

---

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

---

10-19-2020 3:00 PM

## The Language Vitality of Nahuatl in Santiago Tlaxco, Mexico

Grace Gomashie, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Bruhn de Garavito, Joyce, *The University of Western Ontario*

Joint Supervisor: Taylor, Shelley, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Hispanic Studies

© Grace Gomashie 2020

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Anthropological Linguistics and Sociolinguistics Commons](#), [Latin American Languages and Societies Commons](#), and the [Modern Languages Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gomashie, Grace, "The Language Vitality of Nahuatl in Santiago Tlaxco, Mexico" (2020). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 7398.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/7398>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

## Abstract

This thesis assesses the language vitality of Nahuatl (also known as Mexicano) in Santiago Tlaxco, a rural bilingual community in the municipality of Chiconcuautla, located in Puebla, Mexico, in the face of the growing trend of language endangerment for many Indigenous languages. It explores the linguistic use and attitudes of community members, and how they contribute to language maintenance and language shift of Nahuatl. The main research questions are: a) what are the language use patterns of the community? and b) what are the prevailing language attitudes of this Nahuatl-speaking community towards its Indigenous language? Data on the language practices with multiple interlocutors and linguistic attitudes were gathered by means of questionnaires, interviews and participant observation.

The results show that adults actively use Nahuatl in almost all linguistic domains, except in formal and unfamiliar domains where they prefer to use Spanish. Conversely, young people rarely use Nahuatl except with their grandparents. The factors favoring the language maintenance of Nahuatl are intergenerational transmission, cultural, ethnic and personal pride in the language, the isolated geographical location of Tlaxco, Nahuatl-speaking neighboring towns, bilingual education, and the presence of Nahuatl-speaking elders. In contrast, factors encouraging language shift are negative attitudes towards Nahuatl in mainstream society and by some community members, discrimination towards Nahuatl-speakers, absence of Nahuatl as medium of instruction, and the dominance of Spanish in Mexico.

These results indicate that more emphasis needs to be placed on the intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl to stem its declining use among young people. Additionally, the domains of Nahuatl need to be expanded and its home language use strengthened. The

findings also provide a snapshot of a community at the early stage of language shift. This project is the first sociolinguistic study in Santiago Tlaxco and sets the foundation for future studies in the community. The factors favouring Nahuatl language maintenance-shift in Tlaxco also provide insights for other Indigenous communities facing language endangerment.

## Keywords

Nahuatl, Spanish, Indigenous languages, language vitality, language use, language attitudes, linguistic domains, language shift, language maintenance, language endangerment, family language policy, Tlaxco (Santiago Tlaxco), Mexico

## Summary for Lay Audience

In face of the growing trend of many Indigenous languages losing speakers, this thesis examines the circumstances favouring or discouraging the use of Nahuatl (also known as Mexicano) in Santiago Tlaxco, a rural bilingual community in the municipality of Chiconcuautla, located in Puebla, Mexico. Community members were asked to indicate the languages(s), whether Nahuatl, Spanish, or both, they used in various settings (home, work, market, church, etc.) and when speaking with different individuals (spouse, children, teacher, doctor, etc.). Additionally, they were interviewed concerning their opinions and beliefs in relation to the use of Nahuatl and teaching it to the younger generations.

The study found that adults regularly use Nahuatl with different individuals and in many settings, while young people prefer to use either Spanish or both languages. Their infrequent use of Nahuatl is attributed by the speakers themselves to their lack of knowledge or fluency in the language as a result of not being taught at home and school. Additionally, parents prefer that their children learn Spanish first before Nahuatl since Spanish is the dominant language used in mainstream society and within the schools and is associated with economic opportunity. As a positive factor, both adults and young people consider Nahuatl to be an important language for their community and identity.

The findings indicate that in order for Nahuatl to survive and flourish, adults have to make a concerted effort to use it with the younger generations and to strengthen its use at home with their children. Furthermore, government authorities can support the survival of this Indigenous language by expanding its use within the bilingual school system and improving teaching resources and effectiveness. This project is the first to comprehensively evaluate the

health of Nahuatl in this rural Mexican community and sets the foundation for future studies in this region.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my awesome father, Bishop Richard Smart, and my amazing mother, Prophetess Margaret Appiah.

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I reserve my most profound gratitude to Jesus Christ, my Rock, Pillar, and Companion, for His endless love and grace through every stage of my life. I thank Him for His assurance that I can do all things because He strengthens me. All glory and honour be to His holy name! I am greatly indebted to my parents, Richard and Margaret, sister, Matilda and beloved, Robert, for their unconditional love, care and support all these years. I am also grateful to the many mentors, friends and second families I have encountered throughout my life.

I would like to specially thank my academic advisor and thesis supervisor Dr. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito for her guidance throughout the project, and collaboration on several of her research projects. My PhD study experience was such an enriching, enlightening and enjoyable one thanks to her. I wish to express my deep gratitude to my thesis co-supervisor, Dr. Shelley Taylor, for her depth of knowledge that she brought to the dissertation. Her insightful comments and recommendations made this dissertation stronger. I would also like to offer my sincere thanks to Dr. Roland Terborg, Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM), my project supervisor during my research stay in Mexico, for his expertise and unique perspective on the linguistic situation of Mexico. It was very rewarding to collaborate with him on several projects on the language vitality of Nahuatl. I would also like to thank the thesis committee members, Dr. Yasaman Rafat, Dr. María Eugenia de Luna Villalón, Dr. Tania Granadillo and Dr. Jeff Tennant, for their insightful and constructive comments.

I would like to thank the staff and academics of the Department of Applied Linguistics, UNAM, especially the Chair, Mtra Karen Lusnia, and the Ecology of Pressures research team, especially Denisse, Victoria, and Dr. Terborg for facilitating my research stay and

fieldwork. I would like to pay my special regards to my friend, Guillermo Garrido, a scholar and activist of Nahuatl origin for being a major help and facilitating my contact with several Nahuatl-speaking communities including Santiago Tlaxco. To the people of Santiago Tlaxco, my immense gratitude for their wholehearted participation in the research. My invaluable gratitude to Gaby, Alex, Cecilia, and Alberto, the family with whom I resided during the duration of my fieldwork, for a lovely and memorable time and friendship. A big thank you to Leonardo and Zacarias, my research assistants, for facilitating the fieldwork in the community.

I would like to show my wholehearted appreciation to the invaluable staff and influential professors of the Graduate Program in Hispanic Studies at the University of Western Ontario for the monumental support and training provided during my study. A special thank you to Sylvia Kontra for being an indispensable resource and fountain of knowledge in my graduate studies. Also, many thanks to Dr. Alena Robin, for her concern and interest in student progress as Graduate Chair.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the generous funding by the University of Western Ontario through a Faculty of Arts & Humanities Graduate Dean's Entrance Scholarship, a Mary Routledge Fellowship, a Lynne-Lionel Scott Scholarship in Canadian Studies and an Africa Institute Graduate Student Research Fund award. I am also thankful for the funding to support my fieldwork in Mexico received from the Mitacs Globalink Research Award and from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Grant [435-2018-1135] awarded to Dr. Bruhn de Garavito.



# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Summary for Lay Audience .....	iv
Dedication .....	vi
Acknowledgments .....	vii
Table of Contents .....	ix
List of Tables .....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xiv
List of Appendices .....	xvi
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	xviii
Chapter 1 .....	1
1 Overview of Study .....	1
1.1 Aims and Rationale .....	1
1.2 Status of Indigenous Languages in Mexico .....	4
1.3 Nahuatl Language in Mexico .....	7
1.4 Theoretical Framework .....	10
1.4.1 Language Shift and Language Maintenance .....	10
1.4.2 Language Vitality .....	12
1.5 Previous Studies on Nahuatl Vitality .....	18
1.6 Research Questions .....	22
1.7 Community Setting .....	22
1.8 Procedures .....	26
1.9 Outline of Thesis .....	28
1.10 References .....	29
Chapter 2 .....	31

2	Bilingualism in Mexico: The Case of Nahuatl.....	31
2.1	Introduction.....	31
2.2	Some Statistics on Nahuatl Language Usage.....	36
2.3	Methodology.....	39
2.3.1	Participants.....	39
2.3.2	Instrument.....	40
2.3.3	Data Analysis.....	42
2.4	Results.....	44
2.4.1	Home.....	44
2.4.2	Community.....	47
2.4.3	Emotions.....	50
2.5	Discussion and Conclusions.....	52
2.6	References.....	55
	Chapter 3.....	58
3	Bilingual Youth's Language Choices and Attitudes towards Nahuatl.....	58
3.1	Introduction.....	58
3.2	Previous Literature.....	59
3.3	Methodology.....	64
3.3.1	Research Setting.....	64
3.3.2	Instrument.....	65
3.3.3	Participants.....	68
3.4	Results and Discussion.....	70
3.5	Conclusions.....	83
3.6	References.....	84
	Chapter 4.....	88

4	Language Attitudes: Insights into Language Shift and Language Maintenance of Nahuatl .....	88
4.1	Background and Previous Literature .....	88
4.2	Methodology .....	98
4.2.1	Context of Study .....	98
4.2.2	Research Procedures .....	99
4.2.3	Instrument .....	100
4.2.4	Participants.....	102
4.3	Findings.....	103
4.3.1	Importance of Nahuatl .....	103
4.3.2	Necessity of Spanish .....	107
4.3.3	Nahuatl Language Shift .....	111
4.3.4	Language Maintenance .....	120
4.4	Conclusions.....	124
4.5	References.....	125
	Chapter 5.....	129
5	Family Language Policy: Language Attitudes and Language Practices of Nahuatl-Speaking Parents .....	129
5.1	Introduction.....	129
5.2	Previous Studies on Parental Attitudes in Indigenous Communities.....	133
5.3	Research Context .....	139
5.4	Methodology .....	145
5.5	Findings.....	146
5.5.1	Case studies.....	146
5.6	Conclusions.....	159
5.7	References.....	160
	Chapter 6.....	164

6	Conclusions .....	164
6.1	Summary of Main Research Findings.....	164
6.2	Implications for Nahuatl Vitality .....	169
6.3	Importance of the Research .....	170
6.4	Future Directions .....	171
	Appendices.....	173
	Curriculum Vitae .....	231

## List of Tables

Table 1.1 Linguistic varieties of Nahuatl and their level of risk .....	8
Table 2.1 External context of language use in Santiago Tlaxco .....	43
Table 3.1 Youth language use .....	71
Table 3.2 Young people's language attitudes towards Nahuatl and Spanish .....	74
Table 5.1 Profile of case study participants .....	145

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Linguistic families of Mexico .....	5
Figure 1.2 Proportion of Indigenous language speakers, aged 5 and older (1930-2015) .....	7
Figure 1.3 Náhuatl de la región nororiental .....	10
Figure 1.4 Satellite map of the municipality of Chiconcuautila .....	23
Figure 1.5 Croquis of Santiago Tlaxco .....	26
Figure 2.1 Distribution of the Nahuatl-speaking population by age group (1990-2010) .....	38
Figure 2.2 Gender of adult speakers .....	41
Figure 2.3 Age groups of adult population .....	41
Figure 2.4 First languages of adults .....	41
Figure 2.5 Type of speaker (adults) .....	41
Figure 2.6 Education (adults).....	41
Figure 2.7 Occupation (adults) .....	41
Figure 2.8 Language use at home by adults (in percentages).....	44
Figure 2.9 Use of Nahuatl at home by the two age groups (in percentages) .....	45
Figure 2.10 Spanish language use at home for the two age groups (in percentages) .....	46
Figure 2.11 Use of both languages at home for the two age groups (in percentages) .....	46
Figure 2.12 Language use in the community by adults (in percentages).....	47
Figure 2.13 Use of Spanish in the community by age groups (%) .....	48
Figure 2.14 Use of Nahuatl in the community by age groups (%) .....	49

Figure 2.15 Use of both languages in the community by age groups (%).....	49
Figure 2.16 Language use by adults in emotional states (%) .....	50
Figure 2.17 Use of both languages in emotional states by age groups (%).....	51
Figure 2.18 Use of Nahuatl in emotional states by age groups (%) .....	51
Figure 2.19 Use of Spanish in emotional states by age groups (%) .....	52
Figure 3.1 Characteristics of young people .....	69
Figure 3.2 Self-assessment of four language skills in Nahuatl.....	70
Figure 3.3 Self-assessment of four language skills in Spanish.....	70
Figure 4.1 Characteristics of adult interviewees.....	102
Figure 6.1 Connections between research questions and thesis chapters .....	164
Figure 6.2 Linguistic contexts of use for Nahuatl for youth and adults .....	165
Figure 6.3 Linguistic contexts of use for Spanish for youth and adults .....	166
Figure 6.4 Linguistic contexts of use for both languages for youth and adults .....	166

## List of Appendices

Appendix A: Adult Language Use in Santiago Tlaxco (Chapter 2) .....	173
Appendix B: Language Background Questionnaire (English Version).....	177
Appendix C: Language Background Questionnaire (Spanish Version) .....	179
Appendix D: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Adult (English Version) .....	181
Appendix E: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Adult (Spanish Version) .....	185
Appendix F: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Youth (English Version) .....	189
Appendix G: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Youth (Spanish Version) .....	193
Appendix H: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Adults (English Version).....	197
Appendix I: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Adults (Spanish Version).....	200
Appendix J: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Youth (English Version).....	203
Appendix K: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Youth (Spanish Version).....	206
Appendix L: Interview Guide (Short Form) (English Version).....	209
Appendix M: Interview Guide (Short Form) (Spanish Version) .....	211
Appendix N: Letter of Information and Consent (English Version) .....	213
Appendix O: Letter of Information and Consent (Spanish Version).....	216
Appendix P: Parent Letter of Information and Consent (English Version).....	219
Appendix Q: Parent Letter of Information and Consent (Spanish Version).....	222
Appendix R: Letter of Assent and Consent (English Version).....	225
Appendix S: Letter of Assent and Consent (Spanish Version).....	227



Appendix T: Ethics Approval (The University of Western Ontario) ..... 229

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDI: La Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas

CONAPO: El Consejo Nacional de Población

EGIDS: Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

GIDS: Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

INALI: El Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas

INEGI: El Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LVE: Language Vitality and Endangerment

TEP: Theory of Ecology of Pressures

UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## Chapter 1

### 1 Overview of Study

Following a statement of the aims and rationale of this project, this chapter describes the status of Indigenous languages in the national context, before focusing on Nahuatl. The theoretical framework and literature review are then provided, followed by a description of the community of Tlaxco, the research site, as well as the research procedures used.

#### 1.1 Aims and Rationale

This dissertation examines language practices and attitudes towards Nahuatl in the community of Santiago Tlaxco based on fieldwork conducted from September to November in 2019. Arriving in the community, I drew on my previous research on Indigenous languages, a research interest which began in Canada, and my lived experience growing up in multilingual Ghana. The primary objective of this thesis is to study the vitality of the Nahuatl language in this community, with two major aims:

- I. to explore the linguistic patterns of use in the community
- II. to investigate the prevailing language attitudes which favour or deter the language shift of Nahuatl to Spanish, the dominant language of the region.

This is the first sociolinguistic project in Santiago Tlaxco, providing novel information about the current language use and attitudes in the face of the global trend of language endangerment. This project investigates the complex interplay between positive and negative attitudes towards this Indigenous language by its speakers after decades of urbanization, migration and modernization in Mexico. It also allows a valuable

comparative analysis of the linguistic situation in Santiago Tlaxco with that in other Nahuatl communities. Furthermore, it contributes to our knowledge about Nahuatl language shift and maintenance in Mexico. The implications of the study also extend beyond Mexico as it joins the international body of work on Indigenous languages. There is a growing recognition internationally that language rights are also part of Indigenous rights, especially after many nations including Canada, the United States of America, Mexico and Colombia have a history of trying to erase Indigenous languages with the excuse of modernizing Indigenous populations or integrating them in mainstream society. Hence, the adoption of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007) by the General Assembly of the United Nations was a welcome development. While the UNDRIP resolution is non-binding, it raises awareness at a multinational level that language rights are a key aspect of Indigenous human rights. Bolivia is one of the few Spanish-speaking countries that has adopted this declaration in their constitution. Its 2009 Constitution recognizes all 36 Indigenous languages as national languages along with Spanish and stipulates that government officials should have working knowledge of at least two languages. While language policy does not always ensure the survival or maintenance of Indigenous languages, especially when its implementation is flawed, it is still an important step in garnering institutional support for Indigenous languages.

The vitality of Indigenous languages, such as Nahuatl, is not only a topic of interest to governmental and non-governmental organizations but also for community members and activists, and academics such as linguists and researchers. It is important to understand the use of Indigenous languages and the attitudes towards them, especially at a time when

many of the world's languages are endangered. Language endangerment, "the en masse, often radical shift away from unique, local languages and language practices, even as they may still be perceived as key emblems of community identity", is a widespread phenomenon which adversely affects many Indigenous languages (Woodbury, 2011, p. 160). Linguists estimate that at least half of the world's 7,000 languages will be endangered in a few generations, as they are no longer being spoken as first languages (Hale et al. 1992; Austin & Sallabank 2011). Speakers of these threatened minoritized languages face enormous pressure to switch to the dominant languages because of the numerous social, cultural and political advantages that the latter have. Other factors that lead to language endangerment include natural disasters, war, genocide and repressive assimilation policies (Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Crystal, 2000).

Preventing or reversing the endangerment of languages is important because their loss represents a loss of immense intellectual, philosophical, ecological, and cultural wealth, as well as aesthetic and artistic beauty. For some Indigenous people, losing their language is synonymous to losing their self, as they consider their languages to be a vital part of their identity and personal makeup. Ensuring the survival or maintenance of endangered languages, especially Indigenous languages, is a matter of human rights, which should be supported universally as noted in the UNDRIP. In the context of Mexico, several policies and laws have been adopted to protect the linguistic rights of Indigenous populations. For example, after a series of events which brought Indigenous issues to the fore, especially the Zapatista Movement which started in 1994, the government passed the 2003 General Law for the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous People, which recognized Indigenous languages as national languages. This Law also created the National Institute of

Indigenous Languages (*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* [INALI]), whose main aims are to promote, maintain and develop Indigenous languages. Earlier, in 2001, in its modified Constitution, Mexico recognized Indigenous peoples as an integral part of its multicultural makeup or identity. Two years later, the Government passed the Federal Law for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination (*Ley Federal para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación*) which forbids discrimination on any grounds including one's ethnicity.

## 1.2 Status of Indigenous Languages in Mexico

Out of Mexico's total population of about 120 million people, 21.5% (25.7 million people) self-identify as Indigenous based on an association with the traditions, culture and history, 1.6% self-identify as partly Indigenous, and 74.7% self-identify as non-Indigenous. However, only 6.2% (7.2 million people, aged 5 and older) speak an Indigenous language (INEGI [Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática], 2015; CONAPO [Consejo Nacional de Población], 2016; Rizo Amézquita, 2017).

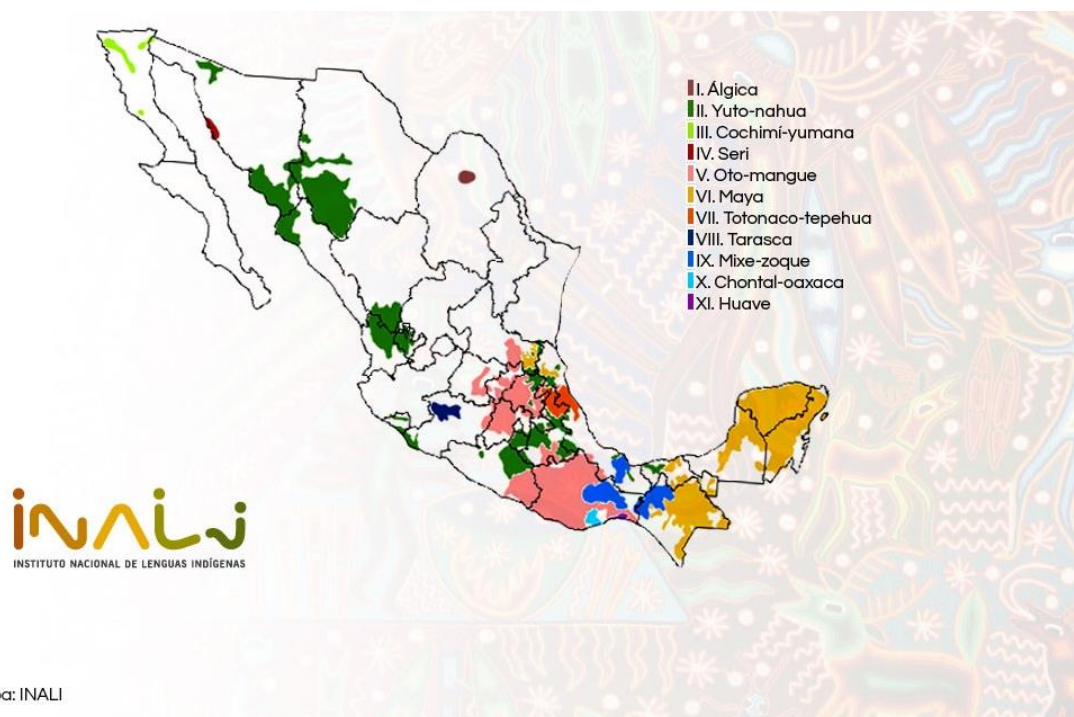
Mexico has 68 Indigenous languages, with 364 varieties, belonging to 11 Indo-American linguistic families (INALI, 2009):

- I. Álgica (1 language, 1 variety)
- II. Chontal de Oaxaca (1 language, 3 varieties)
- III. Cochimí-Yumana (5 languages, 5 varieties)
- IV. Huave (1 language, 2 varieties)
- V. Maya (20 languages, 43 varieties)
- VI. Mixe-zoque (7 languages, 19 varieties)
- VII. Oto-mangue (18 languages, 220 varieties)

- VIII. Seri (1 language, 1 variety)
- IX. Tarasca or Purepecha (1 language, 1 variety)
- X. Totonaco-Tepehua (2 languages, 10 varieties)
- XI. Yuto-nahua (11 languages, 59 varieties)

Figure 1.1 shows the geographical distribution of these 11 linguistic families. Of the 364 language varieties in Mexico, 64 are in critical danger of disappearing, 43 are in severe danger, 73 are at medium risk and the remaining 185 are not in immediate danger (INALI, 2012). No Indigenous language is used at an institutional level (i.e. official or governmental level) in Mexico, that is, none is used and maintained by institutions outside the home and community (Eberhard et al., 2020).

**Figure 1.1 Linguistic families of Mexico**



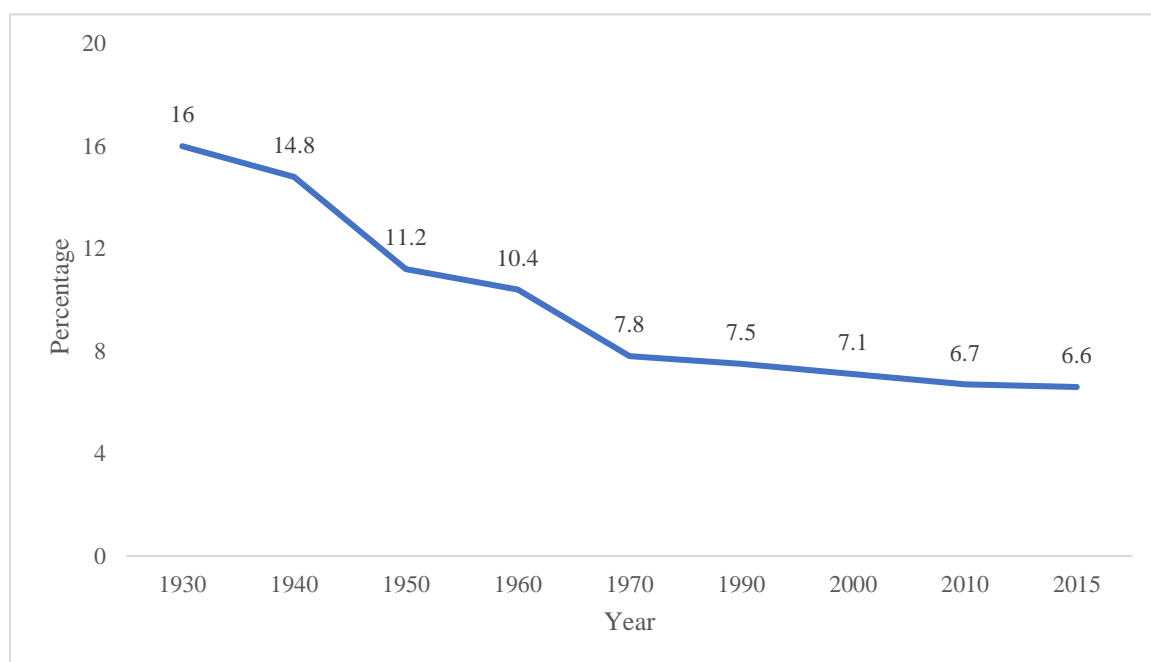
Mapa: INALI

*Note.* Classification by INALI (2009). Figure taken from <http://ciencia.unam.mx/uploads/textos/imagenes/ano-lenguas-indigenas-14-12-18-2.jpg>

According to the 2010 population census by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI] in Spanish), most Indigenous speakers are concentrated in the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas, which each have over a million speakers, followed by Veracruz, Puebla and Yucatan with over 500,000 speakers each. Over an 85-year period, there has been a downward trend in the proportion of Indigenous speakers compared to the national population: the proportion of speakers fell from 16% in 1930 to 6.6% in 2015 (Figure 1.2). Of the 68 languages, Nahuatl has the most speakers (about 1.5 million), followed by Maya with about 786,000 speakers. Mixtec languages, Zapotec languages, Tzeltal or Tseltal, and Tzotzil or Tsotsil, each have at least 400,000 speakers. The languages with the highest proportion of monolingual speakers are Tzeltal and Tzotzil at 30%, while only 7% of Nahuatl speakers are monolingual (INEGI, 2015).



**Figure 1.2 Proportion of Indigenous language speakers, aged 5 and older (1930-2015)**



### 1.3 Nahuatl Language in Mexico

Nahuatl has 30 varieties and most of the speakers of Nahuatl are found in the states of Puebla, Hidalgo, Guerrero, San Luis Potosi, and Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave (INEGI, 2015). Similar to other Indigenous languages, the number of Nahuatl speakers has not kept pace with the growth rate of the national population. According to the classification of INALI (2012), about half of its varieties are at immediate risk of disappearing. The variety spoken in Santiago Tlaxco, our community of study, is the Northern Puebla variety (ISO 639-3 [ncj]), and it is not considered to be endangered (Valiñas, 2019). This variety, also known as *náhuatl del noreste central*, *mexi'catl* or *maseual tla'tol*, is spoken in the Acaxochitlán municipality in the state of Hidalgo, and 11 municipalities in Puebla, namely Chiconcua, Honey, Huauchinango, Jopala, Juan Galindo, Naupan, Pahuatlán, Tlaola, Tlapacoya, Xicotepec and Zihuateutla (Valiñas, 2019). According to

Ethnologue's classification, it is in vigorous use, meaning that it has speakers in all generations who use it in a sustained manner; however, there is no standardized literature for this variety. Approximately 83% of the population in Santiago Tlaxco, aged 5 and older, speak Nahuatl, while 76% of the total population are bilinguals, who speak both Nahuatl and Spanish (INEGI, 2010).

Nahuatl belongs to the Uto-Aztecan (Yuto-nahua) linguistic family, with six main branches or subdivisions, namely Náhuatl del occidente, Náhuatl del centro, Náhuatl del sur, Náhuatl del oriente, Náhuatl de la región nororiental, and Náhuatl de la Huasteca (Valiñas, 2019). Table 1.1 shows the different varieties of these subdivisions and their level of risk of endangerment. Valiñas (2019) based his classification on three different sources: Ethnologue, UNESCO and INALI.

**Table 1.1 Linguistic varieties of Nahuatl and their level of risk**

Nahuatl subfamily	Linguistic varieties and their status
Náhuatl del occidente	náhuatl alto del norte de Puebla (high risk); náhuatl o mexicano del noreste central (no risk); náhuatl de la sierra oeste de Puebla (no immediate risk); náhuatl de la sierra noreste de Puebla (no immediate risk); mexicano del oriente central (no immediate risk); mexicano del oriente de Puebla (high risk)
Náhuatl del centro	mexicano del centro de Puebla (no immediate risk); mexicano del centro alto (very high risk); mexicano central bajo (medium risk); mexicano de Temixco (medium risk); mexicano de Puente de Ixtla (very high risk); mexicano de Tetela del Volcán (high risk); mexicano del centro (high risk); náhuatl del centro bajo (high risk); mexicano de Guerrero (no risk); náhuatl de Ometepepec (unstable); náhuatl de Guerrero (vigorous); náhuatl de Coatepec (unstable); náhuatl de Tlamacazapa (threatened)
Náhuatl del sur	náhuatl del Istmo-Cosoleacaque (extinct);

	náhuatl del Istmo-Mecapayan (safe); náhuatl del Istmo-Pajapan (threatened); náhuatl o mexicano del Istmo bajo (no immediate risk); mexicano del oriente o náhuatl de Tabasco (very high risk)
Náhuatl del oriente	náhuatl o mexicano central de Veracruz (no immediate risk); mexicano o náhuatl o mexicatl de la Sierra Negra norte (no immediate risk); mexicano o náhuatl de la Sierra Negra sur (medium risk); náhuatl o mexicano de Oaxaca (no immediate risk)
Náhuatl de la región nororiental	náhuatl alto del norte de Puebla (high risk); náhuatl o mexicano del noreste central (no risk); náhuatl de la sierra oeste de Puebla (no immediate risk); náhuatl de la sierra noreste de Puebla (no immediate risk); mexicano del oriente central (no immediate risk); mexicano del oriente de Puebla (high risk)
Náhuatl de la Huasteca	náhuatl o mexicano de la Huasteca veracruzana (no risk); náhuatl o mexicano de la Huasteca potosina (no risk); mexicano de la Huasteca hidalguense (no risk)

*Note.* Source: Valiñas (2019) [names of Nahuatl varieties in Spanish]

From Table 1.1, it can be observed that the North Puebla variety (*náhuatl o mexicano del noreste central*) is one of the 6 linguistic varieties of the subfamily of *náhuatl de la región nororiental*. Figure 1.3 shows the regions of Mexico where these 6 linguistic varieties are spoken, namely the northern part of Puebla and the southern part of the state of Tlaxcala.

**Figure 1.3 Náhuatl de la región nororiental**



Note. Source: Arqueología Mexicana (2019). Image accessed from

<https://arqueologiamexicana.mx/sites/default/files/styles/arq1200x600/public/nahuatl-de-la-region-nororiental.jpg?itok=vPL7o-9T>

## 1.4 Theoretical Framework

### 1.4.1 Language Shift and Language Maintenance

The topics of language shift and language maintenance are closely related to the fields of language endangerment and language vitality. Language maintenance is the “continued

use or retention of an L1 [first language], a minority or heritage language in one or more spheres of language use” while language shift is the “process in which a language is gradually replaced by another language, often labelled L2 [second language], dominant language or majority language, in all spheres of usage” (Pauwels, 2016, p. 20).

In Tlaxco, our community of interest, Nahuatl is the first language of most residents and it is also a minoritized language, while Spanish is the second, and the majority language. Language shift is considered to be both a process, occurring over one or more generations and/or across different domains of use, and an outcome, when the language is no longer spoken (Pauwels, 2016). Most language shift studies focus on the outcome rather than the process since the latter cannot be easily assessed. Speakers face both negative and positive pressures to use their language(s); the relative effect of such pressures can lead to either endangerment or maintenance of their language(s) (Terborg & García Landa 2011, 2013). UNESCO (2003) differentiates between internal and external pressures resulting in language endangerment. An example of an internal negative pressure is the presence of negative attitudes held by community members towards their own language, while external negative pressures could arise from cultural, religious, economic, educational or military forces. Both types of negative pressure could act in concert in any given linguistic situation resulting in decreased use of L1, especially in language contact situations where the minoritized language may be perceived as a liability or a social disadvantage by its speakers. Speakers may choose to shift to another language for multiple reasons including “overcoming discrimination, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to assimilate to the global marketplace” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 2). The causes of language endangerment are complex, and many possible reasons have

been posited including lack of intergenerational transmission, community members' lack of affinity with the language, use in limited domains, lack of new domains, oppressive assimilationist policies, declining number of speakers, and lack of literacy in the language (INALI, 2012).

## 1.4.2 Language Vitality

Research on language endangerment has examined questions and themes such as why speakers stop transmitting their language, the factors causing language endangerment, how to assess the vitality of a language, the importance of maintaining or saving a language, and how to combat language endangerment (Crystal 2000, Nettle & Romaine 2000, Hale et al. 1992). There have been several scales of vitality designed to assess language endangerment and predict language shift based on certain factors. Among these scales, the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (Fishman, 1991), the Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework (UNESCO, 2003), and the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) (Lewis & Simons, 2010) stand out globally. In the Mexican context, INALI's classification and the Theory of Ecology of Pressures (TEP) framework (Terborg, 2006; Terborg & García Landa, 2011) are most pertinent. All these measurements underline the importance of passing on one's language to the younger generation.

### 1.4.2.1 Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)

The GIDS has eight stages and it assesses the vitality of a language based on intergenerational transmission and the presence of the language in the spheres of home, school, community, government, mass media, and work. In the framework, *Xmen* refers to members of the minority language, *Ymen* refers to members of the majority language,

*Xish* is the minority language, *Yish* is the majority language and XSL is *Xish* as a second language. At stage 8, most of the remaining speakers of *Xish* are old and socially isolated. Proponents of reversing language shift, linguists, and folklorists attempt to preserve the language and culture of *Xish* by re-assembling and documenting the speech of the remaining speakers. At stage 7, most of the speakers of *Xish* are socially integrated but cannot contribute demographically because they are beyond child-bearing age. Their impact can be felt socially through their involvement in *Xish* activities involving youth. At stage 6, the *Xish* community attains intergenerational informal transmission, and this is considered the most crucial stage by Fishman (1991, p. 92). At stage 5, *Xish* is used in the home, schools, and community without compulsion. At stage 4, *Xish* is used in lower levels of education and this fulfils compulsory education requirements and laws. Type 4a schools are under the control of the *Xish* community, whereas Type 4b schools are largely dependent on *Yish*-controlled funds and administration. At stage 3, *Xish* is used in the lower work sphere (external to the minority language community) where speakers of *Xish* and *Yish* interact. At stage 2, *Xish* is used in lower spheres of mass media and government. At stage 1, there is some usage of *Xish* in higher spheres of government, mass media, education, and work. In this framework, intergenerational transmission is the most critical factor for language vitality.

#### 1.4.2.2 Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework

The UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (UNESCO 2003 [Brenzinger et al. 2003]) proposed the Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) scale, with six degrees of endangerment, namely, extinct (6), critically endangered (5), severely endangered (4), definitely endangered (3), vulnerable (2), and safe (1). This assessment

was based on 9 factors (p. 17), namely intergenerational transmission, absolute number of speakers, proportion of speakers within the total population, trends in existing language domains, response to new domains and media, materials for language education and literacy, governmental and institutional language policies (including official status and use), community members' attitudes toward their own language, and finally the amount and quality of documentation.

The most important factor for this scale is intergenerational transmission, hence a language is considered safe if there is no disruption in its transmission across all generations. A language is considered still vulnerable even if it is spoken by most children because its use is restricted to specific domains. A definitely endangered language is no longer being learned by children as a first language at home. With regards to a severely endangered language, the use of the language is vigorous among the grandparent and older generations but is restricted among the parent generation. A language is considered critically endangered when the grandparent and older generations are the remaining speakers and their language use is partial and infrequent at best. The last level of endangerment on the LVE scale is an extinct language, one with no speakers.

#### **1.4.2.3 Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS)**

Lewis and Simon (2010) developed the Expanded GIDS (EGIDS), a 13-level scale currently used by Ethnologue to classify the health of languages, from the perspective of language revitalisation, not language loss. The EGIDS, an adaptation of Fishman's GIDS, is a synthesis of UNESCO's LVE, Fishman's GIDS, and Ethnologue's five-level scale.



This previously used five-level scale of Ethnologue centred primarily on the number of first language speakers. The 5 categories (Lewis, 2009) were extinct (no speakers left), dormant (no speakers left but strong ethnic identity with the language), nearly extinct (very small number of speakers), second language only, and living (majority of the population are first-language speakers). The EGIDS assesses the vitality of a language based on 5 main questions. The first question is about the current identity function of a language and the possible answers are historical, heritage, home, and vehicular functions. The second question concerns the official use of a language, be it international, national, regional, and not official. Question 3 asks whether intergenerational transmission occurs at home. Question 4 enquires about the literary status of a language, such as whether it is at an institutional or incipient level or it has no literary status. Question 5, closely related to question 3, seeks to identify who the youngest generation of speakers are: great grandparents, grandparents, parents or children. The 13 levels of language vitality (from the highest to the lowest vitality) are international (0), national (1), regional (2), trade (3), educational (4), written (5), vigorous (6a), threatened (6b), shifting (7), moribund (8a), nearly extinct (8b), dormant (9), and extinct (10). The factors of EGIDS emphasize language use, particularly the speakers and functions of the language (Eberhard et al. 2020) and are outlined as:

- I. the speaker population
- II. the ethnic population; the number of those who connect their ethnic identity with the language (whether or not they speak the language)
- III. the stability of and trends in that population size
- IV. residency and migration patterns of speakers

- V. an estimate of when the last speaker died (in the case of extinct languages)
- VI. the use of second languages
- VII. the use of the language by others as a second language
- VIII. language attitudes within the community
- IX. the age range of the speakers
- X. the domains of use of the language
- XI. official recognition of languages within the nation or region
- XII. means of transmission (whether children are learning the language at home or being taught the language in schools)
- XIII. non-linguistic factors such as economic opportunity or the lack thereof

#### 1.4.2.4 INALI classification

The National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) of Mexico has identified four levels of risk of endangerment facing languages and their linguist varieties, namely very high (critically endangered), high (severely endangered), medium (vulnerable) and not immediate (enduring) based on three indicators: total number of speakers, number of younger speakers, and geographical distribution of the language.

In the INALI classification, a linguistic variety is considered critically endangered if its speaker population represents less than 30% of the linguistic communities where it is spoken. A language is severely endangered if its younger speaker population is less than 25% of the total speaker population. For a vulnerable language, the total speaker population represents over 30% of its communities, of which the younger speakers are more than 25% of the total speaker population. In this classification, an enduring language is spoken in more than one locality where the total speaker population

represents over 30% of the total population, of which more than 25% are younger speakers.

#### 1.4.2.5 Theory of Ecology of Pressures (TEP)

The TEP framework (Terborg, 2006; Terborg & García Landa, 2013) identifies factors which favour or deter language maintenance, especially those mentioned in LVE. It focuses primarily on the proportion of speakers within the total population and their language practices, in order to determine the preferred language of communication in a community. It also considers three additional factors of LVE, namely, intergenerational transmission, trends in existing language domains, and community members' attitudes toward their own language. TEP has its foundations in the field of linguistic ecology, which is defined as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (Haugen, 1972, p. 325). This suggests that linguistic interactions are dynamic in a given environment. Hence, the central idea of TEP is that speakers in a linguistic contact situation experience different pressures that drive them to undertake a particular linguistic or communicative action in choosing one language over the other. These pressures result from two main factors: their own interests, and their environment or the sociolinguistic context. Their interests may arise from their needs, attitudes or beliefs, and values. Their environment shapes and is shaped by the bi/multilingual situation, the speaker's proficiency, their interactions with other interlocutors, and the motivations or pressures driving their language choices. Previous research using TEP in Mexico have found that a lack of intergenerational transmission, negative attitudes, limited use, and a preference for Spanish in all linguistic domains to be detrimental to the maintenance of Indigenous languages (Terborg, 2006; Terborg & García Landa, 2013).

These results are similar to those reported by INALI (2012) on the causes of language shift in Mexico.

## 1.5 Previous Studies on Nahuatl Vitality

One of the most important studies on the vitality of Nahuatl (Mexicano) was Hill and Hill's (1986) seminal work on the sociolinguistic situation of the 11 Nahuatl-speaking towns in the Malinche/Malintzi region of Tlaxcala-Puebla in Central Mexico. In interviews with 96 speakers, the investigators revealed the language patterns and prevailing attitudes in these communities. They found a diglossic situation where Spanish was the functional language in public, impersonal, formal and official domains and Nahuatl was preferred for informal and domestic domains, emotional attachment and kinship ties. While proficiency in Spanish opened the possibility of a salaried job, Nahuatl represented access to community membership. Speakers valued bilingualism and did not want Nahuatl to disappear. However, with the existence of bilingualism came linguistic insecurity in the two languages. Speakers felt insecure about their Spanish skills, even those who considered themselves bilingual in the language. Furthermore, participants thought that the legitimate or most original Nahuatl was spoken in the past because, in present times, people tended to mix it with Spanish. Persons most critical of language mixing tended to be middle-aged men and they usually aimed their criticism at younger speakers of the language. While purism can sometimes positively impact language maintenance efforts of Indigenous languages if there is an interest in them, Hill and Hill (1986) recognised that it could impede language survival efforts, especially when Nahuatl was seen as a language of "little economic utility" and "many people question [its] instrumental value" (p. 140). This extensive study was not only influential

for the general field of language vitality, but it has also spurred other researchers to conduct similar studies in Nahuatl-speaking areas.

Two such studies were performed by Messing (2007, 2009) about two decades later in the same Malintzi region in Tlaxcala (Central Mexico), focusing on the two towns of Contla and San Isidro. Using an ethnographic and discourse analysis approach, she reported on the three main competing discourses informing language use of Spanish and Nahuatl among adults and youth. They were *salir adelante*, about the need to use Spanish to forge ahead socioeconomically; *menosprecio*, concerning the devaluation of one's Indigenous identity and wanting its erasure; and *pro-indígena*, a pro-Indigenous attitude which embraces one's Indigeneity. She also identified purist attitudes towards Nahuatl as described by Hill and Hill (1986). Adults were nostalgic about the legitimate Nahuatl spoken in the past and were less likely to transmit the 'mixed' or syncretic version they spoke today. Both studies portrayed the attitudes and beliefs about Nahuatl which could hinder the language maintenance of this language.

Other studies (Mojica Lagunas, 2019; Hansen, 2016; Hill, 1998) have focused on the use of Nahuatl in the home context or its intergenerational transmission. Mojica Lagunas (2019) examined the circumstances surrounding Nahuatl language shift in Coatepec de los Coasteles in Guerrero. Through interviews, archival analysis and participant observation, this study described the importance of elders, who are referred to as the key holders in maintaining Nahuatl in the community. Whenever elders attended events, conversations would switch from Spanish to Nahuatl, out of respect for them. This respect for elders also meant that the youth were reluctant to speak Nahuatl until they were older and more responsible, although they believed the language was beautiful and

sacred. Other youth reported being embarrassed to speak Nahuatl in front of elders for fear of being mocked by the latter for their lack of fluency, but they felt comfortable to use it with their peers. Elders interpreted the youth's reluctance to speak the language as a sign that they're ashamed of their language. One of the major factors influencing the language shift was economical, as Spanish was associated with success, revenue and better living conditions. In educational contexts such as preschool where Indigenous learning was supported, the lack of materials in Nahuatl was a major obstacle. Having teachers who spoke a different variety of Nahuatl was also a problem. Mojica Lagunas (2019) concluded there was a need to involve elders or grandparents in the school and community learning process since they were at the forefront of Nahuatl transmission at home.

The importance of elders in fostering language maintenance was also highlighted in Hill's (1998) case study on Don Francisco Márquez, an 85-year-old monolingual speaker of Nahuatl from La Resurrección Tepetitlán, Puebla. In this community, monolingualism in Nahuatl was seen as a problem or some form of retardation, which could affect one's economic and political prospects. Don Francisco successfully transmitted his conservative Nahuatl to his 43-year-old son and 19-year-old grandson, who in spite of being fluent in Spanish, also spoke Nahuatl as well as monolinguals. They exhibited fewer Spanish loanwords and infrequent code-switching, characteristics different from other Nahuatl speakers in their generation. Additionally, they exhibited speech characteristics in Nahuatl which resembled those of older generations. Hill (1998) concluded that the example of Don Francisco could be emulated by language maintenance programs whose aims are for younger generations to speak like fluent

speakers, especially in communities nostalgic about the old, original or ‘legitimate’ way of speaking Nahuatl.

Also focusing on the home context, Hansen (2016) reviewed the impact of intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl (or lack thereof) in the lives of two families, one from Hueyapan, Morelos, and the other from Tlaquilpa, Veracruz. Using two adult children as a case study, 30-year-old Ana and 17-year-old Feliciano, he documented how not speaking Nahuatl decreased opportunities for one, while speaking Nahuatl presented obstacles for the other. While both had Nahuatl-speaking parents, Ana could not speak Nahuatl because she grew up in a mostly Spanish-speaking household. Not being able to speak Nahuatl decreased her chances of gaining economic support for her small-scale enterprise from an Indigenous organization. This experience impacted her so much that she transformed to become Indigenous in her appearance, wearing Indigenous outfits and no longer dying her hair blonde. She also started learning Nahuatl. Feliciano grew up speaking Nahuatl and had Nahuatl-speaking teachers at her primary school, but she struggled in her junior high school where Spanish was the language of instruction as she was not proficient in that language. Being mocked by her schoolmates did not help matters and she did not continue her education. For her, Nahuatl had become an obstacle to achieving higher levels of education and pursuing a life outside the community. The lived experiences of Ana and Feliciano, together with the constraints of social realities (i.e. access to Indigenous resources for Ana and Spanish-dominant educational system), would likely inform their own language policies in the future.

All studies in this literature review resonate or align with the present dissertation thematically as they explore the circumstances or factors that contribute to Nahuatl

language shift and maintenance. From Hill and Hill's study (1986) some 35 years ago to Mojica Lagunas' more recent study (2019), similar issues confronting the vitality of Nahuatl were identified, as communities navigated competing discourses such as developmentalist, pro-Indigeneity, and denigration, which may have informed their language choices. The present study contributes much-needed knowledge on Nahuatl language vitality by providing novel data on a different Nahuatl-speaking community, Santiago Tlaxco. Secondly, it goes beyond descriptions of Nahuatl use in linguistic domains as seen in previous studies and provides quantitative data, allowing for comparative studies in the future.

## 1.6 Research Questions

The research questions for this study can be broadly stated as:

- I. What are the linguistic patterns of use in the community of Santiago Tlaxco?
- II. What are the prevailing language attitudes which favour or deter the language shift of Nahuatl to Spanish, the dominant language in the region?

## 1.7 Community Setting

Tlaxco (the preferred name for Santiago Tlaxco) is a bilingual Nahuatl- and Spanish-speaking rural town located in the municipality of Chiconcuautla in the state of Puebla. On official websites, the community is designated as 'Tlaxco (Santiago Tlaxco)' to differentiate it from another Tlaxco, a municipality in the state of Tlaxcala.





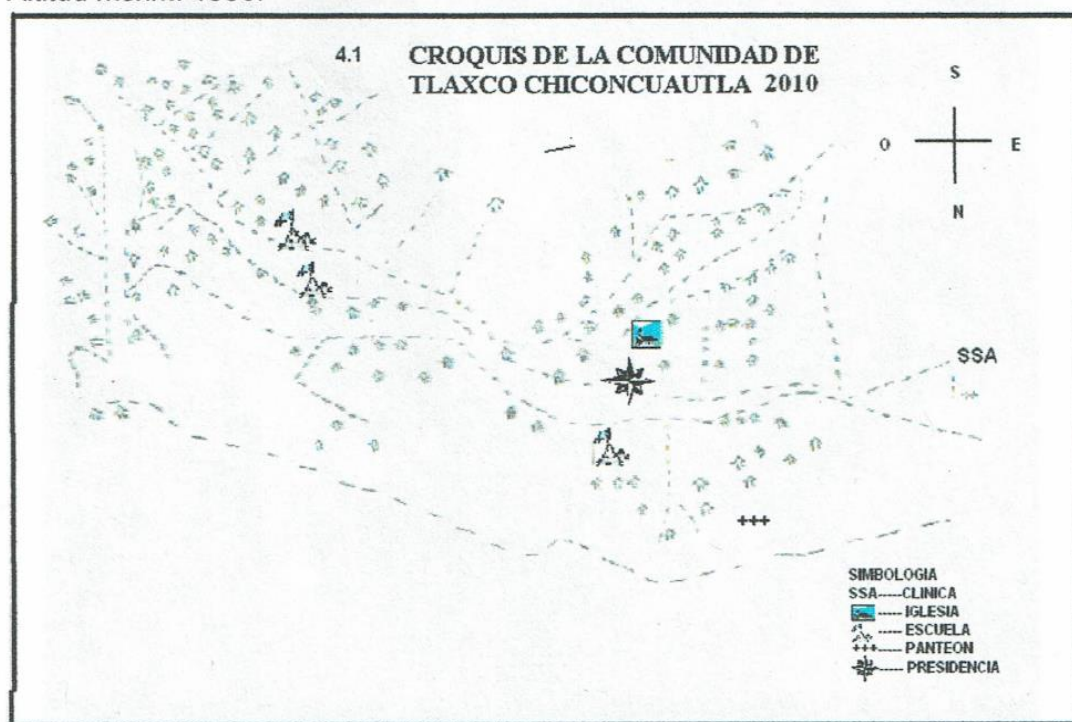
The sociodemographic characteristics of the municipality of Chiconcuautila (INEGI, 2011) are presented as they are anticipated to provide a good representation of those for Tlaxco. Chiconcuautila has a relatively young population, with half of the population being 17 years of age or younger. The main economic activity is agriculture, and 52.6% of the population aged 12 and older are economically active. Less than 1% of the 3,416 households have internet, 6.7% have telephones, 1.7% have cellphones and 0.4% have computers (INEGI, 2011). Of the general population aged 15 and older, 33.3% have no formal education, 59.2% have completed basic education, 5.5% have some form of (or completed) junior high level of schooling (*media superior*), 0.8% have some form of (or completed) senior high school (*superior*), and 0.2% did not specify or indicate their level of education. Approximately 87% of the population aged 15–24 is literate compared to 49% of those aged 25 and older. Most of the population are Catholics (88%), compared to 10% who are Pentecostals, Evangelicals and other Christian denominations. About 70% of the population speak Nahuatl, with 14% of them being monolingual speakers. These sociodemographic details paint a picture of a rural municipality, with little technological access, and which ranks high on the marginalisation index.

Tlaxco is considered one of the main towns out of the 24 in Chiconcuautila. Its population of 1,695 people makes it the third largest after Chiconcuautila (3,332) and San Lorenzo Tlaxipehuala (1,966). The closest town to Tlaxco is Toxtla, which is within walking distance (Figure 1.4). Both towns share a clinic. The medical staff includes a physician, a trainee physician, a nurse, two trainee nurses, a health promoter and a dentist on contract with the municipality. All information on Tlaxco was gathered from a health report on Tlaxco and Toxtla (Gómez Arellano, 2018) that the resident physician shared with me.

Tlaxco has a preschool and 3 schools, from primary to senior high levels. The preschool, Pre-escolar “Tonaltzintle”, has 3 teachers and 104 pupils while the primary school, Primaria Mariano Escobedo, has 12 teachers and 288 students. While both schools are designated as bilingual and intercultural schools, Spanish is primarily the language of instruction. Additionally, the Nahuatl-speaking teachers speak a different variety from that of the community. The junior high school, Telesecundaria “Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez”, has 3 teachers and 143 students. The senior high school, Bachillerato General Oficial “Ignacio López Rayón” has 5 teachers and 70 students (information collected from the management of the school). Tlaxco is situated about 8 km from the municipality of Chiconcuautla, about 50 km from the municipality/city of Huauchinango and about 30 km from the municipality/city of Zacatlan. In addition to private vehicles, there are frequent commercial minibuses that provide service from Tlaxco to Zacatlan or Mexico City. The main sources of mass media are radio and television, both broadcasting only in Spanish. While there is no cellular network access, there is an internet café where people can browse the internet and also purchase time slots or codes to use the internet on their phones and laptop computers in the comfort of their homes. Internet access is also available in the schools. The main economic activity is agriculture, with frequent migration to large cities such as Mexico City and Puebla to work in construction, carpentry and crop harvesting. There are several Christian denominations such as Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and Seventh Day Adventists, with most people being Catholics. The community is administered by a *presidente*, an auxiliary of the municipal president. The croquis (Figure 1.5) shows some landmarks of the community: the clinic

(*clínica*), Catholic Church (*iglesia*), primary school (*escuela*), graveyard (*panteón*), and the office of the *presidente* (*presidencia*).

**Figure 1.5 Croquis of Santiago Tlaxco**



*Note.* Image taken from Gómez Arellano (2018)

## 1.8 Procedures

The study was undertaken during my research stay at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City from September to November in 2019. Ethical approval was granted by the Office of Human Research of the University of Western Ontario and can be found in the Appendices section of this dissertation. The study adopted a mixed methodology, benefitting from both quantitative and qualitative approaches, supplemented by participant observation to triangulate the data.

The quantitative part of the research was conducted by means of language-background and language-use-and-attitude questionnaires. The language-background questionnaire provided information on the linguistic history and self-assessment of language skills in Nahuatl and Spanish. The language-use-and-attitude questionnaire was used to collect information about four main areas: a) individual language use at home, in the community and for expressing emotions; b) societal language use in public places; c) language attitudes; and d) affective evaluations of Nahuatl and Spanish. The questionnaires were administered in both oral and written formats in Spanish but only in an oral format for Nahuatl. They were adapted for both adults and students (see Appendices for the versions in Spanish and English).

The qualitative research was conducted through interviews, which were conducted in either Nahuatl or Spanish and broadly covered topics such as language maintenance, language shift, language practices and language attitudes (see Appendices for the interview guide in both Spanish and English). Furthermore, the data from the survey and interviews were complemented by my observational data. Living in the community allowed me to observe language use in many contexts in the community including at home, shops or market, office of the mayor, places of worship, workplaces, streets, the clinic, and schools.

The data for this dissertation were collected from 142 participants: 80 were adults and 62 were adolescents. All completed language-background and language-use-and-attitude questionnaires. Of the participants, 52 adults and 3 adolescents participated in the interview. Most of the questionnaires and interviews were administered by two research assistants, who were native speakers of Nahuatl from the community. I only administered

questionnaires and interviews in Spanish. Two Nahuatl-Spanish translators from the community transcribed all Nahuatl and Spanish interviews, and also translated the Nahuatl interviews into Spanish. The study took place in four locations; in my place of residence/office in the community, the homes of participants, their place of work, and a neutral public space.

Based on the integrated-article format of this thesis, Chapters 2 to 5 are each focused on a particular research topic and they include the relevant research instruments that were used. For example, Chapter 2 only reports on part A of the language-use-and-attitude questionnaire for the 80 adult participants while Chapter 3 reports on parts A and C of the language-use-and-attitude questionnaire and interviews of young people. Chapters 4 and 5 mainly draw from the interview data.

## 1.9 Outline of Thesis

This six-chaptered thesis adopts the integrated-article format. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the study, including the theoretical framework and literature review.

Chapters 2 to 5, which are presented as stand-alone articles, are the principal chapters of the thesis. Chapter 2 investigates the language practices of adults while Chapter 3 explores the language choices and attitudes of bilingual youth in the community of Tlaxco. Chapter 4 examines the language attitudes of adults towards Nahuatl, and Chapter 5 reviews the family language policy of community members. Chapter 6 summarizes the main findings and contains the conclusions of the thesis.

## 1.10 References

- Austin, P. K. & Sallabank, J. (2011). Introduction. In P. K. Austin & J. Sallabank (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages* (pp. 1-24). Cambridge University Press.
- CONAPO (El Consejo Nacional de Población) (2016). *Infografía de la población indígena, 2015*. CONAPO. <https://www.gob.mx/conapo/documentos/infografia-de-la-poblacion-indigena-2015>
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge University Press.
- Eberhard, D. M., G. F. Simons, and C. D. Fennig (eds.). 2020. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world. Twenty-third edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Gómez Arellano, C. (2018). *Servicios de Salud del estado de Puebla. Diagnóstico de Salud 2018*. Centro de Salud, Tlaxco, Chiconcuautla.
- Hale, K., Krauss, M., Watahomigie, L. J., Yamamoto, A. Y., Craig, C., Jeanne, L. M., & England, N. C. (1992). Endangered languages. *Language*, 68(1), 1-42.
- Hansen, M. P. (2016). The difference language makes: The life-history of Nahuatl in two Mexican families. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 26(1), 81-97.
- Haugen, E. (1972). *The ecology of language; essays by Einar Haugen*. Stanford University Press.
- Hill, J. H. (1998). Don Francisco Marquez survives: A meditation on monolingualism. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 132, 167-182.
- Hill, J. H. & Hill, K. C. (1986). *Speaking Mexicano: Dynamics of syncretic language in central Mexico*. The University of Arizona Press.
- INALI (Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas) (2009). *Catálogo de las lenguas indígenas nacionales. Variantes lingüísticas de México con sus autodenominaciones y referencias geoestadísticas*. INALI.
- INALI (Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas) (2012). *Lenguas indígenas nacionales en riesgo de desaparición: Variantes lingüísticas por grado de riesgo. 2000*. INALI.
- INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía) (2010). *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010*. INEGI.
- INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática) (2015). *Encuesta Intercensal 2015*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2011). *Panorama sociodemográfico de Puebla. Tomo I*. INEGI.



- Lewis, M. P. & Simon, G. F. (2010). Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, 2, 103–120.
- Messing, J. (2007). Multiple ideologies and competing discourses: Language shift in Tlaxcala, Mexico. *Language in Society*, 36(4): 555–577.
- Messing, J. (2009). Ambivalence and ideology among Mexicano youth in Tlaxcala, Mexico. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 8(5), 350–364.
- Mojica Lagunas, R. (2019). Language keyholders for Mexicano: The case of an intergenerational community in Coatepec de los Coasteles, Mexico. In T. L. McCarty, S. E. Nicholas & G. Wigglesworth (Eds.), *A world of Indigenous languages: Policies, pedagogies and prospects for language reclamation* (pp. 214–234). Multilingual Matters.
- Nettle, D. & Romaine, S. (2000). *Vanishing voices*. Oxford University Press.
- Pauwels, A. (2016). *Language maintenance and shift*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rizo Amézquita, J. N. (2017). Población Indígena en cifras. *Boletín CONAMED OPS*, 13, 7-13.
- Terborg, R. (2006). La ecología de presiones en el desplazamiento de las lenguas indígenas por el español. Presentación de un modelo. *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, 7(4), 1-32.
- Terborg, R. & García Landa, L. (2013). The ecology of pressures: Towards a tool to analyze the complex process of language shift and maintenance. In A. Massip-Bonet & A. Bastardas-Boada (Eds.), *Complexity perspectives on language, communication and society* (pp. 219-239). Springer.
- UNESCO (2003). *Language vitality and endangerment*. UNESCO. [www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf)
- United Nations. (2007). *United Nations declaration of the rights of Indigenous peoples*. United Nations.
- Valiñas, L. (2019). *Diccionario enciclopédico de las lenguas indígenas de México*. Academia Mexicana de la Lengua/Fundación para las Letras Mexicanas/Secretaría de Cultura.
- Woodbury, A. C. (2011). Language documentation. In P. Austin & J. Sallabank (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages* (pp. 159–186). Cambridge University Press.



## Chapter 2

### 2 Bilingualism in Mexico: The Case of Nahuatl

This chapter reports on adults' linguistic practices of Nahuatl and Spanish in their interactions with people in various linguistic domains including personal, public, occupational, and educational.

#### 2.1 Introduction

Mexico (*Estados Unidos Mexicanos*) is a large country, uniquely situated in North America, where it shares borders with the United States of America to the north and with two Central American countries, Guatemala and Belize, to the south. It covers an area of approximately 2 million square kilometers (the 13<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world), with a population of about 125 million people of which 51.1% are women and 48.9% are men (INEGI, 2018). The majority of the country's population now resides in urban areas, with only 22.2% living in rural areas, compared to 1950 when 54.6% of the population resided in rural communities (INEGI, 2010a). It has 32 states, with Mexico City being the federal state where governmental power and functions are situated. Article 2 of Mexico's Constitution describes the nation as pluricultural, owing its diversity to Indigenous peoples, the original inhabitants of the land before Spanish colonization. In addition to Spanish, Mexico boasts of 68 Indigenous languages as its national languages, with Nahuatl and Maya being the most spoken (INALI, 2012). The languages of the Indigenous peoples are enshrined in the 2003 General Law of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (*Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*). The Law also created the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* [INALI]), a decentralized organization of the Federal Public

Administration, under the Secretary of Culture, which promotes, preserves, revitalises and researches Indigenous languages.

The proportion of the Mexican population that speaks an Indigenous language has been in steady decline for many years, starting from 16% in 1930 and decreasing to 6.6% by 2015 (INEGI, 2015). The majority of Indigenous language speakers also speak Spanish. The languages with the highest proportion of monolingual speakers are Tzotzil (30.8%) and Tzeltal (29.8%) (INEGI, 2015). Currently, 21.5% of Mexico's population self-identity as Indigenous (INEGI, 2015). The Indigenous population is an increasingly young one, with 58% being younger than 30 years old, which is 5% higher than the national average (CDI [la Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas], 2016). Approximately half of the 364 varieties<sup>1</sup> of Indigenous languages in Mexico are at some risk of endangerment: 64 varieties are in critical danger of disappearing, 43 are in severe danger, 73 are at medium risk and the remaining 185 are considered safe for now (INALI, 2012).

The phenomenon of endangerment facing Indigenous languages is not unique to Mexico but is a global one. Linguists estimate that at least half of the world's 7,000 languages will be endangered in a few generations, as they are no longer being spoken as first languages (Hale et al., 1992; Austin & Sallabank 2011). Speakers of Indigenous languages and other threatened languages face enormous pressure to switch to the dominant languages because of the numerous political, social and cultural advantages that

---

<sup>1</sup> Varieties are forms or varieties of a language. For example, Nahuatl has 30 varieties, means that it has 30 forms that are lexically and structurally different, implying a different sociolinguistic identity for speakers.

the latter have. Other factors leading to language endangerment include repressive assimilationist policies, natural disasters, and man-made disasters such as war and genocide (Nettle & Romaine 2000; Crystal 2000). The issue of language endangerment has attracted the attention of researchers, linguists, activists, communities, governments and multinational organizations such as the United Nations. There have been many activities and projects at the local, national and international levels to safeguard and revitalise Indigenous languages ranging from language documentation, language courses or programs, to enactment of language laws and policies enshrining the linguistic rights of Indigenous peoples. Examples of such laws are the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007) at the global level and the General Law for the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2003) in the national Mexican context.

Studies and projects which have focused on the causes of language shift of Indigenous languages in Mexico have found that a decrease in intergenerational transmission of these languages is one of the main causes. Some parents are no longer teaching their Indigenous language to their offspring, resulting in children who no longer speak it as their first language. Parents do not transmit their language because they prefer their children to gain fluency in Spanish before acquiring their Indigenous language so that their children do not mix or 'confuse' both languages. The global myth that one's mother tongue, minority languages, or bilingualism is a hindrance to a child's academic success has existed for many years. Unfortunately, this belief is not only held by parents and mainstream society but also by some educators (Taylor, 2014). Another reason that parents prefer that their children learn Spanish is their belief that Spanish will be more beneficial to their children since it is necessary for socioeconomic advancement and

professional development. This feeds into the global discourse of language as a commodity (Heller, 2003; Smala et al, 2013) where adults, especially parents, want their children or the younger generations to learn languages they consider more useful in terms of career or economic prospects. Apart from the utilitarian value Spanish has in Mexico as the *de facto* national language, it is also one of the most spoken languages in the world.

Another factor deterring the language maintenance of Indigenous languages in Mexico involves mainstream negative attitudes which do not provide a conducive environment for Indigenous peoples to use their language outside of their community. In some communities, such negative attitudes may be internalized by speakers, resulting in some speakers denying knowledge of their language, much less transmitting it to the younger generations. While the General Law recognized Indigenous languages as national languages along with Spanish, no Indigenous language is used at an institutional level (i.e. official or governmental level) in Mexico. Speakers of Indigenous languages face discrimination and racism based on their language, a concept that Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, 2015) refers to as linguicism.

Furthermore, the teaching of Indigenous languages is not supported financially to the same extent as Spanish, the medium of instruction in schools. The teaching of Indigenous languages in Mexican schools has only achieved limited success. While the government has instituted bilingual and intercultural education at the pre- and basic-school levels in Indigenous communities, there are several issues regarding its implementation and infrastructure that impede its effectiveness. For instance, the Indigenous languages are rarely used as languages of instruction. Even when they are taught as a subject, Spanish is

still the language of instruction. The textbooks used, usually commissioned by the Ministry of Education, are sometimes written using another variety, different from that of the community. There have been situations where Indigenous-language-speaking teachers have been placed in communities with a different variety from what they speak. All these challenges have facilitated language shift to Spanish. Indigenous languages are often associated with tradition and culture on one hand and backwardness and poverty on the other, while Spanish is associated with modernity and progress. With the decline in the use of Indigenous languages among the younger generations, they are increasingly becoming languages used predominately by adults.

In order to gain a fuller appreciation of the status of an Indigenous language in a bilingual setting, it is valuable to examine language use in a variety of spheres or domains. The Council of Europe (2001) identifies four main domains of language use: personal (related to an individual's private life and interactions with family and friends); public (associated with an individual's communication with the general public); occupational (work-related); and educational. An example of a study on domains of language use is Rubin's (1968) seminal work on Paraguayan bilingualism which investigated language use during 1960-61 in the rural-urban town of Luque near Asunción, the capital. She examined interactions in the family (personal), community (public), work (occupational), market (public), academic (educational), and affective (personal and public) contexts. The main findings were that while the Indigenous language, Guaraní, was associated with intimate (e.g., family), informal (e.g., friends), and less serious (e.g., jokes) contexts, Spanish was associated with formality (e.g., communications with teacher, boss, priest, and doctor), prestige, education, and socioeconomic value. Choi's (2005) comparative study done 40

years later (2000-01) found several differences in language use in Luque. There was a displacement of Guaraní in all linguistic contexts, especially in intimate and informal ones, in favour of bilingual use or Spanish. However, Guaraní made inroads in the educational system when bilingual schooling was introduced in the country. Choi (2005) reported a trend towards bilingualism and an increase in the use of Spanish in urban areas, a prediction made by Rubin (1968).

The present study aims to explore the language use situation of Nahuatl and Spanish in Santiago Tlaxco, a rural community with about 1700 people in the municipality of Chiconcuautla, Puebla by answering the question: what are the language patterns of use in the community? While census data are a valuable resource to track the number of speakers of Indigenous languages, they do not provide information on the contexts of language use. To our knowledge, there have been no previous studies on the use of Nahuatl by adults with multiple interlocutors in different domains. Our project used a similar approach as the landmark study by Rubin (1968) and its replicated study (Choi, 2005) that examined language use of Guaraní and Spanish in the bilingual context of Paraguay. In the following sections, we provide an overview of Nahuatl language use in Mexico, followed by the methodology, results, discussion and conclusions.

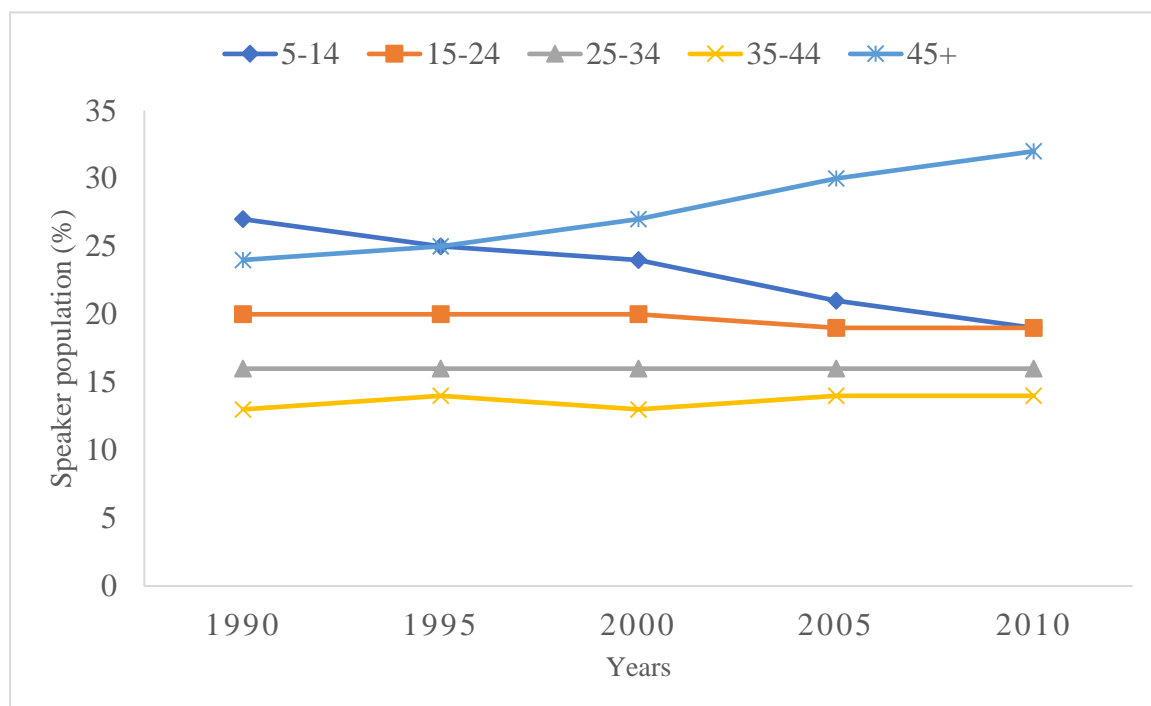
## 2.2 Some Statistics on Nahuatl Language Usage

Nahuatl is the most spoken Indigenous language in Mexico with over 1.5 million speakers, aged 5 and older. Nahuatl speakers are found in highest numbers in the states of Puebla, Hidalgo, Guerrero, San Luis Potosí, and Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave. Nahuatl has 30 varieties, and half of these are considered to be at immediate risk of disappearing (INALI, 2012). Most Nahuatl speakers are bilingual, with only 7% being monolinguals

(INEGI, 2015). Figure 2.1 shows the percentage distribution of the Nahuatl-speaking population from 1990 to 2010 for five age groups (5-14, 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, and 45 and older). Two demographic shifts are evident over the 20-year period represented in this Figure. First, the proportion of Nahuatl speakers in the 5 to 14-year-old group decreased from 27% to 19%. According to INALI (2012), one of the main criteria for a language to be considered safe is for its youngest speakers (ages 5 to 14) to make up at least 25% of the speaker population. Nahuatl is currently below this critical level, suggesting that intergenerational transmission of the language is impaired. Second, the proportion of Nahuatl speakers in the oldest age group (45 and older) increased from 24% to 32% over this 20-year period. This follows the general trend that in Indigenous communities facing language endangerment, the older speakers continue to use the language, while the youngest generation exhibits a decline in language use. The three intermediate age groups (15-24, 25-34, 35-44) did not show any significant changes in their proportions of the Nahuatl-speaking populations over time.

The Nahuatl variety under study in this project, Northern Puebla variety, is spoken in the Acaxochitlán municipality in the state of Hidalgo, and eleven municipalities in Puebla, namely Chiconcuautla, Honey, Huauchinango, Jopala, Juan Galindo, Naupan, Pahuatlán, Tlaola, Tlapacoya, Xicotepec and Zihuateutla (Valiñas, 2019). It is one of the varieties considered to be at no immediate risk of endangerment (INALI, 2012). In the community of Tlaxco, 83% of the population, aged 5 and older, speak Nahuatl while 76% are bilinguals who speak both Spanish and Nahuatl (INEGI, 2010b).

**Figure 2.1 Distribution of the Nahuatl-speaking population by age group (1990-2010)**



*Note:* The absolute number of Nahuatl speakers was 1,197,328 (in 1990), 1,325,440 (in 1995), 1,448,936 (in 2000), 1,376,026 (in 2005) and 1,544,968 (in 2010). Sources: General Census (INEGI, 1990, 2000, 2010b) and Population and Housing Census (1995, 2005).

There have been very few sociolinguistic studies conducted in this region. Gomashie (2020) focused on bilingual young people's (aged 12-17) language practices with 21 interlocutors inside and outside their homes in Tlaxco. At home, most of them preferred to communicate in Spanish with their siblings, Nahuatl with their grandparents, and both languages with their parents and other relatives. Outside the home and among the peers, they used both languages mostly with their male friends and school colleagues, but mostly Spanish with their female friends. They used Spanish with professionals like doctors, nurses and teachers on one hand, and strangers on the other. Even when



expressing emotions, they preferred to use either only Spanish or both languages. The language that individuals use to communicate emotions or feelings tends to be the language they feel most comfortable with it (usually their first language) or most expressive in, most linguistically competent in, or has the most emotional resonance for them (Dewaele, 2010). For young people, Nahuatl was the least preferred linguistic option. The absence of an exclusive context for Nahuatl use, except with grandparents, highlights a shift towards Spanish. While young people generally expressed positive attitudes towards Nahuatl such as its importance to the community, its inclusion in schools, and its aesthetic beauty, these attitudes did not translate to actual use. Some attributed the low usage of Nahuatl to their own linguistic insecurity in the language due to a lack of desired proficiency, a preference for Spanish as the more socioeconomically viable language, and internalized negative attitudes of community members. This foundational study on language practices of young people in Tlaxco sets the stage for the current project to describe the language patterns of adults who form the parent and grandparent generations of the community, the principal agents of language transmission.

## 2.3 Methodology

### 2.3.1 Participants

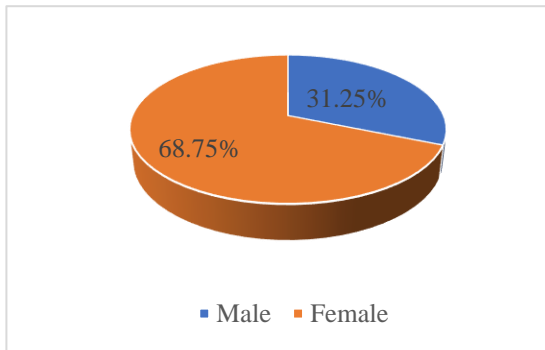
Eighty adults participated in this study: this compares to 66 adults who participated in Rubin's (1968) study and 71 in Choi's (2005) study in Paraguay. All participants, 55 females and 25 males, reside in Tlaxco; all but 4 were born in Tlaxco. Two were born in Toxtla, an adjoining community to Tlaxco, one in Chiconcuautla and the other in the state of Puebla; all are Nahuatl-speaking areas. Sixty-six of them reported Nahuatl as their first language, 12 reported both Spanish and Nahuatl as first languages, and only 2

declared Spanish as their first language. Sixty-eight were bilingual while 12 were monolingual speakers of Nahuatl. Thirty-four participants had no formal education, 18 had completed or attended some form of basic school, 18 had completed or attended junior high school and 10 had completed or attended senior high education. Forty-one were farmers, and there were 28 home keepers, 3 translators, 2 merchants, 2 pastors, 1 seamstress or clothier, and 3 unemployed. The ages ranged from 18 to 78, with the mean age being 43 years. To compare linguistic use, participants were divided into two groups based on their age: group A ( $N = 42$ ) had an age range of 18 to 40, and group B ( $N = 38$ ) had an age range of 41 to 78. Figures 2.2 to 2.7 summarise the characteristics of participants.

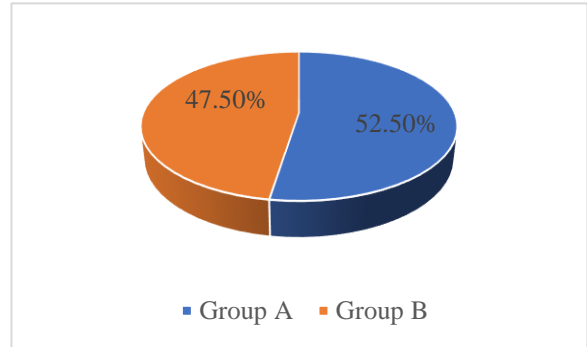
### 2.3.2 Instrument

The questionnaire administered in this study to assess linguistic use was modelled after those of Rubin (1968) and Choi (2005). The preliminary section elicited information on linguistic and demographic background such as age, gender, place of birth, place of residence, formal education, first language(s), professions, and knowledge of Nahuatl and Spanish. The main section primarily asked questions about language use with various interlocutors and in emotion states. The three language options were Nahuatl, Spanish and both languages. The 15 interlocutors in the Paraguayan study (Rubin, 1968; Choi, 2005) were spouse, spouse in front of children, children, parents, grandparents, siblings, housekeeper, boss, friends in the neighbourhood, friends in downtown, neighbours, school teachers, doctor, *curandero* (witch doctor), and priest. All these interlocutors were included in the present study with the exception of the housekeeper and friends downtown because they were not applicable to the context in Tlaxco.

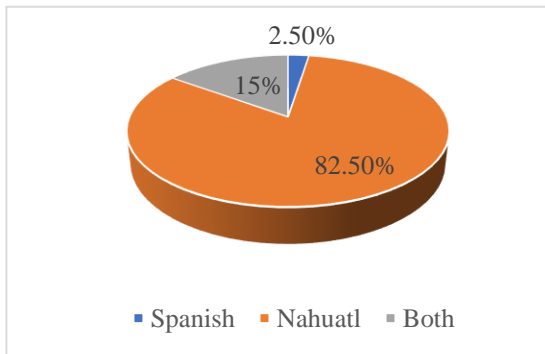
**Figure 2.2 Gender of adult speakers**



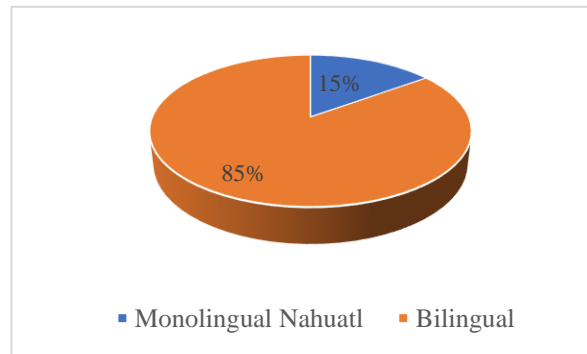
**Figure 2.3 Age groups of adult population**



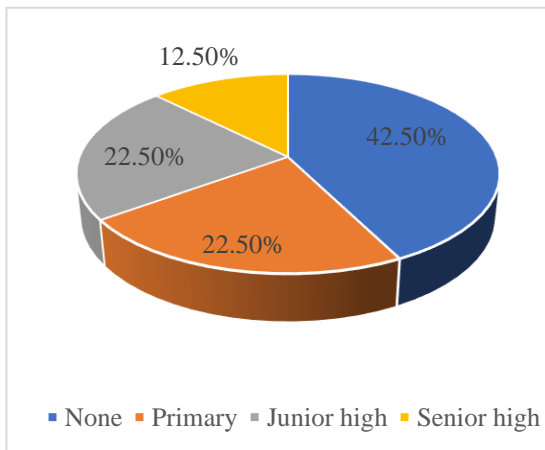
**Figure 2.4 First languages of adults**



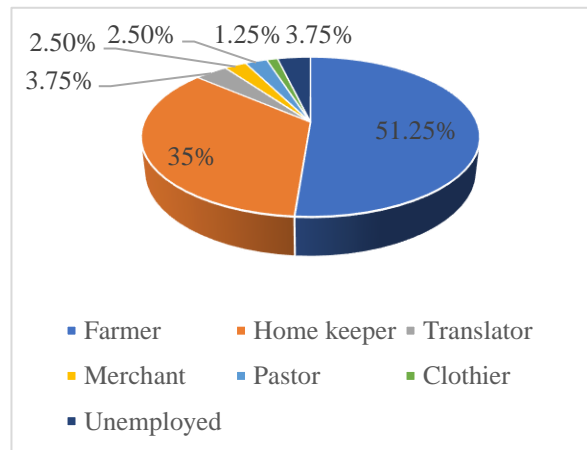
**Figure 2.5 Type of speaker (adults)**



**Figure 2.6 Education (adults)**



**Figure 2.7 Occupation (adults)**



The Guaraní studies were conducted in Luque, a town uniquely located between rural areas and Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, whereas Tlaxco is an isolated rural community. Other modifications were made to their questionnaire by including additional interlocutors. For instance, instead of having a simple category of ‘their children’, it was split into four subcategories by age group: their children aged 0 to 5, aged 6 to 12, aged 13 to 18, and aged 19 and older. The purpose of subdividing this category was to assess whether adults’ language patterns were influenced or determined by the age of the children. Additionally, to assess the effect of age on the interactions with non-family members in the neighbourhood, four more interlocutors were included: preschoolers aged 0 to 5, children aged 6 to 12, adolescents aged 13 to 18, and adults aged 19 to 60. This division of non-family members mirrored that of the participants’ own children, which allowed for a comparison of age effects. Other included interlocutors were workmates, employees, other relatives, elderly people (aged 60 years and older), and strangers, bringing the number of interlocutors to 26. The Guaraní questionnaire also had 4 questions on language use at the market, when angry, when telling a joke and when saying intimate things: all of these were included in the present study. Other emotional states were added to our questionnaire such as when afraid, sad, remorseful, happy, rendering insults, and cursing or swearing. In all, there were 37 items related to linguistic use.

### 2.3.3 Data Analysis

The study adopts the four linguistic domains (personal, public, occupational, and educational) proposed by the Council of Europe (2001). This framework proposes that there are situations which emerge in each domain, covering the location or place in which

language use occurs, the institution related to the context of language use, and the persons or interlocutors. Table 2.1 breaks down the external context of language use examined in this study.

**Table 2.1 External context of language use in Santiago Tlaxco**

<b>Domains</b>	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Persons</b>
<b>Personal</b>	Home: own of family of friends	Family Social networks	Spouses, offspring (preschoolers; children; adolescents; adults), parents, grandparents, siblings, other relatives, friends, neighbours
<b>Public</b>	Public spaces: street market clinic place of worship	Community Public health Denominations	Residents (preschoolers, children, adolescents, adults, elderly) Merchants Doctors, nurses, <i>curandero</i> Priests, pastors, congregation Strangers
<b>Occupational</b>	Farms Stores, shops Offices	Small and medium-sized enterprises Family-owned businesses	Employers, employees Workmates
<b>Educational</b>	Schools	Schools	Teachers

*Note.* Descriptive categories are adapted from the Council of Europe (2001, p. 48)

Additionally, the context of emotions which can occur in any domain, location, and with any persons, is explored. In the presentation of the results, the focus is placed on interactions with persons. All the results are presented in percentages. First, results on the personal domain are presented, excluding the social networks of friends and neighbours. Second, the results for public, occupational, and educational domains, in addition to social networks, are presented together since they occur in the wider community context. Finally, results on language use during emotional states are presented. The effect of age

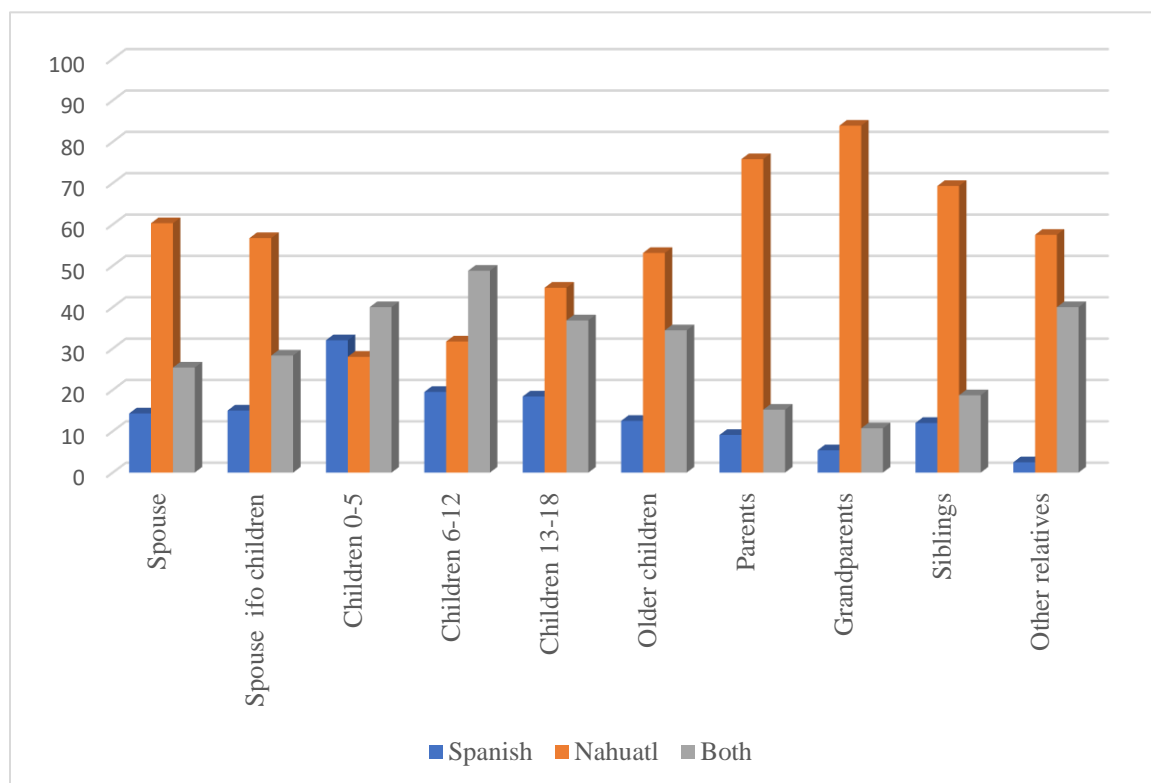
on linguistic use is tested as the two age groups are compared. The results of the total population are shown, followed by group comparison for the each of the three language options. Tables of the results presented in both numbers and percentages are included in Appendix A.

## 2.4 Results

### 2.4.1 Home

Figure 2.8 illustrates language use with family members at home by the total study population. Nahuatl is predominately used at home as it is used with all but 2 interlocutors.

**Figure 2.8 Language use at home by adults (in percentages)**



It is the main language chosen for speaking with their spouse (60.3%), even when both of them were speaking in front of their children (56.7%), parents (75.8%), grandparents (83.9%), siblings (69.3%) and other relatives (57.5%). When Nahuatl was not the preferred language of communication as observed in the case of the youngest generations (i.e. preschoolers and children aged 12 and younger), bilingual usage was chosen. In the home, Spanish was the least preferred option with all interlocutors.

Figures 2.9 to 2.11 compares the two age groups in the use of Nahuatl, Spanish and both languages, respectively.

**Figure 2.9 Use of Nahuatl at home by the two age groups (in percentages)**

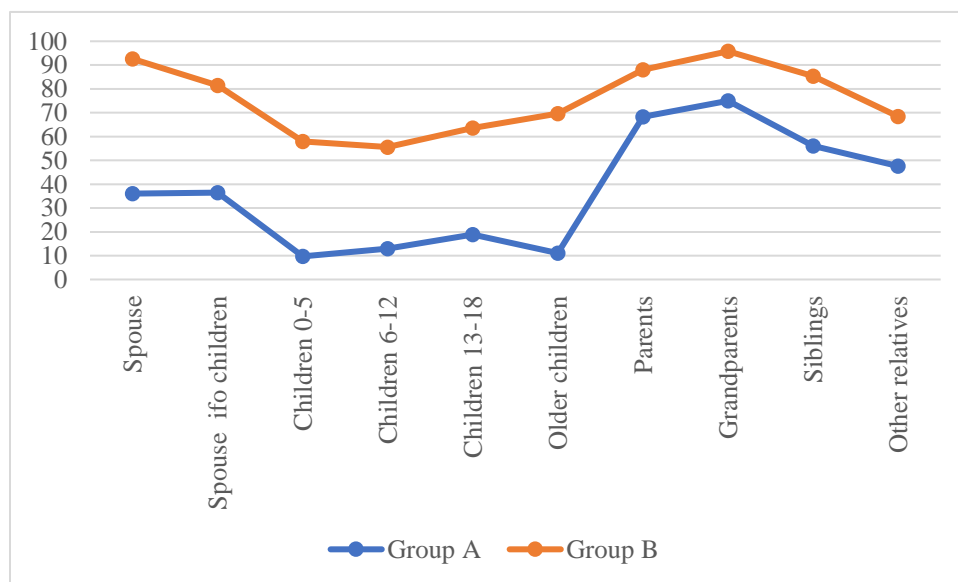
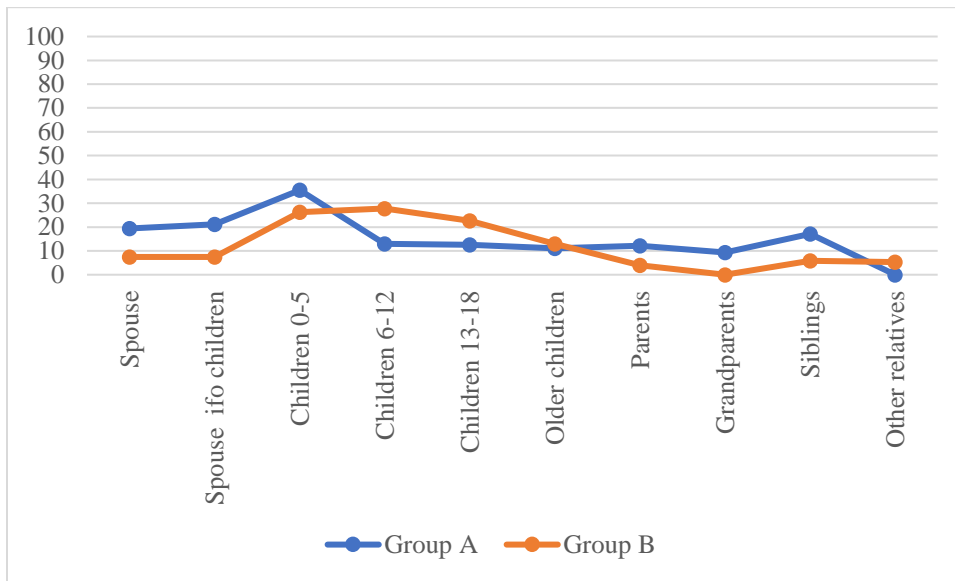


Figure 2.9 shows that the older group (group B) had a clear preference to use Nahuatl with all interlocutors compared with the younger group (group A). This preference was particularly marked when speaking with their spouse and children of all ages. Figure 2.10 shows use of Spanish at home.

**Figure 2.10 Spanish language use at home for the two age groups (in percentages)**



The younger age group (group A) preferred to use Spanish with spouse, children (0-5), parents, grandparents and siblings. In contrast, the older group preferred to use Spanish with children (6-18), and other relatives. The magnitude of the differences between the age groups for the use of Spanish were not large.

**Figure 2.11 Use of both languages at home for the two age groups (in percentages)**

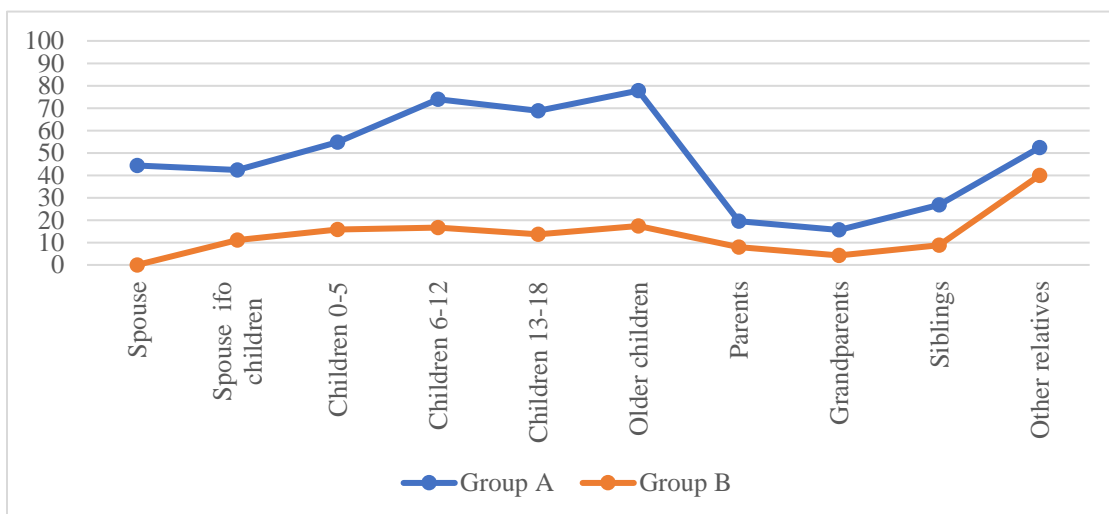


Figure 2.11 demonstrates that, concerning the use of both languages at home, the young group (group A) preferred to use both languages with their spouse and all children,

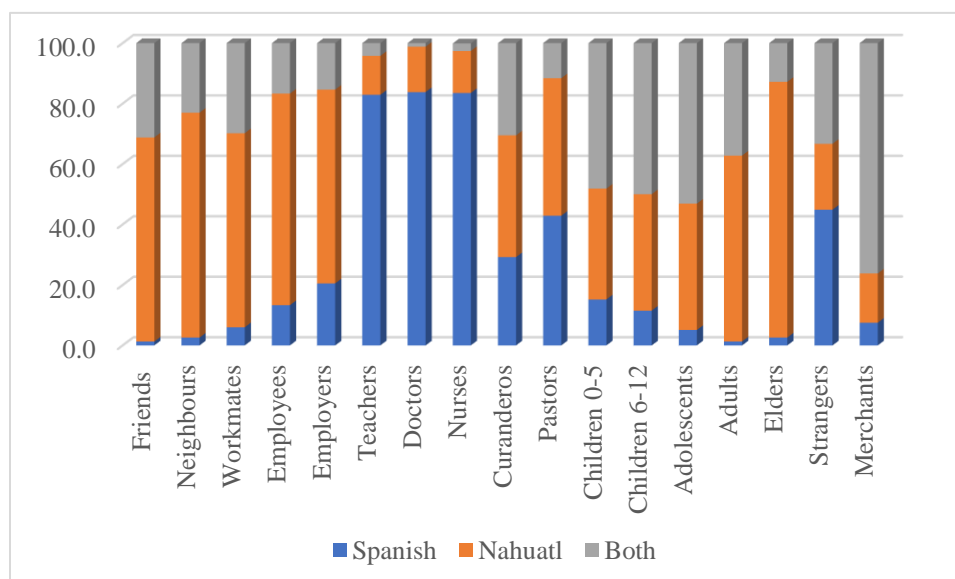


compared to the older group. Both age groups showed similar use of both languages with parents, grandparents, siblings and other relatives.

## 2.4.2 Community

In the community context (Figure 2.12), the study participants commonly used Nahuatl in communicating within the social networks (i.e. friends in the neighbourhood (67.5%), neighbours (74.4%)); occupational domain (i.e. work colleagues (64.2%)), employees (70.0%), and employers (64.1%)); public health context (i.e. curandero (40.3%)); at place of worship (i.e. pastors or priests (45.5%)); and older residents (i.e. adults (61.5%) and the elderly (84.5%)).

**Figure 2.12 Language use in the community by adults (in percentages)**



Spanish was preferred for interlocutors who were usually not from the community such as teachers (82.9%) in the educational domain, doctors (83.8%) and nurses (83.5%) in the

clinic, and strangers (44.9%). Both languages were preferred for communicating with residents younger than 18 and merchants (at the market).

The patterns of language use identified in the community or public domain were compared for the two age groups. In the younger age group (group A), the use of Spanish was higher with doctors, nurses and pastors, compared with the older group (group B) (Figure 2.13). There were no substantial age-related differences in Spanish use in other contexts.

**Figure 2.13 Use of Spanish in the community by age groups (%)**

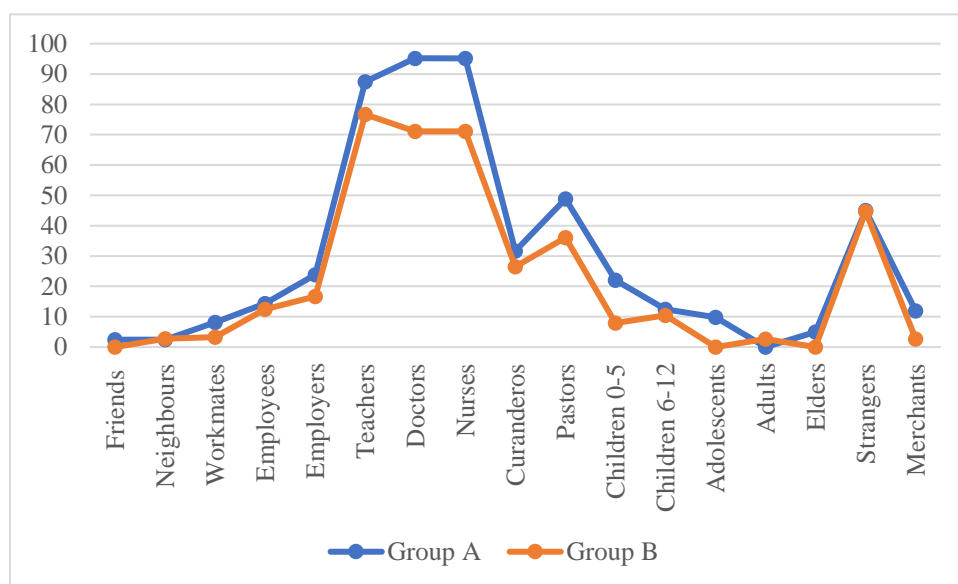


Figure 2.14 shows that the use on Nahuatl by the older group (group B) was higher in most contexts, except with workmates, merchants and the curanderos. The largest differences between the age groups was when speaking with employees, employers, doctors, nurses, and children (all ages).

**Figure 2.14 Use of Nahuatl in the community by age groups (%)**

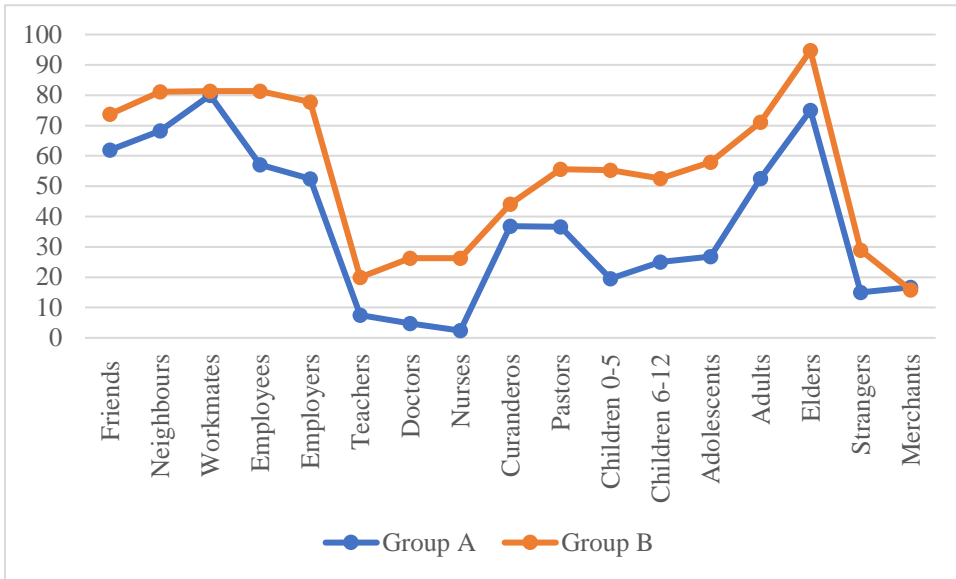
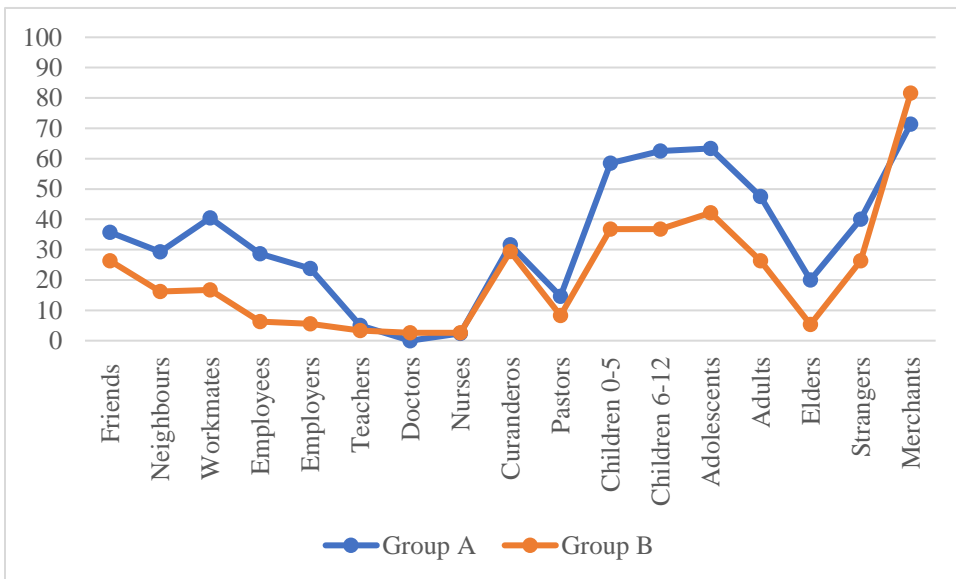


Figure 2.15 shows that, concerning the use of both languages, the young group (group A) preferred this option more frequently with friends, neighbours, workmates, employees, employers, children (all ages), adults, elders and strangers.

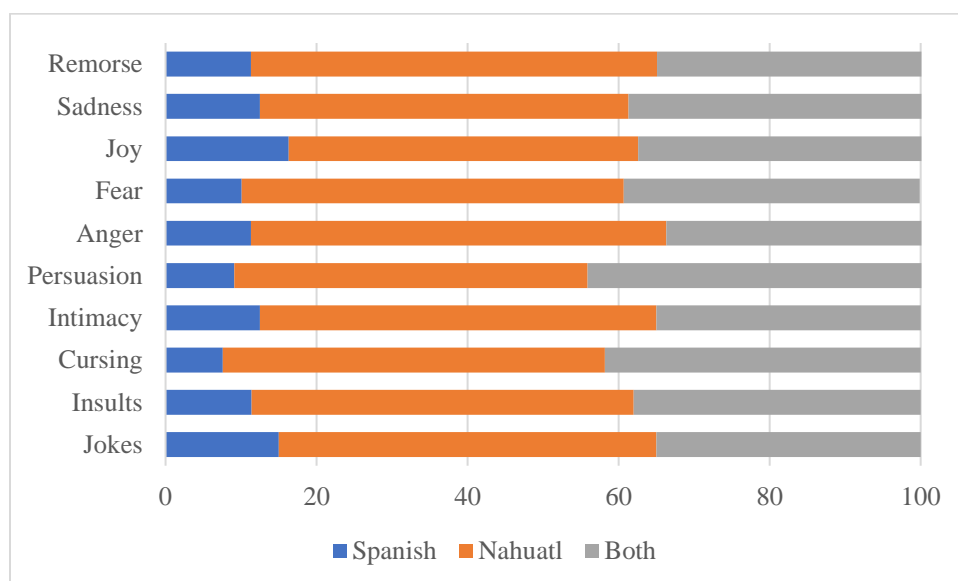
**Figure 2.15 Use of both languages in the community by age groups (%)**



### 2.4.3 Emotions

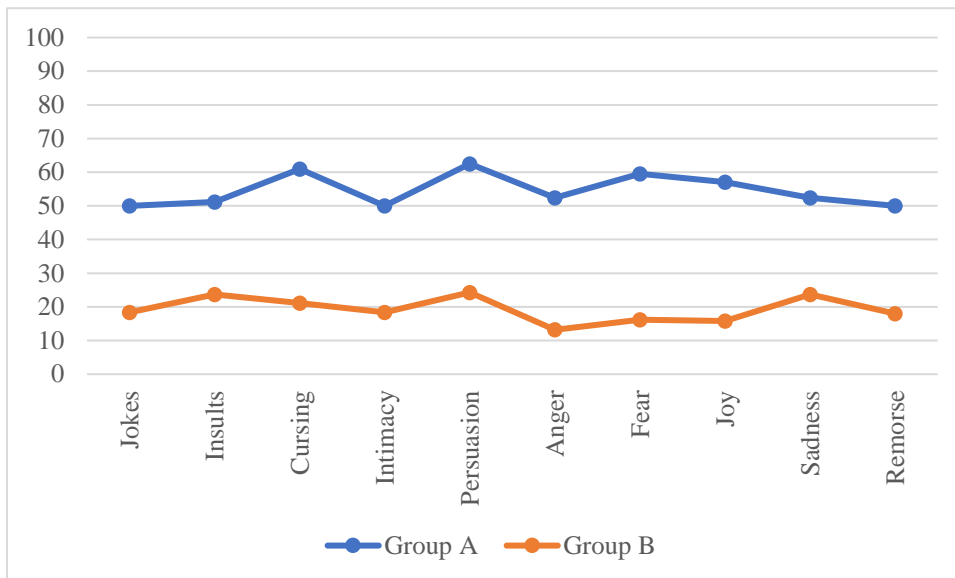
Considering language use during emotional states (Figure 2.16), adults preferred Nahuatl in all situations: when telling a joke (50.0%), rendering insults (50.6%), cursing (50.6%), saying intimate things (52.5%), convincing someone (46.8%), expressing anger (55.0%), expressing fear (50.6%), expressing joy (46.3%), expressing sadness (48.8%) and showing remorse (53.8%). Use of both languages was the second most frequent choice for all emotional states, while Spanish was infrequently used.

**Figure 2.16 Language use by adults in emotional states (%)**



There were age-related differences in language use in emotional states. Figure 2.17 shows that the younger group (Group A) had a clear preference to use both languages in all emotional situations, compared to the older group (Group B). A different age-related effect was seen concerning Nahuatl use in emotional states. Figure 2.18 shows that the older group (Group B) clearly preferred to use Nahuatl in these situations compared to the younger group (Group A).

**Figure 2.17 Use of both languages in emotional states by age groups (%)**



**Figure 2.18 Use of Nahuatl in emotional states by age groups (%)**

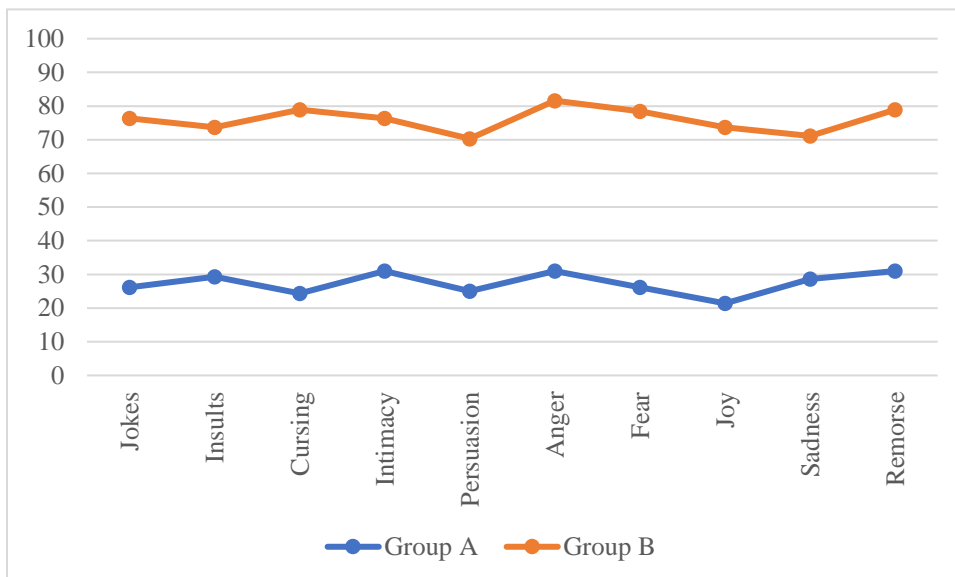
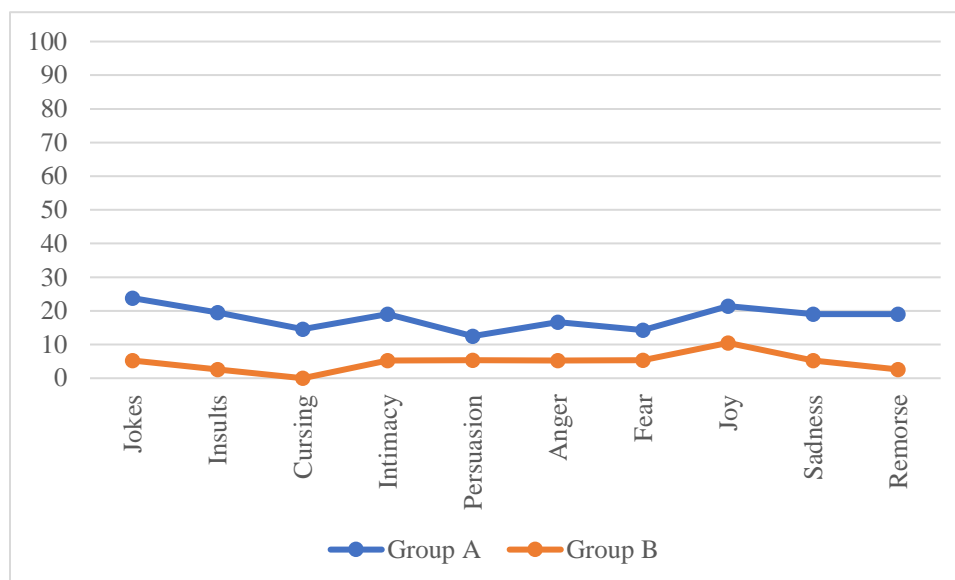


Fig 2.19 shows that when it came to the use of Spanish in emotional situations, this was more frequent in the younger group (Group A) than the older group (Group B).

**Figure 2.19 Use of Spanish in emotional states by age groups (%)**

## 2.5 Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine the language practices of adults in the bilingual context of Tlaxco. From the results, Nahuatl was the language of choice in the family circle, an indication that its language maintenance is still ongoing. However, parents preferred to use both Nahuatl and Spanish with their children younger than 13 years of age, suggesting two possibilities: that parents either supported bilingualism or believed that Nahuatl should not be learned exclusively. There is support for both possibilities from a study of language attitudes in the same community (see Chapter 5). In that study, adults generally supported bilingualism and wanted the younger generations to learn both languages. However, some parents reported that they preferred that their children gain proficiency in one language first, usually Spanish, before acquiring Nahuatl. Parents often wanted their children to learn Spanish first for easier transition to the educational system where Spanish is the language of instruction. This is one of the most common

themes in Indigenous communities worldwide, where parents want their children to learn the dominant language because their own past experience with their language. For example, in the Canadian context, parents did not transmit their Indigenous language because they had a hard time transitioning to the English-language schooling system (Knockwood, 2015). It should be noted that while Tlaxco has both a pre-school and a basic school which are supposed to be bilingual and intercultural, Nahuatl is seldom used as the language of instruction. Other reasons for wanting children to learn Spanish first are its representation as the language of socioeconomic opportunities, professional development and advancement, and wider communication. Many Indigenous communities grapple with the reality that their languages are not considered economically viable. For some speakers, knowing their language just brought them starvation (Knockwood, 2015).

Not knowing the dominant language, be it Spanish or English, makes it very difficult for persons to integrate into mainstream society. Given the situation of Spanish dominance in Mexico, parents' reports of bilingual usage with their children do not necessarily represent equal use of both languages. An extreme example illustrating this point was one father who reported on the questionnaire that he used both languages with his children (ages 12 and 17) but when interviewed he revealed that his occasional usage of Nahuatl with his 12-year-old daughter only involved translating some Nahuatl words into Spanish whenever she was curious about them. Despite this minimal use of Nahuatl with his daughter, this father selected the option "both languages" on the questionnaire to describe his language use with her. Thus, while bilingualism was commonly reported by adults in Tlaxco, it may often be unequal bilingualism, favouring Spanish more than Nahuatl. This

is more apparent when we consider that irrespective of age, the younger age group used both languages with their children while the older age group preferred to use Nahuatl.

Outside the home context, Nahuatl was preferred in informal and public settings such as with neighbours and with friends in the neighbourhood. This result is encouraging for language maintenance as it shows that Nahuatl language use extended outside the family circle. Nahuatl was mostly used in communication with adults and the elderly while both languages were used with infants, children, and adolescents, suggesting that Nahuatl use was mainly reserved for adults. This assessment agrees with the results of Gomashie (2020) which showed that the young people (less than 18 years) in Tlaxco preferred to use either Spanish or both languages for interactions in the community. In the market, we found that the use of both languages was preferred. In the work sphere with fellow employees and employers, Nahuatl was still the preferred language given that most participants were involved in agricultural work inside, or outside, the community. When they worked outside the community, they tended to travel together with their Nahuatl-speaking co-workers from the community. In the place of worship, Nahuatl was generally used with a priest or pastor. However, the language used in this interaction depended on the language skills of the priest or pastor. In Tlaxco, the three pastors in the two Pentecostal churches and the Seventh Day Adventist church were Nahuatl-speakers while the Catholic priest was not. Nahuatl was also used most commonly in emotional states. Spanish was predominately used in formal situations, especially with professionals such as schoolteachers, doctors and nurses, as they were usually not from the community. Additionally, Spanish was commonly used in unfamiliar situations, such as with strangers.



In conclusion, our results show that Nahuatl is in vigorous use by adults in the community of Tlaxco as they preferred to use it in many interactions as compared to Spanish and bilingual use. This vigorous use of Nahuatl by adults is a positive factor in the maintenance of the language. In contrast, a different picture emerges for language use by young people (aged 12-17) in this community (Gomashie, 2020). These young people preferred to use Spanish with 10 out of 21 interlocutors, and also for expressing emotions. This preference for Spanish among young people is expected to have a negative long-term impact on the maintenance of Nahuatl. In addition, another indication of possible language shift away from Nahuatl is our finding that adults preferred bilingual language use with children younger than 13 (at home and in the community) as well with adolescents in the community. In these interactions, it seems likely that there may have been unequal bilingualism favouring Spanish, given the broader appeal of Spanish in mainstream society. The members of the older age group (41 to 78 years) in Tlaxco are the most consistent users of Nahuatl in many contexts but there is a need to transmit it more effectively to the younger generation to ensure its long-term maintenance.

## 2.6 References

- CDI (La Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas) (2016). *Indicadores Socioeconómicos de los Pueblos Indígenas de México, 2015*. CDI.
- Choi, J. K. (2005). Bilingualism in Paraguay: Forty years after Rubin's study. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 26, 233–248.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dewaele, J. M. (2015). *Language and emotions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gomashie, G. A. (2020). Bilingual youth's language choices and attitudes toward Nahuatl in Santiago Tlaxco, Mexico. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1800716>.

- Heller, M. (2003). Globalization, the new economy, and the commodification of language. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(4), 473-492.
- INALI (El Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas) (2012). *Lenguas indígenas nacionales en riesgo de desaparición: Variantes lingüísticas por grado de riesgo. 2000*. INALI.
- INEGI (1990). *XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1990. Tabulados básicos*. INEGI.
- INEGI (1995). *I Conteo de Población y Vivienda 1995. Tabulados básicos*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2000). *XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2000. Tabulados básicos*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2005). *II Conteo de Población y Vivienda 2005. Tabulados básicos*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2010a). *Volumen y crecimiento. Población total según tamaño de localidad para cada entidad federativa, 2010*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2010b). *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010. Tabulados del Cuestionario Básico*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2015). *Encuesta Intercensal 2015*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2018). *Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica 2018*. INEGI.
- INEGI (2019). *Anuario estadístico y geográfico de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos 2019*. INEGI.
- Knockwood, I. (2015). *Out of the depths: The experiences of Mi'kmaw children at the Indian residential school at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia (4th ed.)*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Rubin, J. (1968). *National bilingualism in Paraguay*. Moulton.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1988). Multilingualism and the education of minority children. In T. Skutnabb-Kangas & J. Cummins (Eds.), *Minority education: From shame to struggle* (pp. 9-44). Multilingual Matters.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2015). Linguicism. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1460>
- Smala, S., Bergas Paz, J., & Lingard, B. (2013) Languages, cultural capital and school choice: Distinction and second-language immersion programmes. *British Journal of the Sociology of Education*, 34(3), 373-391.
- Taylor, S. K. (2014). From “monolingual” multilingual classrooms to “multilingual” multilingual classrooms: Managing cultural and linguistic diversity in the Nepali

educational system. In D. Little, C. Leung, & P. Van Avermaet (Eds.), *Managing diversity in education: Key issues and some responses* (pp. 259–274). Multilingual Matters.

Valiñas, L. (2019). *Diccionario enciclopédico de las lenguas indígenas de México*. Academia Mexicana de la Lengua/Fundación para las Letras Mexicanas/Secretaría de Cultura.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Bilingual Youth's Language Choices and Attitudes towards Nahuatl<sup>2</sup>

This chapter assesses the linguistic use and attitudes of bilingual youth in Santiago Tlaxco.

#### 3.1 Introduction

The present study explores the language choices and attitudes of bilingual youth in the Nahuatl-speaking community of Santiago Tlaxco (or Tlaxco) in Mexico. Investigating the language practices of young people and their attitudes provides important insights into the vitality of a language. A language is considered safe if there is no disruption in the intergenerational transmission, meaning that young people have successfully acquired their first language, transmitted to them from their parents and grandparents. Conversely, a language is considered endangered or at risk if the young people are no longer speaking it as their first language (Fishman, 1991; Lewis & Simons, 2010; UNESCO, 2003; Austin & Sallabank, 2011; Krauss, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2015). Young people as active participants in the maintenance and shift processes of a language have their own motivations for learning and speaking a language. One of the reasons they learn a language is the professional and socioeconomic capital associated with it (Flors, 2015; Novak Lukanovic, 2015). They are more likely to learn a language they feel a sense of

---

<sup>2</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was published as Gomashie, G. A. (2020). Bilingual youth's language choices and attitudes toward Nahuatl in Santiago Tlaxco, Mexico. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1800716>.

ownership towards (Sadembouo & Ngoumamba, 2015). The influence of family, peers, school, and mainstream society all play important roles in learning a language.

Taking into account how vital the young people are to the maintenance of a language, the present study explores their linguistic choices, and the influences or motivation behind those choices by answering the following questions:

- I. What are the language use patterns of young people in Tlaxco?
- II. What are the attitudes of young people towards Nahuatl in Tlaxco?

The two factors studied here, language use and attitudes, are considered important factors to assess language vitality. They are components used in several scales of vitality (i.e. measurements that assess if a language is endangered or not), such as the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (Fishman, 1991), the Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework (UNESCO, 2003), and the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) (Lewis & Simons, 2010). For these scales, a language that is used at home (i.e. intergenerational transmission) and in the broader community is likely to be safe. Additionally, positive attitudes by communities, officials, and the general public support the maintenance of a language. In the next sections, previous literature on the linguistic practices and attitudes of young people towards Nahuatl and other Indigenous languages in Mexico are reviewed, followed by the methodological framework, results, discussion and conclusions of the paper.

## 3.2 Previous Literature

There are very few studies solely focused on linguistic choices and attitudes of young people in Indigenous communities in Mexico: as described below, some exceptions are

those by Messing (2009) on linguistic attitudes and by Córdova-Hernández (2015) on the importance of including young people in language revitalisation. In the majority of studies, young people are secondary participants and/or observations made about them are seen through the perspectives of adults. In this literature review, we have primarily focused on studies concerning language use in Nahuatl communities and attitudes towards Nahuatl, while drawing parallels with some other Indigenous communities.

A seminal investigation of Nahuatl (Mexicano) language use and attitudes is Hill and Hill's (1986) study in the rural Malinche region of Tlaxcala-Puebla in Central Mexico. While the study focused primarily on adults, it offers important insights on the sociolinguistic situation in which young people reside. The study noted that in the Malinche region there was a diglossic situation where Spanish was the functional language in public, impersonal, formal and official contexts and Nahuatl was preferred for informal and domestic contexts, emotional attachment and kinship ties. While Spanish indicated a possibility of a salaried job, Nahuatl represented access to community membership. Speakers valued bilingualism in their communities and did not want Nahuatl to disappear. Speakers believed that the legitimate or most original Nahuatl was spoken in the past because people nowadays tended to mix it with Spanish. Younger speakers received the brunt of the criticism directed at 'offenders' of code-mixing or translanguaging. This quest for purism in language could impede language survival efforts, especially when Nahuatl was seen as a language of "little economic utility" and "many people question [its] instrumental value" (p. 140). The observations made and the themes identified in this study have been recognised in other Indigenous communities in Mexico and worldwide.

In the same region of Mexico, some two decades later, Messing (2007, 2009) reported on the three main competing discourses informing language use of Spanish and Nahuatl among adults and youth. They were *salir adelante*, about the need to use Spanish to forge ahead socioeconomically; *menosprecio*, concerning the devaluation of one's Indigenous identity and wanting its erasure; and *pro-indígena*, a pro-Indigenous attitude which embraces one's Indigeneity. She also identified purist attitudes towards Nahuatl mentioned in Hill and Hill (1986). Adults were nostalgic about the legitimate Nahuatl spoken in the past and were less likely to transmit the 'mixed' or syncretic version they currently spoke to the younger generations. The findings of Messing (2007, 2009) portrayed how some attitudes and beliefs could hinder the language transmission of Nahuatl.

Other studies on Indigenous languages in the South of Mexico (Córdova-Hernández (2015) and on Nahuatl in Tlaxcala (Messing (2003) found that adults blamed young people for refusing to learn and speak their Indigenous language, despite the adults' best efforts. They felt young people had no respect for the language and were denying their culture. Additionally, family relatives reported that children requested that they be addressed in Spanish (Messing, 2003). Mojica Lagunas (2019) portrayed the perspective of young people in their reluctance to speak Nahuatl in Coatepec de los Coasteles, Guerrero. Their reluctance stemmed from language insecurity fuelled by a lack of desired fluency in the language, and by fear of disrespecting elders and the sacred language of Nahuatl through using it improperly. For some young people, this sacred and beautiful language should be spoken when they became adults with more responsibilities. Other young people reported being embarrassed to speak Nahuatl in front of elders for fear of

being mocked by the latter for their lack of fluency but felt comfortable to use it with their peers. However, the elders interpreted their reluctance as a sign that they were ashamed of their language.

Sandoval (2017) pointed out the influence of the broader society on young people in Mexico as they learned quickly that there is a hierarchy of language domains. Indigenous languages are used in informal situations and contexts such as family, tradition, and agriculture, while Spanish is the language of society and public affairs and is used in many spheres including education, law, science, and politics. English is the language of the elite and is used in domains of pop culture, tourism, technology, and business.

Messing (2009) also mentioned this hierarchy of languages in her study on Tlaxcalan youth. They were aware of, navigated, and appropriated ideologies surrounding the English, Spanish and Nahuatl languages in their daily lives, where the first is portrayed as global, the second national and modern, and the third anti-modern. The young adults reported sometimes feeling shame in speaking Nahuatl, which some overcame later in life. Others who lacked proficiency expressed insecurity when speaking it. Grandparents were key actors in transmitting Nahuatl to the younger generation, especially when there was a transmission break between the parent and child generations.

The linguistic landscape in Mexico greatly favours Spanish, relegating Indigenous languages to the traditional contexts. Messing (2003) reported that children in the rural Nahuatl-speaking community of Contla, Tlaxcala, perceived their inability to speak standard Spanish, and their Indigeneity, as markers of poverty and backwardness. This opinion was also commonly found among adults. The family circle is not always a haven for Indigenous languages in Mexico as some parents decide not to transmit their language



to their children, as seen in many Indigenous communities worldwide. These parents play a major role in disrupting the intergenerational transmission of their first language for fear it would mar young people's ability to speak the dominant language in a native-like manner. Families may not communicate their language to the younger generation to avoid a repeat of past discrimination they have faced in schools and in their personal lives (Knockwood, 2015; Gomashie, 2019a). Given their own negative language experiences, and the stigmatisation of Indigenous languages in mainstream society, adults may find it challenging to transmit their language to their children and communicate to them early on that speaking their Indigenous language is nothing to be ashamed of.

Predictors of learning and using Nahuatl do not favour children and youth. Messing (2003) reported that influencing factors for learning Nahuatl were the age of the person (the older the person, the greater the likelihood they spoke the language), communicative competence of family members (one parent not speaking the language may hinder intergenerational transmission) and the speakers' own linguistic orientation (whether they learned it from their grandparents or have partially or completely abandoned the language). The context of use was a determining factor, especially its use in private contexts and in interpersonal relationships. In such contexts, speaking Nahuatl became a habit, and occurred between interlocutors who shared mutual trust and tended to be of the same generation. In the limited contexts where cross-generational communication of Nahuatl occurred, Messing (2003) indicated that it usually happened between grandparents and younger relatives. Other studies on Indigenous languages have found that in the family circle, younger generations generally preferred to speak Spanish but used their Indigenous language the most with their grandparents (Pérez, Aideé Ramos &

Terborg (2018) on the Cora language; Gómez-Retana, Terborg & Estévez (2019) on Mazahua; Trujillo Tamez, Terborg & Velázquez (2007) on Otomí, Matlatzinca, Atzinca and Mixe languages; Garrido Cruz (2015) on Nahuatl).

The studies reviewed in this section portray the sociolinguistic environment of young people, and the different pressures affecting their language choices. The present work contributes to this existing knowledge with a focused study dedicated to young people in a Nahuatl community. Different from previous studies, the current research provides detailed information on the interaction of young people with multiple interlocutors, accompanied by both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of their linguistic attitudes.

### 3.3 Methodology

#### 3.3.1 Research Setting

The present study occurred during my one-semester research stay at the Department of Applied Linguistics in the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Through the extensive social and academic networks of Professor Roland Terborg, the project supervisor, I visited several Nahuatl-speaking communities, including the community of interest, Santiago Tlaxco. It is a rural agricultural-based Nahuatl-speaking community of about 1700 inhabitants. The town has 4 schools: a bilingual pre-school (104 pupils), a bilingual primary school (288 pupils), junior high school (143 pupils) and a senior high school (70 pupils). Participants were recruited from the junior and senior high schools. The directors of the two schools received an explanation of the project and informed the teachers who then distributed the parental consent forms to their pupils for

parental signatures. Upon receipt of the signed parental consent forms authorizing participation in the study, students were asked to sign an assent form indicating their willingness to participate (see Appendices for parent consent and student assent forms). The study was conducted on the school grounds (either in the classroom or staff room) for all but 3 participants. For the latter, the study protocol was administered in the office of the researcher. The primary inclusion criteria for choosing the participants were that they were at least 12 years old but younger than 18 years and spoke Nahuatl or Spanish or both languages.

### 3.3.2 Instrument

The study employed a mixed method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data were collected through questionnaires while the qualitative data were gathered from semi-structured interviews. All participants were asked to complete two questionnaires; one on language background, and the other on language use and attitudes. All were administered in Spanish. Students were informed that there were no right or wrong answers, and their answers should be based on their opinions.

The background questionnaire elicited information on three main areas:

- Demography such as age, gender, level of studies, birthplace, and current place of residence;
- Linguistic background such as first language(s), parents' first language(s), and whether they can converse in Nahuatl or Spanish; and

- Linguistic proficiency in Spanish and Nahuatl: self-assessment of language skills in comprehension, reading, speaking and writing based on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *no muy bien* (very poor) to *muy bien* (interpreted as exceptional)

The purpose of this questionnaire was to provide the descriptive characteristics of the participants; the results are presented in the next subsection (i.e. the participant section) of this paper.

The second questionnaire, the language-use-and-attitude questionnaire (see Appendices), was adapted and expanded from several previous studies (Choi 2005; Gomashie 2019b; Rubin 1974). A version for adults was used in Chapters 2 of this thesis. The student version had two parts; one on linguistic choices, and the other on attitudes. In the first part, participants had to indicate which language(s) (whether Nahuatl, Spanish, or both languages) they used in interactions with different interlocutors in various settings. In all, there were 30 questions covering language practices in the home/family sphere (8 items), community (13 items) and personal context (9 items on emotional states):

- Family: mother, father, younger brothers, younger sisters; older brothers, older sisters, grandparents and other relatives;
- Community: friends (male), friends (female), schoolmates, teachers, doctor, nurses, pastor or priest, preschoolers (aged 0-5), children (aged 6-12), adolescents (aged 13-17), adults (18-60 years), elderly (older than 60 years) and strangers; and
- Emotional states: jokes, intimacy, persuasion, anger, fear, joy or happiness, sadness, regret or remorse, and insults

The results are presented as raw numbers and percentages.

In the second part, participants were asked to rate how strongly they (dis)agreed, using a 7-point Likert scale, with a series of 10 attitudinal statements on:

- the importance of speaking Nahuatl/Spanish well
- wanting others to think they are good speakers of Nahuatl/Spanish
- the importance of Nahuatl/Spanish for their community
- the importance for community members to learn and speak Nahuatl/Spanish well
- liking speaking Nahuatl/Spanish
- liking hearing people speak Nahuatl/Spanish
- the incorporation of Nahuatl/Spanish in the school curricula
- wanting Nahuatl/Spanish to be compulsory in junior or senior high school
- the appreciation for Nahuatl/Spanish
- the discrimination against Nahuatl/Spanish

The means and standard deviations of the participant responses were calculated and are presented in the results.

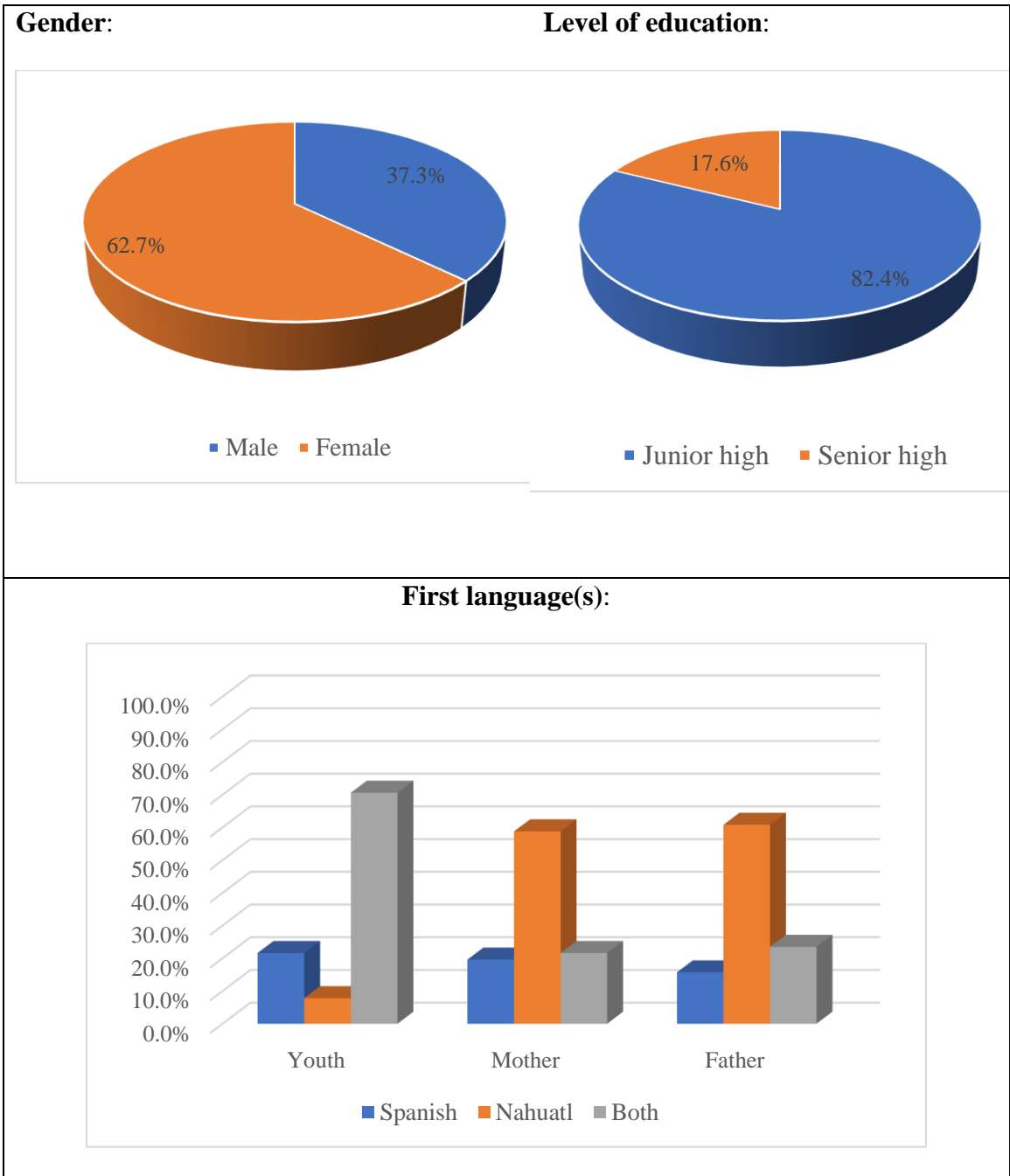
Additionally, the interview provided a qualitative analysis to gain insights into youth language choices. It covered similar themes as the language attitude portion of the language questionnaire. It also explores participants' perspectives on the (lack of) use of Nahuatl in the community, and the future of Nahuatl. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and later transcribed. After the information from the background questionnaire is presented in the Participants section, the results from the language use and attitudes questionnaire will be presented in the Results section, followed by the findings from the

recorded interviews. All findings are discussed through the lens of language shift and maintenance.

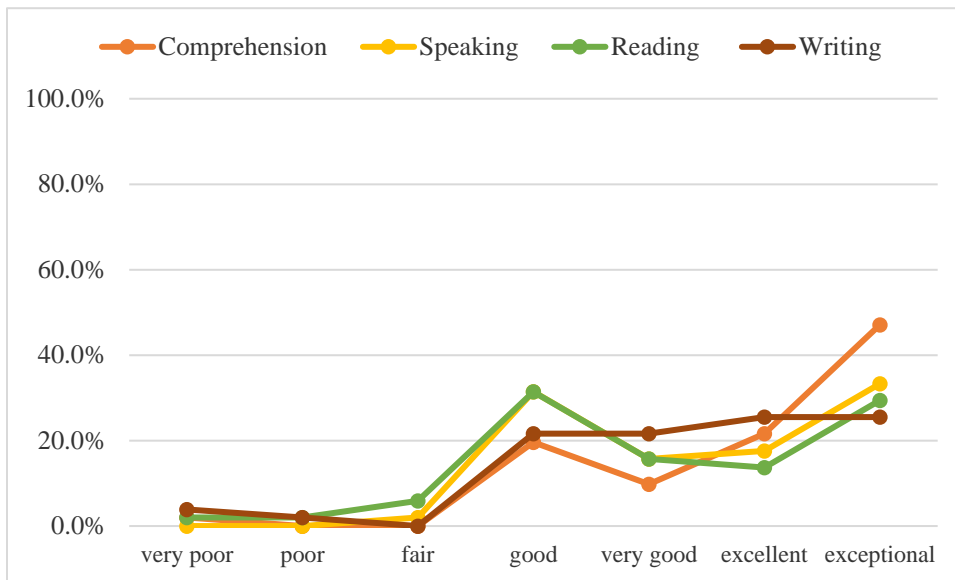
### 3.3.3 Participants

The 51 students (aged 12-17) who participated in the study were bilingual speakers of Spanish and Nahuatl, with a mean age of 13 years: 32 were female and 19 were male. Most of the participants (42 of them), attended the junior high school while the remaining 9 were in senior high school. The majority (36) of them reported Nahuatl and Spanish as their joint first languages, while 11 and 4 reported their first language as Spanish or Nahuatl, respectively. Their parents' first language was mainly Nahuatl (see Figure 3.1 for the summary of the characteristics of the participants). The majority of the participants self-reported linguistic skills ranging from good to exceptional, in Nahuatl and Spanish: more considered themselves to have exceptional skills in Spanish than in Nahuatl (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). All but 11 participants recorded Tlaxco as their place of birth while only 2 individuals were not currently residing there. The latter commuted to school from the neighbouring Nahuatl-speaking towns of Tepetla (15-minute walk) and Chiconcuaatla (30 minutes by bus). Only 2 bilinguals (1 male, 1 female) participated in the interview as a result of availability and convenience. Both had parents whose first language was Nahuatl. The male participant, who I refer to as 'Dionisio' (age 16), was a senior high school student who learned Nahuatl at home, while the female participant, 'Gloria' (age 13), a junior high school student, learned Spanish at home but learned Nahuatl from her grandparents.

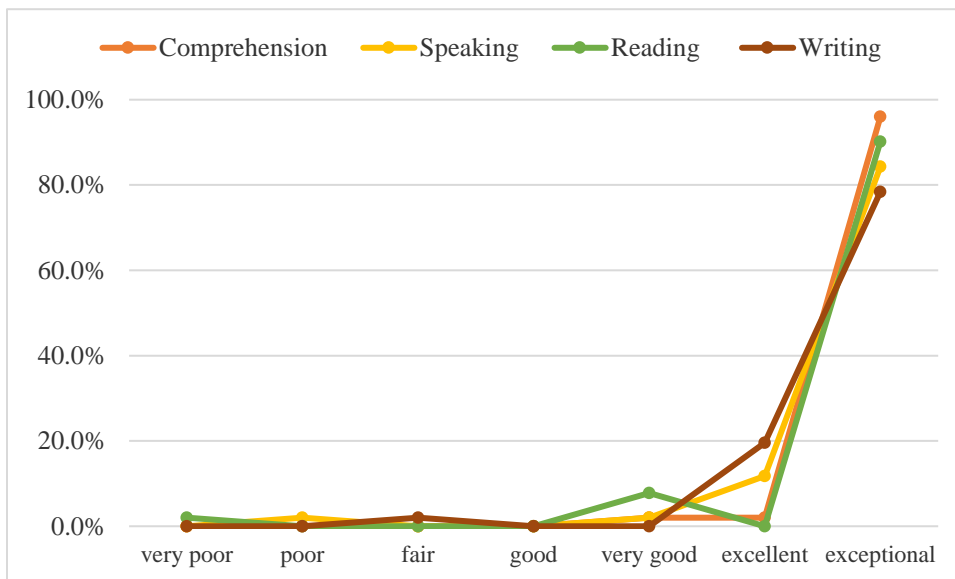
**Figure 3.1 Characteristics of young people**



**Figure 3.2 Self-assessment of four language skills in Nahuatl**



**Figure 3.3 Self-assessment of four language skills in Spanish**



### 3.4 Results and Discussion

The results on language use are presented in Table 3.1 in both raw numbers and percentages, which allows for comparisons with future studies not only on the same and neighbouring Nahuatl-speaking communities but also other Indigenous communities



internationally. Table 1 provides results for the first research question: what are the language use patterns of young people? In the family context (Q1 to Q8), most young people preferred to communicate with their parents in both languages, while a small fraction (< 20%) used only Nahuatl with them.

**Table 3.1 Youth language use**

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both	Total
<b>Home:</b>				
1. Mother	10 (19.6%)	9 (17.6%)	32 (62.7%)	51 (100%)
2. Father	18 (37.5%)	9 (18.8%)	21 (43.8%)	48 (100%)
3. Younger brothers	25 (67.6%)	1 (2.7%)	11 (29.7%)	37 (100%)
4. Younger sisters	21 (67.7%)	1 (3.2%)	9 (29%)	31 (100%)
5. Older brothers	17 (51.5%)	7 (21.2%)	9 (27.3%)	33 (100%)
6. Older sisters	11 (42.3%)	3 (11.5%)	12 (46.2%)	26 (100%)
7. Grandparents	10 (21.7%)	20 (43.5%)	16 (34.8%)	46 (100%)
8. Other relatives	15 (30%)	8 (16%)	27 (54%)	50 (100%)
<b>Community:</b>				
9. Friends (male)	15 (30.6%)	2 (4.1%)	32 (65.3%)	49 (100%)
10. Friends (female)	26 (53.1%)	1 (2%)	22 (44.9%)	49 (100%)
11. Schoolmates	14 (27.5%)	3 (5.9%)	34 (66.7%)	51 (100%)
12. Teachers	50 (98%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	51 (100%)
13. Doctor	49 (98%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	50 (100%)
14. Nurses	49 (98%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	50 (100%)
15. Pastor/Priest	42 (84%)	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	50 (100%)
16. Children (0-5 years)	28 (56%)	6 (12%)	16 (32%)	50 (100%)
17. Children (6-12 years)	12 (23.5%)	5 (9.8 %)	34 (66.7%)	51 (100%)
18. Adolescents (13-17 years)	13 (25.5%)	1 (2%)	37 (72.5%)	51 (100%)
19. Adults (18-60 years)	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	42 (84%)	50 (100%)
20. Elderly (> 60 years)	5 (10%)	11 (22%)	34 (68%)	50 (100%)
21. Strangers	30 (66.7%)	0 (0%)	15 (33.3%)	45 (100%)
<b>Emotional states:</b>				
22. Jokes	26 (51%)	2 (5.9%)	22 (43.1%)	51 (100%)
23. Intimacy	31 (60.8)	2 (3.9%)	18 (35.3%)	51 (100%)
24. Persuasion	32 (65.3%)	3 (6.1%)	14 (28.6%)	49 (100%)
25. Anger	21 (42.9%)	12 (24.5%)	16 (32.7%)	49 (100%)
26. Fear	25 (50%)	6 (12%)	19 (38%)	50 (100%)
27. Joy/Happiness	26 (52%)	4 (8%)	20 (40%)	50 (100%)
28. Sadness	32 (64%)	7 (14%)	11 (22%)	50 (100%)
29. Regret	26 (53.1%)	7 (14.3%)	16 (32.7%)	49 (100%)
30. Insult	9 (18.8)	17 (35.4%)	22 (45.8%)	48 (100%)

In their interactions with siblings, participants reportedly used Spanish the most with all their siblings, with the exception of their older sisters. With the latter, communicating in both languages was the preferred option. The use of only Nahuatl was almost non-existent with younger siblings (less than 4%) but a bit more prevalent with older siblings (not more than 22%). Consistent with other studies (Messing, 2003; Hill, 1998; Mojica Lagunas, 2019), grandparents were the only interlocutors with whom the youth preferentially used Nahuatl. Participants reported preferring bilingual usage with other relatives, with Nahuatl being the least used. Taken together, these results indicate that the home or family as a private, informal and personal domain is not exclusive to Nahuatl but co-exists with Spanish.

In the community setting, beginning with interactions with peers, there was a difference in the preferred language with male friends (i.e. both languages) when compared to female friends, with whom Spanish was mostly used. Bilingual usage was the norm for communication with schoolmates. Spanish was exclusively used in formal situations with teachers (in the educational domain), and doctors and nurses (clinic). These professionals are not usually from the community. With pastors or priests (religion or place of worship), an overwhelming majority used only Spanish. This trend towards Spanish use with pastors or priests was dependent on the church they attended. In the Catholic Church, the services were mostly conducted in Spanish and the presiding official priest was not from the community, but rather with the parish in the municipality of Chiconcuautla. In the Pentecostal church I visited, Nahuatl was used exclusively. The presiding pastor was from the community and was a monolingual Nahuatl speaker. There are three other churches (another Pentecostal church, a Seventh Day Adventist church

and an evangelical church) but I did not have the opportunity to witness which languages were used in the services. The pastor of the other Pentecostal church was bilingual. Both pastors participated in another study on adult language use and attitudes.

With non-family interlocutors in the community, using both languages was the preferred choice of young people when speaking with people of all ages, with the exception of toddlers and preschoolers. With the latter groups, Spanish was the preferred language. It was surprising that participants preferred to use both languages with the elderly in the community, considering that the people with whom they used Nahuatl the most at home were their grandparents, who would often belong to the elderly generation. With strangers, Spanish was used predominantly, with no single case of Nahuatl use recorded. Overall, these results in the community or public domain indicate that there was no single context outside the home where Nahuatl was predominately used by young people, not even with the elders.

A similar finding was noted for the expression of emotions and feelings (Table 3.1). There was no emotional context in which Nahuatl was preferentially used. Instead, the common trend was to use Spanish (in 8 out of 9 emotions, except for insults), making it the language with which young people were most comfortable, most proficient and/or had the most emotional resonance (Dewaele, 2010). From the self-assessment of their language skills, it was observed that young people felt more proficient in Spanish than Nahuatl, as a majority rated their skills in Spanish as either excellent or exceptional (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). Referring to the first research question, their language patterns can be summarized as a predominant use of Spanish (10 interlocutors, and 8 emotional states), frequent bilingual usage (10 interlocutors and 1 emotional state) and limited or

minimal use of Nahuatl (1 interlocutor). A limitation of the study is that the results of self-reported bilingual usage do not allow us to determine if Nahuatl and Spanish were used in a balanced or unbalanced fashion. In contact situations, it is difficult to maintain a balance between shared or differentiated domains between dominant and minority languages (Fishman, 2001). In such situations, it is more challenging to maintain the minority language. In the case of the young people in Tlaxco, it seems likely that their bilingualism is unequally balanced in favour of Spanish based on their reported preference to use Spanish in most contexts. Moving on to the second research question on the attitudes of young people, the quantitative data are presented in Table 2, with the scores (mean and standard deviation) of participant responses. The young people generally had positive attitudes towards Nahuatl. They mostly agreed with the statement that it was important for them to speak Nahuatl well and they wanted to be perceived as good speakers of Nahuatl.

**Table 3.2 Young people's language attitudes towards Nahuatl and Spanish**

Statements	Nahuatl mean (SD)	Spanish mean (SD)	$r_s$
1. It is important for me to speak Nahuatl/Spanish well	6.34 (0.96)	6.54 (0.93)	0.14
2. I want others to think that I speak Nahuatl/Spanish very well	5.98 (1.15)	6.42 (1.01)	0.22
3. Nahuatl/Spanish is important for my community	6.76 (0.69)	6.50 (1.06)	0.02
4. It is important for my community to learn and speak Nahuatl/Spanish well	6.74 (0.8)	6.36 (1.32)	0.23
5. I like to speak Nahuatl/Spanish	6.28 (1.16)	6.68 (1.02)	0.17
6. I like to hear people speak Nahuatl/Spanish	6.56 (0.99)	6.59 (1.21)	0.6**
7. I would like the use of Nahuatl/Spanish in schools	6.63 (1.01)	6.68 (.71)	0.33*
8. Nahuatl/Spanish should be compulsory in junior or senior high school	4.62 (2.23)	5.32 (2.16)	0.49**
9. Nahuatl/Spanish is valued and respected	4.32 (2.17)	4.48 (2.50)	0.55**

10. People do not face discrimination for speaking Nahuatl/Spanish	4.64 (2.50)	5.90 (2.07)	0.51**
--	-------------	-------------	--------

*Note.* Score of 1 represents ‘totally disagree’, 2 = ‘mostly disagree’, 3 = ‘somewhat disagree’, 4 = ‘neither disagree nor agree’, 5 = ‘somewhat agree’, 6 = ‘mostly agree’ and 7 = ‘totally agree’.  $r_s$  is the correlation coefficient between the scores for Nahuatl and Spanish, for each statement. \* $p < 0.05$  and \*\* $p < 0.01$

The participants strongly agreed that Nahuatl was not only important to the community’s identity but that it was also important for members to learn and speak it well. They stated that they mostly liked speaking and hearing others speak Nahuatl, a positive attitude considering one of the common reasons for not speaking or abandoning Indigenous languages is not liking them.

For clarity, the statements associated with discrimination were edited into positive statements as shown in Table 3.2 (statements 9 and 10). The youth responses to these statements were neutral as they neither disagreed nor agreed. Additionally, while young people mostly agreed with the inclusion of Nahuatl at schools, they were however undecided with the statement that Nahuatl should be compulsory in junior or senior high schools. Comparing that result to the mean score of Spanish being compulsory in school, that of Spanish was slightly higher as participants somewhat agreed. The only other statement where Spanish ranked higher than Nahuatl in terms of agreement was the lack of discrimination facing people speaking either language (i.e. they somewhat agreed). From the results, young people did not express any negative attitudes to Nahuatl, suggesting that their infrequent use of Nahuatl is not attributed to any negative sentiments towards the language. However, there is not always a direct correlation between language attitudes and use. While negative attitudes may impede the transmission of a language,

positive attitudes do not necessarily translate into increased language use. An example that illustrates this involves secondary school students in Paraguay who were studied by Choi (2003). These students had positive attitudes towards Guaraní, describing it as a national identity marker and a source of pride which differentiated Paraguay from other Latin American countries. They also expressed a desire to speak and write the language well. However, most of them did not use Guaraní because they expressed themselves best in Spanish. The disconnect sometimes between positive language attitudes and language use is not unique to the students in Tlaxco, Paraguay, and other communities but is also a common finding among adults. For some adults, speaking one's Indigenous language and even being an activist for its maintenance does not guarantee intergenerational language transmission. For instance, some young Indigenous linguists who were involved in revitalising Indigenous languages did not communicate their language to their children (Córdova-Hernández, 2015; Messing, 2003).

We proceed to the interview component where the language experiences of Gloria and Dionisio, the two interviewees, are evaluated in order to gain additional insights into language use and attitudes of young people.

Gloria grew up in Spanish-speaking home although her parents can speak Nahuatl. She learned Nahuatl from her grandparents, the only people with whom she usually speaks the language. With everyone else, she felt more comfortable using Spanish, because it was "*más fácil*" (easier). An interview with her mother confirmed that she did not speak Nahuatl with her children when they were growing up. Gloria stated that she spoke Nahuatl but not much, expressing linguistic insecurity common to bilinguals about their less dominant language: "*lo entiendo pero casi no lo puedo pronunciar*" (I understand it

but can hardly pronounce it). This under-assessment was coming from someone I had witnessed on several occasions speaking Nahuatl with her older sister (the latter also mentioned that she learnt a bit from her grandparents but her speaking skills improved immensely thanks to her mother-in-law who is a monolingual speaker of Nahuatl).

Gloria, like many speakers, measured her Nahuatl language skills by that of the grandparent generation who are mostly monolingual speakers. For Gloria, not speaking the best Nahuatl like her grandparents, and codemixing Spanish with Nahuatl, a natural and common practice for bilinguals, qualified as not speaking the language well. Using elders' language skills as the yardstick was also noted for Nahuatl-speaking youth in Guerrero (Mojica Lagunas, 2019). They reported being embarrassed to speak Nahuatl in front of elders so as not to be mocked by them for their perceived lack of fluency; however, they felt comfortable to use it with their peers. Purist attitudes and criticism towards youths' speech have been well-documented in Indigenous communities, making them some of the major hurdles of language maintenance (Hill & Hill, 1986; Hill, 1998; Messing, 2003; Mojica Lagunas, 2019). Gloria did not indicate that she had ever been mocked for speaking her 'less-than-perfect' Nahuatl but her reluctance stemmed from her lack of fluency. While she may not have achieved the level of 'perfect' Nahuatl spoken by grandparents, her level of competence should still be valued by herself and community members. In the words of Taylor (2019, p. 209), speakers "benefit by understanding that partial competences are valuable parts of the multiplicity of languages and language varieties in their linguistic repertoire; they should not be stigmatized, imperfect as they may be at a given moment". The valuable lesson is that the use of Indigenous and minority languages in any form, including symbolically, should still be appreciated.

Dionisio acquired Nahuatl from childhood, with his father as a monolingual speaker of Nahuatl and his mother as a native speaker of Nahuatl who learned Spanish later, at age 15. He reported using both languages equally on a typical day depending on the language his interlocutors choose to address him. He did not express any linguistic insecurity in his Nahuatl. This is probably as a result of having a different linguistic background from Gloria. Growing up in a Nahuatl-speaking home, he acquired the language successfully and actively used it at home and in the community. He is an example of a best-case scenario for effective intergenerational transmission, and his case demonstrates the importance of the family, especially parents, in creating an environment where Nahuatl is consistently used. This contrasts with Gloria's background where there was no such language support or reinforcement at home. Despite that, she still became a speaker because of her grandparents, underlying their importance in maintaining Indigenous languages as noted in other studies (Hill, 1998; Mojica Lagunas, 2019). The cases of these two young people underscore the importance of family members in the intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl language and its usage in the community.

Apart from family being a motivator for Nahuatl language use, understanding insults and being able to defend one's self was another reason for learning Nahuatl. Gloria mentioned that during recess students spoke Nahuatl but used it for insults or swearwords: "*usan el náhuatl pero no para hablar asi normal, [lo] usan [para] groserías*" (they use Nahuatl but not for regular talk... they used it for insults/swearwords). In interviews with adults, a couple mentioned that their non-Nahuatl-speaking daughter became interested in learning Nahuatl after hearing some insults on the street. She would come home and ask for translations of what was said. Her



parents mentioned that not knowing Nahuatl in the community made one susceptible to insults. In the current study, Nahuatl was the second most chosen language for insults after bilingual usage. Insults serve as a boundary marker or in-group identity (Messing, 2003). For some young people, Nahuatl is a code or special language they use in communicating among themselves (Mojica Lagunas, 2019).

With regards to language attitudes towards Nahuatl, Gloria and Dionisio, just like other young people in the study, expressed favourable opinions and wanted it to be spoken by the community in the future. They gave recommendations on how to maintain and encourage use of the language. Of the two, Gloria was very preoccupied with pronouncing Nahuatl well and recommended that establishing a school to teach pronunciation of Nahuatl would be helpful for language maintenance: “[*establecer*] una escuela nada más para personas que ya quieren estudiar el náhuatl [para] enseñarles a pronunciarlo, leerlo y escribirlo” (to establish a school for people who want to learn Nahuatl to teach them to pronounce, read and write it). Furthermore, since young people in the study overwhelmingly agreed that Nahuatl was important for their community, a follow-up question to interviewees was “how would they feel if for some reason they lost the ability to speak Nahuatl?”. Gloria said she would not be able to communicate with her grandparents while Dionisio was indifferent: “*me daría igual, si no hablo náhuatl, hablo español*” (It won’t matter if I cannot speak Nahuatl, I will speak Spanish). For him, Nahuatl was a medium of communication and losing it was not a great loss so long as there was an alternative (i.e. Spanish). His statement highlights that Nahuatl loss in the community adversely affects monolingual speakers who would lose their principal medium of communication. Additionally, for young people like Dionisio, languages are a

means to an end and do not carry any special meaning. This pragmatism or apathy (depending on one's point of view) could work against the maintenance of Indigenous languages if young people do not feel a sense of ownership or identification with them (Sadembouo & Ngoumamba, 2015).

Gloria and Dionisio agreed that currently many people (i.e. adults) speak Nahuatl and that the language is in vibrant use, but they offered different future outlooks. Gloria was more optimistic. In response to the question: “do you think people will keep speaking Nahuatl?”, she responded, “*creo que sí, si se les enseña a los niños más chicos*” (I believe so, if the youngest children are taught it). She acknowledged that there is a need for intergenerational transmission for the long-term maintenance of Nahuatl to be feasible. Dionisio, on the other hand, offered a less favourable projection: “*no creo porque el español va avanzando...y no va a seguir el náhuatl, se va perdiendo con los tiempos y ya no nos interesa*” (I don't think so. Spanish continues to gain ground...while Nahuatl is not advancing. It will gradually disappear with time and we are no longer interested anymore). His blunt assessment of the language situation reflects the growing presence of Spanish in all spheres of usage, on one hand, and the declining presence of Nahuatl and a (perceived) lack of interest in Nahuatl by the community, on the other. The language patterns of young people seem to support Dionisio's statement that Spanish is dominating a linguistic landscape which was only Nahuatl-speaking decades ago. As a final note on language maintenance, both Gloria and Dionisio expressed the opinion that schools can play a major role in supporting Nahuatl language use and hoped in the next five or ten years, Nahuatl would still be spoken by people in Santiago Tlaxco.

Tied to the question on language maintenance is the issue of language shift, that is, why are people not learning or speaking Nahuatl. Gloria pointed to people's dislike for it: "*no les gusta hablar el náhuatl*" (they do not like speaking Nahuatl). This theme of 'not speaking an Indigenous language because one does not like it' is one of often-cited reasons by parents for not transmitting the language. Parents in Tlaxco expressed that their children were not interested in Nahuatl despite their best efforts. Córdova-Hernández (2015) documented similar attitudes, finding that adults felt that young people denied their culture because they had no desire to speak their Indigenous language. Additionally, family relatives reported that children requested that they be addressed in Spanish (Messing 2003). What the 'they don't like it' discourse among adults overlooks is that the younger generations may have internalized this attitude from the adult generations (be it from their parents, teachers, or society as a whole). Studies have shown that Indigenous peoples in Mexico may simply be reflecting the negative attitudes about their own languages as inferior to Spanish, considered to be the symbol of modernity (Sandoval, 2017) because that is what they encounter in the social environment. So, while Gloria never expressed any negative attitudes towards Nahuatl, and had said earlier that she liked speaking and hearing others speak Nahuatl, she was ambivalent about the presence of Nahuatl in media. She was asked if she would like radio and television programs in Nahuatl:

- Interviewer:     *¿Te gustaría si hay programas de radio y de televisión en náhuatl?*  
 (Would you like it if there were radio and television programs in Nahuatl?)
- Gloria:            [Makes sound in the throat indicating 'no']
- Interviewer:     *¿No? ¿Por qué?* (No? Why?)
- Gloria:            *No. Me da pena* (No. I am embarrassed)
- Interviewer:     *¿Por qué?* (Why?)
- Gloria:            *No me gusta* (I don't like it)

After confirming several times that she would not like television and radio programs, the interviewer asked if she would like to see, one day, telenovela series in Nahuatl, and she responded unexcitedly, “*quién sabe*” (who knows/who can tell). Her response suggests either she would prefer not to see the series in Nahuatl, or she is doubtful it will ever happen or both. The ambivalence displayed by Gloria in her contradictory statements about Nahuatl has been noted in several studies (Hill & Hill, 1986; Messing, 2003, 2009).

For Dionisio, feelings of shame and discrimination were some of the discouraging factors for speaking Nahuatl: “*a algunas personas les da vergüenza...en otras ciudades los discriminan por hablar náhuatl*” (some people are ashamed [of speaking Nahuatl]...In other cities, they are discriminated against for speaking Nahuatl). These reasons were also mentioned in interviews with adults. Many of them mentioned that some people became ashamed of speaking Nahuatl after working in the city for some time. They felt that those community members were being pretentious as they tried to adopt an urban identity by denying Nahuatl. Discrimination faced in the city also played a role in minimizing Nahuatl and Indigenous languages, making speakers feel they are inferior to Spanish. Some adults reported having faced discrimination in the city for speaking Nahuatl. This linguistic racism or linguicism, to use the term of Skutnabb-Kangas (2015), is not unique to Mexico but a common occurrence in many countries with Indigenous populations. Others mentioned the negative environment outside the community made them reluctant to use the language elsewhere. These negative attitudes give speakers the impression that their languages are not worthy outside their community.

The interviews with Gloria and Dionisio provide valuable insights into the linguistic use and language attitudes of bilingual youth in Tlaxco. The interviews highlight the complex

interplay between language attitudes about Nahuatl and Spanish, and the potential impact of these attitudes on language maintenance and shift. It was also observed that there are interpersonal similarities and differences regarding the use of Nahuatl in the community, and the future of Nahuatl.

### 3.5 Conclusions

This is the first study to assess language use and attitudes among the young people in Tlaxco. We found that, for young people, the norm is to either use Spanish or both Spanish and Nahuatl when communicating with interlocutors, while Spanish was the preferred language for expressing emotions. One of the main findings is that grandparents play a major role in Nahuatl language maintenance, filling the vacuum left by parents. Apart from them, there were no other interactions where Nahuatl was predominately used. Another significant finding is that Nahuatl language use is declining while Spanish use is on the rise, that is, to repeat Dionisio's words, "*el español va avanzando...y no va a seguir el náhuatl*". While there is still active bilingual use in the community, the balance may continue to tilt in favour of Spanish. A future study could test this prediction by administering a language use questionnaire with an expanded choice of language options: only Nahuatl, only Spanish, equally Nahuatl and Spanish, mostly Nahuatl, and mostly Spanish.

Taken together, the results of the current study indicate a need to expand the domains in which Nahuatl is used, starting with the home front. Parents, not only grandparents, have a vital role in Indigenous language transmission. Efforts to expand the domains of Nahuatl use have begun at the local level. An example is the national association, Unión Nacional de Traductores Indígenas (National Union of Indigenous Translators) (UNTI),

that trains and commissions Indigenous speakers to create and translate materials into Indigenous languages. Over the past three years, this association has funded a project in Tlaxco whereby local translators are translating religious materials into Nahuatl. Previously, these same translators, in collaboration with a different organization, worked on dubbing video Bible stories in Nahuatl which they hope to screen to the public soon. What makes their work of particular importance is that they are generating much-needed materials in the Nahuatl variety (Northern Puebla) spoken in this region. Students and parents alike mentioned that the textbooks provided by the government use a different variety than the one spoken in Tlaxco. Hopefully, there will also be radio and television programs in Nahuatl that are easily accessible to the public in Tlaxco.

This study lays the groundwork for future research into the evolution of youth language use and attitudes in Tlaxco. It also sets the foundation for comparative studies on youth and adult language experiences for other Indigenous communities in Mexico and other countries. The current results show that Tlaxco is at the early stage of Nahuatl language shift where young people's preferred language of communication is Spanish.

### 3.6 References

- Austin, P. K., & Sallabank, J. (2011). Introduction. In P. K. Austin & J. Sallabank (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages* (pp. 1-24). Cambridge University Press.
- Choi, J. K. (2003) Language attitudes and the future of bilingualism: The case of Paraguay. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 6(2), 81-94.
- Choi, J. K. (2005). Bilingualism in Paraguay: Forty years after Rubin's study. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 26, 233–248.
- Córdova-Hernández, L. (2015). Seeking new generations of speakers: Ambivalent processes in the revitalisation of Indigenous languages in the south of Mexico. In

- J. Cru (Ed.), *Linguapax review 2015: The role of youth in language revitalisation* (pp. 87-96). Linguapax International.
- Dewaele, J. M. (2010). *Language and emotions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Fishman, J. A. (2001). Why is it so hard to save a threatened language? In J. A. Fishman (Ed.), *Can threatened languages be saved? Reversing language shift* (pp. 1-22). Multilingual Matters.
- Flors, A. (2015). Young people and languages in Catalonia: The state of the question. In J. Cru (Ed.), *Linguapax review 2015: The role of youth in language revitalisation* (pp. 30-42). Linguapax International.
- Garrido Cruz, G. (2015). *Las lenguas indígenas de la Huasteca Poblana: Historia, Contacto y Vitalidad*. Programa de Desarrollo Cultural de la Huasteca.
- Gomashie, G. A. (2019a). Kanien'keha / Mohawk Indigenous language revitalisation efforts in Canada. *McGill Journal of Education*, 54(1), 151-171.
- Gomashie, G. A. (2019b). Language vitality of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea: Language use and attitudes. *Humanities*, 8(1), 33. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h8010033>
- Gómez-Retana, D., Terborg, R. & Estévez, S. (2019). En busca de los factores particulares de desplazamiento de lenguas indígenas de México. Comparación de dos casos: la comunidad náhuatl Cuacuila y la comunidad mazahua. *LIAMES: Línguas Indígenas mericanas*, 19, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.20396/liames.v19i1.8655173>
- Hill, J. H. & Hill, K. C. (1986). *Speaking Mexicano: Dynamics of syncretic language in Central Mexico*. University of Arizona Press.
- Hill, J. H. (1998). Don Francisco Marquez survives: A meditation on monolingualism. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 132, 167-182.
- Knockwood, I. (2015). *Out of the depths: The experiences of Mi'kmaw children at the Indian residential school at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia (4th Ed.)*. Fernwood Publishing
- Krauss, M. (1992). The world's languages in crisis. *Language*, 68(1), 4-10.
- Lewis, M. P. & Simon, G. F. (2010). Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, 55(2), 103-120.

- Messing, J. (2003). *Ideological multiplicity in discourse: Language shift and bilingual schooling in Mexico* (Publication No. 3089987) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Messing, J. (2007). Multiple ideologies and competing discourses: Language shift in Tlaxcala, Mexico. *Language in Society*, 36(4), 555–577.
- Messing, J. (2009) Ambivalence and ideology among Mexicano youth in Tlaxcala, Mexico. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 8(5), 350-364.
- Mojica Lagunas, R. (2019). Language keyholders for Mexicano: The case of an intergenerational community in Coatepec de los Coasteles, Mexico. In T.L. McCarty, S. E. Nicholas & G. Wigglesworth (Eds.), *A world of Indigenous languages: Policies, pedagogies and prospects for language reclamation* (pp. 214-234). Multilingual Matters.
- Novak Lukanovic, S. (2015). Young people's attitudes to the use and meaning of language in border areas of Slovenia. In J. Cru (Ed.), *Linguapax review 2015: The role of youth in language revitalisation* (pp. 43-55). Linguapax International.
- Pérez, L., Aideé Ramos, V. & Terborg, R. (2018). Diferentes etapas en el desplazamiento de una lengua indígena: estudio comparativo entre las comunidades de Jesús María, Nayarit y San Juan Juquila Mixes, Oaxaca. *LIAMES: Línguas Indígenas Americanas*, 18(2), 367-380. <https://doi.org/10.20396/liames.v18i2.8653689>
- Rubin, J. (1974). *Bilingüismo nacional en el Paraguay*. Instituto Indigenista Interamericano.
- Sadembouo, E. & Ngoumamba, L. (2015). Young people and the revitalisation of Indigenous languages: The case of Cameroun. In J. Cru (Ed.), *Linguapax review 2015: The role of youth in language revitalisation* (pp. 66-75). Linguapax International.
- Sandoval Arenas, C. (2017). Displacement and revitalization of the Nahuatl language in the High Mountains of Veracruz, Mexico. *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 16(1), 66–81.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2015). Linguicism. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1460>
- Taylor, S. K. (2019). Multilingualism. In N. Schmitt & M. P. H. Rodgers (Eds.), *An introduction to applied linguistics* (3rd ed., pp. 205-220). Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- Trujillo Tamez, A. I., Terborg, R., & Velázquez, V. (2007). La vitalidad de las lenguas indígenas en México: El caso de las lenguas otomí, matlazinca, atzinca y mixe. In L. Morgenthaler García & M. Schrader-Kniffki (Eds.), *La Romania en interacción* (pp. 611-629). Iberoamericana Vervuert.



UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (UNESCO). (2003).  
Language vitality and endangerment. UNESCO.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Language Attitudes: Insights into Language Shift and Language Maintenance of Nahuatl

This chapter explores language shift and language maintenance of Nahuatl through attitudinal interviews with adults.

#### 4.1 Background and Previous Literature

This paper explores language attitudes towards Nahuatl in Santiago Tlaxco (commonly known as Tlaxco), a small rural community in Mexico, with the aim of understanding language shift and language maintenance in this community. To achieve our objective, the research questions of interest are: 1) why do Nahuatl speakers choose (not) to speak and/or transmit their language? and 2) what measures do speakers propose to maintain their language? Investigating language attitudes is a key area of interest in the fields of language revitalisation, language shift and maintenance, and endangered languages, among others. Studies have explored whether there is a direct relationship between language attitudes and language use or behaviour and how they are important to families and communities maintaining their languages (King, 2000). Examples of language attitudes include language being considered a cultural asset (or not), its importance (or not) to a group or community's identity, (lack of) acceptance of bi/multilingualism, majority language speakers' attitudes towards the minority language, and minority language speakers' attitudes (positive or negative) towards their own language (Bradley, 2013).

An example of the power of language attitudes is the myth that bilingualism is bad for children (Kupisch & Rothman, 2018). This myth has existed for decades and is still

pervasive today. Many people believe that bilingualism has negative effects on children's cognitive and linguistic abilities, especially in situations where the minority language is not considered a high-status language, such as Nahuatl in Mexico. This misperception has led parents, sometimes encouraged by teachers and psychologists, to speak only the majority language to their children (Kupisch & Rothman, 2018). Even parents with positive attitudes towards their minority language often still prefer that their children fully acquire the majority language before learning another language. Additionally, minority language speakers may portray attitudes that influence positively or negatively the maintenance of their language. A positive influence would be if the language is considered important to their identity and heritage while examples of negative influence such as purist and devaluing attitudes could favour language shift. While purists love their language and want to guard against any form of mixing or 'contamination' from the majority language, they may discourage younger speakers, who are likely to codeswitch or codemix, from using the minority language (Dorian, 1994). In contrast, community members may disparage their language for a perceived lack of utility, importance and aestheticism. In such a situation, the process of language shift is accelerated as parents and caretakers prefer to teach their children the majority language, considered more economically viable, more beautiful, more relevant or more important. Use of the minority language is sometimes restricted to adults, in-group interactions, and/or intimate or private settings such as the home.

The attitudes of the majority language speakers could also be detrimental to language maintenance as they primarily contribute to the perception that minority languages are inferior or impoverished; perceptions that are internalized by some community members

of the minority language. Some speakers of the majority language mock, mistreat or discriminate against minority language speakers. Even in cases where there is legislation supporting minority language use in the broader society, its implementation or enforcement may be lacklustre. Negative attitudes about minority languages may be so widespread and institutionalized in the main society that speakers of minority languages, even young ones, recognize that the majority language has the most power.

Attitude is defined as “a learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way” (Allport, 1954, cited in Garret, 2010, p. 19). Attitudes to language are subjective, complex, multi-dimensional, emotional, dynamic, cultural, and situationally-based (Moreno Fernández, 2000; Choi, 2003). They may change over time and are dependent on circumstances. Garret (2010) shows how language attitudes are learned and “function as both input into and output from social action [especially in] areas such as educational research and language planning” (p. 21). He further indicates that people’s personal experiences and their social environment are major sources of influence on attitudes and that attitudes have three main components, namely cognition, affect and behaviour. The cognitive component refers to the people’s beliefs or judgments about an object, the affective aspect refers to people’s feelings (favourable or unfavourable) towards an object, and the behavioural aspect refers to people’s actions, which may or may not be consistent with the cognitive and affective components of attitudes. To paraphrase Garrett’s (2010) illustration of these three components, we can use the example of a history student interested in learning Nahuatl to better understand Aztecan culture. This student is eager to read ancient manuscripts written in Nahuatl and enrolls in a Nahuatl language course. The cognitive component is seen in the student’s

belief that learning Nahuatl will give her a deeper understanding of Aztec culture while her eagerness to read manuscripts in Nahuatl reflects the affective component. The action the student takes in enrolling in a Nahuatl language course represents the behavioural component.

Positive attitudes are generally thought to influence language usage or behaviour positively, while negative attitudes may deter language use and maintenance and could eventually lead to language shift. However, several studies have shown that having positive attitudes or reactions towards a language does not necessarily translate into language use (King, 2000; Baker, 1992; Novak Lukanovic, 2015). Choi (2003) also reviewed a number of studies where language attitudes and conduct were inconsistent with each other (Fishman (1966) on immigrants in the United States; Brudner & White (1979) on Irish parents; Lyon & Elis (1991) on Welsh parents; and Hornberger (1988a) on Quechua-Spanish bilinguals in Peru). In these studies, participants expressed positive attitudes towards their native languages (all minority languages) such as pride in their ancestral language and culture and a desire to transmit the minority language to their children. However, very few spoke their native language or used it with their children. Messing (2003) expressed initial surprise that “a teacher at an indigenous bilingual school, who espoused and loudly proclaimed pro-indigenous stance, who spent hours organizing workshops for her fellow teachers to produce curriculum in Mexicano, ...[did] not speak Mexicano to her children?” (pp. 137-138). Similarly, in my fieldwork in Tlaxco, I became acquainted with Indigenous linguists working on translating Spanish materials into Nahuatl but who would not speak Nahuatl with their child. This

contradiction or ambivalence between language attitudes and language use is quite common (Hill & Hill, 1986).

An important concept closely related to attitudes is ideology, which is defined as “a patterned but naturalised set of assumptions and values about how the world works, a set which is associated with a particular social or cultural group” (Garret, 2010, p. 35). In the case of language ideologies, the often-cited definition is that they are “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). Since then, there have been various definitions<sup>3</sup> but they often share common words or keywords such as speaker beliefs or feelings, language or its varieties, language use or discursive practices, and society (Piller, 2015; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Irvine, 2012; Kroskrity, 2018). A more recent definition is “a system of ideas, presuppositions, beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding languages, their status, and their use in society” (Zhou, 2019, p. 36). Language ideologies are inextricably linked to the broader society and are born from, or influenced by, people’s social experiences. An example is the common language ideology which privileges standard languages over non-standard ones. Hence, language ideologies can influence language attitudes in the case where speakers would be less likely to transmit their language intergenerationally if they believe it will negatively affect the younger generation cognitively and impede their advancement in society. Society tends to privilege certain speech varieties, especially standard and literate speech, over others: for

---

<sup>3</sup> According to Zhou (2019), a definition of language ideology has been “elusive...in the relevant literature in Linguistics [where] scholars often use the term with much assumption but without sufficient definition” (p. 27). This makes its definition complex.

example, “[l]anguage mixing, codeswitching, and creoles are often evaluated as indicating less than full linguistic capabilities” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 63). This feeds into the discourse of linguistic purism and linguistic correctness which blocks any form of innovation.

There have several studies exploring language attitudes (or ideologies) in Indigenous communities in Latin America. Hornberger (1988b) found five themes in the interviews in her study of Quechua in Puno, Peru, namely devaluation of Quechua, valuing of Spanish, appreciating multilingualism, valuing Quechua and unconscious loyalty to Quechua. Her study found that some Quechua speakers denied being able to speak Quechua because they were ashamed. This feeling of shame largely stemmed from a desire to speak Spanish in order to integrate and advance in the Spanish-dominated broader society. The general sentiment of such speakers was that to be Spanish (or mainstream), one had to deny or at least minimize Quechua. Secondly, the attraction to Spanish was primarily related to the immense socioeconomic and communicative advantages associated with the language in the national society. Furthermore, the inaccessibility of Spanish learning resources also meant that community members would have to expend more effort in learning it. The author also identified an appreciation of multilingualism, where speakers acknowledged that both Spanish and Quechua were necessary, and that Quechua should not be lost. The final theme was valuing Quechua because speaking it came to them naturally and they had confidence in their speaking ability. Additionally, Quechua was the preferred language for interactions in private, informal, humorous, and communal contexts. It was the language of solidarity and intimacy in the community. Speakers also expressed the belief that Quechua had more

expressive and aesthetic value than Spanish. The study also identified an unconscious and unshakeable loyalty to Quechua because speakers did not consider the possibility that their language would ever disappear.

King (2000) explored through interviews how language ideologies inform language behaviour and language attitudes among the Quichua<sup>4</sup>-speaking Saraguro people in the southern Ecuadorian Andes. King (2000) identified two main ideologies: pro-Quichua and anti-Quichua. In the first case, participants expressed their loyalty to Quichua in signalling its importance as a symbol of Saraguro identity, a source of emotional connection to the past, for its aesthetic value as well as its communicative value with elders. Concerning the anti-Quichua ideology, parents felt that their children learning Quichua would impede their Spanish learning and that children naturally preferred to speak Spanish. A related negative ideology was that Indigenous languages were linguistically inferior to dominant languages such as Spanish and English. This ideology was also reflected in the linguistic insecurity displayed by speakers when they felt their Quichua speaking ability was inadequate. Other speakers, especially elders, were perceived by younger generations to have internalized the notion that Quichua was linguistically inferior, hence they did not want them to learn it. Based on the mixed messages surrounding Quichua, King noted that any efforts to revitalise a language requires a frank and realistic conversation about what it entails. While community members may express support for language revitalisation projects, their actual

---

<sup>4</sup> Quichua is the variety spoken in Ecuador while Quechua is spoken in Peru.



participation may be a different matter. She illustrated this dilemma by referring to the example of Indigenous languages in Alaska as outlined by Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998, p. 63). where community members would readily say yes to preserving their language and culture although:

[t]he underlying and lingering fears, anxieties, and insecurities over traditional language and culture suggest that the answer may really be, 'No'. What does a 'Yes' answer mean? We often find those who vote 'Yes' to 'save the language and culture' expect someone else to 'save' it for others, with no personal effort, commitment, or involvement of the voter.

Community members may agree in principle that their language be preserved but may not be willing to fully commit themselves to the process/project.

Turning now to the context of Mexico, Hansen (2010) identified three discourses or narratives about Nahuatl in Hueyapan, Morelos, reflecting the prevailing language attitudes, which he classified as traditionalist, purist, and developmentalist. The traditionalist discourse was generally held by the older generation who valued Nahuatl and expressed a desire for it to be spoken while recognizing that more and more of the younger generations were not speaking the language. In such a situation, both the older and younger generations blamed each other for the lack of intergenerational transmission. Young people felt it is the responsibility of adults to teach them the language while adults mentioned that young people had not made enough efforts to learn the language (Gal, 1979; Kulick, 1992). The "in-between" generation (aged 30–60), although they speak Nahuatl, felt linguistically insecure, due to using some Spanish mixed with their Nahuatl. This situation feeds directly into the purist discourse where purists are highly critical towards any form of mixing with Spanish and may discourage less proficient speakers. The third discourse questions the usefulness of learning Nahuatl compared to a more

global language like English. In the community, Spanish was the commonly used language for public functions while the use of Nahuatl declined, as it was only reserved for private and intimate contexts (Hansen, 2010). The older the speaker the more likely that they spoke or could converse in Nahuatl, with the oldest speakers (aged 60 and older) being the most Nahuatl-dominant. The younger speakers (younger than 30 years) were more likely to be passive speakers.

Hill & Hill's (1986) seminal work on the sociolinguistic situation of the Nahuatl-speaking population in Malinche communities of Central Mexico also noted these purist attitudes about Nahuatl. While the older generations were critical of the mixed or syncretic Nahuatl spoken in the community, the younger generations expressed insecurities about the Nahuatl they spoke. While purism can sometimes positively impact language revitalisation efforts if there is an interest in the language, Hill and Hill recognise that it could impede language survival efforts, especially when Nahuatl was seen as a language of "little economic utility" and "many people question [its] instrumental value" (p. 140). In these communities, Spanish was the functional language in public and formal domains while Nahuatl was the language of informal and domestic domains, emotional attachment and kinship ties.

Messing (2007) studied language ideologies and competing discourses in the Nahuatl-speaking communities of Tlaxcala through ethnography and discourse analysis. She identified three main competing discourses or attitudes informing language use of Spanish and Nahuatl: 1) *salir adelante*, to forge ahead socioeconomically), 2) *menosprecio*, the devaluation of Indigenous identity and 3) *pro-indígena*, a pro-

Indigenous and positive attitude. She also identified purist attitudes towards language use mentioned by Hill and Hill (1986).

Gomashie (2020) found that while the bilingual youth in Santiago Tlaxco generally expressed positive attitudes towards Nahuatl, this was not reflected in their language practices. Out of 21 possible interlocutors, most young persons preferred to use Nahuatl only with their grandparents. In 20 other interactions, their language use was evenly split between only Spanish on one hand and both languages on the other. In spite of their low usage of Nahuatl, young speakers stated that it was important for them and their community members to speak Nahuatl well, they supported its use in schools and they liked speaking it and/or hearing others speak it. Young speakers attributed the declining use of Nahuatl to a lack of proficiency in the language, a lack of interest in maintaining it, the growing dominance of Spanish, discrimination towards Nahuatl speakers, community members' own dislike for speaking their language and a sense of shame (*pena*) when speaking Nahuatl outside the community.

This review of the literature indicates that speakers of Nahuatl and other Indigenous languages have to negotiate between competing attitudes of pro-Indigenous and devaluing sentiments which may impact their language choices. This may have important consequences for the maintenance of Nahuatl and the ongoing language shift to Spanish. The current study provides valuable new information about language attitudes to Nahuatl and examines what measures speakers propose to maintain this language. The remaining part of this paper proceeds as follows: methodology, which covers the context of study familiarizing readers to the community of interest, and research procedures; findings of

the study; and conclusions. which sum up the study and provide future directions for research.

## 4.2 Methodology

### 4.2.1 Context of Study

Out of Mexico's total population of about 120 million people, 21.5% (25.7 million people) self-identify as Indigenous based on an association with the traditions, culture and history, 1.6% self-identify as partly Indigenous, 74.7% self-identify as non-Indigenous and only 6.5% (7.4 million people) of the total population aged 3 and older and 6.2% (7.2 million people) aged 5 and older speak an Indigenous language (INEGI (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática*), 2015; CONAPO (*Consejo Nacional de Población*), 2016; Rizo Amézquita, 2017). Mexico has 68 Indigenous languages and 364 varieties (INALI (*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas*), 2012): the three most spoken Indigenous languages are Nahuatl, Maya, and Tzeltal (INEGI, 2015). Nahuatl has the most speakers (1.5 million) aged 5 and older, with 30 varieties (INEGI, 2010; INALI, 2012): only half of these 30 varieties are not at an immediate risk of disappearing.

This project focused on the Nahuatl-speaking town of Santiago Tlaxco (commonly called Tlaxco) in Chiconcuautila municipality, where the spoken variety is *náhuatl del noreste central* (also known as *mexi'catl* or *maseual tla'tol*) (INALI, 2012) and Northern Puebla variety of Nahuatl (Ethnologue, 2019 [Simons & Fennig, 2019]). This variety is spoken in the Acaxochitlán municipality in the state of Hidalgo, and eleven municipalities in Puebla, namely Chiconcuautila, Honey, Huauchinango, Jopala, Juan Galindo, Naupan,

Pahuatlán, Tlaola, Tlapacoya, Xicotepec and Zihuateutla (Valiñas, 2019) (see Figure 1.3, Chapter 1 for a map showing where this variety is spoken). According to the classification of INALI (2012) and Ethnologue (2019), this variety is safe. INALI considers it at “no immediate risk of endangerment” while Ethnologue classifies it as “in vigorous use”, meaning that all generations use it in direct communication with one another in a sustainable manner. The classification of UNESCO of this variety as “definitely endangered” is not reliable as its denomination combines four different varieties as one (Valiñas, 2019). This small Nahuatl-speaking community has 1695 inhabitants, of which 83% (1402 people) aged 5 and older speak Nahuatl and 76% are bilinguals who speak both Nahuatl and Spanish (INEGI, 2010). From these results, Tlaxco appears to be a strong bilingual community.

#### 4.2.2 Research Procedures

An ethics application for this project was reviewed and approved by the Office of Human Research of the University of Western Ontario. I undertook this project during my one-semester research stay at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City, where I collaborated with the research working group on Ecology of Pressures in the Department of Applied Linguistics. This research group, led by Professor Roland Terborg, has extensively examined the pressures or factors that cause language shift in rural Indigenous communities. Being interested in the Nahuatl language, and with the help of Guillermo Garrido, a Nahuatl scholar and activist, we had access to several Nahuatl-speaking communities in the state of Puebla, including Santiago Tlaxco, where no sociolinguistic studies have been done. The researcher stayed with a family in the community during the research period. The recruitment of participants and the

administration of research instruments were facilitated by two research assistants who were bilingual speakers from the community. Recruitment was largely by word of mouth and advertisement through the community loudspeaker (or radio). Research was conducted either in the residence of the researcher, the residence or workplace of the participants, or in a public place.

### 4.2.3 Instrument

The study employed semi-structured interviews, a qualitative approach, to identify reasons for language shift and maintenance of Nahuatl. These interviews, which were open-ended and informal, were conducted in either Spanish or Nahuatl, depending on the preference of the speaker. In all, there were 52 interviews; 23 were conducted in Nahuatl, 28 in Spanish, and one alternated between both languages. The research assistants were primarily responsible for interviewing the participants, with the researcher assisting with some interviews in Spanish. The interview covered six areas. The first examined participants' language background with questions like what their first languages are, which other languages they speak, which language(s) they use more, and which language requires more effort, or that they are less proficient in. The second focused on language use in the community with questions, such as which of the two languages was spoken more and with whom the interviewees used Nahuatl and Spanish. The third explored the importance of Nahuatl or what it represented to participants and their community. Questions asked were whether it was necessary for community members to speak Nahuatl, whether a person can still identify as Nahuatl even though they cannot speak the language, and what the consequences will be if Nahuatl is lost some day. The fourth area focused on language shift in the community by asking why people do not speak or

transmit Nahuatl, whether speakers have faced any form of discrimination for speaking the language inside or outside the community, and whether they are optimistic that Nahuatl will still be spoken in the near and distant future. The fifth group of questions involved language maintenance and the possibility of expanding the domains of Nahuatl in the community. Questions asked were whether it was necessary for Nahuatl to be transmitted to children and for the language to be taught at school. Participants were also asked to recommend possible programs in Nahuatl they would like to see and hear in audio, video, and written formats and whether they would like to have Nahuatl-speaking staff in the clinic, a predominately Spanish-speaking domain. They were further asked what community members and municipal authorities could do to support language maintenance, and their predictions for language maintenance of Nahuatl in 10 to 20 years. The final section explores the attitudes of speakers towards their own variety of Nahuatl and other varieties. Participants were asked whether their community spoke Nahuatl well and whether they were aware of other communities who spoke the same or different variety (see Appendices for the questionnaire).

All interviews in Nahuatl and Spanish were transcribed by two Nahuatl-speaking translators from the community; Nahuatl interviews were first translated into Spanish by them before being translated into English by the researcher. Spanish interviews were also translated into English by the researcher. While Nahuatl and Spanish transcriptions depicted exactly what speakers said, the English translations have been edited for clarity. Extracts presented in this paper are marked anonymously. Major themes in the interviews are presented in the next section. Nahuatl quotes are boldened while Spanish quotes are italicised.

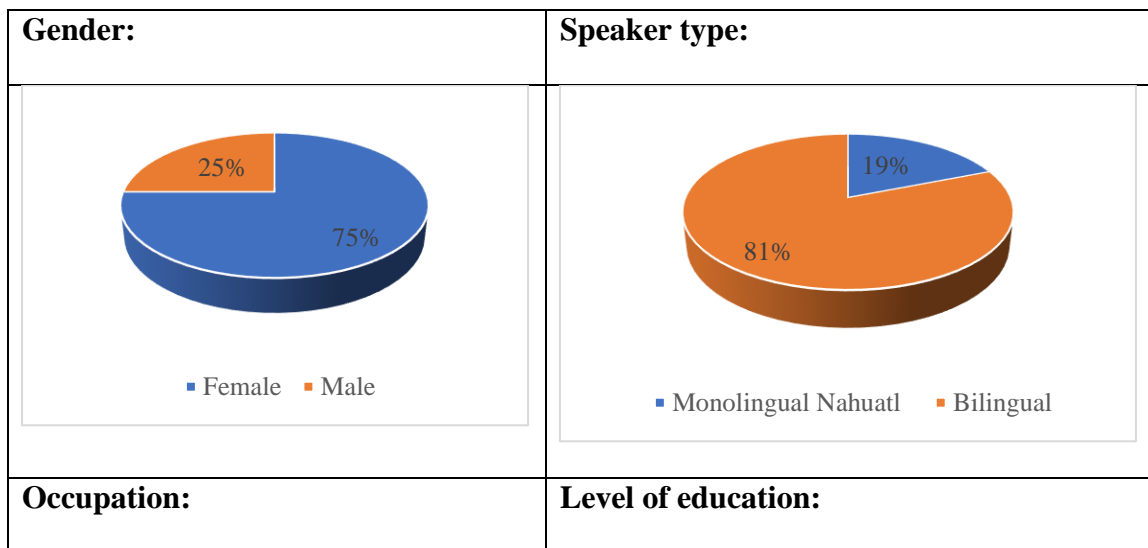
#### 4.2.4 Participants

Fifty-two adults, from ages 18 to 70, were interviewed, with 39 being women and 13 men, all residing in Tlaxco. The age range was evenly distributed as 25 interviewees were aged 40 and younger, while the remaining interviewees were aged 41 and older.

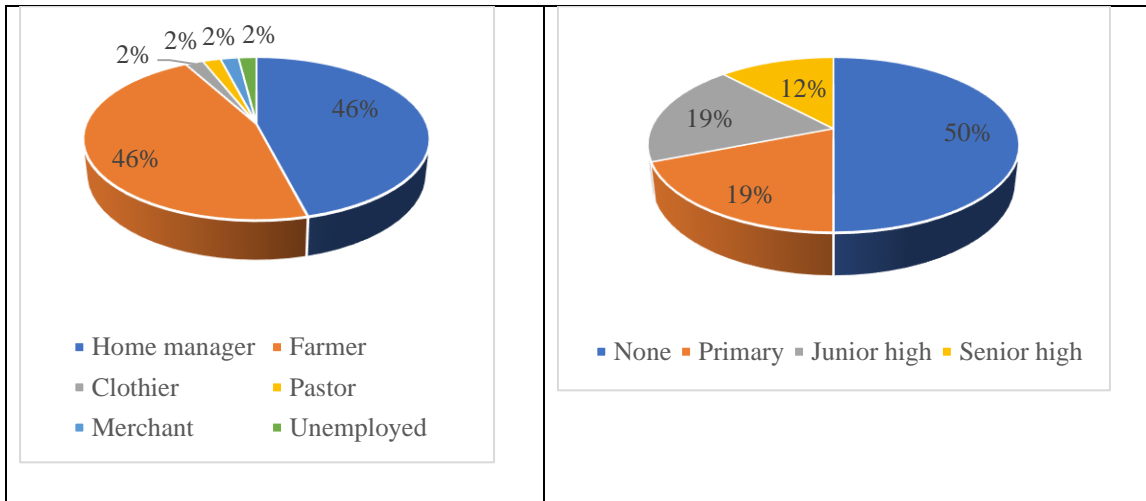
Concerning occupations of the participants, 24 were home keepers, 24 were farmers, 1 was a seamstress or clothier, 1 was a pastor, 1 was a merchant and 1 was unemployed.

Half of the participants had no formal education, 10 had either completed or had some form of primary/basic school education, 10 had either completed or had some form of middle school education, and 6 had either completed or had some form of high school education. Forty-two were bilingual speakers of Nahuatl and Spanish, while 10 were Nahuatl monolinguals. Figure 4.1 summarizes the characteristics of the participants.

**Figure 4.1 Characteristics of adult interviewees**







### 4.3 Findings

From the interview data, Tlaxco is a bilingual community with an increasingly large number of Spanish speakers. Older participants paint a picture of a changing linguistic society where only Nahuatl used to be spoken to one where Spanish is predominately used, especially by the younger generations. Against this background, we explore the reasons for the declining use of Nahuatl. The findings are grouped in four main sections, reflecting the language attitudes of community members: importance of Nahuatl, necessity of Spanish, factors encouraging language shift, and recommendations for language maintenance.

#### 4.3.1 Importance of Nahuatl

Nahuatl was considered important for several reasons, such as that it is the language of the community, the means of communication with family and Nahuatl monolinguals, its beauty, a habit/convenience, and ease of communication:

- 1) *el náhuatl es importante porque aquí en el pueblo casi todos hablan náhuatl*

(Nahuatl is important because here in the town, almost everyone speaks Nahuatl)

- 2) *mi mamá no habla en español y tengo que platicarle en náhuatl* (My mum does not speak Spanish and I have to chat with her in Nahuatl)
- 3) *es bonito hablar náhuatl* (it is beautiful to speak Nahuatl)
- 4) **ye' nik timoacostumbraro'toke' in timono'notza' ika náhuatl** (*porque estamos acostumbrados a platicar en náhuatl*) (we are used to conversing in Nahuatl)
- 5) **ye'nik kachi ma'owe' nitla'towa náhuatl keme' in español** (*para comunicarse es más fácil que el español*) (It is easier to communicate in Nahuatl than Spanish)

Participants expressed pride in, and loyalty to, their language and considered their Nahuatl variety as the best and most original. For some, Nahuatl was linked to their identity and/or heritage and for one to be Nahuatl, they had to speak the language:

- 6) **notla'tol** (*es mi lengua*) (it is my language)
- 7) **ijko in timono'notza'** (*es nuestra forma de hablar*) (it is our way of speaking)
- 8) *es nuestra lengua, en eso hablamos* (it is our language, we communicate with it)
- 9) **notl'tolis** (*es mi idioma de nacimiento*) (it is my language of birth)
- 10) **Ye'nik nika te'wa timasewalte** (*Porque aquí somos indígenas*) (we are Indigenous)

For one speaker, Nahuatl represents the rich cultural heritage of Mexico. The impact of Nahuatl being lost would not only be experienced by the community but by the whole of Mexican society because it would represent a loss of valuable cultures:

- 11) *Pues se perderían las culturas, se perdería la cultura mexicana, la cultura de lo que es México. Pues porque primero fueron como te digo los aztecas los indios y fue lo que hablaban ellos. Si se perdiera el náhuatl pues estaríamos perdiendo cultura y todo*

Well, the culture will be lost, the Mexican culture, the culture that makes Mexico what it is. Because, first, there were Aztecs, Indians, and they spoke Nahuatl. If Nahuatl disappears, we lose the culture and everything

From the comments, participants valued Nahuatl for several reasons, ranging from its ease of communication (with elders), its aesthetic quality, its identification with the community to its marker as personal Nahuatl identity and rich cultural heritage. These pro-Nahuatl attitudes are similar to other pro-Indigenous attitudes expressed in other communities (King 2000, Messing 2009, Hornberger 1988b). The consensus among speakers was that they did not want Nahuatl to be lost. For some, the loss of Nahuatl language represents a major loss of culture.

Conversely, a few individuals expressed negative attitudes about Nahuatl, comments that King (2000) would term anti-Indigenous, Messing (2007) as *menosprecio* (disparagement) and Hornberger (1988b) as devaluing. A 51-year old Nahuatl bilingual woman described Nahuatl as a poor language because it had no relevance outside the community, an opinion also held by some Nahuatl monolinguals. One of the repeated responses to the question, why do people not want to learn or speak Nahuatl, was that they did not like it and preferred Spanish:

12) *no les gusta hablarlo y quieren hablar el español* (they do not like to speak it [Nahuatl] and want to speak Spanish)

Implicit in this statement is that liking Spanish is not synonymous to liking Nahuatl: i.e., one cannot like both at the same time. When asked why they liked Spanish, one speaker responded that for some, it sounded more elegant: *para algunos se escucha más elegante*. Along the same vein, a few others thought that Nahuatl sounded funny or weird:

13) *Pues uno que otro, que ya no quiere hablar pues ya nomas dicen hay se oye chistoso, se oye raro como están hablando* (some who do not want to speak [Nahuatl] have said that it sounds funny and weird when it is spoken)

Furthermore, one parent refused to teach her children Nahuatl because it sounded ugly.

Why does a language sound beautiful to some, but ugly to another? Is our perception influenced by our personal taste/preferences, lived experiences, or mainstream society?

While we proffer no answers to these questions, later on we discuss how the feeling of shame and discrimination can contribute to developing negative attitudes to Nahuatl.

Furthermore, some claimed that they did not like Nahuatl because Spanish was more important: *porque es más importante el español* and that Spanish is better: **ye'nik kachi kuali in castilla'** (*porque es mejor el castellano*), the latter comment coming from a Nahuatl monolingual.

Other speakers had a more neutral attitude (neither positive nor negative) to Nahuatl.

When asked what would happen if Nahuatl was no longer spoken in the community, the general response was *no pasa nada* (it will be okay/ no big deal/ life will go on as usual).

This response may not be surprising if we consider that most speakers are bilinguals who can rely on Spanish as a means of communication. It was the Nahuatl monolinguals who mentioned that they would have lost their ability to communicate with others. The potential loss of Nahuatl would more severely impact monolinguals, as one bilingual explained:

14) **xma'tlaokoya ye'nik ma'kuali mono'notza'** (*yo creo que se ponen tristes porque no pueden platicar*) (I think they [Nahuatl monolinguals] will be sad because they cannot converse)

It may impact, to a lesser extent, bilinguals who cannot communicate with Nahuatl-speaking family members. Hence, while it was generally agreed that Nahuatl should be maintained and bilingualism was appreciated and valued, the potential loss of Nahuatl language was not seen as causing much upheaval in the community members' lives. Furthermore, for most participants, it was not necessary to speak Nahuatl for one to be considered Nahuatl so long as they were born in the community.

#### 4.3.2 Necessity of Spanish

Since older participants mentioned that they grew up speaking and residing in a purely Nahuatl community, it was interesting to assess whether the presence of Spanish was a welcome or an unwelcome intrusion. Most speakers pointed to the functionality of Spanish as a language of wider communication:

15) *cuando sales, así conoces gente que habla español, que no puede hablar náhuatl no le entiende el náhuatl, entonces puedes platicar con el español. Si tú hablas español y esa persona habla español te entiende perfectamente*

when you go out, you meet people who speak Spanish and cannot speak nor understand Nahuatl, you can converse in Spanish. If you and that person speak Spanish, they understand you perfectly

Spanish was considered necessary to finding work outside the community as job prospects in Tlaxco are very limited since it is rural community where the jobs are primarily agricultural. From conversations with community members, it was usual for people to search for or begin work in Mexico City once they completed junior high school. A speaker reiterated the importance of speaking Spanish in finding work:

16) *Si es necesario porque pues sinceramente aquí no hay mucho trabajo. Entonces tú vas a la ciudad buscas trabajo y pues allá no se habla el náhuatl, entonces sí es necesario el español para poder buscar empleo y tener un trabajo en la ciudad*

It is necessary because sincerely there is not much work here. When you go to the city and find work, Nahuatl is not spoken so Spanish is necessary to find a job

The reality of the socioeconomic conditions in the community and the country at large privileges Spanish as the language of socioeconomic advancement while relegating the importance of Nahuatl to more personal/individual and traditional roles, as seen earlier. Similarly, if one wants to have a profession, there is no escaping Spanish which forms the foundation of every educational and labour system. Even when schools are supposedly intercultural and bilingual, Spanish is predominately used. A parent mentioned that she wants her children to learn Spanish because she wants them to be doctors, underlying its essentiality for professional development. Not only is Spanish needed for governmental and official issues, you need Spanish to advance in life as one speaker commented, a discourse identified as *salir adelante* (Messing, 2007) and developmentalist (Hansen, 2010):

17) *para que salga adelante. Para pedir apoyos en municipios o estados* (to get ahead. To ask for support from municipalities and states)

A 40-year old speaker mentioned that he began to learn Spanish at age 25 when he had to go to Zacatlan, the nearest city, an hour and half away by bus, to buy goods:

18) **kox ma'nikpías na' 25 años, i'kuak oniyaya nitlasimana Zacatlan wilika in onimomachtí'**

*creo que tenía como 25 años, cuando iba a Zacatlán a comprar cosas tuve que aprender*

I think I was about 25 years old when I used to go to Zacatlan to buy things, I had to learn [Spanish]

For this 54-year old woman, being able to speak Spanish signified respect from, and equality with, other non-Indigenous Mexicans who tended to look down on Nahuatl speakers:

19) *Se pone muy grande. No los respetan los que hablan náhuatl. Los ven como muditos .... ahorita gracias a Dios ya no, ya nos respetan*

They feel superior. They do not respect people who speak Nahuatl. They see them as mutes [but] now thanks to God that is not case anymore. They respect us

This speaker considered that speaking Spanish was essential for community members.

From her comments, we see the angst caused by the negative attitudes of the Spanish-speaking population among Nahuatl speakers. Similarly, a 70-year-old speaker commented that she preferred to communicate more in Spanish because she could understand when being criticized in that language:

20) **Nechpaktia nijko na'kani nechii'to'toske' nikinni'niwilis** (*Me gusta porque así puedo entender las personas que me critica en ese idioma*) (I like [speaking Spanish] because that way I can hear people when they criticize me in that language)

The underlying sentiment revealed in this statement is that Nahuatl speakers are used to being criticized in Spanish. For one 36-year-old bilingual informant, speaking Spanish made community members feel superior in a negative sense, hence she did not want Nahuatl to disappear from her community:

21) *Para que se siga hablando, para que no nos sintamos muy altos hablando el español* [Nahuatl] should continue to be spoken so that we do not feel too proud speaking Spanish

Here, Nahuatl is supposed to serve as a check against sentiments of superiority by Spanish speakers in the community, so they do not forget their identity as Nahuatl. Some speakers complained that certain community members stop speaking and/or do not want to speak Nahuatl because they think they are now modern or have become city folk:

22) **nikan chane' sansiki yamoxinola'niki** (*es de aquí, solo algunos ya se creen de ciudad*) (They are from here, just that some think that they are from the city)

23) **kita in tlen tla'towa español ma'kmitznotzas** (*mira de los que hablan en español algunos ya ni te hablan*) (Some of those who speak in Spanish do not even speak to you)

24) **xa nochi ika castilla in kinnotza ninkokonewa yamoxinola'niki' ijko ma'kkinnotza ninkokonewa, tlamo kachi kuali in omipantli**

*ahora todos ya les hablan en castilla a sus hijos ya se creen de ciudad por eso ya nos les hablan a sus hijos en náhuatl, mejor los dos idiomas*

Now, everyone speaks Spanish to their children. They think they are city-like, so they do not speak Nahuatl to their children. It is better to speak both languages

25) *No quieren, porque ya se creen como de una cultura diferente, se creen de la ciudad* (They do not want [to speak Nahuatl] because they think they are from a different culture [and] that they are from the city)

Comments 22-25 show that speaking Spanish exclusively afforded speakers a different identity, a mainstream society one where they can shed their Indigenous and rural identity to adopt a more 'national' and urban one. Unfortunately for Nahuatl speakers, not only do they have to confront this perceived superiority in the city but also have to face it, although to a lesser extent, in their community from the 'city-people'.

In sum, Spanish is considered indispensable as its loss could lead to: 1) diminished job opportunities, 2) difficulty in socioeconomic advancement and professional development, 3) lack of communication with, and participation in, mainstream society, and 4) inability to gain respect from, and establish equality with, non-Indigenous people. Compared to Nahuatl loss which was summed up as a loss of communication and culture, Spanish is the language of power, with immense advantages, recognized by community members. In



light of this acknowledgement, we explore community members' opinions about Nahuatl language shift in the community.

### 4.3.3 Nahuatl Language Shift

Interviews with Nahuatl-speaking adults revealed that there has been a substantial decline in the use of Nahuatl in Tlaxco. The community dynamics have shifted from a purely Nahuatl-speaking society to one being overtaken by Spanish speakers. Many parents are no longer teaching Nahuatl to their children and most young people are no longer interested in speaking it because they do not like it anymore. Most speakers were pessimistic about the future of Nahuatl for several reasons including:

26) *porque se les va olvidando su idioma* (people are forgetting their own language)

27) *la mayoría, todos están hablando nada más español* (the majority, everyone speaks Spanish)

28) *ya con el tiempo se va a ir perdiendo [...] pues ahorita ya casi nadie habla náhuatl* (with time, Nahuatl will disappear as currently there is almost no one who speaks it)

29) *unos les gusta hablar más el español que náhuatl* (people just like to speak Spanish than Nahuatl)

30) *es que depende ahí como los acostumbra uno, nosotros los vamos acostumbrando a hablar en español* (it depends on what one makes them used to. We make them accustomed to speaking in Spanish)

These comments give us a snapshot of a community grappling with Nahuatl language shift, with many community members preferring to use Spanish. In the next subsections,

we explore how the themes of linguistic shame or insecurity, discrimination, and lack of intergenerational transmission contribute to this language shift.

#### 4.3.3.1 Pena

A recurring theme in the interviews was that some people were ashamed of speaking Nahuatl: *por pena, por vergüenza*. The Spanish words *pena* and *vergüenza* were used interchangeably by speakers to indicate shame, although *vergüenza* may be considered the stronger version. In a conversation with one of the translators in the community, I asked her the difference between having *pena* and *vergüenza* for speaking Nahuatl. She mentioned that for the community, although the interpretation is similar, there is a minor difference. For her, *pena* is “*no negarlo, pero tampoco sentirse orgulloso*” while *vergüenza* es “*negarlo por completo no hablarlo de plano*”. That is, for those who have *pena*, they do not deny that they speak Nahuatl, but they are not proud of speaking it while those with *vergüenza* would deny emphatically that they speak Nahuatl and would not speak it. Sometimes, those with *pena* may still choose to speak or not speak it. In the case of the latter, the result is the same as *vergüenza*, as the language is not spoken, leading to language shift. The word *pena* has different connotations ranging from shyness, embarrassment, sadness to shame. In the Nahuatl-speaking community of Coatepec in Guerrero, Mojica Lagunas (2019) reported similar connotations of *pena*; for young people, having *pena* represented shyness or embarrassment because they lacked proficiency in the language. For adults, the *pena* of others connoted linguistic shame.

Some people would deny knowing Nahuatl to the surprise of other speakers:

31) **a tepinawia’ siki santikkaktos in ki’to’tos a koxe’ ma’kini’niwilia nijko in castilla’ tlemach ye’ ma’kikaki**

*sí, se avergüenzan algunos, dicen en presencia de uno apoco no entiende el náhuatl. ¡cómo es posible que no lo entienda!*

Yes, some are ashamed, they say in the presence of others that they do not understand Nahuatl. How is it possible that they do not understand it!

One group of people accused of having *pena* for speaking Nahuatl consisted of those who returned to the community after working for some time in other towns. A common pattern was that when they returned, they were no longer interested in speaking Nahuatl:

32) *Así como veo hay uno que otro se va a otro lado a trabajar viene como que ya no quiere hablar como que le da pena nomás, porque si no de que se le olvide no se le olvida, si no que viene ya fue a aprender español y como que ya le da pena hablar náhuatl*

When people travel to other places to work and return, they do not want to speak [Nahuatl] as if they are ashamed. If they are not ashamed, how come they forgot Nahuatl. No, they did not forget Nahuatl, but they have learnt Spanish and are ashamed to speak Nahuatl

This comment echoes the opinions expressed in comments 22 to 25 where such people were considered pretentious. The general idea is that once someone learned to speak Spanish and used it outside the community, they were more likely to abandon Nahuatl. Instead of embracing their two languages, there was a regression to monolingualism where Spanish is favoured. This regression was not only unique to those who have gone outside to work, but other bilinguals may be susceptible to it.

Other speakers have *pena* because they have limited proficiency in Nahuatl and hence do not feel competent in communicating in the language:

33) *bueno los jóvenes por pena, algunos por vergüenza simplemente porque ya no saben mucho entonces como saben más español pues hablan español*

well, young people for embarrassment, some for shame, simply because they do not know a lot [about Nahuatl], so they know more Spanish, so they speak Spanish

34) **kachi ma'kkate' in tlen pinawi' wan katki, pinawi ye'nik ma'kimati kenin kikopas in náhuatl**

*sí, hay personas, pocas personas que les da pena, les da pena porque no saben cómo hacer una conversación en náhuatl*

Yes, there are people, very few people, who are embarrassed [to speak Nahuatl]. They are embarrassed because they do not know how to conduct a conversation in Nahuatl

35) **nili, ye'nik in siki ma'kiyektenkixtia'** (*sí, porque algunos no lo pronuncian bien*) (Yes, because they cannot pronounce it well)

36) *Nosotros casi no sabemos todo así en náhuatl* (We almost do not know everything in Nahuatl)

37) *ya no es bueno ya es mezclado con el español y el náhuatl* ([Nahuatl spoken today] is not good because it is mixed with Spanish)

From these comments, it was common for some people to be shy about speaking Nahuatl or to have linguistic insecurity because of their limited proficiency, showcased by bilinguals whose less dominant language is Nahuatl. Younger speakers felt that they did not speak Nahuatl well because they lacked adequate vocabulary in the language and had to mix it with Spanish. Older speakers noted that the quality of Nahuatl spoken in the community had decreased because it has been mixed with Spanish. Sometimes, speakers may be mocked for not speaking Nahuatl well, discouraging them from even trying, as noted in this following extract:

38) **kema nili tepinawia nik titla'tos ijko, keme' na' ma'otiyektla'tok, entonces nokse mitzpinawi'tok mokawiwitzkatok**

*a veces sí, avergüenzan por hablar así, como a veces uno no lo habla bien entonces te avergüenza, se ríe de ti*

Sometimes, they are ashamed to speak [Nahuatl], sometimes as you do not speak it well, you become embarrassed, and they laugh at it

Such attitudes have a discouraging effect on language maintenance as these speakers may avoid using Nahuatl to prevent any mockery.

Others admitted that they have *pena* when speaking Nahuatl in front of strangers or outside the community to avoid mockery, discrimination, or possible misunderstanding that they were badmouthing others:

- 39) *haz de cuenta van a la ciudad y como allá pues has de cuenta que mucha gente sea toda la mayoría habla español, entonces si él le está hablando náhuatl, siente que la gente lo ve y lo critica, “¡oye, pero este qué onda que habla náhuatl! Entonces, para que no lo critiquen mejor habla español*

you have to realise that when you go to the city where many people or the majority speak Spanish, when someone is speaking Nahuatl, he feels like people will look at him and criticize him, “hey, but what is up with you speaking Nahuatl”. So, to avoid any criticism, it is better to speak Spanish

- 40) *En lugares donde no entienden náhuatl, a veces discriminan* (In places where they do not understand Nahuatl, sometimes they discriminate)

- 41) *Bueno yo a veces sí, porque si he salido y como que dicen las personas que, si estás hablando en náhuatl como que estás hablando mal de ellos, como no lo entienden entonces como que te sientes mal hablar así porque pues no quieres eeh, como le digo, ofender a las personas y todo así, pues, así como que te sientes mal y mejor hablar español enfrente de las personas que saben español*

Yes, sometimes [I am embarrassed to speak Nahuatl in front of strangers] because I have gone out and as people say if you are speaking Nahuatl, you are badmouthing them. Knowing that they do not speak Nahuatl, you feel bad and as a result you do not want to offend them. As you feel bad, it is better to speak Spanish in front of people who only speak Spanish

These statements show that the environment outside Nahuatl-speaking communities was not conducive for speakers as they were likely to be mocked or discriminated against in such spaces. Speakers had to suppress their language to pacify others who assumed that they are being insulted in the language. What is it about Nahuatl and other Indigenous

languages that makes some non-Indigenous persons insecure when these languages are spoken in their presence? Could it be that they are just projecting their own bias about Indigenous languages? Unfortunately, there is still more work to be done in mainstream society to change attitudes in favour of Indigenous languages. In the next subsection, we review some of the discriminatory experiences that participants have faced for speaking Nahuatl.

#### 4.3.3.2 Discrimination

The majority of speakers who participated in this study had not personally faced any form of discrimination for speaking Nahuatl, even though they were aware of others who had been discriminated against. Some speakers had a positive experience concerning Nahuatl where their friends in the city expressed interest in learning their beautiful language. Speaker responses to the questions regarding whether they had personally faced discrimination for speaking Nahuatl and whether they knew people who had experienced any form of discrimination for speaking Nahuatl ranged from being mocked to mistreatment:

42) *Pues algunos, se burla la gente si hablas en náhuatl, entonces te dicen cosas. Pero pues yo no me avergüenzo de hablar así*

Yes, some [may be ashamed of speaking Nahuatl because] people mock you if you speak in Nahuatl, they say things to you. But I not ashamed of speaking it

43) **kita ye'nik ma'kuali xtle'to español siki ki'towa ye' katzawak in mokaki xtle'to kejki**

*mira cómo no podemos hablar español algunos dicen que se escucha feo cuando uno habla náhuatl*

As we cannot speak Spanish, others tell us that it sounds ugly when one speaks Nahuatl

In the first comment, the feeling of shame when speaking Nahuatl was caused or fuelled by other people's mocking. The speaker acknowledged the negative influence of such behaviour in suppressing Nahuatl language use but remained resolute in continuing to speak it. There were many comments about being mocked for speaking Nahuatl, a distressing occurrence. Furthermore, hearing that one's language is considered ugly could cause speakers to reject transmitting their language to future generations if the Nahuatl speaker internalized such negative attitudes. Another speaker faced discrimination for speaking Nahuatl in the capital. He narrated an incident in a bus where he and his friends were insulted for speaking Nahuatl and called "*pinches indios*" (\*swearword\* Indians). They defended themselves and reiterated their pride in being Nahuatl:

44) *sí, indios sí a mucha honra porque nosotros hablamos el dialecto y no nos da pena, y se nos quedaron mirando bien feo, pero ni por eso dejamos de hablar seguimos platicando ... yo creo que siente así que te humillan, pero yo no lo siento así porque yo no estoy negando de donde yo vengo de mis raíces, negar de lo que es uno, de donde uno sale pues niegas a toda tu raza y no debe de ser así*

Yes, we are proud to be Indians because we speak our dialect and we are not ashamed. They were sending ugly looks our way, but we did not let that stop us from conversing. I think [such incidents] could make one feel humiliated, but I do not feel that way because I am not denying where I came from, my roots. Denying who one is and where they come from, is to deny one's whole race and that should not be the case

This disturbing episode highlights the microaggressions that Indigenous language speakers are subjected to in their own country. No one should be put in such a position to defend their language. It is no surprise that speakers may prefer not to use their language in non-Indigenous spaces to avoid being identified as Indigenous. This kind of humiliation could influence speakers to such an extreme that they might decide not to speak their language and/or refuse to transmit it to future generations.

Some participants reported that they were treated as inferior when they spoke Nahuatl:

45) *te ven menos si hablas en náhuatl* (they look down on you if you speak in Nahuatl)

Similarly, a 54-year old speaker recalled that when she was an adolescent, she worked with a woman in Zacatlan for fifteen days. Unfortunately, the woman refused to pay her, and she could not fight back because she could not speak any Spanish. She reflected on how defenceless she felt when she was taken advantage of, knowing that this would not have happened to a Spanish speaker. She eventually learned Spanish in Mexico City when she went there to work, and she resolved that her younger siblings would not have to go through the same suffering. When she returned to Tlaxco, she enforced a Spanish-only policy on her siblings. Here, we see how the dominance of Spanish and resultant discrimination can impact the lives of some Indigenous speakers. Still on the issue of language shift, we move on to another theme highlighted in the interview: the lack of intergenerational transmission.

#### 4.3.3.3 Disruption of Intergenerational Transmission

One of the major reasons for language shift is the absence of intergenerational transmission where older generations are no longer transmitting the language to the younger ones. As one speaker puts it, the task or responsibility of language transmission belongs to the mothers who are usually in charge of language socialization at home:

46) *Ya se está perdiendo el náhuatl, jóvenes puro español, chiquititos puro español [porque] las mamás no les enseñan en náhuatl*

Nahuatl is being lost. Young people [speak] purely Spanish, little children [speak] purely Spanish because the mums do not teach them Nahuatl

Intergenerational transmission, considered to be the most important factor of language maintenance (Fishman, 1991), begins at home and when there is a disruption in the



process, it is likely to lead to language shift. Languages experiencing intergenerational transmission are considered safe from language shift as new generations of speakers are produced. Adults admit that they are mainly responsible for the failure of children not being able to speak Nahuatl while acknowledging that the dominant presence of Spanish makes it easier for them to go along with Spanish use. Even when Nahuatl is taught to children, adults point out that children later decide to stop speaking or forget the language, especially when they start attending school.

**47) yapoliwtok porque kachi mochikawtok in español, mattlalika kita na'kokone' yakikawtok in náhuatl wan como mattlalika ken te'wa oktikseguirwili'toke' in náhuatl porque ma'tle in otikitake'**

*ya está desapareciendo porque el español se está haciendo más fuerte, supongamos los niños ya están dejando el náhuatl y como nosotros le seguimos al náhuatl porque no nos enseñaron*

[Nahuatl] is disappearing because Spanish is growing stronger. We suppose that children are already leaving Nahuatl behind, but we continue speaking with Nahuatl because we were not taught [Spanish]

**48) xkita ye'nik yayoltoke' in tlen tla'towa' español, yakilkawtoke' in náhuatl**

*mira es porque los que están creciendo que hablan español, ya se están olvidando del náhuatl*

Those [children] are growing up speaking Spanish, they are already forgetting about Nahuatl

**49) okatka pues otlá'towaya' náhuatl in axa yamomachtí'toke' español in tlen momachtia'**

*antes hablaban náhuatl, pero ahora ya están aprendiendo español los que van a la escuela*

In the past we used to speak Nahuatl, but now people are learning Spanish, those who go to school

As seen in comments 47 and 48, adults point out that children have agency in determining whether they want to learn Nahuatl and if they choose not to. Parents

defended not speaking Nahuatl with their children by blaming them for not liking it. The presence of schools, where Spanish is the language of instruction, further solidifies the image of Spanish being the dominant and more prestigious language. Coupled with the effects of *pena* and discrimination that we reviewed earlier; it is no surprise that speakers are reluctant to pass on their language to future generations. In general, the disruption of the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages has been attributed to the “prevailing attitude of racism in Mexican society” and the “national educational and mass media policy of Hispanization” (Olko & Sullivan, 2016, p. 160). The sociolinguistic reality of Mexican society acts a negative pressure, forcing (in)directly the endangerment of Indigenous languages. While the scales are tipped heavily towards Nahuatl language shift, some speakers are optimistic that the use Nahuatl in the community will continue for many years. We explore their reasons and recommendations in the next section.

#### 4.3.4 Language Maintenance

As mentioned earlier, most speakers support language maintenance of Nahuatl and the most common response to the questions, why was it necessary for the community to speak Nahuatl? should Nahuatl be taught in schools? and should it be written?, was “*sí, para que no se pierda*” (yes, so it is not lost). In Tlaxco, community members are aware that the use of Nahuatl is on decline, a welcome development for some, an unwelcome one for others. They are also cognizant of the reasons why this is happening and offer possible solutions to reverse the trend so that Spanish and Nahuatl can co-exist in a balanced relationship.

One of the recommendations was to establish and fortify intergenerational transmission: *que los padres de familia les hablen nahuatl a sus hijos* (that parents speak Nahuatl to

their children). Older speakers argue that it is the responsibility of parents to transmit the language early on, so that children grow accustomed to the language and culture as they themselves were brought up. Not only should parents teach their children the language, they should continue speaking it: *seguir hablando*. In our experience in the community, Nahuatl was commonly used in interactions among adults and spoken on the streets. The *presidente* (mayor-type functionary) of the community used Nahuatl when broadcasting announcements through the megaphone to community members. Speakers confirmed that in the communal meetings, Nahuatl was only or predominately used for communication. Additionally, we attended one of the two Pentecostal churches during our stay in the community and the services, from preaching to praying, were completely conducted in Nahuatl, although some singing was done in Spanish. Taking into consideration that the congregation comprised children who will be getting positive reinforcement that their language is valuable, it is a welcome development for Nahuatl language maintenance. It has the possibility of raising the prestige of Nahuatl while reserving an exclusive domain for Nahuatl language use. In a different Nahuatl context in Hueyapan, Hansen (2010) reported that the church, Jehovah's Witnesses, inadvertently made language revitalisation possible in their sub-community by strongly encouraging communication in Nahuatl, including using it as a language of worship. A positive atmosphere was created where others learned from more proficient speakers.

Apart from consistent language use and language transmission, speakers recommended the teaching of Nahuatl in schools. Currently, Tlaxco has two government-designated bilingual schools: pre-school and basic school but they are bilingual in name only.

Nahuatl is only taught as a subject and is never used as a medium of instruction.

Unfortunately, these schools in Tlaxco are plagued with the same problems faced in other public bilingual schools in Mexico as summed up in Olko and Sullivan (2014). For the authors, the teaching of Nahuatl language and culture in schools is an important step to revitalising the Nahuatl language but the bilingual system of education has not led to the development of the literacy skills in Nahuatl when compared to Spanish. Instead, “an unwritten goal of the highly centralized system of bilingual education in Mexico is to replace indigenous languages with Spanish” (Olko & Sullivan 2014, p. 198) due to the lack of resources and planning. They identified four common problems plaguing this system of education. First, instruction in the first language is almost non-existent due to inadequate teacher training in Indigenous languages. Second, textbooks are not always available in the varieties spoken in the community. Third, bilingual teachers do not participate in curriculum development and may be posted to communities with different varieties from their own. Fourth, some teachers not only obstruct the teaching of Indigenous languages but also influence parents to speak only Spanish to their children. Speakers in Tlaxco identified with the first three scenarios, but none reported that teachers had influenced them to use Spanish. When we visited three fifth-grade classrooms when students were having Nahuatl lessons, it was obvious that Nahuatl was not the language of instruction. The teachers would ask pupils to translate vocabulary from Spanish to Nahuatl. The topic for that day was the celebration of the Day of the Dead, one of the important festivals in Mexico. While the Nahuatl-speaking teachers spoke a different variety from what was spoken in Tlaxco, they used the moment to talk about how certain things may be pronounced in other varieties. The Nahuatl textbooks, produced by the Ministry of Education, were in another variety and were rarely utilized.

Considering these observations, the bilingual schooling system has not helped the maintenance of Nahuatl. In general, the “Mexican school system has always been a disruptive factor in the intergenerational transfer of Nahuatl” (Olko & Sullivan 2014, p. 207), but currently it could potentially play a positive role in reinforcing intergenerational transfer and language use. It could be an environment where bilingualism and multilingualism are lauded and positive attitudes towards Nahuatl are generated, established and strengthened. A possible way to achieve such an objective is for Nahuatl classes to be given by qualified teachers or fluent speakers from the community:

50) *Los maestros que hablen en náhuatl o de aquí mismo con las personas alguien que sepa hablar muy bien el náhuatl para apoyar a dar clases*

The teachers who speak Nahuatl or people from here who speak the language well can support by teaching [it]

This comment underlines the importance of empowering Indigenous speakers from the community to be leaders or protagonists in the language maintenance and revitalisation efforts. With the necessary skills, they can create content in their own variety, thereby creating new domains for Nahuatl language use. This will help the language break away from its reputation as being only a traditional language. Speakers suggested ways in which (their variety of) Nahuatl can be expanded to multimedia formats, namely audio, video, and written. On television, speakers wanted to watch the following programs in Nahuatl: (religious) films, movies, series, tourist expositions, news, cartoons, fairy tales (Rapunzel), weather forecasts, cooking shows, announcements, and sports. On radio, they wanted to hear songs, time telling, announcements and the latest news. In the written format, they wanted to see or read poems, novels, their own names, and beautiful things praising them. In sum, they wanted the same things that Spanish has. They wanted their language to have a bit of the recognition that Spanish has.

## 4.4 Conclusions

This study set out to explore the sociolinguistic situation of language shift and language maintenance in the small Nahuatl-speaking community of Tlaxco which faces a decline in the use of Nahuatl. We employed the use of interviews, a commonly used tool, to assess the language attitudes of 52 community members, 42 of which were bilinguals and 10 Nahuatl monolinguals. The research questions which guided the study focused on the possible causes of language shift and/or disruption of intergenerational transmission, and the measures that could be undertaken to maintain and revitalise the Nahuatl language. The results indicated that speakers generally held positive attitudes towards Nahuatl and did not want it to be endangered or lost. For many speakers, the language represented their rich cultural heritage, communal and personal Nahuatl identity, as well as being a beautiful language in which they felt the most comfortable in communicating with community members, family, and elders, all positive indicators for Nahuatl language maintenance. In contrast, some speakers expressed negative attitudes towards Nahuatl, tagging it as a low-value language with no importance outside the community, and with little or no aesthetic quality. They considered it a language that either must be discarded and not taught to children or whose use must be minimized in favour of Spanish, the language of socioeconomic advancement, prestige and power. In exploring the themes of linguistic shame and discrimination, we observed that an unfavourable mainstream society, coupled with its pervasive negative attitudes towards Indigenous languages, can adversely affect speakers' own attitudes towards their language to such an extent they would deny knowing or speaking their own language, conditions which act as triggers for Nahuatl language shift. Despite the challenges facing the community in maintaining

Nahuatl language use, most speakers are optimistic that their variety of Nahuatl will survive for many years as they proposed solutions such as enhanced intergenerational language transmission, use at schools, and the creation of new domains to safeguard and revitalise the language. This is one of the first in a series of sociolinguistic studies to be conducted in this region. This study provides new insights into the perspectives of adults who represent the parent and grandparent generations, important groups responsible for the transmission of the language to the younger generations. Insights into their attitudes inform on the sociolinguistic environment they inhabit and how their attitudes shape the debate or struggle of maintaining an Indigenous language, usually associated with tradition.

The findings will be of value to researchers interested in the maintenance and revitalisation of Indigenous languages as they contribute to our understanding of factors favouring language shift. One of the major conclusions from this study is that language shift begins at home when there is a disruption of intergenerational transmission, providing a fruitful area for further work focusing on parents' attitudes and language use. Such an investigation could examine how parents' lived experiences and attitudes influence language use with their children.

## 4.5 References

- Allport, G. (1954). The historical background of modern social psychology. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology: Theory and method* (pp. 3–56). Addison-Wesley.
- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Multilingual Matters.
- Bradley, D. (2013). Language attitudes: The key to language maintenance. In D. Bradley & M. Bradley (Eds.), *Language endangerment and language maintenance* (pp. 1–10). Routledge.

- Brudner, L. A. & White, D. R. (1979). Language attitudes: Behavior and intervening variables. In W. Mackey & J. Ornstein (Eds.), *Sociolinguistic studies in language contact: Methods and cases* (pp. 51-68). Mouton.
- CDI (La Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas) (2016). *Indicadores Socioeconómicos de los Pueblos Indígenas de México, 2015*. CDI.
- Choi, J. K. (2003). Language attitudes and the future of bilingualism: The case of Paraguay. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 6(2), 81-94.
- CONAPO (El Consejo Nacional de Población) (2016). *Infografía de la población indígena, 2015*. CONAPO. <https://www.gob.mx/conapo/documentos/infografia-de-la-poblacion-indigena-2015>
- Dorian, N. C. (1994). Purism versus compromise in language revitalization and language revival. *Language in Society*, 23, 474-494.
- Fishman, J. A. (1966). *Language loyalty in the United States*. Mouton.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Gal, S. (1979). *Language shift: Social determinants of linguistic change in bilingual Austria*. Academic Press.
- Garrett, P. (2010). *Attitudes to language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hansen, M. P. (2010). Nahuatl among Jehovah's Witnesses of Hueyapan Morelos: A case of spontaneous revitalization. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 203, 125-137.
- Hill, J. H. & Hill, K. C. (1986). *Speaking Mexicano: Dynamics of syncretic language in central Mexico*. University of Arizona Press.
- Hornberger, N. H. (1988a). *Bilingual education and language maintenance: A southern Peruvian Quechua case*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hornberger, N. H. (1988b). Language ideology in Quechua communities of Puno, Peru. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 30(2), 214-235.
- INALI (El Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas) (2012). *Lenguas indígenas nacionales en riesgo de desaparición: Variantes lingüísticas por grado de riesgo. 2000*. INALI.
- INEGI (El Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática) (2010). Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010. Mexico, D.F.: INEGI. <https://www.inegi.org.mx/>



- INEGI (El Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática) (2015). *La Encuesta Intercensal 2015*. INEGI. <https://www.inegi.org.mx/>
- Irvine, J. T. (2012). Language ideology. *Oxford bibliographies: Anthropology*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199766567-0012>
- King, K. (2000). Language ideologies and heritage language education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 3, 167–184.
- Krokristy, P. V. (2018). Language ideologies and language attitudes. *Oxford bibliographies: Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199772810-0122>
- Kulick, D. (1992). *Language shift and cultural reproduction: Socialization, self and syncretism in a Papua New Guinean village*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kupisch, T. & Rothman, J. (2018). Terminology matters! Why difference is not incompleteness and how early child bilinguals are heritage speakers. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 22(5), 564–582.
- Lyon, J. & Elis, N. (1991). Parental attitudes towards the Welsh language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 12(4), 239–251.
- Messing, J. (2003). *Ideological multiplicity in discourse: Language shift and bilingual schooling in Mexico* (Publication No. 3089987) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Messing, J. (2007). Multiple ideologies and competing discourses: Language shift in Tlaxcala, Mexico. *Language in Society*, 36(4): 555–577.
- Messing, J. (2009). Ambivalence and ideology among Mexicano youth in Tlaxcala, Mexico. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 8(5), 350–364.
- Mojica Lagunas, R. (2019). Language keyholders for Mexicano: The case of an intergenerational community in Coatepec de los Coasteles, Mexico. In T. L. McCarty, S. E. Nicholas & G. Wigglesworth (Eds.), *A world of Indigenous languages: Policies, pedagogies and prospects for language reclamation* (pp. 214-234). Multilingual Matters.
- Moreno Fernández, F. (2000). *Principios de sociolingüística y sociología del lenguaje*. Ariel.
- Moseley, C. (Ed.) (2010). *Atlas of the world's languages in danger. Third edition*. UNESCO Publishing. Online version: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas>
- Novak Lukanovic, S. (2015). Young people's attitudes to the use and meaning of language in border areas of Slovenia. In J. Cru (Ed.), *Linguapax review 2015: The role of youth in language revitalisation* (pp. 43-55). Linguapax International.

- Olko, J. & Sullivan, J. (2014). An integral approach to Nahuatl language revitalization. *Zeszyty Łużyckie*, 48, 191-214.
- Olko, J. & Sullivan, J. (2016). Bridging gaps and empowering speakers: An inclusive, partnership-based approach to Nahuatl research and revitalization. In J. Olko, T. Wicherkiewicz, & R. Borges (Eds.), *Integral strategies for language revitalization* (pp. 345-383). Faculty of “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw & Authors.
- Peller, I. (2015). Language ideologies. *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463>
- Rizo Amézquita, J. N. (2017). Población Indígena en cifras. *Boletín CONAMED OPS*, 13, 7-13.
- Simons, G. F. & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.) (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world. Twenty-second edition*. SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com>
- Valiñas, L. (2019). *Diccionario enciclopédico de las lenguas indígenas de México/DELIM*. Academia Mexicana de la Lengua/Fundación para las Letras Mexicanas/Secretaría de Cultura.
- Woolard, K. A. & Schieffelin, B. B. (1994). Language ideology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23, 55-82.
- Zhou, M. (2019). *Language ideology and order in rising China*. Springer.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Family Language Policy: Language Attitudes and Language Practices of Nahuatl-Speaking Parents

This study examines the family language policy of Nahuatl-speaking parents in Mexico and how it is influenced by parental experiences, beliefs, attitudes and expectations, child practices, and broader societal attitudes. It explores the language practices and language attitudes of parents through interviews.

#### 5.1 Introduction

While many factors, both local and global, contribute to the maintenance of a language, there is no doubt that intergenerational transmission is one of the most important factors in preserving minority languages. Many languages, even without a long literary tradition, have survived for centuries because they were transmitted from one generation to the other. Considering the significance of intergenerational transmission, this project examines the language attitudes and practices of parents and caregivers in the Nahuatl-speaking community of Santiago Tlaxco (commonly referred to as Tlaxco). The paper discusses parents' (and caretakers') actual language use with their children, their language attitudes, and how they influence language use, i.e. their family language policy.

The family domain is an important ideological site for the study of language shift and maintenance (King et al., 2008; Spolsky, 2012). Family language policy is “a deliberate attempt at practicing a particular language use pattern and particular literacy practices within home domain and among family members [and] is shaped by what the family believes will strengthen the family’s social standing and best serve and support the family

members' goals in life" (Curdt-Christiansen 2009, p. 352). From this definition, family language policy occurs in the wider sociocultural contexts and it may negotiate, resist, or conform to mainstream language ideologies. Apart from social, cultural and economic factors, parental expectations also play a role in determining family language policy. King et al. (2008) suggest that family language policy covers three main areas, namely, "what families actually do with language in day-to-day interactions [i.e. language practices], their beliefs and ideologies about language and language use [i.e. language beliefs], and their goals and efforts to shape language use and learning [i.e. language management]" (p. 907). This definition corresponds respectively to Spolsky's (2004) three components of language policy: language practices, language beliefs, and language management. The present study adopts this language policy theory as its framework.

Family language policy is not only deliberate but can be an unconscious process that is "predetermined by history and circumstances beyond the family's control" as very few families strategically plan language use within the home, i.e. make overt and explicit language policies (Caldas, 2012, p. 351). Such planning tends to be 'invisible' or spontaneous (Pakir 1994, 2003), and can change over time. Parents may adopt a family language policy (be it mono- or bi-/multilingual) for a variety of reasons. First, some parents want their children to have a cognitive advantage as bilinguals (King & Fogle, 2006; Dolson, 1985). Second, some parents want to preserve the heritage language of the family, for example, maintaining the Russian language among immigrant families in Israel (Kopeliovich, 2009). Third, parents often want to give their children an important economic advantage or enhance children's social capital, as seen with Chinese immigrants in Montreal (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009). Fourth, parents may decide to spare

their children social humiliation or refuse to pass on a perceived linguistic handicap, as observed for Cajun parents in Louisiana deciding not to speak French (Caldas, 2006).

King et al. (2008) identify three types of parental attitudes that influence language practices at home. First, some parents know clearly which languages they want their children to learn and use in communication. Second, parents may bring their perceptions about certain varieties or registers to their language practices with their children. Third, parents' beliefs towards bi/multilingualism and language learning in general may also influence their language management. Other studies attribute a greater influence to cultural attitudes, rather than parental language attitudes. In multilingual contexts, school-going children's language practices and attitudes often influence the parents (Tuominen, 1999; King et al., 2008). Parents may also be influenced by information in the popular press (e.g., magazines, television and newspapers) as well as the experiences of immediate or extended family and friends (King & Fogle, 2006; Barron-Hauwaert, 2004).

To ensure early childhood bilingualism, parents can employ different types of family language strategies such as the one-parent-one-language (OPOL) strategy, the bilingual-monolingual interaction (BMI) strategy, the "home language is different from the language outside the home" approach, the mixed language approach, and the "delayed introduction of the second language" strategy. In the OPOL strategy, each parent speaks to the child in only one language, usually their own first language. For example, the mother speaks only Nahuatl to her child, while the father speaks only Spanish. This strategy aids the simultaneous acquisition of both languages from birth. Several studies have found the OPOL is effective in producing bilinguals, but it requires constant and frequent interaction in both languages (Bain & Yu 1980; Pearson et al., 1997; Okita,

2002). Another study reported a 75% success rate for OPOL among 1899 families in Flanders, Belgium (De Houwer, 2007). The BMI strategy is a more flexible and situational-based approach (Lanza, 1997). One parent adheres strictly to speaking one language to the child while the other parent speaks both languages. In situations where the parental first language is different from the language of schooling or the neighbourhood, the child could acquire the home language, as well as the community language or the school language. In such mixed language settings, the child is exposed to both languages and codeswitching and codemixing are accepted in the speech at home and in the neighbourhood. Parents may also choose to delay the introduction of the second language by addressing the child in only one language until they gain proficiency in the first language.

The success of family language acquisition can be influenced by peers, networks of friends, family structure, and educational options. Caldas (2012) considers the child's peer group, especially during adolescence, as "perhaps the most poisonous external environment" for the maintenance of a minority language, especially "if a child's peer group does not speak the minority language being spoken in the home, then it is very likely that the child will not speak the home language either" (p. 356). Immersing an adolescent in environmental/social milieus where the child's peers speak the minority language is likely to "pressure [them] to conform linguistically to the language norms of their new peer groups and speak the home language with friends" (Caldas, 2012, p. 357). In the family structure, the presence of siblings can influence the success of family's language policy as siblings' choice among themselves may reinforce or undermine language acquisition. The type of school (monolingual or bilingual) can also be a factor.

A monolingual school in the minority language will facilitate the success of a family language policy to preserve the minority language, while a school in the majority language can adversely affect the use of the minority language at home.

Having reviewed some of the different factors (internal and external) related to family language policy, we turn to the next sections of the paper. The first section summarizes some previous studies on parental attitudes towards Indigenous languages, followed by the context of study which gives an overview of the linguistic situation in Mexico, especially Nahuatl. The next section contains the methodology explaining the procedures of the research study, followed by findings of the research, and the conclusions.

## 5.2 Previous Studies on Parental Attitudes in Indigenous Communities

Several studies have investigated the role that parents play in language transmission and maintenance of Indigenous languages. Choi (2003) investigated parents' linguistic use of, and attitudes towards, Guaraní in Paraguay. She reported that parents generally held positive attitudes about Guaraní, that is, they favoured the inclusion of this Indigenous language in the school curricula and noted the need to transmit it to their children.

However, of the 304 parents surveyed, more than half (58%) reported speaking only Spanish to their children, compared to a small fraction (3.9%) who used only Guaraní.

Many parents had developed a monolingual family language policy where the dominant language, Spanish, was used. The majority of parents chose to speak only Spanish with their children in spite of most of them maintaining that it was important to transmit Guaraní to the younger generation: this is an example of a disconnect between language attitudes and language use. Positive attitudes do not always translate into language use.

In the Ecuadorian context, Quichua-speaking parents in the Saraguro communities of Tambopamba and Laguna would not communicate with their children in the language because they feared learning both languages at the same time would hinder their children's Spanish development (King, 2000). They preferred that their children fully develop their speaking skills in Spanish before they learned Quichua, hence adopting a family language policy where the introduction of the second language was delayed. In this environment, parents' misconceptions about language learning, fuelled by societal myths about bilingualism, influenced language practices and management. The myth that bilingualism is bad for children cognitively and linguistically is not only prevalent in Indigenous communities but also for Indigenous persons in the diaspora, as observed in Pérez Báez's (2013) work on family language policy of speakers of San Lucas Quiavini Zapotec in Los Angeles. This study focused on the family members' language use patterns, the ideologies influencing language use and choices, and the resulting consequence of language shift. The author noted that misconceptions about bi/multilingualism were a burden on children, often exacerbated by specialists, including educators and speech pathologists, who encouraged parents to communicate in English with their children. Additionally, parents blamed their children for not wanting to speak Zapotec, pressuring them to accommodate to their language of choice. The lack of language intervention by parents provided an opportunity for external intervention by the child's peers and educators. Parents' fear of negative repercussions on their children if the latter do not speak the dominant language well is justified if the broader discrimination that Indigenous peoples face is taken into consideration. Take for instance, Terborg's (2004) study which tested language attitudes towards accented Spanish using a



matched-guise test. The 106 participants were asked to assign job roles in an electronic company to two candidates based on speech samples; one recording was of a native speaker of Spanish and the other from an Otomi speaker of Spanish. Terborg found that the majority of participants assumed that the native speaker of standard Mexican Spanish was more intelligent and well-educated and assigned them to higher positions such as manager and engineer. In contrast, participants assigned lower-paying jobs such as janitor and labourer to the Otomi speaker of Spanish. With such negative language perceptions, it is understandable that Indigenous parents would not want their children to be disadvantaged. There is a widespread perception that speaking Indigenous languages will affect one's Spanish. In a survey about attitudes towards Spanish varieties, in which 400 adults in Mexico City participated, Spanish spoken in Indigenous-speaking areas was perceived as peculiar: "*tienen un hablar muy peculiar, tal vez por[que] el dialecto que han hablado por siglos no les permite hablar bien el español*" [they have a very strange way of speaking, maybe because the dialect they have spoken for centuries does not allow them to speak Spanish well] (Morett, 2014, p. 847). Indigenous languages are commonly referred to as dialects, indicating that they are not considered languages in their own right.

Another study (Lam, 2009) argued that the institution of Spanish-language schooling and the move to a cash-based economy were the catalysts for parents shifting to a Spanish-only policy with their children in the Totonac-speaking Upper Nexaca Valley of Mexico. For many years, Totonac persisted in spite of the pervasive negative attitudes in the community; however, in the past decades, the establishment of Spanish schools and the socioeconomic opportunities associated with Spanish resulted in language shift. In Lam's

(2009) words, they were “the straw that broke the Totonac language’s back” (p. 231). In this case, mainstream society affected the language policy of parents in the Upper Nexaca Valley, as they opted to speak with the children in Spanish, considered the language of socioeconomic power and prestige.

In the Nahuatl Indigenous context, there are few published studies which have solely or partially focused on language attitudes. One of the seminal studies on Nahuatl language shift and maintenance is Hill and Hill’s (1986) study on the Malinche towns in Mexico. They highlighted two main groups of community members with different attitudes towards Nahuatl: a group who supported the language use of Nahuatl and wanted the language to remain pure or separate from Spanish, and a group who thought Nahuatl had little economic and instrumental value. Similarly, a follow-up study in the same region by Messing (2007) identified three competing discourses informing on language use and reflecting attitudes in the community, namely *salir adelante*, where Spanish was needed to forge ahead socioeconomically; *menosprecio*, where Indigenous identity was devalued and denigrated; and *pro-indígena*, where one’s Indigenous culture was wholly accepted and promoted. In these two studies, while positive attitudes towards Nahuatl did not necessarily translate into language use, negative attitudes appeared to impede the transmission of the language to the young generations.

Hansen (2016) studied two families from different communities in Mexico, namely Hueyapan (Morelos) and Tlaquilpa (Veracruz), and their experiences with Nahuatl: the author portrayed how family language policy impacted adult children. Using two adult children as a case study, 30-year-old Ana and 17-year-old Feliciano, he documented how not speaking Nahuatl decreased opportunities for one, while speaking Nahuatl presented

obstacles for the other. While both had Nahuatl-speaking parents, Ana could not speak Nahuatl because she grew up in a mostly Spanish-speaking household. Not being able to speak Nahuatl decreased her chances of gaining economic support for her small-scale enterprise from an Indigenous organization. This experience impacted her so much that she transformed to become Indigenous in her appearance, wearing Indigenous outfits and no longer dyeing her hair blond. She also started learning Nahuatl. Feliciano grew up speaking Nahuatl and had Nahuatl-speaking teachers at her primary school but struggled in her junior high school where Spanish was the language of instruction as she was not proficient in that language. Being mocked by her schoolmates did not help matters and she did not continue her education. For her, Nahuatl had become an obstacle to achieving higher levels of education and pursuing a life outside the community. The lived experiences of Ana and Feliciano, together with the constraints of social realities (i.e. access to Indigenous resources for Ana and Spanish-dominant educational system), would likely inform their own family language policies in the future.

Chapter 4 of this thesis provided an in-depth analysis of adult language attitudes in the Nahuatl-speaking community of Santiago Tlaxco. Fifty-two adults, aged 18 to 70, were interviewed on a variety of topics including the importance of Nahuatl, its language shift and maintenance, and its intergenerational transmission. It reported that adults generally showed positive attitudes towards Nahuatl and considered it a part of their rich cultural heritage in their community and in Mexico as a nation. They saw Nahuatl as a marker of personal identity, full of aesthetic beauty, and the language of communication with community members, family, and elders. More importantly, they wanted Nahuatl to be transmitted intergenerationally and to be maintained for all eternity. On the other hand,

participants reported negative attitudes on the part of some community members who were ashamed to speak Nahuatl, denied ever knowing or speaking the language and would not transmit the language to their children. For such persons, Nahuatl did not have much relevance outside the community, so it was better to invest more efforts in acquiring Spanish and speaking it well. Others admitted they were reluctant to speak their language outside the community, especially in big cities such as Mexico City, where anti-Indigenous sentiments are present, to avoid snide remarks and insults. Some narrated incidents where they faced discrimination for speaking Nahuatl. These experiences influenced some parents and caregivers' language use with the children, making them opt for a Spanish-only policy at home. Some adults blamed children for the failure of language transmission. They claimed that children did not find the Nahuatl language pleasing enough to learn; they simply did not like it. Others blamed the presence of Spanish-language schools for influencing the language use of children and parents away from Nahuatl. Interestingly, there were parents who held positive attitudes about Nahuatl, referred to it as important to their identity and would defend it to anyone who dared say anything negative, but yet would not communicate in it with their children. There were also Nahuatl translators and activists in the community who did not speak the language to their children, preferring for them to gain fluency in Spanish first. One parent mentioned that she wanted her children to speak Spanish well so they could become doctors. This study lays the foundation for the present work as it provides an overview of prevailing attitudes of adults, the (grand)parent generation, who play a key role in determining whether the Nahuatl language is transmitted to future generations.

The studies presented thus far provide evidence that family language policy in Indigenous communities is determined and shaped by parental beliefs and attitudes, parental aspirations, adults' lived experiences, the educational system, children's preferences, the (negative) attitudes of mainstream society, and socioeconomic realities. The present research aims to partially rectify the dearth of knowledge on language use and attitudes in Nahuatl communities, as it not only focuses on parental language practices and attitudes, but it also employs case studies to gain insights into family language policy. Before proceeding to the methodology section of this paper, it is important to describe briefly the Mexican context in which the study took place.

### 5.3 Research Context

In the Mexican context, there have been a series of legislative matters and language policy initiatives involving Indigenous languages. Terborg et al. (2006) reviewed Mexico's language policy and concluded that the policy had three approaches, namely "incorporation, integration and participation" (p. 139). The first two were top-down approaches, concerned with incorporating and integrating Indigenous peoples into a broader monolithic society through an erasure of Indigenous values and education. In the approach promoting participation, there was active collaboration of Indigenous communities, the Mexican government and multinational organizations. Indigenous values and belief systems were embraced, and bilingual and bicultural schooling was promoted.

Sandoval (2017) shows that, beginning in 1992, there was a cultural and political shift among Indigenous peoples to embrace their Indigenous identity and reject the idea that they had to abandon their language and culture to be modern or Mexican. The Zapatista

movement in 1994, coupled with political activism and several reforms, led to the creation of the General Law of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (*Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*) in 2003 which enshrined the linguistic rights of Indigenous peoples. Some articles of the Law, ratified in 2015, are as follows. Article 3 recognises Indigenous languages and their diversity as an essential component of the national cultural and linguistic heritage and a showcase of pluricultural Mexico. Article 4 establishes Indigenous languages, together with Spanish, as national languages. Article 7 considers Indigenous languages as valid as Spanish in any issue or matter to the public. Article 8 cautions against any form of discrimination based on language. Article 9 establishes that every Mexican has the right to communicate in the language of their choice without any restriction, publicly and privately, in all activities including socioeconomic, religious, cultural and political ones. Article 11 guarantees Indigenous people access to public bilingual and intercultural education. Article 14 creates the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas*) (INALI), a decentralized organ of the Federal Public Administration, under the Secretary of Culture, with the objective of promoting, preserving, and developing Indigenous languages. While the implementation of the Law can be problematic sometimes, this legislation has contributed to the promotion of Indigenous languages in Mexico. INALI has become one of the principal organizations promoting Indigenous languages and has advanced Indigenous language research. There has also been a shift in the educational system from a bilingual system which had an assimilationist approach to an intercultural one which is inclusive of Indigenous language and culture: this has also led to the establishment of intercultural universities in Mexico.

There is a wide gap between the extensive language policy and the practice/efforts of developing and preserving Indigenous languages in Mexico. For example, the intercultural universities have programs in Indigenous languages and culture, but none uses Indigenous languages as a medium of instruction. This reality illustrates the gap between the concept of interculturality and its implementation: as noted by Sandoval (2017), the “concept [of interculturality] did not necessarily translate into a real movement toward the empowerment of indigenous peoples” (p. 70). The situation is even worse in some intercultural and bilingual basic and middle schools, where Indigenous languages are not used in the classrooms and are even prohibited (Sandoval 2017). Considering the general lack of support for Indigenous languages in Mexico, only two Indigenous languages, Nahuatl and Yucatec Mayan, are currently considered safe because of their large speaker populations (Terborg et al., 2006). Nahuatl has approximately 1.5 million speakers and a wide geographical distribution (INEGI [The National Institute of Statistics and Geography], 2010). Historically, it was the lingua franca for other Indigenous peoples and has a long history of literacy. The fact that a language is not endangered does not mean that all its varieties are safe. In the case of Nahuatl, only half of its 30 varieties are not at immediate risk of disappearing (INALI [The National Institute of Indigenous Languages], 2012). The variety spoken in Tlaxco, the community of interest in this project, *náhuatl del noreste central, mexi'catl* or *maseual tla'tol* (Northern Puebla variety), is considered safe by INALI standards, that is, its young speakers (aged 5-14) make up more than 25% of the total speaker population and it is spoken in more than one locality. In the localities where the variety is spoken, the speaker population should represent at least 30% of the total population. In the case of

the Northern Puebla variety, it is spoken in twelve municipalities of which one is in state of Hidalgo and eleven are in state of Puebla (Valiñas 2019). Tlaxco is a small rural community located in the municipality of Chiconcuaula in Puebla. According to the 2010 census, it has only 1695 inhabitants, with the majority (83%) speaking Nahuatl and 76% of the population are bilinguals who speak Nahuatl and Spanish (INEGI, 2010). These results indicate that Tlaxco is a robust bilingual community.

While the census data present an image of Nahuatl as a major minority language, Olko and Sullivan's (2016a) review of the multifaceted factors affecting the endangerment and shift of the Nahuatl language painted a different outlook. They described a language facing disruption of intergenerational transmission as a result of widespread racism in Mexican society, and an educational system and mass media which strongly favour Hispanization. They lament that Nahuatl, once the language of socioeconomic prestige and power, is on a downward trend to becoming an endangered language in Mexico, and that there is an increasing trend for the youth to shift towards Spanish. Many Nahuatl speakers may feel insecure about their language, thinking they do not speak it well because they codeswitch with Spanish. Olko and Sullivan (2016b) attribute the linguistic insecurity of many Nahuatl speakers to a lack of literacy and materials in their language. In comparison with other languages such as Spanish and English, Nahuatl "is commonly perceived as a language of very limited potential, spoken only by elders, and lacking any utility in the modern world, especially as a means for educational, social or economic advancement" (Olko & Sullivan, 2016b, p. 353). Even when Indigenous languages are taught as a subject in basic schools, Spanish is the language of instruction as is the case for Nahuatl in the Highland Mountains of Veracruz (Sandoval, 2017). Nahuatl when used



in the classroom is reserved for poetry and stories and is not used to teach subjects such as mathematics and biology. Nahuatl is not taught at the junior and senior high levels of education. Literacy in Spanish reinforces the dominance of the language and establishes it as the language of knowledge while relegating Indigenous languages such as Nahuatl to traditional and informal contexts. The lack of mother tongue education contributes to the low academic achievements of Nahuatl-speaking children as seen in the case study of Feliciano mentioned above. The absence of Nahuatl-speaking teachers functionally equipped with necessary training and adequate resources impedes the maintenance of the Nahuatl language. Furthermore, efforts to standardize modern varieties of Nahuatl have not been fruitful, as a standardized writing system has not been agreed upon due to dialectal differences and a lack of communication between communities.

In spite of the challenges facing Nahuatl and other Indigenous languages, activists, academics, universities, non-governmental organizations, and community members continue in their efforts to revitalise them. An example is the Language and Cultural Revitalization, Maintenance and Development Project (PRMDLC [*El Proyecto de Revitalización, Mantenimiento y Desarrollo Lingüístico y Cultural*] in Spanish) that is focused on empowering Indigenous speakers through multimedia. This project, which has been ongoing for about two decades, is carried out by teams of activist researchers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). Some of the outputs generated include about 20 books in different Indigenous languages which are being used in schools, besides other materials such as music, cartoons, and documentaries in multimedia formats (Flores Farfán & Vargas García, 2019). In this project, researchers have contributed to

Indigenous communities by collaborating with community members to produce culturally and socially meaningful resources.

Another revitalisation strategy for Nahuatl has been the promotion of literacy in the language, especially among students. The Intercultural University of Veracruz has been doing noteworthy work in this area, as reviewed by Sandoval (2017). It has adopted the writing system of Hasler Hangert (1995, 2001) and Yopihua Palacios et al. (2005) which enjoys some consensus in the region and is used in other universities in the Selvas and Huasteca regions. Additionally, students and other intellectuals from the University have contributed texts of various genres to a bilingual magazine, *Toyolxayak*. Furthermore, students and teachers write poetry and post it in public places for the general public.

The second revitalisation strategy has been to treat Nahuatl as an academic language by setting guidelines for theses, essays and other types of academic writing in Nahuatl (Sandoval, 2017). Students have the opportunity to defend their theses in Nahuatl and can present research in colloquia in Nahuatl. Additionally, plans are underway to have a program where Nahuatl will be the medium of instruction. Another strategy is to foster interdialectal dialogue among speakers, even if it is only at the university level. For example, the Intercultural University of Veracruz encourages the teaching of Nahuatl to non-speakers, especially Spanish speakers, with the goal of changing negative societal attitudes towards the language. Furthermore, the University offers a diploma program to train Nahuatl-speaking professionals in mediation, translation, and interpretation. This University provides a case study of the inclusion of Nahuatl in higher education and its potential impact on the society.

## 5.4 Methodology

The present research employs a qualitative method, utilizing interviews to collect data to gain insights into the family language policy of parents and caregivers in Tlaxco. This study is part of a larger one on adult language attitudes presented in Chapter 4. In the latter study, the prevailing attitudes were presented collectively for the community, but in the current chapter, more personalized accounts of individuals are presented as case studies. While this study was not originally designed as a case study, it appropriates one of common characteristics or elements of case-study research, which is to offer an in-depth study of a specific case. Hence, we offer an in-depth study of the family language policy of three individuals, that is their attitudes, language practices and language management. The interview data in Chapter 4 were mined for cases or examples of family language policy. Their interviews were conducted in Spanish. The three cases presented were selected for their different perspectives on family language policy (e.g. a pro-Nahuatl perspective from a father, a pro-Spanish attitude from a caregiver, and an anti-Nahuatl attitude from a mother) while at the same showcasing themes that are representative of the community. The three participants, whom I refer to as Rogelio, Liliana, and Morgana, are bilingual speakers of Nahuatl and Spanish, whose place of birth and current residence is Tlaxco. Table 5.1 provides a description of the participants.

**Table 5.1 Profile of case study participants**

	<b>Rogelio</b>	<b>Liliana</b>	<b>Morgana</b>
Age (years)	40	52	25
Gender	male	female	female
Speaker type	bilingual	bilingual	bilingual
Occupation	farmer	seamstress	farmer
Education	junior high	none	high school

## 5.5 Findings

### 5.5.1 Case studies

#### 5.5.1.1 Rogelio

Rogelio is a 40-year-old *campesino* (peasant farmer) who grew up to be bilingual in Nahuatl and Spanish. He usually travels outside the community for work. He was born and raised in Tlaxco and has a junior high education. He has three children, with only one, the youngest (age 5) being able to speak Nahuatl. He was accompanied to the interview by his wife and 12-year-old daughter. He and his wife speak Spanish with their two daughters. Interestingly, he felt that he used both languages with his daughters because he sometimes taught and explained some Nahuatl words to them when they occasionally expressed interest in the language. He had to intervene when his first daughter started to mix Nahuatl with Spanish in her speech after visiting her grandfather: *ya le rectifico lo que es el náhuatl y el español* [I correct her on what is Nahuatl and Spanish]. Here, he reveals the fear of most parents that learning both languages at the same time will make children confused, hence preferring them to acquire one language first before introducing the second.

When asked who was responsible for transmitting Nahuatl to the children, he admitted that it should be parents and not the grandparents. In the similar vein with most parents, he excused not teaching Nahuatl to his daughters to them not liking it. He said he was willing to teach them whenever they wanted clarification. At the interview, his daughter did confirm that she did not like Nahuatl but consulted her parents whenever she wanted to be able to defend herself against insults in the language. In the community, insults in Nahuatl were used to mark boundary and show in-group identity (Gomashie, 2020). For

him, it was enough for Nahuatl language maintenance that his 12-year-old daughter learned a few words in the language:

1. *Exactamente no le gusta el náhuatl, pero haga de cuenta cuando va algún lado y le hablan en náhuatl por eso mismo llega a la casa y me pregunta: me dijeron así, pero ¿qué quiere decir? Entonces nosotros ya le explicamos ... aunque no quiera aprender básicamente prácticamente ya está preguntando porque ya le entró la duda de que es lo que le dijeron en náhuatl ... aunque no le gusta, pero va aprendiendo o sea no realmente está perdiendo la costumbre de perder el náhuatl.* Exactly, she does not like Nahuatl, but when she goes somewhere and she is addressed in Nahuatl, she would ask us to explain what was said when she gets home. We explain to her ...so even though she basically does not want to learn, her curiosity is aroused by what was said to her in Nahuatl...so although she does not like it, she is [indirectly] learning it, therefore she is not really letting Nahuatl be lost.

From this excerpt, we see the importance of speakers in the community in motivating others to learn Nahuatl. Here, Rogelio's daughters influenced family language policy because they did not like Nahuatl, so the parents felt required to speak Spanish with them. On the other hand, children's attitudes towards Nahuatl are influenced by peers and community members who use the language to test their Indigeneity. The spouse of Rogelio mentioned that her daughter had been disrespected for not knowing Nahuatl. Consequently, Rogelio makes the case that it is still important to learn Nahuatl, even if one does not like it, in order to defend against insults:

2. *Sí, es necesario saber algo de náhuatl, aunque no te guste porque por ejemplo ahorita ya te dijeron de groserías y no sabes ni que te dijeron ... por ejemplo, es como usted no sabe náhuatl, le podemos insultar en náhuatl porque no sabe náhuatl.* Yes, it is necessary to know a bit of Nahuatl, even if you do not like it because if you are insulted in the language, you would not know what you were told in the language....For example, we can insult you [researcher] in Nahuatl because you do not understand the language.

While it is encouraging to see young people interested in learning their Indigenous language, an interest their parents could not generate, unfortunately it comes at a cost that Nahuatl becomes associated with vulgarity. In the interview data, one of the reasons stated for not liking Nahuatl was it sounded *feo* (ugly) and *raro* (weird). It is possible that Nahuatl's occasional association with insults could be a contributing factor to its negative perceptions by some individuals. Rogelio's daughter being able to recall and memorize some of the words she was told on the streets also suggests a passive gain of knowledge, albeit very limited in scope, in Nahuatl.

Rogelio's acquiescence to his children's language practices is very interesting, considering his pro-Indigenous background. Rogelio proudly asserts that he is Indigenous, and the Nahuatl language is an important part of his identity. He was quick to say that he was not ashamed to communicate in Nahuatl with friends in the city, even though he sometimes received snide remarks from non-Indigenous people who assumed they were being badmouthed. He admitted the environment outside the community, especially in the cities, was not conducive to speaking Indigenous languages as speakers were perceived as an oddity (*bicho raro*). Although this discriminatory attitude has led many people to feel ashamed or reluctant to speak their language outside, he was not disheartened to use his language. He stated that he and his friends faced microaggressions such as racial slurs for speaking Nahuatl in a bus in Mexico City. He admitted that, although that episode was intended to humiliate them and denigrate their Indigeneity, he used it as the opportunity to express his pride in his language:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 3. <i>Sí, indios sí, a mucha honra porque nosotros hablamos el dialecto y no nos da pena, y se nos quedaron mirando bien feo, pero</i> | Yes, we are proud to be Indians because we speak our dialect and we are not ashamed. They were sending ugly looks our way, but we did not let that stop us |
|--|--|

*ni por eso dejamos de hablar  
seguimos platicando ... yo creo  
que siente así que te humillan, pero  
yo no lo siento así porque yo no  
estoy negando de donde yo vengo  
de mis raíces, negar de lo que es  
uno, de donde uno sale pues niegas  
a toda tu raza y no debe de ser así.*

from conversing. I think [such incidents] could make one feel humiliated, but I do not feel that way because I am not denying where I came from, my roots. Denying who one is and where they come from, is to deny one's whole race and that should not be the case.

It is of note that in his defense of the Nahuatl language, Rogelio refers to it as a *dialecto* (dialect), a terminology used to indicate that Indigenous languages are not full languages in the same sense as Spanish. He used the same term later when he spoke about the negative attitudes of Nahuatl-speaking teachers.

Apart from his pro-Indigenous identity, he is very much interested in the language maintenance and revitalisation of his language. He is aware that the use of Nahuatl is on a steady decline in the community: *pa[ra] ser sincero aquí el náhuatl ya se está perdiendo ... Nuestro dialecto, nuestra raíz ya lo estaríamos cambiando por el español* (to be sincere, here Nahuatl is already being lost...Our dialect, our root, we are already exchanging it with Spanish) and estimates that only 3 out of 10 people speak Nahuatl. For him, children of 10 to 14 years addressing people in Nahuatl will be a rare occurrence. He further recommends that to stem the decline of Nahuatl, it is important for parents to teach children Nahuatl, *enseñar a nuestros hijos que aprendan nahuatl*; although he himself did not practice what he preached. He also suggested the schools could do more to support language maintenance. He blamed their ineffectiveness in teaching Nahuatl on teachers not knowing the variety of Nahuatl spoken in the community and Nahuatl language textbooks in a different variety. He was particularly disappointed with the Nahuatl-speaking teachers who he believed were ashamed of speaking the language:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>4. <i>Los mismos maestros les da vergüenza hablar su dialecto, entonces como va a crecer el náhuatl si los propios maestros no lo hablan o les da pena que lo hablen en náhuatl.</i></p> | <p>The teachers themselves are ashamed of their dialect, so how is the use of Nahuatl supposed to grow if the same teachers do not speak it or are embarrassed when they are addressed in Nahuatl.</p> |
|---|--|

He was referring to teachers at the primary school. Indigenous languages are not taught at the junior and senior high school levels in Mexico. None of the teachers, including the Nahuatl-speaking ones, are from the community. The negative attitudes of the teachers indirectly send the message to parents and children that the use of Nahuatl should be minimized at best, as seen in the Nahuatl-speaking context of the Highland Mountains of Veracruz (Sandoval, 2017). Nonetheless, the municipality, Chiconcuautla, could support Nahuatl language maintenance by sending qualified teachers to teach it not only to the children but also to less proficient adults. Additionally, he would like to see proficient speakers participating in the teaching of Nahuatl but perceived a general lack of interest on the part of the community to teach and learn it. He wanted to see the creation of new domains for Nahuatl use, especially in multimedia. He wanted to watch and listen to serious television and radio programs in Nahuatl:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>5. <i>[Me gustaría ver] programas de algo importante porque tampoco me gustaría ver programas que sea de caricatura. A mí me gustaría ver algo importante, algo interesante que pase, por ejemplo, algún noticiero pero que salga en náhuatl, noticias a mi forma de como yo hablo.</i></p> | <p>[I would like to see] important programs because I would not like to see programs such as cartoons. I would like to watch something important, something interesting that is happening, for example, some news forecasted in Nahuatl, news broadcasted in the way I speak [or my variety of Nahuatl].</p> |
|--|--|

He felt that programs such as cartoons would infantilize the Nahuatl language. For him, the language was very important and valuable, and deserved to be treated with all seriousness. He concluded the interview with the wish that his beautiful language is not



lost because its loss would mean the loss of everything: *el náhuatl es bonito y que no se perdiera porque si se pierde, pues realmente, pues, perdemos todo* (Nahuatl is beautiful and it should not be lost because its loss, would mean sincerely, that we lose everything).

From the portrait of Rogelio, we see a parent who is extremely passionate about his language and wants it to survive. However, he did not speak it to his female children but only to his youngest male child. One possible explanation is that he became more pro-Nahuatl as he grew older. Another possibility is that the difference in family language policy for the son could be related to gender. However, it seems more probable that, as the mother said, it was just a question of the daughters' dislike of the language. The most likely scenario is that the parents adopted an unplanned language policy of delaying the introduction of a second language (Nahuatl) with their daughters but chose a bilingual approach with their son. Having seen that their daughters could not defend themselves in Nahuatl, they may want to prevent their son from having a similar experience.

#### 5.5.1.2 Liliana

Liliana is a bilingual 54-year old seamstress with no formal education. Together with her mother, she raised her much younger brothers and is currently a caregiver for her 4-year-old nephew when his parents are at work. Her story is an example of how one's lived experiences can influence one's family language policy. She grew up as a monolingual speaker of Nahuatl, faced discrimination for not speaking Spanish, learned Spanish in the capital when she worked there at age 13, returned to her community, and initiated a Spanish-only family language policy with her brothers. She was 16- and 19-years-old, respectively, when her two brothers were born.

For her, not knowing Spanish represented a major obstacle when she was outside the community and she even referred to this feeling as “suffering”. She recalled two incidents that shaped her linguistic outlook; they occurred when she was working as an adolescent in Zacatlan (closest city to Tlaxco, about 1.5 hours away), and in Mexico City. She mentioned that it is the norm for adolescents and young adults in her community to work as assistants or helpers in Mexico City to support their family. She was told that in Mexico one had to learn Spanish to be able to communicate with people or else you would not be respected. Her first negative encounter was with a Spanish-speaking woman in Zacatlan who refused to pay her after working for 15 days. She lamented that she felt defenseless because she did not know Spanish. She concluded that the woman took advantage of her because she could not speak Spanish:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>6. <i>Cuando tenía yo 13 años, fui a Zacatlán. Entonces como la mujer me está viendo que yo no me puedo defender, puro náhuatl hablo yo... pero así con trabajito le contesto y me está viendo que yo soy mansita ... así trabajé 15 días. No me iba a pagar, entonces yo me ponía muy triste y decía por qué pasa esto por qué no me enseñaron el español. Ahorita, no puedo defenderme.</i></p> | <p>When I was 13 years, I went to Zacatlan. Well, the woman saw that I could not defend myself as I spoke only Nahuatl...I accepted to work with her, and she saw that I was humble/meek...so I worked for 15 days but she was not going to pay me. So, I was very sad, and I asked why this happened. It happened because they did not teach me Spanish. Now, I cannot defend myself.</p> |
|--|--|

This excerpt highlights the theme of language as a weapon and a defense mechanism.

The woman weaponized the adolescent’s lack of Spanish and cheated her out of earned wages. The situation of the adolescent Liliana not being able to fight back emphasizes the importance of linguistic representation of Indigenous languages in the judicial system.

While the first incident was related to discrimination, the second was associated with the feeling of displacement in Mexico City. She recalled that her initial stay there with her

employers was sad as she could not understand a word of Spanish: *me puse triste hasta que me enseñan* (I was sad until they taught me [Spanish]). She struggled to do what she was instructed but eventually she learned Spanish. She returned to Tlaxco when she was 16 years old and began taking charge of the family language policy of her brothers. She told her mother that the brothers should not speak Nahuatl anymore:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>7. <i>Cuando regresé tenía yo 16 años, uno nació tenía yo 16 años y el otro tenía 19... Le digo a mi Morgana, 'ahora los niños no quiero que sufran, ahora los niños ya no vamos a hablar en náhuatl, porque yo ya vi que, si puro náhuatl no te respetan'. Entonces por eso a los niños después les gustó el español, no hablaban náhuatl, estaban chiquitos no hablaban náhuatl.</i></p> | <p>When I returned, I was 16 years old, one was born when I was 16 and the other when I was 19...I told my mum, 'Now, I do not want the children to suffer so we are not going to speak Nahuatl to them anymore because I have seen that if you speak only Nahuatl, you are not respected'. Later, the children [siblings] liked Spanish and did not speak Nahuatl. When they were young, they did not speak Nahuatl.</p> |
|---|---|

From her experience and perspective, there was no respect for monolingual speakers of Nahuatl, and she felt compelled to ensure that her siblings did not face a similar fate. For Liliana, being able to speak Spanish brought respect to her and her brothers when they were outside the community, or when they interacted with Spanish-speakers:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>8. <i>Somos ahorita ya somos como México... somos iguale. Nos decían la gente de los pueblos que no saben español es que son indios... Ya no dicen eso porque ya todos se defienden, aunque venga otra persona de lejos ya hablan iguales como el de aquí y ellos, pero antes no, se esconde la gente no lo responde... Ya ahorita ya se defienden ya hablan bien con ellos, ya platican con ellos ya se hacen amigos ... Antes no los respetaban, los de afuera no respetan se siente muy grande como él sabe hablar y los que no</i></p> | <p>Now, we are the same as Mexico [City]...we are the same. We who lived in towns and could not speak Spanish were called Indians. They do not say that to us anymore because we all can defend ourselves. When a stranger comes to the community, we can easily communicate with him. This was not the case in the past as people in the community would hide to avoid speaking to them. Now we can defend ourselves, we speak well with them, we converse with them and make friends with them ...In the past, outsiders did not respect us. They felt superior because they spoke Spanish and could take advantage of those who could not</p> |
|---|--|

*pueden se aprovechan de ellos, así es, pero ahorita gracias a Dios ya no es así, luego los niños ya estudian.* speak the language. But now, thanks be to God that this is no longer the case as the children are learning Spanish.

Liliana's comments about respect reveal the systemic and pervasive racism and discrimination that Indigenous communities are subjected to. She uttered the first statement about being "the same as Mexico [City]" with a laugh, showing her delight that things have changed for the better compared to her younger days.

In excerpt 7, in which Liliana mentions about her siblings liking Spanish later, we find evidence that children's apparent like or dislike of a language stems from their sociolinguistic environment. An important point to consider is how did her mother, a monolingual speaker of Nahuatl, feel when hearing about how she is not respected outside of her community. Most importantly, how did she feel about not being able to communicate in her own language with her own children. When asked how her brothers communicated with their mother, Liliana replied that they responded in Spanish when her mum spoke to them in Nahuatl because they had some passive knowledge of Nahuatl: *ella con nahuatl les habla, pero ellos le contestan en español, si entiende, pero no hablaban.* She added that they began to speak Nahuatl with her when they were older. Attending school also facilitated their Spanish language learning. Her approach might be considered extreme if one considers that her siblings would have learned Spanish anyway in school. But for her, and many parents, it is considered better for children to acquire Spanish proficiency first before learning Nahuatl later, when they are older. This strategy seems to have worked out for her brothers as they are currently working as Spanish-Nahuatl translators. The same strategy is being implemented with her 4-year-old nephew. He is always addressed in Spanish by his parents and Liliana, the people with whom he

spends most of his time. It seems likely that the nephew will grow up with a receptive capability in Nahuatl as his father did. Liliana mentioned that her nephew understands Nahuatl even though he does not speak it. The case study of Liliana and her siblings is also another example of family language policy based on the introduction of the second language. However, in the households of Rogelio and Liliana, children are still exposed to Nahuatl from birth, even though they do not speak it when they are younger.

### 5.5.1.3 Morgana

Morgana, the youngest of the three case studies, is a 25-year-old, whose first language is Nahuatl but who now prefers to speak Spanish more frequently. She reported her profession as *campesina* (farmer) and has completed a senior high education. She was one of the few parents who openly stated that she did not want her children to learn Nahuatl. Contrary to most parents who claimed that they wanted their children to learn Nahuatl although their language practices did not reflect such a desire, she admitted that she preferred her children to learn Spanish, and only Spanish. Whereas some parents blamed their children for the lack of intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl, she wholeheartedly took the responsibility for not transmitting her first language. Her reasons for not wanting her children to learn Nahuatl ranged from her feeling more comfortable with them speaking Spanish (*porque me siento más cómoda que así hablen mis niños en español que nahuatl*), a desire for them to speak Spanish well (*para que hablen bien el español*) to Nahuatl sounding ugly when spoken (*como que se escucha feo hablando nahuatl*).

Furthermore, she claimed that she did not want her children to learn Nahuatl because she found it off-putting that Nahuatl speakers were discriminated against by Spanish speakers

in the community: *porque a veces los que hablan en nahuatl los discrimina la gente que habla en español*. She had not personally faced any discrimination for speaking Nahuatl but had heard that others had. She did not even want her children to be influenced by Nahuatl-speaking children in schools. She elaborated that she personally did not have anything against other people and children learning Nahuatl so long as it did not involve her own children. When asked what she would like to see happen to Nahuatl in the next 10 or 20 years, she responded that while she wanted the community to continue speaking the language, she does not want the children to do so: *me gustaría que la gente lo siga hablando así, pero los niños no*. In other words, in her family, there should be a total disruption of the intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl. This was not surprising because she argued that it was not important to transmit the Nahuatl language to children nor teach it in schools. Interestingly, she wanted the language to be maintained and revitalised, for example, news shown on television and poems written in Nahuatl. From her comments, we can conclude that she hopes Nahuatl will be reserved for only adult language use.

Morgana stated that one of the reasons that people are not speaking Nahuatl is because they are ashamed of speaking it. Personally, she acknowledged that she was ashamed to speak it in front of Spanish-speaking people, especially in the city: *me da pena hablando nahuatl así enfrente de la gente que sabe hablar español bueno por ejemplo cuando salimos a la ciudad* because it made them realise that you are from a small town: *porque luego se dan cuenta que vienes de un pueblito*. Conversely, she believed that for her to choose not to speak Nahuatl was the best way to erase her Indigenous roots. She indicated that a person is not Nahuatl so long as they do not speak the language. By

extension, her children are not Nahuatl as they do not speak the language. When her pro-Spanish family language policy is compared to that of Liliana, a big difference is that while the children in Liliana's care are exposed to Nahuatl, Morgana actively avoids exposing her children to Nahuatl. While other parents and caregivers such as Liliana said that they wanted their children to learn Nahuatl when they were older or after they gained proficiency in Spanish, Morgana never expressed any such desire. How did someone with Nahuatl-speaking parents and who grew up speaking Nahuatl turn against her own language? Is it because she has internalized mainstream negative attitudes towards her language? Could it be that with her educational background (the highest among the pool of parents), that she associates Nahuatl with backwardness and Spanish with socioeconomic advancement? Does her dislike for Nahuatl stem from a fear of discrimination from mainstream society which extremely favours the Spanish language? From her comments, all these scenarios are plausible.

In all three case studies, we observed the dominance of Spanish language as a majority language in the family language policy for the following reasons: 1) it was aesthetically preferred by children and some parents; 2) it stood for equality and respect with non-Indigenous Mexicans; 3) it represented modernity; and 4) it was a vehicle to access socioeconomic opportunities. These findings illustrate the concept of linguicism, coined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, 2015), which she defines as "discrimination on the basis of language or one's mother tongue(s)". She notes that linguicism is global in scope, where speakers of minority languages are "stigmatized, pitied, and seen as deficient" for not mastering the dominant languages such as Spanish and English. In such contexts, the power balance favours the speakers of the dominant language, allocating them more

resources or support. She describes three processes in which the uneven power balance has been maintained for a long time, all identifiable in the context of Tlaxco:

glorification, stigmatisation, and rationalisation. In the first process, the qualities of a dominant language are praised and elevated with claims such as:

- (a) what the languages *are* – for example, logical, rich, able to describe everything (e.g., in science, because of their large vocabularies);
- (b) what they *have* – for example, grammars, dictionaries, teaching materials, well-trained teachers; and
- (c) what they can *do* for you – such as open doors, function as a window onto the world, enable you to talk to many people, get a good job, and so on. (author's emphasis) (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2015)

These claims were present in the discourses of the interviewees in the Mexican context where Spanish is the language of education with better infrastructure and material support, the language whose vocabularies bilinguals borrow from when speaking Nahuatl, and the language of socioeconomic capital. In the second process of stigmatisation, minority languages are portrayed as “traditional, backward, not able to adapt to an advanced capitalist technological information society”. As indicated by Morgana, speaking Nahuatl outside the community marks you as rural person. The third process rationalises the use of Spanish by claiming that the dominant language is more beneficial to minority groups. This rationalisation is evident in the discourses of Liliana and Morgana. Seeing these processes that reinforce the dominance of Spanish being exemplified in Tlaxco, highlights some of the challenges facing the language maintenance of Nahuatl.

The findings in the present study point to the larger community context where Spanish is gradually replacing Nahuatl in Tlaxco, a community that was once monolingual Nahuatl-speaking. While the importance of Spanish cannot be denied for success in mainstream



Mexico, it would be helpful for the language maintenance of Nahuatl if parents did not presume that both languages cannot be acquired simultaneously. Even when they want their children to be sequential bilinguals (i.e. acquire one language first before the other), they choose Spanish first. One small encouragement for the maintenance of Nahuatl in this linguistic context is that most spouses continue to communicate in Nahuatl between themselves, so their children will at least gain a receptive ability in the language even though they do not speak it. With the influence of peers who use Nahuatl as a code language, hopefully the younger generations' interest in the language will be aroused, as in the case of the 12-year-old daughter in the first case study. Additionally, having programs in Nahuatl in multimedia as suggested by Rogelio could be a motivating factor in learning this language. It is important for young people to see themselves, their culture and their language represented in the media.

## 5.6 Conclusions

This paper discusses the family language policy of Nahuatl-speaking parents and caregivers in Tlaxco and how it is shaped by parental lived experiences, parental attitudes and beliefs, parental expectations, child preferences, educational policy, and attitudes of mainstream society. We used three case studies to exemplify family language policy. Our first case study of a pro-Indigenous father revealed that, despite his strong cultural, personal, and emotional identification with Nahuatl, the family language policy was influenced by child preference for Spanish. In the second case study where a pro-Spanish older sister was in charge of her siblings' language policy, her negative experiences in the city as a monolingual speaker of Nahuatl in her adolescent days strongly shaped her linguistic outlook, making her adopt a Spanish-only family language policy with her

much younger siblings. With our final case study, we describe an anti-Indigenous mother who does not favour the inclusion of Nahuatl in schools nor its intergenerational transmission. As a result, she adopts a Spanish-only policy for her children to such an extent that she does not want them to interact with Nahuatl-speaking children. Our findings support the concept that the family domain is an important determiner of language maintenance and shift of Nahuatl as families negotiate their own personal beliefs, experiences and expectations with the school-going children's language attitudes, broader cultural attitudes, and societal myths. This study sheds light on the continual disruption of intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl in spite of the generally positive attitudes and good intentions of many parents. It provides the first comprehensive assessment of family language policy in this Nahuatl-speaking region, while explaining some of the probable causes of language shift among the youth in the community.

## 5.7 References

- Bain, B. & Yu, A. (1980). Cognitive consequences of raising children bilingually: One parent, one language. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 34(4), 304–313.
- Barron-Hauwaert, S. (2004). *Language strategies for bilingual families: The one-parent-one-language approach*. Multilingual Matters.
- Caldas, S. J. (2006). *Raising bilingual–biliterate children in monolingual cultures*. Multilingual Matters.
- Caldas, S. J. (2012). Family language policy. In B. Spolsky (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy* (pp. 351-373). Cambridge University Press.
- Choi, J. K. (2003). Language attitudes and the future of bilingualism: The case of Paraguay. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 6(2), 81-94.
- Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (2009). Invisible and visible language planning: Ideological factors in the family language policy of Chinese immigrant families in Quebec. *Language Policy*, 8(4), 351–375.

- De Houwer, A. (2007). Parental language input patterns and children's bilingual use. *Applied Linguistics*, 28, 411-424.
- Dolson, D. P. (1985). The effects of Spanish home language use on the scholastic performance of Hispanic pupils. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 6, 135-156.
- Flores Farfán, J. A. & Vargas García, I. (2019). Construyendo un futuro. Las artes y los medios de comunicación en la revitalización lingüística. *Cuadernos del Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano*, 28(2): 30-51.
- Gomashie, G. A. (2020). Bilingual youth's language choices and attitudes towards Nahuatl in Santiago Tlaxco, Mexico. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1800716>
- Hansen, M. P. (2016). The difference language makes: The life-history of Nahuatl in two Mexican families. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 26(1), 81-97.
- Hasler Hangert, A. (1995). *Manual de gramática del Náhuatl moderno*. Secretaría de Extensión Universitaria y Difusión Cultural, Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala.
- Hasler Hangert, A. (2001). *Gramática moderna del náhuatl de Tehuacán-Zongolica*. Universidad Veracruzana.
- Hill, J. H. & Hill, K. C. (1986). *Speaking Mexicano: Dynamics of syncretic language in central Mexico*. University of Arizona Press.
- INALI [The National Institute of Indigenous Languages], (2012). *Lenguas indígenas nacionales en riesgo de desaparición: Variantes lingüísticas por grado de riesgo. 2000*. INALI.
- INEGI [The National Institute of Statistics and Geography] (2010). *Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010*. INEGI.
- King, K. A. (2000). Language ideologies and heritage language education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 3, 167-184.
- King, K. A. & Fogle, L. (2006). Bilingual parenting as good parenting: Parents' perspectives on family language policy for additive bilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9(6), 695-712.
- King, K. A., Fogle, L., & Terry, A. L. (2008). Family language policy. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 2(5), 907-922.
- Kopeliovich, S. (2009). *Reversing language shift in the immigrant family: A case study of Russian-speaking community in Israel*. VDM Verlag Dr Müller.

- Lam, Y. (2009). The straw that broke the language's back: Language shift in the Upper Necaxa Valley of Mexico. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 195, 219–233.
- Lanza, E. (1997). Language contact in bilingual two-year olds and code-switching: Language encounters of a different kind? *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 1(2), 135–162.
- Messing, J. (2007). Multiple ideologies and competing discourses: Language shift in Tlaxcala, Mexico. *Language in Society*, 36(4), 555–577.
- Morett, S. (2014). Actitudes lingüísticas en México: entre el chovinismo y el malinchismo. In A. B. Chiquito & M. Á. Quesada Pacheco (Eds.), *Actitudes lingüísticas de los hispanohablantes hacia el idioma español y sus variantes* (pp. 793-933). University of Bergen.
- Okita, T. (2002). *Invisible work: Bilingualism, language choice and childrearing in intermarried families*. John Benjamins.
- Olko, J. & Sullivan, J. (2016a). Bridging divides: A proposal for integrating the teaching, research and revitalization of Nahuatl. In V. Ferreira & P. Bouda (Eds.), *Language documentation and conservation in Europe* (pp. 159-184). University of Hawai'i Press.
- Olko, J. & Sullivan, J. (2016b). Bridging gaps and empowering speakers: An inclusive, partnership-based approach to Nahuatl research and revitalization. In J. Olko, T. Wicherkiewicz, & R. Borges (Eds.), *Integral strategies for language revitalization* (pp. 345-383). Faculty of "Artes Liberales", University of Warsaw & Authors.
- Pakir, A. (1994). Education and invisible language planning: The case of English in Singapore. In T. Kandiah & K. Kwan-Terry (Eds.), *English language planning: A southeast Asian contribution* (pp. 158–181). Centre for Advanced Studies and Times Academic Press.
- Pakir, A. (2003). Language and education: Singapore. In J. Bourne & E. Reid (Eds.), *World yearbook of education: Language education* (pp. 267–279). Kogan Page Publisher.
- Pearson, B. Z., Fernandez, S. C., Lewedeg, V., & Oller, D. K. (1997). The relation of input factors to lexical learning by bilingual infants. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18, 41–58.
- Pérez Báez, G. (2013). Family language policy, transnationalism, and the diaspora community of San Lucas Quiaviní of Oaxaca, Mexico. *Language Policy*, 12, 27–45.

- Sandoval Arenas, C. (2017). Displacement and revitalization of the Nahuatl language in the high mountains of Veracruz, Mexico. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 16(1), 66–81.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1988). Multilingualism and the education of minority children. In T. Skutnabb-Kangas & J. Cummins (Eds.), *Minority education: From shame to struggle* (pp. 9-44). Multilingual Matters.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2015). Linguicism. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1460>
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Spolsky, B. (2012). Family language policy – the critical domain. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33(1), 3-11.
- Terborg, R. (2004). *El desplazamiento del otomí en una comunidad del municipio de Toluca* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Terborg, R., García Landa, L. & Moore, P. (2006). The language situation in Mexico. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 7(4), 415–518.
- Tuominen, A. K. (1999). Who decides the home language? A look at multilingual families. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 140, 59–76.
- Valiñas, L. (2019). *Diccionario enciclopédico de las lenguas indígenas de México/DELIM*. Academia Mexicana de la Lengua/Fundación para las Letras Mexicanas/Secretaría de Cultura.
- Yopihua Palacios, A. A., Hasler Hangert, A., Bautista Cruz, C., et al. (2005). *Algunos puntos importantes para la escritura del idioma nahua, náhuatl o mexicano*. AVELI – Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz.

## Chapter 6

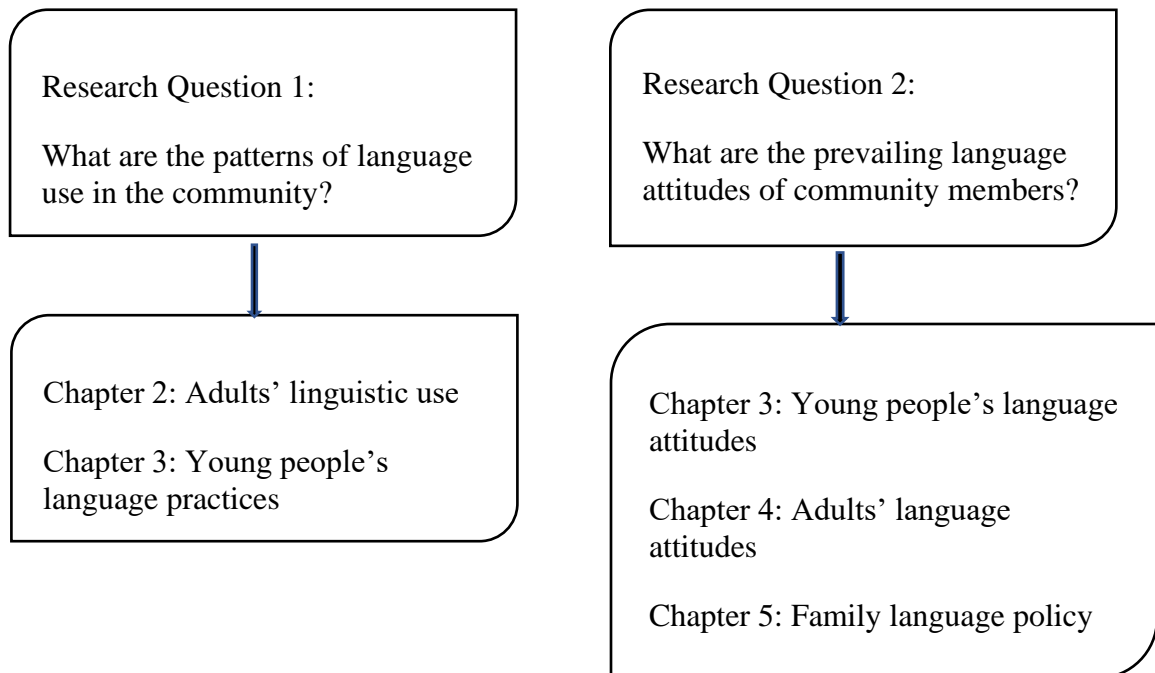
### 6 Conclusions

This dissertation examines language practices and attitudes towards Nahuatl in the community of Santiago Tlaxco. The primary objective is to study the vitality of the Nahuatl language in this community, with two major aims: 1) to examine the patterns of language use in the community and 2) to investigate the prevailing language attitudes of community members. In this concluding chapter, the main research findings are summarized, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations for future research are made.

#### 6.1 Summary of Main Research Findings

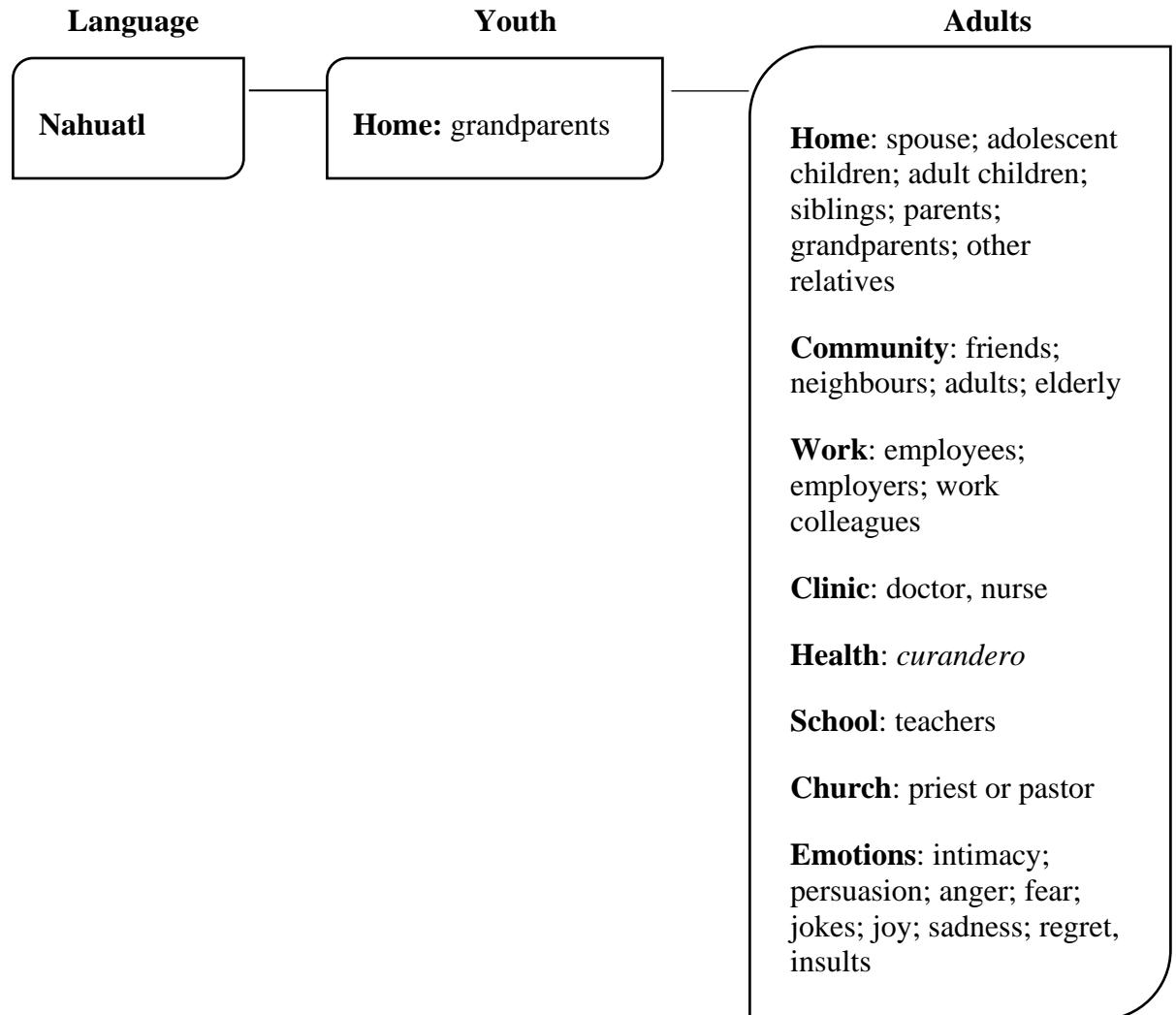
Figure 6.1 shows how the themes of the 4 research chapters are related to the two main research questions of the thesis.

**Figure 6.1 Connections between research questions and thesis chapters**

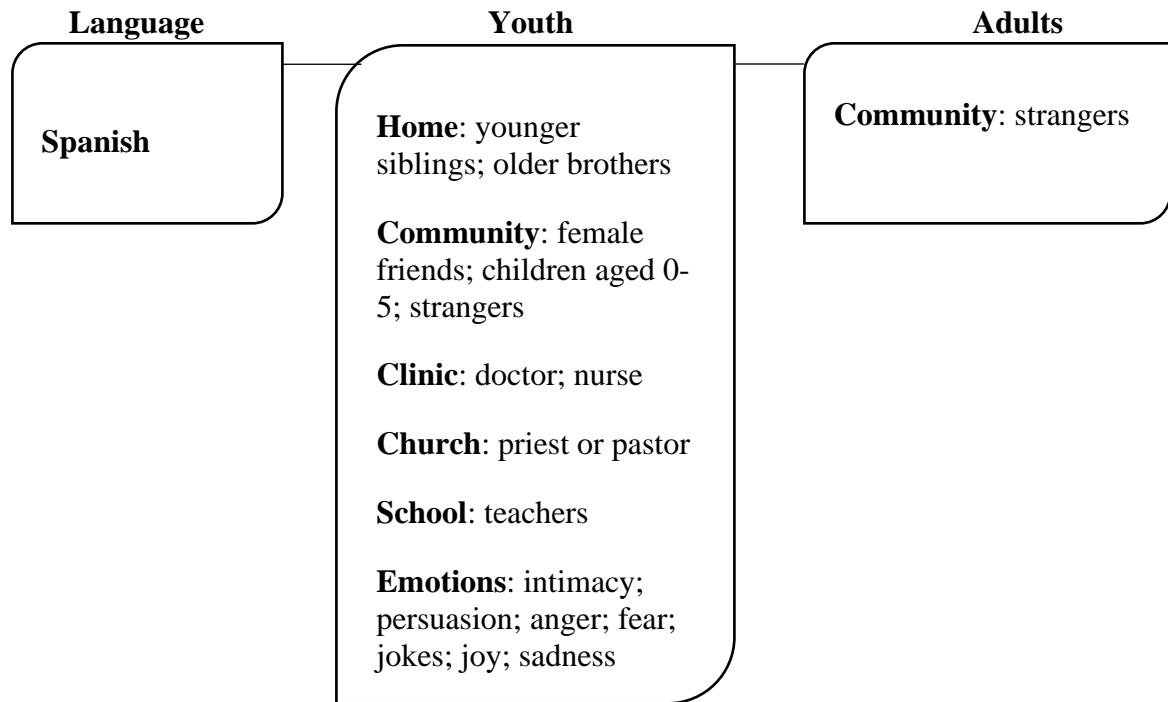


With regards to the linguistic patterns in the community, Chapters 2 and 3 report the research findings for adults and young people. Figures 6.2 to 6.4 summarize their linguistic use with different interlocutors in various linguistic contexts of use.

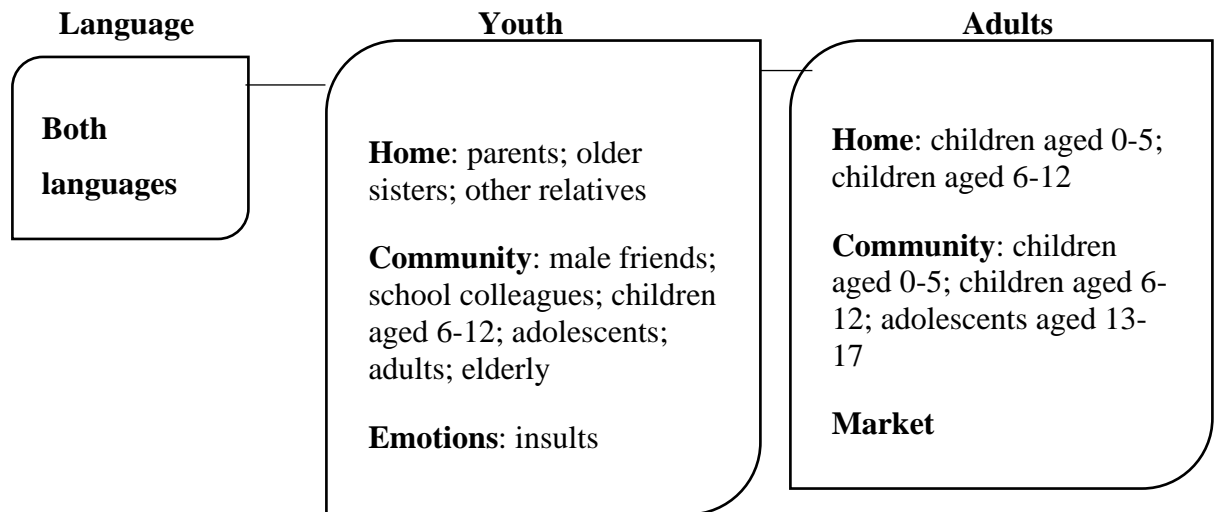
**Figure 6.2 Linguistic contexts of use for Nahuatl for youth and adults**



**Figure 6.3 Linguistic contexts of use for Spanish for youth and adults**



**Figure 6.4 Linguistic contexts of use for both languages for youth and adults**



Chapter 2 reports that adults preferred to interact in Nahuatl with people in the family circle, at work, at the market, and at their religious place of worship. Furthermore, in the



community, Nahuatl was preferred as the language for informal interactions with friends and neighbours. Additionally, Nahuatl was the language in which adults felt the most comfortable in expressing their emotions to others. Adults mostly used Spanish in formal domains such as schools and the clinic, and in unfamiliar settings such as with strangers: in all three of these settings, the interlocutors were not from the community. Bilingual usage was preferred by adults when speaking with persons younger than 18. In the home context, parents preferred to use both languages with their children aged 12 and younger. In the community context, the general trend was for adults to use both languages with anyone under the age of 18. In conclusion, adults in Santiago Tlaxco predominately use Nahuatl in their homes and community, with the exception of speaking with young people.

Chapter 3 investigates language use and attitudes for young people (aged 12 to 17) in Tlaxco. These young members of the community reported that the only people they preferred to use Nahuatl with were their grandparents. In all other interactions, they commonly used either Spanish or both languages. In the home context, young people preferred to use Spanish with their younger siblings and older brothers, while most often using both languages with their parents, older sisters, and other relatives. In the wider community, young people preferred to use Spanish with female friends, teachers, preschoolers, doctors, nurses, priests or pastors, and strangers. Both languages were most commonly used for communicating with male friends, school colleagues, and residents (older than 5 years) (Figure 6.4). For expressing emotions, Spanish was the preferred language of young people, except for when insulting, in which case both languages were usually used (Figure 6.3). The similarities that young people share with adults in their

linguistic patterns are preferring to use Spanish in formal and unfamiliar settings, and Nahuatl with grandparents. In all other contexts, young people and adults differ in language use, as seen in Figures 6.2 and 6.3.

The language attitudes of young people towards Nahuatl are also examined in Chapter 3. Young people generally held positive attitudes towards Nahuatl, supporting its inclusion in school, and they liked speaking it and hearing others speak it. The majority agreed that Nahuatl was an important language for them and their community, and that community members should endeavor to speak it well. However, as shown in the results on language use by these same young people, their positive attitudes did not usually translate into Nahuatl language use: instead they often chose to speak in Spanish. They mentioned that the use of Nahuatl was declining while the use of Spanish was on the rise. They attributed the reluctance to speak Nahuatl to their lack of proficiency in the language, the decrease in intergenerational transmission and a preference for Spanish.

Chapter 4 presents the perspectives of adults on the situation of language shift and maintenance of Nahuatl and their language attitudes. As was the case for the young people, adults held positive attitudes towards Nahuatl. For them, Nahuatl represented their rich cultural heritage, and their communal and personal identity. They felt more comfortable using Nahuatl rather than Spanish for communication. Not all expressed positive attitudes as some adults considered Nahuatl to be a low-value language, with no importance outside the community: they believed that Nahuatl should be forgotten in favour of Spanish, considered the language of socioeconomic opportunities. Some of the factors mentioned for discouraging community members from speaking or transmitting Nahuatl to the younger generations were their own feeling of linguistic insecurity

concerning their language ability in Nahuatl and the negative attitudes of mainstream society towards Indigenous languages. These themes are also present in Chapter 5 where the family language policy of three community members are discussed.

Chapter 5 includes three case studies where language attitudes of parents and caregivers are presented from three perspectives: pro-Indigenous, pro-Spanish and anti-Indigenous. In the first case study of a pro-Indigenous parent, the findings reveal that despite a strong cultural, personal, and emotional identification with Nahuatl, the family language policy was strongly influenced by the child's preference for Spanish. In the second case study, a pro-Spanish caregiver adopted a Spanish language policy at home after experiencing discrimination in the city for being a monolingual speaker of Nahuatl. In the third case study, an anti-Indigenous parent did not support her children learning Nahuatl, nor its teaching in schools. These findings highlight the home (family) context as an important site to study the language maintenance and shift of Nahuatl. In this domain, families negotiate their own personal beliefs, experiences and expectations, with the language attitudes of their school-going children, broader cultural attitudes, and societal myths about detrimental effects of bilingualism. Furthermore, Chapter 5 sheds light on the possible reasons why disruption of intergenerational transmission of Nahuatl may occur in spite of the generally positive attitudes and good intentions of many parents.

## 6.2 Implications for Nahuatl Vitality

The results of this thesis indicate that Nahuatl spoken in the community of Santiago Tlaxco is at stages 6 and 4 on the GIDS since there is still some form of intergenerational transmission of the language (indicative of stage 6) and it is used in schools (indicative of stage 4). The current results showing that most young people report being bilingual and

active users of both languages support the idea that intergenerational transmission is still ongoing in spite of challenges. The high level of Nahuatl usage in the home and community also suggests that young people may still acquire a receptive ability in the language even if adults do not explicitly teach it to them. Nahuatl's inclusion in pre- and elementary schools is also a positive factor despite the schools' limited effectiveness in providing students with adequate literacy in the language. Based on the criteria of the GIDS, the language is considered safe. However, according to the criteria of UNESCO's LVE scale, Nahuatl in the community is classified as 'vulnerable' because, although Nahuatl is spoken by most children, they only use it in a few domains. Similarly, Nahuatl in Tlaxco is considered 'threatened' using Ethnologue's classification (EGIDS) because it is used in face-to-face interactions "within all generations, but it is losing users". In contrast, INALI considers this variety of Nahuatl as being at 'no immediate risk' of disappearing because young people make up more than 25% of the speaker population. Finally, using the TEP framework, Tlaxco is at the early stages of language shift to Spanish because, while adults prefer to communicate in Nahuatl, that is not the case for the younger generation. Therefore, these vitality scales rate the risk of endangerment of Nahuatl differently based on their divergent criteria. Nevertheless, there are several indications that the status of Nahuatl in Tlaxco requires close monitoring, and that there is still work to be done to ensure its maintenance, especially to foster intergenerational transmission and encourage its use among the younger generations.

### 6.3 Importance of the Research

This thesis adds to the research literature on language maintenance and shift of Indigenous languages internationally. It contributes new knowledge about Nahuatl

language vitality by providing quantitative data on language use and attitudes in a rural Mexican community. It is the first sociolinguistic project in Santiago Tlaxco, providing novel information about current language use and attitudes in the face of the global trend of language endangerment. Furthermore, it portrays the complex interplay between positive and negative attitudes towards this Indigenous language by its speakers after decades of urbanisation, migration and modernisation in Mexico. Finally, it provides the first comprehensive assessment of family language policy in this Nahuatl-speaking region, while explaining some of the probable causes of language shift among the youth in the community. This study lays the groundwork for future research into the evolution of youth language use and attitudes about Nahuatl, and for future studies to monitor language shift and maintenance over time. This type of analysis (i.e. examining factors encouraging Nahuatl language maintenance and shift) provides insight for other Indigenous communities facing language endangerment in other countries.

## 6.4 Future Directions

There are some limitations of the present work that could be addressed in future studies. One would be to perform more detailed interviews with more young people in this community in order to better understand why their usage of Spanish is increasing at the expense of Nahuatl. Another would be to modify the language-use-and-attitude questionnaire. It could be optimized by changing the language use option of ‘both languages’ into three categories, namely ‘mostly Nahuatl’, ‘mostly Spanish’, and ‘equally in Nahuatl and Spanish’, to provide a better understanding of the balance of use between the two languages.

An additional recommendation for future studies is to replicate the research in Tepetla and Toxtla, the two neighbouring communities of Tlaxco, for similarities and differences. Furthermore, not only can the quantitative data collected from the current study be compared to similar research using the language-use-and-attitudes questionnaire on Indigenous communities in several countries such as Paraguay, Bolivia and Canada, but it could also set the basis for diachronic study of language shift, some 30 to 40 years later. A future study could also focus on the long-term role of schooling on the maintenance and shift on Nahuatl in the community. Such a study would also consider the perspectives and opinions of teachers, administrators, parents and pupils. Another idea for Nahuatl maintenance is to create some literature since there is no standardized literature for the variety of Nahuatl [the Northern Puebla variety] spoken in community, according to the Ethnologue. It would be important to collect speech recordings to create a corpus, which could serve as basis for future descriptive and grammar studies.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Adult Language Use in Santiago Tlaxco (Chapter 2)

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both	Total
<b>HOME</b>				
<b>1. Spouse</b>				
Group A	7 (19.4%)	13 (36.1%)	16 (44.4%)	36 (100%)
Group B	2 (7.4%)	25 (92.6%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
All groups	9 (14.3%)	38 (60.3%)	16 (25.4%)	63 (100%)
<b>2. Spouse in front children</b>				
Group A	7 (21.2%)	12 (36.4%)	14 (42.4%)	33 (100%)
Group B	2 (7.4%)	22 (81.5%)	3 (11.1%)	27 (100%)
All groups	9 (15.0%)	34 (56.7%)	17 (28.3%)	60 (100%)
<b>3. Children (0-5)</b>				
Group A	11 (35.5%)	3 (9.7%)	17 (54.8%)	31 (100%)
Group B	5 (26.3%)	11 (57.9%)	3 (15.8%)	19 (100%)
All groups	16 (32.0%)	14 (28.0%)	20 (40.0%)	50 (100%)
<b>4. Children (6-12)</b>				
Group A	3 (13.0%)	3 (13.0%)	17 (73.9%)	23 (100%)
Group B	5 (27.8%)	10 (55.6%)	3 (16.7%)	18 (100%)
All groups	8 (19.5%)	13 (31.7%)	20 (48.8%)	41 (100%)
<b>5. Children (13-18)</b>				
Group A	2 (12.5%)	3 (18.8%)	11 (68.8%)	16 (100%)
Group B	5 (22.7%)	14 (63.6%)	3 (13.6%)	22 (100%)
All groups	7 (18.4%)	17 (44.7%)	14 (36.8%)	38 (100%)
<b>6. Adult children</b>				
Group A	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)	7 (77.8%)	9 (100%)
Group B	3 (13.0%)	16 (69.6%)	4 (17.4%)	23 (100%)
All groups	4 (12.5%)	17 (53.1%)	11 (34.4%)	32 (100%)
<b>7. Parents</b>				
Group A	5 (12.2%)	28 (68.3%)	8 (19.5%)	41 (100%)
Group B	1 (4.0%)	22 (88.0%)	2 (8.0%)	25 (100%)
All groups	6 (9.1%)	50 (75.8%)	10 (15.2%)	66 (100%)
<b>8. Grandparents</b>				
Group A	3 (9.4%)	24 (75.0%)	5 (15.6%)	32 (100%)
Group B	0 (0%)	23 (95.8%)	1 (4.2%)	24 (100%)
All groups	3 (5.4%)	47 (83.9%)	6 (10.7%)	56 (100%)
<b>9. Siblings</b>				
Group A	7 (17.1%)	23 (56.1%)	11 (26.8%)	41 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.9%)	29 (85.3%)	3 (8.8%)	34 (100%)
All groups	9 (12.0%)	52 (69.3%)	14 (18.7%)	75 (100%)
<b>10. Other relatives</b>				
Group A	0 (0%)	20 (47.6%)	22 (52.4%)	42 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.3%)	26 (68.4%)	10 (26.3%)	38 (100%)

All groups	2 (2.5%)	46 (57.5%)	32 (40.0%)	80 (100%)
<b>COMMUNITY</b>				
<b>11. Friends in the neighbourhood</b>				
Group A	1 (2.4%)	26 (61.9%)	15 (35.7%)	42 (100%)
Group B	0 (0.0%)	28 (73.7%)	10 (26.3%)	38 (100%)
All groups	1 (1.3%)	54 (67.5%)	25 (31.3%)	80 (100%)
<b>12. Neighbours</b>				
Group A	1 (2.4%)	28 (68.3%)	12 (29.3%)	41 (100%)
Group B	1 (2.7%)	30 (81.1%)	6 (16.2%)	37 (100%)
All groups	2 (2.6%)	58 (74.4%)	18 (23.1%)	78 (100%)
<b>13. Work colleagues</b>				
Group A	3 (8.1%)	19 (51.4%)	15 (40.5%)	37 (100%)
Group B	1 (3.3%)	24 (80.0%)	5 (16.7%)	30 (100%)
All groups	4 (6.0%)	43 (64.2%)	20 (29.9%)	67 (100%)
<b>14. Employees</b>				
Group A	2 (14.3%)	8 (57.1%)	4 (28.6%)	14 (100%)
Group B	2 (12.5%)	13 (81.3%)	1 (6.3%)	16 (100%)
All groups	4 (13.3%)	21 (70.0%)	5 (16.7%)	30 (100%)
<b>15. Employer</b>				
Group A	5 (23.8%)	11 (52.4%)	5 (23.8%)	21 (100%)
Group B	3 (16.7%)	14 (77.8%)	1 (5.6%)	18 (100%)
All groups	8 (20.5%)	25 (64.1%)	6 (15.4%)	39 (100%)
<b>16. Schoolteacher</b>				
Group A	35 (87.5%)	3 (7.5%)	2 (5.0%)	40 (100%)
Group B	23 (76.7%)	6 (20.0%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100%)
All groups	58 (82.9%)	9 (12.9%)	3 (4.3%)	70 (100%)
<b>17. Doctor</b>				
Group A	40 (95.2%)	2 (4.8%)	0 (0%)	42 (100%)
Group B	27 (71.1%)	10 (26.3%)	1 (2.6%)	38 (100%)
All groups	67 (83.8%)	12 (15.0%)	1 (1.3%)	80 (100%)
<b>18. Nurse</b>				
Group A	39 (95.1%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	41 (100%)
Group B	27 (71.1%)	10 (26.3%)	1 (2.6%)	38 (100%)
All groups	66 (83.5%)	11 (13.9%)	2 (2.5%)	78 (100%)
<b>19. Curandero (witch doctor)</b>				
Group A	12 (31.6%)	14 (36.8%)	12 (31.6%)	38 (100%)
Group B	9 (26.5%)	15 (44.1%)	10 (29.4%)	34 (100%)
All groups	21 (29.2%)	29 (40.3%)	22 (30.6%)	72 (100%)
<b>20. Priest or Pastor</b>				
Group A	20 (48.8%)	15 (36.6%)	6 (14.6%)	41 (100%)
Group B	13 (36.1%)	20 (55.6%)	3 (8.3%)	36 (100%)
All groups	33 (42.9%)	35 (45.5%)	9 (11.7%)	77 (100%)
<b>21. Children (0-5)</b>				
Group A	9 (22.0%)	8 (19.5%)	24 (58.5%)	41 (100%)
Group B	3 (7.9%)	21 (55.3%)	14 (36.8%)	38 (100%)



All groups	12 (15.2%)	29 (36.7%)	38 (48.1%)	79 (100%)
<b>22. Children (6-12)</b>				
Group A	5 (12.5%)	10 (25.0%)	25 (62.5%)	40 (100%)
Group B	4 (10.5%)	20 (52.6%)	14 (36.8%)	38 (100%)
All groups	9 (11.5%)	30 (38.5%)	39 (50.0%)	78 (100%)
<b>23. Adolescents (13-17)</b>				
Group A	4 (9.8%)	11 (26.8%)	26 (63.4%)	41 (100%)
Group B	0 (0%)	22 (57.9%)	16 (42.1%)	38 (100%)
All groups	4 (5.1%)	33 (41.8%)	42 (53.2%)	79 (100%)
<b>24. Adults (18-60)</b>				
Group A	0 (0%)	21 (52.5%)	19 (47.5%)	40 (100%)
Group B	1 (2.6%)	27 (71.1%)	10 (26.3%)	38 (100%)
All groups	1 (1.3%)	48 (61.5%)	29 (37.2%)	78 (100%)
<b>25. Elderly (over 60 years)</b>				
Group A	2 (5.0%)	30 (75.0%)	8 (20.0%)	40 (100%)
Group B	0 (0.0%)	36 (94.7%)	2 (5.3%)	38 (100%)
All groups	2 (2.6%)	66 (84.6%)	10 (12.8%)	78 (100%)
<b>26. Strangers</b>				
Group A	18 (45.0%)	6 (15.0%)	16 (40.0%)	40 (100%)
Group B	17 (44.7%)	11 (28.9%)	10 (26.3%)	38 (100%)
All groups	35 (44.9%)	17 (21.8%)	26 (33.3%)	78 (100%)
<b>27. At market</b>				
Group A	5 (11.9%)	7 (16.7%)	30 (71.4%)	42 (100%)
Group B	1 (2.6%)	6 (15.8%)	31 (81.6%)	38 (100%)
All groups	6 (7.5%)	13 (16.3%)	61 (76.3%)	80 (100%)
<b>EMOTIONAL STATES</b>				
<b>28. When telling a joke</b>				
Group A	10 (23.8%)	11 (26.2%)	21 (50.0%)	42 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.3%)	29 (76.3%)	7 (18.4%)	38 (100%)
All groups	12 (15.0%)	40 (50.0%)	28 (35.0%)	80 (100%)
<b>29. When rendering insults</b>				
Group A	8 (19.5%)	12 (29.3%)	21 (51.2%)	41 (100%)
Group B	1 (2.6%)	28 (73.7%)	9 (23.7%)	38 (100%)
All groups	9 (11.4%)	40 (50.6%)	30 (38.0%)	79 (100%)
<b>30. When cursing</b>				
Group A	6 (14.6%)	10 (24.4%)	25 (61.0%)	41 (100%)
Group B	0 (0%)	30 (78.9%)	8 (21.1%)	38 (100%)
All groups	6 (7.6%)	40 (50.6%)	33 (41.8%)	79 (100%)
<b>31. When saying intimate things</b>				
Group A	8 (19.0%)	13 (31.0%)	21 (50.0%)	42 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.3%)	29 (76.3%)	7 (18.4%)	38 (100%)
All groups	10 (12.5%)	42 (52.5%)	28 (35.0%)	80 (100%)
<b>32. When convincing someone</b>				
Group A	5 (12.5%)	10 (25.0%)	25 (62.5%)	40 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.4%)	26 (70.3%)	9 (24.3%)	37 (100%)

All groups	7 (9.1%)	36 (46.8%)	34 (44.2%)	77 (100%)
<b>33. When angry</b>				
Group A	7 (16.7%)	13 (31.0%)	22 (52.4%)	42 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.3%)	31 (81.6%)	5 (13.2%)	38 (100%)
All groups	9 (11.3%)	44 (55.0%)	27 (33.8%)	80 (100%)
<b>34. When afraid</b>				
Group A	6 (14.3%)	11 (26.2%)	25 (59.5%)	42 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.4%)	29 (78.4%)	6 (16.2%)	37 (100%)
All groups	8 (10.1%)	40 (50.6%)	31 (39.2%)	79 (100%)
<b>35. When happy</b>				
Group A	9 (21.4%)	9 (21.4%)	24 (57.1%)	42 (100%)
Group B	4 (10.5%)	28 (73.7%)	6 (15.8%)	38 (100%)
All groups	13 (16.3%)	37 (46.3%)	30 (37.5%)	80 (100%)
<b>36. When sad</b>				
Group A	8 (19.0%)	12 (28.6%)	22 (52.4%)	42 (100%)
Group B	2 (5.3%)	27 (71.1%)	9 (23.7%)	38 (100%)
All groups	10 (12.5%)	39 (48.8%)	31 (38.8%)	80 (100%)
<b>37. When remorseful</b>				
Group A	8 (19.0%)	13 (31.0%)	21 (50.0%)	42 (100%)
Group B	1 (2.6%)	30 (78.9%)	7 (18.4%)	38 (100%)
All groups	9 (11.3%)	43 (53.8%)	28 (35.0%)	80 (100%)

## Appendix B: Language Background Questionnaire (English Version)

(Information will remain confidential. Please do not add your name)

### A. Biographical Information

Year of birth \_\_\_\_\_  Male /  Female Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Current place of residence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Highest level of formal education  Primary  University (BA...)  
 Secondary  Master  
 Preparatory (High school)  Doctorate  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

### B. Language history

*We would like you to answer some factual questions about your language history*

1. What is (are) your first language(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the first language of:

a. your mother?

b. your father? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. At what age did you start learning the following languages? (e.g. since birth, 1, 2, 3 ...10...20...)

Nahuatl \_\_\_\_\_

Spanish \_\_\_\_\_

4. At what age did you start to feel comfortable using the following languages? (e.g. as early as I can remember, 1, 2, 3...10...20...not yet)

Nahuatl \_\_\_\_\_

Spanish \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many years of classes (grammar, history, math, etc.) have you had in the following languages (primary school through university)? (e.g. 0, 1, 2, 3...10...20...)

Nahuatl \_\_\_\_\_

Spanish \_\_\_\_\_

6. In an average week, how many hours do you use the following languages? (e.g. 0, 1, 2, 3...10...)

Nahuatl \_\_\_\_\_

Spanish \_\_\_\_\_

7. Can you hold a conversation in the following languages?

Nahuatl

Yes

No

Spanish

Yes

No

8. What other language(s) do you speak?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What language(s) does your mother speak? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What language(s) does your father speak? \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Language proficiency

Please rate your language proficiency by giving marks from 0 (not well at all) to 6 (very well)

	<i>0= not well at all</i>					<i>6= very well</i>	
1 a. How well do you speak Nahuatl?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. How well do you speak Spanish?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
2 a. How well do you understand Nahuatl?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. How well do you understand Spanish?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
3 a. How well do you read Nahuatl?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. How well do you read Spanish?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
4. a. How well do you write Nahuatl?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. How well do you write Spanish?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

## Appendix C: Language Background Questionnaire (Spanish Version)

(Su información será confidencial. No añada su nombre)

### A. Información biográfica

Nombre \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha de hoy \_\_\_\_\_  
 Año de nacimiento \_\_\_\_\_  Hombre /  Mujer Puesto \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lugar de nacimiento \_\_\_\_\_ Lugar de residencia actual \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nivel más alto de formación académica  Primaria  Universidad (licenciatura...)  
 Secundaria  Máster  
 Preparatoria  Doctorado  
 Otra \_\_\_\_\_

### B. Historial lingüístico

*Nos gustaría que contestara algunas preguntas sobre su historial lingüístico.*

1. ¿Qué idioma(s) aprendió usted de niño?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. ¿Cuál es el idioma materno (primera lengua) de

a. su madre \_\_\_\_\_ b. su padre \_\_\_\_\_

3. ¿A qué edad empezó a aprender las siguientes lenguas? (e.j. desde el nacimiento, 1, 2, 3, ...10...20...)

Náhuatl \_\_\_\_\_ Español \_\_\_\_\_

4. ¿A qué edad empezó a sentirse cómodo usando las siguientes lenguas? (e.j. tan pronto como recuerdo, 1, 2, 3...10...20... aún no)

Náhuatl \_\_\_\_\_ Español \_\_\_\_\_

5. ¿Cuántos años de clases (gramática, historia, matemáticas, etc.) ha tenido en las siguientes lenguas (desde la escuela primaria a la universidad)? (e.j. 0, 1, 2, 3...10...20...)

Náhuatl \_\_\_\_\_ Español \_\_\_\_\_

6. En una semana normal, ¿cuántas horas habla Ud. estos idiomas? (e.j. 0, 1, 2, 3...10...)

Náhuatl \_\_\_\_\_ Español \_\_\_\_\_

7. ¿Puede Ud. mantener una conversación en los siguientes idiomas?

Náhuatl  Sí  No Español  Sí  No

8. ¿Qué otro(s) idioma(s) habla Ud.? \_\_\_\_\_

9. ¿Qué idioma(s) habla su madre? \_\_\_\_\_

10. ¿Qué idioma(s) habla su padre? \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Competencia

*Nos gustaría que considerara su competencia de lengua marcando la casilla de 0 (no muy bien) a 6 (muy bien).*

	<i>0=no muy bien</i>					<i>6=muy bien</i>	
30 a. ¿Cómo habla en <b>náhuatl</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. ¿Cómo habla en <b>español</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
31 a. ¿Cómo entiende en <b>náhuatl</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. ¿Cómo entiende en <b>español</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
32. a. ¿Cómo lee en <b>náhuatl</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. ¿Cómo lee en <b>español</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
33. a. ¿Cómo escribe en <b>náhuatl</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
b. ¿Cómo escribe en <b>español</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

## Appendix D: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Adult (English Version)

Please answer the following questions concerning your language use and attitudes. The survey consists of 88 questions and will take less than 30 minutes to complete. This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Please skip any question you do not wish to answer and/or may not apply to you. Thank you very much for your help.

### I. Language use (individual)

In this section, we would like you to answer some questions about your language use with the following people and when you express emotions. Please indicate the language(s) you use.

#### A) Home context

What language(s) do you use with

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both	Not applicable
31. Spouse				
32. Spouse in front children				
33. Your children (aged 0-5)				
34. Your children (aged 6 - 12)				
35. Your children (13 – 18 years)				
36. Your adult children (older than 18 years)				
37. Parents				
38. Grandparents				
39. Siblings				
40. Other relatives				

#### B) Community

What language(s) do you use with

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both	Not applicable
41. Friends in the neighbourhood				
42. Friends downtown				
43. Neighbours				
44. Workmates				
45. Employees				
46. Employers				
47. Teachers				
48. Teachers of your children				
49. Doctor				
50. Nurse				
51. Witch doctor				
52. Priest or Pastor				
53. Children (0 - 5 years)				
54. Children (6 - 12 years)				

55. Adolescents (13 - 18 years)				
56. Adultos (18 - 60 years)				
57. Elders (older than 60 years)				
58. Strangers				

### C) Emotional states

What language(s) do you use for

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both
59. telling jokes			
60. rendering insults			
61. cursing			
62. expressing intimacy			
63. persuading others			
64. showing anger			
65. showing fear			
66. expressing joy or happiness			
67. expressing sadness			
68. expressing regret			

### II. Linguistic Use (societal)

In this section, please indicate the language(s) people in this community tend to use in the following contexts of use

What language(s) do people often use

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both
69. at home			
70. at the market			
71. at work			
72. at the primary school			
73. at the secondary school			
74. at the senior high school			
75. at the bank			
76. at the police station			
77. at civil institutions			
78. at the clinic			
79. at the church			
80. in mass media			

### III. Attitudes and Ideologies

In this section, we would like you to respond to statements about language attitudes by choosing from **0** to **6** to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement (where **0** = totally disagree; **6** = totally agree)

	0=totally disagree				6=totally agree			
51. a. I feel like myself when I speak Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	



b. I feel like myself when I speak Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
52. a. I identify with a Nahuatl-speaking culture	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I identify with a Spanish-speaking culture	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
53. a. It is important to me to use (or eventually use) Nahuatl like a native speaker	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. It is important to me to use (or eventually use) Spanish like a native speaker	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
54. a. I want others to think I am a native speaker of Nahuatl.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I want others to think I am a native speaker of Spanish.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
55. a. Nahuatl is important to my identity.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is important to my identity.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
56. a. Nahuatl is important to my town/community	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is important to my town/community	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
57. a. It is important that the community learn and speak Spanish well	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. It is important that the community learn and speak Spanish well	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
58. a. It is easier to speak Nahuatl than Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. It is easier to speak Spanish than Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
59. a. I like speaking Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I like speaking Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
60. a. Nahuatl is threatened by Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is threatened by Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
61. a. Nahuatl is stigmatized in the society	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is stigmatized in the society	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
62. a. There is discrimination towards people for speaking Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. There is discrimination towards people for speaking Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
63. a. I would like Nahuatl to be used in schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I would like Spanish to be used in schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
64. a. I want my children to learn Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I want my children to learn Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
65. a. I like to hear people speak Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I like to hear people speak Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. a. Nahuatl should be compulsory in (high) schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish should be compulsory in (high) schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
67. a. I would like some subjects to be taught in Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I would like some subjects to be taught in Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
68. a. Nahuatl is difficult to learn	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is difficult to learn	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

#### IV. Evaluations or Impressions

In general, tell us how the following languages sound to you. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with these evaluations about Spanish and Nahuatl by choosing from 0 to 6 (where **0=totally disagree; 6=totally agree**)

Spanish sounds _____ to me							
69. intimate	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
70. useful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
71. unnecessary	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
72. incorrect	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
73. easy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
74. nice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
75. rude	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
76. harsh	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
77. elegant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
78. fun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
79. unreliable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
80. poor	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
81. superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
82. sacred	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
83. stressful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
84. unpleasant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
85. absurd	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
86. charming	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
87. caring	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
88. fast	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Nahuatl sounds _____ to me							
intimate	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
useful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
unnecessary	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
incorrect	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
easy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
nice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
rude	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
harsh	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
elegant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
unreliable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
poor	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
sacred	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
stressful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
unpleasant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
absurd	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
charming	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
caring	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fast	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

## Appendix E: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Adult (Spanish Version)

Nos gustaría pedir su ayuda para contestar a las siguientes preguntas sobre su uso lingüístico y actitudes lingüísticas. El cuestionario contiene 70 preguntas y le llevará menos de 30 minutos para completar. Esto no es una prueba, por tanto, no hay respuestas correctas ni incorrectas. Por favor, salte cualquier pregunta que no quiera contestar y/o no le aplique. Muchas gracias por su ayuda.

### I. Uso lingüístico (individuo)

*En esta sección, nos gustaría saber en qué idioma(s) se comunica con las siguientes personas y cuando expresa emociones y sentimientos. Por favor elija o seleccione el idioma que habla*

#### A) Contexto familiar

En qué idioma(s) se comunica Ud.

	Español	Náhuatl	Ambos	No Aplicable
1. Con su esposo/a				
2. Con su esposo/a enfrente de sus niños				
3. Con sus hijos (hasta 5 años)				
4. Con sus hijos (de 6 a 12 años)				
5. Con sus hijos (de 13 a 18 años)				
6. Con sus hijos (más de 18 años)				
7. Con sus padres				
8. Con sus abuelos				
9. Con sus hermanos				
10. Con otros parientes				

#### B) Contexto no familiar

En qué idioma(s) se comunica Ud.

	Español	Náhuatl	Ambos	No Aplicable
11. Con amigos en su vecindario				
12. Con amigos en el centro				
13. Con vecinos				
14. Con compañeros de trabajo				
15. Con empleados				
16. Con jefes				
17. Con profesores				
18. Con profesores de sus hijos				
19. Con el médico				
20. Con los enfermeros				
21. Con el curandero				
22. Con el padre/cura				

23. Con niños (hasta 5 años)				
24. Con niños (de 6 a 12 años)				
25. Con adolescentes (de 13 a 18 años)				
26. Con adultos (de 18 a 60 años)				
27. Con ancianos (más de 60 años)				
28. Con desconocidos				

### C) Emociones y sentimientos

Qué idioma utiliza para

	<b>Español</b>	<b>Náhuatl</b>	<b>Ambos</b>
29. bromear /contar chistes			
30. insultar			
31. maldecir			
32. decir cosas íntimas			
33. persuadir a alguien			
34. expresar enfado			
35. expresar miedo			
36. expresar felicidad/alegría			
37. expresar tristeza			
38. expresar remordimiento			

### II. Uso lingüístico (sociedad)

*En esta sección, nos gustaría saber qué idioma(s) se suele utilizar la gente/comunidad en los siguientes ámbitos.*

Qué idioma se suele utilizar

	<b>Español</b>	<b>Náhuatl</b>	<b>Ambos</b>
39. en casa			
40. en el mercado/la tienda			
41. en el trabajo			
42. en la escuela primaria			
43. en la escuela secundaria			
44. en el colegio			
45. en el banco financiero			
46. en la comisaría de policía			
47. en las instituciones gubernamentales/civiles			
48. en la clínica			
49. en la iglesia			
50. en los medios de comunicación			

### III. Actitudes e Ideologías

En esta sección, nos gustaría que señalara su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones, eligiendo/rodeando un número de 0 a 6 (0=totalmente en desacuerdo; 6=totalmente en acuerdo)

	0=totalmente en desacuerdo		6=totalmente de acuerdo				
51. a. Me siento “yo mismo” cuando hablo en náhuatl.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me siento “yo mismo” cuando hablo en español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
52. a. Me identifico con una cultura náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me identifico con una cultura hispanohablante	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
53. a. Es importante para mí usar (o llegar a usar) náhuatl como un hablante nativo.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Es importante para mí usar (o llegar a usar) español como un hablante nativo.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
54. a. Quiero que los demás piensen que soy un hablante nativo de náhuatl.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Quiero que los demás piensen que soy un hablante nativo de español.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
55. a. El náhuatl es importante para mi identidad.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español es importante para mi identidad.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
56. a. El náhuatl es un idioma importante para mi pueblo/comunidad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español es un idioma importante para mi pueblo/comunidad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
57. a. Es importante que la comunidad aprende y hable bien el náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Es importante que la comunidad aprende y hable bien el español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
58. a. Es más fácil hablar el náhuatl que el español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Es más fácil hablar el español que el náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
59. a. Me gusta hablar náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me gusta hablar español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
60. a. El náhuatl está amenazado por el español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español está amenazado por el náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
61. a. El náhuatl está estigmatizado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español está estigmatizado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
62. a. Hay una discriminación hacia la gente por su uso de náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Hay una discriminación hacia la gente por su uso de español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
63. a. Me gustaría el uso del náhuatl en las escuelas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me gustaría el uso del español en las escuelas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
64. a. Quiere que mis hijos aprendan náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Quiere que mis hijos aprendan español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
65. a. Me gusta oír hablar náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

b. Me gusta oír hablar español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
66. a. El náhuatl debe ser obligatorio en los colegios	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español debe ser obligatorio en los colegios	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
67. a. Me gustaría que varias asignaturas se enseñaran en náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me gustaría que varias asignaturas se enseñaran en español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
68. a. El náhuatl es difícil de aprender	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español es difícil de aprender	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

#### IV. Evaluaciones/Impresiones

En general, nos gustaría saber cómo le suena los siguientes idiomas. Nos gustaría que señalara su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones, eligiendo un número de 0 a 6. (0=totalmente en desacuerdo; 6=totalmente en acuerdo)

El español me suena								El náhuatl me suena							
69. íntimo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	íntimo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
70. útil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Útil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
71. innecesario	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	innecesario	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
72. incorrecto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	incorrecto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
73. fácil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	fácil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
74. simpático	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	simpático	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
75. grosero	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	grosero	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
76. duro	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	duro	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
77. culto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	culto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
78. divertido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	divertido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
79. no de fiar	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	no de fiar	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
80. pobre	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	pobre	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
81. superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
82. sagrado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	sagrado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
83. estresante	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	estresante	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
84. desagradable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	desagradable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
85. absurdo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	absurdo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
86. encantador	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	encantador	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
87. cariñoso	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	cariñoso	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
88. rápido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	rápido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

## Appendix F: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Youth (English Version)

Please answer the following questions concerning your language use and attitudes. The survey consists of 77 questions and will take less than 30 minutes to complete. This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Please skip any question you do not wish to answer and/or may not apply to you. Thank you very much for your help.

### I. Language use (individual)

In this section, we would like you to answer some questions about your language use with the following people and when you express emotions. Please indicate the language(s) you use.

#### A) Home context

What language(s) do you use with

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both	Not applicable
1. Mother				
2. Father				
3. Younger brothers				
4. Younger sisters				
5. Older brothers				
6. Older sisters				
7. Grandparents				
8. Other relatives				

#### B) Community

What language(s) do you use with

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both	Not applicable
9. Friends (male)				
10. Friends (female)				
11. Schoolmates				
12. Teachers				
13. Doctor				
14. Nurse				
15. Priest or Pastor				
16. Children (0 - 5 years)				
17. Children (6 - 12 years)				
18. Adolescents (13 - 18 years)				
19. Adults (18 - 60 years)				
20. Elders (older than 60 years)				
21. Strangers				

### C) Emotional states

What language(s) do you use for

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both
22. telling jokes			
23. expressing intimacy			
24. persuading others			
25. showing anger			
26. showing fear			
27. expressing joy or happiness			
28. expressing sadness			
29. expressing regret			
30. rendering insults			
31. cursing			

### II. Linguistic Use (societal)

In this section, please indicate the language(s) people in this community tend to use in the following contexts of use

What language(s) do people often use

	Spanish	Nahuatl	Both
32. at home			
33. at the market			
34. at work			
35. at preschool			
36. at the primary school			
37. at the secondary school			
38. at the senior high school			
39. at the clinic			
40. at the church			

### III. Attitudes and Ideologies

In this section, we would like you to respond to statements about language attitudes by choosing from **0** to **6** to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement (where **0** = **totally disagree**; **6** = **totally agree**)

	0=totally disagree			6=totally agree			
41. a. I feel like myself when I speak Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I feel like myself when I speak Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. a. I identify with a Nahuatl-speaking culture	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I identify with a Spanish-speaking culture	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. a. It is important to me to use (or eventually use) Nahuatl like a native speaker	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. It is important to me to use (or eventually use) Spanish like a native speaker	0	1	2	3	4	5	6



44. a. I want others to think I am a native speaker of Nahuatl.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I want others to think I am a native speaker of Spanish.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
45. a. Nahuatl is important to my identity.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is important to my identity.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
46. a. Nahuatl is important to my town/community	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is important to my town/community	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
47. a. It is important that the community learn and speak Spanish well	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. It is important that the community learn and speak Spanish well	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
48. a. It is easier to speak Nahuatl than Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. It is easier to speak Spanish than Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
49. a. I like speaking Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I like speaking Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
50. a. Nahuatl is stigmatized in the society	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is stigmatized in the society	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
51. a. There is discrimination towards people for speaking Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. There is discrimination towards people for speaking Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
52. a. I would like Nahuatl to be used in schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I would like Spanish to be used in schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
53. a. I want my children to learn Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I want my children to learn Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
54. a. I like to hear people speak Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I like to hear people speak Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
55. a. Nahuatl should be compulsory in (high) schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish should be compulsory in (high) schools	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
56. a. I would like some subjects to be taught in Nahuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. I would like some subjects to be taught in Spanish	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
57. a. Nahuatl is difficult to learn	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Spanish is difficult to learn	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

### III. Evaluations or Impressions

In general, tell us how the following languages sound to you. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with these evaluations about Spanish and Nahuatl by choosing from 0 to 6 (where **0=totally disagree; 6=totally agree**)

Spanish sounds ___ to me								Nahuatl sounds ___ to me							
58. intimate	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	intimate	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
59. useful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	useful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
60. unnecessary	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	unnecessary	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
61. incorrect	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	incorrect	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
62. easy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	easy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

63. nice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
64. rude	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
65. harsh	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
66. elegant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
67. fun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
68. unreliable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
69. poor	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
70. superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
71. sacred	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
72. stressful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
73. unpleasant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
74. absurd	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
75. charming	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
76. caring	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
77. fast	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

nice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
rude	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
harsh	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
elegant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
fun	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
unreliable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
poor	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
sacred	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
stressful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
unpleasant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
absurd	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
charming	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
caring	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
fast	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

## Appendix G: Language Use and Attitude Questionnaire - Youth (Spanish Version)

Nos gustaría pedir su ayuda para contestar a las siguientes preguntas sobre su uso lingüístico y actitudes lingüísticas. El cuestionario contiene 77 preguntas y le llevará menos de 30 minutos para completar. Esto no es una prueba, por tanto, no hay respuestas correctas ni incorrectas. Por favor, salte cualquier pregunta que no quiera contestar y/o no le aplique. Muchas gracias por su ayuda.

### I. Uso lingüístico (individuo)

En esta sección, nos gustaría saber en qué idioma(s) se comunica con las siguientes personas y cuando expresa emociones y sentimientos. Por favor elija o seleccione el idioma que habla

#### A) Contexto familiar

En qué idioma(s) se comunica Ud.

	Español	Náhuatl	Ambos	No Aplicable
1. Con su mamá				
2. Con su papá				
3. Con sus hermanos menores				
4. Con sus hermanas menores				
5. Con sus hermanos mayores				
6. Con sus hermanas mayores				
7. Con sus abuelos				
8. Con otros parientes				

#### B) Contexto no familiar

En qué idioma(s) se comunica Ud.

	Español	Náhuatl	Ambos	No Aplicable
9. Con amigos				
10. Con amigas				
11. Con compañeros de escuela				
12. Con maestros/maestras				
13. Con el médico				
14. Con los enfermeros				
15. Con el padre/cura				
16. Con niños (hasta 5 años)				
17. Con niños (de 6 a 12 años)				
18. Con adolescentes (de 13 a 18 años)				
19. Con adultos (de 18 a 60 años)				
20. Con ancianos (más de 60 años)				
21. Con desconocidos				

### C) Emociones y sentimientos

Qué idioma utiliza para

	Español	Náhuatl	Ambos
22. bromear /contar chistes			
23. decir cosas íntimas			
24. persuadir a alguien			
25. expresar enfado			
26. expresar miedo			
27. expresar felicidad/alegría			
28. expresar tristeza			
29. expresar remordimiento			
30. insultar			
31. maldecir			

### II. Uso lingüístico (sociedad)

En esta sección, nos gustaría saber qué idioma(s) se suele utilizar la gente/comunidad en los siguientes ámbitos.

Qué idioma se suele utilizar

	Español	Náhuatl	Ambos
32. en casa			
33. en el mercado/la tienda			
34. en el trabajo			
35. en la escuela preescolar			
36. en la escuela primaria			
37. en la escuela secundaria			
38. en el bachillerato			
39. en la clínica			
40. en la iglesia			

### III. Actitudes e Ideologías

En esta sección, nos gustaría que señalara su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones, eligiendo/rodeando un número de 0 a 6 (0=totalmente en desacuerdo; 6=totalmente en acuerdo)

	0=totalmente en desacuerdo    6=totalmente de acuerdo						
41. a. Me siento “yo mismo” cuando hablo en náhuatl.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me siento “yo mismo” cuando hablo en español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. a. Me identifico con una cultura náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me identifico con una cultura hispanohablante	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. a. Es importante para mí usar (o llegar a usar) náhuatl como un hablante nativo.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Es importante para mí usar (o llegar a usar) español como un hablante nativo.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

44. a. Quiero que los demás piensen que soy un hablante nativo de náhuatl.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Quiero que los demás piensen que soy un hablante nativo de español.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
45. a. El náhuatl es importante para mi identidad.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español es importante para mi identidad.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
46. a. El náhuatl es un idioma importante para mi pueblo/comunidad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español es un idioma importante para mi pueblo/comunidad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
47. a. Es importante que la comunidad aprende y hable bien el náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Es importante que la comunidad aprende y hable bien el español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
48. a. Es más fácil hablar el náhuatl que el español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Es más fácil hablar el español que el náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
49. a. Me gusta hablar náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me gusta hablar español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
50. a. El náhuatl está estigmatizado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español está estigmatizado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
51. a. Hay una discriminación hacia la gente por su uso de náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Hay una discriminación hacia la gente por su uso de español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
52. a. Me gustaría el uso del náhuatl en las escuelas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me gustaría el uso del español en las escuelas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
53. a. Quiere que mis hijos aprendan náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Quiere que mis hijos aprendan español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
54. a. Me gusta oír hablar náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me gusta oír hablar español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
55. a. El náhuatl debe ser obligatorio en los colegios	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español debe ser obligatorio en los colegios	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
56. a. Me gustaría que varias asignaturas se enseñaran en náhuatl	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Me gustaría que varias asignaturas se enseñaran en español	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
57. a. El náhuatl es difícil de aprender	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. El español es difícil de aprender	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

#### IV. Evaluaciones/Impresiones

En general, nos gustaría saber cómo le suena los siguientes idiomas. Nos gustaría que señalara su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones, eligiendo un número de 0 a 6. (0=totalmente en desacuerdo; 6=totalmente en acuerdo)

El español me suena								El náhuatl me suena							
58. íntimo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	íntimo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
59. útil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	útil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
60. innecesario	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	innecesario	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
61. incorrecto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	incorrecto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
62. fácil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	fácil	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
63. simpático	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	simpático	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
64. grosero	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	grosero	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
65. duro	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	duro	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
66. culto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	culto	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
67. divertido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	divertido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
68. no de fiar	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	no de fiar	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
69. pobre	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	pobre	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
70. superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	superior	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
71. sagrado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	sagrado	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
72. estresante	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	estresante	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
73. desagradable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	desagradable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
74. absurdo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	absurdo	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
75. encantador	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	encantador	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
76. cariñoso	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	cariñoso	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
77. rápido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	rápido	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

## **Appendix H: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Adults (English Version)**

### **Language Use and Attitudes in Contact Situations**

#### **General**

- What was the first language that you learned as a child? How and where did you learn it?
- What is the language that you speak most often now? Why? In what language do you prefer to speak? Why? Are there certain places and times in which you choose to use one language over another?
- Which language is more difficult for you to speak? Why?
- Which language is more important for you? Why?
- Do more people speak Nahuatl or Spanish in your community?
- Do you think that Nahuatl is still spoken as frequently/the same as before? Why is this the case?

#### **About Nahuatl**

- If you could not speak Nahuatl (for any reason), what things will be difficult for you to do/say/tell?
- What are some of things you could only say or do in Nahuatl?
- Do you think that the Nahuatl language will continue to be spoken always?
- If you (people) stopped speaking Nahuatl, will they stop being Nahuatl?
- Do you think it is important for Nahuatl speakers to pass their language knowledge to future generations? Why?
- Why do people stop/not want to speak Nahuatl?
- Comparing with previous years (maybe five or ten years ago), do you think there are more people speaking Nahuatl?
- Would you like it if there are (more) radio and television programs in Nahuatl? What kinds of programs?
- For you, what are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Nahuatl?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Nahuatl for the community?
- What do you think of people/children/adults who do not speak their language?
- Do you read Nahuatl? What do you read?
- Would you like for there to be more written material in Nahuatl? Which types?
- Do you write in Nahuatl? Where did you learn? What do you write? To whom?
- Do you like that people are writing in Nahuatl?
- What is the importance of writing Nahuatl for the community?
- Do people speak Nahuatl well in your community?
- In your opinion, which community speaks the best Nahuatl? Why?
- In which places/regions do they speak the same Nahuatl as you/your community? What are some of the similarities?
- In which communities/regions/places do they speak differently? Do you understand them? What are the differences?
- Do you find it difficult communicating in Nahuatl with members of other communities?

### **About Spanish**

- What purpose does speaking Spanish have for you? What are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Spanish?
- With whom do you speak Spanish?
- Do you read in Spanish? What do you read?
- Do you write in Spanish? Where did you learn? What do you write about in Spanish? To whom?
- What would be the challenges if you could not speak Spanish?
- Do you know people who do not speak Spanish? What are the difficulties they face for not speaking Spanish?

### **About Intergenerational Transmission**

- Do you have children or wards?
- (If yes):
- How many children or wards do you have? (number of boys/girls/age)
- What are your children or wards doing? (If in school: what are they studying? Any languages? Would you like them to study Spanish/Nahuatl in school?)
- In which language(s) did you speak to your children or wards when they began to speak? Why?
- What are your aspirations for your children/wards? What do you want them to be (when they grow up)? What role does Nahuatl/Spanish play in them?
- Do you talk to your children/wards' teachers? In which language?
- (If no):
- In which language(s) will you speak to your children or wards when they start to speak in future?

### **Language use in different contexts**

What language(s) do you use (or is commonly used) in the following contexts:

- At work
- At church
- At the clinic. Would you like to see bilingual assistants help in the communication with doctors and nurses?
- With the family
- In the assemblies/meetings of the community
- At schools. In which language are classes taught? In which language do children talk to each other in recess?
- Do you want the Nahuatl language and culture to be taught in schools? Do you want children to read and write in Nahuatl?
- Traditional ceremonies
- Where do you think Nahuatl is spoken all the time/always? In which circumstances/events?
- When you go to other places, which language do you use to speak with your relatives?



**Interest in participating in language revitalisation**

- Do you think enough is being done to support the use of Nahuatl in your community?
- Would you be interested in supporting activities to broaden, promote and strengthen the use of Nahuatl in your community?
- What kind of activities can be done?
- What do you think helps to keep Nahuatl in use by people within a community?
- What do you think might prevent people from learning Nahuatl?
- What would you like to see 20 years from now about the use of Nahuatl? You can answer for yourself and/or more widely.
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

**Other possible topics**

- language policy and planning

## Appendix I: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Adults (Spanish Version)

### Guía de Entrevista sobre Uso y Valoración de las Lenguas en Contacto

#### General

- ¿Cuál es la lengua que aprendió primero? ¿Cómo y dónde la aprendió?
- ¿En qué lengua habla más ahora? ¿Por qué? ¿En qué lengua le gusta hablar más? ¿Por qué?
- ¿En qué lengua le cuesta más trabajo hablar? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué lengua le parece más importante? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Hay muchas personas que hablan el náhuatl o el español en su comunidad?
- ¿Cree que el náhuatl se hable igual/frecuentemente que antes? ¿Por qué cree que ha pasado eso?

#### Sobre el náhuatl

- Si no pudiera hablar en náhuatl (por cualquier motivo), ¿qué cosas le resultaría de hacer / decir / contar?
- ¿Qué cosas sólo puedes decir o hacer en lengua náhuatl?
- ¿Le parece que el idioma náhuatl va a seguir hablándose siempre?
- Si dejaran de hablar la lengua náhuatl, ¿dejarían de ser náhuatl?
- ¿Por qué la gente no quiere o deja de hablar náhuatl?
- ¿Cree que es importante que los hablantes de náhuatl pasen el idioma a generaciones futuras? ¿Por qué?
- En comparación con los años anteriores (por ejemplo, hace cinco o diez años), ¿hay más hablantes de náhuatl hoy?
- ¿Le gustaría que hubiera programas de radio y televisión en lengua náhuatl? ¿Qué tipo de programas?
- ¿Qué ventajas y desventajas tiene para usted hablar náhuatl?
- ¿Qué ventajas y desventajas hay para la comunidad que se hable el idioma?
- ¿Sabe leer en lengua náhuatl? ¿Qué lee?
- ¿Le gustaría que hubiera más material escrito en lengua indígena? ¿Cuáles?
- ¿Sabe escribir en lengua indígena? ¿Dónde aprendió? ¿Qué escribe?
- ¿A quién?
- ¿Le parece bien que se escriba en la lengua náhuatl?
- ¿Qué importancia / utilidad tiene para ustedes la escritura de la lengua náhuatl?
- ¿La gente de su comunidad habla bien el náhuatl?
- En su opinión, ¿qué comunidad habla el mejor náhuatl? ¿Por qué dice esto?
- ¿En qué lugar(es) en su región se habla el mismo náhuatl como usted/aquí?
- ¿En qué regiones tienen una manera distinta de hablar el náhuatl o hablan un náhuatl distinto? ¿Los entiende? ¿Cómo hablan? ¿Cómo son diferente?

#### Sobre el español

- ¿Para qué le sirve hablar español? ¿Qué ventajas y desventajas tiene hablar español?
- ¿Con quiénes habla español?
- ¿Sabe leer en español? ¿Qué lee?

- ¿Sabe escribir en español? ¿Dónde aprendió? ¿Qué escribe (sobre qué temas)? ¿A quién?
- ¿Qué se le dificultaría si no hablara español?
- ¿Conoce a personas que no hablan español? ¿Qué dificultades tienen por no hablar español?

### **Sobre la transmisión intergeneracional**

- ¿Tiene hijos/pupilos?
- (Si tiene hijos/pupilos):
- ¿Cuántos hijos/pupilos tiene? (número de hijos/pupilos, edad)
- ¿Qué hacen sus hijos/pupilos? (¿a qué se dedican los hijos/pupilos?) (Si son alumnos, ¿que estudian? ¿Idiomas? ¿Quiere que sus hijos/pupilos aprendan náhuatl/español?)
- ¿Cuáles son sus aspiraciones/metapas para sus hijos/pupilos? ¿Qué quiere que sean (cuando crezcan/sean mayores)? ¿Qué papel juega el náhuatl/español en sus metas/aspiraciones/futuro?
- ¿Habla con los profesores de sus hijos/pupilos? ¿En qué idioma(s)?
- (Si no tiene hijos/pupilos):
- ¿En qué idioma(s) les hablará a sus hijos cuando ellos empiezan a hablar?

### **Uso de la lengua en diferentes contextos**

- En el trabajo
- En la iglesia
- En la clínica. ¿Le gustaría que hubiera asistentes bilingües para facilitar la comunicación
- con médicos y enfermeras?
- Con la familia
- En las asambleas de la comunidad
- Escuela. ¿En qué lengua se da la clase? ¿En qué lengua se comunican los niños en el recreo?
- ¿Qué piensa de las personas/niños/adultos que ya no hablan su lengua? ¿Quiere que en la escuela les enseñen la lengua y la cultura náhuatl?
- ¿Quiere que en la escuela les enseñen a leer y escribir en náhuatl?
- Ceremonias tradicionales
- ¿Dónde considera que se debería hablar siempre en náhuatl? ¿En qué circunstancias o eventos?
- Cuando sale a otros lugares, ¿en qué lengua se comunica con los suyos?
- ¿Tiene dificultades para comunicarse en lengua náhuatl con miembros de otras comunidades?

### **Interés en participar en la revitalización**

- ¿Cree que se está haciendo lo suficiente para apoyar el uso de náhuatl en su comunidad?
- ¿Le interesaría apoyar actividades para fortalecer el uso de la lengua náhuatl en tu comunidad?
- ¿Qué tipo de actividades crees que se podrían hacer?

- ¿Qué ayudaría mantener el uso de náhuatl en su comunidad?
- ¿Qué prohibiría/dificultaría el uso de náhuatl en su comunidad?
- En 20 años, ¿qué te gustaría ver sobre el uso de náhuatl para usted y/o su comunidad?
- ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría contarnos? (sobre su experiencia con náhuatl/español...)

**Otros temas posibles**

- las políticas y planificación lingüísticas

## **Appendix J: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Youth (English Version)**

### **Language Use and Attitudes in Contact Situations**

#### **General**

- What was the first language that you learned as a child? How and where did you learn it?
- What language(s) do you speak?
- What is the language that you speak most often now? Why? In what language do you prefer to speak? Are there certain places and times in which you choose to use one language over another?
- Which language is more difficult for you to speak? Why?
- Which language is more important for you? Why?
- Do more people speak Nahuatl or Spanish in your community?
- Do you think that Nahuatl is still spoken as frequently/ the same as before? Why is this the case?
- Do you attend school?
- How long have you attended this school? Other schools?
- What grade are you in?
- What is your favorite thing to study?
- What is your favorite thing to do when you are not in school?
- Do you like school? (What is liked about school?)
- How do you spend your time when you are not in school? (What is favorite/least favorite uses of time?)
- Are there things that you are not learning in school that you would like to learn?
- Do your parents/guardians visit the school? Talk with your teachers?
- (If so) why do they visit school? What language do they use when they talk with your teachers?
- How many years will you attend school?
- What do you hope/plan to be doing five/ten years from now? (Getting at aspirations) (What would you like to be doing when you are eighteen years old? Twenty-five years old?)

#### **About Nahuatl**

- If you could not speak Nahuatl (for any reason), what things will be difficult for you to do/say/tell?
- What are some of things you could only say or do in Nahuatl?
- Do you think that the Nahuatl language will continue to be spoken always?
- If you (people) stopped speaking the Nahuatl, will they stop being Nahuatl?
- Do you think it is important for Nahuatl speakers to pass their language knowledge to future generations? Why?
- Why do people stop/not want to speak Nahuatl?

- Comparing with previous years (maybe five years ago), do you think there are more people speaking Nahuatl?
- Would you like it if there are (more) radio and television programs in Nahuatl? What kinds of programs?
- For you, what are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Nahuatl?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Nahuatl for the community?
- What do you think of people/children/adults who do not speak their language?
- Do you read Nahuatl? What do you read?
- Would you like for there to be more written material in Nahuatl? Which types?
- Do you write in Nahuatl? Where did you learn? What do you write? To whom?
- Do you like that people are writing in Nahuatl?
- What is the importance of writing Nahuatl for the community?
- Do people speak Nahuatl well in your community?
- In your opinion, which community speaks the best Nahuatl? Why?
- In which places/regions do they speak the same Nahuatl as you/your community? What are some of the similarities?
- In which communities/regions/places do they speak differently? Do you understand them? What are the differences?
- Do you find it difficult communicating in Nahuatl with members of other communities?

### **About Spanish**

- What purpose does speaking Spanish have for you? What are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Spanish?
- With whom do you speak Spanish?
- Do you read in Spanish? What do you read?
- Do you write in Spanish? Where did you learn? What do you write about in Spanish? To whom?
- What would be the challenges if you could not speak Spanish?
- Do you know people who do not speak Spanish? What are the difficulties they face for not speaking Spanish?

### **Language use in different contexts**

What language(s) do you use (or is commonly used) in the following contexts:

- At work
- At church
- At the clinic. Would you like to see bilingual assistants help in the communication with doctors and nurses?
- With the family
- In the assemblies/meetings of the community
- At schools. In which language are classes taught? In which language do your classmates talk to each other in recess?

- Do you want the Nahuatl language and culture to be taught in schools? Do you want children to read and write in Nahuatl?
- Traditional ceremonies
- Where do you think Nahuatl is spoken all the time/always? In which circumstances/events?
- When you go to other places, which language do you use to speak with your relatives?

### **Interest in participating in language revitalisation**

- Do you think enough is being done to support the use of Nahuatl in your community?
- Would you be interested in supporting activities to broaden, promote and strengthen the use of Nahuatl in your community?
- What kind of activities can be done?
- What do you think helps to keep Nahuatl in use by people within a community?
- What do you think might prevent people from learning Nahuatl?
- What would you like to see 5 or 10 years from now about the use of Nahuatl?  
You can answer for yourself and/or more widely
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

## Appendix K: Interview Guide (Long Form) – Youth (Spanish Version)

### Guía de Entrevista sobre Uso y Valoración de las Lenguas en Contacto

#### General

- ¿Cuál es la lengua que aprendió primero? ¿Cómo y dónde la aprendió?
- ¿Qué idioma(s) habla?
- ¿En qué lengua habla más ahora? ¿Por qué? ¿En qué lengua le gusta hablar más? ¿Por qué? ¿Hay ciertos momentos y lugares en que prefiere hablar una lengua sobre otra?
- ¿En qué lengua le cuesta más trabajo hablar? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué lengua le parece más importante? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Hay muchas personas que hablan el náhuatl o el español en su comunidad?
- ¿Cree que el náhuatl se hable igual/frecuentemente que antes? ¿Por qué cree que ha pasado eso?
- ¿Va a la escuela? ¿Cuál(es)? ¿Por cuánto tiempo? ¿En qué grado esta?
- ¿Cuál es su tema favorito en la escuela?
- ¿Cuál es su actividad favorita fuera de la escuela?
- ¿Le gusta asistir a la escuela? (¿Qué le gusta/gustaba de la escuela?)
- ¿Cómo pasa su tiempo cuando no está en la escuela? (¿Su uso favorito/no favorito del tiempo?)
- ¿Hay cosas que quiere aprender que no está aprendiendo en la escuela?
- ¿Sus padres/tutores visitan la escuela? ¿Hablan con sus profesores? ¿En qué idioma(s)?
- ¿Cuántos años asistirá a la escuela?
- ¿Qué espera/piensa hacer en cinco o diez años? (¿Qué espera/piensa hacer cuando tiene 18 o 25 años?)

#### Sobre el náhuatl

- Si no pudiera hablar en náhuatl (por cualquier motivo), ¿qué cosas le resultaría de hacer / decir / contar?
- ¿Qué cosas sólo puedes decir o hacer en lengua náhuatl?
- ¿Le parece que el idioma náhuatl va a seguir hablándose siempre?
- Si dejaran de hablar la lengua náhuatl, ¿dejarían de ser náhuatl?
- ¿Por qué la gente no quiere o deja de hablar náhuatl?
- ¿Cree que es importante que los hablantes de náhuatl pasen el idioma a generaciones futuras? ¿Por qué?
- En comparación con los años anteriores (por ejemplo, hace cinco años), ¿hay más hablantes de náhuatl hoy?
- ¿Le gustaría que hubiera programas de radio y televisión en lengua náhuatl? ¿Qué tipo de programas?
- ¿Qué ventajas y desventajas tiene para usted hablar náhuatl?
- ¿Qué ventajas y desventajas hay para la comunidad que se hable el idioma?



- ¿Sabe leer en lengua náhuatl? ¿Qué lee?
- ¿Le gustaría que hubiera más material escrito en lengua indígena? ¿Cuáles?
- ¿Sabe escribir en lengua indígena? ¿Dónde aprendió? ¿Qué escribe?
- ¿A quién?
- ¿Le parece bien que se escriba en la lengua náhuatl?
- ¿Qué importancia / utilidad tiene para ustedes la escritura de la lengua náhuatl?
- ¿La gente de su comunidad habla bien el náhuatl?
- En su opinión, ¿qué comunidad habla el mejor náhuatl? ¿Por qué dice esto?
- ¿En qué lugar(es) en su región se habla el mismo náhuatl como usted/aquí?
- ¿En qué regiones tienen una manera distinta de hablar el náhuatl o hablan un náhuatl distinto? ¿Los entiende? ¿Cómo hablan? ¿Cómo son diferente?

### **Sobre el español**

- ¿Para qué le sirve hablar español? ¿Qué ventajas y desventajas tiene hablar español?
- ¿Con quiénes habla español?
- ¿Sabe leer en español? ¿Qué lee?
- ¿Sabe escribir en español? ¿Dónde aprendió? ¿Qué escribe (sobre qué temas)? ¿A quién?
- ¿Qué se le dificultaría si no hablara español?
- ¿Conoce a personas que no hablan español? ¿Qué dificultades tienen por no hablar español?

### **Uso de la lengua en diferentes contextos**

- En el trabajo
- En la iglesia
- En la clínica. ¿Le gustaría que hubiera asistentes bilingües para facilitar la comunicación
- con médicos y enfermeras?
- Con la familia
- En las asambleas de la comunidad
- Escuela. ¿En qué lengua se da la clase? ¿En qué lengua se comunican los niños en el recreo?
- ¿Qué piensa de las personas/niños/adultos que ya no hablan su lengua? ¿Quiere que en la escuela les enseñen la lengua y la cultura náhuatl?
- ¿Quiere que en la escuela les enseñen a leer y escribir en náhuatl?
- Ceremonias tradicionales
- ¿Dónde considera que se debería hablar siempre en náhuatl? ¿En qué circunstancias o eventos?
- Cuando sale a otros lugares, ¿en qué lengua se comunica con los suyos?
- ¿Tiene dificultades para comunicarse en lengua náhuatl con miembros de otras comunidades?

**Interés en participar en la revitalización**

- ¿Cree que se está haciendo lo suficiente para apoyar el uso de náhuatl en su comunidad?
- ¿Le interesaría apoyar actividades para fortalecer el uso de la lengua náhuatl en tu comunidad?
- ¿Qué tipo de actividades crees que se podrían hacer?
- ¿Qué ayudaría mantener el uso de náhuatl en su comunidad?
- ¿Qué prohibiría/dificultaría el uso de náhuatl en su comunidad?
- En 20 años, ¿qué te gustaría ver sobre el uso de náhuatl para usted y/o su comunidad?
- ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría contarnos? (sobre su experiencia con náhuatl/español...)

## Appendix L: Interview Guide (Short Form) (English Version)

### Language Use and Attitudes in Contact Situations

1. What was the first language that you learned as a child? How and where did you learn it?
2. What other language(s) do you speak?
3. What is the language that you speak most often now? Why?
4. In what language do you prefer to speak? Why?
5. Which language is more difficult for you to speak? Why?
6. Do more people speak Nahuatl or Spanish in your community?
7. Do you think that Nahuatl is still spoken as frequently/ the same as before? Why is this the case?
8. Do you think that the Nahuatl language will continue to be spoken always?
9. To be Nahuatl (or Indigenous), is it necessary to speak the language?
10. If you (people) stopped speaking Nahuatl, are they still Nahuatl?
11. Is it necessary for you to speak Nahuatl? Why?
12. Is it necessary for the community to speak Nahuatl? Why?
13. Is it necessary for you to speak Spanish? Why?
14. Is it necessary for the community to speak Spanish? Why?
15. With whom do you speak Nahuatl?
16. With whom do you speak Spanish?
17. What are some of things you could only say or do in Nahuatl?
18. What would you happen if you stop speak Nahuatl?
19. What would happen if everyone stopped speaking Nahuatl?
20. What would happen if you stopped speaking Spanish?
21. What would happen if people stopped speaking Spanish?
22. Why do people stop/not want to speak Nahuatl?
23. Are you shy/embarrassed to speak Nahuatl? Why?
24. Do you think others are shy/embarrassed to speak Nahuatl? Why?
25. When you go to other places where the people do not speak Nahuatl, what language do you use with your family or a person from your community?
26. Have you been discriminated or treated bad for speaking Nahuatl? Where? What happened?
27. Do you know if other people have faced discrimination for using Nahuatl?
28. Is it important for Nahuatl speakers to teach their children? Why?
29. What languages do you speak with your children? Why?
30. Is it necessary to write Nahuatl? Why?
31. What would you like to see written in Nahuatl?
32. What would you like to watch in Nahuatl on television?
33. What would you like to listen in Nahuatl on radio?
34. Would you like it if there were bilingual assistants to help with communication with at the clinic?
35. Should Nahuatl be taught in schools? Why? In which schools?
36. What language(s) do people use in community meetings or reunions?
37. Do people speak Nahuatl well in your community? Why?
38. In your opinion, which community speaks the better Nahuatl? Why?

39. Which communities speak the same Nahuatl as Santiago Tlaxco?
40. In which communities do they speak a different Nahuatl? How is it different?
41. What activities can be done by people for the use of Nahuatl to grow?
42. What activities can be done by the government or municipality to support the Nahuatl language?
43. What would you like to see happen to Nahuatl in 10 or 20 years?

## Appendix M: Interview Guide (Short Form) (Spanish Version)

### Guía de Entrevista sobre Uso y Valoración de las Lenguas en Contacto

1. ¿Cuál es la lengua que aprendió primero? ¿Cómo y dónde la aprendió?
2. ¿Qué otra(s) lengua(s) habla?
3. ¿En qué lengua habla más ahora? ¿Por qué?
4. ¿En qué lengua le gusta hablar más? ¿Por qué?
5. ¿En qué lengua le cuesta más trabajo hablar? ¿Por qué?
6. Entre el español y el náhuatl, ¿cuál es la lengua que la gente habla más en su comunidad?
7. ¿Cree que se habla el náhuatl igual o menos que antes? ¿Por qué??
8. ¿Piensa que la gente va a seguir hablando náhuatl siempre?
9. ¿Para ser una persona náhuatl, es necesario hablar náhuatl?
10. Los que nacieron aquí pero no ya hablan náhuatl, ¿ya no son náhuatl?
11. ¿Es necesario para usted hablar náhuatl? ¿Por qué?
12. ¿Es necesario para el pueblo hablar náhuatl? ¿Por qué?
13. ¿Es necesario para usted hablar español? ¿Por qué?
14. ¿Es necesario para el pueblo hablar español? ¿Por qué?
15. ¿Con quiénes habla náhuatl?
16. ¿Con quiénes habla español?
17. ¿Qué cosas sólo puedes decir o hacer en lengua náhuatl?
18. Si usted dejara de hablar náhuatl, ¿qué pasaría?
19. ¿Qué pasaría si todos dejaran de hablar náhuatl?
20. Si usted dejara de hablar español, ¿qué pasaría?
21. ¿Qué pasaría si todos dejaran de hablar español?
22. ¿Por qué la gente no quiere o deja de hablar náhuatl?
23. ¿Usted tiene pena de hablar náhuatl? ¿Por qué?
24. ¿Piensa que algunos tienen pena de hablar náhuatl? ¿Por qué?
25. Cuando sale usted a otros lugares, donde la gente no habla náhuatl ¿qué idioma habla con son su familia o paisanos? ¿Por qué?
26. ¿Ha sido tratado mal (discriminado) por hablar náhuatl? ¿Dónde? ¿Qué pasó?
27. ¿Sabe usted si otras personas han sido discriminadas por su uso del náhuatl?
28. ¿Es importante que la gente enseñe o hable náhuatl a sus hijos?
29. ¿En qué idioma(s) habla con sus hijos? ¿Por qué?
30. ¿Es necesario escribir náhuatl? ¿Por qué?
31. ¿Qué le gustaría ver escrito en náhuatl?
32. ¿Qué le gustaría ver en náhuatl en la televisión?
33. ¿Qué le gustaría escuchar en náhuatl en la radio?
34. ¿Le gustaría que hubiera ayudantes que hablan náhuatl en la clínica? ¿Por qué?
35. ¿Se debería enseñar náhuatl en las escuelas? ¿Por qué? ¿En qué escuelas?
36. ¿Qué lengua se habla en las asambleas de la comunidad?
37. ¿Cree que la gente de este pueblo habla bien el náhuatl? ¿Por qué dice esto?
38. ¿Hay otro(s) pueblo(s) náhuatl donde se habla mejor que aquí? ¿Cuál(es)? ¿Por qué dice esto?
39. ¿Sabe usted donde se habla el mismo náhuatl como aquí?

40. ¿Sabe usted donde se habla un náhuatl diferente de aquí? ¿Cómo es diferente?  
¿Cómo hablan? ¿Los entiende?
41. ¿Qué (cosas, actividades) puede hacer la gente para que crezca el náhuatl?
42. ¿Qué puede hacer el gobierno o el municipio para apoyar el náhuatl?
43. ¿Qué le gustaría ver pasar con el náhuatl en 10 o 20 años?

## Appendix N: Letter of Information and Consent (English Version)

**Project Title:** Nahuatl Language Vitality in Mexico

**Principal Investigator:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Western University, Canada

### Letter of Information

#### 1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study on the vitality of Nahuatl because you are bilingual in Nahuatl and Spanish, or you are a native speaker of Nahuatl or Spanish.

#### 2. Purpose of this Study

We are interested in knowing the language vitality of Nahuatl, by focusing on language use and attitudes.

#### 3. Inclusion Criteria

The following people are eligible to participate in this study: (a) speakers of Nahuatl (of age 12 and older); (b) speakers of Spanish (of age 12 and older); and (c) bilingual speakers of Nahuatl and Spanish (of age 12 and older). Knowing other languages is not disqualifying.

#### 4. Exclusion Criteria

Individuals under age 12

#### 5. Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will sign a letter of consent before completing two main tasks. Briefly, the study involves reading a letter of information; signing a letter saying that you agree to participate; filling out a language questionnaire that will tell us about the languages you speak, when you learned them, where you use them and your opinions about them; and sitting for an audio-recorded interview on Nahuatl and Spanish language use and attitudes of Nahuatl. The audio-recorded interview will be transcribed. The information you submit in the interview, including anonymised direct quotes, may be included in any resulting report. The full set of tasks will take less than 2 hours. The task(s) will be conducted at a location of your preference.

#### 6. Possible Risks and Harm

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

#### 7. Possible Benefits

While direct benefits of this study to the participants themselves may not be obvious, Mexican society will benefit from language planning policies informed by sociolinguistic research of this type.

**8. Compensation**

You will receive no monetary compensation.

**9. Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. If you decide you no longer wish to take part in this research, you can notify the researcher involved and withdraw within one month after your participation in the survey and/or interview. The data collected from you will be withdrawn from the study. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

**10. Confidentiality**

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published (e.g. in a thesis, a conference paper, article, or as part of a book), only deidentified information will be made available. All identifiable information will be collected separately from study data and linked only by a unique ID code which will be assigned by the research team. The master list linking your study ID and your identifiable information will only be available to the researchers. Research Ethics Board may require access in order to monitor the ethical conduct of the study. The researcher will keep all personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 7 years, separate from your study file. Your data may be retained indefinitely and could be used for future research purposes (e.g., for longitudinal studies). By consenting to participate in this study, you are agreeing that your data can be used beyond the purposes of this present study by either the current or other researchers.

**11. Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study, or would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca); XXX-XXX-XXXX, or Grace Gomashie, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics X-XXX-XXX-XXXX, email: [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca). This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*



**Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Nahuatl Language Vitality in Mexico  
**Study Principal Investigator's Name:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I know I can withdraw at any time.

\_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I understand that my participation in the interview will be audio recorded.

\_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I understand that the information I submit in the interview, including anonymised direct quotes, may be included in any resulting report.

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature (Mark): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature means that I have explained/read/translated the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions. I certify that the signature or mark is that of the participant.

Translator's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Translator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix O: Letter of Information and Consent (Spanish Version)

**Título de Proyecto:** La Vitalidad Lingüística de Náhuatl en México

**Investigadora Principal:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Western University, Canada

### Carta de información sobre el estudio

#### 1. **Invitación**

Lo invitamos a participar en un proyecto de investigación sobre la vitalidad del idioma náhuatl porque es hablante nativo de náhuatl o de español, o habla ambas lenguas: náhuatl y español.

#### 2. **Objetivo del estudio**

Nos interesa saber la situación lingüística del náhuatl en México, especialmente el uso y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el idioma.

#### 3. **¿Quién puede participar?**

Usted es elegible para participar en el estudio si tiene al menos 12 años y hablan español o náhuatl o ambos. No importa si Ud. conoce otras lenguas.

#### 4. **¿Quién no puede participar?**

Cualquier niño o niña bajo 12 años

#### 5. **¿Qué implica la participación?**

Si decide participar en este estudio, habrá 2 partes a completar. 1) Un perfil lingüístico y un cuestionario en papel a responder y se tarda menos de 45 minutos en completar. Contiene preguntas sobre el uso y las actitudes de las lenguas por Ud. Todas las preguntas son opcionales. 2) Una entrevista de 1 hora sobre el uso y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el español y el náhuatl. Las entrevistas serán grabadas en audio y transcritas. La información proporcionada en la entrevista, incluyendo las citas directas anónimas pueden ser utilizadas en los informes resultantes. En total, su participación se tarda menos de 2 horas y se lleva a cabo en un lugar de su preferencia.

#### 6. **¿Hay riesgos?**

No se anticipa ningún riesgo

#### 7. **¿Hay beneficios?**

No habrá un beneficio directo para participar en este estudio, pero la información recogida podrá beneficiar a la sociedad en el sentido de que estos resultados darán información para la planificación y la política lingüísticas.

#### 8. **Compensación**

No será compensado por su participación en este estudio.

## 9. Participación voluntaria

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Tiene derecho a rehusarse a participar en este estudio o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin punición. Puede rehusarse a contestar cualquier pregunta. Después de participar en este estudio, puede retirarse dentro de un mes, solo tiene que avisar a la investigadora. En este caso, los datos recogidos serán destruidos. No renuncia ningún derecho cuando consiente al estudio.

## 10. Confidencialidad

Todos los datos recogidos son confidenciales y solo los investigadores los tendrán acceso. Si los resultados de este estudio son publicados (por ej. en una tesis, una ponencia, una revista, o un libro), su nombre no será nunca utilizado. Toda la información identificable será recogida separada de los datos de estudio y se identifica con un código único asignado por los investigadores. Una copia maestra que enlaza su código único con su información identificable será solo disponible para los investigadores. Los representantes del comité ético no médico de la Universidad de Western pueden requerir acceso a los datos recogidos para asegurar la buena praxis en la colecta de datos en esta investigación. La investigadora mantendrá su información personal en un lugar seguro y confidencial por el mínimo de 7 años, separada de sus datos de estudio. Sus datos de estudio serán conservados indefinidamente y pueden ser utilizados para estudios futuros (por ej. estudios longitudinales). Al consentir para participar en este estudio, acepta que sus datos serán utilizados más allá de los propósitos de este estudio por el equipo de investigación actual u otros.

## 11. Contactos

Si tienen dudas o preguntas, o le gustaría participar, pueden escribir o llamar a la Dra. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca); XXX-XXX-XXXX, o a Grace Gomashie, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca). Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación o sobre la realización de este estudio, puede comunicarse con la Oficina de Ética Humana en la Investigación llamando al X-XXX-XXX-XXXX, o enviando un correo electrónico a [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca).

*Esta carta es para usted, para futura referencia.*

## Consentimiento

**Título de Proyecto:** La Vitalidad Lingüística de Náhuatl en México

**Investigadora Principal:** la Dra. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito

**Coinvestigadora:** Grace Gomashie

He leído y entendido la carta de información y acepta participar. Han respondido a todas mis preguntas y preocupaciones. Puedo negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta. Sé que puedo retirarme en cualquier momento.

\_\_\_sí \_\_\_no Entiendo que mi participación en la entrevista será grabada en audio.

\_\_\_sí \_\_\_no Entiendo que la información proporcionada en la entrevista, incluyendo las citas directas anónimas pueden ser utilizadas en los informes resultantes.

Nombre de participante (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma (Marca) de participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Mi firma significa que he explicado el estudio al participante antes mencionado. He contestado todas las preguntas.

Consentimiento informado obtenido por (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Mi firma significa que he explicado/leído/traducido el estudio para el participante antes mencionado. He contestado todas las preguntas. Certifico que la firma o marca es del participante.

Nombre de traductor (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de traductor: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix P: Parent Letter of Information and Consent (English Version)**

**Project Title:** Nahuatl Language Vitality in Mexico

**Principal Investigator:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Western University, Canada

### **Letter of Information - Parent/Guardian**

#### **1. Invitation to Participate**

Dear Parent/Guardian, I hope you will agree to allow your child to participate in this research study on the vitality of Nahuatl because your child/ward is either bilingual in Nahuatl and Spanish, or a native speaker of Nahuatl or Spanish.

#### **2. Purpose of this Study**

We are interested in knowing the language vitality of Nahuatl, by focusing on language use and attitudes.

#### **3. Inclusion Criteria**

The following people are eligible to participate in this study are at least 12 years old and speak Nahuatl or Spanish or both Nahuatl and Spanish. Knowing other languages is not disqualifying.

#### **4. Exclusion Criteria**

Individuals under age 12

#### **5. Study Procedures**

If you agree to allow your child/ward to participate, you will sign a letter of consent giving them permission to participate. Should your child/ward decide to participate, they will read a letter of assent and sign an assent form before completing two main tasks. Briefly, the study involves completing a language profile and language questionnaire that will tell us about the languages your child/ward speak, when they learned them, where they use them and their opinions about them; and sitting for an audio-recorded interview on Nahuatl and Spanish language use and attitudes of Nahuatl. The full set of tasks will take less than 2 hours. The task(s) will be conducted at a location of your preference

#### **6. Possible Risks and Harm**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with your child/ward participating in this study.

#### **7. Possible Benefits**

While direct benefits of this study to the participants themselves may not be obvious, Mexican society will benefit from language planning policies informed by sociolinguistic research of this type.

#### **8. Compensation**

You will receive no monetary compensation.

**9. Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child/ward may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. If you decide that your child/ward will no longer wish to take part in this research, you can notify the researcher involved and withdraw within one month after your participation in the survey and/or interview. The data collected from you will be withdrawn from the study. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

**10. Confidentiality**

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published (e.g. in a thesis, a conference paper, article, or as part of a book), only deidentified information will be made available. All identifiable information will be collected separately from study data and linked only by a unique ID code which will be assigned by the research team. The master list linking your child/ward's study ID and your identifiable information will only be available to the researchers. Research Ethics Board may require access in order to monitor the ethical conduct of the study. The researcher will keep all personal information about your child/ward in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 7 years, separate from your study file. Your data may be retained indefinitely and could be used for future research purposes (e.g., for longitudinal studies). By consenting to participate in this study, you are agreeing that your child/ward's data can be used beyond the purposes of this present study by either the current or other researchers.

**11. Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your child/ward's participation in the study, or would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca); XXX-XXX-XXXX, or Grace Gomashie, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics X-XXX-XXX-XXXX, email: [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca). This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*

**Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Nahuatl Language Vitality in Mexico

**Study Principal Investigator's Name:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to allow my child/ward to participate in the research. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my child/ward does not have to answer any questions s/he does not feel like answering and that s/he know can stop participating at any time.

\_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I understand that my child/ward's participation in the interview will be audio recorded

\_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I understand that the information my child/ward submit in the interview, including anonymised direct quotes, may be included in any resulting report

Parent/Guardian's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian's Signature (Mark): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature means that I have explained the study to the parent/guardian named above. I have answered all questions.

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature means that I have explained/read/translated the study to the parent/guardian named above. I have answered all questions. I certify that the signature or mark is that of the parent/guardian.

Translator's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Translator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix Q: Parent Letter of Information and Consent (Spanish Version)**

**Título de Proyecto:** La Vitalidad Lingüística de Náhuatl en México

**Investigadora Principal:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Western University, Canada

### **Carta de información sobre el estudio – Padres/Tutores**

#### **1. Invitación**

Queridos Padres/Tutores, queríamos invitar a su hijo/hija/pupilo a participar en un proyecto de investigación sobre la vitalidad del idioma náhuatl porque es hablante nativo de náhuatl o de español, o habla ambas lenguas: náhuatl y español.

#### **2. Objetivo del estudio**

Nos interesa saber la situación lingüística del náhuatl en México, especialmente el uso y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el idioma.

#### **3. ¿Quién puede participar?**

Personas que tienen al menos 12 años y hablan español o náhuatl o ambos idiomas. No importa si Ud. conoce otras lenguas.

#### **4. ¿Quién no puede participar?**

Cualquier niño o niña bajo 12 años

#### **5. ¿Qué implica la participación?**

Si decide que su hijo/hija/pupilo participe en este estudio, habrá 2 partes a completar. 1) Un perfil lingüístico y un cuestionario en papel a responder y se tarda menos de 45 minutos en completar. Contiene preguntas sobre el uso y las actitudes de las lenguas por Ud. Todas las preguntas son opcionales. 2) Una entrevista de 1 hora sobre el uso y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el español y el náhuatl. Las entrevistas serán grabadas en audio y transcritas. La información proporcionada en la entrevista, incluyendo las citas directas anónimas pueden ser utilizadas en los informes resultantes. En total, su participación se tarda menos de 2 horas y se lleva a cabo en un lugar de su preferencia.

#### **6. ¿Hay riesgos?**

No se anticipa ningún riesgo

#### **7. ¿Hay beneficios?**

No habrá un beneficio directo para participar en este estudio, pero la información recogida podrá beneficiar a la sociedad en el sentido de que estos resultados darán información para la planificación y la política lingüísticas.

#### **8. Compensación**

No será compensado por su participación en este estudio.



## 9. Participación voluntaria

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su hijo/hija/pupilo tiene derecho a rehusarse a participar en este estudio o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin punición. Puede rehusarse a contestar cualquier pregunta. Después de participar en este estudio, puede retirarse dentro de un mes, solo tiene que avisar a la investigadora. En este caso, los datos recogidos serán destruidos. No renuncia ningún derecho cuando consiente al estudio.

## 10. Confidencialidad

Todos los datos recogidos son confidenciales y solo los investigadores los tendrán acceso. Si los resultados de este estudio son publicados (por ej. en una tesis, una ponencia, una revista, o un libro), su nombre no será nunca utilizado. Toda la información identificable será recogida separada de los datos de estudio y se identifica con un código único asignado por los investigadores. Una copia maestra que enlaza su código único con su información identificable será solo disponible para los investigadores. Los representantes del comité ético no médico de la Universidad de Western pueden requerir acceso a los datos recogidos para asegurar la buena praxis en la colecta de datos en esta investigación. La investigadora mantendrá su información personal en un lugar seguro y confidencial por el mínimo de 7 años, separada de sus datos de estudio. Sus datos de estudio serán conservados indefinidamente y pueden ser utilizados para estudios futuros (por ej. estudios longitudinales). Al consentir para participar en este estudio, acepta que sus datos serán utilizados más allá de los propósitos de este estudio por el equipo de investigación actual u otros.

## 11. Contactos

Si tienen dudas o preguntas, o le gustaría participar, pueden escribir o llamar a la Dra. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca); XXX-XXX-XXXX, o a Grace Gomashie, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca). Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación o sobre la realización de este estudio, puede comunicarse con la Oficina de Ética Humana en la Investigación llamando al X-XXX-XXX-XXXX, o enviando un correo electrónico a [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca).

*Esta carta es para usted, para futura referencia.*

**Consentimiento**

**Título de Proyecto:** La Vitalidad Lingüística de Náhuatl en México

**Investigadora Principal:** la Dra. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito

**Coinvestigadora:** Grace Gomashie

He leído y entendido la carta de información y acepta participar. Han respondido a todas mis preguntas y preocupaciones. Puedo negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta. Sé que puedo retirarme en cualquier momento.

\_\_\_sí \_\_\_no Entiendo que mi participación en la entrevista será grabada en audio.

\_\_\_sí \_\_\_no Entiendo que la información proporcionada en la entrevista, incluyendo las citas directas anónimas pueden ser utilizadas en los informes resultantes.

Nombre de participante (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma (Marca) de participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Mi firma significa que he explicado el estudio al participante antes mencionado. He contestado todas las preguntas.

Consentimiento informado obtenido por (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Mi firma significa que he explicado/leído/traducido el estudio para el participante antes mencionado. He contestado todas las preguntas. Certifico que la firma o marca es del participante.

Nombre de traductor (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de traductor: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix R: Letter of Assent and Consent (English Version)

**Project Title:** Nahuatl Language Vitality in Mexico

**Principal Investigator:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Western University, Canada

### Letter of Assent

**1. Why are you here?**

You are being invited to be a part of our research study on the vitality of Nahuatl in your community because you are at least 12 years old and speak Nahuatl, Spanish or both Nahuatl and Spanish.

**2. Why are they doing this study?**

We want to know about how and where you use language(s) and your opinions about Nahuatl and/or Spanish.

**3. What will happen to you? Will there be any tests?**

If you are willing to be part of the study, you will do two things. The first thing is you will fill out a language profile and language questionnaire that will tell us about the languages you speak, when you learned them, where you use them and your opinions about them. The second thing is to sit for an interview that will be audio-recorded on the use of Nahuatl and/or Spanish language use and your opinions about them. The two activities will take less than two hours. We can do these activities at a place you prefer.

**4. Will the study help you?**

The study will not help you, but it will help us learn about the language culture in your community.

**5. Do you have to be in the study?**

It is voluntary to be in the study. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel like answering, and that you can stop participating any time.

**6. What if you have any questions?**

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask Grace Gomashie ([email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca)) or Professor Joyce Bruhn de Garavito (XXX-XXX-XXXX or [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca)). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or if you are unhappy about any part of this study, you may report your feelings confidentially to the conduct to The Office of Human Research Ethics (X-XXX-XXX-XXXX or [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca)).

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*

**Assent Form**

**Project Title:** Nahuatl Language Vitality in Mexico  
**Study Principal Investigator's Name:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito  
**Study Co-Investigator's Name:** Grace Gomashie

I have had the nature of the study explained to me and I am willing to participate and let the researcher (Grace Gomashie) observe and ask me questions. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not feel like answering, and that I can stop participating at any time.

\_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I understand that my interview will be audio recorded

\_\_\_yes \_\_\_no I understand that the researchers can use information from me in their writings and presentations of the research.

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant's Signature (Mark): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above, I have answered all questions.

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature means that I have explained/read/translated the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions. I certify that the signature/mark is that of the participant.

Translator's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Translator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix S: Letter of Assent and Consent (Spanish Version)

**Título de Proyecto:** La Vitalidad Lingüística de Náhuatl en México

**Investigadora Principal:** Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, PhD, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Western University, Canada

### Carta de asentimiento sobre el estudio

#### 1. Invitación

Lo invitamos a participar en un proyecto de investigación sobre la vitalidad del idioma náhuatl porque tiene al menos 12 años y es hablante nativo de náhuatl, español, o habla ambas lenguas: náhuatl y español.

#### 2. Objetivo del estudio

Nos interesa saber la situación lingüística del náhuatl en México, especialmente el uso y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el idioma.

#### 3. ¿Qué implica la participación?

Si decide participar en este estudio, habrá 2 partes a completar. Primero, un perfil lingüístico y un cuestionario en papel a responder y se tarda menos de 45 minutos en completar. Contiene preguntas sobre el uso y las actitudes de las lenguas por Ud. Todas las preguntas son opcionales. Segundo, una entrevista de 1 hora sobre el uso y las actitudes lingüísticas hacia el español y el náhuatl. Las entrevistas serán grabadas en audio y transcritas. La información que nos da en la entrevista puede ser citada anónimamente en los informes del estudio. En total, su participación se tarda menos de 2 horas y se lleva a cabo en un lugar de su preferencia.

#### 4. ¿Hay beneficios?

No habrá un beneficio directo para participar en este estudio, pero la información que nos da nos podrá ayudar aprender sobre la cultura/práctica lingüística de su comunidad.

#### 5. Participación voluntaria

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Puede elegir no participar, puede no responder cualquier pregunta o retirarse de este estudio en cualquier momento

#### 6. Contactos

Si tienen dudas o preguntas, pueden escribir o llamar a la Dra. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca); XXX-XXX-XXXX, o a Grace Gomashie, [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca). Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación o sobre la realización de este estudio, o si no estoy feliz con alguna parte del estudio, puede comunicarse confidencialmente con la Oficina de Ética Humana en la Investigación llamando al +X-XXX-XXX-XXXX, o enviando un correo electrónico a [email@uwo.ca](mailto:email@uwo.ca).

*Esta carta es para usted, para futura referencia*

**Asentimiento**

**Título de Proyecto:** La Vitalidad Lingüística de Náhuatl

**Investigadora Principal:** la Dra. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito

He leído y entendido la carta de información y acepta participar. Han respondido a todas mis preguntas y preocupaciones. Sé que puedo retirar en cualquier momento.

\_\_\_ sí \_\_\_ no Entiendo que mi participación en la entrevista será grabada en audio.

\_\_\_ sí \_\_\_ no Entiendo que la información en la entrevista puede ser citada anónimamente en los informes del estudio.

Nombre de participante (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma (Marca) de participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_ Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

Mi firma significa que he explicado el estudio al participante antes mencionado. He contestado todas las preguntas.

Consentimiento informado obtenido por (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Mi firma significa que he explicado/leído/traducido el estudio para el participante antes mencionado. He contestado todas las preguntas. Certifico que la firma o marca es del participante.

Nombre de traductor (por favor, escriba): \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de traductor: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix T: Ethics Approval (The University of Western Ontario)



# Western Research

**Date:** 3 May 2019

**To:** Prof. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito

**Project ID:** 113112

**Study Title:** Language Maintenance and Revitalization of Nahuatl in Central Mexico

**Short Title:** Nahuatl language vitality in Mexico

**Application Type:** NMREB Initial Application

**Review Type:** Delegated

**Full Board Reporting Date:** 07/Jun/2019

**Date Approval Issued:** 03/May/2019 17:02

**REB Approval Expiry Date:** 03/May/2020

Dear Prof. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

**Documents Approved:**

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Interview Guide Youth. English. 23 April 2019	Interview Guide	23/Apr/2019	I
Interview Guide. Adults. English. 23 April 2019	Interview Guide	23/Apr/2019	II
Interview Guide. Adults. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Interview Guide	23/Apr/2019	II
Interview Guide. Youth. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Interview Guide	23/Apr/2019	I
Language Profile. English. 23 April 2019	Paper Survey	23/Apr/2019	I
Language Profile. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Paper Survey	23/Apr/2019	I
Language Questionnaire. English. 23 April 2019	Paper Survey	23/Apr/2019	II
Language Questionnaire. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Paper Survey	23/Apr/2019	II
Letter of Assent & Consent. English. 23 April 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	II
Letter of Assent & Consent. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	II
Letter of Information & Consent. English. 23 April 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	II
Letter of Information & Consent. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	II
Parent Letter of Information & Consent. English. April 23 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	I
Parent Letter of Information & Consent. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	I
Participant Observation Script. English. 23 April 2019	Oral Script	23/Apr/2019	I
Participant-Observation-Guide. 23 April 2019	Participant Observation Guide	23/Apr/2019	I
Participation Observation Consent. English. 23 April 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	I
Participation Observation Consent. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Written Consent/Assent	23/Apr/2019	I
Participation Observation Script. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Oral Script	23/Apr/2019	I

Recruitment Poster. English. 23 April 2019	Recruitment Materials	23/Apr/2019	I
Recruitment Poster. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Recruitment Materials	23/Apr/2019	I
Recruitment Script. English. 23 April 2019	Oral Script	23/Apr/2019	II
Recruitment Script. Spanish. 23 April 2019	Oral Script	23/Apr/2019	II

**Documents Acknowledged:**

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Certificate of Translation. 20 April 2019	Paper Survey	20/Apr/2019	II

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Harris, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

**Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).**



## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Grace A. Gomashie

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2016-2020 Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies

The University of Ghana  
Accra, Greater Accra, Ghana  
2012-2014 MPhil in Spanish

The University of Ghana  
Accra, Greater Accra, Ghana  
2006-2011 B.A. in French and Spanish

**Honours and Awards:** MITACS Globalink Research Award  
2019

Arts & Humanities Graduate Research Scholarship  
2018, 2019

The Africa Institute Graduate Student Research Fund Award  
2018

PSAC Local 610 Scholarship for Outstanding Research  
Contribution  
2018

Mary Routledge Fellowship  
2018

Lynne-Lionel Scott Scholarship in Canadian Studies  
2017

Dean's Entrance Scholarship  
2015

Western Graduate Research Scholarship  
2015-2020

**Related Work Experience**            Teaching Assistant  
    The University of Western Ontario  
    2015-2020  
    Research Assistant  
    The University of Western Ontario  
    2017-2020

**Publications:**

Gomashie, G. A. (in press). Transatlantic Female Solidarity: Two Women Social Explorers and Their Views on Nineteenth-Century Latin American Women. In Misty Krueger (Ed.) *Transatlantic Women Travelers, 1688-1843*. Bucknell University Press.

Gomashie, G. A. (2020). Bilingual Youth's Language Choices and Attitudes Toward Nahuatl in Santiago Tlaxco, Mexico. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1800716>.

Gomashie, G. A. (2019a). Language Vitality of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea: Language Use and Attitudes. *Humanities*, 8(1), 33; <https://doi.org/10.3390/h8010033>.

Gomashie, G. A. (2019b). Kanien'keha/Mohawk Indigenous Language Revitalization Efforts in Canada. *McGill Journal of Education*, 54(1), 151-171.

Gomashie, G. A. (2019c). "A House of Many Rooms:" Different Approaches of Two Translators of Flora Tristan's *Pérégrinations d'une paria*. *Meta: journal des traducteurs/Meta: Translators' Journal*, 64(1), 125-144.

Gomashie, G. A. (2017). Preserving the Community in Gabriel García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (Chronicle of a Death Foretold). *Onomastica Canadiana*, 96(2), 31-49.

Gomashie, G. A. (2016a). Review of Sandino's Nation: Ernesto Cardenal and Sergio Ramírez Writing Nicaragua, 1940-2012. *European Review of Latin American & Caribbean Studies*, 101, 122-124.

Gomashie, G. A. (2016b). Community in Julio Cortazar's Libro de Manuel. *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, 4(4): 60-63.

Gomashie, G. A. & Stainton, R. S. (2016). Verbing and Nouning. *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6\\_3329-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6_3329-1).