conservatism” to economic development, is the fundamental cause of language shift in Mazaltepec and Zautla.

Changing attitudes are closely connected to indigenist education that, over the course of the twentieth century, set out to integrate indigenous peoples into Western social, political, and economic structures. In Zautla the first school opened in 1919. Students in the twenties learned Spanish and were sometimes the first speakers in their family. When they had kids of their own they passed on Spanish, but not Zapotec. By the early 1940s most kids did not speak Zapotec; nor did they, or their parents, see it as important enough to save. In Mazaltepec, language shift was more gradual. There were fully bilingual generations (those born in the 1920s to the 1960s) and at least one partial bilingual generation (those born in the 1970s and 1980s) before Spanish gained dominance. Most bilingual adults today only pass on one language to their kids, the one that will help their kids, family, and community to *salir adelante* or “forge ahead”—Spanish.

In subsequent chapters I will complicate the notion of changing attitudes. I will show that there are other factors involved including migration and capitalist expansion. I will also show how language shift is closely connected to culture shift.

Chapter 3

Ripples of Modernity: Competing Ideologies and Multiple Discourses

Outside ideologies and thought hardly apply here. The only one that's convinced us has been capitalism. That, yes. Capitalism has us at its feet because we consume everything. We consume foods, we consume electronic products, we consume ideologies, we consume everything—Jesús, age 28, Zautla

Las corrientes externas de ideologías y pensamiento casi no apliquen. La única que sí nos ha convencido es el capitalismo. Esa sí. Nos tiene a sus pies el capitalismo porque consumimos de todo. Consumimos alimentos, consumimos productos eléctricos, consumimos ideologías, consumimos todo pues.

Many practices, of the political parties, the church, migration, they bring other ways of thinking or of seeing the world to the community. This has divided the community. It's not pure. The culture of Zautla isn't pure anymore—Lydia González, age 51, Zautla

Muchas prácticas de los partidos políticos, la iglesia, la migración, traen otras formas de pensar o de ver el mundo a la comunidad. Eso ha dividido a la comunidad. Ya no es pura pues. La cultura de Zautla ya no es pura.

Mazaltepec isn't an indigenous community anymore. It's civilized now. The people are waking up—Jéssica, age 17, Mazaltepec

Mazaltepec no es una comunidad indígena. Está ya muy civilizada. La gente está muy despierta ya casi—Jéssica, age 17, Mazaltepec

Guajolotes

I woke up to birds chirping and roosters crowing. The air was fresh and cool, but still. The only other sound came from a buzzing car engine sitting outside of the house. After a few minutes, Jesús called my name and said it was time to go. Jesús, his dad, his uncle, and I piled into his uncle's pickup truck and left for Zaachila, another community about a forty minute drive from Zautla. We were going to Zaachila's weekly *tianguis*, one of the Central Valley's largest

markets outside of Oaxaca City. Jesús and his family were hosting the upcoming community patron saint festival, the day of San Andrés and needed to purchase the *guajolotes*. Turkeys are an important part of community fiestas. They are used for the *baile de guajolote*, the “dance of the turkey.” Then they are killed and eaten, or given as gifts to other community members. They already had fifteen turkeys, but they needed fifteen more. This was no small purchase—a large turkey could cost upwards of five hundred pesos (about forty dollars)—especially when combined with all of the other expenses for the fiesta: the tent, tables, food, band, decorations, etc. Jesús said that this can cost up to ten thousand pesos in total (upwards of eight-hundred dollars). But, as they told me, this was a key aspect of being a part of the community. All adults have the moral obligation to host, or at least co-host a community fiesta during their life. Jesús’ family had been saving for years and it was now time to celebrate and give back to the community. (See (Barabas et al. 2003:29) for a further discussion on community fiestas.)

In indigenous communities no one is a member solely by birth right, but also by responsibility. Hosting of and participation in community fiestas is one of the three pillars of community responsibility along with *el poder* and *el trabajo*, community power and community work (Barabas et al. 2003:28). I discuss power and work below. Over the last few years in Zautla, it has become increasingly difficult to host fiestas. Prices have gone up and it is a large time commitment. Many foods and materials (like turkeys) are no longer available in the community and they must be purchased in Oaxaca City or markets like Zaachila. As a result, Zautecos are beginning to question the price and value of community fiestas. Jesús’ mother, Lydia González, told me that “it just cost too much. No one wants to do it anymore” [*cuesta muchísimo. Ya nadie las quiere hacer*]. Jesús explained further:

If we don't bring back the values of the of the fiestas, they're going to be lost within five years. There is just no one that wants to host a fiesta anymore. It used to be about bringing the community together, but now it's about money and who can pay. Fiestas are being lost, and with them, our identity. It will break the union of the community. We will stop being Zautla.

Si no se recuperen los valores de las fiestas se van a perder dentro de cinco años. Ya no hay personas que quieren hacer la fiesta. Antes las fiestas unían a la comunidad, pero ya no. Ya se trata del dinero y quien puede pagar. Se va perdiendo la fiesta y con ello la identidad. Dejará la unión de la comunidad. Dejará de ser Zautla.

Here, Jesús mentions the communal value of fiestas. They are a key aspect of community identity (one that I did not discuss in Chapter 1), and each community is proud of its particular fiesta customs. But, beyond this, fiestas are important for building cohesion amongst community members. This value, the value of community itself, is threatened. The community may become more divided if fiestas are lost, but it is *already* divided in many ways. What is changing and why? Furthermore, what do people say and do about this? In both Zautla and Mazaltepec people told me about their experiences with social changes. They also told me how they are affecting the community. Here I document these changes. I also argue, following Messing, that

it is not social changes themselves—such as colonialism, industrialization, or migration—that motivate or explain linguistic [and culture] change culminating in obsolescence, but rather that the focus should be on HOW the social change itself affects how speakers USE their languages [and cultures] in different contexts. (2007:557)

Looking East along the road
that goes from Etna Center to Zautla and
Mazaltepec

The Road to Modernity

I opened this thesis with a story about Zautecos and Mazaltecos travelling between their communities and Oaxaca City. The communities are only about a forty-five minute *colectivo* taxi ride from the city. There are multiple *colectivos* that leave every hour and many people make the trip. In fact, the taxis rarely leave, especially from Zautla, before they are packed with five passengers and their baggage. Zautecos and Mazaltecos travel daily to Oaxaca City for work or education. Others visit the city on occasion for shopping or entertainment. Oaxaca City can be a somewhat hostile environment for those that “look” indigenous or speak an indigenous language, but this does not stop people from visiting. But, until the 1980s or even 1990s, there was a manifest divide between the communities and the city. Few people travelled to the city, at least on a daily basis before the road was paved in the 1990s. Middle aged and older people told me stories of walking for hours or even days to get other communities or Oaxaca City. People told me that most of these journeys to markets where they sold their goods and bought those of others. Even in the 1980s there was only one or two buses per day. An older Mazalteco man said:

Before, in the eighties there wasn't regular transportation here. There was, but only once a day, twice a day. One [bus] went to Oaxaca in the early morning and returned at two in the afternoon. It didn't go again until the next day. It came just once a day. But now there are lots of trips.

Antes como en el ochenta todavía no venían pasajes seguidos aquí. Había, pero venía una vez al día, dos veces. Uno se iba pa' Oaxaca temprano, se regresaba a veces a las dos de la tarde. Se iba hasta el otro día y así no más. Una vez no más venía al día. Pero ya ahora hay mucho pasaje.

The road to Zautla and Mazaltepec was paved in the early 1990s, at the request of both municipalities. This greatly compacted both the time and distance between the communities and the city and consequently opened new possible exchanges between the worlds. Anthony Giddens

explains that this is true “both on the level of the ‘phenomenal world’ of the individual and the general universe of social activity within which collective life is enacted. Although everyone lives a local life, phenomenal worlds for the most part are truly global” (Giddens 1991:187-188).¹ It is clear that the subjective experience of living a “local” life in Zautla and Mazatepec has changed greatly over the last two decades.

Capitalist development in Oaxaca implies the exploitation of indigenous lands and labor, often leading to ruptures or disjunctures in community structures and organizations (Barabas et al. 2003:36). Some political economic disjunctures that have resulted from capitalist expansion in Zautla and Mazaltepec are: increased migration to Mexico and the United States (especially from Mazaltepec^{xxxiv}); increased wage labor (moving away from agriculture); decreased self-sufficiency (and greater dependency on outside products and institutions); and decreased self-determination (especially with the rise of political parties in Zautla). But the disjunctures go beyond politics and economics and into what Arjun Appadurai calls *mediascapes* and *ideoscapes*, and thus, into the realm of language, culture, and subjective experience. Mediascapes refer to the distribution of new media technologies and information as well as the images of these media. Furthermore:

they provide (especially in their television, film, and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers around the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed. What this means is that many audiences around the world experience the media themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens, and billboards. The lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the farther away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds (Appadurai 2000:104)

¹ This was quoted in Messing 2007:555. How do I quote this and how to cite?

In Zautla and Mazaltepec there is not only telephone service, but also internet cafes and access to satellite television with both Mexican and U.S. channels in Spanish and English. There is even a store in Zautla that sells pirated copies of U.S. movies on DVD. These new media symbolize twenty-first century modernity for many people in the communities, and almost every household has at least one small television. These media not only bridge the gap between worlds—for instance, Zautecos and Mazaltecos can talk to relatives in the U.S.—they also carry ideoscapes, or images that are “often directly political and frequently have to do with ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it” (Appadurai 2004:104).

New media technologies have greatly impacted how people in Zautla and Mazaltepec see themselves and how they act in relation to the outside world. In a way people have created “imagined worlds.” However, this is misleading because it suggests that their subjective world and experience is not as real as anyone else’s. Appadurai points out that such “[macro]-scapes” do not necessarily cause homogenization. Rather, all of the resultant social changes are fit into local cultural values and understandings (Appadurai 2004:102). This applies to mediascapes and ideoscapes, but also to other social changes that have resulted from capitalist development such as industrialization and migration, or even just the possibility of visiting the city on a daily basis. In Zautla and Mazaltepec there are “new identities” like *hipster* or *punk*; there are new products from Disney, and Mattel Inc.; there are new foods like Coca-cola, candies, hamburgers and pizza (Mazaltepec is considered the pizza capital of the Valley of Etna) (new foods have led to increased rates of diabetes in both communities); there are new agricultural technologies like tractors and fertilizers; there are new (non-agricultural) forms of employment like restaurants and small businesses (some sell products like school supplies, Western clothing, packaged foods, and

American toys; and others offer services like photocopying or intracommunity moto-taxi transport); and there are new denominations of Christianity (besides Catholicism) like Evangelicism and Jehova's Witness. Such changes are facts of everyday life in Zautla and Mazaltepec. They cannot be understood simply in terms of cultural homogonization because they are absorbed according to local norms.



Sisters Ashely (age 9) and Diana (age 7) at their home in Mazaltepec. Like most kids today, they dress in Western clothing that can be bought in the community.

The Contradictions Beyond Modernity

But not everyone is happy about the the march of modernity into Zautla and Mazaltepec. As we began to see in Chapters 1 and 2, people have mixed attitudes about modernizing, at least according to Western standards. Some simply accept social change and modernity as a reality, but others actively promote it or actively resist it. This is the central ideological disjuncture within and between Zautla and Mazaltepec. But to understand this disjuncture and others we need to expand our scope and our theory beyond “[macro]-scapes” (Meek 2010:51) and into the everyday lives of Zautecos and Mazaltecos.

As Lydia suggests in the epigraph Zautla has experienced a great deal of social and cultural change as a result of outside political and economic forces, notably colonizing and modernizing practices that have explicitly and implicitly aimed to assimilate indigenous peoples into the dominant culture. These forces have divided and continue to divide both Zautla and Mazaltepec, not only politically and economically, but also ideologically, creating disjunctive discourses, practices, and ideologies that colonize the communities from within. Here, it is not modernity itself that causes change, but the ripples of modernity—the everyday reproduction of national, state, and regional ideologies within and between Zautla and Mazaltepec.

Barbra Meek argues, “language endangerment is not just a repercussion of colonial assimilationist tactics—it is an affect of contemporary sociolinguistic practices, ideologies, and disjunctures”^{xxxv} (2010:52). I will follow Barbra Meek in looking at economic and political disjunctures, disjunctures of identity, and sociolinguistic disjunctures (Meek 2010:xx). These are “the everyday points of discontinuity and contradiction—between social or linguistic groups, within discourses, practices, or between them, even between indexical orders—that interrupt the

flow of action, communication, or thought” (2010:x). In order to most clearly see the disjunctures in Zautla and Mazaltepec I will build a conceptual framework around Jacqueline Messing’s idea of “multiple ideologies and competing discourses of language, identity, and progress.” (2007:555). These multiple ideologies and competing discourses are not only a result, but also a driver of social and linguistic change.

Working in the Malintzi region of Central Mexico, Messing develops a framework around three discourses and ideologies of language, identity, and progress (modernity): “the pro-development metadiscourse of *salir adelante*, ‘forging ahead’ and improving ones socio-economic position; the discourse of *menosprecio*, denigration of indigenous identity; and the *pro-indígena* or pro-indigenous discourse that promotes a positive attitude toward indigenous identity” (Messing 2007:555). The discourse of *salir adelante* is promulgated by entities of the Mexican government, especially education, through slogans such as “*Para el Progreso de la nación*,” “for the progress of the nation” (Messing 2007:559). It tends to invoke ideas of development into a “modern,” “first world” nation. This is the dominant discourse not only nationally and regionally, but also locally within Mazaltepec and Zautla. It exists alongside discourses of *menos precio* and *pro-indígena*. “*Menosprecio* discourse, denigrating comments about local language and identity, can be explicitly produced by all people [in Mazaltepec and Zautla] but is particularly vocalized by the upper classes, or by anyone who has internalized racist attitudes, reproduced from outside their community” (Messing 2007:561). The *pro-indígena*, “pro-indigenous,” discourse “interrogate[s] the hegemonic stance of *menosprecio*” (Messing 2007:561). It is commonly produced by local historians, folklorists, revitalization workers, and teachers, some who are university-educated and some who are not. This “heterogeneous group [similar to what Messing found] are quite aware of their use of this

discourse as a part of consciousness raising, to call into question the anti-indigenous sentiment among producers of *menosprecio* discourse” (Messing 2007:561). The discourse of *pro-indígena* reflects national discourse (much of it coming out of indigenous political movements including, but not limited to, the ongoing Zapatista uprising started in 1994) of the *revaloración de la cultura indígena*, the “reevaluation of indigenous culture” (INEGI 2004:119).

Ideological conflicts (influencing discourse and practice) in Zautla and Mazaltepec fit into this schema. Messing shows that multiple discourses and ideologies can be expressed in a single utterance. Likewise, Jane Hill (following Mikhail Bakhtin) shows that, within heteroglossia, multiple “voices” can be expressed in a single utterance (1985:728). While I did not collect this kind of linguistic data, the concept is still useful to analyze the multiple ideologies and discourses of a single person.

In Mazaltepec, even parents that speak Zapotec and speak highly *of* Zapotec do not teach their children. For instance, Felipe Froilán is a steadfast proponent of Zapotec revitalization and maintenance within Mazaltepec. He teaches the language in Mazaltepec’s bilingual primary school and has even written a small dictionary of *Tizá*, the local variety of Zapotec; but, he does not speak the language to his two (pre-teen) kids and, consequently, they do not speak Zapotec (outside of school Felipe only speaks Zapotec with adults). This *sociolinguistic disjuncture*—here, inconsistent and discontinuous speech patterns that do not cross domains—is the most substantial obstacle to language maintenance and revitalization in Mazaltepec. The primary goal of language revitalization must be to create new first-language speakers, and this requires consistent language use across multiple domains (Meek 2010:xi, 3). The fact that Felipe teaches Zapotec to his kids *only during specific classroom activities*, is an insufficient means of revitalization.

Sociolinguistic disjunctures can also be seen within the multiple discourses of a single person. Within Felipe's discourse there are multiple, competing ideologies of progress. He uses a *pro-indígena* or pro-indigenous discourse to exalt Mazaltepec's indigenous language and culture. Accordingly, he blames modernity and globalization for language shift:

Felipe: What's happening is that the kids, the youth that are under fifteen years old, well, they don't care about the language [Zapotec].

Mack: Why is the language being lost now and not earlier?

Felipe: Because of the new technology, the issue of *modernity*, communications, and the government programs that are doing away with the language. And it's the objective of the government. Their objective is to put an end to the languages and cultures, nothing else. The objective is to globalize and make all of us study the same thing.

Felipe: Lo que pasa es que los niños, los jóvenes que tienen de quince años hacia abajo, pues ya nadie se preocupa por la lengua [Zapoteco] pues.

Mackenzie: ¿Por qué se va perdiendo ahora y no antes?

Felipe: Porque con la nueva tecnología, la cuestión de la *modernidad*, las comunicaciones, los mismos programas del gobierno pues se está acabando con la lengua. Y es el objetivo del gobierno. Es el objetivo acabar con las lenguas y culturas no más. El objetivo es globalizarlos y que todos estudiemos lo mismo.

In the same conversation he used the discourse of *salir adelante*, "forging ahead," to suggest that Mazaltecos and Mazaltepec can make progress by tapping into the dominant culture, language, and *knowledge*.

Mackenzie: Do you want your kids to study in the United States?

Felipe: Yes. I want my kids to *forge ahead*, to go to the best universities, so that they learn, but never forget their culture. To the contrary, that this serves them to develop their culture. That one day they come back prepared and rescue other things that we can't rescue right now.

Mackenzie: ¿Usted quiere que sus hijos estudien en los Estados Unidos?

Felipe: Sí. Yo quiero que mis hijos *salgan adelante*, que vayan a las mejores universidades. Que conozcan, pero jamás olviden su cultura. Al contrario que les sirva para que desarrollen su cultura. Que algún día regresen preparados y rescaten otras cosas pues que uno no lo puede hacer.

Mazaltecos (and Zautecos) use the discourse of *salir adelante* to talk about economic development, migration to the U.S.,^{xxxvi} work in the city, or the modernization of a “backwards” culture [*cultura atrasada*]. Such discourse often exalts English and U.S. culture and knowledge as does Felipe. Felipe’s discourse is distinct in that it fluidly combines multiple ideologies and the competing discourses of *pro-indígena* and *salir adelante*. He believes that U.S. universities hold the knowledge necessary to save the cultural knowledge of Mazaltepec. This suggests that successful revitalization may come, not from within the community, but from the U.S.; that is, it must be imported.^{xxxvii}

***Comunalidad* as Purism in Zautla**

Felipe’s discourse of *salir adelante* does not mix well with *indigenous purism*, another type of *pro-indígena* discourse in Zautla and Mazaltepec. In both communities, the discourse of purism can be related to identity and to language. Jesús, of Zautla, disagrees with the importation of knowledge—this is an impurity. For Jesús, knowledge production must come from within the community itself. Much of his discourse (he himself says) is based on the principle of *comunalidad*, common amongst indigenous populations in Oaxaca. The term ‘*comunalidad*’ comes from Oaxaca’s indigenous context and is best explained by Jaime Luna, a Oaxacan anthropologist that explores the concept in depth. He writes:

Comunalidad is a way of understanding life as being permeated with spirituality, symbolism, and a greater integration with nature. It is a way of understanding that Man is not the center, but simply a part of this great natural world. It is here that we can distinguish the enormous difference between Western and indigenous thought. Who is at the center—only one, or all? The individual, or everyone? (Maldonado and Meyer 2010:24)^{xxxviii}

Jesús is familiar with this literature. He states: “what Jaime Luna invented, *comunalidad*, is a type of socialism, but implicit. It is already in our way of life [*eso que inventó Jaime Luna de la comunalidad es un tipo de socialismo pero implícito. Algo que ya venía en nuestro*].

Comunalidad revolves around the production and valuation of power, subjectivity, and knowledge within the (indigenous) community. In general, *comunalidad* rejects Western institutions and ideas, not only because they are impositions that rupture community unity, but because they don't fit into the indigenous *cosmovisión*, world view. Therefore, *comunalidad* rejects modernity and the discourse of *salir adelante* (including the related “culture of migration”^{xxxix}), instead suggesting that development come from within the community and be based on community values of cooperation and respect (for other community members and for the natural environment in which they live). *Comunalidad* does not reject development: rather it rejects *Western* (homogenizing and teleological) *notions of development*. It also rejects individualism (likewise related to the discourse of *salir adelante*). Jesús is an adamant proponent of *comunalidad*. So as not to misrepresent *comunalidad* in Zautla I use Jesús words.

Jesús: The individual, or the analysis of the individual, doesn't exist within an indigenous person. What exists is the analysis of community, not the analysis of a person. How do we see the individual? We don't really. That type of introspection, well an indigenous person doesn't even do self-analysis. (S)he analyzes the community... The individual is always going to be tied to the community.

Mackenzie: How has this changed with modernization?

Jesús: That's what has affected the community. Modernization, globalization have made the individual more particular, more individualistic. Someone only thinks in themselves and those people are rejected by the community. It's like a system of self-destruction for those people [laughs]. Society won't kill you, but it will automatically exclude you.

Jesús: La individualidad, o el análisis del individuo, no existe dentro del indígena. Existe el análisis de la comunidad, pero no el análisis de la persona. Eso de cómo se ve el individuo, casi no se ve. No hace ese introspección pues no se analiza a el mismo. Analiza la situación de la comunidad... El individuo siempre va a estar ligado a la comunidad.

Mackenzie: ¿Cómo va cambiando eso con la modernización?

Jesús: Es lo que se ha afectado el pueblo. La modernización, la globalización han hecho que el individuo sea más particular, más individualista. Solamente se fija por sí mismo y esas personas que se empiezan a fijar por sí mismo son rechazadas por la comunidad. Hay como un sistema de autodestrucción para esas personas [risa]. La sociedad no te va a matar, pero automáticamente te va a excluir.

In this conversation Jesús discussed some of the most important aspects of community involvement. He highlighted fiestas, *tequios*, and *usos y costumbres*. As mentioned, community fiestas are one of the three pillars of indigenous identity and responsibility. The other two are work, referring to community work projects called *tequios*; and power, referring to participation in community politics, especially through participation in the community assembly (*asamblea*), the primary decision making body within Oaxacan communities, and the holding of un-paid positions in the community government called *cargos*. Jesús explains that *tequios* are still an important part of the community. Community politics, on the other hand, have been greatly changed by the rise of political parties in the 1990s. Jesús also highlights the importance of *ayuda mutua*, mutual help. Here he discusses all of these:

Jesús: Here, when we have a fiesta everyone helps. When someone dies, everyone helps. In Oaxaca this is called *ayuda mutua*. It's mutual help with a hint of *truque*. Do you know what *truque* is? It's reciprocal exchange.

Mackenzie: Yes. It's a part of community membership right?

Jesús: Yes. Exchange. For instance, if I have a party today you help me ten kilos of corn and that's your *guelaguetza*, your support. And when you have a fiesta I'll bring something to you, more or less equivalent to what you brought me. This makes fiestas easier if everyone collaborates. It's more communal. So, if it's a fiesta for everyone, everyone participates.

Mackenzie: And how about the *tequio*?

Jesús: Yes, the *tequio* is fundamental here... *Tequios* are an obvious general participation. It's a communal labor, not a private labor. We all feel like we participate in it... We do *tequio* to clean the municipal building when it's time for Day of the Dead, all of the community goes to clean the building. When we clean the agricultural canals, everyone that has land goes to clean the canals... When the mountain is set on fire everyone goes to put it out. When the water springs are cleaned, the whole community goes to clean. Yes, *tequio* is still fundamental here.

It's a part of community identity that we hold on to strongly. *Tequio* hasn't dissapeared, nor has mutual help... What has dissapeared is the *cargo* system. In the *cargo* system we are all supposed to climb a ladder [starting with lower positions before working up to higher positions and eventually community president]. That doesn't exist anymore. *Cargos* are still elected, but not in the same way. They are no longer elected by the assembly, but by political parties.

Jesús: Es que aquí cuando hay una fiesta todos ayuda, cuando hay un difunto todos ayuda. Aquí en Oaxaca se conoce como la ayuda mutua. Es una ayuda mutua con tintes de truque. Si sabes que es el truque? Es el intercambio.

Mackenzie: Sí, ¿ese es parte de ser miembro de la comunidad no?

Jesús: Sí intercambio. Es decir, yo hoy tengo una fiesta, entonces tu me vas a ayudar con diez kilo de maiz, y esa es tu guelaguetza, tu ayuda. Pero cuando tú tengas una fiesta tambien yo te voy a llevar algo, mas o menos equivalente a lo que tu me llevaste. Entonces la realización de las fiestas es menos dificil porque todos colaboran. Es mas comunal. Entonces, si es una fiesta donde todos van a participar todos dan pues.

Mackenzie: Y ¿el *tequio*?

Jesús: Sí, el *tequio* sí. Sí el *tequio* es fundamental aca... Los *tequios* son una obvia participacion de lo general. El *tequio* es un trabajo común, no es un trabajo privado. Porque todos nos sentimos partícipes de eso... Se hace *tequio* para limpiara el panteon cuando viene el Festival de Muertos, todo el pueblo en general va a limpiar el panteon. Cuando se hace las limpieas de los canales de regalio todos los que tienen terrenos de cultivo se van a limpiar los canales. Cuando se hace la brecha, la brecha es delimitar los territorios de la comunidad, se hace una linea, o sea todo donde pasa el limite el pueblo se corto los arboles y queda una linea dibujada en toda la orilla del pueblo. En esa brecha va todo el pueblo. Cuando se incendia el monte todos van a apagar el monte. Cuando se limpia los manantiales de agua para agua potable, todo el pueblo tiene que ir a limpiar. Si todavía el *tequio* es fundamental aquí. Es un valor identitario que todavía tenemos muy fuerte. Sí del *tequio* casi no ha desaparecido nada, ni la ayuda. La ayuda tampoco—esa que te digo vamos a ejar maiz, mezcal, cuetes, todo eso. Eso todavía no desaparece. Lo que si ya desapareció fue el sistema de *cargos*. El sistema de *cargos* es de que todos tenemos que pasar en una escalera. Eso ya no existe. Se eligen los *cargos* pero ya no de la misma manera. La asamblea ya no lo determina sino los partidos politicos.

Jesús explains further, that “*comunalidad* and the community can't be explained if you don't live within it” [*la comunalidad y la comunidad no se pueden explicar si no vives dentro de ella*].

Therefore, Jesús (and Lydia as we see in Chapter 4) believes that revitalization, like development, can only be understood from the *community perspective*. Outsiders, including

those who migrate, do not have the answers for Zautla. Only those who spend, what Jesús calls, their “productive” or “developmental” years in the community (between about fifteen and forty or higher—these are the most important years for learning how community practices and institutions like *tequios* and *cargos* (described below) work) can understand *comunalidad* as a path to development, rather than modernity. For Jesús, not even Oaxacan anthropologists that write about *comunalidad*, Benjamín Maldonado and Jaime Luna, can truly understand *comunalidad*:

Benjamín Maldonado and Jaime Luna, big anthropologists here, one of them from the Sierra Norte [Jaime Luna], have never gone to a *tequio* [communal work project]. They have studied it and know all of its identity aspects, its cultural aspects, and its representational aspects, but they have never grabbed a pick or a shovel and gone to work in a *tequio* to see how you coexist within a *tequio*. Going to see and analyze a *tequio* is very different from going to live it. When you live it, then you understand how indigenous and community matters are managed within a community. Until you go and drink a *mezcal* [alcoholic beverage from the maguey plant] with your friends at the *calenda* [community religious festival], until you carry the marmot [big ball of cloth and wood used during community festivals] you won't understand the sense of culture—no not *culture* because that's a different term—but the sense of life that these things have.

Benjamín Maldonado y Jaime Luna, que son grandes antropólogos, uno es de la Sierra, nunca han ido a un *tequio* por ejemplo. Lo han estudiado y saben todos los aspectos identitarios, los aspectos culturales, los aspectos representativos de que es un *tequio*. Pero ellos nunca han agarrado un pico, una pala, y ido a trabajar en un *tequio* y ver como se convive dentro del *tequio*. Es muy diferente, te digo, ir a verlo y analizarlo a ir a vivirlo. Tu cuando lo logras vivir, logras saber como es que se manejan las cuestiones indígenas y comunitarias dentro de una comunidad. Hasta que no vayas y tomas un *mezcal* con tus amigos en la *calenda*, hasta que no cargues la marmota, que le llamamos aquí, no vas a saber cual es el sentido cultural—no el sentido cultural porque es un término aparte—sino el sentido de vida que tienen esas cosas.

Within Zautla, community elders hold the purest knowledge of *comunalidad*, even if they don't use the term to describe it. This knowledge is key to the revitalization of cultural forms (and language).

Jesús: I believe that in Zautla, if we don't take advantage of the elders right now there won't be another chance... If the generation, for example of my grandpa [age 87], disappears, we will be left alone. They are the only ones that can support us, because the generation of my mom [Lydia] and dad don't think like them anymore. They think in another way, more in terms of institutions, globalization, in involvement with the modern world. The elders no. They still think in terms of determination, self-determination of communities, because that's the life they lived... Some want *comunalidad* and some don't.

Mackenzie: Where does that consciousness come from?

Jesús: Ah, it's a different relationship. For example, my grandpa lived his productive life in the home and in the fields, but his son, my dad, when he began his productive life he went to Mexico City. That's where he spent his productive years. And he adapted to that rhythm of life. But it wasn't just my dad, but his whole generation that migrated to the city. When they come back to the community, they bring the vision of institutions: work is done in the office or factories, not on the land.

Jesús: Pues creo que en Zautla si no se aproveche de estos grupos ahorita ya no va a haber otra oportunidad, porque desapareciendo la generación del, por ejemplo mi abuelito, si se desaparece esa generación, nos quedamos solos nada más esta generación que estamos. La única gente que nos pueden apoyar son ellos, porque la generación de mi mamá, de mi papá ya no piensan igual que ellos. Ya piensan de otra manera. Una manera más de instituciones, más de globalización, de involucrarse más en el mundo moderno, y los abuelitos no. Ellos todavía piensan en esa determinación, la autodeterminación de los pueblos, porque ellos vivieron toda esa vida pues... Unos que quieren la *comunalidad* otros que no.

Mackenzie: ¿De dónde viene esa conciencia?

Jesús: Ah, es que te digo que la relación es diferente. Por ejemplo, mi abuelito su vida productiva la pasó en su casa y en el campo, pero su hijo, o sea mi papá, él cuando empezó su vida productiva se fue a México D.F. Allí pasó su edad productiva digamos. Y se adaptó ese ritmo de vida. Y no solamente fue mi papá, fue toda su generación de mi papá la que migró hacia la ciudad. Entonces cuando regresan al pueblo ya vienen con la visión de las instituciones—de que el trabajo se da en las oficinas, en las fábricas, en eso, ya no en el campo.

Here, Jesús highlights two key aspects of *comunalidad*—land and self-determination. Lydia told me that, ideally, all of the land in indigenous communities like Zautla is communal. No one can

own land [*nadie puede ser dueño de la tierra*]. This is connected to the principle of *comunalidad* that people must live in harmony with the earth because the earth itself is animate and sentient. Lydia said, “the land can’t be seen as a *resource* that we buy or sell. It’s not something we can exploit. The land is life. It’s a being, or many beings. Everything is a being, the rocks, trees, hills, the rivers, everything. It’s mother earth and we have to coexist” [La tierra no es un recurso que podemos comprar ni vender. No la podemos explotar, porque la tierra es vida. Es un ser, o muchos seres. Todo es un ser: las piedras, los arboles, el monte, los rios, todo pues. Es la madre tierra y tenemos que convivir. In both Zautla and Mazaltepec the earth is called *madre tierra*, “mother earth, or *Chaneque*, the local spirit that occupies the land. Lydia told me that they cannot expect the land to provide for them if they don’t respect the land.

Jesús also mentions self-determination as a key aspect of community politics that must be revitalized. In particular, he is referring to the “indigenous political system”^{x1} called *usos y costumbres*, ‘uses and customs’ that is closely tied to the self-determination and autonomy of communities (indigenous and non-indigenous). *Usos y costumbres* is a form of direct democracy based on values of indigenous *comunalidad*. It is through this system that communities make communal decisions, participate in local, regional and national politics, and preserve their traditions. Today, most Oaxacan communities are self-governed through *usos y costumbres* (418 of 570 municipalities in Oaxaca used *usos y costumbres* in 1998 (Barabas et al. 2003:45)). However, Oaxaca’s 10,500 communities in 570 municipalities did not have the legal right to use *usos y costumbres* to elect their officials until 1995 (Barabas et al 2003:44). It was right around this time (between 1995 and 1996) that political parties entered Zautla (Mazaltepec is governed by *usos y costumbres*).

Communities not governed by *usos y costumbres* are governed by political parties. Political parties have only entered indigenous communities in the last century. The rise of political parties in a community often signifies community division and culture loss. In the early 1990s Zautecos that had migrated to Mexico City returned to their community with outside ideologies and visions. These return migrants divided between two of Mexico's major political parties, PRI and PRD. The PRI group came first and then, as a reaction, some other return migrants formed a PRD group. At first, Zautecos told me, no one listened to them. Soon, however, they took over two competing sports clubs in the community (*clubes deportivos*) and people started picking sides.^{xli} It was not long before they took over the whole community and put an end to *usos y costumbres* which they saw this as *politica atrasada*, "backwards politics." To this day Zautla is divided by political faction—almost all adult Zautecos are loyal to one party or the other.

Yet, many Zautecos are reconsidering the value of political parties. People told me they felt alienated from community decisions. While the assembly still exists as a communal decision-making body, it is no longer used to elect community officials (presidential elections are done by secret ballot, instead of in assembly, and presidents then hand-pick members of their cabinet) or to hold them accountable for their actions. "They just have too much power," one Zauteco told me. "We need to return to *usos y costumbres*" [*es que tienen demasiado poder. Hay que regresar a usos y costumbres*]. Furthermore, rampant fiscal corruption of the last administration has led many to question the democratic principles of the political parties. Lydia argued that political parties were not only a part of community division, but also culture loss. She sees them as one source of impurity:

Many practices, of the political parties, the church, migration, they bring other ways of thinking or of seeing the world to the community. This has divided the community. It's not pure. The culture of Zautla isn't pure anymore.

Muchas prácticas de los partidos políticos, la iglesia, la migración, traen otras formas de pensar o de ver el mundo a la comunidad. Eso ha dividido a la comunidad. Ya no es pura pues. La cultura de Zautla ya no es pura.

She was not the only one to express this sentiment. Many people wanted to return to *usos y costumbres*. Jesús said "it would be more democratic" [*sería más democrática*]. But, for other people this seemed unlikely and some said it was *ilegal*, "illegal." Beyond *usos y costumbres* Jesús also wants to bring back the council of elders, a group of community elders (often past presidents) that advises community officials and monitors governance.

We can also work on saving the council of elders. It is a project that we've had in mind, but it's difficult to do...All of the elders, for example, my grandpa was already president of the town. All of the people that have served the community have past experience and can help the new presidents that are not elected by *usos y costumbres*. Yes, that determination of the community and politics and through elders is important and influential. Besides the respect that they have gained in the community, it can also be an influence. It can be focused on influencing the new presidents. That's how self-determined politics can come back. Perhaps we could even bring back *usos y costumbres*. This would be work of consciousness building, of making the people conscious. But that would be the only way. To untie ourselves from the government and start something internal. Something that is ours.

Tambien se puede rescatar lo que es el consejo de ancianos. Es un proyecto que tiene en mente y que es muy dificil de realizar...Porque todas las personas, por ejemplo mi abuelito ya fue preidente del pueblo. Todas esas personas que ya sirvieron a la comunidad tienen mucha experiencia pasada y que puede servirles a los nuevos presidentes que vengan y que ya no son eligidos por usos y costumbres. Sí, esa determinación de la comunidad, en cuanto a la politica, por parte de las gentes adultas debe ser importante y influyente porque aparte del respeto que ya se generaron ellos dentro de la comunidad tambien puede ser como influencia. Puede ser enfocado en la influencia que pueden tener en los nuevos presidentes. A así la determinacion politica puede volver a regresar. Los usos y costumbres tal vez pueden volver a regresar. Que sería un trabajo de concientizacion pues, de hacer conciente a la gente. Pero te digo eso sería la unica forma: desligarse del gobierno y comenzar algo interno.

While the political parties in Zautla have created multiple levels of disjuncture—political, economic, historical, sociolinguistic—they have not yet eroded the value of community in Zautla. Jesús told me

There are times when the community represents you, not you representing the community...there are situations in which political divisionism doesn't matter. In those moments we are all friends...with a common enemy. When we go to do the community boundaries with the surrounding *pueblos*, the whole community goes. Whether you are PRD or PRI you have to unite because it's a problem of the community. That's where Jaime Luna invented *comunalidad*, that cohesive force that unites the community...We can divide on the inside, but to the outside we are Zautla. It's the identity that we all have. And there are individual values, but only as a presentation to the outside...at the end of the day each individual *is* the community. It's not 'this is me and I'm from Zautla,' but rather, 'I am Zautla and Zautla is me.'

Hay momentos en que el pueblo te representa a ti, no tú al pueblo. Nunca vas a representar todo el pueblo sino el pueblo va a representar a ti. Hay situaciones donde el divisionismo político no importa. En ese momento somos totalmente amigos los de aquel lado y los de este lado, porque tenemos un enemigo común. O estamos realizando nuestro pueblo. Cuando se va a la brecha, cuando se va a ver los linderos con los otros pueblos, allí todo el pueblo. Seas del PRD o seas del PRI, tienes que estar unido porque es un problema del pueblo. Allí es donde Jaime Luna inventa la comunalidad, esa fuerza de cohesión que mantiene el pueblo unido. Ese el sentido en sí de la comunalidad. Así nos podemos dividir adentro pero afuera somos Zautla. Es la identidad única que tenemos cada una. Y sí hay valores individuales pero valores individuales para presentar al exterior. Es como tu carta de presentación digamos. Pero como individuo, a final de cuentas es una comunidad. No es decir nada más decir "soy yo y soy de Zautla" sino decir "yo soy Zautla o Zautla soy yo."

This demonstrates the continuing resistance of the community, despite the apparent shift to "modern" politics. However, the disjunctures between PRI and PRD followers clearly endanger *comunalidad*, not because of the inequitable or homogenizing policies they legislate, but because these discourses become a part of daily life. For Jesús, both PRI and PRD are symbols of modernity and their policies are "modern." The greatest disjuncture is not between the parties

and their opposing politics. Rather, the most significant ideological conflict is between *comunalidad* and modernity itself. Jesús fears that the discourses of modernity, notably neoliberal capitalism (as we see in Jesús' epigraph to this chapter), have already rippled deep into the psychology of Zautecos. He says:

There is a risk, the risk that you are contaminated with other ideologies, with other thoughts. It's a fragile thing, *comunalidad*. Very fragile and when it breaks, the entire structure of the community breaks.

Pero tambien hay un riesgo, un riesgo de que te contamines con otras ideologías, con otros pensamientos. Pues es una cosa fragil, la comunalidad. Muy fragil pero si se rompe, se rompe toda la estructura de la comunidad. Todo se rompe.

Pure Zapotec: Language Ideologies of Purism

Language ideologies—"the way people rationalize for themselves and explain to others what spoken words are capable of doing when used in certain ways" (Basso 1988:107)—are one way to view the internalization of national and regional discourses. In this section I address language ideologies of Zapotec purism and in the following I address language ideologies of English. In general terms, those that promote Zapotec follow the *pro-indígena* ideology and those that promote English follow the *salir adelante* (or *menosprecio*) ideology.

Messing and Hill and Hill (1986) have marvelous accounts of purism in the Malintzi region of Tlaxcala Mexico. They find the most salient language ideology to be

the ideology of "*legítimo Mexicano*" 'legitimate Mexicano', in which speakers' purist attitudes encourage speech that is completely Mexicano, without any trace of its syncretic elements whose source is the Spanish language. There is a discourse of nostalgia about earlier times, which includes greater use of this type of legitimate Mexicano...and the ideology that the language spoken today is inferior to that which was spoken in the past because Spanish has been mixed in. *Legítimo Mexicano* can best be understood as "unmixed" speech. (Messing 2007:557)

People in Zautla and Mazaltepec people (mainly elders and revitalization workers) also talked about purity in terms of language (and, as we have seen, culture). In Mazaltepec, where multiple generations speak Zapotec, older people told me that kids don't speak *correctly*. Here is an excerpt from my conversation with an eighty year old woman from Mazaltepec that goes by Tía Elicia.

Mackenzie: Do your kids speak Zapotec?

Tía Elicia: Yes. Yes, but they don't pronounce well. They understand and some speak, but not correctly.

Mackenzie: Why don't they speak correctly?

Tía Elicia: They didn't like learning...most of the language they don't do very good because they didn't try hard to learn.

Mackenzie: ¿Sus hijos hablan Zapoteco?

Tía Elicia: Sí. Sí, pero no lo pueden pronunciar bien. Sí le entienden y hablan uno que otro pero no correcto pues.

Mackenzie: ¿Por qué no hablan correcto?

Tía Elicia: No les gustó aprender...la mayor parte no pueden muy bien por lo que no se esmeraron de aprender bien.

Language revitalization workers in Mazaltepec (there are only one or two besides Felipe Froilán) are recording the community variant, but, following the advice of Zapotec linguists from the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI), only with people that are older than forty-five (here, again, we see the mingling of outside discourse with local discourse and practice). In Zautla, where only a handful of elders speak Zapotec, Lydia González and her son Jesús are urgently recording. They want to be minimally reliant on Mazaltepec for revitalization because, as Lydia stated, “the Zapotec of Zautla is more pure than in Mazaltepec” [*el Zapoteco que se habla en Zautla es más puro que el de Mazaltepec*]. Even so, Lydia recognizes the dire language situation of Zautla and has already started working with revitalization workers in Mazaltepec,

where the Zapotec variant is most similar to Zautla. She explained to me that *Tizá*, the variant of Zapotec that is spoken in Zautla and Mazaltepec (and four other nearby municipalities), is the purest of the sixty some variants in the state of Oaxaca (INALI 2008:69):

The Zapotec people walked west and south... The most ancient Zapotec stayed here... just in these three towns [Zautla, Mazaltepec, San Felipe Tejalápam]. Here it didn't vary a lot. But, where the people walked to the south and west there are many communities where it is spoken—maybe eighty percent of the communities speak the mother tongue. But, in a way, this has changed the language. Whether it's in the tone, a letter, a vowel it has changed. Between every community it gets spoken in another way. *The Zapotec that has stayed here, because there are only three communities that speak it, it is the most pure.* That's why many people don't understand the Zapotec of this valley, because their Zapotec has already changed.

Aquí tenemos una situación que el pueblo Zapoteco caminó hacia el poniente y hacia el sur del estado lo que es la Sierra y el Istmo de Tehuantepec. Hazte cuenta que aquí se quedó el Zapoteco mas antiguo y como ya no se habló en otros pueblos se quedó nada mas en estos tres pueblos. Entonces no varió mucho. En cambio la gente que caminó hacia el sur y el poniente allí hay una gran cantidad de comunidades que lo hablan—este unos ochenta por ciento de las comunidades tienen hablantes de lengua madre. Entonces eso ha hecho que de alguna manera la lengua se vaya cambiando. Ya sea en el tono, en alguna letra, en alguna vocal, pero si ha variado. O de comunidad en comunidad se va diciendo en otra forma. *Entonces el Zapoteco que queda aquí este como no hay mas comunidades que lo hablan mas que tres, entonces asi quedó como mas puro.* Por eso, de repente, ellos no reconocen el Zapoteco de este valle porque ellos como ya se modificó su Zapoteco.

Lydia recognizes different temporal and spatial scales of purity. She recognizes the more recent micro-variations between the Zapotec of Zautla and Mazaltepec, but she also goes further. In the above excerpt purity stems from the pre-colonial period. She discusses regional, not community, geographical variations. These variations are, in fact, quite distinct from *Tizá* and everyone told me that it is hard or not possible to understand Zapotec speakers from the other regions (Sierra Juárez, Sierra Sur, and Istmo de Tehuantepec). However, Lydia also told me that the variants within the seven districts of the Valley of Oaxaca were thought to be mutually unintelligible until

recently (I expand on this in Chapter 4). Later in this conversation Lydia explained why Zautla has the purest Zapotec of any community, even within the *Tizá* speaking region.

The [Zapotec] of Zautla is more pure. It hasn't changed because we stopped speaking it, but those who still speak it speak the language more purely. But the people who kept speaking, in a way it has changed.

El [Zapoteco] de Zautla es más puro pues. Como que no cambió porque se dejó de hablar, pero los que lo hablan lo hablan mas puro la lengua. En cambio, los que siguieron de hablar de alguna manera se fue transformando.

Lydia states that the disuse of Zapotec has prevented it from changing as it has in other communities. There are only a handful of elders in Zautla, all over eighty years old, that speak Zapotec. For Lydia, these are the last remaining speakers of *pure* Zapotec. This drives Lydia's passion for language revitalization in Zautla. She is the leader of a pan-ethnic Zapotec revitalization organization that excludes all outsiders. In Chapter 4, I discuss the institutional purity of the organization. It excludes outsiders not only because of their historic role in the colonization of indigenous communities, but also because their knowledge is thought to *contaminar*, "contaminate" pure community knowledge (of elders). This is important because, as Barbra Meek shows, language revitalization goes beyond grammar to include "the indexical orders that link a grammar to a complex of meaning emergent through a world of experience" (2010:50). Felipe Froilán, a revitalization worker also discussed in Chapter 4, describes the different phenomenological worlds of Zapotec and Spanish:

For us Zapotecs there are two world: the world of Spanish and the West and our world. So I, for example, dream in Zapotec, not in Spanish. They're two differnt things. Different worlds.

Para nosotros los Zapotecso son dos mundos: el mundo del Español y Occidental y nuestro mundo. Entonces, yo por ejemplo sueño en Zapoteco, no sueño en Español. Son como dos cosas diferentes. Son dos mundos.

To be successful, language revitalization must socialize kids, not only in Zapotec grammar but also in the Zapotec world.

Discourses and Ideologies of English

In Chapter 2, I described the inroads that English has made amongst Mazaltepec students. Overall English is not spoken as much as Zapotec, but in some Mazaltepec school classes there are more first-language English speakers than first-language Zapotec speakers. Most first-language English speakers grew up, at least partially, in the United States. Kids also learn English in language schools in Oaxaca City and even in community schools. English is a part of the national curriculum for all Mexican public schools—every student in Zautla and Mazaltepec learns to read, write, and speak *some* English—and is promoted by teachers as a way to progress, *salir adelante*, into the urban capitalist workforce. In this way, schools transmit national and regional discourses and ideologies to rural communities.

Through schools, English is ideologically and discursively linked to *salir adelante*, the dominant discourse in Zautla and Mazaltepec. Many students enjoy the school subject of English. These students told me that it was the most useful, or even “necessary” subject, if they wanted a “good” job or a “good” education in the city. Because there are no highschools or universities in either community students who wish to go beyond secondary school must leave their community (usually just for the school day, but sometimes to stay). Many of these schools—especially universities (private and public) but also some highschools (mainly private)—require a certain level of English for admission. This system favors those with a working knowledge (especially in literacy) of the English language. It is also true that certain jobs request a working knowledge of English. However, economic push-pull forces alone cannot

explain why Zautecos and Mazaltecos strive for this education and employment. Rather, this shift may be explained by the ideological forces, taken up in the city and in schools, that then become a part of everyday discourse and practice.

English and the discourse of *salir adelante*, however, do not go unchallenged. Not every student likes learning English and some would even prefer to learn Zapotec, even in Zautla. In Chapter 1, I discussed excerpts from a conversation I had with three young Zautecos: Diana (age 17) and her cousins Janet (age 17) and Leonardo (age 11). Diana and Janet had conflicting views on English. The two girls got into an argument when I asked them if they would prefer to learn English or Zapotec:

Mackenzie: Would you prefer to learn Zapotec or English?

Janet: Zapotec [said with conviction].

Diana: I like both, but I think I'd stick with English.

Janet: No! Zapotec, because English doesn't belong to us. In one way or another, it doesn't belong to us. It would be better to learn our language, the language that belongs to us and to our state. English, I don't want to learn English.

Diana: No, both are important because it's important to learn another language.

Janet: But it doesn't belong here.

Diana: But preserving the language too. Our native language is important, but there are people that think otherwise. My cousin [Janet] would like to learn our language but I don't really care. If I were to choose I would pick English.

Janet: It's that she isn't Oaxacan at heart.

Diana: Yes I am, but, yes I am!

Janet: No she's not.

Diana: Yes I am!

Mackenzie: ¿A ustedes les gustaría aprender más el Zapoteco o el Inglés?

Janet: El Zapoteco [dicho con convicción].

Diana: Me gustan los dos pero me quedo más con el Inglés.

Janet: No, el Zapoteco porque el Inglés no pertenece a nosotros. No pertenece a nosotros de una u otra forma, no. Y sería más conveniente aprender nuestra lengua y nuestro idioma que es de nosotros, que pertenece a nuestro estado pues. Y el Inglés a mí no me gustaría aprender el Inglés.

Diana: No, es importante las dos porque también aprender otro idioma también es importante no.

Janet: Pero eso no pertenece aquí pues.

Diana: Pero también preservar la lengua, la lengua natal es importante, pero si hay personas que piensan diferente, mi prima sí le gustaría aprender nuestra idioma y no sé a mí me da igual pero si me diera a escoger me inclino mas para el Inglés.

Janet: Es que ella no es de corazón Oaxaqueño.

Diana: Sí soy pero. ¡Sí soy!

Janet: No es.

Diana: Yo si soy!

This argument brings back the question of indigenous identity, or, more specifically, Oaxacan identity. Janet argues that a true Oaxacan values indigenous languages. This is the *pro-indígena* discourse. Diana disagrees, arguing that a person can value English over an indigenous language, and still be a true Oaxacan. This is the *salir adelante* discourse. It is not *menosprecio* because Diana does not denigrate Zapotec, she just devalues it relative to English.

This type of discursive conflict is common in both communities. However, in valuing Zapotec above English, Janet is in the minority. Most people view English as superior, or see the languages as equal. Many people reasoned that practicality made English more important. Mayela (age 24) of Zautla told me, “for me, it [Zapotec] just isn’t useful anymore” [*a mi ya no es útil*]. But Mayela lives and works in Mexico City for BBVA Bancomer, one of Mexico’s largest private financial institutions (I talked to Mayela when she was in Zautla for the Christmas holidays). She says that English literacy is necessary for her job at the bank—she translates manuals from English and writes documents in English. She also told me that in the city, “they say ‘if you speak English we’ll pay you more than if you don’t. Here is an excerpt I had with Mayela and her aunt Concepción who lives in Zautla:

Mackenzie: What’s more important, English or Zapotec?

Mayela: For us it is English because Zapotec isn’t used anymore. It’s been lost. English because it gives you more opportunities of getting good pay. Zapotec *should* be more important to us, but, but in these times it doesn’t serve for anything besides language revitalization.

Concepción: But it's not important. It stopped being important. It's not even our means of communication. It stopped being so. Maybe if we still spoke it like Mazaltepec it would matter to us as a form of communication, but not anymore. On the other hand, English is indispensable for kids. Zapotec is for the elders.

Mackenzie: Para ustedes, ¿cuál es más importante, el Inglés o el Zapoteco?

Mayela: Para nosotros pues el Inglés, porque el Zapoteco ya ni se ocupa. Se perdió. El Inglés porque te da más oportunidades de que te paguen mejor porque sabes Inglés. En cambio el Zapoteco *debería* importarnos más, pero en estos tiempos ya no nos sirve sino nada más de rescate de la lengua.

Concepción: Pero no es importante. Ya pues dejó de serlo. Porque ni siquiera nuestro medio de comunicación. Dejó de serlo. Porque a lo mejor si lo mantuviéramos como Mazaltepec pues entonces así sería importante porque es una forma de comunicar, pero ya no. En cambio el Inglés para los chiquitos es indispensable. El Zapoteco es para los viejos pues.

For Mayela and Concepción the value of Zapotec and English are measured in practical, not symbolic, terms. Further, their discourse of practicality, a discourse of *salir adelante*, relies on “opportunity” in the outside world, not on *comunalidad* or community life. They also suggested that Zapotec is the past (of elders) and English is the future (of kids). For them, progress lies in an English future and Zautla must promote this through English education. Mayela and many others act as vessels that carry city discourse into Zautla and Mazaltepec. This is then reproduced by people like Concepción that live in the communities.

Other Zautecos and Mazaltecos, however, do not like the idea of English coming into their respective community. Jesús, of Zautla, sees English as a loss of identity. He also argues that it does not help people to get a “good” job (which is often the reality for migrant workers nationally and internationally). Here is an excerpt of a conversation I had with Jesús.

Mackenzie: What do you think of English in the community?

Jesús: Speaking English?

Mackenzie: Yes, because it seems like a lot of people want to learn English more than Zapotec.

Jesús: Yes, that's the detail. All of these external influences leave a mark on us. Let me give the example of *American Pie*, and now I want to live like a gringo from that movie. It's that

ambition, like development. To what point is learning English development? If it's development for someone that's going to leave to work in the United States with papers...well, that process has lots of obstacles...Not everyone can get a job in the United States. Still, everyone wants a job in the United States. So the only way to get a job in the United States is to go illegally...So the problem with Mexicans is that we like to dream too much. *We like to dream that we are Americans*. And we say 'I want to work in the United States and I'm going to learn English. But at the end of the day, learning English isn't going to help you out much because you will just end up speaking with the gringos that come to Oaxaca, because it's so hard to actually go to the United States and speak English. We say, all of the Mexicans, we want to go to the United States and the Americans want to come to Mexico to see why we want to go...All of my friends that have gone to the United States illegally know some English. All of them. But, if you ask me 'which youth in your community speak Zapotec,' no one. The vision of the system is 'grab your things and get out of here.' It's a big problem.

Mackenzie: ¿Que piensas del Inglés aquí en la comunidad?

Jesús: ¿El hablar Inglés?

Mackenzie: Sí, porque parece que muchos quieren aprender Inglés más que Zapoteco.

Jesús: Sí, ese es el detalle. Te digo esas influencias externas es lo que te marquen. O sea te pongo el ejemplo de *American Pie*, y ahora quiero vivir como vive el gringo de esa película. Esa ambición es la que sí nos está, su par es lo que te decía también del desarrollo. Hasta donde aprender Inglés es desarrollo? Si es desarrollo para alguien que va a salir a trabajar a EEUU,^{xlii} un empleo fijo, con papeles y todo ese procedimiento. Pero ese procedimiento tiene muchas trabas. Primero que no hay dinero para hacer el procedimiento legal, luego las imprecisiones que te pone el gobierno, la burocratización de todo el proceso y todas esos problemas. Entonces no cualquiera pueda tener un empleo en EEUU. Pero sin embargo todos quieren tener un empleo en EEUU. La única manera que queda para tener un empleo en EEUU es irse de ilegal, porque son muchos requisitos los que piden para poder trabajar allí. Entonces te digo, el problema es que el Mexicano nos ha gustado soñar mucho. Nos ha gustado soñar demasiado. Nos ha gustado soñar que somos Norteamericanos. Y decimos "yo quiero trabajar en EEUU y voy a aprender Inglés" y todo eso. Pero al final de cuentas, el que aprendas Inglés no te va a servir de mucho porque vas a hablar Inglés con los gringos que vengan a Oaxaca, porque es muy difícil que vayas a hablar Inglés con los de EEUU. Es como dice, todos los Mexicanos queremos ir a EEUU y los de EEUU quieren venir a Mexico para ver porque nos queremos ir... Todos mis amigos que conozco que han ido a trabajar de ilegales a EEUU, todos saben un poquito de Inglés, todos. Pero por ejemplo, si tú me dices 'quien de los chavos de tu comunidad sabe hablar Zapotec,' nadie. La vision que el mismo sistema te marque es 'agarra tus cosas y vete de aquí pues.' Así es un gran problema.

Migration is often associated with the discourse and practice of *salir adelante* (see Cohen 2004).

Community members that have migrated often send remittances to their family that stays in their home community. These remittances are used, first, to provide basic health care to their family and to send their kids to school. After that, however, they are generally used to construct a larger

house. In Zautla and Mazaltepec there are multiple two-story cement houses, almost all built by a family that has access to remittances. Other people continue to live in small-medium size adobe houses. However, as we have seen, migrants often return to the community with a new perspective, a “modern” perspective of individualism that does not align with *comunalidad*. They also bring English (and the discourse that exalts English) back into the community. Jesús points out the main problem with English—it breaks apart the community

Everyone wants to learn English, but no one wants to learn Zapotec. Your value as an individual of the community is completely lost. The problem, those problems with the loss of identity. The fact that someone learns English is a negative part of the community—you lose more than you gain. I bet you that, in Zautla, there are more people that speak English than there are people that speak Zapotec...English is important for modern life, but not community life.

Pues como dices, todos quieren aprender inglés, pero nadie quiere aprender Zapoteco. Sientes tu valor como individuo de una comunidad se pierde totalmente. Esa problemática, esos problemas de la pérdida de la identidad. El que alguien aprenda Inglés es un punto negativo para la comunidad—pierdes más que ganas. Te apuesto que en Zautla hay más personas que saben hablar inglés que personas que saben hablar Zapoteco...El inglés es importante para la vida actual, la vida moderna, pero para la vida comunitaria no.

Within both communities there are competing language ideologies of Zapotec and English. The dominant discourse of *salir adelante* promotes English as a means of achieving greater economic development and higher status outside, but even within, the communities. English is related to modernity and Zapotec to *comunalidad*. There even seems to be a correlation between baby-naming and ideology. Recently foreign names have become more common. I asked Mayela what the most popular names are in Zautla today. They are common Mexican names like *Juan, Pedro, Ricardo, José, Diana, Guadalupe, and María*. She said, however, that foreign names were gaining ground. There are people, she said, named *Hugo Bryan, John Lennon Hernández, Kevin, Milton, Hilton, Padice, Ian, Fred, Freddy, Wendy,*

William, Caterín, Frandon, Britney, Britany, Italia, Francia, Grecia, Socrates. These are the linguistic ripples of modernity that seep into everyday practices and discourse, causing Zautecos and Mazatlecos to reconsider their position relative to the outside world. Some people believe in *progress*, as advertised by the Mexican government. Others believe in *comunalidad*, a life in harmony with each other and with the earth. These competing discourses that reflect multiple ideologies flow and ebb through everyday life. Without conscious resistance, however, the dominant discourse of *salir adelante* gains ground on the *pro-indígena* discourse. In Chapter 4, we see how the *menosprecio* discourse can also eat away at the promoters of indigenous identity and language.



English is a part of the home environment for many children. Ashley, age 9, of Mazaltepec is shown here with some action figure cards with English names from Oaxaca City.

Conclusion

It is not the social processes themselves—industrialization and colonization, for instance—that cause language and culture shift, themselves closely intertwined. Rather, it is the disjunctures of multiple ideologies and competing discourses that reproduce modernity in everyday speech and practice. The dominant discourse of *salir adelante* promotes migration and English. As more people internalize and activate this discourse it becomes normalized in everyday conversations between friends and family members, and the pressure to assimilate grows; the norms and values of the outside world become reflected in the norms and values of the community. *Pro-indígena* discourse, on the other hand, looks to the past for answers to the future. It is not the outside world or language that holds the answers, but rather community members, and especially elders, that know the path. Lydia told me:

We don't want outsiders...to be the ones that decide, to say we must go in this direction. No, because we know the path. We know what we really want.

Ya no queremos que la gente de afuera sean los que decidan que sean los que nos digan que es por aquí. No porque nosotros sí conocemos el camino pues. O sea sabemos que es lo que realmente queremos.

Yet, local knowledge as well as the Zapotec language are denigrated by the third discourse, *menosprecio*. This discourse is deeply embedded, as we see in Chapter 4, and is a great barrier to revitalization. What would Zautla and Mazaltepec be like had modernity not entered into the communities in the first place? If they had community education instead of state education? If they were not dependent on outside market forces? Would the multiple ideologies and competing discourses still exist? Is the loss of indigenous languages an inevitable side-effect of capitalist

expansion and nationalism? What if the road to Zautla had never been built? This last question I asked to Jesús.

Mackenzie: Is it better not to have a paved road?

Jesús: I would say yes. I would prefer a thousand times an unpaved road. If we had thought about the consequences that the road would bring I would have said no.

Mackenzie: And what has the road done?

Jesús: The community has been divided...All of these divisions were caused through the development of infrastructure in the country. Roads are designed for commerce and to take advantage of resources, not for the benefit of communities. The effects of roads have been great.

Mackenzie: Es mejor no tener una carretera pavimentada?

Jesús: Yo diría que sí. Yo preferiría mil veces una carretera despavimentada. Si hubieramos pensado las consecuencias que nos traería yo habría dicho que no.

Mackenzie: Y que ha hecho la carretera?

Jesús: Pues, se ha dividido la comunidad...Todas esas divisiones se causaron a través de la infraestructura del país. Las carreteras están diseñadas para el comercio y para el aprovechamiento de los recursos, no para el beneficio de las comunidades. Entonces este lo que afectaron las carreteras fue muchísimo.

As we saw in Chapter 2, modernity entered the communities (especially Zautla) long before the road was constructed in the 1990s—institutional education brought Spanish to Zautla in the 1920s. However, the road greatly accelerated modernization, opening an accessible path to the outside world. It may even be seen as the primary historical event behind language shift in Mazaltepec. Most Mazaltecos born before the 1990s speak Zapotec. Most born after do not. Even Mexican census data suggests that it is harder for urban communities or communities near cities to maintain their language and identity (INEGI 2004:10). The many disjunctures discussed in this Chapter help to explain why.

Chapter 4

Revitalization and Resistance: Discourse and Practice in Two *Pro-Indígena* Efforts

If the generation of elders dies and we don't take advantage of them [those over seventy-five or eighty] it's going to be very difficult to save our values—Jesús, age 28, Zautla

Te digo que si esa generacion muere y no aprovechamos esa generación de gente adulta [los que tienen más que setenta y cinco o ochenta] va a ser muy difícil de rescatar los valores.

What happens outside of the community is of no interest here. Even if someone is saving the world, here, no one cares. What interests us is what happens inside our community. This interests us because it is what we live—Jesús, age 28, Zautla^{xliii}

Lo que están haciendo afuera de la comunidad a nadie le interesa. Aún si están salvando al mundo a nadie le interesa. Lo que nos interesa es lo que pasa dentro de nuestra comunidad. Eso sí nos interesa porque es lo que vivimos.

Language and Culture in Revitalization

The previous three Chapters describe the social and sociolinguistic environments of Zautla and Mazaltepec. The discursive and ideological conflicts described in Chapter 3 are an outcome of colonizing practices and modernity that was accelerated by road construction in the early 1990s. In Chapter 2, we saw the longer history of modernity in Zautla and Mazaltepec, originally propagated by state public schools in the early to mid twentieth century.

Institutionalized education had an earlier impact on Zapotec in Zautla than Mazaltepec. The discourses of *menosprecio*, denigration of indigenous identity and language, and *salir adelante*, “forge ahead,” were already present in the 1930s in Zautla. Mazaltepec resisted these early colonizing practices of the Mexican government and to this day the majority of adults speak Zapotec. However, the language is quickly being lost amongst the youngest generation, and this

is the principle danger. As Nettle and Romaine note, “the pulse of a language clearly lies in the youngest generation. Languages are at risk when they are no longer transmitted naturally to children in the home by parents or other caretakers” (2000:8). I have shown that language shift is not only the result of social, political, and economic processes—such as industrialization, colonization, and migration—that are imposed upon communities, but also of the resulting disjunctures between multiple ideologies, practices, and discourses that ripple through everyday life. Such sociolinguistic disjunctures are the reason that parents do not speak Zapotec to their children; that children themselves are apathetic towards the language; and, consequently, that the *Tizá*, the local variant of Zapotec, is being lost. They also explain the ideological, if not practical, shift towards English and other symbols and materials of modernity like political parties and telecommunications.

Alongside the dominant ideology and discourse of modernity, however, there has been consistent and unwavering resistance. In Chapter 3 we saw some of the *pro-indígena*, “pro-indigenous” discourses of Zautla and Mazaltepec. These are the discourses that drive revitalization efforts in Zautla and Mazaltepec. However, as we saw, there are multiple *pro-indígena* discourses, some that are mixed up in modernity and others that evoke *comunalidad* and purity. In this Chapter I describe two revitalization efforts, one that evokes each of these discourses. First, I will describe the revitalization effort of Felipe Froilán. The effort itself is based in a modern institution—a bilingual intercultural school in Mazaltepec. Second, I will describe the revitalization effort of Lydia González that escapes ties to modernity in both practice and discourse. At different times these efforts both converge and diverge from one another. They are alike in many ways and yet, they each adapt to their own particular setting and ideology. They face similar challenges—apathy, limited support, limited materials, *salir adelante*

discourse, and, perhaps most disconcerting, *menosprecio* discourse—but also have their own particular hurdles. Both efforts, however, come from within the community and challenge the dominant discourse. There are other efforts at revitalization in both communities, but I choose to analyze these two because they are not only the most significant efforts in their respective communities, but also the most heterodox. That is, they clearly resist the dominant discourse within their communities (even though they may at times align with it).

Barbra Meek argues that language revitalization is a process of socialization, both cultural and linguistic, and must aim to create new speakers. She highlights two ideas of language socialization: “(1) cultural socialization through language use and (2) language development (socialization) through linguistic practice, including everyday use as well as instructional and specialized uses” (Meek 2010: 48). According to this view, grammar development is closely tied to the “social and cultural milieu of the language-acquiring person and language-practicing speaker ” (Meek 2010:49). I collected little observational data on sociolinguistic practices in relation to revitalization. Rather, my data comes from the discourse (through interviews) of those involved in revitalization, and some participant observation. Still, Meek’s framework can help us to think beyond the divide between language and culture. They are closely entangled and revitalization workers in Zautla and Mazaltepec recognize this. Therefore, neither effort focuses solely on language. They address various factors set out by UNESCO’s assesment of language vitality (see introduction) including speakers, sociolinguistic practices, language materials, and support. Lydia’s effort has an especially wide focus that, sometimes is only loosely related to language revitalization. The three principle concerns of her effort—medicine, history, and language—are even posed as separate.

At the most fundamental level, both efforts aim to *revalue* the culture and language of their ancestors, whatever they see this to be. This is done through the sociocultural practice of raising consciousness, awareness of one's place in a broader sociopolitical world, in their communities and beyond. This is a process, basically, of changing people's attitudes towards indigenous identity and language. Thus, they recognize culture and its sociolinguistic manifestations as the underlying barriers to language maintenance or revitalization. Changing community discourse from *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* to *pro-indígena* would get more people interested and *involved* in revitalization. Parents, for instance, could teach Zapotec in their homes and teachers could teach it in schools. Yet, as I show, consciousness-raising, especially in Mazaltepec is not an easy task. There is, in fact, active suppression of Felipe's work within Mazaltepec.



Felipe Froilán in his classroom.

Bilingual Education as Revitalization in Mazaltepec

In Chapter 2, we saw that institutionalized education has been one of the primary means of language shift and of assimilating indigenous peoples into Mexico's *alma nacional*, "national soul." Even the bilingual intercultural school system can promote assimilation, for instance, by teaching indigenous language literacy to facilitate Spanish literacy acquisition. Bilingual schools, in general, use the same curriculum as all other public schools in Mexico, but they also mix in indigenous language (and cultural) activities according to the language level of students. While bilingual schools are a key aspect of Mexican modernity, they may also be key aspects of resistance. Teachers, like Felipe Froilán, often have a good deal of autonomy and can determine their own curriculum and teaching style, so long as parents consent.

Felipe Froilán Miguel López is a teacher in Mexico's Bilingual Intercultural School System. He is from Mazaltepec, but after receiving his teaching certificate he taught in other communities for a number of years. In 2009, he returned to Mazaltepec and co-founded a small bilingual school called *Nueva Creación*, "New Creation," that aims to meet the educational needs of low-income families in Mazaltepec. Felipe has devoted a good deal of his life to revitalization and his work outside of the school, mainly documenting community culture and language, often converges with his work in the school. For instance, he uses his community-specific cultural knowledge and language materials with the kids at *Nueva Creación*. This is done, however, out of necessity just as much as desire—there simply are not sufficient language resources at the school. Thus, he sometimes refers to his own two books, one on the culture, and one on the language of Mazaltepec. The first is called *Rescate Cultural del Pueblo de Santo Tomás Mazaltepec* ("Saving the Culture of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec"). It discusses some past revitalization projects in the community which mainly consist of intracommunity cultural

conferences in which elders share their stories and vision with younger generations. Felipe also organizes Zapotec theatre and dance productions for the community and this is recorded in the book. Felipe wrote a play himself that relates the founding myth of Mazaltepec. His second book is called *T'is Sha'a: Lengua Zapoteca de Mazaltepec* (“*T'is Sha'a: Zapotec of Mazaltepec*”). It is a basic dictionary that he himself compiled through his work with community elders and their language. Felipe is a first-language Zapotec speaker, but there are parts of Zapotec that he, and many of his generation never learned—the focus of the dictionary is to *rescatar*, save these parts of language. For instance, Felipe has compiled Zapotec numbers to one-hundred. He told me that very few people in his generation knew any of the numbers because they always counted in Spanish. With both of his books, we see that Felipe is indeed concerned with the purity of knowledge and language that is being revitalized—thus he works primarily with elders to make sure that their understandings are not lost before it is too late. Even as a young boy Felipe worked in revitalization. In the early 1990s he helped organize the cultural councils of the elders and they taught him why community culture and language is important: “many of the elders have since died, but they chatted, talked, and said that it was important to save these things” [*Ya muchas no viven. Platicaron, hablaron, y dijeron que era importante rescatar las cosas*]. Felipe is not just a teacher, but a Mazalteco that truly cares for and believes in his community heritage.

He helped to open the school in the midst of a hostile discursive environment in which most of the community (he tells me) insulted him and the students for looking “backwards” instead of forward (discourse of *salir adelante*) and for denigrating the language and culture that he set out to teach (discourse of *menosprecio*). As we saw in Chapter 1, one indicator of indigenous identity is economic underdevelopment. Because *Nueva Creación* works primarily for the low-income sector of Mazaltepec, indianness and underdevelopment have been conflated

in *menosprecio* discourse. Kids were called *mugrosos* (dirty/filthy, mentally retarded) and *inbañables* (unbathable), terms associated with underdevelopment. But they were also called *indígenas*, *indios*, and *Mixtecos* (Mixtec),^{xliv} terms associated with racial inferiority. I heard all of these latter terms used as slurs between Mazaltecos. One of the biggest challenges to *Nueva Creación* is overcoming the discourse and discrimination of *menosprecio*. When Felipe and his associate opened the school they were almost kicked out of the community “for the objective and vision that I [Felipe] have [“*Me han tratado de correr...por el objetivo y visión que tengo*]. Some parents, Felipe told me, no longer send their children to the school because of the discrimination. The retention rate of *Nueva Creación* is very low because students often change schools or stop coming altogether. There is discrimination against and amongst children and adults alike. Racist discrimination in Mazaltepec is one of the greatest challenges to revitalization at *Nueva Creación*, and in general (at least for revitalization efforts that follow a *pro-indígena* ideology).

One day after class, I had a long discussion with Felipe about this denigrating *menosprecio* discourse. Most of the students, he said, speak some Zapotec. The problem is that they are ashamed to do so. “Many of the kids, even though they speak it, say they don’t because they are ashamed. They are embarrassed to say they speak Zapotec” [*Muchos de los niños, aunque lo hablan, dicen que no porque les da vergüenza. Les da vergüenza decir que hablan Zapoteco.*] He told me that “here in the community Zapotec is not valued. It’s seen as backwards. Someone who speaks Zapotec is backwards” [*aquí en la comunidad no se valora el Zapoteco. Se piensa que es un atraso. Se piensa que él que habla Zapoteco es atrasado*].

Felipe told me a story about a theatre production play he worked on with his students. The play acted out a local myth—the origin myth of Mazaltepec—entirely in Zapotec. Many of

his students were really excited about it. They acted it out amongst themselves, but when it was time to perform to the community they didn't speak. "They didn't want to speak. And you know why? It's because they are afraid to be discriminated against... And I asked them 'why didn't you speak?' 'Teacher, forgive us but we're embarrassed that the other kids will make fun of us.'" [*No lo quisieron hablar. Y ¿sabe por qué?. Porque tienen miedo que les discriminen. Y acá sí lo hicieron, lo repasábamos. Y lo presentamos programa en el palacio y no. Y al final les digo 'a ver ¿ por qué no hablaron allá?' 'Maestro perdonanos pero nos da vergüenza porque se van a burlar de nosotros los otros niños. ']*

Felipe himself has had a hard time as a teacher and founder of the school. "It's not easy," he said.

In these years I've gone through a lot. They've told me I'm ignorant, that I want the community to go backwards, that I'm a crazy person. That's what they've told me. But I've studied a little bit and I have enough knowledge to say that that's not true. I believe that a person that is rescuing his/her culture is an learned person that knows what they are doing... When we started they said 'don't go there kids because there is a man, he's a teacher that is crazy and he's getting people together to trick the kids. And the kids won't learn anything because that man doesn't know anything. That man is a fool, he's ignorant.' So you have to imagine how hard we have to fight just to do something. It's a fight. It's a fight because we have to talk to those people and with the kids. We have to bring consciousness to the kids too because they are ashamed to come here.

Pero no es fácil. Yo en esos años he enfrentado a muchas cosas. A mi me han dicho que soy un ignorante, que soy una persona que quiere el atraso para el pueblo, que soy una persona que está loca. Así me han dicho. Y a todo eso, porque yo algo estudié y tengo el conocimiento de decir que no es cierto pues. Y yo tengo los elementos de decir que una persona que esta rescatando su cultura es una persona culta que sabe lo que hace... Cuando llegamos decían 'no niños ni se vayan allí porque hay un señor y es maestro que está loco y está juntando a la gente para engañar a los niños. Y los niños allí no aprenden nada porque ese señor no sabe nada.' Y así, 'ese señor es un tonto, es un ignorante.' Entonces se imagina como, hay que luchar para que se tenga que hacer algo. Y es una lucha. Es una lucha porque hay que platicar con la gente, con los niños. Hay que concientizar a los niños también porque les da vergüenza venir aquí.

It is this *menosprecio* discourse that makes revitalization so hard in Mazaltepec. Recently, Felipe told me more people are starting to see the value of his work and he even received an award from the municipality a couple of years after opening the school. Perhaps his *pro-indígena* discourse is beginning to make ideological inroads into people's everyday practice and discourse beyond the school.

But *Nueva Creación* faces other challenges to revitalization. It is a multigenerational school with about twenty students ages eight to twelve. All students attend the same classes. In itself, Felipe sees this as a positive strategy. The idea is that the older kids help teach the younger kids. All of the kids could learn at their own pace. If they wanted to go faster they just took up material from the next grade. Yet, it is a difficult strategy for language socialization because there is a wide range of Zapotec speaking abilities at the school: some kids are first-language speakers of Zapotec and others only understand (see chart in Chapter 2). This doesn't correspond to age either so younger students often help older students. But the main problem with this is that Spanish remains dominant. It is spoken to fill in the gaps of Zapotec. Furthermore, there is only a small amount of time each day that is set aside for Zapotec class. Felipe must also teach the standard curriculum so that children are able to *salir adelante*, and go to other schools afterwards. Here, as we saw in Chapter 4, his *pro-indígena* discourse converges with the discourse of *salir adelante*. Few parents would send their kids to the school if it did not prepare their students for further education. In Mazaltepec, as in many other communities, bilingual education ends after primary school. If students want to get accepted into other schools they are tested in Spanish (and sometimes English), but not Zapotec. It is hard to avoid the practice of *salir adelante* within the state education system. As I describe in the conclusion, *pro-indígena*, "pure," education may require moving beyond institutional education itself, and into

comunalidad driven socialization and learning. This, however, requires a fundamental shift in consciousness amongst the majority of community members. Currently it may be unfeasible in Mazaltepec.

Other challenges that *Nueva Creación* faces include lack of support. Felipe and the other teacher are the sole source of funding for the school. They rent the school building from an American, who used to live there. Felipe and his wife, a teacher at a different Bilingual Intercultural school, put much of their already small income towards the rent. They also pay for supplies. There is no funding from the state or municipal government despite the school's official status under IEEPO (State Institute of Public Education in Oaxaca) and DGEI (General Direction of Indigenous Education).

Another challenge is lack of language materials. As mentioned, Felipe uses his books for Zapotec education. However, they are very limited. Each community values its version of Zapotec (see Chapter 1). Thus, community specific materials, or at least adaptations are ideal. However, it is not possible to create language materials for thousands of communities unless the communities themselves have linguists, which is not the case in Mazaltepec or Zautla. As we see with Lydia's revitalization effort in Zautla, another strategy is to bring multiple communities together to create a common set of language materials. As of now, there is no complete set of language materials for the Zapotec of the Central Valleys. Without these materials, Felipe often has to rely on the free national text-books (used in all Mexican public schools). . "That's what the government wants," Felipe told me. "That we all study the same things" [*Es el objetivo del gobierno...que todos estudiemos lo mismo*]. Felipe's ultimate goal is to create not only "books, stories, [and] songs," but also tools of digital technology [*se necesita crear libros, cuentos, canciones, tecnología*]. "Our dream is to have internet in Zapotec, television programs, and

radio” [*Tenemos ese sueño de incluso tener internet en Zapoteco, programas de televisión, de radio*]. He wants to apply the tools of modernity to his revitalization effort (as did the Zapatistas in 1994).

Even if the Zapotec education within *Nueva Creación* could be improved, it is insufficient. New domains (language camps for instance) for using Zapotec must be created outside of the school, and there must be a general revaluation of the language and indigenous identity. Related to this, parents must teach the language in their homes or the language will almost certainly be lost. Even so, *Nueva Creación* is currently one of the best hopes for revitalization in Mazaltepec. It is the only public space in the community where Zapotec is promoted to children.



Lydia González wearing a huipil at a community wedding. Here she is pictured with her new daughter in law and her husband, Constantino. Jesús is in the background, looking upwards.

Pueblos Zapotecos

In Chapter 3, I discussed the *pro-indígena* discourse of purity, mainly in relation to Lydia González and her son Jesús. The discussed concepts that are closely connected to *comunalidad*, a purist indigenous understanding of community over individual and integration with the natural world. As modernity infiltrates deeper in Zautla and Mazaltepec, *comunalidad* itself is threatened. Outside ideologies and discourses of *salir adelante* and *menosprecio* are more common than *pro-indígena* discourse (itself based on an “outside” ideology of decolonization). Still, as we saw in Chapter 3, it is an important aspect of community living in Zautla, especially through *tequios*, communal work projects, and fiestas. Perhaps most endangered are the principles and values through which these elements (and community politics) are articulated (Maldonado and Meyer 2010:89). That is, respect and reciprocity—respect for community knowledge and the land, and reciprocity between community members and with the land.

In Zautla, community life is clearly not what it used to be. It is not “pure.” Lydia and Jesús believe that the pure knowledge and language of the elders must be revalued if Zautla is to survive the contradictions and discontinuities, the disjunctures, of modernity. For them, however, this does not only mean looking backwards. Rather, it means learning from the past in order to consciously move forward according to *their* values, in terms of *comunalidad*, not in terms of modernity. Jesús states: “it’s about evolution, not change” [hay que evolucionar, no cambiar]. Such decolonization discourse is central to many indigenous political movements in Latin America today. Equadorian sociologist Aníbal Quijano suggests that decolonization is the only way to escape the persistent effects of colonial relations and structures of power, thought, and being (2000). Decolonization implies heterogeneity and diversity rather than homogeneity within a nation-state. As Gustavo Esteva, one Oaxacan thinker, suggests, “we need to open our heads,

hearts an arms to the radical otherness of the other, celebrating it with hospitality” (Maldonado and Meyer 2010:118).

Related to *comunalidad* are the principles of community self-determination and autonomy. I understand autonomy as the power of a community to organize its cultural, social, political, and economic life without outside interference; to write its own history and future; to speak its own language; to work its own land; and to think in terms of *comunalidad*. This too requires evolution based on community tradition. Esteva describes autonomy as:

Regulation provided by the current generation of community members, frequently modifying traditional norms. One of the best traditions of indigenous communities is that of changing tradition in a traditional manner. This provides historical continuity—communities continue being the same—but at the same time, they remain highly dynamic, which has ensured their survival and allows them to continuously update their norms (Meyer and Maldonado, 2010:121).

Autonomy, like *comunalidad*, is central to indigenous political movements and revitalization today. I show that autonomy and self-determination are central aspects of Lydia’s revitalization effort. She is the director of *Pueblos Zapotecos del Valle de Oaxaca* (Zapotec Peoples of the Oaxaca Valley), a pan-ethnic organization that works in communities across the six valleys of Oaxaca. *Pueblos Zapotecos* not only promotes autonomy and self-determination, it also functions according to these principles. There is outside support, but only when absolutely necessary.

Sociopolitical Organization and Revitalization

Pueblos Zapotecos is a pan-ethnic organization—it goes beyond the bounds of community identity (as described in Chapter 1), instead recognizing the common identity of all Zapotec peoples in an ethnolinguistic region, in this case the valleys of Oaxaca. Lynn Stephen

shows that, “increasingly, people... in Oaxaca are reclaiming a wider Zapotec identity and even a pan-indigenous identity as part of social and political movements” (2005: 31). This is largely a result of indigenous political movements that promoted such an ideology. Stephen writes:

In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s—particularly in the wake of the Zapatista rebellion and a national movement for indigenous autonomy and in certain other historical locations where the state has promoted a pan-indigenous identity through specific institutions—“Indian” identity and broader pan-ethnic identities have come to the fore. (2005: 27)

Here I will briefly outline this widening identity in relation to the sociopolitical organization of communities in Oaxaca. The first pan-community ethnic organizations in Oaxaca were formed in the early 1980s (Barabas et al. 2003:37). Such organizations bring together communities of the same “ethnic” group and sometimes (more recently) of an entire “ethnolinguistic” region^{xlv} as if each community itself was part of a single pueblo (people or community). Communities within these organizations are mutually supportive of one another, at least in theory. Early pan-community organizations worked on a diverse array of human rights issues such as the revitalization of indigenous languages and medicines (Barabas et al 2003:37). The *Pueblos Zapotecos* organization, formed in 2011, is the first organization to attempt to join the 118 Zapotec communities of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca (CDI 2006:17).

Many such indigenous political organizations and movements demand autonomy. Ethnolinguistic organizations like *Pueblos Zapotecos* demand regional and community level autonomy. One ethnopolitical organization, *Frente Único de Presidentes Municipales Indígenas de la Sierra Mazateca* in the Sierra Mazateca region, understands autonomy as “the non-interference of political parties in their communities” (Barabas et al 2003:47). Another organization, the *Asamblea de Ciudadanos Mixes por la Autonomía* (Assembly of Mixe Citizens

for Autonomy) in the Mixe region, sees autonomy as the “reconstitution of indigenous peoples, understood to be the creation of a permanent union between communities and municipalities of every ethnolinguistic group, that will constitute a platform to mediate between each community and the state government”^{xlvi} (Barabas et al 2003:47). From my conversations it seems that *Pueblos Zapotecos* would agree with both definitions, but more fundamentally with the latter. The former definition suggests a universal revival or maintenance of *usos y costumbres* (see Chapter 3). This is certainly important to *Pueblos Zapotecos*, but it is not the main concern, even of Lydia González of Zautla, the president of the movement. The second definition gets at one of the main goals of *Pueblos Zapotecos*: to unite the valley communities, both at the community and regional levels, to more strongly voice political concerns. The other goal is the mutual support of diverse community revitalization projects. These were big objectives when we consider the antagonistic and disconnected relation that communities have had in the past.

As mentioned, ethnolinguistic organizations often see themselves as a single pueblo (people or community) even though they come from diverse communities, often with long histories of intervillage conflict, as between Zautla and Mazaltepec (Dennis 1987). *Pueblos Zapotecos* is certainly breaking down the barriers of old disputes by “projecting a local community logic onto a regional sphere” (Barabas et al 2003:48). This can be seen in the collaboration of Mazaltepec and Zautla on language revitalization. It is also apparent in the structure of *Pueblo Zapoteco* meetings called *Encuentros Interculturales* (intercultural meetings, encounters, happenings^{xlvii})—they function similar to community assemblies (*asambleas*). Thus unity is both a means and an end for *Pueblos Zapotecos*.

But autonomy and unity run even deeper in the organizational structure of *Pueblos Zapotecos* through membership. The organization (just like their ideal community) is very much closed to outsiders. Lyda told me:

now in our movement, that is the *Pueblos Zapotecos*, we don't want to have religion, or political parties, or government...we also don't want foreigners

Ahorita en el movimiento en que estamos, este de Pueblos Zapotecos del Valle de Oaxaca, ya no queremos meter ni religión, ni partidos políticos, ni, este, gobierno...pero tampoco estamos involucrando mucho a la gente extranjera.

When I asked her if outsiders could go to the intercultural meetings she said:

as observers sure, but they are excluded from the formation of our alphabet, of our ideas. Not anymore. They can't be involved because they don't know our culture.

Como observadores sí, pero que sea los que discluyen en la formacion del abcdario, de nuestro alfabeto, de nuestras ideas. Ya no. No porque no conocen nuestra cultura.

Lydia explained that the meetings are sacred and outsiders must stay out of the interior sacred space. Further, she said that outsiders can't participate because they "dont share our beliefs and don't know our rituals" [no comparten nuestras creencias y no saben los rituales que hacemos].

The exclusion of outsiders is symbolic of indigenous autonomy and independence.

Communities no longer want to deal with violations of their values such as respect:

Businesses, the big companies that have arrived are foriegn and the majority of them use our land for business, without respect. That's why we have this feeling that foreigners no, no, no, no, no.

Y este las empresas, las grandes empresas que han llegado son extranjeras y la gran mayoría de las empresas usan nuestra tierra como un negocio no con respeto pues. Por eso tenemos el sentido que ya el extranjero no, no, no, no, no.

Furthermore, Lydia asserts the importance of self-determination:

We don't want outsiders...to be the ones that decide, to say we must go in this direction. No, because we know the path. We know what we really want.

Ya no queremos que la gente de afuera sean los que decidan que sean los que nos digan que es por aquí. No porque nosotros sí conocemos el camino pues. O sea sabemos que es lo que realmente queremos.

This is a part of Lydia's discourse or purity, suggesting that outside knowledge will "contaminate" [*contaminar*] indigenous knowledge, language, and ideas conceptions of development. For *Pueblos Zapotecos*, self-determination and *comunalidad* are not only ends, but also means of revitalization. They are ways to escape the persistent colonial power relations and dictate the future of indigenous peoples from their own perspective and set of values. Lydia believes that it is time to move away from this past:

There are things that we don't like about what has been done and that's why there is now such reserve towards that [outside impositions broadly speaking]...And history itself has taught us that it is difficult for an outsider, I'm not saying that there aren't people, but they are few, that in reality will respect us. The majority have always abused of our confidence you can say, including religions because these were brought to us. They weren't from America, they weren't from our culture. And so they have greatly divided our communities. They have changed our original community names for biblical names that have nothing to do with us, with our culture. So, in that way we are losing our culture. And we are adopting an identity that we don't even understand deeply, and a culture of which we don't even have a basic knowledge. All of that has caused great harm.

Hay cosas que no nos gusta de lo que se ha hecho y por eso es que ahorita hay mucha reserva hacia eso [imposiciones de afuera]...Y la misma historia nos enseñó que difícilmente alguien que viene de fuera, no digo que no haya personas, pero son muy poquitas las que en realidad van a respetar o la gran mayoría siempre ha abusado de la confianza se puede decir, incluyendo a las religiones porque las religiones nos las trajeron. No eran de América, no eran de nuestra cultura. Entonces eso ha dividido mucho a las comunidades. Han cambiado sus nombres originarios por nombres bíblicos que nada tiene que ver con nosotros, con nuestra cultura. Entonces eso, este, de alguna manera vamos perdiendo nuestra identidad. Y vamos adoptando una identidad que ni siquiera la conocemos profundamente ni tenemos un conocimiento básica de esa cultura. Entonces todo eso ha hecho mucho daño.

Autonomy and self-determination within the organizational structure itself demonstrate the power that indigenous political organizations can have without outside support (including non-Zapotec Oaxacans and anthropologists). This structure also reflects the *pro-indígena* ideology of the organization.

Pueblos Zapotecos: Demands and Methods

Pueblos Zapotecos is organized through intercommunity assemblies called intercultural meetings. Since the organization's inception in 2011 there has been one meeting each year. In total there will be five of these annual assemblies, one in each of the six valleys of Oaxaca. The first three were held in the communities of Santa Ana del Valle, Ayuquesco del Gama, and San José Magote (confirm this). These meetings have had well over one hundred participants (community cultural promoters). In addition to the meetings, there are one or two planned workshops (*talleres*) each year. Each workshop develops in depth the importance of a single theme. The first three workshops explored indigenous language (zapotec), indigenous history, and indigenous medicine. There has been varied participation in these workshops (find the numbers of attendance). At these workshops promoters share their community's experiences, develop program ideas, and discuss strategies to overcome difficulties. Sometimes an expert will speak on a particular theme. Most speakers are from communities, but sometimes outsiders (mainly indigenous anthropologists, linguists, and historians from Oaxaca) are invited.

Community promoters return to their home communities with new skills and knowledge, the seeds of their revitalization efforts. They must decide which issue(s) are most important to their community. Sometimes the community assembly or municipality is involved, but many times they are not. They may even oppose revitalization. Either way, the most important voice is

the promotor that actually attended the intercultural meeting. (see Barabas 37 for more on alternative methods of community decision making). However, there is still not enough support.

The first three workshops addressed three of the most important efforts of *Pueblos Zapotecos*—language, history, and medicine. In Zautla all three issues are being addressed by Lydia and a couple of community groups that she has organized: one is a group of elder women that hold a great deal of knowledge about the community and its culture and the other is a group of middle school and high school youth that are beginning to document today's culture through photography and other means. Lydia's son Jesús also plays an important role. Here I will briefly discuss medicine and history. Then I will discuss language in more depth.

Medicine:

Zautla wants to bring back the local remedies, rituals, and medicinal practices of its ancestors. They believe this will help them to better care for each other and for the land. It will also help them to become less dependent on the community clinic of the state health organization *Servicios de Salud de Oaxaca* (SSO) and of pesticides that hurt the land. The most recent project was to build a community *temazcal*, a pre-hispanic vapor bath. Through ritual healing events, this bath is said to cure various remedies in the physical and non-physical realms [I've never taken Med anthro—is this acceptable terminology?]. (Add example—jealousy).

The revitalization of medicine is also geared towards a better relationship with the land. This is deeply rooted in the principle of *comunalidad* that nature, not humans, are at the center of existence and that the land deserves respect (Meyer and Maldonado 2010:93). Lydia told me that “the land cannot be seen as a resource that we can own and take advantage of, but rather as a being, or a set of beings with which we mutually coexist. Its mother earth and includes every rock, tree, every flower, the rivers. We're all equal” [La tierra no un recurso que podemos

comprar ni vender. No la podemos explotar, porque la tierra es un ser, o muchos seres y tenemos que convivir con ellos. Es la madre tierra y cada piedra, arbol, cada flor, los rios. Todos somos iguales]. In Zautla (and Mazaltapēc) the land is referred to as “mother earth” [la madre tierra] or the *Chaneque*—a name given to the supreme being of the earth. She told me that if they don’t respect the land, they can’t expect the land to provide for them. Here I will give an example of a ritual offering to the land that was also a cleansing of participants.

One morning I went to a ritual with Lydia, her husband, and her sister. We drove up a dirt road into the dry mountains west of Zautla. When the road ended we continued climbing along a footpath, a route supposedly travelled for hundreds of years, until we arrived to a small lagoon. Here we put down our baskets and collected some plants and sticks. Lydia drew a cross in the sand at the water’s edge and poured mezcal on it. She pulled out three incense sticks. She lit them with matches and then puffed one time on each before placing them in the sand around the cross. Out of her basket she pulled purple and white flowers. She circled the cross with the purple flowers and put white flowers at four equidistant points along the edge of the circle. Meanwhile Lydia’s sister pulled out a bag of candies that we had collected at the most recent community festival. She began to remove their plastic wrappers. Lydia’s husband came back with some plants and sticks. She took these and put them into a three-legged clay bowl with some scented rocks. Here she lit a small fire and placed it in the circle. She told me not to touch the inside of the circle. Lydia took a handfull of recently pulled branches and waved them through the incense smoke. She brushed the branch over her sister, husband, and then me. Lastly she brushed herself. Next, Lydia picked up the bowl and put it up to her sister, husband, and me. We each took a few deep breaths followed by steady exhales. She did the same and then put the bowl back in the circle. The incense sticks were almost burnt out. She said the “earth is

smoking” [la tierra está fumando], meaning that the offering was being accepted. Last, we took the candies and threw them into the still water.

Lydia told me this was an offering to the *Chanéque* for rain. It had not rained in weeks and there had been numerous crop fires in the previous week. It was also a human healing ritual, but I did not find out its purpose. This is the type of spiritual medicine that Lydia is trying to bring back to Zautla. There are few people today that participate in such rituals.

History:

Indigenous histories and knowledges have become a major concern of *Pueblos Indígenas*. This history and knowledge has been transmitted, to an extent, through culture and language to this day. However, it has also been repressed, manipulated, and devalued. The Mexican state all but ignored indigenous history and knowledge prior to the EZLN uprising in 1994. According to anthropologist Jaime Luna this uprising “pull[ed] away the blanket underneath which we were hidden” (Maldonado and Meyer 2010:97). History and knowledge, as revitalization, must be revalued and accepted as equally legitimate and rational.

Mexican history textbooks (the same throughout the country) reduce indigenous peoples to a few pages, even though they are the majority in states like Oaxaca. In these books, their cultural contribution is reduced to music, dance, textiles, and art. There is little to no description of *comunalidad*. The indigenous perspective, not to mention language, is entirely absent. But history and knowledge are not only produced in formal education, but also in everyday community experience, or lack thereof. The revitalization of history and knowledge must address both formal and informal education/socialization of youth as well as adults. Further, as we saw in Chapter 1, the image of the “Mexican Indian” has been largely constructed on essentializing constructions of the population. This has turned the indigenous population as a spectacle for

Western viewers. One example is the Guelaguetza in Oaxaca City—an enormous spectacle of the “culture” of indigenous peoples.

Here, history must be seen as the present and future as well as the past. It is alive and has social, psychological, and material effects everyday. *Pueblos Zapotecos* makes this especially clear. History brought people together for a workshop and is motivating them to work for indigenous rights in the present. Many community members in Zautla do not recognize the value in their history or knowledge. Reaffirmation of history and knowledge is seen as a future to be attained. In some communities there is resistance against this. Lydia is sometimes called *extraña*, for her efforts. This is not like the discrimination faced by Felipe in Mazaltepec. On a material level, history continues to influence economic, political, and health disparities of indigenous peoples.

In Zautla, the revitalization of history and knowledge has begun. It started with the collection of local writings and, more urgently, with the collection of elder’s knowledge. Community members involved in revitalization (among others) believe that this knowledge is key to revitalization because they lived in a way that has been eroded in younger generations. Jesús says “if that generation [those over seventy-five^{xlviii}] dies and we don’t take advantage of that generation of elders, it’s going to be very difficult to save our values” [Te digo que si esa generacion [los que tienen más que setenta] muere y no aprovechamos esa generación de gente adulta, va a ser muy difícil de rescatar los valores. That generation (the oldest community generation) is important because they still think in terms of autonomy and *comunalidad*:

Language:

Closely connected to these revitalization efforts in Zautla is the revitalization of the community Zapotec. In Chapter 3, we saw how “pure” Zapotec was valued in Zautla. Because

there are so few speakers in the community, it has remained relatively static and is thus seen as the most pure variant of Zapotec. However, the limited number of speakers is a great difficulty for language revitalization in Zautla. There are only about five fluent speakers left in the community and they are all over eighty years old. Right now, revitalization of the language within Zautla consists of recording as much of this language as possible. INALI linguists told Lydia to record as much as possible. This data will be compiled and the missing spaces will be filled in with the Zapotec of Mazaltepec. Thus, Lydia is already working with Mazaltecos to record their language as well.

But *Pueblos Zapotecos* goes beyond individual community projects. *Pueblos Zapotecos*, working with INALI linguists, is pushing for a *common* orthography that would better support bilingual education in the Central Valleys. This is going to be the first complete grammar and orthography for the Zapotec of the Central Valleys. A common orthography will not only incorporate the variants of a couple of communities or regions, but rather it takes into account all of the variants within the Zapotec community of the valleys. The idea is not to homogenize the language, but rather, to create common language education materials that can be adapted to revitalization and maintenance of all Central Valley variants of Zapotec.

Purity is an important aspect of the grammar and materials that are created. Only Zapotec speakers over forty-five years of age contribute to the construction of the language (supported by linguists). Another aspect of purity recognizes the relationship between language revitalization and indigenous world view. *Pueblos Zapotecos*, for instance rejects Zapotec bible translations because this is seen as another tool of evangelization. Here is an excerpt from a conversation I had with Lydia:

Mackenzie: What do you think of bible translations into Zapotec?

Lydia: Ah, yes. There are many people that want to bring the language back by means of evangelization. We don't agree with them.

Mackenzie: Why?

Lydia: Because religion. All religions have hurt our culture. They've put an end to the best parts of our culture...

Mackenzie: Did it also contribute to language loss?

Lydia: Yes. Now they are looking to transform the bible into Zapotec, but at the bottom they are trying to manipulate the people. Religion always manipulates.

Mackenzie: ¿Qué piensa de las traducciones de la biblia al Zapoteco?

Lydia: Ahh, sí. Hay muchas de esas personas que trabajan así por medio de la evangelización. No más, que nosotros como no estamos muy de acuerdo.

Mackenzie: ¿Por qué?

Lydia: Porque la religión. Todas las religiones han hecho mucho daño a nuestra cultura. Han acabado con lo mejor nuestra cultura...

Mackenzie: ¿Ese fue parte de la pérdida de la lengua?

Lydia: Sí. Aunque ahora le andan buscando como van a transformar la biblia al Zapoteco y esas cosas pero en el fondo es una forma de manipular a la gente. La religión manipula siempre.

Religion is another aspect of language and culture shift in Zautla and Mazaltepec. I do not address it in this thesis, not only because it was not a primary motivator of language shift in Zautla or Mazaltepec, but also because I did not have access to the necessary historical archives that would have allowed in depth research on the Church in the communities.

Conclusion

A Way Forward

Writing History and Ethnography

When I first visited San Andrés Zautla in 2010 I did not understand the implications of my presence. I was assigned to work on a “digital culture” project with community youth.^{xlix} Together we were supposed to document “community culture” (dance, dress, sport, food, etc) through photography, videography, blogs, cookbooks, and other media. The idea was to promote interest amongst young Zautecos in community life and culture—to “save” the community culture (*rescate cultural*). But there was an intrinsic contradiction to this project; our presence involved us sharing our cultural meanings, values, and attitudes. It involved sharing technologies that we brought in, sharing stories about our lives, sharing our ideas and opinions, and sharing our food. At times it involved us teaching them. Did we, in a sense, facilitate precisely the process that we were trying to prevent—assimilation? As one community member told me, “the more we learn about the outside world, the less we learn about ourselves.”

During my “fieldwork” I had a similar experience. I worked in two indigenous communities in Oaxaca Mexico, San Andrés Zautla and Santo Tomás Mazaltepec. Again I was an outsider and again I was expected to share. Many people were interested in the U.S. or wanted to practice their English with me. On the other I worked closely with community members interested in their own culture and in resistance to outside imposition. I was perplexed by the contrast within each of these communities (not to mention between them). Was it a contrast between generations, genders, socioeconomic statuses, religions, or political affiliation? Surely these are influential, but alone they could not explain the contrast. They could not explain the disjunctures. So how did this contrast come about and how did I fit in?

I believe that the contrast is a historical impact, almost natural, of globalization. Each community member has interacted in some way with the “outside world.” They have had different experiences with outside people, media, technology, money flows, and ideas. I was a part of this outside world and at moments it was very clear. One Zauteco, Liliana, told me: “you are not like us. You know how to travel in an airplane and must have money to come here. You know different things than us...you have your own culture” [No eres como nosotros. Sabes viajar en avion y tienes que tener dinero para venir a Mexico. Sabes otras cosas que nosotros...tienes tu propia cultura] Later she told me that people in the community like me because “ you go to the weddings, posadas, and the quinceañeras and you dance and talk with the people. You have integrated well.” [a la gente les caes bien porque vas a las bodas, posadas, y las quinceañeras. Bailas y hablas con la gente. Te has integrado bien.]

For a short month I became a part (not a member) of Zautla and Mazaltepec (more so in Zautla where I spent more time). I talked to people every day, formally and informally. I went to fiestas, helped extinguish fires in the fields, and played soccer. But never did I feel like a community member—nor could I ever. Everything in this work is influenced by the fact that I was and am an outsider, an abnormality. Furthermore, I am an outsider from the dominant country that speaks the dominant language. I went to “study” them. I am a colonial cog. I am a product and a source of globalization. This study in itself is an abstract ethical concern. It affirms the long-standing hierarchy that has oppressed indigenous people for five hundred years. It also reproduces the “disparity in global language power and media access” (Meyer and Maldonado 2010:22). Well-known indigenous authors of Latin America are rarely encountered in the U.S.

This editorial and intellectual silence is one consequence of a significant journalistic “language divide”: it is far easier to find scholarship by Western, English-speaking authors that has been

translated into Spanish (bookstores in Latin America are filled with such translated editions), than it is to find English translations of the research and perspectives of Latin American authors, however respected they may be in their own continental context.

Throughout this work, I will include the voices, mainly from recorded interviews, of Oaxacans. I will include their voices not only to address this power disparity, but also to stress another—a disparity of perspectives and of experiences—one that exists between the “indigenous” and the “West.” I cannot begin to explain indigenous life or struggle through their eyes. The closest I can get, is to explain it through their words.

Before I left to do field work I felt strangely knowledgeable, as if I might actually be able to understand, truly understand, the people with whom I was going to work. This, of course, was silly. I may have been prepared to do ethnography, but I was not prepared to understand another way of life, a new set of meanings and symbols. I learned a great deal from my third trip to Zautla and second trip to Mazaltepec, but I learned little, if anything, from their perspective, only understood by community members and learned through living. As one Zauteco, Jesús, told me:

Benjamín Maldonado and Jaime Luna, big anthropologists here [in Oaxaca], one of them from the *Sierra Norte*, have never gone to a *tequio* [communal work projects]. They have studied it and know all of its identity aspects, its cultural aspects, and its representational aspects, but they have never grabbed a pick or a shovel and gone to work in a *tequio* to see how you coexist within a *tequio*. Going to see and analyze a *tequio* is very different from going to live it. When you live it, then you understand how indigenous and community matters are managed within a community. Until you go and drink a mezcal [alcoholic beverage from the maguey plant] with your friends at the *calenda* [community religious festival], until you carry the marmot [big ball of cloth and wood used during community festivals] you won't understand the sense of culture—no not culture because that's a different term—but the sense of life that these things have.—
Jesús, 28

Benjamín Maldonado y Jaime Luna, que son grandes antropólogos, una es de la Sierra, nunca han ido a un tequio por ejemplo. Lo han estudiado y saben todos los aspectos identitarios, los aspectos culturales, los aspectos representativos de que es un tequio. Pero ellos nunca han agarrado un pico, una pala, y ido a trabajar en un tequio y ver como se convive dentro del tequio.

Es muy diferente, te digo, ir a verlo y analizarlo a ir a vivirlo. Tu cuando lo logras vivir, logras saber como es que se manejan las cuestiones indígenas y comunitarias dentro de una comunidad. Hasta que no vayas y tomas un mescal con tus amigos en la calenda, hasta que no cargues la marmota, que le llamamos aquí, no vas a saber cual es el sentido cultural—no el sentido cultural porque es un término aparte—sino el sentido de vida que tienen esas cosas.—Jesús, 28

If Zapotec anthropologist Jaime Martínez Luna could not understand, how could I? Jesús offered me solace:

Yes, seeing it and living it [community life] are very different things. But you have come to Oaxaca and you know more or less what I am talking about: what life is like in a village, what we eat, how we live, and how we coexist in the community. You have lived it more than other people because many researchers that come from the United States come as mere researchers. They don't stay in a village, they don't eat with the people... You become a part of the community even though you are not a part. You go all in and eat what we eat, sleep where we sleep, and live where we live. This is good because it helps you to understand how life is. What the people say is one thing and what you live is another. And in this way you see it and can more easily interpret it. Maybe you don't participate in all of the community activities, but you can see them up close. You can see it for example when a man gets back from a *tequio* and he is tired or has had a few drinks of mezcal. You can see these aspects and they are very intimate aspects of a family and of a community. So you can from that point of view and can analyze them differently. You can more intimately interpret all of those aspects.—Jesús

Pero sí es muy diferente vivirla y verla. Por ejemplo tú que has venido a Oaxaca, tú ya sabes mas o menos de que te hablo: como vive en los pueblos, que comen, como viven y como conviven dentro de la comunidad. Ya lo has vivido mas que otras personas porque muchos investigadores que vienen de Estados Unidos pero como meros investigadores. Ellos no se quedan en un pueblo, no comen en las casas de las gentes... Tu vuelves parte de la comunidad aunque no seas. Te metes de lleno y comes lo que comen, duermes donde duermen, y vives donde viven pues. Sí eso es muy bueno porque en si logras a entender como es la vida. Porque lo que te cuenta es una cosa. Lo que tú logras vivir es otra cosa. Y así se ve y se interprete más facil. Se comprende más facil. En lo mejor no participan en los aspectos comunitarios, pero si los puedes ver de cerca. Si los puedes ver por ejemplo cuando ya llegó el señor del tequio, o que ya viene cansado o ya viene con unos mescales adentro. Esos aspectos los puedes ver y que son aspectos muy intimos de la familia y de la comunidad. Entonces sí puedes verlos de ese punto de vista y sí se puede analizar de un forma diferente. Puedes interpretarlos más intimamente todos esos aspectos.—Jesús

Jesús told me this after my first few days in Zautla. We became friends and I took his words to heart. I tried not only to study in Zautla and Mazaltepec, but also to live. This not only helped me

to integrate, as Lydia mentioned, but also to understand, even if from the perspective of an outsider. This thesis is my attempt to dialogue between multiple perspectives. It is my attempt to understand that which I cannot understand. It is my attempt to understand a different field of experience, a different set of values, and a life other than my own.

Community Run Education: A Path to Heterogeneity?

In the last fifteen or so years,¹ Oaxacan communities and pedagogues have pushed for community controlled education and curriculum. Local education is often seen as a survival strategy that will allow indigenous communities to hold onto their languages and cultures. This may look different in every community, but the general idea is to teach local knowledge and teach (or teach in) the local language. Ideally all teachers would be from the community. Local education would clearly be a step towards a heterogeneous society. But, some say it is not enough.

Gustavo Esteva, a social activist and public intellectual that works for Centro de Encuentros y Diálogos Interculturales (Center of Intercultural Encounters and Dialogues) and Universidad de la Tierra (University of the Land), believes that communities need to move beyond education itself if they are to truly determine their own path. He sees education as an inherently controlling institution; “all schools, whether controlled nationally, locally, or by families, are coercive systems...[i]n order to avoid coercion, the first thing you would need to abandon is the school itself, that is, education” (Meyer and Maldonado 2010:120).

Esteva goes against the “general prejudice that education is a universal good.” Rather, he sees education as a “strictly Western enterprise [that] cannot be separated from the capitalist project,” and as a “pernicious form of colonialism, in which intimate enemies colonize us from the inside” (Meyer and Maldonado 2010:122). Esteva believes that learning needs to break free

from education—from the confines of school rooms, teachers, and set curriculum. Learning, for Esteva, is living and doing. Children can learn from their family and community until they are ten years old. At this point, some communities may not be able to provide what all kids are looking for. Esteva believes that youth should then connect with specialists that can mentor young learners.

This way, among other things, one of the classic problems of the school is resolved: habitually, teachers are ones who don't practice what they teach. The teacher is not a mathematician, geographer, historian, or person of letters. The teacher is a teacher. S/he teaches what s/he does not do. Not the thing is to learn with those who are doing things...with a carpenter, a geographer, an agrarian lawyer, or a specialist in free software, ultrasound, or community radio production...so that the learner not only acquires specific skills and capacities, but also the ways these are applied in the real world. In this way, young people learn to do something useful for their communities or groups and, through this, they gain dignity, esteem, and income. (Meyer and Maldonado 2010:127).

Esteva's vision would require not education reform, but a restructuring of society (he calls it "radical decolonization"); "instead of tolerance," he says, "we need hospitality. We need to open our heads, hearts and arms to the radical otherness of the other, celebrating it with hospitality" (Meyer and Maldonado 2010:118). This type of learning would have to be valued in and outside of communities if young people were to find employment outside of their community (community employment, of course, is the goal for many, not outside work). Not even less radical learning reforms are unanimously valued. In Mazaltepec I met parents that would not send their children to the "alternate" (intercultural) school because it doesn't offer the same credentials as the general school.

Closing

Zautla and Mazaltepec have had at least four hundred years of contact with Western civilization. The communities have changed a great deal over this time, but language loss, the loss of

Zapotec, occurred in the last century. We have seen that language shift can be correlated with social, economic, and political processes such as capitalist expansion and nationalism. In Zautla, Zapotec was lost in the early 20th Century in relation to education. In Mazaltepec, it is being lost today in relation to capitalist expansion. However, as I have argued, it is not modernity itself that *causes* these changes. Rather, it is the ripples of modernity that are reproduced in the discourses, practices, and ideologies of everyday life in Zautla and Mazaltepec. What does the future hold for indigenous languages and cultures in Oaxaca?

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ⁱ A *colectivo* taxi is a taxi with a fixed route and a set price, dependent on where the passenger gets on and off. They often fill to capacity as five or more people try to squeeze in with their cargo. In Oaxaca, they usually travel between Oaxaca City and satellite communities.

ⁱⁱ Original indigenous communities are communities that are thought to have existed prior to the Spanish colonial period that began in the 16th century.

ⁱⁱⁱ Communities in Oaxaca may be municipal centers or municipal agencies (*agencias*) that rely to differing extents on municipal centers. Zautla has six agencies, but Mazaltepec has none (ILI 2008:76). This is a part of Zautla's history as the more powerful community. In Oaxaca there are 570 municipalities, almost half of all municipalities in Mexico (Stephen 2005:30).

^{iv} Translation from Jane Hill (1985)

^v Leah K. VanWey, Catherine M. Tucker, and Eileen Diaz McConnell (2005) have a wonderful discussion of remittances in four Zapotec communities.

^{vi} <http://www.inegi.org.mx/movil/mexicocifras/> (accessed 4/7/2013)

^{vii} Emphasis added

^{viii} Huaraches are precolombian sandals made from woven leather. Huipiles are precolombian dresses, commonly worn by indigenous women in Mexico and parts of Central America. These are often considered, in communities and by the government, to be an important part of indigenous outward expression. They are also used by the tourist industry in Oaxaca to create the public image of the Oaxacan Indian. In other places, where the discourse of indigeneity is not common, they are simply the clothes of the community.

^{ix} *Tizá* is the Zapotec name for the variant of Zapotec spoken in the Northwest region of the Central Valleys (ILI 2008:76). The Institute of Indigenous Languages (ILI) recognizes sixty-three variants of Zapotec that are spoken in Oaxaca, each with its own name (ILI 2008:69).

^x This may be extended into many other realms including literacy.

^{xi} Older people in both communities tend to use the term *Indio* without the negative connotation that younger people often give it. Today, younger people use *indígena* as a relatively neutral term.

^{xii} The Mixtec are another of Oaxaca's large ethnolinguistic groups.

^{xiii} Define indigenism:

--David Wood noted in the 1960s that "no indigenist seeks the liberation of the indigenous population" (FIND QUOTE in Spanish book).

^{xiv} The redistribution and exploitation of land was the other means of assimilating indigenous peoples into the national culture (Lepe Lira 2008:100).

^{xv} *La Casa del Estudiante Indígena*

^{xvi} My translation

^{xvii} This was formed under the *Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas* (Autonomous Department of Indigenous Issues). The two Oaxaca schools were in Guelatao, in the Sierra

Juarez region, and San Antonio Eloxochitlán, in the Mazatec region. Neither of these are close to the Valley of Etla.

^{xviii} My translation

^{xix} Rural primary school education began in 1911 and was systematized in 1922 (Lepe Lira 2008:105).

^{xx} <http://www.ieepo.oaxaca.gob.mx/NivelIndigenaSecundaria.html> Date of Access: 4/6/2013

^{xxi} The INI controlled most policy towards indigenous communities from the 1950s into the 1990s (Lepe Lira:102).

^{xxii} Uaricha: Revista de Psicología, 2008. ISSN: 1870-2104. 200

^{xxiii} My translation

^{xxiv} My translation

^{xxv} Today, thinkers like Aníbal Quijano (2000) see plurality (heterogeneity) as central to breaking down the colonial power relations that exist within Latin American countries.

^{xxvi} Following the 1911 Law of Rudimentary Instruction

^{xxvii} <http://www.revistauaricha.org/uaricha11.html> (accessed 3/15/2013). Uaricha, issue 11, July 2008. Coedition with the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí.

^{xxviii} The book is called: *Zautla: Una Comunidad Oaxaqueña. Breve Reseña Histórica del Siglo XX*.

^{xxix} Secondary schools that have a television used to play educational videos.

^{xxx} Tía Cuca and her husband Tío Facundo are Lydia's parents in law and Jesús' grandparents.

^{xxxi} When Tío Facundo went to school there were only three grades. He could barely afford to go to school because of his economic situation. Like many kids, he had to work and couldn't afford a notebook [*apenas alcanzabamos para un cuaderno y como ibamos a avanzar*]. He learned Zapotec, but today says that he doesn't remember much (Jesús says that Tío Facundo knows a lot. Thus he is recording Tío Facundo's Zapotec). Tío Facundo was president of Zautla in the early 1990s.

^{xxxii} There are two public school systems for elementary schools today. The General System and the Bilingual Intercultural System. Many communities have "telesecondary" schools. These are secondary schools that have a television used to play educational videos. Zautla has a general primary school and a telesecondary school.

^{xxxiii} Conclusion of this section—say that this is the same as it was in Zautla. Also the same as in Zautla is the inter-kid discrimination. The kids themselves have little (serious) interest in learning.

^{xxxiv} People in Mazaltepec say there are as many Mazaltecos in New Jersey as there are in Mazaltepec (some two thousand). People told me that most extended families included at least one person in the U.S.

^{xxxv} Emphasis removed

^{xxxvi} The discourse of *salir adelante* is often related to the "culture of migration"—the normalization of national or international migration (Cohen 2004).

^{xxxvii} Eduardo Quijano would call this "coloniality of knowledge" (2000).

^{xxxviii} Following Maldonado and Meyer (2010:31) I do not translate *comunalidad*. Past translations—community, indigenous communitarianism, communalism, and other similar variations—do not capture, or even obscure, the culture and philosophy of *comunalidad*. For a further discussion of *comunalidad* in Spanish see Jaime Luna's original book, *Eso que Lllaman*

Comunalidad (2010). For a discussion of *comunalidad* in English see Maldonado and Meyer (2010).

^{xxxix} See Jeffrey H. Cohen (2004)

^{xl} *Usos y costumbres* is often considered to be the “indigenous political system,” but it did not exist in pre-colonial communities—it was a Spanish feudal imposition, used to control communities and extract resources from them. Therefore, for some people, *usos y costumbres* itself is not *pure*.

^{xli} Here Jesús talks, untranslated, about PRD’s socialism in Zautla, one of the ideologies that many people follow today.

Mackenzie: Eso [división] pasó con el club deportivo ¿no?

Jesús: Ah, allí sí. Pero fue por cuestiones meramente de ambición. En si no fueron cuestiones de política ni de querer componer a la comunidad. Te voy a decir en palabras comunes. Esos señores de dividieron y adoptaron esas ideologías socialistas solamente porque aquí la gente no se hacía caso. Entonces para que las hicieran caso formaron esta corriente y la legalizaron como partido. Y nosotros estamos en contra de esos. Y nosotros somos socialistas, somos comunistas, aunque no sea cierto. Pero la gente vio otro bandera con que identificarse. Entonces cambiaron a ese bando que es el PRD, que tiene una tendencia de izquierda, muy socialista y comunista. Pero solamente se hizo para tener otro grupo a quien pertenecer, no como ideología. La gente no lo analizó como una forma de vivir—una forma económica, una forma social, y una estructura política—sino lo vio como otro grupo a quien pertenecer. Y la conformación del sistema comunitario no tiene ninguna relación ni biológica, ni de intenciones con el socialismo ni el comunismo. Es mas ni mucha gente sabe que es el comunismo y socialismo, ni van a saber nunca. Podría decirse de una logica muy asaltada de que tenemos alguna relación con ese sistema, o a lo menos el conocimiento del sistema, pero no. El socialismo y comunismo casi no se manejó en los pueblos indígenas. Porque tenemos nuestra propia forma de comunismo y socialismo en realidad. Es una forma adaptada a nuestra forma de vida pues. No tiene nada que ver con el socialismo y el comunismo de Rusa y los países europeos. Por ejemplo la base del socialismo y comunismo con el proletariado y todo eso pues a lo menos en los pueblos indígenas no existe ese grupo del proletariado. Existen campesinos y no campesinos pero no existe proletariado.

^{xlii} I use EEUU as the Spanish abbreviation of *Estados Unidos*.

^{xliii} Minute 1:16:00. There is much more around this quote.

^{xliv} “Mixtec” refers to a nearby indigenous group that is seen as traditional, backwards, *indio*, and poor.

^{xlv} The idea of an ethnolinguistic group is highly problematic to linguists and linguistic anthropologists because there are so many ways to define the limits of a speech community. Here I am using the term because it is commonly used in the anthropological literature of Oaxaca (see Barabas et al 2003 and CDI 2006). Furthermore, many people talk about different indigenous regions in terms of ethnicity and language (e.g. “they speak the Zapotec of the Sierra, not of the Valley”). Interestingly, community members from the Valleys did not recognize their common language until the language workshop last year. Thus, the ethnolinguistic group that is the Zapoteco Pueblos of the Valley of Oaxaca, did not really exist as such until 2011.

^{xlvi} My translation.

^{xlvii} These are the possible translations given by Lin Stephens (1997:15).

^{xlviii} Jesús later said that this was the generation of his grandparents who are well over seventy years old.

^{xlix} This was a project run by a U.S. based non-profit in conjunction with the State Institute of Public Education in Oaxaca (IEEPO).

¹ In 1997, it was publically recognized that state education in Mexico had been a tool of “exterminating Indian peoples” (Meyer and Maldonado 2010:116).