From Language Revalorisation to Language Revitalisation? Discourses of Maya Language Promotion in Yucatán

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University

August 2014

Abstract

Against the background of worldwide processes of language abandonment that are taking place at an unprecedented and rapid pace, in the last two decades language revitalisation has become an ever more prominent area of academic research. This thesis looks at the ideological underpinnings of Yucatec Maya language promotion in the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, based on the discourses of both official institutions and grassroots actors. After introducing the historical processes that have led to the present sociolinguistic minorisation of speakers of Maya in the Yucatán Peninsula, I analyse salient themes for language policy and planning pointed out by activists and institutions. Both official and grassroots discourses gathered in the field overwhelmingly revolve around the key concepts of revalorisation and *rescate*. These notions undergird the strategies that most participants consider as necessary for Maya language promotion, namely, the drafting of specific language legislation; the use of Maya in the education system; and an emphasis on the development of literacy in Maya. While policies in these areas may have a positive impact on raising the status and public profile of Maya and may lead to its legitimation, I argue that they present considerable limitations for actual revitalisation, which I believe should be part of a wider sociopolitical movement coming from the grassroots. On the one hand, vertical language policies that emanate from official institutions, the school being a prominent one, have been central in the cultural and linguistic assimilation to Spanish of indigenous peoples in Mexico. On the other hand, institutional policies that replicate the essentialist tenets of hegemonic languages on minorised languages, such as standardisation, actually devalue plurilingual and mixed practices on the ground and raise the issue of purism, which in the case of Yucatán may be contributing to language shift to Spanish and hindering the revitalisation process. Seen as an alternative and complementary project that comes above all from the ground up, I maintain that grassroots language promotion beyond institutional settings and control is effectively working towards the revitalisation of Maya. Along these lines, the use of this language in social media and modern music genres by youths, as part of their expanding communicative repertoires and heteroglossic practices on the ground, is opening up promising spaces for its maintenance and reproduction.

Epigraph

Ma' su'utsil a t'anik maayai'
Su'utsil ma' a t'anik.

[No es vergonzoso hablar maya
Es vergonzoso no hablarla.]

[It is not shameful to speak Maya
It is shameful not to speak it].

Posted on Facebook by Santa Elena Yucatán (7 October 2012).

Acknowledgements

There are many institutions and people that have supported me in one form or another throughout this PhD without whose help it would have been impossible to complete the project. First of all, I would like to thank both the Institut Ramon Llull and the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University for offering me the possibility to teach Catalan in the North East while undertaking a doctoral degree. I would also like to thank the support of the Newcastle University Santander International Exchange Programme for fieldwork in Mexico.

The help and advice I have received throughout these years from colleagues at the School of Modern Languages have always been stimulating. I owe special gratitude to my supervisors Professor Rosaleen Howard and Dr Peter Sercombe. Every meeting with them has been a particularly fruitful occasion to get invaluable feedback that has enormously expanded both my knowledge of sociolinguistics and academic writing. Their continuous guidance and support to this project has been fundamental for its development and completion. With Professor Rosaleen Howard I have also had the pleasure to share several seminars both in the UK and Mexico, which have allowed me to grow as an academic through encounters with wonderful colleagues involved in language revitalisation in Latin America. Also, a million thanks go to Jane Freeland and Sheila Aikman, my PhD examiners from whom I received precious feedback.

This thesis would just have not been possible either without the input and help from people in Yucatán. To begin with, the support and encouragement of friends such as José Antonio Flores Farfán and Flor Canché have been instrumental for this project. I am especially grateful to all participants who were willing to share their time and opinions on the situation of Maya in Yucatán and, particularly, to Yazmín Novelo, Rossana Ek, José Durán, César Can, Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim, and Ligia Peláez for their warmth and generosity not just while in Yucatán but also afterwards. Their insights and guidance have been particularly important for this thesis. Infinite gratitude goes to Flor's family in Mérida and Timucuy and, particularly, to Doña Maria Justa Teh. Being able to share with them their everyday lives has been an unforgettable experience. Hopefully I will be able to reciprocate their hospitality beyond measure when they visit me in Europe.

Finally, a million thanks, hugs, and kisses to my family and to Montse for their support and love.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CDI	Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples).
CGEIB	Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education).
CIESAS	Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (Centre for Higher Studies and Research in Social Anthropology).
CONAFE	Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo (National Council for Educational Promotion).
DGEI	Dirección General de Educación Indígena (General Directorate of Indigenous Education).
ICY	Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán (Institute of Culture of Yucatán).
INALI	Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (National Institute of Indigenous Languages).
INAH	Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (National Institute of Anthropology and History).
INDEMAYA	Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya del Estado de Yucatán (Institute for the Development of Maya Culture of Yucatán state).
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information).
LGDLPI	Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas. (General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples).
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional.
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional.
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Education).
SRCI	Sistema de Radiodifusoras Culturales Indigenistas (Network of Cultural Indigenist Radio Stations).
UADY	Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (Autonomous University of Yucatán).
UIMQROO	Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (Intercultural Maya University of Quintana Roo).
UNAM-CEPHCIS	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Centro Peninsular en Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales (Autonomous National University of Mexico).
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
UNO	Universidad de Oriente (University of Oriente).

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Against the background of rapid and widespread dominance of Spanish in Mexico, this thesis looks at institutional and grassroots language ideologies that underpin Maya language promotion in the Yucatán Peninsula. Through ethnographic work and by drawing on a growing body of theoretical work in language policy and planning, I explore the recurrent themes that were highlighted by participants when discussing the promotion of Yucatec Maya, locally known simply as Maya, and which are based on two related concepts: *revalorización* (revalorisation) and *rescate* (roughly, reclamation). Both terms refer to discursive practices that put the emphasis on the sociocultural recognition of the Maya language and surface prominently in discourses from both activists and official institutions. These local terms contrast with language revitalisation, which, in my view, entails sociopolitical organisation and activism of speakers whose language practices work toward language maintenance and reproduction. The distinction between these concepts, which is central in this thesis, is explained more fully in chapter 2.

My interest in language revitalisation stems from my involvement since 2001 with Linguapax, an NGO based in Barcelona whose goal is to promote language diversity worldwide. From 2001 to 2007, as a member of the Linguapax team, I was involved with several projects of language revitalisation in Latin America. A particularly engaging project was the production of several booklets of riddles and tongue twisters in indigenous languages of Mexico. These materials are part of a bigger scheme called the Linguistic and Cultural Revitalisation, Maintenance and Development Project, led by José Antonio Flores Farfán, a Mexican anthropologist and friend working at CIESAS in Mexico City. I examine in chapter 7 some events that I attended while doing firledwork and in which this material was used. This collaboration later sparked my interest in choosing Mexico as an area of research when I came to Newcastle. My first connection with Mexico was therefore a collaborative project for an NGO, not academic research. It was at the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University that I was given the opportunity to undertake a part-time PhD in Sociolinguistics while teaching Catalan in the North East of England. I decided to focus my research on Yucatán for practical reasons, since it is an area where I could easily establish contacts through my previous work with Linguapax and is also a relatively safe region untouched by the Drug War that has been going on for years in Mexico. Also, the support and encouragement of José Antonio Flores Farfán was decisive to focus on Yucatán as site

for my fieldwork. José Antonio put me in contact with Flor Canché, a Maya anthropologist and linguist whose kind help and hospitality was fundamental for my fieldwork and, consequently, for the development of this thesis. Furthermore, I was attracted to the particular history of a territory located at the periphery of a nation-state with a distinct regional identity. I was interested in learning more about the construction of a particular Yucatecan regional identity within Mexico, which heavily relies, among other cultural characteristics, on its Maya past, the Maya language, and the local variety of Yucatec Spanish. The fact that Maya is an indigenous language with relatively high vitality was also an important factor since my research interests lie primarily in language revitalisation rather than in descriptive linguistics and documentation. For this reason, this thesis focuses on sociopolitical and sociohistorical aspects of language reproduction with metalinguistic discussions on language policy and planning lying at its core.

This thesis consists of eight chapters. In chapter 1, I introduce the research questions that guide this work, discuss ethical issues, reflect on my positionality as a Catalan researcher, and present the methods and methodology. In chapter 2, I review key terminology, particularly the concepts of discourse and ideology, and the theoretical framework of language policy and planning against which this thesis is built. The emergence of language endangerment and language revitalisation as two sides of an ever more central area of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology research is examined in detail. Moreover, in chapter 2 I explore the key notions that underpin language promotion in Yucatán, namely revalorisation and *rescate*, and the ways in which they intersect with and differ from global discourses of language endangerment and revitalisation. Before delving into the main themes that surfaced in the interviews with activists while discussing language policy and planning in Yucatán, chapter 3 explores the historical, sociopolitical, and economic minorisation of Maya peoples since colonial times up to the present, which has had deep sociolinguistic consequences. Within the framework of significant legislative reforms that have affected indigenous peoples in Mexico, in chapter 4 I analyse discourses of language rights and legislation, which is a central theme in the accounts of activists and civil servants working for the promotion of Maya in Yucatán, particularly of an older generation. In chapter 5, I look at the broad and interrelated discourses of education and literacy, themes which also occupy a prominent position in the data gathered in the field. On the one hand, the participants' accounts revolve around the need to legitimise Maya through the spread of literacy in Maya. On the other hand, a good number of interviewees opined that the

introduction of Maya in the education system is a fundamental move to raise its status, enhance its functional expansion, and secure its reproduction. Moreover, chapter 5 includes accounts of the acquisition and transmission of Maya, particularly among children. These phenomena, which take place during language socialisation and are intimately linked with education and the development of literacy, are also foregrounded in the discourses gathered for this thesis. In chapter 5 I also point out the ways in which an emphasis on the development of formal education and literacy in Maya creates critical tensions and contradictions within the revalorisation process. Chapter 6 explores in detail a particular aspect of those tensions, namely, language purism, which is a common discourse when dealing with the promotion of indigenous language of Mexico. I highlight in that chapter how purist discourses are closely bound up with other ideological sociolinguistic issues such as standardisation and authenticity. Whereas legislation, education, and literacy are typical institutional domains of language policy and planning that place an emphasis on the written word, in chapter 7 I examine alternative areas of revitalisation such as radio and television, media of paramount importance for the promotion of oral language use. I show the possibilities of those domains for language revitalisation but also their limitations when control is in the hands of governmental institutions. Crucially, it is in that chapter that I move on to analyse examples of Maya language practices by youths in social media and modern music genres such as rap. In contrast with the aforementioned domains, which are deemed central by the older generation of interviewees, I argue that these latter spaces, which are especially popular among youngsters, are becoming promising grassroots platforms for the revitalisation of Maya. Finally, the observation of these Maya language uses on the ground, both oral and written, points to the ambivalence arising from an essentialist conception of language in a revalorisation process that seeks cultural and linguistic recognition. In the conclusion I characterise the current process of Maya language promotion in Yucatán as a dynamic one in need of stronger sociopolitical mobilisation.

The following sections introduce the main research questions I aim to answer in this thesis. It also gives an account of the interviewees and the key institutions I visited that lead the promotion of Maya in Yucatán. Moreover, drawing from general discussions that have lately emerged in social research, I look at the ethical challenges of conducting sociolinguistic fieldwork on minorised languages. Stating my preference for collaborative research, I then write about the ways in which my position as a foreign

(Catalan-Spanish) sociolinguist in Yucatán affected my research in Mexico. Finally, I review the main research methods used.

1.1   Research Questions

The goal of this thesis is to give an account of the main language ideologies that currently drive the promotion of Yucatec Maya in Yucatán. I have chosen 'promotion' as a blanket term because I was particularly interested in finding out how activists and public institutions are discursively constructing this process and whether it is working towards the reproduction of Maya in Yucatán. Therefore, the central research question is:

- What are the salient discourses that circulate among activists and institutions regarding the current promotion of Maya in Yucatán and what are their implications for language revitalisation?

Along with the central issue of discourse production, a set of related questions weave this thesis together. These are:

- What historical processes have led in the first place to the minorisation of the Maya people and their indigenous language?
- Who are the main individual and institutional actors producing ideologies of Maya language promotion?
- How does language policy and planning relate to recurring discourses of revalorisation?
- What are the possibilities and limitations of current language policies for the reproduction of Maya?

Moreover, this thesis sets out to explore the dialectic relationship between language essentialisation and revitalisation. My aim is to look at macro and micro levels of investigation stemming from the combination of institutional language policy and planning on the one hand and activists' revalorisation efforts on the other. The integration of the macro and micro levels in language policy and their influence on language behaviour has been a central concern in language policy and planning theory (Ricento 2000: 208).The key role that grassroots strategies may play in language

revitalisation will become particularly clear in chapter 7, when I analyse plurilingual linguistic practices on social media among youths.

To answer these questions, I carried out intermittent fieldwork in Yucatán between 2009 and 2012. Most of the fieldwork took place in Yucatán state, although I also had the opportunity to visit Quintana Roo on several occasions. I was not able to gather information from other Yucatec Maya speaking areas of the Peninsula such as Campeche and Belize. Therefore, although these territories share a common cultural area and I will frequently refer to Quintana Roo, the findings and conclusions of this thesis are mostly drawn from the sociolinguistic situation of Yucatán state. To avoid confusion when referring to Mexico as a country and Yucatan as a state, I use the term nation-state to refer to Mexico as a whole.[1] While the majority of interviews took place in Mérida, trips to several villages across the Peninsula were particularly fruitful sites for observation. It is important to emphasise however that this thesis is based on data mainly gathered in an urban context where most activists are based. Working as a part-time language teacher in Britain was a challenge to organise field trips because I could only spend time in Yucatán during holiday breaks, basically summer and Easter. Below I will have more to say about the limitations of doing intermittent fieldwork in Yucatan over a period of six years. Map 1 below shows the location of the main places where I undertook fieldwork. Map 2 locates the Yucatán Peninsula in Mesoamerica.
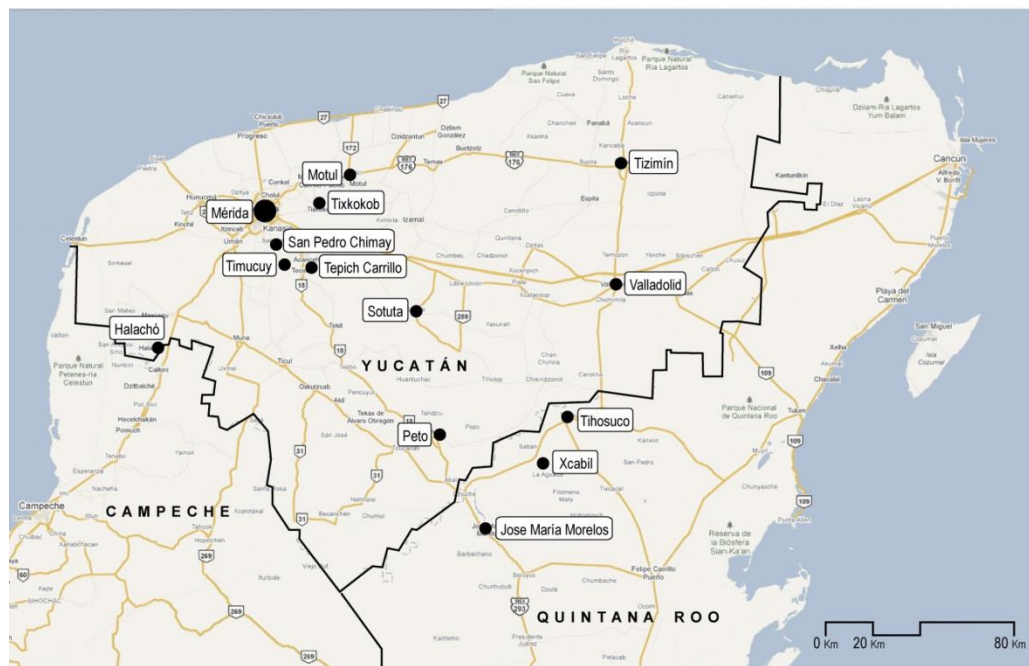
Map 1.1 Fieldwork locations on the Yucatán Peninsula.

1 Mexico is divided into 32 federal entities; 31 of them are states and one, Mexico DF, is a federal district.

Map 1.2 Yucatán state in Mesoamerica.

1.2   Participants and Institutions

The key role of intellectuals in cultural revitalisation movements has been explored in the sociology of language for decades, particularly in connection with nationalist movements (Fishman 1972). More recently, in Latin America several authors have also highlighted the central role that indigenous intellectuals have played in the emergence of indigenous movements (Warren and Jackson 2002, Jackson and Warren 2005; Postero and Zamosc 2005; Rappaport 2005). Similarly, the relatively recent development of multicultural policies in several Latin American countries arising from indigenous demands for autonomy and self-determination has gained scholarly attention (Sieder 2002).[2] However, unlike the nationalist movements studied by Fishman, Latin American indigenous movements have not generally challenged the unified notion of the nation-state, striving instead for its transformation and the construction of pluralism on the national level.

In-depth studies of indigenous movements in different locales of Latin America such as Guatemala (Fischer and Brown 1996a; Warren 1998; England 2003; Montejo 2005) and Colombia (Rappaport 2005) can shed light on the still incipient Maya language revitalisation movement in Yucatán. Sociopolitical mobilisations that drive

2 See Harvey (1998) for the case of Chiapas.

ethnic revivals may have important repercussions for language maintenance, especially when language is viewed as an essential element of a distinct identity and a core component of sociopolitical struggles. In this thesis I shall draw several comparisons between Maya indigenous movements in Guatemala and Chiapas, on the one hand, and Yucatán on the other. In chapter 3, for instance, I shall examine the ways in which identity politics in Yucatán contrasts in a stark way with the Guatemalan case. In that chapter I also look at *indigenismo* as an institutional state project in Mexico that began in the 1920s and that still drives to this day vertical and paternalist policies for indigenous peoples (Hernández et al 2004).

The bulk of my primary data comes from interviews with intellectuals, writers, civil servants, researchers (mostly anthropologists and linguists), and teachers and students who are involved with the promotion of Maya. Although with different motivations and interests, they can all be considered language activists. I provide some basic personal information about the main participants in appendix A but in this section I discuss some general characteristics to put their contributions in context. Owing to the variety of voices of the interviewees and specifically looking at accounts on language policy and planning, this thesis expands existing research based on ethnographic work with Maya intellectuals and professionals (Gutiérrez Chong 1999; López Santillán 2011).

Participants whose narratives form the backbone of this thesis can be roughly divided into four groups. The first group encompasses bilingual (Maya and Spanish) interviewees who have played different roles as writers, intellectuals, and civil servants, often at the same time, in the emerging Maya revalorisation process of the last decade. They are in their fifties and sixties and have decades of experience in cultural affairs, some of them serving as civil servants in public institutions based in Yucatán. The voices of these intellectuals feature prominently in chapters 4, 5 and 6. This is the case, among others, of Bernardo Aguilar, Diego Che, Fernando Segovia, and César Gómez (all names are pseudonyms). They might be considered 'traditional intellectuals' in the Gramscian sense (Ives 2004: 75; Rappaport 2005: 10), that is, those that function, or have functioned, within the structures of the dominant society and the institutions that I review below. I shall highlight how language ideologies such as purism are more outstanding among this group of intellectuals than other participants, especially of younger generations. As I will highlight, the generational aspect is fundamental to understand current strategies to revitalise Maya in Yucatán.

The second group is formed by 'organic' intellectuals, who have a closer relationship with community bases. Some of these activists, such as Jacinto May and José Chablé, are bilingual. Some of them are Maya (socio)linguists who combine academic research with activism. Other participants may have partial competence in Maya, usually good comprehension skills, because they have recovered Maya later in adulthood or are in the process of reactivating it. These are the cases of Manuel Peraza and Carla Rivero, from whom I drew particularly insightful views on Maya language promotion.

The third group is made up of civil servants and researchers who do not speak Maya, but whose work closely revolves around the ongoing revalorisation process. This is the case, for instance, of Salvador Polanco, Mariano Domínguez, and Rocío Esquivel, who advocate Maya language, culture and rights. These participants may correspond to the category of 'colaboradores', as suggested by Rappaport (2005: 54), namely, non-native intellectuals who are nevertheless committed to indigenous politics. This is the only group who would not use the adjective 'Maya' as a form of self-identification.

Apart from these professionals, the opinions of committed young Maya professionals and students from intercultural universities in their twenties and early thirties are also central in this thesis. Contributions by Carlos Canul, Rosa Nava, Rita Chi, and Violeta Pool, all of them bilingual youths, often stand in contrast with the older generation of intellectuals and their opinions on literacy and purism. The role of youth in promoting Maya is central in chapter 7, which shows their increasingly complex communicative practices in ever more important domains of language revitalisation such as social media. I explain below in more detail the development of the research process that has resulted in the writing of this thesis.

In most cases, participants are urban based activists but, crucially, they maintain strong links with their places of origin in the countryside. Therefore, urban and rural life is for them, as well as for many other Yucatecans, a continuum rather than a strict dichotomy. The positions of activists in these groups are not always aligned and some participants critiqued the appropriation of the revalorisation process by the allegedly authoritative group of 'traditional' intellectuals. The revalorisation process entails the institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of Maya as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991), which may lead to the capitalisation of an indigenous identity by some participants. While this is indeed a legitimate move, there is also potential co-option of intellectuals and activists who are working or have worked for governmental institutions. In this sense, in some of my interviews some Maya intellectuals were pejoratively called

'sacred cows' and even 'mercenaries of the Maya culture'. Alfredo Ku, for instance, who considers himself an organic intellectual working from the grassroots, argued that "hay intereses de los mayistas locales, que viven de la cultura maya, entonces no quieren compartir los espacios. Son gente que se llaman intelectuales mayas, pero no tienen base".[3] I heard similar grievances from 'colaboradores', who complained that they are not recognised as legitimate actors in the revalorisation process because they are non-indigenous and do not speak Maya.

As for institutions, I shall frequently mention several official bodies in charge of designing and implementing languages policies in Mexico. Many participants are working or worked in the past in these public institutions, which belong to one of the three political and administrative levels of Mexico: federation, states, and municipalities. It is important to note that in the last two decades political power has been shared between the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) and the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Antagonistic and polarised positions between these two parties have meant piecemeal and discontinuous institutional language policies. The *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD) is the third main political party in Mexico but has no significant presence in Yucatán.

At the federal level three main institutions implement language policies. The first is the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP), namely the Ministry of Education, set up in 1921, along with its *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* (DGEI), a specific department within the SEP that caters for the education of indigenous peoples since 1978. The second institution is the *Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI), which broadly deals with indigenous matters. Although the CDI was created in 2003, it is in fact a continuation of the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI) established in the late 1940s. The goal of both the DGEI and the CDI is respectively to implement educational and developmental policies specifically aimed at indigenous populations. In chapters 5 and 7 I will analyse public policies in the education system and radio stemming respectively from both these federal bodies. The third institution is the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* (INALI), which was set up in 2006 to devise language planning for all indigenous languages of Mexico. One of the first tasks of this federal institute has been cataloguing and standardising indigenous languages. The possibilities, limitations and dilemmas raised by policies emanating from INALI, which

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3 "There are the interests of the local Mayanists, those who live off the Maya culture, then, they don't want to share spaces. These are people who call themselves Maya intellectuals, but they don't have a base". Interview with Alfredo Ku (11.4.2011 Mérida).

for the time being are focused on language form, are addressed at different points in this thesis.

At the state level a particularly relevant institution that I visited on several occasions and whose name often appears in the following chapters is the *Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya de Yucatán* (INDEMAYA), created in 2001. INDEMAYA, which depends on the government of Yucatán state, aims at "promoting social, economic, political and cultural development among Mayas in Yucatán".[4] It holds a department of Maya language and culture and has launched campaigns and produced materials for the promotion of Maya. Also at the state level the *Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán* (ICY) includes Maya affairs within the larger framework of supporting Yucatecan cultural projects and activities. The *Academia de la Lengua Maya, AC*, which depends on the ICY, is a body that aims at researching Maya from a philological and linguistic viewpoint.

Lastly, at the municipal level, a further institution with a very similar name to the aforementioned academia was important for my fieldwork. This is the *Academia Municipal de la Lengua Maya, Itzimná*, which offers Maya lessons. Aside from these governmental bodies, universities in Yucatán were also significant sites for my research. The two intercultural universities on the Peninsula that offer a degree in Maya language and culture, the Universidad de Oriente (UNO) and the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQROO), became particularly fertile sites to learn about linguistic ideologies and practices of young Maya students.

It is worth noting that all interviewees deploy multiple identifications, as parents, writers, researchers, students, etc. that defy simplistic hard-edge categorisations. Even in the case of intellectuals, for instance, their various and sometimes ambivalent roles and activism both from within official institutions and from without sometimes blur the categories of 'traditional' and 'organic', explained above. In other words, the revalorisation process is led by heterogeneous participants that may wear different hats in both place and time. The reason to focus on these educated activists is that their voices are particularly influential in promoting Maya in Yucatán since they occupy positions of leadership in governmental institutions, universities, research centers and NGOs. This also explains why most interviews took place in Mérida, which is where most official institutions are located.

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4 As stated in Indemaya's website: http://www.indemaya.yucatan.gob.mx/sobre-indemaya/quienes-somos.html [Accessed 23.8.2013].

1.3 Ethical Issues and Positionality of the Researcher

Ethical issues have become a fundamental concern of research in the social sciences. The methodologies used, among which ethnography stands out, have increasingly considered the impact of social research on the researched. Cameron et al. (1992, 1993) stressed the centrality of ethical issues in scientific research to supersede the positivistic paradigm that prevailed during the twentieth century. For these authors, research can be done *on* people, what they call the ethical framework; *for* people, the advocacy framework; and *with* people, the empowerment framework (see particularly Schiffrin 1993). Progressive improvement of ethical practices has resulted in research increasingly being done both *along with* the researched (collaborative research), and *by* the researched (community-based research).[5] The latter should be understood as research carried out by the members of the groups themselves who have traditionally been the objects of research. Within this framework they are the actors rather than the patients or, at best, collaborators of much ongoing research whose participation is, at best, acknowledged.

As a consequence of growing concerns about ethical issues, new labels have been proposed by academics to refer to those people whose participation is fundamental to carry out research. Thus, the term 'informant', which puts the emphasis on the act of giving (away?) information, has been replaced by other terms, such as consultants, participants or collaborators, which some researchers deem more appropriate to describe ethical ways of doing research.[6] I prefer to use in this thesis the term 'participant' and avoid the more traditional term 'informant', which may have connotations of extractive practices, particularly in the field of language documentation.[7] In any case, it is not just a question of simply replacing traditional labels with more politically correct ones but to come up with terminology that better reflects the ethical practices that must guide social research based on acknowledging, sharing, and incorporating the authorship of participants in the research.

However, it is important to note that the very nature of a PhD thesis, with its institutional constraints on individual authorship, is not particularly suitable for collaborative research, let alone co-authorship, even if this approach would entail more

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5 See Grinevald (2003). See also contributions in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 2006, Vol. 27, No. 1.
6 Newman and Ratliff (2001: 9) provide other examples such as "teacher", "subject", "assistant" or "interlocutor".
7 According to Newman and Ratliff (2001: 4), in Africanist circles the term "informant" does not seem to carry a negative connotation (see also Dimmendaal 2001). See Flores Farfán and Ramallo (2011) for relationships between language documentation, language revitalisation, and sociolinguistics.

ethical and fruitful relationships between the researcher and the researched. One way in which I have practised reciprocity is by sharing information through conversations and also by distributing different kinds of materials (books, journal articles, web resources) with a good number of people that I met and interviewed during my fieldwork. Since some people I talked to are researchers themselves, the flow of information has been in both directions and I was often queried about the sociolinguistic situation in Spain. Also, I am aware that my work sometimes allowed me to connect people who share similar interests in promoting Maya. Finally, electronic and social media has been of great help not only to keep in contact with most participants throughout the six-year period that has taken the completion of this thesis but also to observe their actual language practices in that domain.

I believe I was able to build collaborative relationships, some of which developed through bonds of friendship both with researchers and many other people with whom I shared time in the field. "Giving back", in my experience, does not necessarily mean to give something tangible to the people one works with but rather the establishment of emotional links based on respect and reciprocity. Indeed, respect has cemented a truly horizontal situation which, in my case, has been enriching both for me and, hopefully, for participants as well. Emotional issues should not be underestimated while doing research, especially in processes of language revitalisation, since they usually underpin the language attitudes that are vital for language maintenance or loss (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998). Wolcott, who devotes a chapter to examining the role of emotions and imagination in fieldwork, distinguishes between doing fieldwork and gathering data. He states that "fieldwork cannot be done without gathering data, but it entails far more than data gathering as a process of sustained enquiry" (1995: 249).[8] In my case, as noted above, sustained fieldwork has been enormously facilitated by electronic communication through email and Facebook with many Maya speakers and activists. In short, I see ethnographic work as a reciprocal relationship with emotions playing a central part which stems from the principles of commonality and solidarity (Garner et al 2006: 75), or as Brayboy and McCarty (2010) put it, from respect, responsibility, and reciprocity.

Giving talks at several universities in Yucatán also exemplifies the dialogic relationship of the research process I was involved with. I prepared talks about the current sociolinguistic situation in Spain and, particularly, language policies in

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8 For emotions and research, see Holland (2007).

Catalonia for students and teachers at several universities (see appendix B). I had the opportunity to get some feedback from the teachers who invited me to give talks. One of the things that students especially appreciated was the insistence on self-esteem and pride in one's language, the fact that one can become plurilingual without having to abandon one's own language, and letting students know about ongoing revitalisation projects around the world, particularly in Latin America. I also learned much from those sessions. One telling example was the question whether Catalan was an indigenous language of Spain, which made me think about the importance of labels and terminology and about who has the power to impose them.[9] While I focused on the development of language policy and planning in Spain in the last four decades and its positive impact on minorised languages in this country, I also stressed in my talks the dissimilar sociohistorical and current situation of regional languages in Spain and indigenous languages in Mexico. In fact, one of the main arguments of this thesis revolves around the limitations of institutional language planning, largely implemented in schools and with an emphasis on the development of literacy and standardisation, for these latter languages.

In sum, through exchanges during interviews, but especially while giving talks at Yucatecan universities, I think I contributed to raising linguistic critical awareness among participants, which is a central component to trigger revitalisation processes. Some of the arguments I have discussed with participants have to do with the idea that one has to abandon his or her language to adopt the dominant one; the perception that 'mixed' varieties are a corruption of 'pure' languages; the over-reliance on the school as the primordial site for assuring language reproduction; and the emphasis on literacy as a practice that will keep a threatened language alive.

As I will show in subsequent chapters, official policies which stem from what Gogolin (2008) has called the 'monolingual habitus', despite discursive acknowledgement of linguistic diversity, often clash with actual sociolinguistic practices on the ground. I maintain that these latter linguistic practices are influenced both by global, national and local forces and point to increasingly complex communicative repertoires and identity performances that defy simplistic binary oppositions, especially among youths. Important to note is the fact that the research process for this thesis spanned six years and in that period I progressively became aware

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9 The term 'indigenous' is not commonly used in Europe to refer to subordinated languages. See the next chapter for an analysis of the terminology used to qualify languages in this thesis (e.g. indigenous, regional, minority, minorised).

of the differences between discourses of Maya language promotion I gathered from an older generation on the one hand and youths on the other. Indeed, visting intercultural universities in Yucatán, collecting primary data on the use of Maya in social media, and paying attention to blossoming modern musical genres such as hip hop in Maya were fundamental to suggest that promising strategies of revitalisation that defy essentialisation are underway, as I highlight in chapter 7. It was only at the last stage of my intermittent fieldwork that I was able to observe these practices and gather this kind of data.

In short, as Blommaert and Dong (2010: 10) put it, the whole process of writing this thesis has been "a journey through knowledge". In this case, doing fieldwork in rural areas required adjustment to often unknown natural environments and challenging cultural situations. The feeling of being at a loss was particularly acute at the beginning of my fieldwork in contexts where Maya was mostly used, since I did not have the opportunity to learn the language in the UK before doing fieldwork. This was due to teaching commitments both at the universities of Durham and Newcastle in the North East of England. As a speaker of a 'regional or minority' language myself, I always encouraged Maya speakers to use it in my presence and let them know that, while my knowledge was basic, I always took the opportunity to take some classes during my fieldwork trips. I am aware though that not being fluent in Maya is a drawback since different kind of data might have emerged had I been able to carry out fieldwork in that language.

Despite the observer's effect (Labov 1972) I am confident to say that my presence, when rapport (and even friendship) was built with many Maya speakers, did not have a significant influence on their linguistic choices. Even if they knew that my proficiency in Maya was low, once I became a familiar presence around, speakers of Maya stuck to their usual patterns of language use, which included code-floating (Khubchandani 2011) and, sometimes, using Maya to poke fun at the researcher. With the passing of time, my receptive skills improved and saying some basic sentences was met with reactions of surprise. Moreover, and obviously at a very different level of adaptation, I was immersed in Yucatán in a new sociolinguistic environment where a very distinct variety of Spanish (Yucatec Spanish) is spoken.[10] Thus, I was exposed to a different variety of Spanish from my own, one with conspicuous lexical and phonological differences, not to mention important divergent pragmatic uses, especially

10 The role of Yucatec Spanish in the sociolinguistic repertoire of Yucatecans and the ideologies attached to it are also part of this thesis and will be dealt with in some detail in chapter 6.

in the area of politeness.[11] This had some influence in the way that interviews and conversations developed with an adaptation to a conversational style which favoured more subtle and indirect ways of asking questions.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning the potential influence of an outsider who is keen on learning a subordinated language like Maya. A typical reaction to this interest is a kind of lament by Maya speakers of the fact that some foreigners show more interest in the language than most local people. Conspicuous examples are Shigeto Yoshida, a Japanese linguist, and Francesc Ligorred, a Catalan researcher who has written extensively on Maya literature.[12] Both their names came up in several interviews with activists. In the Maya lessons that I took during my fieldwork in Yucatán, there were always foreign people with various interests, including evangelists from the United States trying to learn Maya for proselytist reasons. Whatever the positive ideological influence that outsiders may exert on promoting a marginalised language, and recognising their potential influence in certain cultural contexts (Dobrin 2008), successful language revitalisation must always emerge and be led from within the community whose language is being abandoned in the first place (Crawford 1996: 64; Wurm 1998: 198; Fishman 1996).

1.4   Research Methods and Methodology

This thesis includes a combination of various research methods. After setting out the research questions and having done the literature review, I decided to focus on newspapers, since mass media is one of the main social institutions that shapes public opinions and sparks language ideological debates (Blommaert 1999), which I define in detail in the next chapter. Therefore, I carried out an analysis of news items that dealt with Maya language and culture in two Yucatecan newspapers in the last decade. This data-driven qualitative analysis of almost five hundred news items using Critical Discourse Analysis yielded a series of recurring themes. Literacy and education, which are commonly linked in the press to describe the process of Maya language promotion in Yucatán, stood out among those themes. Owing to lack of space, I was not able to include a preliminary analysis of this corpus in this thesis, but the emphasis on literacy and education in the newspapers coincides with the accounts by intellectuals and official institutions that I analyse below. This first approach to the topic, which I could undertake while based in the UK, was complemented at a later stage with ethnographic

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11 See Placencia and García (2007) on this topic in the context of Spanish-speaking countries.
12 See Yoshida (2009) and Ligorred (1997, 2000) for examples of their academic work.

work in Yucatán. The main research methods to gather primary data were interviews, observation in the field, a survey on the use of languages in social media among students of an intercultural university, online research through email and Facebook, and analysis of some written texts and images.

As noted above, I collected the bulk of the data by interviewing forty educated activists involved with the promotion of Maya on the Yucatán Peninsula and particularly in Yucatán state. The accounts of about thirty of them form the testimonies included in this thesis. All the interviews were of a semi-structured, open-ended type and revolved around the central topic of the current sociolinguistic situation of Maya in Yucatán and the efforts, both institutional and grassroots, to promote it. The corpus gathered consists of formal recorded interviews that were carried out in both institutional and non-institutional settings and also informal conversations and discussions, which were not recorded. Most interviews took place in Mérida, where most participants are based, but a few other interviews and observations in the field were undertaken throughout the Peninsula, as shown in map 1.

The difference between interviews and conversations/discussion was often blurred, especially when I met participants several times and a relationship of trust, and in some cases friendship, was established. Being able to regularly meet up with some interviewees, not always to talk about sociolinguistic issues, let alone to record them, allowed me to build rapport with them and learn their opinions in more depth. While doing intermittent fieldwork over relatively short periods of times was sometimes a drawback (for instance in terms of learning Maya, in transport costs, and in quantity of data gathered), returning to the field several times had a positive impact on building more trustworthy relationships with participants and keeping in touch with them online.

Furthermore, unrecorded informal discussions and observation in the field were very valuable to better understand the social and political situation of Maya speakers in Yucatán. To a greater or lesser extent most participants were aware of the sociolinguistic situation in Spain and the historical struggle in some regions to reclaim autochthonous languages after four decades of dictatorship. Indeed, some participants knew that the Catalan case is an example of a relatively successful language recovery. Interviews may sometimes become conversations and often, in a reversal of roles, I was asked questions regarding the ways in which language policy and planning has affected the social use of Catalan. As Blommaert and Dong (2010: 44) highlight, the dialogic nature of interviews and the co-construction of knowledge that results from them needs to be set against supposedly neutral techniques in which the interviewer's reactions are

erased. One example was my visit to Radio Yóol Íik, an urban station that broadcast in Maya between 2006 and 2010 in Mérida. My intention was to talk to a few Maya speakers who were working there, which I did, but I was unexpectedly invited to take part in a live programme and ended up being interviewed about the sociolinguistic situation in Spain.

As for observation, while data gathered in interviews became the primary source of analysis, it was often by observing rather than by asking questions that I could better learn and interpret other people's (linguistic) behaviour. Indeed, interviews have limitations. Blommaert and Dong argue that "ethnographic fieldwork is aimed at finding out things that are often not seen as important but belong to the implicit structure of people's life. Asking is indeed very often the worst possible way of trying to find out" (2010: 3). In a similar vein, Briggs (1986) has underscored the need to understand the native metacommunicative patterns of the community where research is carried out, since these patterns can collide with methods based on asking questions, such as the interview. Much anthropological work has shown that learning activities in many societies proceed through observation rather than explicit language use and in the case of Yucatec Mayas observation is indeed a prominent mechanism for learning (Gaskins 2000, 2006; Llanes Ortiz 2009).[13]

Although interviews and conversations with other researchers were very useful to gather significant information, observation and asking informal questions were the main methods I used in contexts where Maya is mainly spoken. I carried out observation in Mérida but also in several towns I visited throughout the Yucatán Peninsula. Sharing most of my stay in Yucatán with a family for whom Maya is still part of their daily communicative interactions gave me the opportunity to observe language choice among its members. It bears mention that many Maya families, due to work or education, share their time between Mérida and the villages of origin where some relatives may still live. Therefore, a good number of people regularly travel back and forth and live 'on the move', as it were, between urban centres and villages located in rural areas. This has important consequences for language maintenance, as Mérida, the municipality with the greatest number of Maya speakers, is a determinant site for language shift to Spanish due to discrimination and marginalisation (Castellanos 2003; Iturriaga 2010). The workshops organised as part of the *Proyecto de Revitalización, Mantenimiento y*

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13 These works do not focus on language socialisation, though. Ideologies of language socialisation and specifically language acquisition play a key role in language revitalisation processes (Friedman 2011) but this is still a little researched area (see Canché 2005 for a case study in that direction).

Desarrollo Lingüístico y Cultural, which I review in chapter 7, were other particularly enlightening contexts of observation.

Moreover, I did observation during several events that revolved around Maya language and culture, as listed in appendix B. Thus, the presentation of a book that won the Nezahualcóyotl prize (the most important award for literature written in Mexican indigenous languages); the discussion of a recent law specifically drafted for the Maya communities of Yucatán; and the celebration of the International Day for Indigenous Peoples (2011) were some privileged occasions to observe Maya language use and discourses about its situation. All in all, I was immersed in various contexts of research that ranged from festive occasions to institutional events.

Finally, writing fieldnotes was also an important part of doing ethnographic work. Fieldnotes are crucial ethnographic products not only because they help us to retrieve information but also because they are essential to understand how we interpret and make sense of events and situations in the field. I concur with Blommaert and Dong (2010: 37) that the epistemic value inherent in the process of writing fieldnotes should not be underestimated. Moreover, in contrast with the highly intrusive method of recording, taking notes during a research event is always seen as less disturbing and can even yield different kinds of data from participants.

Complementary research methods included taking photographs and what Blommaert and Dong (2010: 58) call "collecting rubbish", that is, gathering all sort of objects that one comes across in the field such as newspaper clippings, photographs, flyers, books and booklets, advertisements, etc., some of which I have used in this thesis to illustrate several points I make about the promotion of Maya. Photographs of the linguistic landscape of Mérida, for instance, were useful to suggest further avenues of research that have lately gained attention in sociolinguistic research (Shohamy and Gorter 2008; Shohamy et al. 2010). As for advertisements, in chapter 6 I include a radio advertisement which is based on a comparison between Standard Mexican Spanish and Yucatec Spanish. Finally, two further examples will suffice to show the usefulness of "collecting rubbish". On the one hand, I got hold of a brochure of the International Mother Language Day (2010) promoted by UNESCO worldwide, which included about fifty events to be celebrated in Mérida over the course of one month. This shows that in Yucatán that International Day has become a central institutional activity to promote the Maya language and culture. As I explain below, it has also helped to spread and consolidate the term 'mother tongue' to refer to indigenous languages in Mexico. On the other hand, leaflets with religious contents in Maya are easy to come by in Yucatán

and are a sign of the headway that evangelist groups are making in that region. The linguistic attitudes of these groups towards Maya needs further research because they often publish material in Maya with their own orthographic norms. Last but not least, social media, especially the use of Facebook, have been fundamental not only to observe language practices on a daily basis from a distance but also to keep in contact and exchange ideas and discussions with Maya friends and colleagues. In the next chapter I discuss the theoretical framework and key terminology of this thesis.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework and Discussion of Key Terminology

2.1   Introduction

In this chapter I present the theoretical framework and some general terminology upon which this thesis is built. First, I look at the broad concepts of discourse and language ideologies and also at the fields of language policy and planning and language revitalisation. Then, to situate this research within global trends of language abandonment, I delve into the central concept of endangerment and review scholarly works on the causes, assessments and reactions to the current decline of language diversity worldwide. I further analyse recent critiques of language endangerment based on its ideological and discursive foundations. Finally, in the last part of this chapter I discuss the key terms of revalorisation and *rescate*, which are recurrent in the Yucatecan context when exploring the current sociolinguistic situation of the Maya language.

2.2   Ideologies and Discourses

Both ideology and discourse are highly complex notions which form a fundamental part of the analytical framework of the social sciences. On the one hand, disciplines such as conversational analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and the ethnography of communication have all taken up the concept of discourse, broadly understood as language use in social interaction, as a central unit of analysis. In this thesis, I will mainly draw on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), since both ideology and discourse figure prominently in its approach to analyse text and talk. Because of their intrinsic heterogeneous nature, I use discourses and ideologies in the plural as intertwined systems of thought and beliefs that present particular representations of social life, in this particular case the process of Maya language promotion in Yucatán. Discourses have been defined as "semiotic elements of social practice" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 38), which include not only language, both spoken and written, but also non verbal communication and visual images. Although this thesis is primarily based on the spoken accounts of a group of activists and some key official texts, I have also included a few images that I found particularly telling to understand current efforts to revalorise Maya.

On the other hand, ideology has been a central concept in social disciplines. Woorlard (1998: 5-9) summarises several strands that include Marxist approaches, the sociology of knowledge, the work on hegemony by Gramsci, and French structuralism,

among others.[14] From a socio-cognitive perspective on CDA, van Dijk (2011: 380) has written that ideologies are "general systems of ideas shared by the members of a social group, ideas that will influence their interpretation of social events and situations and control their discourses and other social practices as group members". Theorists of CDA have noted that discursive practices can have ideological effects and can be used to reinforce the status quo or to contest it and transform it (Fairclough et al. 2011: 358). Relatedly, ideologies are discursive constructions and it is through discourses that the contents of ideologies are often expressed.

Taking the above definitions into account, it becomes clear that the concepts of discourse and ideology are mutually constitutive and, along with power and hegemony, can help us understand how social inequalities and exclusion are produced and reproduced through semiotic practices, and particularly through linguistic practices (see Blommaert 2005; Flores Farfán and Holzscheiter 2010). As I will show in this thesis, the concept of hegemony is especially convenient when looking at the ways in which discourses of language revalorisation among activists replicate the discursive practices, in a taken-for-granted and consensual manner, that stem from official institutions. One of my arguments in this thesis is that salient discourses among some activists and intellectuals regarding language revalorisation replicate hegemonic discourses, namely produced by consent rather than coercion, which have been used for the reproduction of dominant languages. This creates tensions in the process of language revalorisation that I address in the subsequent chapters. Finally, Bourdieu's (1991) work on the relationship of language, social position and symbolic value will be relevant in the discussion on standardisation and institutionalisation of Maya, especially in the educational context.

As for language ideologies, I will draw on the research carried out by North American linguistic anthropologists (see Schieffelin et al 1998; Kroskrity 2000; Kroskrity and Field 2009) because it focuses on the ways in which ideologies are played out in specific contexts of language contact and conflict, and, specifically, on ensuing processes of language minorisation and abandonment. One of the first definitions was proposed by Silverstein as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (1979: 193). A decade later, Irvine wrote that language ideologies are "the cultural system of ideas

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[14] Chilean sociologist Jorge Larraín (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010) has written four volumes on the concept of ideology from several approaches which include Marxism, post-Marxism (Gramsci and Althusser), irrationalism, historicism and positivism (Nietzsche, Mannheim and Durkheim), and poststructuralism and postmodernism (Laclau, Lyotard and Foucault).

about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (1989: 255).[15] A further definition has been proposed by Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006) who write that language ideologies are "ingrained, unquestioned beliefs about the way the world is, the way it should be, and the way it has to be with respect to language". Language ideologies refer in this thesis to the set of (often unconscious and naturalised) ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes about language and languages which are embedded within specific historical, economic and socio-political contexts. Language ideologies can be brought to the surface in productive and critical ways through ethnographic fieldwork and are of the utmost importance to understand language minorisation processes and the reproduction of hegemonic discourses, as I show in subsequent chapters. It is important to note that language ideologies are more often than not part and parcel of broader sociopolitical struggles and conflicts. In the Yucatecan case discourses of Maya language promotion, as I will emphasise, are bound up with demands for official and public ethnocultural and linguistic recognition of Maya speakers.

In sum, the approach to discourses and ideologies that I take up in this thesis is based on the various semiotic ways which are used to conceptualise and represent an aspect of social life, namely the revalorisation of Maya within the context of language policy and planning in Mexico and Yucatán. My analysis will concentrate on the themes that emerged both in the interviewees' accounts of the current situation of the Maya language and also in some official documents produced by international, national and regional institutions, rather than on a structural or pragmatic analysis of linguistic features of the primary data. This approach will help me tease out the recurring themes that surfaced in the primary data and analyse how the revalorisation process is discursively constructed by activists and intellectuals in Yucatán. I maintain that activists' discourses form a web of interrelated topics that has brought about a language ideological debate, that is, a debate "in which language is a central topic, a motif, a target, in which language ideologies are being articulated, formed, amended, enforced" (Blommaert 1999: 1). What this language debate is indexing beyond the promotion of Maya is indeed a central research question that I address in this thesis. To situate

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15 Schiffman's (1996) notion of 'linguistic culture', which arguably avoids the politically loaded concepts of ideology and interest, goes along similar lines. Schiffman defines 'linguistic culture' as "the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language" (1996: 5).

discourses of language revalorisation in Yucatán it is necessary to present first how academic research has dealt with the topic of language loss in the last decades.

2.3   Language Policy and Planning

The issue of language loss has been tackled by several disciplines of the social sciences. Scholars from anthropology, sociology, psychology and, of course, linguistics have contributed to build and consolidate a field of study concerned with the disappearance of languages. This thesis is mainly informed by two broad scientific fields that look at the interrelations between language, culture and society, that is, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Within these two fields, which often share both theoretical frameworks and research methods and have historically criss-crossed each other (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 2008), I shall mainly draw on language policy and planning, also known as language management (Spolsky 2009), and on language ideologies. Below I review them in turn to point out relevant concepts in this thesis.

As for language policy and planning, Ricento (2009) divides the modern history of this discipline into three distinct periods. The first period corresponds to the Post World War II era, when language policy and planning activities were closely tied, in the context of postcolonialism, to solving 'problems' in nation-building in so-called 'developing' countries, particularly in Africa and Asia (see e.g. the telling title of Fishman et al. 1968; also Rubin and Jernudd 1971); the second period was marked by awareness of the weaknesses of that model, when policy makers realised that, ironically, language policies tended too often to reinforce and perpetuate social inequalities (see critiques by Tollefson 1991; Williams 1992; Junyent 1998); the current third phase is dominated by the language rights and the language ecology paradigms in which the concepts of ideology, ecology, and agency are central.

An oft-cited definition of language planning is given by Cooper. He writes that "language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes" (1989: 45). His emphasis on social change as the driving force behind language planning is an idea of paramount importance in presenting both the current and historical sociolinguistic situation in Yucatán and in developing my own argument about the current limitations of promoting Maya in that region. Drawing on previous models of language planning, which had already distinguished between status planning and corpus planning (Haugen 1983), Cooper (1989) spells out the different areas and steps for planning and intervention. They consist of corpus planning (working on the

forms of the language), status planning (expanding the functions of the language), and acquisition planning (often synonymous with language-in-education planning). The areas of prestige planning (Haarmann 1990), also known as image planning (Ager 2005), and discourse planning (Lo Bianco 2005) have been later suggested as further components to Cooper's framework.

Language policy and language planning, terms usually conflated in the literature, are firmly established in the sociolinguistic literature at least since the seminal work of Rubin and Jernudd (1971). As noted, the focus of language policy and planning on 'developing' nations and modernisation, its bias towards the supposedly neutral technical aspects of planning, its positivistic conceptualisation of multilingualism as a 'problem' that needed to be addressed, and the eschewal of its ideological and political implications are all reasons for the critiques of the early model (Williams 1992; Tollefson 2002; Baldauf 2005; Lo Bianco 2005).[16] Development and modernisation are in fact recurrent concepts of institutional discourses on indigenous peoples in Mexico, especially in relation with the process of nation-building. It is not a coincidence that two key institutions in this thesis, the *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI) and the *Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya* (INDEMAYA), include the word 'development' (*desarrolllo*) in their names. When referring to languages and cultures, however, the emphasis on development entailed in language planning may be more of a hindrance than an advantage for language revitalisation. Thus, comparing the 'development' of English and Swahili in Africa, Blommaert writes that "the metaphors of development and modernization impose a grid on thinking about language, which implies an eternal backlog for the 'non-developed' languages. It is the worst possible frame for 'developing' a language" (1996: 211).

Another important feature of classic language planning was its overwhelming macrosociolinguistic perspective and the implementation of institutional top down policies, which may clash with organic language practices on the ground. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), also Baldauf (2005, 2006), have drawn attention to the largely neglected meso and micro levels, which often correspond with regional and municipal institutions respectively. In Mexico it is mainly at the federal and state levels that institutional policies are devised. The municipality, which is the closest administration

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16 In Catalan sociolinguistics, from its very conception in the late 1960s, language policy and planning was inextricably linked to sociopolitical issues owing to its early development against the backdrop of a dictatorship. The consideration of linguistic conflict as a type of social conflict; the early critique of a consensual notion of diglossia; and the rejection of unilateral bilingualism, which was seen as a stepping stone to language shift to a dominant language, are examples of its early militant and questioning nature (Boix and Vila 1998: 35).

to citizens, has very little say in their design. While municipal administrations are in daily contact with the general public, there is a dearth of case studies worldwide on the topic of language policy at the municipal level (Backhaus 2012: 226).[17] Owing to the varying vitality of Maya in the municipalities that make up the Peninsula, this local level of language policy might be particularly suitable in Yucatán, were it not for the highly rigid, vertical and centralised political system of Mexico and its language policies. However, oftentimes municipal language policies do not comply with language policy schemes devised at higher political levels (Backhaus 2012). Therefore, it is not uncommon that decisions stemming from vertical language planning are ignored at the local level, a point made by Patthey-Chávez (1994) almost two decades ago for Mexico. In short, in a highly centralised nation-state such as Mexico, where corporatism, co-optation, clientelism and, in the specific case of indigenous peoples, paternalism are deeply ingrained in the political system, I argue that top down language policy and planning has important pitfalls for effective language revitalisation.

Although the language policy and planning framework is still widely used, it has been reworked and adjusted with an emerging alternative approach known as language management (Neustupný 1978; Jernudd and Neustupný 1987). According to Jernudd and Nekvapil, language management theory "subsumes language planning as one type of behaviour toward language and describes it as language management organized at a macro social level" (2012: 33). Other leading scholars in the field (Kaplan and Baldauf 2005; Spolsky 2009) have also made use of this more encompassing framework. Spolsky (2009) has developed his work on language management around the central concept of domain. He suggests that language management is a better label than language planning because the former is a more dynamic approach based on modifiable strategies rather than plans. Spolsky (2009: 4) spells out the conceptual triad of language management as language beliefs (the value and status assigned to named varieties); linguistic practices on the ground (actual linguistic behaviour); and management (efforts to modify beliefs or practices that range from the individual to the nation-state). This framework has the advantage of foregrounding ideology as a central component and bridging the gap between the different levels of policy implementation. However, a caveat is in order with the term 'management', since Western governments may negatively conceive of multilingualism within their borders as a 'problem' that needs to be 'managed' (Hogan-Brun et al 2009).

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17 Backhaus (2012) maintains that this administrative level has been essential to inform language policies of a decentralised nation such as Finland.

2.4 Language Maintenance, Revitalisation, and Documentation

Against the broader field of language policy and planning, the concept of language maintenance has been present in the sociolinguistic literature for decades. Hinton defines it as "efforts to support or strengthen a language which is still vital, i.e. which is still acquiring young speakers, but where incipient decline is starting to be apparent" (2011: 291). A related central term for this thesis is language revitalisation, which applies to "the phenomenon of attempting to bring endangered languages back to some level of use within their communities (and elsewhere) after a period of reduction in use" (Hinton 2011: 291). [18]

It is useful to complement Hinton's definition of revitalisation with the one given by Kendall King (2001). She writes that 'language revitalization encompasses efforts not only to expand the linguistic system of an embattled minority language, but also to bring the language into new domains for new uses among new types of speakers" (2001: 4). King's definition is important because of the recognition of an existing social struggle and also, unlike Hinton's definition and Fishman's Reversing Language Shift framework, because it is forward-thinking.

As a reaction to language loss, both revitalisation and documentation programmes, each of them with a different emphasis, have burgeoned worldwide (Hinton and Hale 2001).[19] Apart from the introduction of minorised languages in the formal education system, other projects to revitalise languages have been put into practice in more informal settings such as language nests, language camps, and the master-apprentice language learning programme (Hinton 2011).[20]

Documentary linguistics, which has a long tradition dating back at least to missionary linguistics, has become a prime subdiscipline in the field of endangered languages. Language documentation is "the creation, annotation, preservation and dissemination of transparent records of a language" (Woodbury 2011: 159). Although in some cases there is not a clear-cut distinction between the aims of language revitalisation and language documentation, academic research has given priority to programmes that focus on description and documentation, while more proactive

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18 Several other labels have been coined to name the efforts to promote languages that are being abandoned: reversing language shift, language revival, language renewal, language reclamation (particularly used in the Australian context), language restoration, and language reproduction (Tsunoda 2006: 168).

19 See Dobrin et al (2007) for a list of academic to language endangerment responses such as training programmes, archives, and organisations.

20 See also Tsunoda (2006: 200) for a list of other types of language revitalisation efforts.

revitalisation approaches have not been so common.[21] Notable exceptions are the examples collected in Hinton and Hale (2001).

When languages are on the verge of extinction and only a few speakers are left, language documentation and description might be the only possible intervention before they completely disappear. This approach has been called 'salvage documentation' (UNESCO 2003: 13) and it is often assumed that once an endangered language is recorded and well-documented it may be revived by future generations (see Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 45-48 for Cornish; Amery 2004 for Kaurna; Hinton 2001 for Miami). Salvage documentation, which has sparked hot debates among sociolinguists, is not a relevant approach to the situation of Maya in Yucatán owing to its still relatively robust demographic base and high vitality in some areas, as I show in chapter 3.

Furthermore, I will generally make use of the term 'minorised' language instead of the most widespread concept of 'minority language'. Social scientists have used the idea of minorisation to look at phenomena such as racism (Wieviorka 1994; Wallerstein 1991) but it is also a productive concept to represent the dynamic process whereby the use of languages becomes increasingly reduced due to socio-political oppression. In this sense, Patrick has defined language minorisation as "a social process occurring at local, regional, national, and supranational levels that constructs minority groups with less political, economic, and social power than some dominant groups" (2010: 176). Her emphasis is not on demographic factors but on unequal sociopolitical relations. Patrick goes on to write that "[d]ominant or minority status is thus attributed not on the basis of numbers of speakers, but rather on the basis of the social positioning of particular social groups within a hierarchical social structure". Although I am aware that the concept of 'minority' is an integral part of international human rights law (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 2008), I prefer to use 'minorised' because it highlights the ongoing unequal power relationships that affect speakers and that impinge on the use or abandonment of their languages. Also, I shall frequently use the term 'language abandonment', since it puts the emphasis on speakers' agency rather than on languages. I return below to the issue of choice in processes of language abandonment.[22]

To conclude this section, the notions of legitimation and institutionalisation need to be explained because they are also linked with language promotion and have long been part of sociological analysis (Berger and Luckmann 1966). These two concepts are

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21 See for instance the programme on language documentation and description at SOAS, University of London: http://www.soas.ac.uk/linguistics/elap/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].
22 The terms 'minoritised' language and 'minoritisation'are also used in the specialised literature.

important in language policies of minority language production and reproduction in Europe (Nelde et al 1996; Williams 2005). On the one hand, legitimation focuses on raising the status of subordinated languages and encompasses different areas of language planning, as spelled out above. Again this backdrop, language standardisation and granting official status have been widespread strategies undertaken by governmental institutions to imbue so-called 'national' languages with legitimacy (Milroy 2001). On the other hand, legitimation usually goes hand in hand with institutionalisation of a highly standardised language within the civil society, particularly through education (Bourdieu 1991). Institutionalisation is closely related to standardisation and refers to the process whereby "the language variety comes to be accepted, or 'taken for granted', in a wide range of social, cultural and linguistic domains or contexts, both formal and informal" (May 2012a: 161). I shall highlight the contradictions and tensions that emerge out of institutional language policies based on these concepts and which form part of nation-building efforts. In the next section I look at the causes of language loss first and then I trace the conceptual evolution from maintenance and shift to endangerment and revitalisation that took place during the last decades of the twentieth century. Both language endangerment and language revitalisation have become an ever more central area of sociolinguistic research.

2.5   Language Endangerment and Language Death

Language endangerment occurs when there is a loss of speakers or when a language is used in a diminishing number of domains. Language endangerment is a matter of gradation and should be conceived as a continuum, a dynamic process, rather than a definite fixed state. Tsunoda (2006: 14) advises about the useful distinction between language disuse in different domains, on the one hand, and linguistic structural simplification and reduction, on the other. Different terminology is applied in either case. Generally, obsolescence, attrition, degeneration, decay, and disintegration are all terms chosen to emphasise language structure rather than function (Dorian 1989; Hill 2001).

Several authors have attempted to list the set of factors that explain the related terms of language shift (Edwards 1992), endangerment (Tsunoda 2006), and death (Crystal 2000). Thus, Edwards (1992) presented a comprehensive taxonomy with thirty-three questions that compose an array of ethnic minority language contexts of language shift. Drawing on Edwards' typology, Grenoble and Whaley (1998: 22) proposed their "typology of language endangerment". This typology is based on both macro-variables

"indicative of features which are shared across large numbers of endangerment situations", such as language policies, regional autonomy or federal support; and micro-variables "which are unique to specific speech communities" (1998: 28), such as language attitudes, human resources, and the economic organisation of a specific group, to name but a few key aspects they underline. Acknowledging that literacy is one of the most controversial issues in language revitalisation, Grenoble and Whaley (1998: 32) give it a prominent role as one of the micro-variables they put forward. I analyse in chapter 5 the contradictions that promoting literacy in Maya raises in the Yucatecan case. What can be observed from the terminology suggested by Grenoble and Whaley is that, apart from the ever larger set of factors considered, in the late 1990s the focus is firmly established on 'endangerment', 'loss' and 'death', rather than on 'shift', as I discuss below in more detail.

In a similar vein, Tsunoda (2006: 53-63) spells out a set of decisive causes of language death. The causes he mentions are: dispossession of the land; relocation of the people; breakdown in isolation and proximity to towns; dispersion of the population; mixing of speakers of different languages; socio-economic oppression linked to economic deprivation, exploitation, oppressive domination, etc.; low status and low prestige of the group and its language and, consequently, language attitudes such as denigration, shame, stigma; assimilation policies; relative lack of indigenous literature; social development (modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation); spread of religion; and culture contact and clash. However, many of these factors, as King (2001: 15) notes, are *post hoc* explanations stemming from a macrosociolinguistic perspective of language shift rather than indispensable conditions for shift to occur. Detailed ethnographic work at the microlevel has shown that it is local ideologies of language socialisation rather than the type of macrosociological factors mentioned above that actually trigger language shift (Kulick 1992). Although larger socioeconomic processes should not be overlooked, the focus must be placed on the way speakers interpret and cope with social transformations such as urbanisation and migration (Kulick 1992: 9). It will become apparent in the next chapter that urbanisation, and particularly migration to Mérida and the Maya Riviera, plays a vital role in language shift to Spanish not only because of the dominant use of that language in urban settings but also because of widespread discrimination associated with speaking Maya in cities. Therefore, the primary causes of language shift are usually found at the intersection between social, political and economic processes and local linguistic ideologies. In this sense, Flores Farfán (1999) has looked at the ways in which the strengthening of linguistic and

cultural awareness among Nahua people in the Balsas region of central Mexico was a direct response to the government's attempt to build a dam which threatened the very survival of the region. As he states:

> De cualquier manera, está claro que la amenaza de desaparición de la región ha tenido un efecto revitalizador y emblemático de la lengua y cultura nahuas, mucho más eficaz que cualquier acción de política del lenguaje implementada por el Estado, incluyendo los proyectos de educación "bilingües" (1999: 68).

Therefore, political and economic claims, which are not directly related to language revitalisation, may have deeper consequences on language use than governmental language policies. Worthy of note is that, whereas many of the demands made by indigenous communities are significantly related to the management of natural resources, land rights and the protection of the environment, language is often a common site for social struggles (Cameron 1995).

In the next sections I look in more detail at the evolution of the field of language endangerment and explore some recent influential frameworks.

Evolution of the field: obsolescence, shift, endangerment, and death

During the first decades of the twentieth century linguistic anthropologists such as Boas and Sapir established the basis for linguistic fieldwork in North America with descriptions of what they called obsolescent languages. Their interest mainly focused on finding linguistic structures and language variation through description and documentation of native languages. The Boasian hallmark of creating texts, grammars and dictionaries laid the foundations for the current field known as 'documentary linguistics' (Woodbury 2011: 162).[23] The work of Swadesh, a student of Sapir's, furthered the field of language obsolescence by paying attention not only to structural changes in languages but also to the fact that 'non-linguistic factors' were the cause of language death (Swadesh 1948).[24]

Research on language contact, maintenance and shift has formed the basis for the subsequent growth of the field of language endangerment and revitalisation. Within a structuralist framework Weinreich (1953) presented a set of essential phenomena that resulted from language contact situations. While previous study of language

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23 It can be argued that in fact the trilogy composed of 'grammar, texts and dictionary' dates back to the production of missionary linguistic work in Latin America after the conquest (Smith Stark 2010).
24 In the late 1930s Swadesh became advisor of the Mexican government, which was at the time implementing some pilot projects aimed at introducing Mexican indigenous languages in education within the framework of transitional bilingualism to Spanish (Heath 1972: 118).

obsolescence carried out by North American anthropologists had mainly centred on the theoretical analysis of linguistic features, Weinreich divided contact phenomena into two groups: strictly linguistic phenomena, with an emphasis on the analysis of 'interferences', an ideologically loaded term with negative nuances that can lead to language shift; and non-linguistic phenomena related to sociocultural and psychological circumstances. The emphasis on language structure and on the social conditions of language use has given way to an array of labels to describe processes of language loss.[25]

An influential figure in the field of language maintenance and shift has been Joshua Fishman. In much of his work he has analysed bilingualism, diglossia, and intergenerational transmission as key aspects to understand language maintenance and shift. Fishman (1991) developed the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), a theoretical framework divided into eight stages, which roughly coincide with domains of use, where intervention is needed in order to reverse language shift and secure intergenerational linguistic continuity. The achievement of stable diglossia, namely, a clear-cut functional compartmentalisation of two languages in contact (prior ideological clarification), is at the heart of Fishman's Reversing Language Shift (RLS) framework. The concept of ideological clarification, closely linked to diglossia, has remained undertheorised in Fishman's work. It is in later work by Kroskrity (2009a) that we can find a concise and clear definition of that concept. Kroskrity describes ideological clarification as:

> The process of identifying issues of language ideological contestation within a heritage language community, including both beliefs and feelings that are indigenous to that community and those introduced by outsiders (such as linguists and government officials), that can negatively impact community efforts to successfully engage in language maintenance and renewal (Kroskrity 2009a: 73).

This is a useful concept for this thesis since I believe that 'ideological clarification' is needed in Yucatán to untangle the tensions and contradictions that arise from the ongoing process of language revalorisation.

Also significant for subsequent chapters is Fishman's (1991) warning that, too often, the role of the school as the central institution for minority language reproduction

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25 Apart from language endangerment and death, Tsunoda (2006: 13) mentions language decay, decline, demise, displacement, erosion, extinction, and imperilment.

has been overvalued. This is an issue of utmost importance within the ideological framework of Maya language promotion in Yucatán as I examine in chapter 5. The theoretical approach of RLS was revisited ten years later in an edited book which includes eighteen case studies of linguistic communities around the world (Fishman 2001). The GIDS scale continues to be an influential model for assessing language shift in Mexico (Hidalgo 2006). Following Fishman's (1967) combinative framework, the term 'diglossia with bilingualism' has been used to portray the sociolinguistic situation in Yucatán (Pfeiler 1988; Pfeiler and Zámišová 2006). Also, Linda King, using the somewhat redundant term of 'ideological diglossia' (1994: 142), has characterised the sociolinguistic situation in Yucatán as 'stable bilingualism' (1994: 97). Against this background, I argue that diglossia is always ideologically driven and that 'bilingualism' is a highly dynamic and unstable process in Yucatán (and beyond), owing to rapid language shift to Spanish and the emergence of other languages such as English in the sociolinguistic ecology of Yucatán.

While Fishman's model has the advantage of being proactive and focusing on processes rather than on the outcome of shift (usually conceived of as 'death'), it is not without its critics, especially as regards the concept of diglossia. Romaine, for instance, points out the need to stress the unequal relations of power implicit in diglossic situations, an aspect often overlooked in classic conceptions of the term. Romaine sees diglossia as "something to be overcome rather than to be attained" (2006: 452) and underscores the ideological bias of Fishman's model, owing to the European ethnocentricity implied in the RLS theory. For Romaine, the very name of the RLS paradigm is "misleading as it seems to suggest that we are undoing or reversing the past when it is obvious that we cannot go back into time" (2006: 444). The central concept of *rescate* in Yucatán is reminiscent of this idea of looking back which is implied in reversing language shift. Finally, Hinton (2003: 53) has also critiqued the GIDS scale on the grounds that some of the stages, for instance those that focus on functional extension in the mass media, the work sphere and governmental services, are irrelevant to many indigenous languages. Additionally, she highlights the fact that literacy is given too much prominence, which is also problematic for languages mainly used in their oral form.

Against this backdrop, the present situation of many subordinated communities seems to call for the management of plurilingual situations in which, more often than not, the dominant language fulfils key functions that minorised speakers are eager to acquire and where hybrid varieties are common. It is not, thus, a return to a "glorious

past where their language was vibrant", as Romaine (2006: 446) puts it, that language activists must look at, but rather at a more complex and dynamic sociolinguistic situation where, while adding the dominant language to growing linguistic repertoires, local languages can still keep meaningful functions and, ideally, expand to new domains. These critiques are important to understand the Maya case since the idea of the 'glorious past' and an emphasis on literacy figure prominently in the discourses of language promotion I gathered in Yucatán, particularly among intellectuals.

In a nutshell, diglossia may fail to adequately describe ever more complex situations of language contact. In Mexico, Flores Farfán (1999: 260) notes that the concept of diglossia falls short to explain the highly variable use and the often contradictory relationships between Nahuatl and Spanish. Linguistic variability is a resource that plurilingual speakers use strategically, depending on the negotiations that occur in their social interactions. Therefore, it is both the context and the deployment of multiple identifications by speakers that often determines language choice and use rather than a fixed and bounded concept of domain, as proposed by the RLS framework. In the Nahuatl case, language syncretism, which is a consequence of long-lasting contact, is intimately linked with strategies of cultural resistance and assimilation (Hill and Hill 1986). A similar situation obtains among Mazahua speakers in Mexico. As Dora Pellicer writes, "in those [Mazahua] communities where language contact is extensive, speakers tend to develop plural identities, which seek conciliation through diversity" (2006: 348). In Yucatán, I was also able to observe complex and situational language use, such as code-switching or code-mixing, based on the linguistic resources of bilingual (Maya-Spanish) or trilingual (Maya-Spanish-English) speakers. In chapter 7 I shall give examples of plurilingual practices that challenge sociolinguistic concepts based on too rigid and discrete conceptualisations of the notions of language and domain, as is the case of classic diglossia.

Despite these critiques, since the mid-1960s the work of Fishman, theoretically built around the sociology of language, has furthered the field of language maintenance and shift. Much research on this area of sociolinguistics has produced specific case studies and has widened theory development by focusing on the set of variables that impinge on language shift. These studies took either a sociopolitical standpoint, which includes immigrant groups (Fishman 1966), or a socio-psychological perspective (Giles 1977). Later research on language maintenance and shift, and more specifically on 'reversing language shift' (Fishman 2001), has grouped languages spoken by immigrants (e.g. Puerto Rican Spanish in New York and Greek in Australia), along with

languages of national minorities (e.g. Frisian in Friesland and Catalan in Catalonia) and indigenous languages (e.g. Otomí in Mexico and Quechua in South America). Nonetheless, Kymlicka's (1995) distinction between national and indigenous minorities (with a historical settlement in a particular territory and minorised in their own regions) on the one hand, and ethnic minorities (immigrants who have recently settled in another country) on the other, is important because the causes of shift to the dominant language and, especially, the struggle for language rights may be of a very different nature in these two categories.[26]

In the sociolinguistic literature of the 1970s the use of biological metaphors to assess situations of language loss became salient (Dressler and Wodak-Leodoter 1977; Giles 1977). The pioneering work of Nancy Dorian (1981) expanded research on language obsolescence and helped to establish a distinct field of sociolinguistics in which the concepts of death, endangerment and, later on, revitalisation would be central. In Dorian's (1989) edited book the terms 'obsolescence' and 'death' were jointly used in the title to reflect, for instance, on the structural consequences of language death in Mesoamerican languages (Campbell and Muntzel 1989), and on the social functions of particular grammatical features of Cupeño and Mexicano (Hill 1989). Along with Dorian, Jane Hill had also been a trailblazer in the study of language death. Her work on Uto-aztecan languages (see Hill 1978, 1983) and, together with Kenneth Hill, on syncretic uses of Mexicano (1986) still stands as a fundamental reference to understand processes of language shift to Spanish in central Mexico. I shall draw on the Hills' seminal work in chapter 6, which is devoted to purism.

The wake-up call of the early 1990s

Whereas the works mentioned above were building a growing literature on language shift and loss, it was not until the beginning of the 1990s that linguists brought more actively to the fore the issue of language death and called attention to the scope of the critical situation of the world's linguistic diversity. Significantly, some of these linguists, such as Ken Hale and Colette Grinevald, had been doing fieldwork in Latin America, where indigenous movements were gaining strength (Craig 1992; Jackson and

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26 This classification is not without problems and raises questions such as: how does one deal with diasporic groups? Or after how long can an originally settler group, for instance the French in Quebec or the Spanish in Latin America, be considered an autochthonous community?

Warren 2005; Postero and Zamosc 2005).[27] The introduction of the topic of language endangerment at the 1991 Linguistic Society of America (LSA) annual meeting and subsequent contributions from that seminar published in the journal *Language* was a turning point. In the seminal article entitled 'The world's languages in crisis', Krauss (1992) estimated the disappearance of up to 90% of the approximately 6,000 of the world's languages by the end of the twenty-first century. This has been a highly influential statement, although several sociolinguists have criticised the difficulties involved in estimating the scope of global linguistic homogenisation and Krauss's alarming prognosis (Whaley 2003; Mackey 2003).

Not only did the collection of articles in *Language* put the issue of language endangerment on the linguists' agenda but they also triggered an ethical debate within sociolinguistics about the position of linguists working with endangered languages. Thus, in the face of the dire situation of the world's languages, the articles in *Language* spurred a discussion that showed opposite stances. Peter Ladefoged (1992) and Nancy Dorian (1993) represent contrasting positions in this debate: on the one hand, Ladefoged defended a supposedly neutral descriptive approach of linguists to language endangerment as outsiders; on the other hand, Dorian called for involvement and intervention.

Indeed, either taking an active position of intervention or a passive one (a sort of *laissez faire* role) are political positions. Ethical implications associated with the work of the social scientist are unavoidable, particularly as regards endangered languages, which more often than not are spoken in contexts of sociopolitical and economic marginalisation and subordination. Writing on the supposedly apolitical considerations of the linguists' work, Dorian argued that:

> The implication is that apolitical positions can be found and adopted. Scientists of many stripes like to consider their undertakings apolitical and their professional activities objective and impartial. In actuality, linguistic salvage work which consists solely of 'record[ing] for posterity' certain structural features of a threatened small language is inevitably a political act, just as any other act touching that language would be (1993: 575).

Ladefoged's non-interventionist approach is not an isolated case amongst linguists who devote their research on endangered languages. Ethical issues still lingers in the

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27 See for instance Grinevald's (2003) account of the organisation of the 1991 LSA meeting. In Catalonia Junyent (1992) had also explored the issue of language endangerment since the beginning of the 1990s. In 1992 the Grup d'Estudis de Llengües Amenaçades-GELA (Study Group on Endangered Languages) was set up at the Linguistics Department of the University of Barcelona.

research agenda on endangered languages. More recently, Newman (2003) considered language loss as a 'hopeless cause'. He criticised the view of 'linguists as social workers' (2003: 6) and called for the impending need to do linguistic fieldwork because "the disappearance of a language without documentation is a huge scientific loss" (2003: 2). Along these lines, Newman and Ratliff remind us in their text on linguistic fieldwork that:

> While acknowledging the difficulties in collecting reliable and comprehensible basic field data, we want to stress the vital importance of doing so, not just as an end in itself, but for the advancement of the linguist's various goals, including the elucidation of Universal Grammar, the discovery of principled variation across different types of languages, and the reconstruction of earlier forms of language (2001: 1).

They go on to write that:

> Unlike anthropologists, we do not regard language as a key that allows us to unlock the secrets of culture as the object of study; for us it *is* the object and therefore, perhaps, something to hold at arm's length for the sake of scientific objectivity (2001: 5, their emphasis).

According to these authors, it is clear who sets the research agenda and priorities when conducting linguistic fieldwork, particularly when language theory and description are the main goals. With these views in mind, Speas maintains the somewhat radical position that language revitalisation processes do not actually need linguists since "[they] have a very specialized training in the analysis of language and are generally fascinated by languages, but it is not clear that their skills are the skills that a community needs for revitalizing a language" (2009: 23). Some linguists, therefore, see language as a decontextualised object of academic study that allows for expressions of allegedly apolitical positions of objectivity, while others consider it as a dynamic sociocultural and political phenomenon. There is an uneasy relationship between these contrasting approaches to languages and the scientific disciplines that support them.

The purpose of this critique is to highlight the shortcomings of linguistic fieldwork, conducted *by* and *for* the researcher, which focuses exclusively on languages as autonomous and independent systems from speakers. Several authors have pointed out a clash between the linguists' interest (mainly linguistic data collection and analysis) and what communities request, which is often pedagogical expertise and production of teaching material (Gerdts 1998; Dwyer 2006; Rice 2006; Dobrin et al

2007; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009; Austin and Sallabank 2011). Furthermore, it is worth noting that while legitimising tools, the real impact of grammars, dictionaries and texts on language revitalisation, the 'big three' usual outcomes of linguistic fieldwork (Rice 2009: 39), is doubtful. This is particularly the case in contexts where illiteracy in the indigenous language is the norm, as in Yucatán.[28]

Other social scientists (Edwards 1985; de Swaan 2004) have expressed the view of language loss as a process of social Darwinism.[29] Along Ladefoged's arguments noted above, de Swaan (2004: 568) considers it 'presumptuous' to advise a particular linguistic community about language shift. He questions the term language 'death' and prefers to use language 'abandonment', putting the emphasis on the speakers' will to give up their languages. According to de Swaan, the causes of language loss may be "bitterly tragic" but also "rather gratifying". He maintains that "it is therefore inappropriate to discuss the abandonment of languages invariably in mournful terms" (2004: 569). In short, he regards concern about the protection of endangered languages as "linguistic sentimentalism" (2004: 571).

I use the term 'language abandonment' throughout this thesis because I believe that the emphasis must be put on speakers' agency rather than languages. Clearly, it is not languages that shift on their own but people who decide to abandon them. However, while admittedly some situations of language abandonment may not be tragic at all, as de Swaan argues, the decision to abandon a language may not be an easy one. Other authors have discussed this so-called "benign neglect" approach, which is based on the argument that "language death comes about because people make a free choice to shift to another language" (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 154). Similarly, Errington (2003), who writes on the different biological metaphors used in sociolinguistics such as "language death", comments on the sociopolitical circumstances which impinge on language choice. Criticising authors who emphasise language shift as a natural process, Errington states that:

> In different ways these observers [referring to critics of language activism] all argue that "language death" is a misnomer for what is actually "language shift", the sort of cumulative process of language change that results from the self-interested, rational decisions that individuals make in the course of their lives, which happen to include choices between transmission of one language rather than another. These

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28 This is not to say that these kinds of texts do not have any positive ideological impact on speakers' attitudes towards minorised languages. See Terrill (2002) for a good example of the positive knock-on effects of drafting a dictionary for an illiterate society in Melanesia.
29 See May (2012a: 147) for a critique of Edward's position, which he calls 'resigned language realism'.

arguments, founded on the premise that speakers are autonomous, knowledgeable social agents, can in turn be rebutted by calling into question easy distinctions between self-interested "choice" and institutional "coercion", especially in circumstances of rapid sociolinguistic change (2003: 725).

Along Errington's lines, I maintain that it is identifiable social, economic and political circumstances related to unequal power relations that often push people to abandon their language. Since language loss is not caused by purely linguistic factors, it would be naïve to think that a process of adopting the dominant language and culture necessarily means improving the well-being of individuals.[30] In this sense, I will argue in chapter 6 that linguistic discrimination and marginalisation can easily be transferred to the non-standard ways in which the dominant language is spoken, as is the case of Yucatec Spanish in Yucatán.

To conclude, further to the issue of choice, one essential task of the specialist should be, as Tsunoda (2006: 225) puts it, "to inform the community members of the grief that has been felt by those people who have lost their traditional language". Informed choice is essential since it is not an uncommon reaction of the younger generations in communities going through cultural assimilation to show interest for the heritage language and even criticism of the generation who decided to abandon it.[31]

Popular works on language death at the turn of the century

After the wake-up call of the 1992 *Language* articles and subsequent ethical discussions, other works published throughout the 1990s expanded the number of case studies and broadened the research on language endangerment and death (Robins and Uhlenbeck 1991; Brenzinger 1992; Fase et al 1992; Bobaljik et al 1996; Matsumura 1998; Grenoble and Whaley 1998).[32] These books concentrate on language death. Alternative outcomes of language contact, such as the emergence of new varieties through processes of creolisation, are often overlooked in the literature.[33] This disregard for pidgins and creoles may be explained by the challenges that these conspicuously

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30 See Blackledge (2006) for an analysis of the ways in which linguistic minorities are denied access to domains of power.

31 Writing about the Gaelic-speaking East Sutherland people she worked with in Scotland, Dorian states that "the youngest members of their own kin circles have begun to berate them for choosing not to transmit the ancestral language and so allowing it to die" (1993: 576).

32 An overview of the endangered languages of Mexico by Garza Cuarón and Lastra is included in Robins and Uhlenbeck's edited volume.

33 Vakhtin's (1998) account of the process of creolisation of Copper Island Aleut is a valuable exception.

hybrid and usually stigmatised varieties pose to reified conceptions of "full" languages in mainstream linguistics (Garrett 2006).[34]

At the turn of the century books about language death aimed not only at the specialist for also at the general public were published, popularising the alarming statement, based on Krauss's prognosis, that 'every two weeks a language is dying out' (Crystal 1999, 2000; Hagège 2000). In a similar vein, the 'last speaker' has figured prominently in the literature and the media in the last decade (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 3; Evans 2010: xvii). Research has shown, however, that the last speaker may be more of a myth than a real category of speakers and that a clear definition and identification is fraught with problems (Evans 2001: 250; Grinevald and Bert 2011: 52). At the beginning of the 2000s language endangerment even became a topic of discussion addressed by commentators who were not linguists. Thus, Malik (2000) reacted to the book *Vanishing Voices* by Nettle and Romaine (2000) with the wishful thinking of language homogenisation. In Malik's liberal view, language is purely a communicative tool and, therefore, he proposes a hierarchisation of languages (English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Hindi, in this order), according to their supposed usefulness. As for languages with little communicative range, the title of his article, 'Let them die', is quite straightforward.[35] As I show in subsequent chapters, the dichotomy between an instrumental and sentimental value of languages is an ideological issue that also appears in the Yucatecan context.

UNESCO and language endangerment

As noted above, there have been various attempts to propose a framework that reflects different degrees of language endangerment. Significantly, biological metaphors comparing languages with organisms are abundant and the metaphor of the 'health' of languages has been common in evaluating trends in language use. Most of these taxonomies look at the phenomenon of language loss through the model of 'clinical diagnosis' (Krauss 1992; Moseley 2010) and terms such as safe, endangered, moribund and extinct, with an array of subdivisions, abound.[36] An example of this approach is

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34 Garrett (2006: 178) notes that the marginality of pidgins and creoles in the specific field of language endangerment stems from the "relative lack of historicity" and the "perceived lack of autonomy" of these contact languages. See also (DeGraff 2005).

35 See Romaine (2008) for a response to Malik's critique.

36 Aware of the connotations of the 'clinical diagnosis' terminology, Krauss (1997) proposed a scale based on letters that go from *a* (the language is spoken by all generations, including all, or nearly all, children) to *e* (the language is extinct, there are no speakers).

UNESCO's (2003) division into safe, unsafe, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered and extinct.[37]

The main criteria to measure language endangerment are the number of speakers, the age of speakers, the transmission of the language to children, and the function of the language in the community/society. Among these aspects, sociolinguists consider transmission to younger generations as a key element for language reproduction. As a rough figure provided by UNESCO, a language is entering the stage of endangerment when less than 30% of the children of a community are learning the language. More specifically, the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages that met in Paris in 2003 identified the following six major evaluative factors of language vitality: (1) Intergenerational language transmission; (2) absolute number of speakers; (3) proportion of speakers within the total population; (4) trends in existing language domains; (5) response to new domains and media, and (6) materials for language education and literacy (UNESCO 2003: 13-14). All these factors have to be placed within specific contexts and should be carefully considered since they may not apply to all communities. For one thing, the 'absolute number of speakers' factor has often been disputed since there are counterexamples of relatively small language communities whose language is not endangered. Conversely, communities in a numerical majority may be socio-politically minorised and their language in process of abandonment. This is the case of Maya speakers in central areas of the Yucatán Peninsula. Another counterxample is the percentage of children speaking the language and the issue of intergenerational transmission. Based on his fieldwork, admittedly with small and multilingual communities of Australia, Evans (2001: 265) gives examples of language activation at an adult age. He notes that the 'critical period' in language acquisition, usually set by the scholarship around adolescence, must be called into question. This is an essential caveat because, according to my observations and interviews, acquiring new roles at adulthood is an important factor for Maya language (re)activation or (re)learning. I shall have more to say about language socialisation and (re)activation of Maya in chapter 5.

Lastly, while acknowledging the interest of UNESCO in language endangerment, we must be wary of the limitations of this United Nations body in language policy implementation. UNESCO is an organisation of nation-states, the language policies of which are in some cases precisely devised against the interests of minority or

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37 Similar views can be found in Tsunoda (2006). He includes gradations in terms of health, such as weakening, dying, extinct languages or strong, sick, dying and dead languages (2006: 9-15).

indigenous groups. As a member of Linguapax, a project originally supported by UNESCO, I had the opportunity to visit the headquarters of this agency in Paris and attend the General Conference in 2005. Based on my personal experience, language endangerment is a very marginal topic within that organisation and, unsurprisingly, work done with its support has been rather scarce. The 'flagship' project of UNESCO in safeguarding endangered languages, as seen on its website, has been the fairly politically disengaged publication of an 'Atlas of the world's languages in danger of disappearing' by the Culture section of that organisation. This is mainly a descriptive project of little use for language revitalisation purposes and, more importantly, for speakers of minorised languages.[38] As one can readily observe from the list of factors provided by UNESCO (2003), political and economic variables such as degrees of self-determination, autonomy, and socioeconomic empowerment are not included in those evaluative factors, despite their indisputable weight to understand patterns of language shift. This discussion is pertinent to this thesis because the influence of UNESCO has trickled down to Mexican institutions as a recent booklet edited by Embriz and Zamora (2012) and published by INALI shows.

Picture 2.2 Cover of INALI's book 'Indigenous national languages in danger of disappearing'.

According to INALI's book, which explicitly draws on UNESCO's framework of language endangerment, Yucatec Maya appears to be in a scale of 'medium risk of disappearance'.[39]

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38 For details see http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].
39 The booklet is available on line at the CDI website: http://www.cdi.gob.mx/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].

A critique of language endangerment

As noted above, the scholarship produced in the 1990s was fundamental to raise awareness about the dire situation of language diversity worldwide but much of its discursive foundations arose from an ontological view of languages as bounded autonomous objects that can be counted and labelled. This essentialist premise is based on Western views of language, the objectification of which is intimately connected with processes of nation building (Mühlhäusler 1996; Bauman and Briggs 2003; Joseph 2004; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). In his pioneering study of the ecology of language Einar Haugen called attention to the need to transcend language reification. As he observed:

> The concept of language as a rigid, monolithic structure is false, even if it has proved to be a useful fiction in the development of linguistics. It is the kind of simplification that is necessary at a certain stage of a science, but which can be replaced by more sophisticated models (1972: 325).

More recently, Mühlhäusler has similarly criticised the objectification of languages stating that:

> A particular obstacle to an ecological view has been the working hypothesis that languages are self-contained independent systems and that the boundaries between languages and their external environment and between individual languages are categorical (2001: 134).

Against this backdrop, scholarly discourses of language endangerment have often considered languages as autonomous and countable objects, what Hill (2002: 128) has named 'the ideology of enumeration'. Moore et al (2010: 5) have explored the ideological underpinnings of counting languages. These underpinnings revolve around three critical issues: the nature of the speaker, the nature of language, and the nature of domains. From a foucauldian stand, these authors consider counting practices as a powerful 'discourse of truth', that is, webs of discourses that function as true in a particular time and place. Moore et al foreground "an alternative vision that centres not on distinct, named, countable languages, but on speakers and repertoires" (2010: 1).

Unsurprisingly, sociolinguists from non-Western contexts where multilingualism is the norm have emphasised the fact that blurred boundaries and mixing are ordinary rather than exceptional everyday linguistic practices on the ground of millions of people. Khubchandani (2011) writes about India that "a plurilingual milieu makes the maintenance of boundaries fuzzy. There are many instances where speech groups utilize

a wider spectrum, criss-crossing language boundaries in their verbal repertoires: often leading to creative fusion, called 'code-floating'". Along similar lines, Canagarajah, also drawing on experiences from the Indian subcontinent, reminds us that "mainstream linguistics is still squeamish about hybrid languages that show considerable mixing" (2005: 17).

These views have deep epistemological implications since alternative paradigms that deconstruct the ontological nature of languages, or 'disinvent' them (Makoni and Pennycook 2007), raise fundamental doubts about core concepts in current sociolinguistic research. Language rights, bilingualism, multilingualism, code-switching, and mother tongues are all terms that rely on the existence of discrete and nameable languages (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 22). Not only do these authors emphasise the fuzzy boundaries of languages, a fact usually acknowledged even by conventional (segregational) sociolinguistics, but in a more radical turn they argue that "the concept of language, and indeed 'metadiscursive regimes' used to describe languages, are firmly located in Western linguistic and cultural suppositions" (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 27). From a postcolonial approach, they call for strategies of disinvention and reconstruction highlighting the epistemic violence and damage that this conceptualisation of language has on speakers of subordinated languages, particularly in the educational domain (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 21).

In spite of these critiques, counting and classifying languages and speakers has become an important endeavour in the field of endangered languages, even if cataloguing languages clashes with fine-grained ethnographic work that describes linguistic practices on the ground.[40] Tonkin writes that "many linguists, and many popular writers on linguistics, seem perfectly content to quote figures they know are, at best, imprecise" (2003: 323). This objectification of languages goes hand in hand with current efforts to document and archive endangered languages and has led to a resurgence of the field of descriptive linguistics.

In Mexico enumeration and classification of languages has been a fundamental institutional concern, at least since the nineteenth century (Cifuentes 2002). One of the first tasks of INALI, after its creation in 2006, was the elaboration of a catalogue of all the indigenous languages of Mexico. I also include a discussion of language essentialisation in the chapter on language legislation since it forms part of the ideological foundations of Maya language promotion in Yucatán. As I discuss below,

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40 The Ethnologue, which has a particularly atomistic view of languages, stands out as the most important catalogue of its kind. See: http://www.ethnologue.com/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].

'disinventing' languages may raise important dilemmas in contexts where language legitimation and ethnolinguistic recognition, as in Yucatán, are driving language revalorisation.

Apart from enumeration, the rhetoric of language endangerment also highlights the precious cultural knowledge attached to each and every language that is worth keeping alive for humankind. The ecolinguistic framework presupposes an interdependence of language and culture and the assumption that specific cultural knowledge, especially of local environments, is lost when local languages are abandoned (Nettle and Romaine 2000; Maffi 2001; Harrison 2007). However, indigenous sustainable management of the environment cannot be taken at face value. James Nations cautions that "the priority of many indigenous peoples is not conservation, but land and rights to resources" (2001: 468). In his study among Maya communities in Guatemala, Nations notes that the indigenous Pan-Mayan movement has justified the occupation of the Highlands by Q'eqchi' Maya, resulting in a social and environmental disaster.

Furthermore, in both lay and expert discourses of endangerment languages are often portrayed as repositories of particular worldviews and cosmovisions, an idea which is clearly reminiscent of the Principle of Linguistic Relativity of Boasian origins (Foley 1997: 192), based on the supposedly direct and interdependent relationship between language and culture. Hence, it is not surprising that the focus of language endangerment discourses has been biased towards 'exotic' and 'unique' languages. These languages are usually spoken in remote places by a small number of aboriginal or indigenous peoples who have an intimate connection with their lands since time immemorial and who are likely to practice their ancestral rituals. The pre-eminence of these languages in the discourses of language endangerment has meant the absence of other linguistic varieties such as pidgins and creoles, as mentioned above, and also so-called dialects and sign languages.[41]

Jane Hill (2002) has drawn attention to this particular construction of endangered languages by linguists and anthropologists and the negative consequences that this 'expert' view may have on their transmission. In her critique she points out three recurrent themes in the literature on language endangerment, namely, 'universal ownership', 'hyperbolic valorization', and 'enumeration' (2002: 120). Likewise, Cameron has underlined the idea that linking endangered languages with ecological

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41 See Nonaka (2004) for endangerment of sign languages.

concerns about biodiversity is but one choice among other possible approaches. Crucially, it is a choice that overshadows the sociopolitical inequalities and subordination that cause language endangerment in the first place. As she writes:

> It is the 'ecologizing' idea of diversity as a good in itself –and conversely, the loss of that diversity as an injury to humanity as a whole– that is presented as the central moral issue. Far less attention is given to the overtly political, redistribution and recognition struggles in which many language preservation and revitalization movements are actually embedded (Cameron 2007: 270).

This 'depoliticization' of language endangerment stems not only from focusing on languages rather than on people but also from portraying human beings (when and if they appear in discourses) as lacking agency and choice (Cameron 2007: 281). While the ecological discourse and the loss of local knowledge have emerged only tangentially in my interviews, the movement to promote Maya responds precisely to this 'recognition struggle' pointed out by Cameron, which in Yucatán is epitomised by the concept of 'revalorisation'.[42]

Notwithstanding these critiques, it is important not to forget the difficulty of bringing a scientific subject such as language endangerment to the public opinion. At a Linguapax conference in 2004, David Crystal emphasised the difficulties for language endangerment to become a mainstream concern. He compared the development of the ecological movement with what he called the 'paxlinguistic' movement thus:

> The paxlinguistic movement, if we might call it that, is an infant, by comparison with other ecological movements, some of which have been with us for over a century. […] It takes a while for new social movements to make an impact on public consciousness, but there is no doubting the success of these measures of the past. I doubt whether any educated person today is unaware of species loss, at the botanical and zoological level. Everyone is familiar with at least some of the arguments supporting the need to sustain biodiversity. We need to learn from their experience (Crystal 2004: 3).

In that same talk Crystal highlighted the arts, the media, the Internet and the schools as key domains to engage the public with the issue of 'language death'.[43] To conclude, the

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42 In view of the growing academic interest in this area it would be particularly interesting to find out whether shift to Spanish correlates with loss of the vast Maya ethnobotanical knowledge still used by healers, yerbateros (herbalists), and jmeeno'ob (shamans) across the Yucatán Peninsula. As I was able to observe, not only is there concern among some Maya activists about the loss of all this medical knowledge but also about unethical practices such as biopiracy of pharmaceutical industries. This area, which would need transdisciplinary collaboration between ethnobotanists, linguists, anthropologists, lawyers, and activists, among others, could also serve as a catalyst for political mobilisation.
43 See also Crystal (2003).

issue of language endangerment has increasingly gathered momentum within sociolinguistics research and has raised at the same time some awareness within the general public, which may be a positive component for language revitalisation. Equally important, however, are critiques that draw attention to the fundamental political nature of language revitalisation movements, a neglected aspect of much work focusing on endangered languages.

2.6 Local Terminology Used in Mexico and Yucatán

The terminology reviewed above, particularly the central concepts of 'endangerment' and 'revitalisation', let alone 'documentation', is rarely used in the local context of Yucatán. Maya is still a highly vital language in some areas of the Yucatán Peninsula and has a relatively large number of speakers, as I discuss in chapter 3. Indeed, the current sociolinguistic situation of the Yucatán Peninsula is extremely diverse in terms of language vitality and whereas Maya has almost disappeared in many municipalities, such as the coastal ones, in other areas it is still spoken by the overwhelming majority of the population. In these contexts with high vitality terms such as *fortalecimiento* and *desarrollo* (strengthening and development), as used by some Yucatec linguists, seem more appropriate.[44] These two concepts fit well with James Bauman's (1980) classification of language maintenance strategies, which includes the term 'fortification' as a response to language decline.

Table 2.1 Bauman's (1980) taxonomy of language maintenance strategies

Language status	Flourishing	enduring	declining	obsolescent	extinct
Retention strategy	Prevention	expansion	fortification	restoration	revival

The still relatively large number of Maya speakers and the existence of Maya 'hardcore' areas may explain why endangerment, so commonly used in more critical situations, did not come up in my interviews. This caveat is important because it is through scientific and specialised terminology that social processes are conceptualised and differences in terminology express alternative ways of understanding them.

One term that did emerge in the discourses of activists and experts is *desplazamiento lingüístico* (literally, 'language displacement'), the counterpart of 'language shift' in Mexican sociolinguistics. Arguably, this notion reflects the dynamic

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44 Fidencio Briceño, personal communication (Mérida 25.8.2011).

aspects of language abandonment in a better way than, for instance, *sustitución lingüística* (language replacement), which is generally used in Iberian sociolinguistics. In any case, both concepts seem more adequate to describe an ongoing social change that can be contested than the biological metaphor of 'language death'. This latter term, apart from being a state rather than a process, is resented in many communities.[45] As Grinevald and Bert (2011: 61) note, the profusion of 'doom and gloom' terms is but one way of looking at the issue of language endangerment. This view emphasises the negative side of the process, although revitalisation and resilience, positions often highlighted by community members, might as well be the lens through which these processes can be seen.[46]

It soon became apparent during my first visit to the field that the concepts of *revalorización* or *valorización* (revalorisation or valorisation) and *rescate* (recapture, rescue) were recurrent in the interviews with activists.[47] The difference between these local terms and language revitalisation as described above is significant since I argue that the term 'revalorisation' does not refer to the need to gain new uses and users for a minorised language but rather to an ideological valuation of Maya that symbolises a strive for social recognition. The endeavour to revalorise Maya in this particular case is an attempt of a social group to demand respect and recognition in the face of social marginalisation and exclusion. Thus, drawing on Cameron, language becomes the terrain "where certain social conflicts find symbolic expression" (1995: 11). To illustrate this point, this is what José Chablé, a Maya researcher and teacher, answered to my question whether a revitalisation process was underway in Yucatán:

Testimony 2.1

Josep: ¿Crees que hay un proceso de revitalización en marcha aquí en Yucatán?
José Chablé: De momento los esfuerzos son aislados. No hemos conseguido amarrar un proyecto conjunto. Un proyecto común de revitalización donde todos confluyamos, eso todavía no hay. Pero sí hay un cambio de percepción sobre el maya.

[José Chablé, Mérida 5.4.2011].

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45 Hinton (2011: 291) notes that some communities, particularly in Australia, prefer the terms 'sleeping' or 'dormant' languages to the "depressing finality" of 'dead' or 'extinct'.
46 Nancy Farriss (1984) uses the term 'resilience' to characterise the survival of the Maya society under colonial rule.
47 These concepts are also used by newspapers in Yucatán when dealing with the sociolinguistic situation of Maya.

Other participants confirmed that more positive attitudes towards Maya can be lately found in Yucatán. I maintain that this is due to a language revalorisation process which is often discursively constructed around verbs such as *dignificar* ('to dignify') and *respetar* ('to respect') against the backdrop of racism and marginalisation of Maya speakers in the Yucatecan society (Castellanos 2003; Iturriaga 2010). Also, specific laws to acknowledge language and cultural diversity have been recently passed in Mexico and Yucatán, as I examine in chapter 4.

Furthermore, although *rescate* is sometimes synonymous with 'salvage linguistics', which is closely linked with the documentation of languages with a very small demographic base (see UNESCO 2003), this term has another meaning in Yucatán. In a region with a relatively large number of speakers of Maya, *rescate* (literally 'rescue') seems to refer to status planning efforts with a view to giving social value to that language and to bringing it back to public domains of use, ideally on a par with Spanish. Therefore, similar to the notion of revalorisation the emphasis is on the place that the Maya language, and its speakers, should hold in the Yucatecan society.

Another term that needs clarification is *normalización*, which in Latin America, unlike in Iberian sociolinguistics, usually refers to language codification and standardisation. The focus of *normalización* when used in the Catalan, Basque, and Galician case is not on linguistic form but on the functional extension of a minorised languages into as many public domains as possible (Ruiz i San Pascual et al 2001).

Finally, the concept of 'mother tongue' deserves some detailed discussion because of its prominence in Mexico and Yucatán. Several labels are used by speakers, government institutions, and in the literature to name in Spanish the autochthonous languages of Mexico. The most common terms are *lenguas indígenas* (indigenous languages), *lenguas originarias* (original languages) and *lenguas maternas* (mother tongues). The latter term is particularly relevant in Yucatán because it has become a proxy for 'indigenous language' both in the discourses of institutions and those of some participants. For instance, we can read on INDEMAYA's website (section "who we are and what we do") this statement: "Realizamos acciones que permitan la revalorización de la lengua maya, nuestra lengua materna, a través de la promoción cultural y la difusión del trabajo artístico y educativo."[48] Thus, revalorisation of *the* mother tongue, namely Maya, underpins INDEMAYA's policies. The term 'mother tongue' has gained more saliency in Yucatán as a result of the celebration of UNESCO's International

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48 On line at: http://www.indemaya.yucatan.gob.mx/sobre-indemaya/quienes-somos.html [Accessed 23.8.2013].

Mother Language Day (IMLD) with activities spanning for one month.[49] Picture 2.1 is the cover of the leaflet prepared by several official institutions to celebrate the IMLD in 2010.

Picture 2.1 Cover of the leaflet for the celebration of the International Mother Language Day in Yucatán (February-March 2010).

The following excerpt by Azucena Castillo, a civil servant working at the Institute of Culture of Yucatán (ICY), points to institutional efforts to organise events under the umbrella of what she calls the 'International Mother Language *Month*':

Testimony 2.2

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49 UNESCO's International Mother Language Day (21 of February) has been observed by this organisation and celebrated around the world since the year 2000.

> Un ejemplo de estas estrategias [aimed at promoting Maya] es la agenda colectiva que se logra integrar a propósito de todo el mes mundial de la lengua materna que a iniciativa del INDEMAYA, desde hace seis años se viene construyendo una agenda donde participan universidades, centros de educación, desde primaria, bueno, varios niveles, radiodifusoras, organizaciones básicamente gubernamentales, civiles a lo mejor hay pero en menor medida, entonces es este trabajo interinstitucional que se facilita o no dependiendo de las personas que lo lideran.

[Azucena Castillo, Mérida 13.4.2010].

The IMLD initiative is led by public institutions, which reflects the fact that grassroots organisations are weak in Yucatán. Moreover, I never came across in my interviewes or found in any newspapers the term 'mother tongue' referring to Spanish. While Spanish as the dominant language is taken for granted in Mexico and has become naturalised and institutionalised (Bourdieu 1991; Williams 2005), 'mother tongue' is often used in the press as an essentialist blanket concept that refers to any indigenous languages. In short, Spanish as the dominant language has become 'anonymous' in Mexico (Woolard 2008).

It is also important to highlight that this public and institutional conflation of the terms 'mother tongues' and 'indigenous languages' has trickled down to participants. The following excerpt shows that for Rosa the term 'lenguas maternas' is akin to 'indigenous languages' therefore excluding Spanish. This is what she recounted when discussing language revitalisation initiatives in Yucatán:

Testimony 2.3

Josep: ¿Qué proyectos serían positivos para revitalizar la maya?
Rosa: Yo había pensado en el contexto institucional de la CDI, pues son los que tienen que apoyar estos proyectos, por ejemplo con una radio en línea no solo en lengua maya, en todas las lenguas maternas de México.

[Rosa Nava, Mérida 6.4.2010].

The relevance of the mother tongue issue needs to be seen against the background of UNESCO's full endorsement of the term since the mid-1950s. A seminal paper drafted in1953 has been at the core of the educational recommendations issued by UNESCO since then. UNESCO's document states that "[i]t is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue" (UNESCO 1953: 11). However, the use of the 'mother tongue' in education is not without its critics. The consequences of its essentialisation

for language policies have been the subject of sociolinguistic debate.[50] Thus, Ricento questions the universalist claims in the 1953 UNESCO Report on the use of mother tongue in education and maintains that:

> The research presented reveals, among other things, just how ideologically encumbered MT [mother tongue] is and why our understanding of contemporary language policies requires a careful analysis of the histories of all ethnolinguistic groups in contact situations, as well as an interpretive framework that resists the tendency to essentialize received categories such as language, ethnicity, identity, and most of all, mother tongue (2002: 2).

For other authors, the construction of the mother tongue, and especially mother tongue education, is part and parcel of a colonial endeavour aimed at reinforcing a Western strategy of dominance and of constructing the 'Other' (Pennycook 2002: 12; also Fabian 1991 for the African context). Furthermore, the term *lengua materna* has become a handy euphemism to avoid the term 'dialect', which in lay terms is commonly used in a denigratory way to downplay the status of indigenous languages. I devote a particular section in chapter 5 to discourses that label Maya as a dialect but it will suffice to quote at this point Uuc-kib Espadas, one the discussants in the drafting of the General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Linking the concepts of mother tongue and dialect, Espadas states that:

> El criterio de desigualdad ontológica de las lenguas tiene su verbalización típica en la referencia a ellas como dialectos. El término, sin embargo, no fue utilizado en el debate formal [of the Law on Linguistic Rights], pero en él se produjo una identificación entre "lengua materna" y lenguas distintas al castellano que desempeñó exactamente la misma función discriminatoria (2008: 60).

Therefore, in the discussion of this law politicians passed on the stigma from 'dialects' on to 'mother tongues'.

Also, tensions often arise when 'mother tongues' are introduced in formal education, since a gap may be created between formal and informal education, the latter taking place in the primary socialisation of the family and the community (Aikman 1999). As Luis Enrique López reminds us, "the very concept of mother tongue does not help that much nowadays" (2009: 43), since monolingualism in the indigenous language is becoming ever rarer also in Latin America. Be that as it may, in Yucatán, official

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50 For further details see the papers gathered in number 154 of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2002.

institutions have appropriated the euphemistic and allegedly depoliticised label of 'mother tongue', which often appears in local discourses of revalorisation.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the general theoretical framework, based on the field of language policy and planning, and some key terms in social theory such as language ideologies and discourses, which undergird this thesis. I have also discussed the scholarly evolution of the field of language maintenance and shift and the recent use of biological and ecological metaphors in a research area known as language endangerment. As I have noted, although the ecological paradigm is not without problems, language endangerment and revitalisation are now widespread and common terms in current scientific accounts of language abandonment. The last part of the chapter has introduced fundamental critiques of well-established sociolinguistic paradigms that reify linguistic practices and discourses of language endangerment that focus on languages rather than on the sociopolitical situation of speakers. Against this background, I have finally introduced key sociolinguistic terms used in Mexico and Yucatán, some of which have particular nuances and do not necessarily coincide with those used and defined in the specialised literature. It is important to note therefore that discourses on the situation of Maya in Yucatán are made up of a combination of concepts which have filtered down from international (e.g. UNESCO and the mother tongue issue), continental (e.g. the meaning of *normalización* in Latin America), and national/local levels (e.g. revalorisation and *rescate*). In this latter case, I argue that the emphasis is on improving the social recognition of speakers of Maya rather than gaining new speakers, which is at the core of many scholarly definitions of language revitalisation. To understand the reasons for this stress on dignity and respect conveyed through demands for language revalorisation, we need to delve into the historical circumstances that have led to the sociopolitical and economic minorisation of the Maya people in Yucatán in the first place.

Chapter 3. Sociolinguistic Minorisation Processes in Mexico

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I look at the introduction of Spanish in Yucatán and its spread at the expense of Maya since the early sixteenth century up to the present day. I follow the common periodization of Mexican history since European contact, which is divided into three stages: colony (mid-sixteenth century through to 1821), independence (1821-1910) and post-revolution (1910 up to present). I highlight key societal transformations for the spread of Spanish and the loss or minorisation of indigenous languages of Mexico. I shall make specific references to the Yucatán Peninsula when reviewing the language policy of those periods and in the last part of the chapter I shall focus on the contemporary sociolinguistic situation of Yucatán in more detail. The main argument I develop is that in the last five centuries the spread of Spanish in Mexico can only be understood against the background of all-embracing socioeconomic and political transformations that have led to the subordination of indigenous peoples and, consequently, of their cultures and languages. While language minorisation has been present since the conquest, shift to Spanish gathered particularly rapid pace in the post-revolution period of the twentieth century against the backdrop of *indigenismo*.

3.2 The Colonial Period and the Spread of Spanish

The demographic catastrophe caused by the Spanish conquest is the major historical event that explains the radical changes in the human configuration of the Americas. This profound demographic decay in the local population was the consequence of warfare, slavery, and environmental changes due to the introduction of new animals and crops, suicide, and, above all, the spread of diseases (McCaa 2000: 258).[51] Estimations of the genocide in Mesoamerica, a territory known as New Spain in colonial times, vary greatly. Figures range from a loss of up to 90% of a population of around 30 million inhabitants to much more conservative loss of 'only' 25% of a population between 4 and 5 million (McCaa 2000: 253).[52] Whatever figures are considered, the dimension of

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51 In Yucatán, Clendinnen (2003: 76) reports the violent methods of evangelisation used by the Spanish friars, which not uncommonly resulted in suicide. Similarly, in their review of language loss in Mexico, Garza and Lastra (1991: 104) mention the 'loss of will to live' as one of the causes of the disappearance of entire groups in that same period.

52 McCaa (2010: 252) summarises the differing positions of this still controversial issue in three 'schools': catastrophists, moderates, and minimalists.

this cataclysm was unprecedented and it was not until the middle of the seventeenth century that the native population began to recover (Hidalgo 2006c: 95).

After the conquest, the sociolinguistic ecology of the American colonies went through profound transformations. Not only did many local languages become extinct as a consequence of genocide but also, in the framework of a new social and political situation of indigenous subordination, language policies were to be set up by the metropolis. The real scope of the language policies of the Spanish Crown and their impact on its colonies is a contentious issue. On the one hand, several authors have emphasised what Hidalgo (2006d: 358) calls 'the recovery mission', that is, a post-contact period when a few indigenous lingua francas were promoted and even flourished.[53] Along these lines, Sánchez and Dueñas argue that "[the] consolidation of Spanish in Latin America does not seem to have included an explicit goal of language spread". These authors go on to write that "[f]unding was more readily available for teaching and learning the languages of the local people than for expanding Spanish" (2002: 282). Sánchez and Dueñas define metropolitan language policies at the time as "rather inconsistent and subject to frequent variation" (2002: 282). On the other hand, Heath (1972) and Hidalgo (2006b), while recognising the ambivalent language policies of the metropolis at the onset of Conquest, underline their overall negative effect and the eventual demise and disappearance of many local languages.

As for language ideologies, it is important to note that the kingdom of Castile in Spain was already favouring Castilian by the time of the conquest of Mexico (around 1521). Castilian was the first modern European vernacular with a written grammar and a unifying language of the Iberian Peninsula. In spite of the various high domains that Latin was still occupying at that time, in 1492 Nebrija had already completed his grammar on Castilian, which contained the famous dictum 'language was always the companion of empire'. This grammar, which followed the model classical languages, neatly summarised the ideological importance attached to the spread of Castilian by the Spanish Crown. As Milán writes, "Nebrija's *Gramática* is much more than a mere codification of structural rules. It is a complete and comprehensive plan intended to fulfill the language policy needs of the Spanish empire at the peak of its glory" (1983: 122).[54] Also, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the Golden Age of arts in

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53 Hidalgo (2006c: 101) points out Ricard (1933), Zavala (1996) and Cifuentes (1998) as scholars that stress the recovery mission.
54 Nebrija's prologue to the *Gramática de la lengua castellana* is devoted to Queen Isabella and includes the famous statement in Spanish "*que siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio*". The complete prologue can be found at: http://www.antoniodenebrija.org/prologo.html [Accessed 18.8.2013].

general and literature in particular, which raised the prestige of Spanish (Hidalgo 2006b: 71). It is not a coincidence that the term 'Spanish' to refer to 'Castilian' began to gain currency in that period of embryonic nation building around the Kingdom of Castile (Hidalgo 2006b: 68).[55]

Against this backdrop, the ideological underpinnings of language spread in Spain, which linked language (Castilian) with religion (Christianity) were to go hand in hand in the colonies. As Heath (1972: 7) writes, "[o]fficial Crown policy made it clear that the extension of the Castilian language was an acknowledgement concomitant of the expansion of the Spanish Catholic Empire". Although with limited effect, owing to the gap between language policies and practicalities in the field, the Spanish Crown issued specific legislation to spread the knowledge of Spanish in its colonies (Heath 1972: 6, Hidalgo 2006d: 358, Terborg et al. 2007: 140). The admittedly ambivalent and inconsistent attitudes of the metropolis towards language policy stem from the difficulties encountered in the colonies by missionaries and other settlers to effectively spread Spanish, which allowed for "a short-term tolerance period" (Hidalgo 2006d: 360). There was even a time, during the rule of Philip II and his son Philip III (1570-1634), in which Nahuatl was actively promoted and declared 'official'.[56] Nahuatl, alongside Purépecha (also known as Tarascan) and Maya, had been *lenguas generales* (lingua francas) in Mesoamerica before the conquest (Heath 1972: 36; Martín Butragueño 2010a: 78), a fact that did not go unnoticed to Spaniards. Missionaries chose these languages and alphabetic writing for religious conversion, since Spanish was proving an ineffective and impractical instrument to convert the Indians to Christianity.[57] Significantly, the description of many indigenous languages in alphabetic writing has yielded a good number of scientific works, such as grammars and dictionaries, with enormous (socio)linguistic value.[58]

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55 While the language-nation-state nexus emerges in its full form in Europe in the nineteenth century, Woolard (2004b) has argued that language ideological debates about the origins of Castilian, which were already circulating at the end of the sixteenth century, point to a nascent Spanish national consciousness.

56 Hidalgo (2006d: 370) provides a complete chart of the language policies in colonial times relating the rule of kings with the mandates they issued and the overall effect they had in New Spain. For the Andean area, Heath and Laprade (1986) present a parallel development of the spread of Quechua and Aymara in colonial times.

57 Ostler (2005: 365) notes the contrast between the sociolinguistic outcome in mainland New Spain and the islands of the Caribbean. In the latter, a highly fragmented linguistic area with no *lengua general*, all indigenous languages became extinct and Spanish was the only possible language used for religious conversion.

58 *Doctrina*, *arte*, and *vocabulario* form the *trilogía catequística* (Smith Stark 2010: 453), which, aside from its obvious religious goal, were key works for language codification. The similarities with much of current language documentation and description, especially when done by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, are striking. Hanks (2010) thoroughly analyses colonial bilingual dictionaries and *artes* (grammars) in Yucatec Maya.

The aim of the metropolitan legislation to spread Spanish was not only to civilise the Indians but also to exert a more effective control over the colonised population. Both the Spanish Crown, and also many settlers in New Spain, felt that the promotion of indigenous languages, which was effectively taking place through the work of the mendicant orders, especially after the arrival of the Jesuits, might spur ideals of autonomy. Therefore, in a stratified society based on segregated castes colonial elites perceived the acquisition of Spanish by Indians as threatening (Heath 1972: 44; Farriss 1984: 111; Hidalgo 2006b: 80). Bilingualism represented a form of cultural capital, to use Bourdieu's terminology. A few interpreters, the priests themselves and some members of the indigenous elite were the ones that needed to use two languages and those that profited from being bilingual, regardless of mandates issued by the Spanish Crown. As Heath and Laprade argue, "[o]ver the centuries, some members of Spanish religious orders and creole prelates (those born in the New World) learned some Indian tongues and used this knowledge to reinforce their own position of power" (1986: 119).

At the end of the colonial period, however, only 35% of the population knew Spanish in New Spain (Hidalgo 2006d: 360), which shows the failure of the oscillating languages policies of the metropolis to impose Spanish through a series of decrees on an overwhelming majority of speakers of indigenous languages.[59] Legislation had very limited effect on the everyday linguistic practices of the colony, although the reduced number of people who could speak Spanish in the colonial period, both Spanish settlers and the Maya nobility, were part of the elites with power and prestige (Heath 1972: 182). As Hidalgo states: "[t]he spread of Spanish beyond the Iberian Peninsula and its use in *more* and *more* prestigious domains may be perceived as being a distant factor in the decline of Amerindian languages, but it cannot be underestimated" (2006b: 68, her emphasis). She goes on to write that "[t]he vitality of Spanish in the Mexican colony was not demographic. It was qualitative" (2006b: 69), a factor which undoubtedly laid the foundations for the dominance of Spanish in subsequent times.

In short, the linguistic ideologies of the Spanish Crown, which were bound up with religious conversion, helped to establish a hierarchical linguistic stratification in the colonial society based, on the one hand, on the primacy of Spanish as the language of the dominant elites and, on the other, on the contingent tolerance and even promotion of indigenous lingua francas at the expense of other native languages.[60]

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59 As is usual with these kinds of estimations, divergent sources set the percentage of speakers of indigenous language at 80% when the colony gained independence (Terborg et al. 2007: 140).
60 For a parallel situation in the Andes, see Mannheim (1991, Part I).

In Yucatán, the fact that the zenith of the Maya civilisation had passed long before the arrival of the Spaniards, the lack of gold and other precious metals in the region, and the harsh ecology of the Peninsula, particularly the dearth of sources of fresh water, determined low patterns of Spanish settlement (Clendinnen 2003: 28). Unlike the clash with the Aztec empire, the Spaniards found no political or unified central power in Yucatán but a number of small chiefdoms that would prove difficult to conquer (Quezada 2001: 34).[61] Consequently, Yucatán remained a backwater within the Viceroyalty of New Spain, a condition that lasted after Independence and well into the twentieth century. The maintenance of a native ruling elite (the Maya nobility) who acted as cultural brokers, and the preservation of the *cah* (the village, the community), as a fundamental geographical, political, and organisational Maya entity (Restall 1997: 2), were fundamental elements for the continuation and cohesion of Maya society (Farriss 1984: 227). As for language policies, the Spanish Crown issued several decrees and official pleas during the colonial period with a view to advancing the castilianisation process in Yucatán, especially as of the seventeenth century (Bracamonte 2007: 184). If language legislation was only having a relative effect in most parts of New Spain during the colonial period, in Yucatán, a fairly homogeneous linguistic region far from the political centres of decision with a scattered population, Maya was to remain not just the lingua franca but "the primary language of all the native-born inhabitants of every caste" (Farriss 1984: 112). A process of mayanisation rather than castilianisation was actually taking place on the Peninsula (Farriss 1984: 110).[62] While literacy was only in the hands of a small group of professionals (*escribanos*), in this pre-Independence period Maya enjoyed the status of 'official' language as it was valid in written legal documents, such as wills, land sales, petitions and election records (Restall 1997; Hanks 2010).[63] This sociolinguistic situation would change progressively in the second half of the eighteenth century with the coming to power of the Bourbon kings in Spain and, even more radically, during the nineteenth century when independence from the metropolis was achieved and the process of nation building was set in motion.

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61 Coe (2005: 162) highlights three main interrelated causes of the downfall of the Maya civilisation, whose classic period spans from AD 250 to 900. These causes are endemic internecine warfare, overpopulation and accompanying environmental collapse, and drought.

62 Similar processes of 'Indianization' were taking place all over New Spain (Parodi 2006).

63 The interrelation between the legal status of Maya and literacy is still a major issue worth looking at in the current situation of Maya in Yucatán. See chapters 4 and 5 for details.

3.3 Independence and Nation Building in Nineteenth Century Mexico

In the second half of the eighteenth century language policies issued by the Bourbon kings were geared towards spreading Spanish not only in the colonies (Heath 1972: 47) but also within Spain.[64] As noted above, segregation among the population during the colonial period allowed the indigenous poulation to maintain their own spaces of sociocultural reproduction such as limited forms of self-government, collective landed property, and special courts of justice in the *repúblicas de indios* or *reducciones*.[65] In her detailed account of the colonial society of Yucatán, Farriss underlines the formidable material and sociocultural adaptation of the Maya to the new environment created after the conquest in order to survive colonisation. She calls the harshness of the Bourbon reforms a 'second conquest' (Farriss 1984: 355). Although the entrenched social stratification of colonial times began to change in the late eighteenth century, radical transformations only took place after the territory of New Spain gained independence in the nineteenth century (1821). The drafting of a new body of legislation including a constitution; the transformation of the communal lands (*ejidos*) into private property; the development and improvement of means of transportation; incipient urbanisation; and the increasing use of literacy created new sociolinguistic environments that favoured Spanish. The resulting adaptive patterns of language use to these new domains led to increasing bilingualism and indigenous language abandonment.

However, several authors consider the beginning of compulsory elementary education in the nineteenth century as the most decisive cause of language shift to Spanish.[66] As I explain in more detail below, educational policies were underpinned by the ideal of a monolingual country centered on Spanish, which was the language of the *criollo* elites in power. In this vein, the Mexican constitution of 1857 promoted the extension and secularisation of education and the so-called direct method, a submersion type of education implemented with a view to integrating Indians to the mainstream society (Barriga Villanueva 2010: 1108; Heath 1972: 72). The caste division and the ethnic labels used during the colonial period were avoided (Hidalgo 2006d: 361) and the idea of a fusion of all the inhabitants of Mexico, now simply citizens, into a new nation became the foundational myth of racial mixing, known as *mestizaje* (Gutiérrez Chong

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64 For instance, it is during the centralising Bourbon rule of Philip V (1683-1746) in Spain that the Decrees of Nova Planta suppress autonomous institutions in the Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands) imposing the rules of Castile and the Castilian language.
65 See Bracamonte and Solís (1996) on indigenous spaces of autonomy in the colonial period.
66 See Heath (1972) for Mexico in general and Bracamonte (2007, chapter 3) for Yucatán in particular.

1999). This was the beginning of a profoundly racist discursive project which 'under a mask of inclusiveness' (de la Peña 2006: 284) is still being played out in Mexico to this day.

Against the background of political discourses that emphasised economic and social progress and development, the place of the Indian within the new nation was a matter of concern for both liberal and conservative politicians of the nineteenth century. Whereas some liberal intellectuals recognised the rights of indigenous peoples, the main goal of institutional language policies was both unity and homogeneity of the country through Spanish. Hidalgo (2006d: 361) points out that 'little nations' and 'self-determination' were not outlandish ideas for some liberal politicians and intellectuals at that time. These disparate views on the Indian 'problem', *indigenismo* versus *hispanismo*, would be further developed in the twentieth century. Whatever the political positions taken, cultural and linguistic diversity in Mexico was seen as a hindrance to socioeconomic progress, a goal that was ideologically supported by the scientific framework of the Enlightenment and positivism.

After Independence from the metropolis, contradictory ideological forces were negotiated in the process of constructing Mexico. The new country needed to find unifying symbols to build a differentiated and strong national identity (a sense of 'Mexicanness') and the indigenous past, seen both as glorious and truly autochthonous, was usurped.[67] This myth of origin used in official nationalist discourses was based on the appropriation of one specific prehispanic culture, the Aztec or Mexica, hence selectively excluding other Mesoamerican peoples such as Mayas from the nationalist agenda (Gutiérrez Chong 1999: 3). It is in this post-Independence period that a gap between the historical Indian and the real contemporary Indian begins to emerge. As Frida Villavicencio notes:

> Desde entonces se estableció una infranqueable distancia entre el indio histórico, cuyo pasado prestigioso se esforzaban por recuperar los criollos, y el indio real perteneciente al sector más marginado de la sociedad. Entre estos dos polos transcurre la suerte del indio a partir de la instauración de México como país independiente y explica las acciones que se tomaron en el transcurso del siglo XIX sobre esta población y, en buena parte, la contradicción en la que aún hoy nos debatimos (2010: 751).

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67 Brading (1985), Bonfil Batalla (1996), and Florescano (2001) have all explored this topic. In the Andean area Mannheim (1991: 71-74) provides a similar account of a 'Quechua Renaissance' based on the 'idealization of the Inka past' during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This appropriation of the indigenous past as a basic constituent in the construction of Mexican identity in the nineteenth century is still today part and parcel of the discourses on indigenous languages and cultures in Mexico. It surfaces in the recent legislation drafted as a result of indigenous demands, as I explore in chapter 4, and it is particularly insidious in Yucatán, where the Maya culture is folklorised and commodified by government institutions for tourist consumption.

As for sociolinguistic transformations, official institutions in Mexico were institutionalising and promoting Spanish, the former metropolitan language, as the national language. Iberian Spanish, which had been the most prestigious variety up to that period, was discarded as a model to follow, not without heated debates and the opposition of those who saw that variety as 'purer' than Mexican Spanish (Villavicencio 2010: 727). Against this backdrop, Mexico's own variety of Spanish needed legitimation and institutionalisation, hence the creation of the Mexican Academy of Language (1875) and the compilation of the first dictionary of 'Mexicanisms' (1895). Heath stresses the change of linguistic attitudes in that period stating that:

> Whereas just a half a century earlier *el criollo mexicano* had called for a strict imitation of the language of Spain, the sophisticated Mexican of the late nineteenth century proudly claimed an evolved national standard which was the special product of his unique history (1972: 74, her italics).

The paradox of choosing the language of the former metropolis for the new independent nation was mitigated by the recognition of the valuable cultural Indian heritage of the country. On a linguistic level, this was achieved by the proud acknowledgement of lexical contributions mostly from Nahuatl, the language of the glorious Aztec prehispanic civilisation, to Mexican Spanish. Sanctioned as a national standard, Mexican Spanish became increasingly institutionalised and occupied ever more prominent public domains (politics, education, leisure, and mass media) in which literacy played a key role. Concomitantly, indigenous languages began their withdrawal into private, and primarily oral, domains such as community and home, retaining some functionality. This is a sociolinguistic situation that still prevails today (Pfeiler and Zámišová 2006: 285).

Furthermore, in this period of construction of a national standard newly created scientific societies, such as the *Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística*, carried out numerous works aimed at classifying and describing the indigenous languages of Mexico (Cifuentes 2002). The scientific rationale behind these incipient efforts to

document the indigenous languages of Mexico arose from the Enlightenment and Romanticism, movements that emphasised the ideological pertinence of native languages to consolidate the specificity of newly independent Mexico (Cifuentes 2002: 11). Not only were these works important to acknowledge, and even 'to valorise' (a verb that is at the core of discourses of language promotion in Yucatán today) the indigenous roots of the new nation, but also to support, through evolutionist theories, the superiority of Spanish (Cifuentes 2002: 47; Villavicencio 2010: 779). The choice and promotion of Spanish as the only national language in the nineteenth century meant that 83% of Mexicans in the first official census of 1895, then officially a *mestizo* country, appeared to be speakers of Spanish, while around 16% claimed to speak an indigenous language (Hidalgo 2006d: 361).

3.4 The Yucatán Peninsula in the Nineteenth Century

In Yucatán the second half of the nineteenth century represents a particularly complex period in terms of its political relationship with the nascent Mexican Republic. A tension between centralist and federalist (even separatist) forces; the interplay between the interests of foreign countries in the area (especially Great Britain and the USA, the former controlling neighbouring Belize); and the strong feelings of regionalism of the ruling elite were distinct sociopolitical characteristics of the Yucatán Peninsula.[68] Moreover, the fairly homogeneous ethnic composition of the indigenous population of Yucatán, with a majority of rural population speaking Maya who had traditionally occupied a peripheral and isolated position within Mexico, had created a unique sociolinguistic situation. In 1863, though, the territory of Campeche, where Yucatec Maya is also spoken, became a separate state within the Republic. In 1902 Quintana Roo was made a territory of Mexico and in 1974 was granted statehood. As Gutiérrez Chong (1999: 43) notes, territorial division was, among other government policies, a coercive strategy to subdue Indian rebellions, to which I return below. The partition of a common sociocultural area has consequences for present language planning since I maintain that the current political division of the Yucatán Peninsula into three different Mexican states is a hindrance for joint language policies.

The economic deprivation and political subordination that indigenous peoples of Mexico suffered were not carried out without resistance and rebellions were numerous throughout the country. In Yucatán Jacinto Canek's revolt in 1761 is a well-researched

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68 British Honduras was a British colony from 1856 to 1964, when it became self-governing. In 1981 it became a fully independent nation under the name of Belize.

case.[69] Indeed, the Caste War of Yucatán, which erupted in 1847 and lasted for about half a century, is considered one of the most devastating uprisings in the Americas. Although ethnic hatred of Maya people against the population of European descent has been traditionally singled out as the reason for the uprising, recent works have noted the actual fuzziness of ethnic boundaries in both groups taking part in the war. Moseley and Depar (2008: 24), for instance, point to the economic motivations of the conflict, such as assaults on Maya lands and excessive taxation, as more likely causes of the revolt.[70] Whatever the motivations that triggered the war, the tragic outcome of the conflict is still part of the discourses of contemporary Mayas (Lizama 2007: 50). In my own interviews, some participants singled out the Caste War and its aftermath, namely the defeat and subsequent retreat of rebellious Mayas to the south eastern part of the Peninsula, as the reason for the lack of current indigenous political mobilisation in Yucatán state.[71]

In the socioeconomic sphere, the emergence and development of the henequen industry in the late nineteenth century became the most important phenomenon up to the 1970s. The henequen is an agave plant from which a fibre to make ropes, twine, cables, etc. is obtained. With the expansion of world shipping and in particular the increasing demand of that produce from the USA, henequen plantations became a booming agricultural industry in Yucatán from which only a handful of landowners (*hacendados*), the so-called *casta divina,* would profit. The *casta divina,* an oligarchy of about thirty families, managed to maintain and reinforce their position at the top of the social, economic and political ladder of Yucatán through their abusive labour practices on landless peasants (a consequence of the Caste War). The cultivation of henequen was concentrated on the north western part of the Peninsula, around the city of Mérida, which had been first the base of the Spanish and then criollo elites since colonial times. In the areas of Yucatán where henequen had become a monocrop, the traditional subsistence agriculture of the Maya population based on the milpa (the corn plot) was deeply affected. Not only would this agricultural transformation impact on the natural environment but also on the cultural practices of the Mayas living in that area of the Peninsula, since cultivation of corn stands at the core of some rituals, such as *ch'a'a*

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69 The interested reader on that topic can consult the work of Patch (2002) in English and Bracamonte (2004) in Spanish.

70 There is a large body of literature on the Caste War of Yucatán. Some key works are Reed (1964) and more recently Rugeley (1996) and Dumond (1997).

71 Interview with Bernardo Aguilar (8.4.2010 Mérida).

cháak, a rain ceremony, or the *ujanlikool*, thanksgiving to the milpa, which are performed in Maya (Guzmán 2005: 309; Lizama 2007: 29).

3.5 *Indigenismo* and Education in Twentieth Century Mexico

The national policy of assimilation through the national education system was deepened after the Mexican Revolution and the drafting of a new constitution in 1917, which is still in force. The work of Manuel Gamio (*Forjando Patria*) published in 1916 was a turning point that summarised the scientific debates since Independence between more or less liberal views of language and cultural diversity in Mexico. A holistic approach to education encompassing political, economic, social and linguistic factors was devised in the 1920s and developed further in the 1930s by the central government with the help of social anthropologists (Heath 1972: 84). The creation of the Ministry of Education, the *Secretaría de Educación Pública*, in 1921 and the appointment of José Vasconcelos as secretary were the cornerstones of a more radical approach to the idea of 'incorporation', which was based on racist ideas of cultural superiority of Spanish.[72] Informed by anthropological research, this official ideology, known as *indigenismo*, made apparent once more deep discrepancies between the recognition of the indigenous past, valued as a fundamental part of the Mexican heritage, and the homogenising and paternalist policies carried out by post-revolutionary governments. Indigenismo was, as Villoro (1950) succinctly defined it, "the whole set of ideas about Indians in the heads of non-Indians".[73]

Education became the main tool to incorporate the indigenous population into mainstream society. The implementation of a direct method of instruction, namely monolingual education in Spanish, had the goal of spreading the use of Spanish at the expense of indigenous languages (Heath 1972: 93). In the mid-1930s, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) began to develop literacy programmes in Mexico. William Cameron Townsend, the founder of SIL, had been promoting literacy programmes to translate the New Testament among the Cakchiquels of Guatemala before being invited by the Ministry of Public Education to work in Mexico (Heath 1972: 101).[74]

Both submersion programmes in Spanish and, later, bilingual programmes with some transitional use of indigenous languages as a stepping stone to learn Spanish were

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72 In 1925 Vasconcelos wrote *La Raza Cósmica*, where he expressed his ideas of racial miscegenation in the Americas and the need to create a new civilisation.
73 Quoted in Hamel (2008: 303).
74 The history of SIL in Mexico and in other countries of Latin America has been critically analysed by Stoll (1982).

put into practice during the leftist administration of president Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s. The Tarascan Project, led by Morris Swadesh, and with the participation of SIL, introduced literacy in that indigenous language. While the project only lasted for two years, it was considered a success and was replicated in other communities, the Maya of Yucatán among them (Heath 1972: 128; Aguirre Beltrán 1993: 291). SIL became one of the main consultation agencies for official educational policies, particularly during the Cárdenas administration. Although with an emphasis on literacy, these pioneering projects were later dismantled by conservative governments.

The monolingual method of education in Spanish was eventually superseded in the 1940s by the bilingual method, which allowed some use of indigenous languages for transitional purposes, and the concept of 'incorporation' was abandoned. Instead, social scientists working for official institutions put forward plans of 'integration' for the Indian population (Heath 1972: 117). In addition, the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI) was created in 1948 to undertake research and improve, at least theoretically, the living conditions of the indigenous population of Mexico.[75] The INI was a scientific and political body with an advisory nature that played a prominent role in the development of official hispanisation through educational policies. From an international perspective, the use of mother tongues in education was endorsed by UNESCO (1953). This is perhaps not coincidental, since Jaime Torres Bodet, secretary of Public Education of Mexico in the 1940s, served as director-general of UNESCO from 1948 to 1952. An advocate of cultural relativism, Torres Bodet was a defender of the introduction of culturally specific teaching material for indigenous populations (Heath 1972: 130).

In a nutshell, uniformity and hispanisation were the main driving forces behind the cultural and language policies carried out by the Mexican post-revolutionary governments. *Indigenismo*, a fundamental pillar of indigenous acculturation, was in the end an unsuccessful strategy for incorporating indigenous peoples into the political realm. As Guillermo de la Peña puts it:

> The failure of this strategy was to a large extent caused by the government's gradual abdication of the revolutionary ideals of social justice and democracy [but] it was also a consequence of the vision of Mexican citizenship as a function of cultural homogeneity, which ignored the demands of Indian peoples for cultural and political recognition, thus thwarting the participation in the public sphere (2006: 281).

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75 The INI was replaced in 2003 by the *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI), as a result of indigenous demands stemming from the Zapatista uprising.

More recently, against a global awakening of indigenous movements in Latin America (Warren and Jackson 2002; Postero and Zamosc 2005), active participation of indigenous organisations has gained momentum, particularly in the design of their own educational programmes. In Mexico, however, bilingual education remains firmly in the hands of the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (Hidalgo 1994, 2006c; also Patthey-Chavez 1994: 201). New models of bilingual education, such as Bilingual Bicultural Education and Intercultural Bilingual Education, have become widespread educational frameworks not only in Mexico but also in many other Latin American countries where official policies to cater to indigenous demands for linguistic and cultural revitalisation have been developed. I shall look in detail at these initiatives in chapter 5.

3.6 Sociopolitical and Economic Changes in Twentieth Century Yucatán

In Yucatán, a 'recalcitrant' state (Moseley and Delpar 2008: 33), the Mexican Revolution came from 'without', to use Gilbert Joseph's (1982) phrase.[76] The 1920s was a period of remarkably progressive social and land reforms. In a context of profound educational transformations, the language policies in the early 1920s contributed to the revalorisation and promotion of Maya with Felipe Carrillo Puerto as state governor (Gabbert 2004: 105). However, the federal apparatus based in Mexico City increasingly strengthened its control over Yucatán. On the one hand, the political integration into the rest of Mexico was furthered, especially after the emergence of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), which would turn into an all-powerful single-party structure ruling the country until the year 2000. On the other hand, geographical integration was progressively achieved thanks to the development of infrastructures that connected the Peninsula with the rest of Mexico.[77]

In the economic sphere, the industry based on the henequen agave was still dominant in Yucatán in the first half of the twentieth century but its decline had already started when President Cárdenas visited Yucatán in the late 1930s to supervise land reforms. The henequen industry lingered until its complete downfall in the 1980s. After four decades of growth of an economy based on state control and protection of national industries, a debt crisis burst in Mexico in 1982, leading to new economic neoliberal policies and increasing dependence on global trends. The subsequent transformations

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76 Gilbert Joseph's *Revolution from Without* (1982) is a detailed account of the Mexican Revolution in Yucatán.
77 Up to the 1960s the connection between the Yucatán Peninsula and the rest of Mexico was mainly via the sea. The Gulf of Mexico, particularly the states of Campeche and Veracruz but also the USA and Cuba, had been until then the natural area of economic exchange for the Yucatán Peninsula.

have had an important socioeconomic impact on Yucatán and can be summarised, following Blakanoff, in four salient factors: "the decline and collapse of the monocrop economy, economic diversification, the Yucatán-Quintana Roo nexus, and Mérida's emergence as a strategic city" (2008a: 2). Against this background, since the mid-1980s the introduction of maquiladoras (export-assembly plants) has helped to diversify the state economy to cope with the demise of the henequen industry and to immerse Yucatán into the global market economy (Blakanoff 2008b).

Moreover, the growth of the tourist industry in recent decades has concentrated especially on the Maya Riviera and an escalating process of urbanisation has been affecting the sociolinguistic ecology of the whole Yucatán Peninsula. Both phenomena are epitomised in the extraordinary development of the city of Cancún on the Caribbean coast. Rampant urbanisation has had deep economic and environmental impact on the area and has affected sociocultural adaptations of the Maya population of both Yucatán and Quintana Roo, as recent research is showing.[78] According to Bianet Castellanos (2010: xviii), one third of the population living in Cancún is Maya. Likewise, the city of Mérida already accounts for almost half of the population of Yucatán state (42.5%). Furthermore, migration from other Mexican states has changed the demographic and sociolinguistic composition of Yucatán. INEGI's census of 2010 gives a figure of 8.3% of migrants from other Mexican states living in Yucatán and 14.2% in Mérida. These migrants may speak Spanish but also indigenous languages other than Yucatec Maya. In sum, Yucatán is deeply immersed in an interdependent demographic and economic process characterised by *deruralisation* and *tertiarisation*, that is, an increasing urbanisation with a growth of the service sector and a decline of agriculture. Due to their speed and depth these socioeconomic phenomena may become highly disruptive in the case of fast developing areas.

Although these factors provide the background to analyse recent patterns of language use in Yucatán, they do not fully explain language shift to Spanish. These changes are typical *post hoc* explanations of language loss seen from a macro-sociolinguistic perspective (K. King 2001: 14). An ethnographic approach that explores how these external social factors affect people's language ideologies can be a more useful frame to explain language abandonment. Arguably, in Yucatán the perceived lack of value of Maya for upward social mobility makes this language redundant, particularly in urban contexts. With few exceptions, Maya plays either a minor role or

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78 See Sánchez Arroba (2009) for Quintana Roo, and López Santillán (2010) and Canché et al (2010) for Yucatán.

no role at all in important domains such as education and the workplace in cities, both of which are intimately connected to socioeconomic opportunities and advancement. Last but not least, prejudices and continuing discrimination and marginalisation of the Maya population, though subtly expressed (Castellanos 2003, Iturriaga 2011), may trigger shift to Spanish. In this vein, it is worth noting the particular characteristics of racism in Latin America, which needs to be seen against the backdrop of the notion of mestizaje as a central process of nation-building. As Stavenhagen has written:

> Por las características del régimen colonial y la autopercepción de algunas sociedades latinoamericanas como naciones mestizas, la opinión pública pensaba tranquilamente que el racismo no existía en estos países. Pero en el momento en que los pueblos indígenas, víctimas seculares de políticas racistas que no se atrevían a identificar como tales, exigen sus derechos humanos y ciudadanos, el racismo enraizado no puede seguir escondido (2011: 187).

These negative attitudes have repercussions beyond urban environments. Discriminatory practices against Maya speakers in cities are often internalised and reproduced in rural areas (Chi 2011: 249). In the following section I present current trends of language shift to Spanish from the macrosociolinguistic perspective of national censuses.

3.7   Language Diversity and National Censuses in Mexico

In spite of secular minorisation, indigenous people still represent a significant part of the Mexican population. According to the last national census (INEGI 2010), there were 6,695,228 speakers of indigenous languages, accounting for 6.7% of a total population of 112,336,558. In that census the two indigenous languages with the largest number of speakers are Nahuatl and Yucatec Maya with 1,544,968 and 786,113 speakers respectively. I provide a breakdown of the figures for Yucatec Maya by state below. Despite these substantial figures, indigenous language loss is widespread. While an overall increase in absolute numbers of speakers of many indigenous languages has taken place in the last few decades, due to high rates of population growth in Mexico (Feliciano 2010), a longitudinal look at INEGI figures shows signs of language shift: shrinking number of monolingual speakers, decreasing percentages of speakers in

relative terms, and growing rates of transitional bilingualism to Spanish.[79] Against this backdrop, during the twentieth century Mexico has become the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.

The Mexican government has undertaken national censuses since 1895 as a tool not only to provide official statistics but also as an inherent element of nation building, since public policies have been built upon those statistics.[80] The inclusion of language as a variable in the censuses since their very conception is a continuation of the scientific endeavours that blossomed during the nineteenth century (Cifuentes 2002). Mexican institutions consider language, at least since the 1930s, as a key cultural component to ascribe indigenous ethnic identity. Therefore, officially-sanctioned statistics of language diversity are a necessary previous step to carry out language policies. (Hidalgo 2006c: 97; Cifuentes and Moctezuma 2006: 192; Terborg et al. 2007: 129). Classifying and labelling Mexican indigenous language is still a central concern for public institutions, as the production of a comprehensive catalogue of INALI in 2008 shows.

However, censuses should be interpreted cautiously due to their limitations and ideological biases (Khubchandani 2001). Fishman has summarised some caveats regarding censuses thus:

> The most important thing to remember is that censuses, admirable research tools though they may sometimes be, are, after all, the tool of a given sociocultural and ethnolinguistic establishment and are instituted to serve their masters' purposes, not only with respect to *what* is asked, but with respect to *when* and *how*, as well as with respect to *what particular analyses are undertaken, how they are performed and what findings are reported* with respect to the data on hand (1991: 40, emphasis in original).

Official censuses are prone to raise a number of sociolinguistic problems. The information censuses yield can only be approximate, owing to many complex and uncontrolled variables that enter into play when administered. One central issue in the case of stigmatised languages such as Maya is concealment (*ocultamiento*). In the excerpt below anthropologist Manuel Peraza highlights two key issues: the interrelationship between linguistic insecurity based on purist ideologies and language

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79 Cifuentes and Moctezuma (2006: 241) have looked at national censuses since the 1940s. In 1940 there were in Mexico 50.34% bilinguals and 49.66% monolinguals; in 1970 the ratio was 72.36% to 27.64%; in 2000 it was 81.47% to 16.58%.
80 The *Dirección General de Estadística* was founded in 1882.

concealment. This is what Manuel reports when a census taker visited his house to gather information for the last census of 2010:

Testimony 3.1

Fíjate que mucha gente declara no hablar maya en los censos, cuando fueron a hacer el censo en la casa en este último la muchacha, no estaba preguntando, daba por hecho de que no se hablaba maya, por ser Mérida y ver la casa y la familia y dan por un hecho de que no, pero tú tienes que preguntar, y yo sé maya, y mucha gente lo oculta porque dice no hablar maya puro, eso que hablo no hablo bien, muy españolizado, a los albañiles por ejemplo yo los contrato y vienen a casa y están hablando maya entre ellos, luego les hablo maya y me contestan en español ¿No saben maya? Bueno sí la sé, me dicen, pero muy mezclada, muy españolizada, ya que entran en confianza ya me empiezan a hablar maya, cuando me ven me saludan, pero pasa muchísimo esto en la ciudad sobre todo el ocultamiento.

[Manuel Peraza 11.08.2011 Mérida].

As Manuel explains, the census taker assumes that dwellers of a middle-class house in certain neighbourhoods of Mérida are monolingual Spanish-speakers. Among 'meridanos' there is a widespread awareness of a socioeconomic division between the north and the south of the city, the latter holding growing neighbourhoods made up of migrants from the countryside, many of them Maya speakers.[81] In an urban environment where concealing one's language is used to avoid discrimination, or symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1991), sociolinguistic census results must be taken with caution. Also, figures might be different if census takers were themselves speakers of Maya and the interviews to gather information were held in Maya or in Maya and Spanish. As Rocío Esquivel argued in an interview, "hay mucho ocultamiento, yo digo que si el INEGI usara personal que habla la lengua maya y el censo se hiciera en maya, aparecerían más hablantes de maya".[82]

Reliability of official figures has to do not only with the problem of self-reported data, a particularly salient issue for stigmatised languages, but also with more crucial ideological definitions of language and speaker in the first place (Mackey 2003: 65). In their work in central Mexico, Kenneth Hill and Jane Hill problematise the concept of 'speaker of a language' and argue that "we cannot define the notion 'speaker of a language' on a priori linguistic grounds. Such a concept must be locally situated and is constructed in the speech community through ongoing negotiations among its

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81 Iturriaga (2010: 122) includes a useful map which indicates the division of Mérida into districts and the distribution of the population along social and ethnic lines.
82 Interview with Rocío Esquivel (2.4.2012 Mérida).

members" (1986: 141). Resonant with the situation in Yucatán, these authors highlight syncretic ways of speaking in central Mexico that escape easy language categorisation. There are other fundamental issues to be considered when trying to establish taxonomic classifications through censuses that lead to language essentialisation (Urla 1993). Some of these have to do with the social, psychological and political implications of stating in an official survey that one speaks an indigenous language and also with the categories that respondents choose to name what they speak.[83] Moreover, based on detailed analysis of the Mexican national censuses from 1970 to 2000, Cifuentes and Moctezuma conclude that "due to the impossible task of establishing precise limits between languages and dialects, official surveys are known for offering one single option or one single name for entities that are quite complex" (2006: 199). One telling example is the use in the 2005 census of the plural term 'languages' to group the varieties of Chinantec, Mixtec and Zapotec, while Nahuatl, although rather diversified as well, was considered a single language.

Such information may be strategically used by official institutions but also by activists. Thus, according to official censuses, Yucatec Maya is placed in the second position among Mexican indigenous languages in terms of number of speakers. However, following INALI's catalogue, some Maya linguists maintain that it should be the first indigenous language in the ranking since it is a homogeneous language with only one variant, while Nahuatl is formed by a group of thirty variants, to use INALI's terminology.[84] This shows how informed speakers of minorised languages can strategically appropriate an essentialising ideology based on linguistic homogeneity and number of speakers, which usually underpins official policies for the spread of dominant languages. Also, despite little dialectal variation, the idea that many speakers use a mixed variety of Maya, which is heavily influenced by Spanish and often perceived as inauthentic, may have consequences for the data collected by language censuses. For all these reasons, it is necessary to carry out more fine-grained qualitative and ethnographic research to find out real patterns of language use and refine, compare and critique self-reported results obtained by national censuses.

In spite of the inherent pitfalls and inconsistencies of national of censuses, they are useful, albeit approximate, estimations of general patterns of language shift that

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83 The three questions included in the INEGI census are: 1. Do you speak any indigenous dialect or language? 2. What dialect or language do you speak? 3. Do you also speak Spanish?
84 For an example of this strategic use among activists, see: http://elchilambalam.com/2012/02/la-maya-es-la-lengua-indigena-mas-viva-en-mexico/. For a classification of Mexican indigenous languages, see: http://www.inali.gob.mx/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].

have provided both scholars and policy makers with a useful sociolinguistic overview of the country (Cifuentes and Moctezuma 2006). It is therefore worth taking a closer look at the current trends of language shift in Yucatán based on these figures.

3.8   Current Trends of Language Shift to Spanish in Yucatán

As noted above, economic subordination and sociocultural stigmatisation of Maya speakers in Yucatán are the main causes of language shift to Spanish (Bracamonte and Lizama 2004, 2008). The result is that Spanish has become the only expected language in many domains of use and a widely preferred language of intergenerational transmission to children.

However, in spite of an extended institutionalised programme of linguistic assimilation through education from the *indigenista* period up to the present, Maya is still spoken, although with varying degrees of vitality, in all the 106 municipalities of Yucatán state (Güémez Pineda 2008: 123). According to INEGI (2010), only the state of Oaxaca (34.2%) has a larger percentage of speakers of indigenous languages than Yucatán (30.3%), the main difference being the enormous linguistic diversity of the former state, whereas Yucatec Maya is the language of 98.7% of the people who speak an indigenous language in Yucatán. Also, Maya speakers are among the indigenous groups with the highest rates of bilingualism in Mexico, with just above 90% (Cifuentes and Moctezuma 2006: 240). This is explained by the particular concomitant historical processes of hispanisation and mayanisation in the region, as discussed above.

A longitudinal look at censuses shows that relatively rapid shift to Spanish is underway. While in the 1950s and 1960s indigenous language retention figures for Yucatán state were 63.8% and 53.3% respectively (Heath 1972: 174), INEGI statistics of subsequent decades point to shrinking numbers of monolingual speakers of an indigenous language, decreasing percentages of speakers of an indigenous language in relative terms, growing rates of bilingualism and, finally, increasing numbers of absolute speakers of an indigenous languages, which again in Yucatán state is almost tantamount to Yucatec Maya (see below table 3.1 for a longitudinal view of the last two decades). Similar decreasing percentages are found in tables 2 and 3, based on INEGI figures for Quintana Roo and Campeche. These trends are common for many other indigenous languages of Mexico (Cifuentes and Moctezuma 2006).

The increase in absolute numbers of speakers of indigenous languages is explained by the dramatic demographic growth of Mexico in the last century, which was, especially during the 1960s, one of the highest in the world (Feliciano 2010: 605).

Although the birth growth rates began to slow down as of the 1980s, the population of Yucatán has almost tripled in forty years, from 643,432 inhabitants in 1970 to 1,772,252 in 2010. Even more striking is the demographic growth of Quintana Roo, which has followed similar patterns in just two decades (see table 3.2). This trend regarding absolute numbers, however, is changing. A comparison between the results of 2000 and 2010 shows a decrease in the absolute number of speakers of an indigenous language for the first time (549,532 speakers and 537,516 speakers, respectively). Similar processes can be found in Campeche.

Table 3.1 Speakers of an indigenous language in Yucatán state.

YUCATÁN*	1990	2000	2010
Speakers of an indigenous language	525,264	549,532	537,516
Speakers of both an indigenous language and Spanish	475,962	497,722	487,751
Speakers of an indigenous language but no Spanish	40,813	48,066	40,273
Total population	1,188,433	1,472,683	1,772,252
Percentage of total population who speaks an indigenous language	**44,2%**	**37,3%**	**30,3%**

* All figures take into account population of five years old and over only. Source: INEGI (Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2010).

Table 3.2 Speakers of an indigenous language in Quintana Roo.

QUINTANA ROO*	1990	2000	2010
Speakers of an indigenous language	133,081	173,592	196,060
Total population	412,868	755,442	1,173,159
Percentage of total population who speaks an indigenous language	**32,2%**	**22,9%**	**16,9%**

* All figures take into account population of five years old and over only. Source: INEGI (Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2010).

Table 3.3 Speakers of an indigenous language in Campeche.

CAMPECHE*	1990	2000	2010
Speakers of an indigenous language	86,676	93,765	91,094
Total population	456,452	606,699	739,127
Percentage of total population who speaks an indigenous language	**18,9%**	**15,4%**	**12,3%**

* All figures take into account population of five years old and over only. Source: INEGI (Censo General de Población y Vivienda 2010).

The INEGI document that summarises the result of the last census explains this decrease in speakers of Maya as a consequence of macrosocial factors (economic, political and cultural conditions) that have impinged on language transmission. No explicit mention is made of discrimination and marginalisation as the driving force accompanying those processes:

> Las variaciones al respecto se explican por las condiciones económicas, políticas y culturales en que vive esta población, lo que tiene relación directa con el comportamiento lingüístico e impacta en la manera en que se transmite o se afirma el uso del idioma (INEGI 2010: 43).

Sociolinguistic research focusing on language abandonment in Yucatán is not extensive but some works based on census data have also noted an overall language shift to Spanish in Yucatán in the last decades (Pfeiler 1999; Güémez Pineda 2008). Pfeiler (1999) proposed a regional division into economic areas of the Peninsula according to the production of their primary sector (henequen in the north west, corn in the centre and south east, fruit in the south west, livestock in the north east, and fishing on the coast). This division reflects the sharp variation of Maya language vitality in each area, with highest use in the corn production zone and lowest in fishing towns. In the last national census of 2010 most municipalities singled out by INEGI as having the highest percentage of Maya speakers in Yucatán state (all of them above 90%) are located precisely in the south east area of the state bordering with Quintana Roo (see map 3.1 below). It is also the area where a number of rebellious Maya withdrew after the Caste War. This region, where corn growing is widespread, is considered the most genuine Maya area and the heartland of the Maya language. It is not a coincidence that the only place where I have seen children spontaneously playing and talking in Maya during my fieldwork was the village of Tihosuco, which is located in a contiguous area of Quintana Roo. Also, isolated areas with traditional means of production and highest rates of marginalisation and poverty correspond to high levels of indigenous language retention and self-ascription to the category of indigenous person (Bracamonte and Lizama 2004, 2008; INEGI 2010).
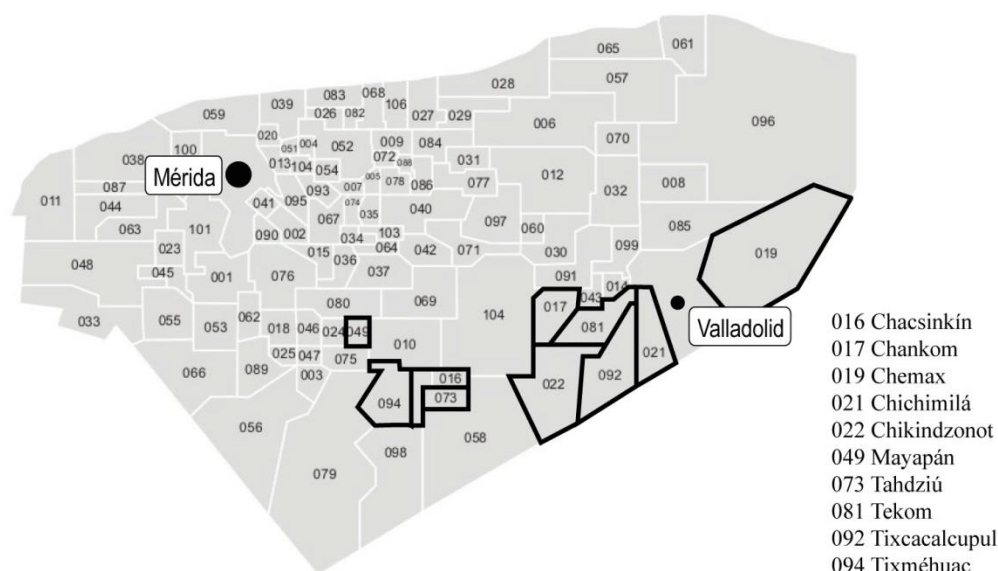
Map 3.1 Municipalities in Yucatán with over 90% of Maya speakers (INEGI 2010).

Official figures are useful to paint a broad sociolinguistic picture of Maya language use in Yucatán. Nevertheless, detailed ethnographic work can shed light on actual microprocesses of language retention and loss that are taking place on the ground. In this sense, Canché et al. (2010) looked at patterns of intergenerational transmission of Maya in Timucuy and noted the key role that the extended family plays in the vitality of Maya.[85] However, this extended type of family is often affected by the macro-socioeconomic transformations mentioned above and a transition from extended to nuclear family seems to be ongoing in Yucatán (Guzmán 2005: 208). Also, migration and the incorporation of women to the labour market are two central social processes deeply reconfiguring traditional Maya households and gender relations (Bianet Castellanos 2007). In the traditional type of family Maya still retains meaningful sociocultural functions, which partly derived from the existence of a monolingual or at least Maya dominant older generation (Canché et al 2010; Chi 2011).

Owing to recent demographic and socioeconomic changes, sociolinguistic research in Mexico that focuses on language contact in urban contexts is an area of research in need of urgent attention.[86] It is important to investigate the use of Maya in the metropolitan area of Mérida and its potential role as a site for language revitalisation, not only because that municipality already concentrates the largest number of Maya speakers on the Peninsula, with over 90,000 people (INEGI 2010), but also because the capital of Yucatán is a prominent environment for racism and discrimination (Iturriaga 2010). I will give two examples to illustrate this point. The first is an anecdote that José Chablé, a researcher who teaches Maya at a university in Mérida, recounted in an interview:

Testimony 3.2

En un descanso de las clases salí con una alumna a comprar al súper. Estábamos platicando y llegamos al cajero y seguimos platicando en maya. Y el cajero se nos queda viendo y yo seguía hablando, y dice él: "No les estoy entendiendo", me dice. ¿Perdón? "No les estoy entendiendo". Y le digo, "pues es que no es la idea que nos entiendas". Y se puso así incómodo como sintiendo una falta de respeto… El problema es que el comentario de ese señor se lo hace a mi primo o a un paisano y completamente seguro que dejan de hablar maya y se van a sentir mal.

[José Chablé 5.4.2011 Mérida].

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85 See Gaskins (2006) for the key role that interactions within the extended family, particularly with siblings, play in socialisation among Maya children.
86 Martín Butragueño (2010b) is a notable exception that touches on indigenous languages in urban contexts. His work, though, mainly focuses on variationist sociolinguistics and dialectology of Mexican Spanish.

Prejudice, particularly widespread in urban contexts, still works toward language shift to Spanish. Speaking Maya in Mérida, as the example above shows, is still seen by the supposedly monolingual cashier of the supermarket as 'lack of respect'. Implicit in José's comments is the importance of social position and class to contest these discriminatory situations. José is a young professional, and a teacher of Maya too, working at a university and is therefore less affected by linguistic insecurity. According to him, there is no doubt that a cousin or a 'paisano' (someone from his village) would switch to Spanish while in Mérida to shun stigma associated with origin and class. The second example comes from an interview with Diego Che, a civil servant working for the CDI. Diego points out the deterrent effect that discrimination and marginalisation have had in the formation of a strong Maya identity:

Testimony 3.3

Hemos estado reasumiendo nuestra identidad, es uno de los problemas que tenemos, no hemos asumido bien nuestra identidad, obviamente es muy dificultoso porque la discriminación es muy fuerte acá, las otras instancias de la sociedad que nos marginan tienen mayor fuerza que nosotros. Tenemos todavía una posición muy débil, no tenemos estructuras, no tenemos organización. Sin embargo, en la última década sentimos que tanto los adultos como los jóvenes empiezan a fijarse y a asumir su identidad y a defenderla que es lo que creemos que va a darle mayor fuerza en corto plazo a nuestra presencia como pueblo porque algunos de nosotros defendemos que somos una sociedad dentro de la sociedad general. Somos la sociedad maya con nuestras características porque somos un pueblo, y que no somos esa cultura intangible con la que nos quieren identificar, o antigua, esa civilización, estamos aquí, estamos en todos lados y hemos estado en todos lados, en los camiones, en los elevadores, en los jardines, en los hoteles de cinco estrellas, en cualquier edificio vas a encontrar un maya, no por otra cosa, porque aquí estamos. Somos los que construimos este estado, o esta región, somos los que hacemos todos los trabajos, y por fortuna, a lo mejor no muchos pero un grupo pequeño hemos roto la barrera de la marginación y hemos llegado a las universidades.

[Diego Che 28.07.2011 Mérida].

The growing number of urban Maya speakers, as noted by Diego, is evidence to dispel the well-entrenched myth, as used in official discourses, which correlates Maya speakers with rural identities. Changes in patterns of settlement due to migration and increasing mobility are blurring clear-cut distinctions between rural and urban life, which is better described as a continuum. It is remarkable how Diego locates the Maya on the socioeconomic ladder of Yucatán, giving examples of the kind of jobs they have.

The 'invisibility' of Mayas in cities is rebutted by Diego who says that "Maya people are everywhere and have been everywhere". Indeed, a flagship campaign of INDEMAYA during the PAN administration of Yucatán state (2000-2006) was called *Wey yano'one*, which means 'Here we are' in Maya. In this excerpt the interviewee is weaving a string of fundamental topics together to portray sociolinguistic minorisation in Yucatán. Thus, Diego begins with the key issue of discrimination; then he connects it with the lack of indigenous political organisation in the region, which is a common concern among Maya activists; next he emphasises the fact that the Mayas are 'a people', a statement which needs to be seen against the background of institutional discourses that consider the Maya people as 'communities'.[87] As noted, there is not a significant indigenous movement in Yucatán which rallies around the construction of a distinct indigenous identity (see the following section; also Castillo Cocom 2004: 271). Furthermore, Diego mentions the need to supersede a discourse that extols a forgone Maya civilisation linked with praise of its magnificent intangible heritage. This is a somewhat contradictory statement since it is the tangible heritage of the Mayas, particularly the Maya ruins (Chichén Itzá, Uxmal and Calakmul), that UNESCO included in the list of World Heritage List and that most people both in Mexico and abroad associate with Mayas. Diego finally mentions an increasing social and spatial mobility among Mayas and in a circular way he concludes his comments with the issue of marginalisation.

In sum, like many other Mexican cities, Mérida has become a sociolinguistic environment in which speakers of other indigenous languages such as Chol and Tzeltal come into contact with both Spanish and Maya speakers in ways that to my knowledge have not been researched yet. Lastly, the interrelation between two distinct varieties of Spanish (Yucatec Spanish and Standard Mexican Spanish) should be added to this complex linguistic ecology that forms a hierarchical order depending on the prestige and values attached to speakers of each variety.

3.9   Language, Ethnicity, and Identity in Yucatán

While the joint study of language and ethnic identity is a vast field of sociolinguistics research, a short review on the historiography of Maya identity and some terminology is in order. Several researchers have pointed out the quite varied and murky concepts used to label the inhabitants of Yucatán. To begin with, whether the ethnonym Maya was

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87 On May 3, 2011, the Congress of Yucatán passed the 'Ley para la Protección de los Derechos de la Comunidad Maya del Estado de Yucatán'. I briefly discuss this law, which entered into force on January 1, 2012, in the next chapter.

imposed by the conquerors, used spontaneously for self-identification by the inhabitants of the Peninsula, or adopted after being imposed from without is a contentious issue that deserves some comment.

Drawing on colonial texts, Restall (2004) observes that the term Maya was not used by the indigenous people of Yucatán as a term of self-identification during colonial times, despite a common sense of shared practices. It was the concept of 'race' imposed from without by the Spanish conquerors, the Caste War of the nineteenth century, and the ethnic policies undertaken by the Mexican nation-state in the twentieth century that cemented what he considers a process of 'Maya ethnogenesis'. Likewise, Gabbert (2004) questions the existence of clear-cut ethnic boundaries between two distinct communities (Maya Indians and descendants of the Spanish conquerors) and of a conscious ethnic grouping among the Maya. As for current language use, Gabbert stresses the fact that "[m]ost speakers of the Yucatec Maya language reject being considered Indian and refuse to employ the term Maya as self-identification" (2004: xi). Along similar lines, Castañeda notes that for most present-day Maya speakers, even monolingual ones, the Maya are those that built the pyramids and "all are long gone" (2004: 41).

These stances also emerged in my own fieldwork and in conversations with Maya speakers. Rocío Esquivel, a Yucatecan anthropologist, recounted that "es difícil realmente que la gente de manera espontánea en el campo se autoidentifique en términos étnicos, y mucho menos como maya".[88] The adjective 'ancient' usually accompanies the noun Maya, a kind of collocation that is further reinforced by public official discourses that link the Mayas with the ancestors who built the pyramids. An archaeological view on the Maya is widespread in other parts of Mexico and, at least in my experience, it was not uncommon to meet Mexicans who were shocked to hear that the Maya language and culture continue to exist on the Yucatán Peninsula. At the official level, the ethnonym Maya is used to name some official and academic institutions (INDEMAYA, Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo), and a few civil associations, such as *Maya'on* (we are Maya), *Miatsil Maaya* (Mayan Culture), CEPROMAYA (Centro Promotor Cultural Maya), and CELICMAYAB (Centro Lingüístico del Mayab). It should also be noted that the success of the brand 'Maya Riviera', located on the Caribbean coast of Quintana Roo, is a prominent example of the complex interrelations between the development of mass tourism and the folklorisation and

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88 Interview with Rocío Esquivel (2.4.2012 Mérida).

commodification of a distinct cultural identity (Marín Guardado 2010 for Quintana Roo). These issues also emerged my interviews. Thus, several intellectuals who have capitalised on their indigenous identity use the term Maya for self-ascription and the phrase 'el pueblo maya', the Maya people, is often referred to in an essentialist way, as in the previous excerpt by Diego. Similarly, Fernando Segovia, an intellectual and writer, noted that:

Testimony 3.4

Yo he señalado también públicamente que en Yucatán entre las fuentes de mayor ingreso está el turismo, después del turismo están las remesas, pero yo les digo están matando la gallina de los huevos de oro y entonces de qué va a subsistir el estado. Yucatán no recibe el turismo solo porque es Yucatán. Yucatán tiene un trasfondo que es el pueblo maya, mejor dicho, tiene una esencia que es pueblo maya, y entonces si no lo vemos en ese nivel si lo volvemos folclor bueno el folclor lo puede reproducir cualquiera, medio aprendes cómo se baila, medio aprendes cómo se habla, medio aprendes cómo se hace una ceremonia, lo haces, lo folclorizas pero no es la esencia de la cultura, claro.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

This reflection touches on the idea of a Maya 'essence' of Yucatán, a connection with the roots, which is a frequent discourse in processes of ethnocultural revalorisation and *rescate*. Fernando points out the dangers of an institutional folklorisation of the Maya culture. What needs to be emphasised as well is that while Maya culture is being used for tourist consumption and appropriated by official institutions for marketing purposes, as Fernando notes, political mobilisation among Maya speakers is as yet almost non-existent in Yucatán.

The Maya identification is but one of the many facets in which the indigenous population deploy their social identities. The use of varied terminology is important for understanding the origins of social category formation in Yucatán. Unlike other regions with Maya population such as Chiapas or Guatemala, ethnicity in Yucatán does not play a determinant role in 'polarising' social groups (Castañeda 2004: 52). The lack of a term such as 'ladino', used especially in Guatemala to refer to hispanicised people, shows the difficulty of labelling the non-Maya population in Yucatán, who are not known as mestizos in contrast to the rest of Mexico, as I explain below.[89]

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89 'Ladino' is used in Guatemala and Chiapas for native Spanish-speakers of mainly mixed European and American descent. Garzon (1998: 39) notes that although that term is used by indigenous peoples and social scientists, Ladinos rarely use it as a term of self-ascription.

Other researchers, however, express a differing view to this constructivist approach to identity formation. While acknowledging the importance of foregrounding an antiessentialist approach to identity and its changing historical configurations, Bracamonte (2007: 216) argues that the use of the term Maya to name the province and the language spoken by the indigenous population is in itself strong evidence that supports the existence of a collective Maya self-ascription.

Whatever position is taken, there have been myriad labels to define the autochthonous population of Yucatán, arising from a number of situational, contingent and relational markers that have to do with social class, gender, and language use. Further to the term Maya, there are geographical classifications such as Mexican, Yucatecan and, as microethnic identification is primordial, from one's village (Gutiérrez Chong 1999: 40). Other terms may be added to this complex terminology: '*indio*', '*macehual*' (a loanword from Nahuatl meaning 'commoner', 'unprivileged', mainly used in Quintana Roo), '*indígena*', '*mestizo*', and '*mayero*'. According to a survey carried out in 2008 (Bracamonte and Lizama 2008), the terms 'Yucatecan' (40%), '*mayero*', Maya speaker, (32,9%), and even 'Mexican' (9,9%) were all given far more importance than the term 'Maya' (9,5%).[90]

As regards this terminology, apart from noting the highly derogatory connotation of the word '*indio*', the term mestizo has a particular and distinct meaning in Yucatán, which is different from the notion of mestizo as used in other regions of Mexico to refer to the outcome of indigenous and European miscegenation. In Yucatán mestizo is a highly polysemic word that generally refers to indigenous people and especially to indigenous women ('mestizas') who don the traditional regional dress, the *hipil* (Loewe 2011: 61).[91] In Yucatán the specific use of this designation, which may be a euphemism to avoid the pejorative '*indio*' (Loewe 2011: 8), seems to have its origins in the cleavage between the 'rebel' Maya and the 'peaceful' Maya in the aftermath of the Caste War of the nineteenth century. The 'peaceful' Mayas, namely those who did not join the rebellion, were subsequently given the title of 'hidalgo' and classified as mestizos, since '*indio*' and 'rebel' had become synonymous terms after the war. Quintal (2005: 314) maintains, however, that it was not until the post-revolutionary period that the term mestizo became generalised. She writes that:

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90 In Yucatán Quintal (2005: 343) notes that it is around the town of Peto that more often people identify themselves as Maya. This is probably due to the fact that the federal Radio XEPET is located in that town. I shall look at federal radios in chapter 7.
91 The *hipil* is a dress embroidered around the neckline and the hemline, also spelled *huipil*.

La Revolución Mexicana que llego a Yucatán en 1915 como "socialismo" y la política popular de regímenes como el de Salvador Alvarado y Felipe Carrillo Puerto trajeron a muchos mayas libertad, calzado y letras. "Rasgos" todos éstos propios de los mestizos. A algunos también les trajo nuevamente sus tierras ancestrales. Quizá entonces los indios empezaron a ser considerados mestizos (2005: 325).

Quintal (2005: 328) adds that the traditional dress was a trait that mestizos were abandoning at that time, and that Indians, especially women, continued to wear. This fact could have triggered the transference of the name mestizo to the indigenous population.

Further to this analysis of local terminology, the word 'mayero' is especially significant because it refers to people who speak Maya and points to the existence of a term of identification based on language use. As for its saliency as a marker of ethnic identity, Lizama (2007: 137) notes that while almost 90% of respondents to the EMPIMAYA survey of 2004 acknowledged the term '*mayero*' as a form of ethnic identification, only 11% considered it as the most important feature for self-ascription. Results are strikingly different from the survey of 2008 where the term '*mayero*' was preferred by almost 33% of the respondents. The contrast in results between the two surveys may have to do with the choice of municipalities, which belong to altogether different geographical areas, with a high percentage of Maya speakers in the latter case.

A key issue to understand links between language and identity in Yucatán is that historically it was not uncommon for elites to be bilingual in Spanish and Maya and, therefore, speaking Maya was not necessarily tantamount to belonging to the lower strata of society. This is what linguist Lope Blanch wrote in the mid-1980s:

Más de la mitad de la población yucateca (casi su 55%) habla la lengua maya, en tanto que los monolingües en español apenas rebasan el 45%. Además, el conocimiento del maya no está restringido a la población rural o popular – marginada y carente de prestigio–, sino que se extiende sobre buena parte de la población urbana y aun culta de la península (1987: 9).

Maya has traditionally moved across social class boundaries in Yucatán, although usage by the elites is the result of an entrenched socioeconomic subordination of Maya people. Rocío Esquivel, for instance, recounted that:

Testimony 3.5

Yo cuando empecé a trabajar en la zona de Valladolid [in the 1990s] pues la élite hablaba maya, sobre todo es cierto para dirigirse a los sirvientes y a los empleados.

> Entonces era común que una señora ahí racista y muy encopetada y muy discriminadora usara la lengua maya.
>
> [Rocío Esquivel 2.4.2012 Mérida].

Lope Blanch's comments on the use of Maya by 'cultivated' peoples would be considered outlandish in the current context of rapid language shift to Spanish in which urban migration and stigmatisation play a key role.[92] It is against this background of language abandonment that an essential link between the Maya language and an indigenous identity is gaining strength.

All in all, it is important to underline the dynamic and adaptive nature of ethnicity in Yucatán. The fuzzy and ideologically loaded terminology that crosscuts ethnic and social boundaries cannot be simply conceived of in binary terms. This profusion of labels, either imposed or chosen, reflect different aspects of the multiple and fluid identities, or rather identifications (Eriksen 2010: 71), that indigenous peoples of Yucatán deploy in their social interactions and that may be strategically used. A case in point is the growing currency of the term '*indígena*', a label used by official institutions of Mexico when designing assistance-based programmes which can be appropriated by minorised peoples.

Exploring the links between language abandonment and the pejorative use of most of the above terms is much needed, since studies of this kind are still largely missing (but see Lizama 2013). Public and 'expert' discourses in Yucatán are arguably following global changes in sociocultural nomenclature, and ethnicity, with its emphasis on cultural specificities, is largely replacing the more traditional, and biologically based term 'race', which is now a somehow outdated term (Eriksen 2010: 5). While the indigenous population of Yucatán does not generally use the ethnonym Maya for self-ascription, the phrase '*etnia Maya*' often crops up in scientific works (see López Santillán 2010, 2011) and in the press, which may lead to a reification and pigeonholing of a heterogeneous segment of the population of Yucatán. I have not found the term 'ethnic' to refer to dominant social classes in Yucatán. In this respect Williams has observed that "the concept of ethnicity is denigratory in the sense that it treats ethnicity as deviation from the dominant norm and it is little wonder, therefore, that the dominant group tends not to be conceived of in terms of ethnicity" (1992: 216). It is unsurprising therefore that the terms 'ethnic' and 'minority' have become such a common collocation in the scholarship. In any case, we cannot lose sight of the social power imbalances that

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92 In chapter 6 I will have more to say about the use of Yucatec Spanish by elites.

exist in Yucatán and which are often reflected in the labels that are used, or rather imposed, to categorise Maya speakers as an 'ethnic group'.

3.10 Conclusion

Despite the demographic havoc caused by the Spanish invasion in the sixteenth century, a good number of indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica and their languages, unlike their counterparts in the Caribbean, managed to survive contact. The dominant position of Spanish as a superimposed language was not achieved in the colonial period, in spite of specific legislation aimed at that goal, but the ideological foundations of linguistic inequality were laid for the subsequent period of nation building in the nineteenth century. After Independence, language policy and planning in Mexico oscillated between discursive acknowledgment of the indigenous heritage, a primordial component of a distinct Mexican national identity, and actual policies giving Spanish a pre-eminent position in all public domains. These policies paved the way for the stigmatisation of indigenous languages. As of the late nineteenth century, the extension of secular formal education became a prominent tool to homogenise a culturally and linguistically diverse population, a strategy that would take a more radical and profound turn in the post-revolutionary period. The intellectual justification for these assimilationist policies was based on the myth of *mestizaje*, whose exaltation became "a pretext to justify further subordination of indigenous peoples' (de la Peña 2006: 293). Thus, after long periods of assimilationist policies carried out to 'civilise', 'incorporate', or 'integrate' the indigenous populations, recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity has finally been achieved in the twenty-first century, at least as official discourse.

In Yucatán, against the backdrop of growing urbanisation and the service industry since the 1970s, socioeconomic subordination of the Maya people and cultural and linguistic stigmatisation has been furthered. The minorisation process has made Maya an overwhelmingly oral language, at present mainly used in the private domain by decreasing numbers of speakers. However, Maya was the majority language in Yucatán until relatively recently and de facto an 'official' and written language for centuries, first used in hieroglyphic and then, after the conquest, in alphabetic script. The main themes that have stood out in this historical review (education, literacy and legislation) are still central in the current ideological debates on Maya language promotion in Yucatán, as I show in the following chapters. The encompassing process of language minorisation that took place in the twentieth century in Yucatán, owing to socioeconomic transformations and persistent discrimination, has gathered a particularly

rapid pace in the last four decades. Statistics based on national censuses point to widespread language shift to Spanish, a trend confirmed by ethnographic works carried out in different locales of the Yucatán Peninsula. While speaking an indigenous language has historically been a key criterion for institutional classification of indigeneity in Mexico, Maya was generally used until fairly recently by people that belonged to different social strata in Yucatán. In this sense, sociohistorical studies in Yucatán have stressed the loose link that has traditionally existed between speaking Maya and the performance of an indigenous identity.

In the following chapters I will discuss how some Maya activists, particularly those of an older generation and many of them working for official institutions, are constructing a somewhat essentialist discourse that closely intertwines identity, language, and indigeneity. The essentialist positions of some activists and institutional language policies that underpin language legitimation create tensions and contradictions. Thus, as I explore in chapter 6, specific linguistic ideologies such as purism, arising as by-products of these essentialist views, need also be considered because they can hinder rather than propel language revitalisation.

Before I deal in detail with the prominent issue of purism, I examine below discourses on two main domains where institutional language policies and planning to promote Mexican indigenous languages are devised, namely, language legislation and the education system. These two domains are inextricably bound up with the development of literacy, which is also a central theme of discussion among official institutions and grassroots activists.

Chapter 4. Discourses of Language Legislation

4.1   Introduction

In this chapter I set out to analyse discourses of Maya language lesgislation in Yucatán against the backdrop of current global and national debates on language rights. First, I briefly introduce these contemporary scholarly debates on linguistic rights which, stemming from differing epistemological positions, point not only to the benefits of those rights but also to their contradictory nature and even the potential negative effects on minorised languages. Next, I review the latest legislative changes in Mexico that deal with the recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity. Of particular interest is the General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2003), whose contents I examine to give the legal framework in which discourses on language rights are generally articulated in Mexico. To conclude, I highlight the possibilities and limitations of the language rights paradigm in relation with Maya language revitalisation in Yucatán based on the recent passing of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Maya Communities of Yucatán State (2011), and, particularly, on primary data gathered in the field.

4.2   The Centrality of Language Rights in Recent Sociolinguistic Debates

Although still in the process of being more clearly defined and in constant development, language rights have become a basic component of the struggles in which minorised groups are involved to maintain their cultural specificity (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 211, Skutnabb-Kangas 2009: 373; de Varennes 2010; May 2012a). While only a very small percentage of the world languages have any kind of official status, language rights have become increasingly prominent in the field of language policy (Ricento 2009).[93] This paradigm is not without problems though, particularly as regards the issue of language essentialisation (Freeland and Patrick 2004; Duchêne and Heller 2007; May 2003).

On a global scale language rights have been included in some international documents, such as the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 of 1989 concerning Indigenous Peoples in Independent Countries. This document, ratified by Mexico in 1990, is "the only internationally *binding* instrument aimed specifically at protecting the rights of indigenous peoples" (May 2012a: 290, emphasis in original).

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93 Nettle and Romaine (2000: 39) state that fewer than 4% of the world's languages are officially recognised by nation-states. Stephen May (2012a: 5) suggests that the figure may be less than 1.5%.

Furthermore, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted in 2007, although not legally binding, was finally passed after almost two decades of indigenous claims.[94] Along with specific legislation, de Varennes (2010: 267) has aptly noted that, whereas linguistic rights are not explicitly stated yet in international law, many individual language rights are in fact protected by fundamental international human rights law, such as freedom of expression and the right to interpreting in judicial procedures.[95] In any case, there seems to be an urgent need for cross-disciplinary work in the field of linguistic human rights, since the very concepts that constitute the backbone of the discipline, such as mother tongue, ethnolinguistic identity, first language, language community, individual and collective rights to mention but a few, are used differently by sociolinguists and lawyers (Kontra et al. 1999: 4; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 2008).

Against this background, both the possibilities and limitations of the language rights paradigm have been lately placed at the centre of considerable debate among anthropological linguists, sociolinguists, political scientists, lawyers and applied linguists. I present below divergent positions taken by scholars, since this debate will help us to frame the issue as it pertains to Mexico and, particularly, to Yucatán.

4.3   A Critique of the Language Rights Paradigm

It may be argued that the language rights paradigm has its ideological foundation in a particular European conception of language that is neither ideologically neutral nor universally accepted (Freeland and Patrick 2004: 4). In fact, discourses of language rights are rooted in the European sociopolitical history and, more specifically, in a notion of language that has its origin in the Enlightenment period (Bauman and Briggs 2000, 2003). According to this view, languages are conceived of as clearly identifiable and nameable codes that are often closely intertwined with identity, culture, and the nation, as the classic Herderian conceptual triad goes. It is not a coincidence that a good number of documents such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992); the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992); and the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) have both

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94 The Working Group on Indigenous Population within the UN was set up in 1982. The first draft of the Declaration was issued in 1993 (May 2012a: 291).
95 De Varennes (2010: 276) points out the exception of the minor provision of Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which entered into forced in 1976. See also May (2012a: 198) for a discussion of the scope of that covenant.

European origin and scope. Furthermore, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, drafted by the Council of Europe in 1992, is one of the very few instruments to date devoted to language diversity with some binding force in Europe (de Witte 2008).[96] The first article of the Charter states that it only applies to languages with a territorial base, explicitly excluding 'migrant' languages and so-called 'dialects' of official languages.[97] Needless to say, what counts as a 'migrant' language or a 'dialect' depends on highly ideological arguments with social and political consequences for speakers of those languages who are usually placed at the bottom of a sociolinguistic hierarchy. The classification of languages in the European Charter is underpinned by the ideology of standard languages, which routinely enjoy "authenticity and universality" as sources of authority (Gal 2006: 166). This approach raises a number of contradictions stemming from clashes between these ideologies and sociolinguistic realities 'on the ground' (Freeland and Patrick 2004: 1). Thus, the often taken for granted link between speakers, their languages, local environments and worldviews must be problematised. A critique of discourses of locality implicit in the language rights paradigm is especially significant in a world where mobility is on the increase, diasporas are numerous, and the deterritorialisation of language is becoming ever more prominent (Blommaert 2004, 2010). In the case of Yucatán, for instance, it is estimated that between 50,000 and 80,000 Yucatec Maya speakers live in California (INDEMAYA 2005). Notwithstanding the importance of territory for the sociocultural reproduction of any given group and the fact that indigenous claims may establish an indivisible link between language, culture, identity and territory (López 2008b: 145), these critiques should be carefully considered.

Discourses of language rights are still deeply embedded within the political framework of the nation-state. This means that legislation related to language rights is more often than not the result of top down language policies in control of the nation-state apparatus. This will become apparent in my analysis of language legislation in Mexico below. Monica Heller, for example, writes that "the concept of linguistic minority only makes sense today within an ideological framework of *nationalism* in which language is central to the construction of the nation" (1999: 7, her emphasis). Therefore, linguistic minorities are the creations of nation-states and remain under the

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96 The Council of Europe, a suprastate organisation with little political power, is not to be confused with the European Union or any of its governing bodies such as the European Commission.
97 The Charter can be consulted online at: http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/148.htm [Accessed 23.8.2013].

rule of nation-states, which ultimately establish the legal framework in which minorities live (Freeland and Patrick 2004: 5).

The linguistic rights paradigm may be effective for relatively large, literate language communities with a significant degree of political autonomy. Quebec, Catalonia and Wales are well-known examples. As Whiteley writes, these regions have been "long involved in the arena of the nation-state politics at a level recognizable within the state's own terms" (2003: 713).[98] However, the appropriation of this paradigm to promote mainly oral languages of disenfranchised communities, as Yucatec Maya, raises important contradictions and dilemmas that I address below.[99] Lastly, declaring a subordinate language 'official', let alone 'national', will not arrest language abandonment unless the structural sociopolitical and economic conditions that cause minorisation are challenged in the first place. In this sense, Blommaert reminds us that "declaring languages equal does not make their speakers equal in real societies, because far more than language is at play" (2001: 138). Thus, demands about language rights are usually part of broader political, social and economic struggles (Freeland and Patrick 2004: 29; Jaffe 2004: 278; also Cameron 1995). Against this background, most ethnic conflicts around the world nowadays take place at the intrastate level rather than between nation-states (de Varennes 2010). In sum, for the time being existing international instruments on language rights are dwarfed by the political power that nation-states can exert within their own borders (Mackey 2003; Heller 2008; Blommaert 2010).

A particular view of language rights, the 'linguistic human rights' (LHR) framework, has been proposed, among others, by Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994; Phillipson 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Using a series of binary principles Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) has described LHR as variously individual and collective, negative (toleration-oriented) and positive (promotion-oriented), personal and territorial, and appearing in soft and hard laws, that is, in non-binding and binding legislation. Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) maintains that education systems and mass media are the main direct agents of linguistic and cultural genocide. She advocates "the unconditional right to mother tongue medium education" (2009: 383), along with the right to learn the official/dominant language, as a necessary

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98 This does not mean that once autonomous regions are granted language rights, these are not challenged by the nation-state, such as the recent attacks on immersion schools in Catalonia by the conservative central government based in Madrid.
99 For other examples, see Patrick's (2005) account of the contrasting relationship of Aboriginal populations and French speakers vis-à-vis the Canadian state. See also Whiteley (2003) for an analysis of these contradictions within Hopi communities in the US.

condition to counter current assimilationist educational policies. This categorical statement regarding blanket support for mother tongue education and an over-reliance on the school as a site of revitalisation is not without problems, as I discussed in chapter 1. I will have more to say about the limitations of formal education for language revitalisation in Yucatán in the next chapter.

The LHR framework puts a strong emphasis on nameable languages as the recipients of rights. This may have the consequence of overlooking speakers, who are the ultimate agents involved in processes of language shift. Skutnabb-Kangas's use of highly sensitive terminology (e.g. language genocide and language suicide), and biomorphic metaphors (e.g. languages are 'murdered', the 'killing' of languages) has been critiqued for being "too emotive and conspirational" (May 2003: 119).[100] The reification of languages and the use of anthropomorphic metaphors crop up in her discourse of language rights in the same article. She states that:

> Languages themselves may have rights to be used, developed and maintained. Alternatively, people or collectivities of people (individuals, groups, peoples, organisations, or states) may have rights to use, develop and maintain languages or duties to enable the use, development or maintenance of them (2009: 374).

According to this view, languages are not only objectified but can even become the 'subjects' of rights and become legal personalities. In short, the LHR paradigm is based on an essentialist view of languages as nameable and bounded codes. This framework fits well with official language policies that often privilege a limited set of languages at the expense of other communicative practices.

Several scholars have noted the problems that the reification of language raises in many small, basically oral, communities (Whiteley 2003). Similar problems emerge in highly multilingual contexts where singling out languages proves difficult. Based on his experience with Indian languages, Khubchandani (1994) has suggested the term 'communication rights' to supersede the LHR paradigm. Moreover, from the viewpoint of political theory, Kymlicka and Patten have argued that "[a]ny attempt to define a set of rights that applies to all linguistic groups, no matter how small and dispersed, is likely to end up focusing on modest claims" (2003: 11). They go on to emphasise the

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100 See also critiques by Blommaert (2010), Kirkpatrick (2009), and Mufwene (2002) of the idea of English as a 'killer' language. These terms may sound exaggerated in contexts where the word genocide expresses its whole terrible meaning. Brenzinger (2009: 38) provides some telling examples of whole communities that have been wiped out as a result of the civil war in Sudan.

myriad situations of linguistic communities around the world, along with their different aspirations and struggles, which a universalistic approach to LHR cannot encompass.

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson have rebutted much of the critiques on essentialism maintaining that:

> Much of the scholarly 'debate' in sociolinguistics fails to appreciate that when LHR require formulation in the conceptual worldview of international and national law, terms like 'language' cannot be subjected to apolitical post-modern academic hair-splitting (2008: 9).

Despite the problems raised by linguistic essentialism and the too often assumed link between language, identity and territory, the dominant discourse of 'hard edge' languages may also be appropriated by minorised groups in their struggles for linguistic rights (Freeland and Patrick 2004: 8).[101] As Jaffe reminds us, "the celebration of multiplicity, hybridity and ambivalence is not a powerful discursive position. That is, the pragmatic, political contexts of seeking language rights tend to impose essentialist discourses" (2004: 278).

These dilemmas also emerge in Yucatán where discourses that essentialise both the Maya people and their language are common, as I show below. The essentialisation of Maya is deemed necessary in the current struggle for ethnolinguistic recognition in Yucatán even if it clashes with vernacular language practices on the ground. For one thing, critical discourses of essentialisation produced in anthropological research clash with the discourses of some language activists, who may find 'strategic essentialism' particularly useful for their sociocultural and political demands (Spivak 1993). In Brazil, for instance, Laura Graham (2002) has shown how indigenous peoples make strategic decisions about language use based on the appropriation of Western linguistic ideologies such as the idea that language is the main badge of identity and that monolingualism is the norm. For another thing, in Guatemala Warren (1998) has explored the ways in which a postmodern critique of essentialism has frustrated indigenous political mobilisation (see also Rappaport 2005 for Colombia).

While the role of language may not always be a salient marker of identity, I have already noted that speaking Maya is increasingly taking centre stage in identity politics among Maya activists in Yucatán. This overt and strategic emphasis that links language

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101 A paradigmatic European example is Slovenia, a historically minorised language community surrounded by larger ethnolinguistic groups, which has heavily relied upon the Slovenian language for nation-building. However, the essentialisation of Slovenian has not prevented most Slovenians from becoming highly multilingual (Roter 2010). Admittedly, this is a European example that may prove to be difficult to extrapolate to Latin America.

and identity in minorised peoples is taken for granted and seldom made visible among dominant groups. Jaffe (2004) highlights the ethical implications of recognising this contingent relation thus:

> For majority speakers, the identity functions their language fills for them are so powerfully inscribed in their day-to-day experiences within dominant social institutions and domains of practice that they are rendered almost invisible. This invisibility makes it possible for those majority speakers to be dismissive of the identity functions of language in general. This dismissal emerges discursively in the exploitation of the contingent relationship between language and identity (that we endorse as linguists and social scientists) to trivialize minority speakers' socially, politically and historically grounded experiences of identification through language (2004: 277).

This sort of 'banal' link between language and identity among speakers of dominant languages needs to be made apparent to dispel the idea that only minorised languages are intimately linked to identity (Billig 1995).

In conclusion, in spite of the limitations of the language rights paradigm, these debates have overall helped to increase sensitivity about the protection of language diversity worldwide. In Latin America most national constitutions have been recently reformed to accommodate cultural and linguistic pluralism, and specific laws have been passed with a view to, theoretically at least, promoting language diversity. Eventually, however, it is a close inspection of speakers' ideologies on the ground and their communicative practices that explain processes of language abandonment. One particularly interesting question is, therefore, to find out to what extent language reproduction is ultimately affected, if at all, by the development and consolidation of the linguistic rights paradigm.

4.4   Language Legislation in Mexico

Language legislation in Latin America has significantly evolved in the last two decades. A large number of national constitutions (Colombia 2005; Ecuador 2008; Bolivia 2009, just to mention a few of the recent reforms) have included the recognition of cultural diversity and, particularly, plurilingualism as an important component of the nation-state (Sieder 2002).[102] As noted above, from an international perspective the recognition of minority rights has been gaining ground and the ILO Convention 169, approved in 1989, was ratified a year later by Mexico. The Mexican constitution of 1917 finally

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102 Nicaragua passed a constitutional reform already in 1987 to acknowledge its pluricultural composition and to grant autonomy to the Atlantic Coast region (Sánchez-Álvarez 2012: 18).

recognised indigenous peoples in 1992 (PINALI 2009: 29). However, iIt was not until 2001 that the constitution was amended to state in article 2 that:

> The Nation has a multicultural composition based originally on its indigenous peoples, who are the descendants of populations that inhabited the current territory that makes up the country, at the beginning of the colonial period, and they preserved their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions, or at least partially.[103]

The amendment to recognise the contribution of indigenous peoples in Mexico is the result of a historical process of indigenous struggle and negotiations with the nation-state. The inclusion of the aforementioned article in the federal constitution, acknowledging the multicultural composition of Mexico based on its indigenous origin, stems from recent sociopolitical indigenous demands dating back from the 1970s but, especially, in the aftermath of the Zapatista upsurge in mid-1990s. The San Andrés Larráinzar Accords signed in 1996 by the Zapatista army and the federal government were the base for the constitutional reform of 2001 (PINALI 2009: 30). While the COCOPA (Commission for Concordance and Pacification) was formed after the Zapatista uprising, the Accords were ultimately watered down by the federal government and promises of self-determination and autonomy for indigenous peoples were never kept by the Mexican government (Díaz-Polanco 2005; de la Peña 2006). The recognition of the multicultural character of the nation is, however, an important symbolic achievement since Mexico, in spite of its division into three administrative levels (federation, states and municipalities), is an "all-embracing and vertical case of nation-state building" (Hamel 2008: 301).[104]

The General Law on Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2003 (hereafter, LGDLPI) became the first law to directly address multilingualism in Mexico.[105] The final text, which was based on previous drafts and drawing on international proposals, recognises both the individual and collective linguistic rights of indigenous peoples; acknowledges the contribution of these languages to the Mexican cultural heritage, and grants the status of national languages, along with Spanish, to all indigenous languages (as singled out by a language catalogue to be compiled by INALI). The General Law of

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103 Published in the *Diario Oficial*, April 25, 2001. See also Pellicer et al (2006:162).

104 This does not mean, however, that there are not tensions between centripetal power of the capital and centrifugal federalism of the states.

105 See Pellicer et al. (2007) and Espadas (2008) for a detailed account of the process of drafting the law. Espadas, a Yucatec Maya linguist and a member of the PRD party (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*), was one of the two proponents of this law.

Education was also modified in 2003 (article 7, section IV) to include a paragraph on access to compulsory education in indigenous languages and Spanish by speakers of indigenous languages.[106]

Whereas the LGDLPI can be viewed as a symbolic achievement to acknowledge language diversity in Mexico, it contains several flaws that need to be highlighted in order to grasp its real scope. Firstly, as its name indicates, it exclusively concerns the indigenous population, setting them apart from the mainstream society. The law focuses on the "compensatory nature of minority rights" (Pellicer et al 2007: 147) and follows the historical paternalist approach towards indigenous peoples. The dominant discourse in this law stresses the value of indigenous languages as an integral part of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the nation (see article 3), an idea that lies at the core of nation-building efforts in Mexico (Brading 1985; Bonfil Batalla 1996; Florescano 2001).[107] Indigenous languages are in need of protection and preservation and, therefore, verbs such as *difundir, supervisar, apoyar, procurar* (disseminate, supervise, support, encourage) with positive connotations but no binding force at all are common in the wording of the law.

In their critique of the LGDLPI, Pellicer et al point out the "pervasive vagueness in the definition of those very entities which constitute the object of these rights" (2006: 146) and recognise the inherent difficulties in producing a nomenclature for all Mexican indigenous languages. As already noted, the issue of establishing the number of languages, and more importantly the number of speakers of each language, is essential in Mexico to ascribe ethnic identity and devise policies for indigenous peoples (Hidalgo 2006c: 97; Cifuentes and Moctezuma 2006: 192). It is within this framework that in 2008 INALI, the main federal body in charge of fostering indigenous languages, produced a catalogue (as mandated in article 20 of the LGDLPI) with the purpose of singling out and labelling all those languages. The aim of the catalogue was to refine the generic definition of 'national' languages, as stated in article 4 of the LGDLPI. Constituting a clearly separate ethnolinguistic community with a named language has therefore become key with a view to benefiting from official policies devised by INALI,

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106 General Law of Education (1993, reformed on 13.3.2003), Article 7, section IV: Promover mediante la enseñanza el conocimiento de la pluralidad lingüística de la Nación y el respeto a los derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas. Los hablantes de lenguas indígenas, tendrán acceso a la educación obligatoria en su propia lengua y español.
107 Artículo 3: Las lenguas indígenas son parte integrante del patrimonio cultural y lingüístico nacional. La pluralidad de lenguas indígenas es una de las principales expresiones de la composición pluricultural de la Nación Mexicana.

which mainly focus on language standardisation.[108] This approach is arguably a continuation of a historical endeavour to catalogue the languages of Mexico that began in the nineteenth century (Cifuentes 2002).

It is also worth noting that the legal principle of 'official status' does not appear in the LGDLPI. This is not surprising since the Mexican constitution does not include an article on the legal status of Spanish either. Although Spanish is *de facto* the official language of Mexico, it is not official *de iure*. Along these lines, in their analysis of the law Eva Pons and Alicia Johnson note that:

> La calificación como *lenguas nacionales*, interpretada sistemáticamente y a la luz del derecho comparado, sintetizaría la asunción del valor de esas lenguas como parte del patrimonio histórico y cultural del país y de su igual dignidad con el español. Se destaca así su carácter simbólico, mientras que los efectos jurídicos que se derivan de dicha noción son limitados, como se deduce también del silencio elocuente de la Ley sobre la oficialidad del castellano, que sólo es presupuesta por el legislador (2005: 95, their emphasis).

What article 4 of the LGDLPI states, however, is that both Spanish and indigenous languages are 'national' languages and "have the same validity in the territories, localities and contexts where they are spoken", a statement that again strongly links language with territory.[109] Thus, from the legal point of view, ascribing the status of national languages to all indigenous languages is a symbolic measure with little effect on granting effective language rights to speakers.

Moreover, the promotion and use of indigenous languages in domains such as the judicial system, the school, and the mass media are fraught with problems. Fuelled by INALI's policies, one of the pressing challenges is the need for indigenous languages, mostly used in their oral form, to go through a whole process of standardisation to be fully viable in the aforementioned domains. This process raises the issue of creating specialised terminology (corpus planning) and the need to train translators and interpreters in the numerous Mexican indigenous languages. The emphasis on literacy creates tensions with indigenous customary law, which is based on oral practices (Pellicer et al 2006: 149).[110]

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108 Article 2: El reconocimiento de los pueblos y comunidades indígenas se hará en las constituciones y leyes de las entidades federativas, las que deberán tomar en cuenta, además de los principios generales establecidos en los párrafos anteriores de este artículo, *criterios etnolingüísticos* y de asentamiento físico (my emphasis).

109 This is also the case of national constitutions in Latin American countries such as Peru (1993, artícle 48) and Colombia (1991, article 10). See details at:
http://pdba.georgetown.edu/constitutions/constudies.html [Accessed 23.8.2013].

110 See Rappaport (2005, particularly chapter 7) for similar dilemmas in Colombia.

Decades ago several authors noted the importance of taking into account, respect, and legitimise indigenous forms of justice (Stavenhagen and Iturralde 1990). Indeed, laws on cultural indigenous rights have lately been drafted in Mexican states with significant numbers of indigenous population. Quintana Roo and Campeche, for instance, have had laws on indigenous justice and rights for more than a decade now.[111] In Yucatan state a similar law, which I briefly discuss below, was not passed until 2011. From the perspective of language policy and planning, it is perhaps not languages *per se* that need to be protected or preserved, but rather those domains and cultural practices in which indigenous languages are functional and play a significant role. One of these domains may well be customary law. Also, it bears mention that while Maya is mainly used nowadays in its oral form, there exists an extensive corpus of legal documents made up of land sales, wills, records of election, etc. which were written in Maya in colonial times (Restall 1997; Hanks 2010), although that does not mean that literacy was widespread at that time.

Another aspect covered by the LGDLPI is the mass media. These are in the hands of conglomerates, basically the duopoly formed by Televisa and TV Azteca, both of which widely favour Spanish as the dominant language. Canal 13, the state television channel of Yucatán, only offers a very short daily summary of news in Maya. As for radio, there are some 20 *indigenist* radio stations making use of indigenous languages but they are mainly supported by the CDI, which is a federal institution. Indigenous control over mass media is rare, as the recent struggle for the recognition of community radios show (Calleja and Solís 2007). I will discuss media and the use of Maya in more detail in chapter 7.

Overall, in the domains of education, media and justice, Pellicer et al. observe that "the Law's limited scope derives from its subordinate position to the Reform in Indian Affairs, the normativity and structure of the Ministry of Public Education, and the Federal Radio and Television Legislations" (2006: 127). In a nutshell, the essential shortcomings of the LGDLPI are its vague discursive nature, the subsequent lack of enforcement, and its subordinate position within the Mexican legal system.

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111 These laws are: Yucatán, Ley para la Protección de los Derechos de la Comunidad Maya del Estado de Yucatán (2011); Quintana Roo, Ley de Derechos, Cultura y Organización Indígena del Estado de Quintana Roo (1998, amended in 2007) and Ley de Justicia Indígena del Estado de Quintana Roo (2007); Campeche, Ley de Derechos, Cultura y Organización de los Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Estado de Campeche (2000).

4.5   Recent legislative changes in Yucatán

Before delving into the contents of the interviews below, I will briefly discuss the specific legal framework regarding the Maya language and culture in the state of Yucatán. Along the same lines as the federal legislation, the constitution of Yucatán recognises the Maya people as the original contributors to the cultural composition of the state. This fact is stated in article 2 in the following way:

> Art. 2 El Estado tiene una composición pluricultural sustentada originalmente en el pueblo maya, el cual desciende de la población que habitaba la península yucateca, al iniciarse la colonización; que conserva sus propios conocimientos, manifestaciones e idioma, así como sus instituciones sociales, económicas y culturales o parte de ellas.

Thus, the pluricultural composition of Yucatán is underpinned by the Maya people, who are identified as the original inhabitants of the Peninsula. In article 7 the right to free determination and autonomy is included, although within the unity of the nation-state. Furthermore, sections II and V of article 7 refer to language and the juridical status of the Maya people of Yucatán:

> Artículo 7 Bis**.-** Se reconoce el derecho a la libre determinación del pueblo maya, bajo un marco autonómico en armonía con la unidad Estatal, conforme a las siguientes prerrogativas y atribuciones:
> II.- Preservar y enriquecer el idioma maya Peninsular, los conocimientos y todos los elementos que constituyan la cultura e identidad del pueblo maya yucateco; para tal efecto, el Estado garantizará, la promoción, difusión, preservación y desarrollo de la lengua maya, por lo que a través de los Poderes públicos y órdenes de gobierno, en el ámbito de sus respectivas competencias, reconocerá, protegerá y promoverá su preservación, uso y desarrollo, en los términos de ley.
> V.- Los integrantes del pueblo maya serán considerados como sujetos de derecho público, tendrán acceso pleno a la jurisdicción del estado, en todos los juicios y procedimientos **e**n que sean parte, individual o colectivamente, por lo que se deberán tomar en cuenta sus prácticas jurídicas y especificidades culturales, respetando los preceptos de esta Constitución; con derecho a ser asistidos por intérprete y defensor, en su propio idioma y cultura.

Therefore, free determination and autonomy are political principles theoretically recognised by Yucatecan constitution for the Maya people. Paragraph II touches upon the Maya language and uses juridically vague wording similar to the LGDLPI, with an emphasis on the 'promotion', 'enrichment', 'spread', 'preservation' and 'development' of Maya. Paragraph V is particularly relevant because Maya people, who are now considered 'subjects of public law', were previously referred to as 'subjects of public

interest'. I shall return to this issue below. That same paragraph also acknowledges juridical practices of the Maya and the right to be assisted by an interpreter in their own language and culture.

Additionally, in May 2011 the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Maya Community of Yucatán State was passed. Although there is no space here for an in-depth analysis of that law, which mainly deals with indigenous customary law ('usos y constumbres'), I will underline some of its shortcomings. To begin with, this Law opted for the word 'community' rather than 'people' since this latter term is more politically charged than the former. The rationale of this law stems from a profound essentialisation of Maya peoples, who are labelled throughout the text as a 'minoría' (minority) and an 'etnia' (ethnic group), to the point that a specific chapter is devoted to the creation of a 'registro estatal' (state registrar) of all the Maya communities in Yucatán. That Maya people are increasingly on the move (both within the borders of the nation-state and transnationally), urbanised, and with complex identifications and language use makes this goal challenging, to say the least. These trends are, incidentally, shared by many other indigenous communities across Latin America (Jackson and Warren 2005). Specific articles of this law also include references to language promotion (e.g. article 14, chapter 1, Title 2), but again declarative and vague statements without development in secondary legislation are put forward. Paragraph VIII of article 14 illustrates this point stating that the Executive Branch of Yucatán state shall "promote the recovery and preservation of the Maya language".[112] The potential implementation of this law, which is subordinated to the federal juridical system, corresponds to INDEMAYA. No mention is made, though, of budgetary issues to impart Maya justice. The limitations of a juridical framework that recognises only in a tokenistic way indigenous rights emerged in the interviews with some intellectuals.

In sum, the national and regional laws reviewed above may have some influence at a symbolic level, but it is doubtful whether they will have any positive effects on most indigenous speakers' attitudes and, eventually, on arresting shift to Spanish. Without radical transformations, the introduction of minorised languages in domains that have precisely been instrumental for hegemonic policies of assimilation, particularly the formal education system, may not be the most fruitful strategy for implementing successful policies of language revitalisation. While official discourses that recognise cultural and linguistic diversity may be seen in a positive light,

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112 Original section in Spanish: Promover el rescate y la conservación de la Lengua Maya (sic), tradiciones, costumbres y demás aspectos relacionados con su entorno cultural.

government control and regulation of rights legitimises structures of power that further subordinate indigenous peoples. In this sense, both Speed (2005) and Sieder (2002) have thoroughly criticised the discourse of 'human rights' and 'multiculturalism', which has been appropriated by official institutions in Mexico to actually curtail indigenous rights. Speed argues that "despite the Mexican state's initial 'multicultural moves' in the 1992 constitutional reform, there is a clear government reticence to institute anything more than the most limited reforms or, rather, reforms that further limit indigenous autonomy" (2005: 39).

Language policies, as Romaine (2002) stressed, cannot just be based on top down initiatives such as language legislation since laws on their own may have a negligible impact on language reproduction. Fundamental changes in economic, political and social rights may have a more direct repercussion on patterns of language use than the recognition of specifically linguistic rights. Thus, critically, issues of territory and autonomy in the negotiations that ensued from the Zapatista uprising in the late 1990s were far more contentious issues for the Mexican nation-state than cultural and educational rights (Pellicer et al. 2006: 136).

4.6   Discourses of Language Legislation in Yucatán

Language legislation was a prominent topic in the accounts gathered in the interviews. This is not surprising since many participants work in governmental institutions, such as INDEMAYA or the CDI, whose aim is to cater for the development of indigenous peoples, or they have been involved in the promotion of Maya through education. Because of their jobs and activism, participants were aware of international debates on language rights and, particularly, of the latest legislative changes in Mexico and Yucatán.

In spite of this seemingly favourable legal framework, which recognises the role of the Maya people in the making of Yucatán state and the value of their language and culture, according to my interviewees, these declarations have had so far little positive impact on the effective promotion of Maya. More specifically, some participants commented on the possibilities of this new legal framework for political mobilisation. In this vein, Fernando Segovia (FS), a Mayan activist and writer who had recently participated in a round table on the juridical situation of Maya, pointed out that:

Testimony 4.1

FS: El hecho de que se reconozca la condición pluriétnica de Yucatán es ya importante y además ocurrió algo que hasta pareció chistoso gracias a la ignorancia

de nuestros diputados. En la legislación federal se reconoce a los pueblos originarios como sujetos de interés público y en el estado nunca se dieron cuenta del gol que se les metió porque reconocieron al pueblo maya como sujetos de derecho público.
Josep: Que es diferente.
FS: Claro, quienes entendemos esto nos parece interesante pero bueno en realidad en los hechos no sucede gran cosa, ¿no? No sucede gran cosa en la medida en que nosotros como pueblo no tenemos esa capacidad de reclamar la rentabilidad política.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

According to Fernando, members of the Yucatecan congress unwittingly recognised Maya people as 'subjects of public law', going beyond the consideration of 'entities of public interest', which is the phrasing that appears in the Mexican constitution.[113] The effects of this different legal consideration may be ultimately negligible, since the constitution of Yucatán is legally subordinated to the federal constitution. As noted, the LGDLPI and the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Maya Community are declarative instruments because specific secondary legislation has not been developed to implement them. What is more, other secondary legislation curtails the rights apparently recognised in those declarative laws, as I explain in chapter 7 when dealing with media in Mexican indigenous languages.

'Hay que pasar más al activismo': on the lack of political mobilisation
The lack of political mobilisation, especially in Yucatán state, a strategy of obvious importance to demand and negotiate any kind of rights, is also of special interest in Fernando's observation above. Reflecting on lack of activism in Yucatán, he further stated that:

Testimony 4.2

Definitivamente yo creo que hay que pasar más al activismo, de esta actitud discursiva a un activismo un poco más dinámico, más, no sé, corporativo porque nos falta contagiar y lograr que se mueva la gente hacia ciertos fines. Me parece que hay que cambiar eso.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

In the same interview Fernando later observed that "no se han creado espacios de liderazgo entre los mayas que permitan avanzar" (spaces of leadership for advancement

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113 Guillermo de la Peña (2006: 292) notes that in the San Andrés accords indigenous peoples demanded recognition as 'entities of public rights' but that claim was not included in the 2001 constitutional reform.

among the Maya have not been created). Along these lines, Gutiérrez Chong (1999), who also based her research on discourses of indigenous intellectuals, wrote more than a decade ago that:

> Indigenous educated people have constructed a discourse critical of official nationalism, and some expressions of ethnic identity do persist, although such manifestations of identity are by no means crystallized into an ethnopolitical project seeking autonomy or separation from the central state. In fact, none of the organisations and professionals and intellectuals studied here has made clear demands to challenge the authority of the state (1999: 204).

In Yucatán there are neither political parties nor strong grassroots organisations led by Mayas, and direct political participation, with Maya politicians in prominent positions, is almost non-existent. Consequently, indigenous policies are decided by non-indigenous politicians. Sergio Poot, a primary school teacher and activist, commented on this issue thus:

> Testimony 4.3
>
> Sí, lo hablábamos los compañeros el otro día, el mismo presidente de la Cámara de Diputados de México dice que son los mismos indígenas quienes tienen que participar en la política y estar aquí con nosotros para que nos podamos entender y entonces mientras no se participe, no se va llegando a esos puestos públicos, no son los verdaderos indígenas, la asociación, la conciencia política, la necesidad de participar, todo eso es importante.
>
> [Sergio Poot 9.4.2010 Mérida].

In the same interview very similar remarks were made by Valerio Cauich, a young teacher that works for the DGEI:

> Testimony 4.4
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> De hecho, durante la jornada del Día Mundial de las Lenguas Maternas se estuvo llevando a cabo varias actividades, varias conferencias sobre, uno de ellas es por ejemplo el papel de las instituciones hacia la lengua maya, el otro tema fue por qué es importante hablar la lengua maya, el otro fue de quién depende la sobrevivencia de la lengua maya y el último se hizo en el Congreso del Estado sobre el papel de la legislación, qué están haciendo los diputados, qué están haciendo pues todas esas personas, y hay en el congreso algunos diputados que supuestamente deben apoyar a los pueblos indígenas y estuvieron allá y pues como decimos acá, se estuvieron tirando la bolita. No, no pues es que yo los invito a que vengan a participar, los otros no se acercan y así no puedo trabajar y entonces entre que los invitan y no los invitan, pasaron tres o cuatro años y no hicieron nada por la lengua y entonces eso sí es un problema.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

In sum, politicians do not have real interest in indigenous rights and without significant indigenous participation in political parties, the only option is to expect that elected politicians respond to demands. When civil servants supposedly show interest, they blame each other ('se estuvieron tirando la bolita') for the lack of support for indigenous issues. Bernardo Aguilar, a member of Maya'on, one of the few existing Maya associations, further summarised the sociopolitical situation in this way:

Testimony 4.5

A la sociedad maya le falta ser más demandante porque sí que tomemos conciencia de nuestra fuerza como ciudadanos que votamos y que como ciudadanos demandemos eso en campaña y que públicamente condicionemos nuestro voto. El candidato se tiene que comprometer y si se compromete y no lo cumple, si la sociedad le demanda, serían otras las cosas que sucederían en la sociedad, entonces es muy fuerte el trabajo que hay que hacer para que la sociedad maya decida gestionar, se movilice.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) has sponsored television and radio spots in Maya to encourage participation in elections but in stark contrast with other Mexican states, indigenous organisations are rather weak and political apathy is widespread in Yucatán, hence the emergence of the word 'conciencia' (consciousness, awareness) in Bernardo's comment.[114] There may be historical reasons for this lack of political mobilisation, a recurrent topic in the data gathered. One explanation that emerged in the interviews is the terrible consequences of the civil war of the nineteenth century (the Caste War of Yucatán), which deactivated subsequent indigenous political organisation on the Peninsula. Moreover, this lack of ethnopolitical mobilisation may also derive from a lack of a strong indigenous identification in the first place, as I have explained in the previous chapter. In any case, at present sociopolitical mobilisation and lobbying among Maya civil associations are lacking. Quintal (2005: 356) has underlined that only in the last decade of the twentieth century did indigenous organisations in the Yucatán Peninsula begin to be relatively autonomous from the state government and the official party (PRI).

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114 The Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE) is an autonomous, public organisation responsible for organising federal elections in Mexico.

'Que se haga el idioma maya oficial en el estado': on status planning

One common demand for language rights is to grant a language official status in a given territory. Indeed, the idea of making Maya official in Yucatán has been on the agenda of many activists and, especially, of the association Maya'on for decades now. This is how Bernardo Aguilar, a member of that organisation, expressed this historical demand:

Testimony 4.6

Aunque la asociación Maya'on tiene ya casi veinte años, nuestra gestión ha sido más en la plano de la demanda, ha sido una constante demanda sobre todo a las instituciones, a la sociedad que gobierna. ¿Por qué como demanda? Porque si Maya'on se pone a alfabetizar en lengua maya solo vamos a alfabetizar a la gente que está cerca, junto a nosotros, si lo demandamos a las instituciones que además tienen la obligación de hacerlo, tendría un impacto amplio, masivo, entonces por eso nuestros esfuerzos se centran más en el aspecto de la demanda, incluso la demanda argumenta, plantea que no solamente las instituciones permitan o enseñen el idioma maya, sino que se institucionalice la enseñanza a partir de un marco jurídico de reconocimiento que haga al idioma maya un idioma obligatorio, oficial en el estado para que su uso sea en todos los ámbitos de la vida social. Esa es la demanda que hacemos, incluso Maya'on ha redactado un documento que se denomina 'Bases para la oficialización de la lengua maya' y se lo hemos dado, en su oportunidad cuando lo produjimos, lo entregamos a los gobiernos de Yucatán, Campeche y Quintana Roo.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

In 1994 Maya'on drafted the Declaration of Valladolid to demand official recognition for the Maya language in Yucatán, but as yet with no results. The endeavour of conferring Maya official status has, on the one hand, the goal of making this language more visible in society and raising its profile, a project that fits well within current discourses of revalorisation. On the other hand, giving official status to Maya is closely linked to the educational arena, which is deemed by many activists as a key domain for promotion through acquisition planning. The main argument developed by Bernardo is that top down policies, such as the compulsory use of Maya in schools, and its subsequent institutionalisation, are necessary. The reason is that these top down policies may reach a large number of people in comparison with the grassroots work of civil associations, which have very limited power and scope, at least for the moment, to promote Maya. Considering the analysis of the LGDLPI above, the demand to make Maya official runs counter to the general Mexican legislative framework in which not even Spanish is official *de iure*. Unsurprisingly, this goal has been so far unattainable. Some interviewees, particularly those that work in government institutions, are acutely

aware of the difficulties that this demand entails. As Azucena Castillo (AC) and Mariano Dominguez (MD) explained:

Testimony 4.7

AC: Esto de la oficialización forma parte de esta agenda y fue una iniciativa de esa persona. Entonces él ya te podrá contar con mayor detalle y también de allá derivó como colofón un documento que también te platicarán de diez puntos que tratan de sintetizar demandas históricas pero muy concretas, ¿no? que no de la misma envergadura todas, unas son como oficializar la lengua maya y la otra es que se editen al menos cien libros en lengua maya, entonces, son de diverso nivel, pero no se revisó, fue una iniciativa que le falto su revisión, ¿no? que sí sintetiza unas demandas históricas de la lengua maya. Pero ya verás cómo las demandas, esto de la oficialización de la lengua maya pues realmente se va a topar con muchas reflexiones y discusiones, verdad, porque imagínate que oficializar una lengua no es cualquier cosa, máxime cuando no hay una lengua oficial, ¿no? Eso es palabras mayores, digamos.
MD: Ya lo ha dicho ella. Es un momento en el que sentimos que hay muchas oportunidades, aunque no haya salido la ley.
AC: Sea con, sin o contra la ley se va a trabajar por la lengua maya. Está atorado lo de la ley reglamentaria, sí sabes, justamente eso se analizó en la mesa panel sobre la situación jurídica. Finalmente la reflexión es con, sin o contra, la idea es seguirle.
MD: Cuántas leyes salen y se vuelven letra muerta.

[Azucena Castillo and Mariano Domínguez 13.4.2010 Mérida].

The context of this excerpt was the organisation of a round table on the juridical situation of the Maya language held in the Congress of Yucatán in March 2010, some weeks before this interview took place. Both Azucena and Mariano sum up the state of the art of a proposal to grant Maya official status. Firstly, the demand is not a new one. Secondly, Azucena notes that it is extremely difficult to grant official status to a subordinate language when the dominant language of the whole nation-state does not have that juridical status *de iure*. The law to which the interviewees are referring is the *ley reglamentaria* (regulatory law), namely, a law that defines the contents of a constitutional article. Transitory article 4 of the constitution of Yucatán, amended in 2007, states that a specific Law on Mayan Rights and Culture must be drafted within a year, although the law, which I briefly reviewed above, was not passed until 2011 and with a different name too.[115] Against this backdrop, Mariano and Azucena observe that government institutions are not particularly cooperative in supporting indigenous issues.

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115 Text in Spanish of the constitution of Yucatán: Articulo cuarto- La ley reglamentaria en materia de Derechos y Cultura Maya deberá emitirse dentro del plazo de un año, contado a partir de la entrada en vigor del presente Decreto. Online at: http://www.congresoyucatan.gob.mx/legislacion/constitucion-politica [Accessed 23.8.2013].

Therefore, struggling for cultural and linguistic rights, in this case for the official recognition of Maya, must be done, as Azucena puts it, with the help of the law, with no law, or even against the law. Mariano's reply reinforces this awareness of the scope of this particular demand stating that too often laws become *letra muerta* (dead letter). Also significant is the demand mentioned by Azucena that at least one hundred books be published in Maya. I shall deal with literacy issues in the next chapter.

The potential repercussions of granting official status to Maya were further highlighted by Francisco Tuz (FT), a civil servant working at INDEMAYA:

Testimony 4.8

FT: En el congreso hablaron de la oficialización, y que en México solamente existe un municipio, que ya no me acuerdo qué lengua indígena, es oficial, entonces, por qué solo un municipio, convertir todo el estado, y ese sería un ejemplo, un ejemplo en el sentido de que todo el mundo, si lo sabe, va a empezar a influirle, los anuncios, todo va a ser, no sé si es el caso de ustedes, cuando es oficial.
Josep: En nuestro caso es cooficial.
FT: Cuando haya esa fusión de ideas, la gente al acostumbrarse a ver, ya va a ser prácticamente, de poco en poco bilingüe, a lo mejor no llega al cien por cien, sobre todo la gente adulta que se les dificulta por más que quieran y todo, pero sí con los que vienen de abajo.

[Francisco Tuz 29.3.2010 Mérida].

The interviewee is referring to the exceptional case of the town of Huehuetla in the state of Puebla, which in 1993 declared Totonac its official language. Apart from this anecdotal example, there are two important ideas worth discussing in Francisco's contribution. The first is the belief in the consequences of making Maya official in the state of Yucatán. It does not follow from making a minorised language official that people will become bilingual. My interpretation of his words is that once Maya becomes official, implementation of bilingual policies in different domains will automatically ensue. These concrete policies would have, according to Francisco, a positive impact on the use of Maya, particularly on young people. Making Maya official and the subsequent increase in prestige might have an impact on people's perception of Maya and work towards its destigmatisation, but actual changes in linguistic behaviour would not be guaranteed. The second point has to do with the comparison with the situation in Spain, where Catalan is recognised as co-official in Catalan-speaking territories. This was not the first time that I was questioned about the situation in Catalonia, which is considered as a successful case of language recovery (Fishman 2001). Without a doubt, gaining recognition and even becoming relatively hegemonic in

some public domains such as the education system are important achievements, which are 'tolerated' by the nation-state authorities only after usually long and difficult periods of struggle and demand. However, as the Catalan case shows, other socioeconomic and political measures must also be carried out to ensure the long-term reproduction of subordinated languages.[116]

'Los oficios tienen que ser en español': on the institutional use of Maya

In Yucatán some institutionalised use of Maya, although exceptional, does exist. I observed, for instance, that Maya is commonly used among public servants working at INDEMAYA. However, more radical policies, such as making Maya compulsory for all civil servants in Yucatán, are firmly opposed.[117] In the following excerpt Fernando Segovia, who used to work at INDEMAYA, mentions this issue:

> Testimony 4.9
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> En el 2002 yo tuve la oportunidad de participar, bueno desde el 2001, como subdirector general del Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya. Mi primera propuesta es la administración pública bilingüe, después reconocí el error porque bueno un proyecto por muy humano que sea por muy importante que sea, su único camino es la estrategia para venderla, ¿no? Yo lancé a bocajarro el proyecto y se le pusieron de punta los pelos a medio mundo. Entonces dijeron no, dijeron no. Hay un organismo que se llama COPLAN, que es la Comisión de Planeación del Estado y les presenté el proyecto de la administración pública bilingüe y se les pusieron los pelos de punta y dijeron no, pero yo sigo creyendo que ese es un proyecto que realmente puede cambiar las cosas.
>
> [Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Making the Yucatecan public administration bilingual was a concrete proposal that, according to Fernando, *pone los pelos de punta* (it gives the creeps) to the state authorities. This proposal was not successful despite its potential to give visibility, increase the prestige, and encourage the public use of Maya. Apparently, the Yucatecan authorities at that time (2002) were not ready to tolerate bilingualism in the public administration. Even institutional bodies which should be, theoretically at least, sensitive to the public use of Maya such as INDEMAYA or INALI show the difficulty of changing the deeply engrained monoglossic practices of public institutions in Mexico. Jacinto May, who tried to use Maya in bureaucratic forms, recounted that:

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116 See Bastardas (2012) for a brief assessment of language policy in Catalonia and the need to strengthen intervention in the socioeconomic sphere and among the youth.
117 Compare for instance the more radical steps taken in Bolivia in this respect as a result of Article 5 of the 2009 constitution.

Testimony 4.10

De repente he hecho oficios en maya, al gobierno del Estado y al INDEMAYA y nunca me responden, y a veces llamo y les digo que les envié un oficio, y me dicen: ¡ah! bueno, si lo puede enviar en español… es el INDEMAYA, pero no, es que los oficios tienen que ser en español ¿Quién dice? ¿Quién dice que tienen que ser en español? Y les recuerdo el reglamento, pero no me responden.

[Jacinto May 25.8.2011 Mérida].

As we can infer from Jacinto's account, literate practices in indigenous languages are a 'nuisance' even for institutions that have been created to promote those languages.

Another pitfall is the ignorance by the majority of the population of the existence of a law on language rights. During my fieldwork I talked to many Maya speakers who were unaware of the existence of the LGDLPI. This situation is illustrated in the following excerpt in which Carlos Canul is referring to a conversation with a local politician from his own town:

Testimony 4.11

Yo le escribía al presidente municipal y le contaba sobre mi ciudad, veintiuna comisarías de mayahablantes y hay una ley general de derechos lingüísticos y hay un apartado de municipios que dice que debe aportar una cierta cantidad del presupuesto para la lengua, la cultura, y me decía, "no, no lo conozco, pero con mucho gusto". Ese es el problema, no lo conoce, nadie la conoce, ese es un problema muy grande, entonces yo le decía, con gusto se lo mando y todo.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Valerio Cauich gave a similar account:

Testimony 4.12

Otra cosa es el desconocimiento de la ley, que como asociación estamos viendo qué vamos a hacer al respecto, la ley dice que las lenguas originarias, junto con el español son válidas en todo el país, para hacer trámites, para hacer cantidad de cosas, o sea que si yo llego a una institución y no me atienden en maya, ellos tienen la responsabilidad de ofrecerme ese servicio porque mi lengua es válida en todo el país y en el contexto donde se usa en este caso si soy de Yucatán puedo hablar maya, pero como no sé de leyes, dicen no te puedo atender si no hablas español, entonces me doy la vuelta y me quito.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

A further issue is the dissemination of the contents of the LGDLPI through translations into indigenous languages in spite of extremely low literacy rates in those languages.[118] This general scenario of political disinterest has even been pointed out by INALI, which in a recent official document states that "en México existe desinterés de las autoridades por conocer y dar a conocer las leyes y una apatía generalizada de la gente para conocerla" (PINALI 2009: 32). The reasons for this situation are complex and have to do with social, economic and political issues rooted in Mexican history, such as the historical patronising policies toward indigenous peoples and profound democratic deficits. In this respect, it needs to be emphasised that one political party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) ruled the country for seven decades in the twentieth century, creating a deeply corporatist state with widespread clientelism.[119] In the following testimony Valerio Cauich further highlighted a general distrust in the political system and the belief that politicians do not deliver:

Testimony 4.13

Si se hace una ley para los pueblos indígenas los primeros que tienen que saberlo son los pueblos indígenas porque si lo sabe el pueblo indígena, lo que decías hace rato, creo que eso es lo que fortalece a las instituciones, a las organizaciones, en este caso no gubernamentales, ¿por qué? porque si yo sé qué es lo que el gobierno debe hacer por mí, yo voy y le digo ¿sabes qué? tú no estás cumpliendo y necesito que cumplas esto por mí, pero si no lo saben pues no pedimos y el gobierno, si no le pides pues mejor para él, ¿no? menos trabajo. Entonces, vuelvo a lo que decía hace rato, tenemos que despertar conciencia, fortalecer la identidad de la gente, hablo maya porque es importante, porque me sirve, porque ya no me van a menospreciar, entonces es importante que hable la lengua maya, pero entonces hay una parte que le corresponde al pueblo hacer y otra parte le corresponde a las instituciones gubernamentales. En Yucatán, por ejemplo, el congreso está en desacato, desacato es cuando hay una ley que deberían haber cumplido y no lo hicieron. Ya debieron de haber reglamentado la ley sobre lenguas indígenas, en este caso la lengua maya y no lo han hecho, entonces algunas instituciones dicen pues es que si ustedes no lo hacen es que nosotros no podemos hacer nada, y yo digo mentira, no es cierto, hay muchas cosas que nosotros podemos hacer y no tenemos que esperar que el gobierno lo haga.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

118 I was not able to locate exact figures of the number of people who are literate in Maya. In my interviews, some respondents gave the figure of 3-4%, while some others more optimistically raised the percentage to 6-7%.
119 A national survey was carried out in 2008 by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (Ministry of the Interior) in which 52% of respondents said to be little or not at all satisfied with the current democracy in Mexico. As for the assessment of specific institutions, the percentage of respondents who said they were very confident in the Church was 42, followed by the Army with 38%, the IFE (*Instituto Federal Electoral*) with 31%, the Chamber of Deputies with 8% and the Senate with 7%. Political parties were last with just 4% of confidence. http://www.encup.gob.mx/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].

This excerpt underscores the importance of learning about the existence of the LGDLPI. According to Valerio, it is a necessary first step that may trigger indigenous demands to governmental institutions. What is also interesting to point out is the diametrical opposition frequently expressed by participants between the policies of public institutions and citizens' interests. Other participants also stressed this uncooperative attitude from governmental institutions. Valerio draws attention to the fact that the Congress of Yucatán is in contempt ('está en desacato') because, as mentioned above, the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Maya Community of Yucatán State had not been passed yet in 2010. In view of this situation, many participants are acutely aware that activities to promote Maya need to be carried out from the grassroots.

Indeed, given the limitation of official policies, bottom up initiatives seem particularly necessary to revitalise Maya. In the excerpt below Rosa Nava observes the passive attitude of official authorities, the current lack of strong grassroots political organisations, and the reasons for it:

Testimony 4.14

A lo mejor si nos sentamos a esperar que lo haga las autoridades no lo van a hacer, tienen que empezar por la sociedad. Pero ¿sabes por qué nadie se atreve? Yo creo una red fuerte es sinónimo de fuerza política, si tu asociación, tu organización tiene fuerza política, ahí puedes empujar para que sea obligatorio, pero nadie está dispuesto a dar esa cara política, es temeroso.

[Rosa Nava 6.4.2010 Mérida].

Rosa's comment is important because she points to people's fear to organise themselves. This fear has to do with the interests of some activists, since many of them are part of those official institutions that are criticised in the first place. Finally, Fernando Segovia gives a similar view of the tensions between official institutions and civil associations:

Testimony 4.15

En el 2007 se hace la reforma constitucional donde finalmente se reconoce la existencia del pueblo maya y se establece que en un año debe ya de crearse una instancia diseñada y operada por el pueblo maya para que sea el interlocutor con el estado pero como lo asume el propio INDEMAYA. Bueno el INDEMAYA lo que hace es buscar cómo legitimarse como el interlocutor pero no se puede ser interlocutor si se es parte del estado. Entonces se legitima como el interlocutor y no se crea esta instancia como está establecido y diseñado por el pueblo maya y cuando se habla

entonces de una instancia que pueda organizar y normar el uso de la lengua maya, pues es que ahí está el INDEMAYA. Pero bueno dos cosas: han demostrado que no tienen esa capacidad y han demostrado que no tienen ese interés y sus normas de funcionamiento tampoco lo establecen en ese nivel.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Fernando emphasises the need to create a truly Maya body that functions as an interlocutor between the Maya people and official institutions, but apparently INDEMAYA has appropriated that role. This creates the paradox of having a government institution acting as the voice of the Maya people.

In sum, although in the last decade a legislative framework for indigenous languages in Mexico has been developed, language shift to Spanish is still underway. Language laws may have a positive impact, though. Many interviewees agree that overall attitudes towards the public use of Maya have changed in a positive way, especially in urban contexts, where most official institutions are located. In any case, while the goal of legislative changes may be the revalorisation of Maya, the organisation of a truly revitalisation movement must ultimately come from the grassroots.

'La gente no va a entender la traducción de la ley': on juridical translations

One of INALI's recent projects has been the translation of the national constitution into several indigenous languages (so far thirteen, Yucatec Maya among them).[120] This project may enhance the status of Mexican indigenous languages and encourage translators who have done a challenging technical job but again its actual outreach and the effects on language reproduction are very limited. The translation of the Mexican constitution into Maya was undertaken by a group of teachers and students of the *Universidad de Oriente* (UNO) and the INAH.

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120 For the complete list of languages, see:
  http://www.inali.gob.mx/bicen/constitucion_nacional_lenguas.html [Accessed 23.8.2013].
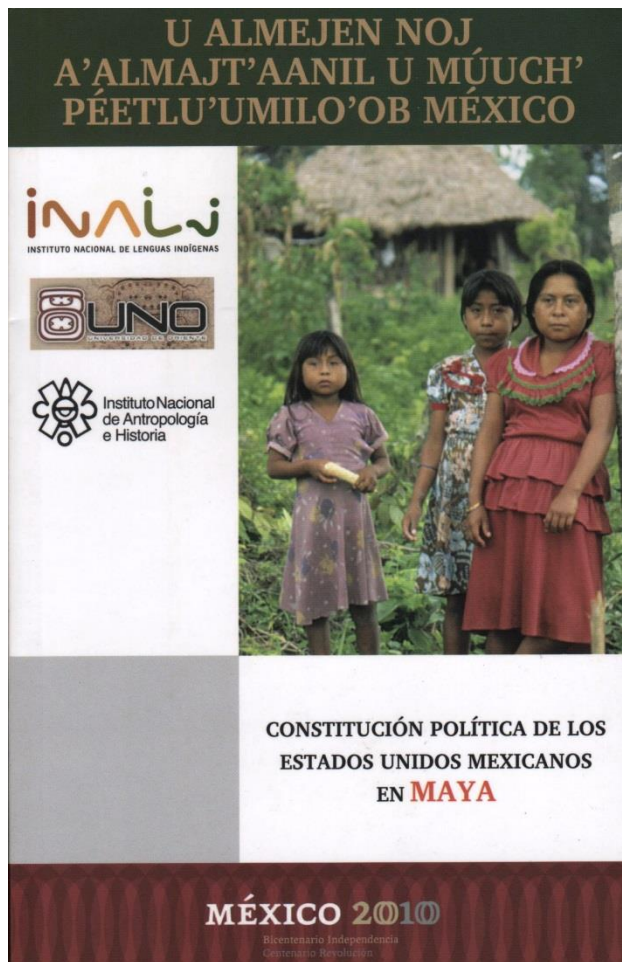
Picture 4.1 Cover of the translation into Maya of the Mexican Constitution.

Apart from the Mexican constitution, the LGDLPI has also been translated into Maya. Valerio Cauich expressed his doubts about the impact of these translations thus:

Testimony 4.16

Date cuenta que una de las traducciones que hicieron decía que según el censo del INALI, hay más de 800,000 mayahablantes, en Yucatán, Campeche y Quintana Roo y otros que están en el extranjero y en cualquier lugar del país. Atrás de la ley que está traducida en maya dice: tiraje 10,000, bueno ¿cuántos crees tú que saben leer en español? Porque la ley está en español y en maya. ¿Cuánta gente de los 800,000 mayahablantes crees que saben leer? Ponle mínimo 100,000, los otros son analfabetos, no saben ni leer, hay 90,000 que no van a saber nada de la ley porque solamente hay 10,000, y lógicamente de los 10,000 se repartirán 1000 y 9,000 se quedan en las oficinas, empaquetados.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

For a start, the publication of these translations does not necessarily mean disseminating their contents. Moreover, these works may raise purist controversies, since more often

than not only a few members of the indigenous intellectual elite can understand the neologisms used in the translation of such formal documents (see Flores Farfán 2009: 34 for similar critiques). As Romaine (2006: 457) has warned, many revitalisation efforts have been allocated precisely to high domains, which, although symbolic, are not a priority for the reproduction of subordinate languages. This is not to say that translations of juridical texts, the constitution being a particularly emblematic one, cannot have powerful effects in cultural revitalisation movements (see Rappaport 2005).[121] In the following excerpt, Manuel Peraza highlights the difficulties of translating highly specialised texts and points to mass media as a more effective domain to promote their contents:

Testimony 4.17

Yo siempre he dicho que los medios de comunicación jugarían un papel muy importante en la difusión de la lengua maya oral, porque, todas esas leyes y decretos, todas esas traducciones, la Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos, de la Constitución, pues también está la que se hizo en Barcelona, cómo se llama, esa igual está traducida al maya, pero yo pienso que aunque se difunda a manera de cápsula, en las difusoras en la televisión, la gente no lo va a entender. Tuvieron que recurrir a un lenguaje técnico para poderla traducir, entonces yo sigo pensando que simbólicamente es importante, y se tradujo, pero aunque se le leyera a la gente, no van a entender la terminología, si no recurren al español, que se va casi a españolizar, casi todo el maya, no lo van a entender porque yo estoy viendo que lo hicieron especialistas, pero un hablante común y corriente de la calle no lo va a entender ni la mitad. Ahí sigue siendo un problema, qué hacer, yo siempre he dicho que hay que enseñarlo como se habla actualmente, es la única manera que lo puedan entender.

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].

Manuel's argument touches on some of the main topics that have recurrently emerged in the interviews, namely, language legislation, literacy, and purism, and shows the ways in which they are intertwined and affect each other. The challenge of technical translations is not only to create neologisms but also to come up with concepts that belong to the Maya juridical tradition.

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121 As Rappaport argues for the case of Nasas in Colombia, "translation provides an indispensable strategy used by Nasa activists to appropriate concepts from the dominant society and to reconfigure them into self-conscious indigenous categories" (2005: 235).

***'Ya inventaron esa cosa de certificar a los que hablan la lengua': on the
bureaucratisation of Maya***

One of INALI's main programmes has been the organisation of training courses for
translators and interpreters in indigenous languages (*Diplomado de formación y
acreditación de intérpretes*). The aim of this programme is to issue official certifications
to speakers of indigenous languages so that they can provide assistance in the juridical
field. This initiative stems from the recent development of laws on indigenous justice
and cultural rights that have been recently passed on the Yucatán Peninsula. While the
certification of translators can have positive effects on the administration of justice
among Maya speakers, Lilia García pointed out the downsides of this top down
initiative controlled by a federal institution:

Testimony 4.18

Desde arriba van a venir cosas, pero muy controladas. Yo veo con el INALI que debe
estar apoyando a las lenguas indígenas y ya inventaron esa cosa de oficializar, de
certificar a los que hablan la lengua, entonces si no pasas un examen, burocratiza la
lengua. Hay un millón de hablantes y no vas a dar un millón de certificados, pero
ellos además quieren que lo escribas, y que lo escribas como ellos dicen.

[Lilia García 29.3.2011 Mérida.

The idea of bureaucratisation came up in the interviews on several occasions, which is
not surprising since it is government institutions that are leading language planning
efforts. The institutionalisation of Maya through certification may have the side effect
of disenfranchising speakers who are not literate in Maya or who think that they speak
an 'incorrect' variety. In any case, the institutionalisation of Maya is, according to many
interviewees, a worthy demand and for this reason the creation of an Institute of the
Maya Language is considered an indispensable move to advance in the 'normalisation'
of Maya.[122] I examine this topic in more detail in the following chapter. For other
participants, however, there is an urgent need to concentrate first on speakers' attitudes
rather than on the normalisation of Maya. Carlos Canul, for instance, argued that:

Testimony 4.19

Yo creo que hay que aprender a distinguir lo necesario de lo urgente, todo es
necesario, la escritura es necesaria, claro que es necesaria, la normalización es

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122 On August 22, 2012, the Congress of Campeche approved a law for the creation of an Institute of
Indigenous Languages in that state.

necesaria, la creación de neologismos es necesaria, el Instituto de la Lengua Maya es necesario, todo es necesario pero lo urgente, que son los hablantes, se nos está yendo de las manos.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Carlos's words point to the need for 'ideological clarification' (Kroskrity 2009a) about language promotion in Yucatán. It is the sociopolitical and economic conditions of Maya speakers rather than Maya as a code that need urgent attention.

This section has raised the crucial question of whether efforts in the specialised domains of legislation should be a priority in the context of rapid language shift to Spanish in Yucatán. This caveat is particularly relevant when top down language policies are tightly controlled by government institutions, as is the case in Mexico.

4.7   Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed discourses of language legislation and pointed out the contradictions and tensions raised by the linguistic rights framework in situations of language minorisation and revitalisation. This influential framework has increasingly gained importance in the field of language policy and planning worldwide. In Latin America there has been a formidable progress in institutional recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity and acknowledgement of the role of indigenous peoples in the composition of modern nation-states. Yet, this "rhetoric of recognition" (Hernández et al. 2004: 15) does not necessarily amount to ensuring the actual practice and development of linguistic rights or the functional extension of indigenous languages in the public domain. At present the language rights paradigm is well entrenched within the political structure of the nation-state and this entrenchment presupposes a hierarchical top down conception and administration of these rights in the optimistic case that they are taken into consideration, since there may also be the problem of compliance (May 2012a: 198). Thus, while cultural and linguistic rights have been negotiable items on the agenda of many Latin American governments, and implemented basically in the educational arena (Pellicer 1999), political and economic self-determination and autonomy, which actually entails the sharing of political power and access to and control of resources, are far from being achieved by most marginalised peoples. Significantly, these political and economic rights are essential for the cultural reproduction of the groups in question.

Furthermore, the language rights paradigm is fraught with problems stemming from its essentialist tenets. One such tenet is the supposedly fixed link between language, territory, and identity. These assumptions fall short to explain complex linguistic practices on the ground and increasing mobility of people. In spite of these caveats, linguistic essentialisation is an important aspect in the demands to promote Maya, a process which is embedded within a wider sociopolitical struggle for the recognition of the Maya people. The iconization of the Maya language as an intrinsic part of Maya identity is a key component in ethnolinguistic recognition (Irvine and Gal 2000). However, linguistic essentialism inevitably raises ideological issues of authenticity, purism and standardisation. I discuss shall these issues in detail in chapter 6 as they figure prominently in the interviews.

What the voices of the Maya activists presented in this chapter also claim is the need for political mobilisation so that the social situation of the Maya people can improve now that the legal framework has been modified. Against this backdrop, the present goal of making Maya official in Yucatán has not met with success yet. Again, laws by themselves are unlikely to change patterns of language shift (Fishman 1991; Romaine 2002). This does not mean that the progress made at the juridical level in relation to the recognition of indigenous languages in Mexico is unimportant. Indeed, the potential consequences of granting Maya official status need not be overlooked, particularly in a region with only one overwhelmingly widespread and relatively vital indigenous language. However, whereas declaring a language official may be easier than changing the circumstances of economic, social and political oppression that cause stigmatisation, legislative reforms at the national level that do not imply structural sociopolitical and economic changes are likely to be ineffective and remain tokenistic.

In light of the vague nature and little binding force of existing legislation and the general perception among activists that language revitalisation is not a priority for the political authorities, grassroots initiatives at the local level that complement the current timid institutional acknowledgement of language rights are much needed to revitalise Maya. I will show some examples of this ground up strategies of revitalisation in chapter 7 but I turn now to analyse discourses of education and literacy, since they are also core themes in the debate of Maya language revalorisation in Yucatán.

Chapter 5. Discourses of Literacy and Education

5.1   Introduction

This chapter looks at discourses of literacy and education which, along with legislation, form central domains of official language policy and planning in Mexico. I shall also explore the topic of language transmission and acquisition since these two processes are intimately related to discourses of education. Before I analyse interviews gathered in the field, I discuss the development of literacy as a particularly ambivalent component of language revitalisation and present a brief review of the emergence and consolidation of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Mexico. In this chapter I argue that, as currently implemented, literacy and education, which are inextricably bound up with each other and lie at the heart of institutional language promotion in Yucatán, have significant limitations for the actual revitalisation of Maya.

5.2   Literacy and Education in Language Revitalisation

The issue of literacy is especially relevant in the case of Mesoamerica as complex writing systems have existed since prehispanic times.[123] Aside from creating a highly sophisticated script based on hieroglyphs, the Maya were one of the Mesoamerican peoples that made use of pictorial writing (Houston 1994; Jiménez and Smith 2008). As already noted, during the colony the production of dictionaries, *artes* (grammars) and doctrinal texts, all of them European genres, were tools of paramount importance to convert indigenous peoples to Christianity. With the appropriation/imposition of alphabetic writing after the conquest, the written tradition of the Maya continued with the production of significant literary works such as the Yucatec Maya Chilam Balam books, which were based on preconquest local literature and were recopied throughout the colonial period and into the nineteenth century (Hanks 2010). Hanks (2010: 13) argues that the introduction of Christianity and missionary work in Yucatán commingled both Maya and Spanish in such profound ways that even the Chilam Balam books, forbidden books aimed exclusively at Maya audiences, contained what he calls *Maya reducido*, namely, a variety of Maya particularly influenced by doctrinal Spanish.[124] This fact has repercussions for language purism, a topic I examine in detail

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123 For hieroglyphic decipherment of Maya, see Coe (1992). Tedlock (2010) has reviewed Mayan literature in the last 2000 years, encompassing both hieroglyphic and alphabetic writing.
124 *Reducción* was the centerpiece of early missionary practice. According to Hanks, "it designates a bringing to order. It has three quite distinct objects: built space, everyday social practice, and language (2010: 4)".

in the next chapter. Apart from these literary works, it was mainly mundane 'notarial texts' such as land surveys, wills, complaints, bills of sales, etc. rather than literary documents that were produced in alphabetic writing in Maya after the conquest (Restall 1997; also L. King 1994: 52). Also important is the fact that many of these texts, though written down, were performed orally (Hanks 2010: 287). I will show in chapter 7 several examples that attest to the interdependence of literacy and orality to these days, which must be seen as a continuum rather than a dichotomy.

Literacy is one the most salient topics in the discourses of revalorisation in Yucatán because it is intimately linked to the ongoing ñegitimation process of the Maya language. Literacy is generally considered 'one of the most complicated issues in language revitalization' (Grenoble and Whaley 2006: 102). As these authors remark, there may be advantages, such as prestige and empowerment, in introducing literacy in minorised communities that mostly use their languages in oral form. However, the development of literacy inevitably raises tensions and contradictions in revitalisation processes, some of which I explore in this chapter. Writing down a minorised language may be a form of empowerment, particularly when the thrust for literacy comes from the grassroots (Hornberger 1997), but language abandonment is a complex and multilayered phenomenon and lack of power and prestige alone does not always explain language loss. Some authors have even argued that lack of literacy is directly equated with language decay and loss (Salinas 1997: 173 for the case of Mixtec), but whereas literacy may raise the status of a minorised language, the larger social framework in which that language is embedded must always be considered. This larger picture and the sociohistorical reasons discussed in chapter 3 explain why Spanish is currently dominant and widely used both in oral and written forms in Mexico. In this sense, literacy must be seen a set of social practices inextricably linked to ideological and political issues inserted in specific cultural contexts (Street 1984). Since literacy is culturally dependent on its socioeconomic and political environment, the overwhelming predominance of literacy in Spanish in Mexico is the consequence rather than the cause of a particularly imbalanced social situation.

As for formal education, its efficacy as a domain for language maintenance and revitalisation has long been debated in sociolinguistics. Edwards (1985: 169) made the point way back that the influence of education on the reproduction of local languages has been overestimated. Along similar lines, Fishman underlined that "most modern RLS movements have quickly and naturally, almost as a matter of course, moved to emphasize schools and schooling as the central thrust and process of the entire RLS

endeavor" (1991: 368). He considers efforts devoted to the educational domain, along with those that focused on mass media, the workplace, etc., as secondary in relation to the home-neighbourhood-community complex. For Fishman (1991: 373), this latter domain is essential to secure intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue.

In contrast with top down institutional policies of bilingual education, bottom up approaches have also recently emerged in Latin America. The case studies in Hornberger (1997), for example, focus on the development of education and literacy as basic components for language maintenance and revitalisation, stressing literacy as a key factor that empowers communities and confers prestige to minorised languages. Nonetheless, as James Milroy (2012: 572) aptly notes, prestige is a social rather than a linguistic concept. In many indigenous communities, orality is still the essential means of cultural transmission and the introduction of literacy raises crucial ideological dilemmas with important sociolinguistic consequences. Literacy is often bound up with standardisation, authenticity, and purism, ideological issues that may trigger language essentialisation and hierarchisation. More recently, and already embedded in discourses of endangerment, contributors in Hornberger (2008) offer an update of the role that schools can play in language revitalisation. Worldwide cases of language policies aimed at promoting minorised languages show that the educational system is one of the typical domains for official intervention. In the literature on language policy and planning, for instance, acquisition planning is often conflated with language-in-education planning. Instead of identifying and supporting cultural practices and functions that are relevant for language reproduction, top down policies aimed at revitalising minorised languages too often reproduce hegemonic policies that have favoured the spread of dominant languages (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; also Junyent 1998).

Based on European examples of educational policies, schools have proved to be efficient institutions for the learning of subordinated languages, even though knowledge may not always lead to functional extension in other domains. Competence in a language and actual use are two separate phenomena, and the former does not necessarily entail the latter (see Ó Riagáin 1997 for Irish, Edwards and Pritchard 2005 for Welsh). It is arguable, therefore, whether the school on its own can exert determinant influence on the revitalisation of minorised languages. From the Catalan context, Carme Junyent asks the following question:

Desde un país que ha tenido tanta fe en la eficacia de la enseñanza a la hora de revitalizar una lengua, se puede plantear una pregunta inquietante: ¿por qué la

enseñanza, que ha sido tan eficaz a la hora de imponer lenguas dominantes, no ha conseguido el mismo efecto en lenguas recesivas? (2007: 203).

Again, the wider set of social, economic, and political factors in which the school is embedded might answer Junyent's question about the ambivalent role of schools in language reproduction. After more than three decades of immersion schooling in Catalonia, Bastardas has noted that "the school model has little influence on the most individualised language uses" (2012: 78). This argument is especially pertinent for this thesis since the school, as already stressed, has been the main tool for linguistic assimilation in Mexico (see Heath 1972; Aguirre Beltrán 1993; for Yucatán see Lizama 2008; Bracamonte et al 2011). Therefore, it may seem paradoxical that formal education is seen not only by official institutions but also by many interviewees as a key domain for language revitalisation. One of the explanations may be the wish of participants to transfer responsibility for language acquisition to that social institution. Indeed, in my fieldwork I encountered several parents that expected their children to learn Maya at school rather than at home. Apparently, it is at school that children are supposed to learn how to speak and write 'authentic and correct' Maya.

Moreover, it is important to stress that formal education in Mexico has been a central domain not only for the spread of Spanish and literacy but also for a particularly prominent nationalist ideology. As classic works on nationalism have underscored (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawn 1990, Anderson 1991), the education system plays a central role in nation building processes and acts as the most prominent agency of the state to promote national sentiment. Bourdieu's (1991) work puts an emphasis on the critical role that language plays in the construction of a common national consciousness. For Bourdieu the school is a central site for the imposition and legitimation of an official national language. In this sense, a topic that will help us to understand the ideological link between the alleged promotion of indigenous languages and nationalism in Mexico is the use of several Mexican national symbols in schools, which lie, as Gellner puts it, 'at the crux of the state's sociosymbolic power' (1983: 34). Along these lines, Gutiérrez Chong (1999, particularly chapter 5) and Barriga Villanueva (2010) have analysed the saliency of textbooks in education as highly effective tools to 'mexicanise' indigenous peoples.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, INALI has supported the translation of the national constitution and the LGDIPL. INALI has also commissioned the translation of the Mexican anthem and even the *bando solemne* (presidential edict) into several

indigenous languages, Yucatec Maya among them.[125] The anthem, together with the flag and the emblem, constitute core nationalist symbols which are typically propagated via the school system in Mexico and beyond (Gutiérrez Chong 1999: 77). The national anthem is sung in all Mexican public schools every Monday morning and there is a national competition that judges students' performances. In Yucatán this competition has included singing the anthem in Maya in schools of the *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* (DGEI). This is an example of how the ideology of nationalism stemming from the macrolevel trickles down to the everyday practices of Yucatecan schools. Although this initiative might have some impact as a sign of institutional recognition of indigenous languages, this may be viewed as an example of the school 'flagging', as Billig (1995) would put it, one of its most essential national symbols with very limited influence on language reproduction.[126] In my fieldwork, during a visit to the village of Tepich Carrillo, I was surprised at the enormous satisfaction and pride shown by a bilingual Maya-Spanish lady who was eager to show me that her children could sing the national anthem in Maya, even if they did not speak the language and could hardly understand the lyrics (see Lizama and Solís (2008) for a similar example). I thought this was a compelling illustration of the scope and depth of nation-state building in Mexico, which overrides the actual promotion of indigenous languages and cultures. With these general issues in mind, I turn now to the development of intercultural education in Mexico.

5.3   The Development of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Mexico

Especially since the late 1980s long overdue recognition of cultural diversity has gone hand in hand with the development of language programmes aimed at introducing indigenous languages in Latin American schools. Educational programmes known as Bilingual Education, Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB), Indigenous Education, and Ethnoeducation have been implemented in several countries (López 2008a: 44). As in other locales of Latin America, in Mexico the name of official programmes has evolved from 'bilingual and bicultural' to 'intercultural bilingual education', with a view to reflecting, at least theoretically, a more inclusive and encompassing approach (Hamel 2008: 318). One important feature of EIB in Mexico is that policies have mainly come from the top down, stemming directly from federal institutions, particularly the

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125 http://site.inali.gob.mx/LGDPI/index.html [Accessed 23.8.2013].
126 The main thesis of Billig's book on nationalism is that "in established nations, there is a continual 'flagging' or reminding, of nationhood" (1995: 8), to the point that it becomes taken for granted.

Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). Unlike Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, where socio-political empowerment has been part of educational struggles (Rappaport 2005; López and Sichra 2008), indigenous organisations in Mexico have played a marginal role in the design and implementation of official educational programmes. Against a backdrop of conflictive relations between indigenous peoples and the nation-state, indigenous communities may perceive EIB policies in Mexico and beyond as an imposition that comes from without the community. Top down policies directed by governmental institutions that do not consider indigenous peoples' decision and control, local communities may be viewed by indigenous peoples with apprehension.[127]

EIB policies and the constitutional acknowledgment of cultural pluralism are major historic achievements in Latin America, especially in comparison with previous periods of complete neglect or active eradication of indigenous cultures and languages in schools. However, legislative changes at the constitutional level that recognise cultural diversity are rarely followed by the structural changes needed to counterbalance deeply ingrained monolingual and monocultural ideologies that support the marginalisation of indigenous peoples (Dietz 2012). As noted in the previous chapter, there is often a gap between the legislative recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity and the actual development and implementation of policies to empower indigenous communities, especially beyond the educational realm. Cárdenas and Arellano (2004) have underscored the contradiction between official discourse and implementation of language policies in Mexico thus:

> Aunque los representantes de las instituciones tiendan a acogerse cada vez más a un discurso que propugna el fomento del plurilingüismo como un elemento de enriquecimiento de la sociedad, en la práctica, los programas institucionales siguen respondiendo a la lógica de la nación homogénea en donde la diversidad lingüística es percibida como un problema o una desviación (2004: 70).

Cultural and linguistic diversity is still widely seen by Mexican authorities as an obstacle to progress. Therefore, the ideological goals of modernisation and national unification have been the thrust behind the implementation of official educational policies. At least in Mexico, EIB is but a new label for an indigenous education that continues to be solely targeted at the most marginalised and impoverished stratum of society. Intercultural education is primarily implemented in rural areas, even though

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127 See for instance García (2003) and Aikman (1999) for Andean and Amazon areas respectively in Peru; Cotacachi (1997) for Ecuador; and Freeland (1995) for Nicaragua.

indigenous people are increasingly found in significant numbers in many Latin American cities.

In spite of the limitations of the school in the reproduction of subordinated languages, changes in the educational domain have had positive effects. The favourable influence of bilingual education policies on the status of minorised languages, the increasing self-esteem of students with marginalised language backgrounds, and the lower rates of absenteeism and dropout in schools where children understand the language of instruction are all dramatic transformations that should not be underestimated (see López and Rojas 2006 for an overview of Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru). Thus, when bilingual education is adequately implemented by well trained teachers using effective teaching materials and when parents' attitudes are positive, students can even outperform their peers in monolingual schools. In some cases, the promotion of indigenous languages through educational policies may trigger the use of the local language beyond the school setting.[128] In short, schools alone are not enough to 'save' languages, but in some cases they may have, as Hornberger writes, "a powerful role to play in Indigenous language revitalization and empowerment of Indigenous communities" (2008: 11).[129]

As discussed in chapter 3, in Mexico official educational programmes in indigenous languages date back to the late 1930s. Against the background of *indigenismo*, the goal of these programmes was the assimilation to Spanish and the abandonment of indigenous languages (Heath 1972; Aguirre Beltrán 1993). Specific government departments were created within the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) in the mid-1970s as a result of growing indigenous political mobilisation (Patthey-Chávez 1994: 202; Hidalgo 1994: 197). In 1978 the *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* (DGEI) was set up within the structure of the SEP and in 1979 indigenous education in primary schools began to be implemented (Schmelkes 2003: 129). The DGEI is in charge of developing educational policies for speakers of indigenous languages on a national scale. In the 1980s the goal of these policies was to promote literacy in indigenous languages while focusing on grammatical aspects following the model of Spanish as the dominant language. In this vein, César Gómez, a retired teacher who was involved in indigenous education at that time, commented that:

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128 See Nucinkis (2006: 76) for a study in Bolivia which found that, after the introduction of IBE in an Aymara area, children also used Aymara outside school, spreading the language to other domains.
129 See also Howard (2009) for an example of political empowerment through education in Bolivia.

Testimony 5.1

En la educación bilingüe bicultural, el planteamiento es una analogía entre los programas nacionales y el programa de educación indígena que se iba a armar. Si el planteamiento a nivel nacional era ver la gramática de la lengua española, entonces su símil en lenguas indígenas sería gramática de lenguas indígenas, en cualquiera de las lenguas. Hay que escribirla, hay que aprenderse también la gramática igual que la del español.

[César Gómez 11.4.2011 Mérida].

The focus on teaching literacy and grammar still remains a key strategy to revalorise Maya, as I discuss below. Since 2001, the General Coordination for Bilingual Intercultural Education (CGEIB), a department within the SEP, oversees intercultural education from which all Mexicans should in theory benefit. However, the target population of intercultural programmes are indigenous students, a fact that is resented by some activists. As Diego Che put it in an interview, "la educación intercultural debe ser de ida y vuelta, no puede ser solo de un lado"[130]. Under the new label of intercultural education educational policies have not basically changed their monolingual and monocultural foundations. Later in the same interview César Gómez summarised the issue arguing that "la educación intercultural bilingüe es un nombre muy bonito, pero el nombre nada más".[131]

Furthermore, according to César Gomez, the emphasis on interculturality had the negative effect of 'justifying' educational practices while ignoring indigenous languages and cultures:

Testimony 5.2

En el estado la educación intercultural como que vino a justificar muchas cosas. Independientemente de que se exige a los profesores la lengua, que trabajen en la lengua, enseñen a leer y a escribir en la lengua, en la práctica los que quieren lo hacen, no hay un control, los que quieren lo hacen y los que no, pues no lo hacen. La educación intercultural viene a justificar todo eso, porque dice pues si somos interculturales, enseñe en maya o enseñe en español ahí hay interculturalidad.

[César Gómez 11.4.2011 Mérida].

César Gómez, who was part of that process, emphasises that there was no control over teachers' linguistic practices and implementation of the curriculum in indigenous

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130 Interview with Diego Che (28.7.2011 Mérida)
131 Interview with César Gómez (11.4.2012 Mérida). See also Muñoz (2002) for a review of the intercultural approach to education in Mexico.

schools. First of all, the highly centralised and hierarchical public education system in Mexico does not allow much room to accommodate children with indigenous backgrounds. Therefore, the common curriculum for all students of public education, "a dogma of the federal government" (Hamel 2008: 319), is based on a monolithic conception of national education oriented towards monolingual Spanish speaking children. One example is the national programme ENLACE, which assesses performance through standardised tests in schools across Mexico. Bernardo Aguilar, a teacher with decades of experience in indigenous education, explained why in Yucatán the results of these tests are rather low:

Testimony 5.3

Acá en Yucatán, en todo México, hay varios tipos de evaluación para conocer el aprovechamiento de los niños, una de estas evaluaciones le denominan ENLACE, evaluación nacional del logro educativo. Nuestras escuelas salen en muy bajito lugar y la prueba llega, evidentemente es una prueba nacional, hecha en español y con un procedimiento que no acostumbran ni los maestros, de llenar una hoja que se va a leer electrónicamente, entonces, tiene mucho que ver el dominio del español de los niños para primero para entender bien las instrucciones, segundo para entender bien las preguntas de la evaluación, y tercero que sea un buen estudiante para que sepa la respuesta, entonces salimos bajitos.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

This programme is an example of vertical implementation of a national curriculum that does not consider local sociolinguistic contexts. In Yucatán deficiencies in the indigenous education system have been noted by many researchers (see contributions in Lizama 2008). Also in Yucatán, Pfeiler and Zámišova (2006) have compared two different modalities of bilingual education. They point out the advantages of the programme implemented by CONAFE, a federal agency that covers complementary educational in remote rural areas where the SEP does not reach. In CONAFE's programme the local population is actively involved in the education process and indigenous cultural knowledge is valued, which reinforces Maya language loyalty.[132] In contrast to this modality, the more widespread and centralised intercultural bilingual education programme of the DGEI has become an effective means of castilianising Maya students. CONAFE's experience shows the importance of not just introducing local languages in indigenous curricula but also relevant cultural contents beyond mere

132 CONAFE is the *Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo*, a federal institution with the aim of gathering financial resources for complementary educational development.

folklorisation. EIB in Mexico and beyond has fundamentally focused on language but in many cases the introduction of meaningful local knowledge has been overlooked (Trapnell and Neira 2006: 291; Rubio 2006: 240). The issue of indigenous learning practices at community level, based on reciprocity and collaboration, and their potential clash with children's formal school experience need further research (see Paradise and de Haan 2009 for an example among the Mazahuas in Mexico).

Thus, several reasons explain the limitations of EIB in Mexico. Some have to do with technical shortcomings and lack of material resources and others, as I illustrate below, with beliefs about the value of indigenous languages. Poorly equipped schools; lack of well trained teachers, some of whom do not even speak the indigenous language of the community where they teach; shortage of pedagogical materials; and the fact that indigenous education is confined to the primary levels of education are common factors that perpetuate language minorisation and educational failure in Mexico and beyond. Also, indigenous schools are located in the most marginalised rural areas of Yucatán, in spite of the increasing number of Maya speakers living in cities. Consequently, remote rural areas where indigenous peoples live, the 'refuge regions' identified way back by Aguirre Beltrán (1967), cannot be any longer the only geographical focus of educational intervention.[133] It is not a question of applying compensatory policies to specific rural regions but rather, from a truly intercultural framework, of implementing language policies that embrace the population as a whole, both speakers of indigenous languages and Spanish (Pellicer 1999). This seems a highly unlikely approach in Mexico, although the programme *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* in Yucatán and the establishment of several intercultural universities in Mexico, which I briefly review below, are in principle initiatives to promote intercultural education for all.

In conclusion, despite the proliferation of government departments and legislative changes, education for indigenous peoples in Mexico is still highly deficient. The school mainly remains an assimilationist institution which not only reinforces the use of Spanish as the dominant language but does not necessarily bring socioeconomic betterment for a highly marginalised population.[134] In this sense, Fernando Segovia commented on rural schools that "no necesariamente la presencia de la escuela en una comunidad maya vaya a indicar que pueda salir de la pobreza y la marginalidad, no

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133 Schmelkes (2003: 139) notes that Mexico City has the largest indigenous population in Latin America. See also Rebolledo (2008) for an exceptional example of an educational project developed in Mexico City with Hñähñö students.
134 See Hidalgo (1994), Hamel (2008) for Mexico, and Bracamonte et al (2011) for the particular case of Yucatán.

necesariamente la presencia de la escuela pueda indicar que pueda haber un fortalecimiento de la identidad cultural, yo digo que es todo lo contrario, ¿no?"[135] In the following sections I briefly examine two government initiatives aimed at promoting intercultural education at both primary and higher education.

5.4 The *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* Programme and Intercultural Universities on the Yucatán Peninsula

The programme *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* ('Let's learn Maya'), administered by the DGEI, has been running in Yucatán for two decades with the goal of introducing Maya to children with little or no contact with that language in urban or semi-urban schools. It covers at the time of writing 88, mostly primary, schools and the teachers, known as *facilitadores bilingües*, are students taking a degree in education. When the programme started in 1992 one of the main obstacles for its implementation was the negative attitudes of some parents who did not want their children to learn Maya as a second language, and also of some teachers who questioned the need to teach Maya (Pool 2008). However, Durán and Sauma (2003) found out that students' attitudes towards Maya language learning in the city of Mérida were overall positive.[136] The programme may have helped to promote positive attitudes towards the use of Maya in urban schools, but it has several drawbacks such as the hiring of usually inexperienced staff to teach Maya, the little amount of exposure to the language (one or two hours on a voluntary basis, sometimes on Saturdays), and the fact that learning Maya is an extracurricular activity that does not count towards final qualifications. The low quality of the pedagogical material and methodology used, based on written texts and repetition and memorisation of dialogues, are other major downsides. Jacinto May, a linguist who knows the programme well, explained that "lo que hace falta es darle más peso a la oralidad, mucho se ha hecho sobre la escritura, la enseñanza, el programa *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* siempre hablaba de la enseñanza a través de la escritura, pero a la cuestión oral no se le da el valor que debe de tener".[137] Although devised as a revitalisation programme to teach Maya as a second language, *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* has remained, at most, a revalorisation programme that heavily relies on traditional language teaching based on *lectoescritura* (Pool 2008). Picture 5.1 is a sample of the basic level of the

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135 Interview with Fernando Segovia (13.4.2010 Mérida).
136 The study was carried out in 22 primary schools and 2 secondary schools of the programme *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* and the School of Anthropology and the Medical School of the UADY.
137 Interview with Jacinto May (25.8.2011 Mérida).

Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya textbook. It reproduces a dialogue between a teacher and a student.[138]

Picture 5.1 Sample of the basic level *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* textbook.
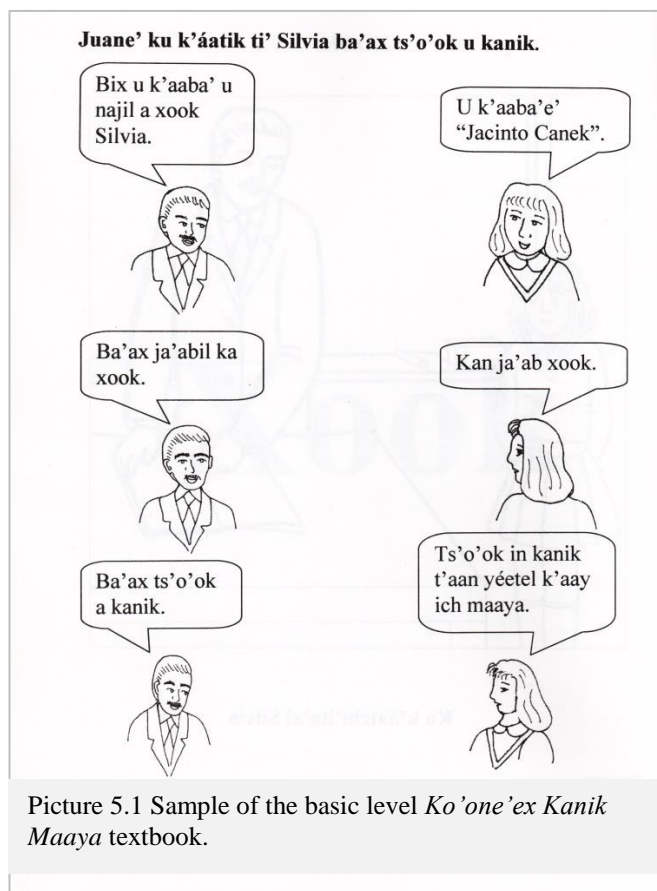
What I want to highlight with this sample of the textbook is the impending need to create top-notch language materials for indigenous languages that supersede outdated methods based on decontextualized language learning and too strong an emphasis on *lectoescritura*. Interdisciplinary work with applied linguists might be useful to overcome the problems of this ineffective approach.

As for intercultural universities, within the urban/rural divide that still underpins public educational policies in Mexico several higher education institutions have been created in the last decade to cater for indigenous students. The establishment of these universities, which are coordinated by the CGEIB, has mainly been the result of government initiatives. While some grassroots efforts have led the creation of intercultural universities (Llanes 2009), it is safe to say that it is governmentally-run

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138 The translation of the dialogue is: What is the name of your school, Silvia? Its name is 'Jacinto Canek' / What year are you studying? Fourth year. / What did you just learn? I just learned to speak and sing in Maya.

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intercultural universities that have been gaining momentum in the last decade. All these universities offer similar degrees, such as indigenous language and cultures, tourism, public local administration, agronomy, and community health, which are specifically geared to indigenous students.[139] The two intercultural universities of the Yucatán Peninsula, *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* (UIMQROO) and *Universidad de Oriente* (UNO) were important sites for my fieldwork and the opinions of some students and teachers at those institutions form part of this thesis.

In the state of Quintana Roo, the creation of UIMQROO was inspired by the philosophy of the Nicaraguan URACCAN University, a pioneer project in Latin America from the beginning of the 1990s. Intercultural universities have been running for only a few years, but there is already a growing body of literature both in Spanish and English that looks at their strengths and weaknesses.[140] This is a very broad topic but I want to point out some key issues that add up to the limitations of top down initiatives in Mexico aimed at promoting indigenous languages. According to Dietz, the main problems of intercultural universities are "bureaucratic, financial, academic and political" (2009: 2) and need to be unravelled to gauge the actual scope of these institutions for language revitalisation. As an example of the political aspect, Sánchez-Álvarez (2012: 53) argues that the decentralised administration of intercultural universities reflects larger sociopolitical tensions that exist between the federal and state governments, both of them contributors to half of the universities budget (see also Schmelkes 2008). The third administrative division in Mexico, namely the municipality, also plays a key role in these political tensions. Without a doubt, municipalities are socially and economically affected by the creation of these universities, as I was able to observe while doing fieldwork in José María Morelos, the small town where UIMQROO is located.[141]

Thus, since intercultural universities are in most cases top down initiatives, political conflicts have arisen from the interference of the federal and state governments in their academic development (Schmelkes 2008: 333). An example was the creation of the *Universidad de Oriente* (UNO) in 2006 in the town of Valladolid in Yucatán state. While UNO does not include the term intercultural in its name, its curriculum is very

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139 See the REDUI (Red de Universidades Interculturales) website for more details: http://www.redui.org.mx/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].

140 For Yucatán state see Llanes (2008, 2009); for a general overview within Mexico see Schmelkes (2009); Dietz (2009); Lehmann (2012); for a comparative perspective between Mexico, Colombia and Nicaragua see Sánchez-Álvarez (2012); also Mato (2008, 2009) for a wide range of continental case studies.

141 See also Guerra and Meza (2009) for the case of UAIM (*Universidad Autónoma Indígena de México*) in Sinaloa.

similar to that offered by other intercultural universities with degrees in indigenous language and culture, tourist development, marketing, public administration, and gastronomy. The establishment of UNO was driven, according to Llanes (2008), by top down political ideologies based on neoindigenism and developmentalism, which led to failure to implement truly intercultural education in Yucatán state.[142]

Further to this conceptualisation of higher education for indigenous peoples, the names given to the universities are particularly revealing. In some areas they are known as 'indigenous universities', while in other regions the designation is 'intercultural universities' (Casillas and Santini 2006). The use of 'intercultural' instead of 'indigenous' is not gratuitous since the former is less politically charged than the latter (Llanes 2009: 52). Two examples from my fieldwork illustrate the negative assessment of these increasingly synonymous terms. The first comes from Salvador Polanco, a researcher and anthropologist who has occasionally taught at UNO. He recounted that:

Testimony 5.4

En Yucatán la universidad intercultural no pudo ser posible porque cuando se planteó la idea de una universidad intercultural, se dijo que lo intercultural no, porque la gente no se iba a inscribir a una universidad indígena. La idea fue tomar el modelo de una universidad intercultural y ponerle otro nombre.

[Salvador Polanco 5.8.2011 Mérida].

The second example comes from my observation of the first graduation ceremony of UIMQROO students, which took place in August 2011 in the town of José María Morelos. In his opening speech the vice-chancellor of UIMQROO recalled that, while the name 'indigenous' had initially been considered for that university, they finally decided that it would be an 'intercultural' institution with a view to attracting a wider range of students.[143]

Even if intercultural universities in Mexico are "open to all" with a quota system that should "ensure at least 20% of Mestizo students [in the Mexican not the Yucatecan sense]" (Schmelkes 2009: 8), their location in small municipalities generally seen as 'indigenous regions', far from urban centers, and the kind of degrees offered indicate that their goal is to cater for the higher education needs of indigenous students. Indeed, many of these students would not be able to follow studies in traditional urban

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142 See Hernández et al (2004) for examples of developmentalism as a 'civilising discourse' in Mexico.
143 Fieldnotes from the opening speech by Francisco May Rosado, vice-chancellor of UIMQROO. José María Morelos, Quintana Roo, 20.8.2011.

universities for economic reasons.[144] Moreover, the creation of intercultural universities in areas with high indigenous political mobilisation and struggle, particularly Chiapas, was a response to subdue potential conflict. Sylvia Schmelkes, who was coordinator of CGEIB during the first PAN administration (2000-2006), notes that:

> Las Secretarías de Educación de los Estados participaron de forma activa en la promoción de la creación de estas instituciones, pues representaba para las entidades federativas el apoyo de recursos federales para atender a una población históricamente demandante y potencialmente conflictiva (2008: 330).

Looking at the bigger picture, there is still a wide gap between intercultural universities and the prestige of traditional universities, which in Mexico belong to the state or federal administrations, or to religious orders.[145] Instead of radically changing the system by introducing interculturality in mainstream education or by creating truly autonomous universities, these governmentally-run intercultural universities replicate the segregated system of indigenous education at lower levels (primary education) that has existed for decades. Interculturality goes, again, in just one direction. Along these lines, in sharp contrast with other Latin American projects, such as the Colombian *Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural* (UAIIN) and Nicaraguan URACCAN, indigenous organisations have been conspicuously absent in the establishment and development of intercultural universities in Mexico (Schmelkes 2008: 336). Sánchez-Álvarez argues that:

> En las universidades interculturales mexicanas se aprecia una autonomía institucional, es decir, operativa y curricular, quedando en el aire la interrogante acerca de si dichas instituciones persiguen o no la autonomía cultural y política de los pueblos a los que sirven. Es muy probable que la noción de autonomía en este caso esté difusa e indefinida porque no se persigue ninguna transformación del orden de las cosas (2012: 86).

The idea of development by bringing education to regions that are socioeconomically lagging behind recalls past policies of *indigenismo*, a framework in which development and assimilation to the mainstream national society were synonymous. Schmelkes argues that "the mission of these universities is to educate intellectuals and professionals who are committed to the development of their regions" (2009: 9). Quite

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144 Lehmann (2012) notes the exception of the Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas (UNICH), which has an urban campus in San Cristóbal de las Casas.
145 One of the most prestigious Mexican universities is the private *Universidad Iberoamericana*, which belongs to the Jesuit order.

tellingly, the degree on tourism at UNO is named 'tourist development'. Finally, as for Maya language, its use is not widespread in the courses of UNO and UIMQROO, even in the degrees of Maya language and culture. This is due to several reasons such as language insecurity, lack of language proficiency of the staff, and of technical vocabulary for the courses offered.

Despite these drawbacks, intercultural universities have had a positive impact among indigenous students. The easier access of young women to these universities because of their location in rural areas, the strengthening of ethnic pride and self-esteem, and the effects on cultural and linguistic revalorisation should not be underestimated. Indeed, the revalorisation of indigenous languages and cultures is a fundamental contribution of intercultural universities to the higher education landscape of Latin America (Mato 2009: 65). That studying at these universities is for some students a sort of eye opener in terms of language reactivation and reclamation will become manifest in chapter 7 when I analyse online linguistic practices of some of these young students.

To conclude, one interesting consequence of the limitations of intercultural universities in Mexico has been the emergence of a discourse among intellectuals in Yucatán that emphasises the need to create a truly Maya university in Yucatán from the bottom up. As Osvaldo Itzá highlighted, a community-based Maya university was needed for the "desarrollo integral de la cultura maya, una universidad no tradicional que debería estar implicada profundamente con las comunidades".[146] In the following sections I delve into discourses of Maya language promotion through education and literacy that surfaced prominently in the interviews.

5.5   Dicourses of Literacy

In this section, I examine discourses that revolve around the development of literacy in Maya and its links with legitimation, literature, written variation, and standardisation. As shown below, the ontological status and labels used to name Maya emerge from a language ideological framework underpinned by standardisation and literacy.

'La maya no es una lengua porque no se escribe': on legitimation through literacy
One common way of denigrating a linguistic variety is to call it 'dialect', which, at least in lay terms, pejoratively stands for a lesser version of a language. Francisco Tuz, a civil servant in his thirties who works at INDEMAYA, put it succinctly in an interview: 'a mis

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146 Interview with Osvaldo Itzá (8.4.2010 Mérida).

padres siempre les habían dicho que el maya es un dialecto'.[147] In Mexico, fully standardised Spanish has been the yardstick against which all other languages are measured.[148] As discussed in chapter 3, Mexican Spanish went through a process of legitimation and institutionalisation from the time of Independence and eventually became both the national and dominant language (Hidalgo 1994, 2006). It is against this entrenchment of a standard language culture that current efforts to legitimise Maya are framed. Also, a central strategy to revalorise Maya is to produce literary works with a view to raising its social status so that it is treated on an equal footing with Spanish.

In Yucatán there exists the folk belief that a language which is not normally used in writing is not "complete". Many participants saw the legitimation and subsequent functional extension that literacy would ideally provide as a necessary step to overcome the debased social valuation of Maya. In the following excerpt Diego Che comments on language legitimation thus:

Testimony 5.5

En materia de la lengua tendremos que empujar muy duro y hacer todo lo posible para que el sistema educativo se reforme. Falta una revolución educativa totalmente radical, tiene que haber recursos para capacitar a la gente que va a enseñar la lengua adecuadamente, correctamente, como se hace con todos los idiomas. Tienes que estudiar la lengua para hablarla y escribirla correctamente, y en nuestro caso nada más nos quedamos en la oralidad marginal que hablas con tu abuelita, hablas con tu tío, hablas con el que vende calabazas, para que se use de manera integral en la sociedad. Hay muestras en otras partes del mundo pero todavía estamos un poco lejos. Pero creemos que con nuestra lucha lo logremos. Las instituciones en términos generales no tienen un verdadero interés.

[Diego Che 28.7.2011 Mérida].

Aside from the idea that literacy will overcome the limitations of 'marginal' orality and confer prestige to Maya, there are several intertwined themes in Diego's argument. First, we find again the need for language institutionalisation through the education system. The school is the site where Maya must be taught and learned. Second, Diego expresses the prescriptivist idea that Maya must be formally learned so that it is spoken and written 'correctly'. Third, contradictions emerge when Diego states that there must

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147 Interview with Francisco Tuz (29.3.2010 Mérida).
148 Note the specific campaign that has recently been launched in Oaxaca by the *Centro Académico y Cultural San Pablo* named 'Todas se llaman lenguas'. As they put it in their website, the goal is to raise awareness "against the pejorative use of the word dialect to name indigenous languages". See: http://www.todas-lenguas.mx/# [Accessed 23.8.2013].

be grassroots struggle to achieve these aims because public institutions are actually not ready to help.

To my question of why there is so much emphasis on 'lectoescritura' in the current process of Maya language promotion, Mariano Domínguez, who works for the Institute of Culture of Yucatán, replied that:

Testimony 5.6

Es que tiene que ver con la preocupación de las actitudes. Todavía hay mucha gente que dice: ¡Ah, no! La maya no es una lengua, no es un idioma porque no se escribe. Entonces los intelectuales mayas se han preocupado mucho por eso.

[Mariano Domínguez 13.4.2010 Mérida].

The belief that 'it is not a language if it is not written' neatly crystallises widespread concerns about legitimation and explains the emphasis, both official and grassroots, on *lectoescritura* in Maya. Further to the development of literacy, producing a grammar is often part and parcel in the process of legitimising indigenous languages, following the model of Spanish as a highly standardised language. This is what Violeta Pool, who has taught Maya at university level, commented on the ontological status of Maya:

Testimony 5.7

Por mucho tiempo, en las escuelas también había la idea errónea de que el maya no era lengua, de que era un dialecto y porque no tiene escritura, no tiene gramática, ya sabes, fue a nivel del país casi, de las distintas lenguas indígenas, y entonces cuando hay una oportunidad de que la lengua tenga un sitio, de que tenga un valor o un prestigio, pues lo que más valor ha tenido por aquí es el español y el español, ¿por qué ha tenido valor? Porque se escribe, porque hay una gramática construida y entonces la gente empieza a trabajar con eso, empieza a escribir, porque si esta que se escribe tiene valor, si escribo la mía, también va a tener valor, y empiezan a escribir y se concentran en la escritura y nos hemos llevado mucho tiempo en eso y sí se ha avanzado por ahí, pero no es como el único medio, y tal vez tampoco el más importante.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

The excerpts above raise two important interrelated questions that point, on the one hand, to the actors that are focusing on literacy to revalorise Maya and, on the other hand, to the weight that reading and writing are given in the context of rapid language shift to Spanish. In this light, it is not a coincidence that many Maya intellectuals are writers. They belong to a very select group of people who are literate in Maya and,

therefore, interest laden in the promotion of literacy. Their position may raise conflicts with more 'organic' intellectuals. In an interview with Alfredo Ku, he called some Maya writers 'vacas sagradas' (sacred cows) and stated that they have lost contact with the bases. To illustrate his criticism, Alfredo noted that "para denigrar al pueblo maya, lo primero que dicen [these writers] es que los mayas no escriben".[149] This cleavage is an important obstacle in the revitalisation process of Maya that needs ideological clarification. I look below at the topic of literature in Maya in more detail, which is obviously connected with literacy issues.

'Este señor lee la historia en un libro y eso le manda un mensaje a la comunidad': on Maya literature

Although to my knowledge there are not official statistics on literacy in Maya, several interviewees estimated that around four or five percent of Maya speakers can write in that language. Perhaps the percentage of people who can read in Maya is slightly higher, owing to the distribution of written material by increasingly present religious groups in Yucatán (see picture 5.1 below).[150] In this vein, the importance of contemporary Maya literature within the overall panorama of literary production in indigenous languages of Mexico must be noted. In the last two decades there has been an increasing production of literary texts in Maya (Ligorred 1997, 2000; Leirana 2006, 2010) and the Nezahualcóyotl Prize in Mexican languages, created in 1993, was recently granted to two young Yucatec Maya writers.[151] One important drawback is that most publications are the outcome of official contests subsidised by government programmes such as the *Programa de Apoyo a las Culturas Populares y Comunitarias* (PACMYC) (Leirana 2010). The ideological aspect of the production of contemporary Maya literature is a broad topic that I can only briefly include here. It is critical to note, though, that current literacy in Maya revolves around the creation of belles-lettres texts (Brody 2004).

Apart from lack of literacy in Maya, buying books, which are relatively expensive items, are not a priority for many Maya speakers. I spent one morning in the Maya Book Fair organised in a central square of Mérida on 24 August 2011. While there were passers-by that stopped to have a look at the books on display, sales were minimal. As for newspapers, Maya is not used in the mainstream press in Yucatán and has only occasionally been included in a tokenistic way in the past (Ligorred 1997: 35). Admittedly, the book may become a highly symbolic object in the revalorisation

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149 Interview with Alfredo Ku (11.4.2011 Mérida).
150 However, Brody (2004: 91) points out that the Bible is more of a symbolic object that is seldom read.
151 Wildernain Villegas and Isaac Carrillo were awarded this prize in 2008 and 2010 respectively.

process of any language mainly used in its oral form since prestige and status are intimately bound up with the written word (Hornberger 1997).[152] Talking about a project supported by the *Dirección General de Culturas Populares* that turns oral stories into booklets, Fernando Segovia explained that:

Testimony 5.8

Entonces la historia este señor la lee en maya, está en un libro, un objeto en que tradicionalmente no está escrito ni su lengua ni el conocimiento de nadie de la comunidad y eso le manda una serie de mensajes a la comunidad, ¿no?

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

These 'messages' that are sent to the community, particularly when the compilation of stories are read out loud in Maya in front of others, may work toward language revalorisation. Reading out loud stories compiled in booklets is an example of the continuum that often exists between literacy and orality. In any case, in the Yucatecan context the spread of literacy through belles-lettres production has a limited scope. There is an urgent need to extend literacy beyond that genre. Producing journals, newspapers, and using new technologies may have an impact beyond the current select group of people who can write poetry, short stories, and novels in Maya. In this vein, Grenoble and Whaley argue that "[o]ne of the greatest challenges in creating local literacy is establishing useful and sustainable domains for its use" (2006: 113). María Moo, who teaches Maya and has been a member in panels of literature contests on several occasions, opined that:

Testimony 5.9

Yo estoy enseñando la gramática a profesionales para que lo utilicen en su trabajo, no necesariamente que me vengan con cuentos, sino que le den un uso más real, que lo apliquen en su trabajo. INDEMAYA está luchando pero hace sus concursos de canto, su concurso de poesía, hace concurso de cuentos, pero limitarlo solo a eso, no todos van a cantar, no todo el mundo va a escribir poesía, el hecho de que tú escribas no necesariamente tienes que ser un poeta. La UADY también organiza concursos de cuentos entre universitarios […] ¿Pero qué hay del uso del lenguaje cotidiano? [María Moo 16.4.2012 Mérida].

María highlights the fact that teaching Maya usually equals teaching it formally and with an emphasis on grammar. Furthermore, whereas a few institutions regularly launch

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152 See Terill (2002) for a case study in Melanesia.

calls for literary prizes in Yucatán, these contests are targeted to very few people due to the low levels of literacy in Maya. As María underlines, more relevant for language maintenance is the daily use of literacy in everyday contexts rather than the production of short stories. Along these lines, Cooper reminds us that "it is likely that it is not *belles lettres* but the less glamorous non-narrative prose […] that lends prestige to vernacular language" (1989: 115, his italics). As I point out in chapter 7, some Maya youngsters are currently using written Maya on Facebook on a daily basis, which is a conspicuous example of mundane use of language. The opinion of Adrián Pech, a student from UNO, further illustrates the need to expand the functional uses of literacy in Maya beyond belles-lettres production:

Testimony 5.10

No podemos vincular lo que se hace académicamente con lo que se vive en la vida cotidiana, cuando no pasamos de los cuentos, de las leyendas. Tenemos que demostrar que la lengua maya no solo debe quedar en ese tipo de literatura, se pueden escribir tesis, monografías, ensayos, testamentos, porque en la época colonial había testamentos en maya, documentos legales. En lugar de lograr perdimos, si no hacemos el uso social y funcional de la lengua en los diversos contextos no podemos avanzar, hacemos carteles en maya y en español, que se vea la presencia, pero que no sea la letra chiquitita, igual, que haya equidad.

[Adrián Pech 7.4.2011 Valladolid].

For Adrián, who is well aware of use of written Maya in colonial times, daily literacy in Maya beyond literature is needed to bridge the gap between elitist and ordinary written practices.

A related topic he raises is the written usage of Maya in the Yucatecan 'linguistic landscape'.[153] Later on in the same interview he added that "este cuatrimestre pasado hicimos una tarea de establecimientos que tienen nombres en maya. En Valladolid encontramos cien, hoteles, talleres, fondas… todo el mundo lo ve y es simbólico, como el Facebook." The study of linguistic landscape deserves further attention in Yucatán (see Brody 2004 for a preliminary analysis), since public signage in Maya may become an ever more conspicuous symbol of authenticity in a region that increasingly depends economically on the tourist market.[154] This is a growing area of interest in sociolinguistics that can inform language policy and planning through public

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153 Landry and Bourhis (1997: 23) define linguistic landscape as "the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region."
154 See Makihara (2004) on heritage tourism and language revitalisation in Rapa Nui.

use of minorised languages (Shohana and Gorter 2008; Shohana et al 2010). Moreover, the inextricable link between public signage and literacy, a salient concern among Maya intellectuals, can widen the current narrow focus on belles-lettres. It must also be noted that, unlike other areas of Mexico, indigenous place names (toponymy) and peoples' surnames (onomastics) are especially pervasive in Yucatán. The city of Mérida, where the highest concentration of Maya speakers now lives, provides a particularly productive context for an in-depth study of linguistic landscape. Again, this would not only be a sociolinguistic exercise as research in this area can also be used to spark political activism, language learning, and critical thinking (Shohamy and Gorter 2008: 4).

'Escríbeme en maya como tú sepas': on written variation

The position of Maya on the Yucatán Peninsula is unusual compared to other major indigenous languages of Mexico. Yucatec Maya is a language wth little dialectal variation, has a widely accepted standard variety, and does not compete with other indigenous languages in its territory. While current efforts to legitimise Maya mainly revolve around status planning, hence the emphasis on revalorisation, some participants also expressed concerns about corpus planning. Although the latter focuses on the lexicon of a language, Fishman notes that "all corpus planning has a status planning dimension, hidden though that may frequently be" (2004: 93). Thus, an alphabet agreed upon in 1984 by several intellectuals and public institutions is broadly in use. However, there are still tensions caused by variation in written Maya, owing to particular graphemic choices that contrast with previous alphabets and, particularly, with place names and surnames. Brody (2004, 2010) explores this topic in depth but here I want to emphasise some of its ideological effects, albeit briefly, because it is a thorny issue that lingers on and has repercussions for the development of written Maya. María Moo, who is an author and teacher of Maya, explained why she does not follow the alphabet of 1984:

Testimony 5.11

Josep: ¿Y usted utiliza el alfabeto del 84?
María Moo: No utilizo el del 84, utilizo el del Codermex, la *h* es la única diferencia, no, todo fue política, todo fue una cosa política, [...] en esa época en el 84, todavía estaba yo muy verde en el asunto, y yo dije no puedes quitar *h* la gente así están acostumbrados, hay apellidos en *h*, nombres de pueblos en *h* y además si van a cambiar *h*, entonces también tienen que quitar *dz* porque hay algunos que incluso hasta ahora, que están utilizando *j* y están utilizando *dz* y *tz*, no pueden hacer una combinación, si van a utilizar *dz* y *tz* que utilicen todo el alfabeto como es, entonces

yo sigo con mi *h*, pero es que tú tienes que quitar me han dicho, y les digo la *h* la sigo utilizando porque acá vienen investigadores que van a consultar libros que están escritos con *h*.

[María Moo 16.4.2012 Mérida].

Although in my experience controversies about the alphabet are not hotly debated at the moment in Yucatán, María's observations illustrate the language ideological debates that are so often intimately bound up with orthographic choices (Woolard 1998). The main graphic differences between traditional alphabets and the 1984 alphabet are shown in table 5.1:

	Variants	
Phoneme	1984	Traditional
/ts/	ts	tz
/ts'/	ts'	dz
/h/	j	h
/k/	k	c
/k'/	k'	k
/w/	w	u

Table 5.1 Graphic variation in Maya.

Moreover, the picture below is a sample of religious material distributed across the Peninsula, in this case by the missionary organisation *Sociedad Bíblica de México*. Note that in this case the official alphabet of 1984 is not followed.[155]

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155 Although beyond the scope of this thesis, the influence that religion has in the use of Maya is an issue that deserves further research. Yucatán is a highly traditional area where Catholicism and more recently protestant denominations play a central role in many people's lives.

Picture 5.2 Bilingual booklet on human rights in the Bible by the Mexican Bible Society.

Linking education with literacy, the SEP and the DGEI have organised a series of annual workshops on 'normalisation' of Maya to analyse the functionality of the alphabet approved in 1984. I attended the meeting of 2009 in Mérida and had the opportunity to see discussions that dealt with quite specific linguistic issues, such as possible ways to translate technical linguistic terms into Maya. The focus of the meeting was almost exclusively on the form of Maya. These debates were striking considering the deficiencies in the indigenous education system as regards the use of that language in schools, the fact that most interventions were held in Spanish, and, last but not least, the absence of Maya linguists at the meeting.[156]

Moreover, some teachers at the workshop expressed the idea that Maya is particularly difficult to write. As Fernando Segovia also pointed out in an interview "siempre existe la idea, que además lo difunden mucho los maestros, que es una lengua muy difícil de escribir y de leer". This perception is arguably based on the representation of vowel length, glottal stops and tones in Maya. Unsurprisingly these

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156 In one of the discussions, participants debated over how to translate 'fricative' and 'affricate' into Maya. A document entitled *Normas de escritura de la lengua maya* was produced in the meeting. It is divided into three sections: rules for the use of letters, rules for the use of orthographic signs, and delimitations of words.

phonological traits are absent in Spanish.[157] This is an example of a value judgment based on linguistic prejudice since I did not come across the belief that Spanish, despite having multiple orthographic inconsistencies owing to homophony, is difficult to spell. Neither did I hear the opinion during my fieldwork that English, a language which many people are eager to learn in Yucatán, is a difficult language to read and write.

Research has shown that variation in written Maya does not pose a problem to those who use it in informal settings, which contrasts with prescriptivist concerns of many intellectuals, writers, and teachers. Brody (2004, 2010), for instance, argues that tolerance towards orthographic variation could foster the use of written Maya among new users. These users may find flexibility less off-putting than the normative practices of a prescriptive and standardised alphabet. Ismael May (2010) reaches very similar conclusions in his study of Maya based on a corpus of emails and phone text messages of people with no specific instruction to write Maya. In chapter 7 I shall analyse some examples from my own data that go along these lines.

Alejandra Pellicer (1996) presents a further example in her research on children who build on their previous knowledge of literacy in Spanish to construct a fairly regular spelling system to write Maya using transference of skills.[158] Drawing on all this research, it needs to be stressed that, like purism, prescriptivism can have a negative effect on the production of literacy in Maya. José Chablé, who teaches Maya, recounted in an interview that:

Testimony 5.12

El asunto es que hay muchos también que prefieren, siendo bilingües en maya y español, pues escribir en español por razones prácticas, porque es más rápido, como por ejemplo, este, "llego en 10 minutos", pues ve y tener que seleccionar buscando apóstrofos, eso es una cosa, los que están alfabetizados. Los que no están alfabetizados, el asunto es la falta de confianza, porque lo primero que piensan es pero no sé escribir maya, o no sé escribirlo bien, es que no tengo mucho vocabulario, o de pronto, es que hay cosas que no sé decir en maya. A veces cuando yo les escribo en maya, todos son mayahablantes, los correos todo en maya, pero muchos me responden en español, me dicen, "oye te respondo en español porque no sé escribir en maya", entonces yo lo motivo a que, no escríbeme como tú sepas y yo lo entiendo, eso es lo importante, trato de darles confianza, hay quien reacciona y dice, está bien y hay quien dice, "no, no, es que tengo que estudiarlo".

[José Chablé 29.3.2011 Mérida].

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157 Interview with Fernando Segovia (13.4.2010 Mérida). Lizama and Solís (2008) also give similar examples from Yucatán. See Linda King (1994: 147) for other regions of Mexico.
158 See Cummins' interdependence hypothesis (1991) for more details on its relevance in language acquisition.

According to José, practical reasons explain the preference for written Spanish. Critically, the lack of confidence of users stems from the perception that Maya needs to be written 'correctly'. Not everyone is of the same opinion, though, and later on in the same interview José reported the striking case of a young Maya student of his who thinks that Maya is easy to write precisely because it has not been standardised:

> Testimony 5.13
>
> Yo le pregunté a ella, oye, para ti qué es más fácil, ¿escribir maya o español? Como que la respuesta automática esperada es español. "¡Pues maya!", me dice. ¿Ah sí? ¿Pero por qué? "Es que como el maya no tiene reglas para escribirse, lo puedes escribir como tú quieras y es más fácil".
>
> [José Chablé 29.3.2011 Mérida].

This perceived freedom and flexibility to write Maya pointed out by this student clashes with ongoing processes of strict 'normalisation' supported by official institutions such as INALI.

'La idea de normalización es otra vez la homogeneización': INALI and language normalisation

The concept of *normalización* often crops up in the data gathered. *Normalización* is a key concept of INALI's approach to language policy and planning in Mexico. This federal institution states in its programme for the period 2008-2012 that:

> Entre los componentes más importantes para alcanzar la justicia y la equidad social a la que aspiramos están el Catálogo de las lenguas indígenas nacionales: Variantes lingüísticas de México con sus autodenominaciones y referencias geoestadísticas, así como la normalización lingüística, que es el proceso de planeación lingüística concomitante a dicha catalogación (PINALI 2009: 3).

That same document summarises INALI's main language planning goals, which are "the production of grammars, the standardisation of writing and the promotion of literacy in the national indigenous languages" (PINALI 2009: 56). This approach to language planning stems from a particular ideological stance that aims at cataloguing and reifying languages through standardisation. The impact of this institutional strategy on the revitalisation of indigenous languages, which parallels language policies for dominant languages, remains uncertain. Defining boundaries and uniformising the languages are core notions in language standardisation (Milroy 2012), but gaining legitimacy through

this process may have the effect of delegitimising linguistic practices on the ground that do not fit into the standard language mould. In this sense, Susan Gal observes that "[f]or those living in standardised regimes –as we all now do– standards command authority; other linguistic forms seem inadequate (non-language) or simply invisible" (2006: 164). A telling example of the problems that this approach raises was provided by Jacinto May, a Maya linguist who collaborated in the past with INALI. According to Jacinto:

Testimony 5.14

Ahora sucede que la normalización nos hace ir otra vez para atrás. La semana pasada que estaba con el director general del INALI, me dice "es que están enmendándonos la plana, es que en el catálogo ustedes dicen que hay seis variantes de tzotzil, y otras tantas de tzeltal pero eso no me sirve como profesor". Y le digo "creo que es al revés, justamente te sirve para saber en qué variante enseñar para que eso funcione". "Sí, pero para las cuestiones administrativas no me sirve, entonces la normalización, que ya la hicimos, es un tzotzil y un tzeltal, y vamos a hacer lo mismo con zapoteco y con mixteco." Es que ¿sabes qué? La idea de normalización es otra vez la homogeneización, eso es lo que se busca y certificar para poder accesar a los presupuestos. Es una norma que te da la Secretaría de Hacienda. [Jacinto May 25.8.2011 Mérida].

Reducing the complex linguistic diversity of Mexico to a list of catalogued languages with a standard has been a central endeavour in INALI's action plan (PINALI 2009). For Jacinto *normalización* is synonymous with homogenisation. Once more, the issue of bureaucratisation surfaces in institutional language planning in Mexico. As Jacinto notes, a language needs to be officially sanctioned by the federal institution in charge of promoting indigenous languages (INALI) because resources can only be allocated to those languages that are referenced in its catalogue.

Further to this idea of official institutions as authoritative voices in the field of language planning, the role of teachers who work for the indigenous education system also needs to be addressed. I asked Carlos Canul about the continuity of the workshops on 'normalisation' organised by the DGEI in the Yucatán Peninsula since the year 2008. This is what he replied:

Testimony 5.15

Josep: ¿Y este verano habrá también congreso de taller de normalización? ¿Se sigue con ese tema?
Carlos: No sé, yo estuve en el de Campeche y en el de Yucatán como sabes. En el primero no pude participar. Es una pérdida de tiempo. Esa normalización es un fracaso en la Dirección de Educación Indígena, querer hacer algo grande, yo he escuchado a estos de la normalización y están bien equivocados, están queriendo

normalizar, están queriendo organizar la lengua, ahí se radica la riqueza de la lengua.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Carlos criticises the workshops on language normalisation on the grounds that it is a waste of time and a failure because normalising entails reducing diversity, a phenomenon extensively studied in the literature on standardisation (Joseph 1987; Mühlhäusler 1990; Milroy 2001; Gal 2006; Romaine 2009). This comment about the goal of the teachers' workshop is consistent with Carlos's insistence on concentrating on more impending matters than standardisation such as how to arrest language abandonment.

5.6   Discourses of Education

This second part of the chapter explores discourses of language promotion that touch on legitimising Maya through the formal education system. Some participants have long experience in bilingual education and recognise the diverse range of language attitudes among teachers working in indigenous education. In fact, a good number of interviewees are teachers of Maya themselves. I examine below discourses produced by these professionals, but by also parents, intellectuals, and other actors involved in the process of revalorising Maya.

'Existen escuelas donde el maestro no sabe maya': on the attitudes of teachers
In an interview with Bernardo Aguilar, Jorge Dzib, and Osvaldo Itzá, three teachers in their sixties who have worked for decades in indigenous education, I asked them about overall competence in Maya and language attitudes of teachers of indigenous schools. Bernardo Aguilar gave the following answer:

Testimony 5.16

Existen todas las situaciones en educación indígena, desde escuelas indígenas donde el maestro no sabe maya, hasta escuelas indígenas donde el maestro sabe maya pero no le interesa enseñarlo, prefiere usar el español, incluso maestros indígenas que están contra la maya, sí los hay, y hay también maestros que tienen actitud positiva

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

According to Bernardo, some teachers do not know Maya and others do not want to use it in schools, although there are some who have a positive attitude. Likewise, Adrián Pech, who is studying at UNO in Valladolid, recounted that:

Testimony 5.17

Mi hermano es director de educación indígena y yo le decía: "¿cómo va el asunto?, "Pues me envían tres maestros que no hablan maya, no hay material, y yo me paso todo el día en la dirección llenando papeles". Esa es la vida de México, tanta burocracia.

[Adrián Pech, 15.4.2011 Valladolid].

Along with the idea of bureaucratisation, Adrián points out some of the major pitfalls of indigenous education, namely, teachers who do not speak Maya and lack of materials. A further problem is that many teachers cannot write Maya (see also Lizama and Solís 2008; Mijangos and Romero 2008). Although there are training courses offered by educational institutions, such as the *Academia Municipal de la Lengua Maya, Itzimná* in Mérida, with a focus on grammar and *lectoescritura*, they often lack interest and motivation. Carlos Canul, who has been a teacher trainer in this *Academia*, complained about the attitudes of some teachers and highlighted the potential of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) to bring about sociolinguistic changes in the communities where indigenous schools are located:

Testimony 5.18

La SEP puede hacer un gran cambio, son los que llegan a la comunidad, están todos los días, hablan con los papás, la SEP puede hacer mucho, en general, directamente la Dirección de Educación Indígena. Hay como 2000 profesores y en teoría todos deben hablar la lengua pero es educación indígena sobre el papel pero es muy lamentable a la SEP no le convendría hacerlo porque debería despedir a muchos profesores o reubicarlos, pero dónde los reubicas. Los viernes damos clase a estos profesores pero sí, es lamentable, te mandan muchos que no hablan la lengua cuando el curso es de lectoescritura, entonces posiblemente se quedan estancados, gente que han repetido tres veces el curso, no va a pasar porque no está en el curso adecuado y no cumplen, llegan tarde, se quieren ir temprano. Otra cosa que yo veo es que es gente grande, no entiendo por qué siguen formando gente que está a punto de jubilarse.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Usually demotivated and poorly paid teachers, who have low status because they work in indigenous education, have negative attitudes toward using Maya and learning

lectoescritura. Moreover, a generational problem becomes evident (see also Lizama and Solís 2008). This is a thorny political issue because the teachers' union, one of the most powerful corporatist institutions in Mexico, gives priority to the interests of its members over indigenous issues (Hidalgo 1994). In this sense, Hamel has written that '[o]ver the years they have forged a powerful structure, within a powerful national teachers' union, that acts objectively as a language movement in favor of Spanish and linguistic assimilation" (2008: 317). Let us turn now to ideologies of language learning.

'Si el niño aprende maya luego cuando vaya a la escuela va a tener problemas': on language 'mixing'

The ways in which Maya is taught at schools is another critical question. According to ethnographic research, one of the main problems is that bilingual programmes are not implemented with adequate teaching of Spanish as a second language (Lizama 2008 for Yucatán; García and Velasco 2012 for the case of Chiapas). One of the main goals of the school is the teaching of 'correct' Spanish, that is, standard Mexican Spanish, as Yucatec Spanish with a Maya accent or 'errors' caused by interferences is likely to be socially sanctioned. The stigma therefore may be transferred from speaking the minorised language to the accent in which the dominant language is spoken, which in Yucatán is known as speaking *aporreado*. 'Aporreado' means 'beaten, hammered' and refers to glottalisation and the influence of suprasegmental features, particularly tone, transferred from Maya to Yucatec Spanish (Martín Briceño 1997).[159] This is a topic I develop further in the chapter devoted to language purism but suffices it to say here that language contact between Maya and Spanish is valued negatively, since many parents and teachers believe that the former language can cause problems to learn 'good' Spanish at school.[160] After explaining her experience as a child who grew up bilingually, María Moo noted the fallacy of seeing bilingualism as a burden to acquire good competence in Spanish. She explained that:

Testimony 5.19

Yo no tuve dificultad con relacionar maya y español, por eso yo estoy en contra de eso de que te digan "no, es que si el niño aprende maya luego cuando vaya a la escuela va a tener problemas". Y ese es el pretexto que hay y eso no solamente

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159 Social psychologists have studied stereotypes based on accent at least since the 1960s (see Lambert et al. 1960; Giles 1973). See Howard (2007: 251) for similar examples of the negative connotation of 'mote', based on vowel distinction, in Andean Spanish. Also, Lippi-Green (1997) for an in depth analysis of discrimination based on accent in the US.

160 See also Howard (2007: 263) and Kendall King (2000: 175) for similar beliefs about the negative effects of bilingualism on good command of Spanish in the Andean context.

viene de los papás, sino hasta de los mismos maestros, "es que el niño sabe maya y por eso no aprende español", ¡noooo! La cosa es que tú no sabes enseñar, ese es el problema.

[María Moo 16.4.2012 Mérida].

For María it is the language ideologies of parents and teachers that are hindering the possibilities to increase the linguistic repertoire of children. As a primary school teacher said about some of his colleagues, "hay algunos que no quieren que los niños mezclen las lenguas en el aula. Tienen que estar separadas".[161] Therefore, the problem is not the coexistence of two languages in the school system, as elite bilingualism in Spanish and English shows, but rather the negative ideologies attached to speaking Spanish with a Maya accent. Language mixing, in short, becomes an excuse for discrimination and is equated with a reduction of possibilities for social mobility.

'Los recursos, ¿de dónde van a salir?': on the costs of bilingual education

A recurrent belief I also came across during my fieldwork was that a widespread implementation of bilingual education in Yucatán would be too expensive. After a talk on immersion schools in Catalonia I gave at UNO, a student of the degree in Maya language and culture commented that it would be very difficult to carry out bilingual education for all in Yucatán, owing to lack of financial resources. Similarly, an anthropologist who works at UADY, while talking about the possibility of granting official status to Maya and the potential consequence of extending bilingual education across Yucatán, recounted the following vignette:

Testimony 5.20

Una vez tuvimos una reunión con diputados aquí el Congreso y una diputada del PRD particularmente y ella dice, y ahí me cayó el veinte, dice, "qué va a pasar, nosotros oficializamos la lengua maya, la hacemos obligatoria para la enseñanza en los diferentes niveles, pero para empezar no tenemos gente preparada, nos vamos a enfrentar a esto y esto y esto qué implica", las implicaciones, y nos va haciendo así como un árbol, muy complicado realmente que a veces los antropólogos no tenemos en cuenta, simplemente lanzar la iniciativa, se ve que se sentó muy puntualmente a razonar. Sabes cómo nos dejó, con la boca callada, estábamos en la reunión gente que realmente conoce, y nos quedamos así viéndonos las caras, cuando nos pintó de esa manera, quién va a hacer todo esto, los materiales, los recursos humanos, ¿saben cuántas escuelas tenemos? Sacó su cuenta, todo, ¡ah caray! No sabíamos qué decir. Es difícil, no es tan fácil.

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].

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161 Interview with Valerio Cauich (24.3.2010 Mérida).

Undoubtedly, the challenges of introducing Maya in all Yucatecan schools, let alone an immersion system, need to be carefully considered. However, unlike the opinions of the participants above, I maintain that the main obstacle is not necessarily economic but first and foremost political, and eventually one that is based on discrimination and marginalisation in education. Bilingual education that promotes indigenous languages is just not a political priority in Mexico. What is more, too often the enormous cultural and economic benefits of a truly plurilingual and intercultural education are intentionally neglected. Patrinos and Vélez (2009) compared the costs and benefits of bilingual education in Guatemala. They conclude in their study that:

> A shift to bilingual schooling would result in considerable cost saving because of reduced repetition. The higher quality of education generating higher promotion rates will help students complete primary education and will substantially increase completion rates at low cost. The cost savings due to bilingual education is estimated at $5 million, equal to the cost of primary education for 100,000 students (2009: 594).

This kind of evidence regarding the real costs of bilingual education needs to reach policy makers and researchers and the myth of inapplicability, due to lack of resources, be called into question. This information should be available to parents and the general public with a view to highlighting the advantages of promoting minorised languages at schools.[162] Giving educational value to Maya might be an important strategy for language revalorisation and to fight against discrimination, a strong and subtle phenomenon in Yucatán that underpins parents' negative attitudes towards Maya language transmission.

'Que les enseñen en español, maya e inglés': on plurilingual education

Language discrimination as a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1991) helps to explain language abandonment in Yucatán. The point I want to stress in these sections is that underlying reasons linked to the ideological positions of parents, teachers and children are at least as important for explaining the limitations of indigenous schools to promote Maya as is the lack of human and material resources. In this vein, concerns

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162 Garcés (2006: 168) and Rubio (2006: 243) note the impending need for informative campaigns to show the beneficial effects of bilingual education in their respective assessments of EIB in Ecuador and Guatemala. See Lizama and Solís (2008) for Yucatán.

expressed by parents about effective learning of Spanish at school are prominent.[163] Jorge Dzib answered to my question about parents' attitudes towards Maya language teaching thus:

Testimony 5.21

Josep: ¿Hay padres que se oponen a que les enseñen en maya, que quieren que los niños aprendan español en la escuela?
Jorge Dzib: Claro, no quiero que sean como yo, es lo primero que te dicen, que no sé español o no lo hablo bien.

[Jorge Dzib 8.4.2010 Mérida].

During my fieldwork I often asked parents whether they would like their children to learn Maya at school. While I generally received positive answers, many parents also pointed out schools as the place where children should learn Spanish. EIB may be sometimes viewed by parents as an attempt to deny access to Spanish as the most useful language for social and economic mobility. Initiatives to introduce Maya in urban school for Spanish speaking children such as the *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* programme raised similar concerns. In the following excerpt, Salvador Polanco closely links learning Maya at school with prejudice:

Testimony 5.22

Los maestros de *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* decían que habían tenido ciertos problemas en su ejercicio docente sobre todo por los prejuicios que tienen los padres de familia respecto a la enseñanza de las lenguas a sus hijos. Yo creo que la cuestión de la discriminación cultural sigue pesando muy fuerte, sigue pesando mucho en esta sociedad yucateca, donde se identifica a la gente por sus apellidos mayas, por su vestimenta, por sus rasgos físicos, por incluso la forma de hablar el castellano, o incluso también por las labores que desempeñan, con todos esos conjuntos uno identifica la población maya e inmediatamente adquiere prejuicios.

[Salvador Polanco 5.8.2011 Mérida].

Salvador's comments on prejudice include not only language, either Maya or ways of speaking Spanish influenced by Maya, but also other marks that can lead to discrimination, such as clothing, physical appearance, employment, and surnames

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163 See García (2003) on Quechua parents showing similar reluctance to have indigenous language education at schools. López claims that indigenous parents "have developed a certain skepticism regarding EIB" and reports parents' concerns stating that "if EIB is as good as state employees and academicians state – mostly members of the culturally hegemonic sector – why do they not apply it in urban schools with their own children? (2008a: 50)"

(Iturriaga 2010; Castellanos 2003). Since these features bear stigma, they are usually shunned. One common practice, for instance, has been for some people to change their Maya surnames into Spanish ones (Quintal 2005).[164]

In spite of the language prejudices of many parents and teachers, not all parents have negative attitudes towards the use of Maya at schools. In the same interview, Jorge Dzib reported that:

Testimony 5.23

Yo trabajé en un programa de evaluación, entrevisté a una madre de familia y pregunté a varios padres de familia cómo les gustaría que les enseñaran a sus hijos, en maya o en español, y me dijo que en las dos, le gustaría que enseñaran a sus hijos, pero qué bueno que les enseñara también en inglés.

[Jorge Dzib 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Surveys have shown that an overwhelmingly high percentage of parents (over 90%) are in favour of having Maya in schools for their children (Bracamonte et al. 2011: 88). These positive opinions raise contradictory ideological issues because fewer and fewer parents are transmitting Maya to their children at home. It is a sort of 'idealised bilingualism', as Salvador Polanco, put in an interview.[165] This was my own experience in the field where I often saw Maya parents giving positive opinions about Maya while invariably addressing their children in Spanish. The priority for children is to acquire good proficiency in Spanish first, although later on in life Maya can also be activated. I shall return to this issue below.

Plurilingualism and language contact are not a problem *per se*, as the interest of learning English shows. Owing to the growth of tourism as one of the main industries and a prominent source of jobs and income in Yucatán, the demand for English is increasing.[166] This language is seen as a key resource to improve economic conditions, which in the case of deprived and poorly educated indigenous people is a most impending need. Rita Chi, when discussing plurilingual acquisition in Yucatán, reported that:

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164 Unlike in other indigenous areas of Mexico, in Yucatan Maya surnames have survived colonisation. See also Howard (2007: 188) for a parallel situation in Andean region as regards changing surnames to avoid stigma.
165 Interview with Salvador Polanco (5.8.2011 Mérida)
166 For similar demands regarding teaching languages of wider communication in Ecuador, see Cotacachi (1997: 295); also Garcés (2006: 154).

Testimony 5.24

Este muchacho trabaja en Cancún y tiene contacto con muchos turistas, creo que es guía de turismo, y su familia viven en Xocen, a su hijo le enseñó maya e inglés, pero no español, dijo, mi hijo dijo, cuando vaya a ir al kinder va a tener que aprender español porque quien lo rodea los profesores y compañeros le van a hablar español pero mientras cumple los cuatro años yo quiero que aprenda maya e inglés. Yo dije qué padre, darle el peso a la lengua maya y el inglés, primero mi lengua materna y luego todas las que vengan.

[Rita Chi 12.8.2011 Mérida].

This case spotlights the concerns of parents about language development of Spanish rather than Maya at schools. Also, unlike the cases mentioned above on bilingual education in Maya and Spanish, acquiring two or three languages, as long as they are international languages, is not considered an onerous burden but rather an asset for the child.[167] There is a practical approach to language learning. Parents with whom I discussed the topic generally think that Spanish and English provide better opportunities for social mobility than Maya.

However, this emphasis on mastering Spanish, and often English, does not mean that Maya has limited value in the economic sphere, even in urban contexts. There is a small group of speakers who have capitalised on their knowledge of both oral and written Maya to find good jobs and position themselves among the middle class of Mérida (López Santillán 2011). It is not a coincidence that the social position of these urban and educated activists contrasts in a stark way with that of marginalised rural populations for whom Maya has little value for upward social mobility.[168] In addition, I often came across the idea, particularly expressed by youths, that being bilingual and knowing Maya helps to acquire English in a quicker and easier way. This positive belief could be fostered in order to counterbalance widespread negative ideologies for language maintenance, such as the ingrained perception that bilingualism hampers acquisition of 'good' Spanish.

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167 In Peru, García gives voice to a Quechua parent who is aware of this paradox and addresses a teacher trainer thus: "You want us to say that it is good that you teach our children in Quechua [...]. But if that is so good for our children, why don't you teach your own children in Quechua, too? Why do you send them to French or English institutes?" (2003: 80). See also Howard (2007: 263) for a similar experience in the Andes.

168 See K. King (2001: 192) and Howard (2007: 198) for analogous descriptions in Andean countries.

5.7 Discourses of Language Acquisition and Transmission

I found out during my interviews that a number of activists are not passing Maya on to their children, which shows important contradictions between their support for revalorisation and their actual linguistic practices. A major question is therefore who is given responsibility for the maintenance of Maya and how that responsibility is transferred to other speakers or institutions such as the school. Also, some discourses point to meaningful spaces for the reproduction of Maya where institutional language planning does not reach. Finally, the fact that receptive skills in Maya are relatively widespread is an issue that must be explored in more detail because of the possibilities it opens up for language (re)activation, and consequently, revitalisation.[169] Unveiling ideologies of language socialisation in a context of widespread shift and concurrent revitalisation is a fundamental issue that can shed new light on patterns of language transmission, acquisition, and (re)activation of minorised languages (see recent contributions in Ochs and Schieffelin 2011). These are the topics of the following sections.

'Les pregunto a los niños en maya si saben maya y me contestan en español que no saben maya': on receptive skills in Maya

The stigma associated with speaking Maya may also be internalised and naturalised by children, many of whom, in contexts where Maya is still widely used by adults, have good receptive skills. While explaining his experience with schoolchildren, Bernardo Aguilar held adults responsible for passing the stigma on to children:

Testimony 5.25

Fui a esa escuela porque lo que yo quería ver es como aprenden a leer en maya o en español y de entrada les pregunté a los niños si hablan maya y en coro me contestaron que no, no hablan maya y me puse a platicar y a cantar con ellos y a conversar y cuando a algunos de ellos de manera individual les pregunto si saben maya, me dice que no sabe maya y ciertamente hablan español todos pero como son niños, les pregunto en maya si saben maya y me contestan en español que no saben maya, ¡claro que saben y entienden! Y el hecho es que al final reconocieron que sí saben maya, pero la tendencia es negarlo, entonces ¿cómo se pasa eso a los niños? La idea de que hay que desplazar la lengua maya, la sociedad de los adultos les transmitimos, le transmitimos los prejuicios. Esa generación de niños todavía con un adecuado programa bilingüe desarrollan su lengua.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

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169 I prefer to use 'receptive' skills rather than 'passive' skills because of the connotations of inaction of the latter term.

Bernardo highlights the possibilities of an adequate bilingual education for the development of Maya and notes the prejudice that is transmitted from parents to children. Arguably, this prejudice stems from the discrimination that parents have suffered themselves. As noted, denial and concealment of Maya is a common strategy to avoid stigma, particularly when moving to urban contexts.

The lingering nature of receptive skills may also play a central role in language shift to Spanish and help this process to take a 'smoother' pace, since total interruption of intergenerational communication does not take place. In the following excerpt Manuel Peraza, who has himself reactivated Maya in adulthood, draws on recent language policies in Guatemala regarding 'passive bilinguals' to describe Maya language competence among children in the town of Santa Elena in southern Yucatán:

Testimony 5.26

Los de la Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala decían que tenían un programa muy interesante, que estaba dirigido a los bilingües pasivos, porque detectaron que había una gran cantidad de niños y jóvenes que entienden muy bien las lenguas mayas pero no las hablan. Entonces implementaron un programa y materiales diseñados exclusivamente para ellos y fue una clave para la recuperación lingüística y yo llego por ejemplo a Santa Elena y la mayoría de los niños está hablando en maya, es muy raro el niño que no hable maya, aunque se niega al principio pero lo sabe, le da un poco de pena pero puedo asegurar que los niños hablan maya, un 90 por ciento de la población habla maya, ese pueblo es muy bilingüe, es uno de los municipios que tiene los grados más altos de bilingüismo en el Estado. Yo hablo con un niño y le hablo en maya y me contesta en español y así podemos llevar la plática mucho rato, y hasta el final le digo ¿por qué no hablas?, ¿Por qué? Y, no lo sé, y se empiezan a reír, o sea que me están entendiendo, se ríen de las cosas que digo, las están entendiendo muy bien, quizá no al cien por cien pero muchos en mi pueblo lo mismo. Un poco pasó conmigo también, que luego me puse a estudiar, yo en el pueblo entiendo perfectamente y decía como cosas aisladas pero estaba como bloqueada esa parte de la lengua y luego la empecé a sacar, y yo entiendo muy bien esta situación. Entonces ellos crearon un programa especial con materiales especiales para esto y eso fue la clave para recuperar.

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].

Manuel's (re)activation of Maya by triggering productive competence is not an unusual experience among my interviewees. This is also the case for those who do not belong to a small group of people for whom writing and speaking Maya has been a profitable experience in their professional lives.[170] The activation of language production in post-

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170 See López Santillán (2011) for an in-depth account of Maya professionals in Mérida. See also Howard (2007: 112) for a similar example in the Andean region.

adolescence may be a common phenomenon in some rural contexts where Maya is still widely used among adults, a topic to which I return below.[171]

‘La lengua maya los que tienen la obligación de aprenderla son los que no la saben’: on the ‘burden’ of Maya maintenance

Further to parents' ideologies of Maya language learning, there is a mismatch between discourses of some activists that support bilingual education in schools and the ideologies that undergird language shift to Spanish in the first place. The following comment by Carla Rivero, an anthropologist who is also reactivating Maya, underlines that conflict. Referring to current academic and intellectual discourses of *rescate*, she criticises the fact that the burden for language revitalisation falls on those who already know Maya:

Testimony 5.27

Dicen que hay que rescatar la lengua, ¿quién la va a rescatar? Tenemos que trabajar en el rescate de la lengua, en el rescate ¡porque está perdiéndose! Se está perdiendo, pero así en muchísimos discursos, porque hay una visión pero desafortunadamente esa visión de la pérdida de la lengua maya está apoyada en discursos incluso de los académicos, de los estudiosos de la cultura maya. Entonces hay que rescatarlo y los primeros que lo desconocen son ellos mismos y los primeros que no hacen nada. Yo cuando participé también en este programa de desarrollo para esta administración me invitaron para el área de los medios y yo lo que dije es que la lengua maya los que tienen la obligación de aprender la lengua maya son los que no saben la lengua maya, tienen que aprenderla para respetarla porque se hace al revés, hay que enseñarle a escribir y a leer a los que la hablan y la practican como cultura en la vida cotidiana, obviamente es lo que menos quieren. Por eso los padres dicen, yo mando a mi hijo a aprender español y esto es condenado por la SEP, porque los padres no quieren, se oponen a una educación bilingüe, ellos necesitan ser bilingües, ¿ellos? ¿Y los demás? ¿Por qué no somos bilingües? Porque obviamente es una vergüenza, ser bilingüe, yo puedo ser bilingüe pero si es con inglés, español e inglés, eso es más estatus para mí.

[Carla Rivero 27.7.2011 Mérida].

Carla's observations condense some of the contradictions of the Maya revalorisation process. These tensions need to be addressed to design more socially relevant language policies that do not necessarily focus solely on Maya language promotion. For those policies to be effective, the sociopolitical subordination of Maya speakers should be challenged. Carla points out the ideological contradiction that the burden of language

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171 Paradise and de Haan write about Mazahuas in central Mexico that "[m]ost of the younger generations are monolingual in Spanish, although they understand Mazahua spoken at home by older members of the family and may later become Mazahua speakers themselves" (2009: 188).

maintenance is transferred to those who are precisely discriminated against for speaking it. Not only do marginalised speakers need to carry on using Maya, but they must also become literate in it. Fernando Segovia elaborated on this idea of blaming people who decide to abandon Maya, usually when they move to the city. The idiom used (*poner el dedo en la llaga*, to rub salt in the wound) is fairly explicit:

> Testimony 5.28
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> Hay mucha gente con toda la buena voluntad del mundo dice "no entiendo por qué te avergüenzas, dejar de hablar tu lengua si es una lengua tan bonita, tan no sé qué". No se da cuenta de que con esa actitud en lugar de motivar a la persona es como ponerle el dedo en la llaga.
>
> [Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

According to Fernando, and as I also heard in the field, Maya may have positive aesthetic connotations, but sentimental value does not seem to be a strong enough reason for parents to pass it on to children. Moreover, the aesthetic appreciation of Maya, as reported by Fernando, often comes from non-Maya speakers. This view coincides with Carla's comment above on who is given responsibility, arguably in a patronising way, to keep Maya alive (note the use of the possessive in the phrase above 'dejar de hablar *tu* lengua').

There is, therefore, a sharp contrast between the instrumental and the sentimental value of Maya. Stephen May has pointed out that an opposition, often mutually exclusive, is drawn between the instrumental use of languages and their sentimental value, this latter closely linked with one's identity. As he writes, "[m]ajority languages are lauded for their instrumental value, while minority languages are accorded 'sentimental' value, but are broadly constructed as obstacles for social mobility and progress" (2004: 41).[172] This theme came up again in the same interview with Fernando Segovia. He went on to note the need to make Maya useful beyond its aesthetic value:

> Testimony 5.29
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> La única manera de fortalecer la lengua es hacerla útil para la comunidad, hacerla útil y mucho del discurso oficial que se da es que es que, bueno, ¿por qué dejan de hablar una lengua tan bonita? … Pero el discurso oficial no ha encontrado hasta este momento una forma de darle utilidad práctica a la lengua. Entonces dice ¿por qué dejas de hablar tu lengua tan bonita que se oye hasta curiosa? Mientras sigamos en ese camino no vamos a hacer gran cosa.

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172 See K. King (2001: 132-134) for this dichotomy in the use of Quichua in the Ecuadorian Andes.

It is again through indirect speech, echoing an institutional voice, that Fernando underlines a lament about the abandonment of Maya. In this case, that indirect speech comes from an impersonal 'official discourse' that values Maya as a beautiful language. However, this institutional acknowledgement is a patronising way of promoting Maya, since actual policies to give Maya practical uses are minimal. This issue raises contradictory reactions because limited and selective policies to increase the usefulness of Maya in the job market may accrue to language commodification and bureaucratisation. Thus, one downside of such policies might be that only a handful of people would benefit from these much sought-after jobs. I asked Rosa Nava whether she thought it important to concentrate on language policies aimed at giving economic value to proficiency in Maya:

Testimony 5.30

Josep: ¿Crees que si la lengua maya fuera útil para encontrar un trabajo por ejemplo menos gente la abandonaría?
Rosa Nava: Creo que se debe mirar más en la importancia de conservar la lengua no tanto por el valor económico sino porque es algo de Yucatán, es algo que se tiene que rescatar. Si lo hacemos por buscar trabajo, muchos a lo mejor lo hacen porque se está dando a lo mejor en la procuraduría, se están formando intérpretes, así si yo sé maya ya tengo asegurado mi trabajo porque soy mayahablante y voy a ayudar en esa parte, pero como sé que son pocos los puestos entonces pues ya hay quienes lo ocuparon y les va a durar varios años y yo ya mejor no aprendo maya si es por algo económico.

[Rosa Nava 6.4.2010 Mérida].

In this excerpt the idea of *rescate*, which in Rosa's view is intimately related to emotional issues linked to a distinct regional identity, appears again. The relative asset of knowing Maya to find a good job in Yucatán seems to her rather limited because only a few official 'interpreters' and other language experts would ultimately benefit from its institutionalisation.

The commodification of minorised languages is increasingly playing an important role in processes of language revitalisation against the backdrop of the increasing centrality of language in the new economy (Heller 2003, 2011). As I have been able to observe, the institutional folklorisation and commodification of Maya culture is a bone of contention in the revalorisation process in Yucatán. Prominent

examples are the recent construction *Gran Museo del Mundo Maya*, which was opened in the outskirts of Mérida on 24 September 2012, and the organisation of an International Maya Festival in October 2013, both of them government initiatives.[173] However, a reliance on economic factors may overlook the potential negative consequences of this approach, such as the folklorisation of indigenous languages and cultures.

Drawing on May's idea that "*all* languages embody and accomplish both identity and instrumental functions for those who speak them" (2012b: 136, his emphasis), I show below how Yucatec Maya does have both instrumental and sentimental value in some contexts. In conclusion, the too simplistic ideological opposition between the instrumental and identity value of languages, while deeply entrenched, needs to be contested because of the negative influence it exerts on the reproduction of minorised languages.

'Mis hijos medio entienden la maya': on the transmission of Maya among activists

Further to the issue of responsibility, parents often transfer the acquisition of Maya to the school. Therefore, Maya language learning is supposed to take place in the secondary socialisation of the school, instead of the emotionally charged primary socialisation initiated by the family (Berger and Luckmann 1967). This may have negative prospects for the maintenance of Maya due to the pitfalls of indigenous education in Mexico. An emphasis on teaching Maya in a formal way emerged in an interview with a Maya teacher and activist whose children do not speak Maya. Apparently, his children will learn that language by reproducing the school setting at home:

Testimony 5.31

Josep: ¿Y tus hijos hablan maya?
Valerio Cauich: No, pero les estoy enseñando, de hecho mis hijos pueden leer en maya, aquí voy a poner mi escuelita de maya […] voy a comprar una pizarra y vamos a comenzar a practicar.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

Again, learning Maya is very closely bound up with literacy. According to Valerio, his children can read Maya even if they do not speak it. This example shows that a number

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173 The commodification of culture among minority groups is a worldwide phenomenon. Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) have critically analysed the growing commodification of ethnicity, culture, and identity and language among several marginalised groups of Southern Africa and North America.

of activists are not passing their language on to their children, in spite of being involved in the revalorisation of Maya. This is a paradox noted by other researchers in Yucatán (Quintal 2005: 295; López Santillán 2011: 178) and in other Latin American contexts as well.[174] There are, though, notable exceptions and the children of some prominent intellectuals I interviewed do speak Maya. One of the main reasons that activists give to explain this contradiction is that they moved to the city (in this case Mérida) and, consequently, their children are growing in an environment where Spanish is the hegemonic language. The case of Luis Uc, who works at the Academy of the Maya Language of Yucatán, illustrates these contradictions:

Testimony 5.32

Josep: ¿Y sus hijos hablan maya?
Luis Uc: Mis hijos algunos lo medio entienden, han crecido aquí en Mérida, desde que nacieron aquí, esa es una de las cosas que comentábamos, ¿por qué no les enseñamos? Bueno son varias cosas que intervienen allá, no es justificación pero, en primer lugar mi forma de trabajo, yo salgo de mi casa desde las 7.30 de la mañana y regreso hasta las 11 de la noche, pues no tengo tiempo de platicar con ellos en maya. Por otro lado cuando empiezan a ir a la escuela pues todos los niños son hablantes de español, nadie habla maya, los vecinos todos hablan español, no tienen con quien practicar realmente, como sucede en los pueblos. Entonces son cosas que influyen a que ellos no aprendan, llega un momento que les decimos que es importante que aprendan, pero nunca han visto la necesidad.

[Luis Uc 28.7.2011 Mérida].

Not only is there no need for the children of activists to use Maya in Mérida, as Luis notes, but also, these middle-class children are living in an urban setting where the stigma attached to speaking Maya and being from a 'pueblo' is most visible, an issue he does not mention.

In addition, the phrase *lo medio entienden* or, less frequently, *lo medio hablan* (they more or less understand it or speak it) was also common in several interviews as a response to the question whether the children of activists know Maya. Alfredo Ku, for instance, reported that he is not transmitting Maya to his children. To my question of how come this is the case among many Maya intellectuals, he answered:

Testimony 5.33

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174 Howard (2007: 191) reports that in eight months of sociolinguistic research in the Andean region she never met a bilingual professional who used the indigenous language with their own children.

Por mil causas, inclusive a mí me está pasando en parte, porque tengo problemas de tiempo, o sea no tengo todo el tiempo para estar en casa, estoy más fuera […] Mi mujer medio habla maya, pero su familia sufrió tanta opresión por la práctica de la cultura maya que su papá y su mamá dijeron ustedes no deben hablar maya.

[Alfredo Ku 11.4.2011 Mérida].

This excerpt points to the key issue of oppression and stigma in previous generations as the reason for breaking the intergenerational transmission of Maya. It is interesting to note that lack of time is again singled out as an excuse for not passing Maya on to children. When I pointed out theses excuses in an interview with Lilia García, she replied that "algunos dicen que no tienen tiempo para enseñar maya a sus hijos, pero se preocupan de que sus hijos estén atareados aprendiendo inglés".[175] In short, these examples show how the ideology of revalorisation may be strategically used by some intellectuals for personal interests, while they follow hegemonic practices of language transmission.

Furthermore, partial competence in Maya is an aspect of language revitalisation that needs further research, since receptive knowledge, albeit somehow limited, allows for potential language activation across the lifespan. In this sense, Alexandra Jaffe (2012: 88) has noted that recent changes in educational language policies in Corsica are progressively adopting a more encompassing and flexible approach to students' linguistic repertoires which values 'passive' skills in Corsican. She maintains that a deeply rooted and idealised image of 'balanced' bilingualism is being put into question. This approach might prove useful in Yucatán as well.

Finally, it is also worth noting that adults may choose to speak Maya as a 'secret language' so that children cannot understand their conversations.[176] These are all examples of contradictory ideologies that do not solely emerge in the Yucatecan case. Language ideologies are often multiple and conflicting, as Field and Kroskrity (2009) have argued. In the context of Native American indigenous languages, these authors write that:

A single individual (within any speech community) may hold conflicting attitudes regarding a language and its use, for example, that speaking an indigenous language is crucial to one's identity as a member of that group but that one prefers one's children to be monolingual speakers of English because one perceives the dominant language as more useful for economic success (Field and Kroskrity 2009: 22).

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175 Interview with Lilia García (6.4.2011 Mérida).
176 Interview with Rosa Nava (6.4.2010 Mérida) and observation in the field.

Needless to say, the use of Maya as a 'secret language' among adults is also an ideological issue that needs to be addressed within the context of language revitalisation efforts.

'El cambio de rol te da también la autorización de emplear una u otra lengua': on linguistic choice

Acquisition of receptive skills in childhood and adolescence may be crucial for subsequent language activation. Thus, important changes across the lifespan, such as marriage, may trigger the need to speak Maya. According to Violeta Pool:

> Testimony 5.34
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> El cambio de rol te da también la autorización o la limitación de emplear una u otra lengua, entonces en el caso de Yucatán, en el caso de las mujeres está como bastante marcado, cuando tú eres adolescente puedes usar cualquiera de las dos, maya o español, cuando tú te casas, si te casas en un ambiente rural, tienes que cambiar tu discurso prioritariamente al maya, porque vas a estar con la suegra, con la tía, con la no sé quién, que son personas mayores, adultas, que usan más maya que español.
>
> [Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Linguistic choice is determined by practices 'on the ground', where role and age of the speaker, setting, conversational topic, and genre are key components.[177] In this case, Violeta highlights that the (oral) use of Maya depends on a combination of factors that include social networks, age, and role in the extended family. The following account based on fieldnotes in the town of Timucuy was also revealing in this sense:

> After a long day celebrating the birthday of Nancy, a seven year old girl, I had the opportunity to observe language use among members of Nancy's extended family and many of her friends in Timucuy. People from all ages gathered for the celebration and the linguistic choices of participants were fairly predictable based on the age of interlocutors: bilingual use with frequent code switching between Maya and Spanish among adults, overwhelming use of Spanish when adults addressed children, and exclusive use of Spanish among children. When night fell, guests left, and children were put to bed, members of the family, all of them adults or young adults, grabbed some chairs and sat down in the patio of the house to have a drink before going to bed. It was then that a lively chat, brimming with jokes and anecdotes, was held almost completely in Maya with occasional code-mixing or code-switching to Spanish.[178]

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177 See Garrett and Baquedano-López (2002: 349) for a literature review of language socialisation that includes changes in verbal repertoires in adult years.
178 Fieldwork notes (9.4.2011).

All the components of the ethnography of speaking mentioned above influenced language choice in this vignette. This speech event represents a fine example worth analysing in its own right from a linguistic point of view, although advanced competence in Maya would be needed. What I want to highlight is that these situational everyday oral uses of Maya sharply contrast with the institutionalised campaigns focused on literacy and education that I have reviewed above.

Verbal arts in Mayan languages, Yucatec Maya included, have been studied at least since the 1970s based on contemporary linguistic practices (Bricker 1974; Gossen 1974; Burns 1980) and on colonial documents (Hanks 1987, 2010). Research undertaken from the perspective of the ethnography of speaking has helped to identify several Mayan speech genres and their particular sociocultural features. One of these features is the remarkable continuity in Maya literary traditions and verbal arts from prehispanic to contemporary times (Hull and Carrasco 2012). In his study of humorous narratives in Yucatec Maya literature Burns (2012) has pointed out that the distinct essence of humour of Maya speakers depends precisely on language choice. As Burns writes, "[w]hen speaking Spanish, Mayan speakers are often serious, courteous, and even deferential. But when monolingual Mayan conversations begin, humor becomes endemic to social linguistic events" (2012: 399). The bold and bawdy humour usually deployed when speaking in Maya is manifest to any researcher who spends some time among Maya speakers and who may become the butt of jokes.[179] More research using the tools provided by the ethnography of speaking is needed to better understand patterns of language use in local oral genres and the ways in which these code-specific genres, unlike top down language policies, contribute to maintenance through covert prestige and legitimation. It is at this microlevel of family and community exchanges that we see emotionally charged usage of Maya, which is beyond the scope of institutional language planning.[180]

5.8   Conclusion

Education in Latin America has been a fundamental arena for indigenous struggles. However, the role of schools in the reproduction of minorised languages, especially when confined to a primary education system that does not value oral traditions and dismisses non-normative language use, has important shortcomings. In spite of positive

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179 See also Armstrong-Fumero (2009) for an exploration of the creation of humour at the intersection of Maya and Spanish in Yucatan and its effects on the position of the researcher.
180 The "difficulty of planning spontaneity and intimacy" has been noted, among others, by Fishman (see Hornberger and Pütz 2006: 119).

changes brought about by EIB in Latin America, for instance in terms of political mobilisation, in this chapter I have highlighted the weaknesses of this type of education in Mexico and Yucatán. Official indigenous education, though currently drawing on the notion of interculturality, continues to be a highly centralised and homogenising institutional tool that effectively promotes monolingualism in Spanish. Both the programme *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* and the creation of intercultural universities are valuable initiatives that cater for the needs of indigenous students, but their rationale still has a remedial approach. Indigenous education still takes place in the most marginalised and impoverished regions of Mexico and compensatory government policies are not tackling the enormous human and material challenges faced by the indigenous education system. Fuentes and Nieto put it bluntly when they write that "we should question the extent to which education will be able to challenge the status quo if, at the same time, it exists as part of a hegemonic system that has vested interests in the perpetuation of power structures that produce inequalities" (2011: 100). As I have shown, the ideologies of 'development', 'modernisation', and 'progress' still drive educational policies for indigenous peoples in Mexico, both at the primary level and more recently at tertiary level with the creation of intercultural universities. These may be seen as neoindigenist policies aimed at providing assistance-based education to indigenous peoples in Mexico. This emphasis on development and modernisation, which has for long underpinned top down language policy and planning, particularly in postcolonial contexts (Woolard 1998: 21), has met with criticism because of its allegedly neutral scientific objectivity and disregard for actual key political and class dimensions (Williams 1992).

Kaplan and Baldauf have observed that "the education sector –often the main, or at least a major, actor in language planning and in language policy implementation– may be precisely the wrong place to begin planning and policy implementation, simply because of the inherent scope of the activity" (1997: 321). The school is not an autonomous agency but an institution embedded in society. Therefore, the timid and deficient promotion of literacy and education in a minorised language may not be the most important means to overcome socioeconomic marginalisation, particularly when schools are beyond the control of indigenous peoples. As Rockwell and Gomes argue, "schools, even bilingual and intercultural schools, tend to integrate Indigenous children not in a space of mutual recognition but, rather, into a subordinate role in a dominant national configuration" (2009: 104). As a response, in some areas, such as Chiapas, indigenous peoples have established their own autonomous schools (Rockwell and

Gomes 2009: 101). In short, destigmatising Maya depends not only on its introduction in a rather dysfunctional education system, but on changing the broader social, economic and political context in which indigenous peoples live in Yucatán. If, as Bourdieu (1991) reminds us, ideologies serve to sustain relations of domination, it is unequal power relations among subordinated and dominant groups that need to be transformed.

Against this background, I have also highlighted that the introduction of Maya in primary indigenous schools raises contradictory ideological issues that affect not only children but also parents, teachers, and activists who are concerned about the prospects of Maya. The dichotomy between the sentimental value accorded to Maya and its lack of instrumentality in important socioeconomic areas explains the contradiction between widespread positive language attitudes towards this language among parents and the interruption of its intergenerational transmission. Hence, the responsibility for the acquisition of Maya is sometimes placed on primary schooling. However, as I have noted, the institutionalisation of Maya through formal education, the quintessential domain of cultural homogenisation, reproduces a social system that does not value the indigenous students' languages and cultures.

As for literacy, urban initiatives to promote Maya have largely been based on teaching *lectoescritura* and grammar, and on the production of mostly belles-lettres texts. It is doubtful whether developing a narrow and acritical view of literacy, conceived of as an 'autonomous' model separated from its sociopolitical environment (Street 1984), will have a significant impact on the revitalisation of Maya. The emphasis on literacy may raise the status of Maya and work towards its legitimation. Indeed, some Maya writers are staunch and active supporters of the revalorisation process of Maya but the point I want to make is that literacy must be useful beyond the belles-lettres genre if it is to play a central role in the revitalisation process. Moreover, literacy can also have important ideological effects on normative uses of Maya associated with 'correctness', orthographic choices, strict separation of codes and purism. Indeed, the ideology of standard languages, epitomised by INALI emphasis on *normalización*, is inextricably linked to the essentialisation of the indigenous languages of Mexico.

In sum, language planning for indigenous languages in the educational domain, which mostly originates at the federal level, reproduces hegemonic policies for the spread of dominant languages (Barriga Villanueva and Parodi 1999). This origin in official institutions explains their potential bureaucratisation and their dangerous ramifications that may lead to co-optation by a nation-state characterised by an all-

embracing corporatist exercise of power. If bottom up grassroots initiatives are always needed in language revitalisation processes, this is a particularly relevant issue in Mexico, as I shall illustrate in chapter 7. Before tackling these alternative efforts, I look at the salient issue of language purism, a consequence of language ideologies based on essentialisation, in the next chapter.

Chapter 6. Discourses of Language Purism

6.1   Introduction

This chapter looks at the saliency of purism in discourses about the promotion of Yucatec Maya in Yucatán. The implications of language purism go beyond the mere linguistic level and are intimately linked with strong ideological components such as authenticity, legitimacy, authority, and identity. These psycho-sociological notions can be found not only among marginalised peoples that are trying to revitalise their languages but also among those that, in spite of being dominant, feel threatened by languages in an even more prominent position. How speakers conceive of the effects of language contact depends on their linguistic ideologies, which will provide us with a pertinent framework to discuss language purism in Yucatán. I present first a brief introduction of the general topic of language purism, with special reference to standardisation and its role in language revitalisation. I go on to explore views of language contact and language purism in Yucatán expressed through discourses gathered in the field. The participants' perceptions and beliefs about these issues will help us to understand the impact of purist ideologies on current language shift to Spanish in Yucatán.

6.2   Defining and Situating Language Purism

In his monograph on the topic based on European languages, Thomas defines linguistic purism as:

> The manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable (including those originated in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language). It may be directed at all linguistic levels but primarily the lexicon. Above all, purism is an aspect of the codification, cultivation and planning of standard languages (1991: 12).

This definition stresses the main technical phases involved in language planning, and particularly standardisation, a process where purism becomes central (Langer and Nesse 2012). Within the broader and radical sociopolitical changes that have made national self-determination possible, language planning in Europe, and specifically corpus planning and the ensuing decisions on purism, has paved the way for the construction of distinct and separate identities from a previously dominant language group. Noting the important role of purism in the emergence and development of nationalist movements in

Europe, Thomas maintains that "it is hard to think of an instance of purism which is not motivated by some form of cultural or political nationalism" (1991: 43). In the case of indigenous peoples of Latin America, however, it is ethnic recognition through language legitimation rather than political feelings closely linked to nationalism that drives language purism.

Whatever the differences, purism is often part of linguistic and social struggles. In the Catalan sociolinguistic tradition, for instance, linguistic purism has been defined as a move to resist assimilation. This is the definition of purism according to a Catalan dictionary of sociolinguistics:

> Actitud lingüística consistent a mirar d'alliberar una llengua d'aquells elements que es consideren aliens o indesitjables procedents d'una altra llengua. L'afany de preservació de la correcció idiomàtica pot referir-se al lèxic i a qualsevol altre aspecte de la llengua. El purisme sol aparèixer com una manifestació de resistència a la influència d'una llengua (o més d'una) que ha estat (o continua essent) la llengua dominant i ha causat un grau considerable (de vegades massiu) d'interferències lingüístiques i manlleus. Quan un procés de substitució lingüística es troba en les darreres fases tendeixen a desaparèixer les manifestacions de purisme, ja que els parlants no es resisteixen a cap tipus d'intrusió (Ruiz i San Pascual et al. 2001: 235).[181]

Two outstanding words in this definition pin down the idea of struggle in the process of language purification. The first one is *alliberar*, which means 'to set free', 'to rid of' and specifically in this case to rid the language of allegedly alien elements. Secondly, the idea of struggle is clearly reinforced by the use of the noun 'resistance', whereby purism is seen as a reaction to domination and oppression by a more powerful language group. Finally, according to this definition, it is necessary to tackle purism to counterbalance encroachment from another language before language shift reaches its final stages and complete defeat sets in. Arguably, concern about purism in Catalan sociolinguistics has to do with the fact that Spanish and Catalan are closely related languages, which makes transferences, or 'interferences' as noted in the definition above, particularly insidious. This anti-assimilationist approach to language purism can

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181 Linguistic attitude whose goal is to rid a language of elements, which coming from another language, are considered alien or undesirable. The desire to preserve idiomatic correctness can refer to the lexicon or any other aspect of the language. Purism usually appears as an expression of resistance to the influence of another language (or several languages) which has been (and remains) the dominant language and which has caused a considerable (sometimes massive) degree of linguistic interference and borrowings. When a process of language shift is in its last phases, expressions of purism tend to disappear, as speakers stop resisting any intrusions.

also be found in Latin America. Similarities are striking between the definition of purism above and the point of view expressed by Peruvian linguist Cerrón-Palomino:

> The dominated languages suffer the impact of a massive influx from dominating systems, to such a degree that they see themselves ... depending on the violence with which they have been attacked, distorted in their most intimate details, a fact that constitutes the beginning of their own extinction. In such situations, it is obvious that an anti-purist attitude of acceptance −and even promotion− of exogenous influences will result in benefiting the assimilationist tendencies that underlie the propagation of the dominant language (1983: 46).[182]

Linguistic purism, therefore, can be a sociolinguisic strategy that works toward resistance to assimilation.[183] Indeed, purism may be a highly symbolic sociolinguistic catalyst for resilience and identity boundary maintenance. However, as I illustrate below, purism can also deter rather than promote language reproduction. As part of a web of linguistic ideologies, purism should be conceived of not just as a linguistic phenomenon but as a multifaceted set of sociolinguistic attitudes, based on values, beliefs, perceptions, and emotions, which are part of larger ideological debates that stem from language contact.

6.3   Purism and Standard Language Cultures

As noted above, language contact may trigger reactions in communities with minorised languages but also in communities with a completely standardised and even hegemonic language (Jernudd and Shapiro 1989). One paradigmatic example of a nation-state whose language policies are geared towards the maintenance of the purity of a national language is the recurrent efforts in France to proscribe the use of English loanwords. France has been constructed around the notion of monolingualism and the idea of French as a rational, pure, clear and lucid language. These ideologies have been reinforced by the control of language norms of the *Académie Française* since the seventeenth century (Joseph 1987; Weinstein 1989; Schiffman 1996). The case of France is of interest here because it stands out as an archetypal approach to language policy underpinned by an 'ideology of contempt', which affects languages other than the national standard (Grillo 1989; Dorian 1998). In the case of Spain, the coincidence of the codification of Spanish with the conquest of the New World in the late fifteen

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182 Cited in Gynan (2007: 263)
183 As Kroskrity (1998) has pointed out in the context of language contact between the Arizona Tewa and the Hopi in the USA, purism is a fundamental linguistic strategy among the Tewa, especially in relation to ritual performances, which has helped maintain a distinct identity in a remarkable way.

century had an influence on the way indigenous languages were conceived in the colonies (Milán 1983; Mignolo 2000: 257).

Drawing from European models of nation-building, Mexico, in spite of current public policies aimed at valorising language diversity, is a country with a "standard language culture" (Milroy 2001) where hegemonic monoglot ideologies have been further underpinned by an essential link between nation and language.[184] Standardisation inevitably has an effect on sociolinguistic ecologies and the standard language may end up occupying a hierarchical position in relation to devalued vernacular varieties. In addition, the European idea of creating language academies, authoritative bodies in charge of policing the quality of the language, has also been transferred to Mexico both for Spanish as a dominant language and for some indigenous languages, Yucatec Maya included. In this vein, the *Academia Mexicana de la Lengua,* founded in 1875, is part of the network of academies of the Spanish language. Moreover, the increasing encroachment of English words into Mexican Spanish led to the creation of the *Comisión para la Defensa del Idioma Español* in 1981, an agency dismantled two years later when a new government came to power. A language ideological debate sparked off in the early 1980s whose consequences included an unsuccessful attempt to grant Spanish official status *de iure* in Mexico (Lara 1993: 155).[185]

In short, ideological debates on purism are not only circumscribed to minorised languages. While we can learn much about the theoretical framework of cases of purism of fully standardised domninant languages, the specific situation of subordinated languages in need of revitalisation deserves special consideration.

6.4   Language Purism and Language Revitalisation

Although language purism often emerges as a central feature of language revitalisation, there are relatively few in-depth studies that look at the connection between these two sociolinguistic phenomena.[186] Value judgements and perceptions on language variation and on language quality seem to be present in all societies, be they literate or not, with

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184 Whereas the creation of Language Academies in Italy (Accademia della Crusca, 1582), France (Académie Française, 1635) and Spain (Real Academia Española de la Lengua, 1713) predate the heyday of nation-building in Europe (Joseph 1987: 112), the foundations of an ideology that blends the nation-state with a single language did not take deep roots in the European sociopolitical thinking until the nineteenth century (Bauman and Briggs 2000).
185 Lara (1993) gives an insider's account of the sociopolitical background that led to the establishment of the Board and its purist driving force.
186 But see Brincat et al. (2003), a book which includes Nahuatl and Otomí, both languages from Mexico.

or without standard languages (Joseph 1987: 4; Dorian 1994: 480). As Brincat et al point out, "purism is an issue that can come up in societies where literacy is heavily restricted and institutions which could organise purist movements largely missing" (Brincat et al. 2003: viii). In any case, it is safe to say that literacy is one of the most salient and emotionally charged terrains where opposing views and ideologies are manifested by the choices to be made in language codification.

Another aspect of language revitalisation closely intertwined with linguistic purism is authenticity, which has been researched in several works of endangered languages.[187] Case studies on the Andean region, such as Hornberger and King (1998), Marr (1999), Howard (2007); the work of England (1996, 2003) and Brown (1996) in Guatemala; and Flores Farfán (2009) and Messing (2009) in Mexico are of particular interest here. I shall also draw on the seminal work by Jane Hill and Kenneth Hill (1986), who devote a whole chapter to studying the impact of purist attitudes on the maintenance of Nahuatl in central Mexico.

6.5   Discourses of Language Purism

In the following sections I examine the ways in which purism affects perceptions of language contact and borrowing in Yucatán and how changes in language attitudes towards purism may favour the revitalisation of Maya. I also look at discourses of language academies as legitimising institutions and, finally, at the ideological position of Yucatec Spanish within the sociolinguistic ecology of Yucatán.

'La maya está amestizada': on varieties of Maya

In Yucatán there is a perceived division between two varieties of Maya, which differ in the amount of lexical borrowing from Spanish present in each of them. These two varieties are commonly known as *jach* Maya and *xe'ek'* Maya. The former corresponds to a supposedly pure and authentic variety spoken by some older people, while the latter literally means 'mixed' and is often referred to in Spanish as 'amestizada'. These varieties are highly ideologised and stand in stark contrast with each other, often becoming symbols of authenticity (or lack thereof) of the speakers that use them. The following excerpt is an informal conversation with Leti, a middle-aged lady with whom I struck up conversation in the town of Tixkokob. The occasion was the celebration of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples (8 August 2011) organised by INDEMAYA:

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187 See Hinton and Ahlers (1999) for California, Wong (1999) for Hawai'i, Jaffe (1999) for Corsican, and Hornsby (2005) for Breton.

Testimony 6.1

Josep: ¿Usted habla maya?
Leti: Sí hablo maya, está bonita la maya pero no es que hable maya normalmente así como estamos hablando español contigo porque hablamos maya revuelto, un poco maya un poco español, está como amestizada.

[Leti 8.8.2011 Tixkokob].

Any researcher asking the question whether people speak Maya in Yucatán will probably find very similar answers, namely, recognition of the 'syncretic' character of current Maya and positive assessment of a supposedly 'pure' variety. It is difficult to assess the influence that asking the question in Spanish may have, but as I have been told by Maya researchers, this seems to be a fairly common reply (see also Hanks 2010: xvi). Worthy of note again is the aesthetic value granted to Maya, which may be a reflection of the general revalorisation process underway and the context in which the question was asked (an institutional day to celebrate indigenous identity). Picture 6.1 is a neat example of how a state institution, in this case INDEMAYA, reinforces the archaeological view of the Maya, rather than concentrating on current demands for recognition. Indeed, the celebration of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples included a recreation of the Mesoamerican ballgame and Maya music performed with prehispanic instruments. Note also the ancient Maya numerical system on the right hand side of the leaflet, which is made up of three symbols: zero (shell shape), one (a dot), and five (a bar).

Picture 6.1 Cover of leaflet published by INDEMAYA to celebrate the International Day of Indigenous Peoples in Tixkokob, Yucatán.

As for the location of the supposedly pure variety of Maya, Yucatecans often point to what are perceived as 'hardcore' Maya regions of the Peninsula such as the interior of Quintana Roo state, around the town of Peto in the centre of the Peninsula, or the environs of the city of Valladolid (Pfeiler 1996; see also map 3.1 in this thesis). Needless to say, it is highly unlikely that the Maya language has been kept pure after five centuries of contact with Spanish, even in the most remote parts of Yucatán. Although the difference between these two varieties is based upon the amount of loanwords from Spanish used, 'pure' Maya is arguably more a myth than a reality. William Hanks, who has examined in detail colonial texts both written in Maya and Spanish, maintains that:

> From quite early in the colonial period in Yucatán, the indigenous language and the European language came to shape one another such that, in a broad contact zone, it became difficult or pointless to sort out the indigenous from the nonindigenous elements of what was becoming a single social world (2010: xvi).

The idea that a pure variety of Maya is spoken 'somewhere else' by 'someone else' is also a feature reminiscent of the discourse of nostalgia noted by Hill and Hill (1986). The Yucatecan case has striking similarities with the context researched by these authors in central Mexico:

[Language mixing] is said to shift speaking away from a legendary perfect language called legítimo mexicano 'genuine' or 'authentic Mexican'. Legítimo mexicano is said to have existed in achto 'in the past'. It is said that in can be found in old books, or that some old man, now dead, used to speak it. Those who have traveled far away claim that legítimo mexicano may survive near Toluca, to the west of Mexico City, or in Cuetzalán, in the northern mountains of Puebla. Speakers in the Malinche towns, though, believe that their own Mexicano is ācmo completo 'no longer whole'. They say that their usage is tlahco mexicano, tlahco castellano 'half Mexicano, half Spanish' (1986: 98).

As the Hills also note for central Mexico, the location of pure Maya is not always people but sometimes books, which reflects the importance of the written word to legitimise indigenous languages. While attending a workshop on language rights in the town of Sotuta, a participant proudly told me that the *jach* (authentic) Maya could only be found in the authoritative Cordemex dictionary.[188]

A vernacular 'mixed' variety, thus, is opposed to a 'pure' Maya that allegedly represents the continuation of Maya as spoken in prehispanic times. This idea of a pre-contact pure Maya is widespread as I was able to corroborate in a conversation with a taxi driver in the town of Puerto Morelos (Quintana Roo). He told me that no one speaks genuine Maya nowadays, since the true Maya language was spoken by the ancient Mayas, such as the ones that feature in *Apocalypto*, a film directed by Mel Gibson in 2006 and set in the sixteenth century! This connection between the 'real' Maya language and the Maya people of prehispanic times illustrates the discussion of chapter 3 about the contentious and complex meanings of the label 'Maya' in contemporary Yucatán.

In a context where the 'old and genuine' Maya language is more valued, the adjectives 'contemporary' and 'modern' seem to have a negative nuance. Quite tellingly, in my informal conversations in Mérida, when I asked Daniel, an educated young Maya speaker (fully bilingual) and member of the family I was staying with, whether he could speak Maya, he answered that he could. However, he was quick to add, almost as a kind of excuse, that his Maya was 'contemporary Maya'. The adjective

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188 The Cordemex is an unabridged Maya-Spanish dictionary first published in 1980.

'modern' may usually accompany the answer to the question of who speaks Maya. When discussing varieties of Maya, Lilia García recounted that:

Testimony 6.2

Tengo un hermanito que me dice que habla la maya moderna y cotorrea bien porque los préstamos, si uno los incorpora fonéticamente, ya se entienden. Hay muchas formas de introducir los préstamos, en la sintaxis, en el tono, y no pasa nada. Yo no soy tan purista, pero me critican mis textos.

[Lilia García 6.4.2011 Mérida].

I shall have more to say about loanwords below but I want to stress here that purism is an ongoing debate among writers in Yucatán, as Lilia, who is a writer herself, points out. The ideological ambivalence produced by two contrasting varieties of an indigenous language seems to be a common outcome of prolonged and unbalanced language contact in Latin America. In this sense, Howard (2007: 311) describes the dichotomy between the vernacular *runa simi* (language of the people) of Quechua and the elitist form cultivated by some academics *qhapaq simi* (the royal language) in Cuzco; in Ecuador King (2001: 93) notes the distinction between 'authentic Quichua' and 'Unified Quichua', the latter being a recently standardised variety; and finally in Paraguay Gynan (2007: 256) explores the role of 'pure Guaraní' and *jopará* (Guaraní mixed with Spanish) in language planning, especially in the educational setting.[189]

Purism commonly appears in the early stages of standardisation and particularly in language cultivation, a task that should be developed by academies, according to my interviewees. Indeed, in all of the aforementioned Latin American cases, significant efforts have been made to expand the functional range of local indigenous languages, and issues revolving around the interdependent issues of purity, authenticity, and standardisation have been hotly debated. These policies have created tensions between 'official' standardised varieties and vernacular varieties which need to be negotiated in processes of language revitalisation.

Fischer and Brown have highlighted the existence of linguistic prejudice against loanwords in Mayan languages in Guatemala. They write that "the Mayan languages are often criticized in Guatemala as 'incomplete' or 'defective' because their many loanwords from Spanish –easily recognized by Spanish speakers– are seen as evidence of inferior expressive capacity" (1996b: 5). In Yucatán Berkley (2001) has noted the

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189 See also Floyd (2004) and Mortimer (2006) for other cases studies on purism in Ecuadorian Quechua and Paraguayan Guaraní, respectively.

ideological discrepancies that arise when a specific Maya oral genre called *tsikbal* (conversation), which reflects 'mixed' communicative practices, is introduced to learn Maya in a formal school setting. Needless to say, formal education favours language standardisation and purism.[190] Similarly, Armstrong-Fumero has explored the ways in which this perceived mismatch between what he calls *Imaginary Maya* ('pure' Maya) and *Deep Maya* ('mixed' Maya) "index a range of hierarchized social identities" (2009: 362). He argues that it is precisely heteroglossic practices of bilingual speakers, who make use of vernacular mixed varieties and code-switching, that are fundamental to understand the expression of humour and wit among Yucatec Mayas. As James Milroy (2012: 575) writes, we need to pay more attention to the different indexicalities of linguistic variables that speakers make use of to deploy an array of social identifications. I will return to the key concept of heteroglossic practices on the ground in the next chapter.

Thus, we can advance that a perception of the low quality of *xe'ek'* Maya, considered as less genuine because it is mixed with Spanish, is determinant in the linguistic choices of bilingual speakers. According to my observations, there is an acute awareness of the hybrid nature of contemporary Maya and of the negative values attached to that variety, which is part of the linguistic repertoire of many bilingual speakers. In her analysis of the complex terminology used to name the indigenous population of Yucatán, Quintal (2005: 333) states that "[p]ara la mayoría de quienes se autodenominan *mayeros* la lengua que hablan está *amestizada*" (emphasis in original). Therefore, the process of *mestizaje* has been not only cultural but also linguistic with the outcome of making Maya less authentic in the eyes of many speakers. The following episode, based on observations in the field, shows how these ideologies manifest themselves:

> In the village of Tepich Carrillo
> One telling example of how the ideology of language purism is played out among Maya speakers took place in the small village of Tepich Carrillo, close to Acanceh, about 30 km south-east of Mérida. Violeta Pool, a bilingual speaker with a university degree in Anthropology, and I were in the main square of that village trying to get permission to organise a Maya language workshop with children. The aim of the workshop was to promote the use of Maya using booklets and a DVD with riddles and tongue twisters in Maya. While waiting for our bus in the middle of the main town square to get back to Mérida, we were approached by two men in their fifties. They struck up conversation and after learning that Violeta was a teacher of

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190 See the work of Hornberger and King (1998) on Quichua in Ecuador. In Europe, Ó hIfearnáin (2008) also looks at the gap between standard Irish and vernacular varieties.

Maya the two men were curious to learn some basic terms in Maya that have been replaced by Spanish borrowings. Thus, my friend was asked to say numbers above five in Maya, some colours, and a few other terms they did not know the word for because, as they put it, they were uneducated and only spoke mixed Maya. The conversation took place both in Maya and Spanish, my friend insisting on using Maya and the two men going back and forth between both languages.[191]

What struck me most as an observer in this situation was the entrenched belief of these two men that the kind of Maya they spoke had some kind of deficiency and was definitely not 'correct' Maya. This was not a case of typical shibboleth questioning an outsider to challenge his or her knowledge of a language, but a case of curiosity to learn vocabulary from an educated person who has formally studied Maya and teaches it at university level too. This episode reveals the widespread idea that, as a result of long-standing language contact, Maya is somehow a lesser language than Spanish. The fact that numerals are only used in Maya up to four by most speakers, borrowing from Spanish with nativised pronunciation from number five onwards, is a conspicuous example of the influence of Spanish on Maya.[192] In contrast with the research carried out among Nahuatl speakers in central Mexico, in the exchange described above discussions about purism are not an "expression of rank" (Flores Farfán 2003: 303) or "a struggle for dominance" (Hill and Hill 1986: 129). It was the fact that my friend teaches Maya that sparked the curiosity to learn the 'genuine' words in Maya equivalent to their Spanish loanwords. I do not mean by this that Maya numerals cannot work as a shibboleth to mark "expression of rank". Loewe, for instance, recounts in his ethnographic work in Yucatán that "[w]hile most Maxcanú residents acknowledge that spoken Yucatec Maya has forever lost its purity, a few older people view themselves as the conservators of legítimo Maya and tout their ability to count to 100 or say things in Mayan that everyone else says now in Spanish" (2011: 177, footnote 18).

Previously on that same day, in a conversation with the *presidenta municipal* (village mayor) of Tepich the topic of purism came up again. While we were discussing the idea of organising a workshop in that village, an older person in her family pointed out that there are not words for 'bicicleta' or 'tren' in Maya anymore and that, therefore, current Maya was not 'legítima' because it needs borrowing from Spanish. I also remember the *presidenta*'s reaction to my friend Violeta sticking to Maya during the conversation. At one point the *presidenta* said to Violeta: Why do you make me speak

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191 Fieldnotes taken in the village of Tepich Carrillo (5.4.2010).
192 Numbers in Maya from 1 to 10 are: 1 – jun, 2 - ka'a, 3 – óox, 4 – kan, 5 - jo', 6 – wak, 7 - u'uk, 8 – waxak, 9 – bolon, 10 – lajun. Spanish numbers are generally used from five onwards.

in Maya when I find it so hard? This comment raises issues of linguistic insecurity that arguably have to do with perceptions of what it is means to be a speaker of 'good' Maya.[193] The following section further deals with beliefs on borrowing and legitimacy in Maya.

'No estoy de acuerdo en hacer préstamos porque en maya se puede decir todo': on lexical borrowing

Ideological debates spurred by linguistic purism are usually prominent at the lexical level of language (Hill and Hill 1986: 122). The lexicon, and particularly nouns, is the linguistic level on which speakers can focus more easily, due to its accessibility. Contributions in Dorian (1989) show, however, that it may not be the most important component to prevent language attrition and obsolescence since, owing to long-lasting language contact, more profound changes may occur on other less transparent linguistic levels such as morphology and syntax. In this sense, Flores Farfán (1999) has pointed out a process of grammatical convergence between Nahuatl and Spanish in the Balsas region of Mexico. The syntactic typology of Nahuatl, originally a polysynthetic language, has changed into a more analytical one because of the pervasive incorporation of connectors and other linguistic particles from Spanish. Similarly, Maxwell (1996) has reviewed recent morphosyntactic changes in Kaqchikel Maya from a VOS language to a predominantly SVO language, calquing therefore the syntactic typology of Spanish.

I begin the analysis of discourses on borrowing with a group interview with Bernardo Aguilar, Jorge Dzib and Osvaldo Itzá, all of them in their sixties and with a long experience in indigenous education. One of the main themes of our conversation was the recovery (*rescate*) of historical memory and the scientific knowledge produced by the ancient Maya. It is within a framework of revaluing Maya culture that the following comment by Jorge on the issue of lexical borrowing from Spanish is framed. The interviewee is enacting a conversation he held with a foreign linguist in a congress where the issue of borrowing came up:

Testimony 6.3

Allá tenía las ideas de los préstamos del español, la lengua originaria para enseñar a leer y escribir. Le dije, ¿sabes qué? le platiqué, yo no estoy de acuerdo contigo de hacer préstamos porque en maya, en mi caso, se puede decir todo. Entonces le pregunté, si tú tuvieras dinero, si fueras rico, ¿pedirías prestado? Eso no, me dice. Pero así estamos, nosotros por ejemplo, no tenemos por qué pedir prestado, las

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193 Fieldnotes from visit to Tepich Carillo (5.4.2010).

palabras por ejemplo, y esta experiencia la tuve cuando fui a un congreso y antes se le llamaba a la lengua maya dialecto, al idioma maya dialecto, no, ese es un idioma. [...] Yo desde entonces cuando digo eso me pongo a reflexionar, sí es cierto, no necesitamos más pedir prestado porque le digo, el camión es el *kis buuts'* y digo entonces el avión es el *xik'nal kis buuts',* que vuela y echa gases. Me dice, tienes razón, qué bueno que lo platicamos, vamos a ver qué hacemos. Eso es lo que nosotros tenemos y por eso a veces los compañeros se oponen cuando decimos tiene que ser así, porque ellos dicen no, es que la lengua maya está amestizada, dice, y se platica mucho sobre eso, los préstamos y sobre todo las terminaciones o los principios de cada palabra y los decimos y cantamos en maya, le damos sonado en maya a la palabra en español.

[Jorge Dzib 8.4.2010 Mérida].[194]

For Jorge borrowing from Spanish is a sign of linguistic poverty, an idea conveyed by a simile that compares the lexicon of a language with money. His main argument is that if your language is rich enough, you do not need to, or rather you should not, borrow words from other languages. On closer inspection, behind the idea of borrowing there is a deeper concern about the ontological status of Maya and the continuous efforts to destigmatise it and infuse it with authenticity and legitimacy, a topic to which I return below. The gist of Jorge's argument is the idea that Maya, in spite of secular contact with Spanish, is a full-fledged language that does not need to rely on Spanish to express modern concepts. He also notes that Maya, as many other linguistic varieties spoken by marginalised peoples, has been traditionally debased to the category of 'dialect', a derogatory term in folk linguistics. Jorge emphasises that Maya is an *idioma* (language). He ends by pointing out the hybrid nature of Maya, which raises ideological debates, particularly among teachers. These debates have to do with processes of morphological and phonological relexification of loanwords, a linguistic phenomenon that, like purism, focuses on the form of the language. The double bind represented by purist attitudes and an emphasis on literacy in the minorised language has also been noted for the Corsican case. Jaffe (1996: 819) writes that "this form of resistance, which defines and values Corsican as everything that French is not, as well as the opposing logic (the language activists'), which seeks to prove that Corsican is everything that French *is*" (emphasis hers).

In contrast with negative attitudes towards borrowing that may trigger language abandonment, a pragmatic and realistic approach to syncretic linguistic phenomena can be explained not only as signs of language decay but rather as strategies for linguistic

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194 The gloss of the Maya terms are: *kis buuts'* = vehicle (literally, to fart smoke)*; xik'nal kis buuts'* = airplane (literally, *xik'nal*: to fly, *kis buuts'*: to fart smoke).

and cultural resistance (Hill and Hill 1986; Flores Farfán 1999: 236; Howard 2007: 340). A ubiquitous example of purism that I came across several times during my fieldwork was the contrasting ways of saying 'thank you' in Maya: *nib óolal* is the form preferred by many intellectuals and official institutions even though a much more common phrase is *Dios bo'otik,* literally 'God shall pay you', which includes a salient loanword from Spanish.[195]

This concern about the transformation of Maya caused by a heavy reliance on Spanish loanwords must be seen within the larger framework of loss of traditional knowledge. Jorge carried on his conversation with a detailed explanation of the prehispanic Maya numerical system, whose base is vigesimal and has its own signs (see picture 6.1). The overarching theme was the valorisation of the long neglected Maya culture and, specifically, of its great past achievements. Against this background, some participants consider prehispanic times as a glorious period of scientific development in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, and architecture. This discourse of the 'glorious past' was present in my interview with Bernardo, Jorge, and Osvaldo. There is deep pride, at least among these educated participants of an older generation, in the traditional knowledge but also an expression of lament that much of the Mayan culture has been destroyed and transformed after the conquest.[196] From a sociolinguistic point of view, there is the widespread perception that prehispanic Maya was pure. However, I maintain that it is not a return to a "glorious past where their language was vibrant", as Romaine (2006: 446) puts it, that language activists must look at, but rather at a more complex and dynamic sociolinguistic situation where, while adding the dominant language to growing linguistic repertoires, local languages can still keep meaningful functions and, ideally, adapt to new domains of use. I will give example of the functional expansion of Maya in the next chapter.

Again, there is a dichotomous perception of the indigenous past and present. On the one hand, the ancient Maya civilisation is recognised by political institutions as an important contribution to the Mexican nation. Indeed, the remains of the Maya tangible heritage are constantly praised, which shows a remarkable continuity with discourses from the *indigenista* period. On the other hand, contemporary Mayas are often described

195 Another common way of saying 'thank you' is *Yuum bo'otik* (the Lord shall pay you),
196 The best known example of cultural destruction is the burning of a great number of Mayan codices and cult images by Fray Diego de Landa, Bishop of Yucatán, in the sixteenth century. He later wrote his own version of the Maya culture in the book *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*.

as backward, poor and in need of development and modernisation, two key concepts of nation-building efforts.[197]

The cultural exploits of the glorious Mayan past can also be strategically used in an essentialist way by activists, as the case of neighbouring Guatemala shows (Brown 1998a). Brown, who has reviewed the historical contacts of Mayas in prehispanic times with other Mesoamerican groups (Otomís, Toltecs, and Nahuas), points out intercultural influences and underlines that "history reveals many supposedly 'authentic' Mayan customs to be of Spanish origin or the product of colonial history" (1998a: 45). Maya intellectuals, however, perceive Maya languages to have remained largely untouched by those prehispanic encounters. This is the reason why indigenous languages have become a focal point in the cultural struggles for authenticity and recognition in Guatemala (England 2003: 733; Fischer and Brown 1996b: 5). In the case of Yucatec Maya loanwords from Nahuatl are numerous (*hipil* and *macehual* are just two prominent examples). This discussion brings us to the issue of the historicization of languages, a common phenomenon which is connected to purism and affects the ideological construction of language. James Milroy puts it succinctly when he argues that "[t]he historicization of the language requires that it should possess a continuous unbroken history, a respectable and legitimate ancestry and a long pedigree. It is also highly desirable that it should be as pure and unmixed as possible" (2001: 548).

The topic of purism also appeared in interviews with other 'traditional' intellectuals in relation with literacy and literature. Fernando Segovia recounted a literacy/literary project in which he had been involved thus:

Testimony 6.4

Entonces cuando se publica un libro lo regresábamos a través de la red estatal de bibliotecas públicas municipales, a través de las escuelas de educación indígena, a través de las misiones culturales, a través de los centros punto de encuentro de educación para adultos, a través de algunas organizaciones civiles, para tratar de que llegue lo más próximo a las comunidades, ¿no? Pero también veíamos que por la naturaleza de la convivencia por llamarle de algún modo de la lengua maya con el español en la península pues, este, de repente hay bastantes préstamos. Probamos a ver qué pasa si nosotros restaurábamos la versión maya de los relatos para regresarlo totalmente en maya y como que veíamos que hay muchas palabras y expresiones que no están lejos de nosotros, que las entendemos, que las recordamos, que si escuchamos la palabra dentro de una expresión las identificamos perfectamente. Entonces nos dimos cuenta de que sí era posible restaurar la versión

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197 This is not only the case of the Maya civilisation but of the indigenous Mexican past in general, as Bonfil Batalla (1996) has noted. See Mannheim (1991), Marr (1999), and Howard (2007) for similar ambivalent discourses about the Inka in South America.

maya para regresarla más depurada, más limpia de palabras de préstamo y, este, hasta el 2007 que dejamos de ir a las comunidades a realizar este tipo de cuestiones, llegamos a cubrir 36 municipios en el estado.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Fernando is explaining one of the goals of a cultural project that ran from 2000 to 2007 and that consisted of compiling literary texts based on the Mayan oral tradition. The name of the project was precisely 'recopilación de la tradición oral maya', although it was changed later to 'continuidad de la memoria colectiva del pueblo maya'. This latter name stresses again the widespread concern about linking traditional and contemporary Maya knowledge through intergenerational transmission. Fernando also points to the limitations of literacy to promote a language basically used in its oral form. Focusing on purism, what stands out in Fernando's excerpt is the clash between the 'mixed' oral version of the tales initially compiled and the final version, which became completely 'mayanised' after a process of restoration. A wide range of metaphors can be used to express the notion of linguistic purism (Thomas 1991). The adjectives that Fernando uses (*depurada*, *limpia*) refer to the idea of cleanliness: after a purifying process, loanwords are purged from the text and a 'purer' version, totally in Maya, is returned to the community.[198] This endeavour reflects the tensions that arise from processes of language recovery when oral varieties are written down. We could even ask the question whether the compilation of oral literature can still be considered oral literature once it is written down. In this sense, Burns (1980) pointed out the importance of interactive features in verbal arts among Yucatec Maya. Listeners are not passive recipients of story-telling but rather participate actively in their development. This dynamic co-construction of stories is lost when oral literature is 'frozen' in writing.

In passing, though, later in the same interview Fernando expressed ambivalent attitudes when he recognised the power and dominance of orality over literacy. He quoted an Argentinian writer who lived for some years in Mexico to support his argument:

Testimony 6.5

Escribir en maya es una posibilidad de hacer perpetuar la lengua aunque hay un especialista, Adolfo Colombres, que dice que la palabra viva es la que perdura, el

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198 Note the similarities with the Spanish Language Academy motto: *Limpia, fija y da esplendor*, literally "it cleans, sets, and casts splendour". The verb *depurar* in Spanish can be translated as "to purify, to cleanse, to purge" but also "to polish or to refine the style of a language".

libro está condenado al polvo de los estantes y al olvido de su contenido, pero la palabra trasciende. El libro está destinado para un solo sector, aquel que tenga capacidad de leer. La palabra está destinada casi, casi al total de la población, ¿verdad?

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Therefore, Fernando acknowledges that the spoken word may reach all Maya speakers. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the purist attitudes examined above are expressed by the older generation of Maya intellectuals, some of them writers, who are more prone to essentialist views on language and culture. As Dorian writes, "the norms invoked [by purists] are not truly those of the community at large, but rather those of a small segment of it: an educated elite of teachers, writers, broadcast journalists, intellectuals, and the like" (1994: 480). These attitudes contrast sharply with the everyday uses of Maya among youths in social media that I explore in the following chapter.

One of the strategies implied in the purification of Maya is archaising purism, which consists of rescuing expressions and words that, according to Fernando, are still understood but have fallen into disuse (see also Dorian 1994: 487; Howard 2007: 345). The idea of recovering archaic words is also mentioned in the following interview with Carlos Canul. When commenting upon the edition of a glossary prepared by a colleague where archaic words have been salvaged, he stated that:

Testimony 6.6

Lo que hizo este chavo en su libro me parece magnífico, rescata varias palabras muy antiguas y todo que ahí fue apoyado por un epigrafista y te da algo muy padre porque él no lo está creando, lo está rescatando, lo que hizo él es un rescate. Yo creo que hay muchos términos en la epigrafía que se pueden rescatar y los que no hay pues se pueden crear, no comparto mucho la idea de crear neologismos en estos momentos, yo creo que primero hay que vitalizar la lengua porque si queremos neologismos, si nos dedicamos a hacer neologismos dentro de unos años, van a ser neologismos que solo vamos a usar nosotros, ya no va a haber hablantes que los usen y entonces qué razón habrá sido?

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

In contrast with borrowing and coinage, the two main linguistic processes to update the lexicon of a language (Dorian 1994: 486), Carlos argues that rescuing words based on Maya epigraphy rather than coining new terms may be a better strategy for revitalisation. The key concept of *rescate* highlights the idea of bringing something back from the past. Once more, it is interesting to compare the situation with

Guatemala, where epigraphy and hieroglyphs have been a useful resource of revitalisation and empowerment for Mayas (Sturm 1996; Schele and Grube 1996). More importantly, though, Carlos draws attention to the fact that concern about corpus planning may not be a priority against the background of widespread and rapid Maya language abandonment in Yucatán. "No urge, no es necesario", Carlos stressed again later in the same interview referring to neologisms. I will further draw on Carlos's experience in the following section, which deals with awareness of language purism and possibilities of changing language attitudes.

'En algún momento dije como que no hablo maya verdadero': on awareness of purism and change of language attitudes

The main argument of this section is that reflection on purism may change language attitudes and have a positive effect on language revitalisation. According to Carlos Canul, sociolinguistic research and academic discourses have reinforced in a negative way the perceived dichotomy between two varieties of Maya in Yucatán. When I asked Carlos about his opinion of the existence of those two varieties, he replied that:

> Testimony 6.7
>
> Eso es un problema que se creó en Yucatán hace no sé cuántos años, no conozco el origen pero sí hubo alguien que metió la pata y que dividió y que si la verdadera maya, la maya pura y aquí no se habla la maya pura, para mi es una metídisima de pata horrible, porque le diste la torre a la gente que dijiste que no hablan la maya pura y ahora se lo creen [...] Tuvo impacto, en mi tuvo impacto ese trabajo y en algún momento dije como que no hablo maya verdadero, en algún momento me molesté, me enojé, y luego recapitulé y dije no, pues hay que tomarlo como es, un artículo, pero cuánta gente puede hacer eso y cuánta gente se va a quedar con la idea de que, ¡ah! Pues mira ¿sabes qué? No hablo bien y mejor pues ya ni hablo, pues eso es difícil. Sí tuvo un impacto en mí, seguro que tuvo un impacto en mucha gente.
>
> [Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Carlos's argument shows the negative effects of 'expert rhetorics' on speakers' perceptions and value judgments about the varieties they speak. Hill defines 'expert rhetorics' as "ways in which linguists and anthropologists may unwittingly undermine their own vigorous advocacy of endangered languages by a failure to think carefully about the multiple audiences who may hear and read advocacy rhetoric" (2002: 119). It is difficult to gauge the impact that academic work has on the language attitudes of Maya speakers, but it is an element that must be considered in processes of language shift since language insecurity plays a key role and authoritative voices are influential.

Lilia García also commented on the negative consequences of academic discourses on purism thus:

Testimony 6.8

La gente está creyendo que ya la lengua está corrupta, y sí sientes como una culpa, como algo feo… hay que decirlo una y otra vez y donde sea, que no nos hagan sentir mal, sobre todo con las expresiones de los académicos como la maya *xe'ek'* y la maya *jach*, y llevan esa conferencia a un montón de lados y los estudiantes se lo creen.

[Lilia García 6.4.2011 Mérida].

From a psychological point of view the idea of speaking a 'mixed' and 'corrupt' variety of a minorised language may pave the way for the usually difficult process of abandoning one's own language and shifting to a dominant one. Against this backdrop, speakers may choose to abandon their language if they are convinced that it is somehow deficient and imperfect or, in other words, that their language lacks 'eloquence and power' (Joseph 1987). Research on this topic in Mexico has shown that language purism may be counterproductive for the reproduction of minorised languages and may ultimately have a paralysing effect for their revitalisation, a fact also highlighted by Carlos and Lilia in their comments above. The case of Nahuatl in central Mexico supports this potential outcome. Writing on the situation of central Mexico, Jane Hill and Kenneth Hill concluded that:

Purism in the Malinche towns may work against the survival of the Mexicano language. Since Mexicano is considered to be of little economic utility, many people question the instrumental value of the language. Purism, which deprecates all modern usage, inspires speakers to question the moral and aesthetic value of Mexicano as well. [...] Since purism attacks particularly the Mexicano power code with its heavy Hispanicization as somehow not authentic, purism indirectly facilitates the intrusion of Spanish itself into elevated public discourse. Since no formal education about Mexicano is available in the Malinche towns, it is unlikely that young speakers can be educated to a purist standard, and when young speakers feel that their Mexicano is inadequate, they may choose to use only Spanish (Hill and Hill 1986: 140-1).

In sum, the potential effects of purism on language shift is a key issue, since speakers that deem their languages as inadequate, deficient, and illegitimate are more likely to abandon them. However, linguistic attitudes regarding purism may change. In the following excerpt Violeta Pool reports a change of purist beliefs and linguistic behaviour. It is worth quoting her at length because she touches on the main issues that I

have been highlighting so far and, particularly, on attitude change towards purism. When I asked her views on purism, she replied that:

Testimony 6.9

Yo he de confesarte que antes de la maestría, que no había hecho lingüística para nada, pensaba un poco así, de hecho cuando platicábamos y alguien en la casa usaba una palabra o una frase en español, como que no me gustaba mucho, porque uno cree que es incorrecto estar mezclando las lenguas, o sea, así hasta tiene la idea de que no suena bien, por ejemplo, que estas metiendo cosas de otra lengua, y no es hasta que estudié la maestría que lo tuve como más claro, como que dije pues sí, no hay ningún problema, si nos entendemos perfecto, no pasa nada y luego cuando vas viendo un poco de la lingüística histórica y te vas enterando de que lo que pensabas que era de tu lengua no es, o sea, que viene de otro lado, entonces, yo sí me maravillé y todo. También tienes como tu propia reflexión, pero bueno eso lo he tenido yo y poca gente alcanza a tener un conocimiento así, ¿no? Entonces la mayoría tiene la idea de que si mezclas la lengua le estas restando valor, o sea, si la lengua no se está hablando solamente con la terminología de la lengua, pierde valor y entonces mucha gente no acepta préstamos, ni del español, ni de ninguna otra, cuando se entera que viene de otra lengua. La escritura también, hablando un poco de la escritura, siempre quieren que sea una sola forma de escribir y no aceptan que existan varias formas para escribir una palabra y ahora está la idea, hay un par de gentes, bueno conozco un par, a lo mejor hay muchos más, que tienen la idea de hacer un proyecto para ir rescatando todos los términos que son arcaicos, que ya no se emplean, o que se emplean muy poco, para incluirlos en el vocabulario actual y sacar los recientes en maya, o que sean préstamos del español, por esto que te decía, porque no soportan la idea de que existan otras palabras, de otra lengua, ahí sí es muy exagerado. Y entonces lo que yo creo es que tendría que haber como más información, por otro lado traer más información en general para la gente, buscar una forma, no sé, un espot de televisión donde ves la idea de que en una comunicación pueden existir distintas lenguas y no pasa nada.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Explaining her own change of attitudes toward mixing, Violeta contrasts her views on language contact with an extreme form of purism that does not accept variation, especially in writing, and whose goal is to purge Maya of Spanish loanword.

As noted, literacy is a prominent arena for purist ideologies. In her analysis on variation in written Maya Brody argues that "orthographic variation in written Yucatec Maya is not seriously problematic for its readers and writers and may even contribute positively to the development of literacy and literature" (2004: 264). I concur with Brody's statement and will show in the next chapter some examples that support this view.

In the case of Carlos and Violeta change of language attitudes is the result of conscious reflection on the variability of Maya, which stems from their education in

linguistics. In both cases they became aware of the fact that Maya, as many other languages, has incorporated numerous loanwords and is absolutely valid for any communicative purpose. In fact, both participants show high linguistic loyalty to Maya, a strong commitment to use it in all kinds of situations, and activism for its promotion. Another important variable is the fact that both Carlos and Violeta have been in contact with speakers of other indigenous languages throughout their higher education. For instance, Carlos, who had the opportunity to share a flat with two youngsters who speak Mixe, told me that: "todas las lenguas están así mezcladas, cuando escucho esos cuates que hablan mixe tienen palabras así, tacos, todas, ¿cuál es el problema?" [199] These cases show that speakers can change their language ideologies over time and, through linguistic awareness, strengthen language maintenance and reproduction.[200] However, as Violeta acknowledges above, not many people have the opportunity to go through this process.

A critical issue is therefore how to disseminate more tolerant and flexible attitudes towards loanwords among Maya speakers and recognise the 'mixed' nature of vernacular Maya, against the background of a legitimation process. Apart from education, the contribution of mass media, as Violeta also notes, might become an essential domain in the necessary task of changing linguistic attitudes and fighting against linguistic prejudices and minorisation. The following section deals with language academies, institutions that some participants consider as crucial for the normalisation and development of Maya.

'Hay que crear un organismo que pueda normar el desarrollo de la lengua maya': on language academies and language authority

Language academies in Latin America, such as the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* and the Peruvian *Academia Mayor de la Lengua Quechua*, were set up in the 1990s, mirroring the well-known European institutions mentioned above. While there is an Academy of the Maya Language in Mérida (*Academia de la Lengua Maya*), made up of experts who supposedly have a say in the normative use of the language, work on specialised lexical terminology, and produce dictionaries, etc., its activities are kept to a minimum because of lack of financial resources.[201] The main achievements of this *Academia,* founded in 1937 by renowned Mayanist Alfredo Barrera Vásquez, have

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199 Interview with Carlos Canul (16.4.2010 Mérida). Mixe languages are spoken primarily in Oaxaca.
200 See also Messing (2009) for similar experiences with Nahuatl in Tlaxcala.
201 Osvaldo recounted that "hay una academia de la lengua maya, pero tiene muy pocos recursos para hacer el trabajo de la normalización" (8.4.2010 Mérida).

been the publication of a journal on Maya literature from 1939 to 1955 and, especially, the elaboration of the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex*. It is not an institution that can become a focal point in the current process of language planning in Yucatán. Actually, other public organisations are also called *academias* in Yucatán, such as the *Academia Municipal de la Lengua Maya Itzimná*, which function as language schools rather than as academies of the language in the sense of language planning agencies.[202]

In view of this lack of a leading body in the field of language planning in Yucatán, some activists consider it necessary for the development of Maya to set up an Institute of the Maya Language. Bernardo Aguilar, for example, when we were discussing the ways in which Maya could be revitalised, replied that "una línea de trabajo sería una academia que funcione o instituto, que vea esto de la modernización del léxico, desarrollo del léxico maya, diccionario, que lancen, como han hecho en Cataluña, de usar los medios de comunicación en lengua maya, se necesita un trabajo intenso."[203] Thus, Bernardo shows concern about developing the lexicon and producing authoritative accounts of the corpus (dictionaries and grammars being typical examples) and the establishment of an Institute might carry out the task of 'normalising' Maya.

Fernando Segovia was the interviewee who elaborated in more detail on this idea of creating an ad hoc Institute of the Maya language:

Testimony 6.11

La idea era que para que la lengua maya tuviera un desarrollo con orden, con rumbo, tiene que haber una instancia con autoridad que pueda normar y organizar este desarrollo, entonces, en el 2005 presenté la idea de una instancia que se llama *U nojolil u máaya t'aan* o Instituto Estatal de la Lengua Maya, que tuviera como tarea desarrollar un proyecto de planificación para el desarrollo de la lengua maya, lo hemos vuelto a mencionar a cada rato pero parece ser que desde la parte oficial no hay esa aceptación porque se cree que el INDEMAYA es una de las instancias que puedan asumir esa tarea. Ellos tienen un área de lengua y cultura pero ni siquiera con una propuesta que tenga esa visión de ese nivel. [...] Entonces a lo mejor hay que pensar que si no quieren crear el Instituto Estatal de la Lengua Maya o como se llame, ese organismo que pueda organizar y normar el desarrollo de la lengua maya pues bueno a lo mejor desde la sociedad civil habrá que buscar cómo implementarlo con recursos que a lo mejor en parte sí puedan venir del estado pero en parte puedan venir de otros lados.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

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202 To my knowledge there are two other academies in the Yucatán Peninsula, one in the town of Izamal and another in the town of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, in Quintana Roo. Their goals are similar to the Academia Municipal in Mérida, namely, promoting the language through language classes and, especially, through the organisation of teacher training courses.
203 Interview with Bernardo Aguilar (8.4.2010 Mérida).

Fernando points to a couple of interrelated topics behind this project. One is the development of Maya and the other is the need for an authoritative body to lead that development. Institutional support for Maya would underpin legitimation, which is at the core of the current process of revalorisation, but standardisation entails the setting of boundaries and uniformity of language, which is by definition variable and dynamic.

Two further themes that surface in this excerpt must be noted. The first is the potential conflict with INDEMAYA, a state institution with a specific department of language and culture. For one thing, Fernando sees the scope of INDEMAYA as too broad. For another thing, whereas the Institute for the Maya Language is in principle a top down proposal, grassroots support may be needed to counterbalance the so far negative government response to the project.

In view of the lack of an authoritative body that guides the development of Maya, the thrust to normalise it comes at the moment from an array of social actors. I was told by people working both at INDEMAYA and Radio XEPET, the only radio station that broadcasts mainly in Maya in Yucatán state, that they were commonly approached by Maya speakers to solve their linguistic doubts. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that an Institute for the Maya Language might become a reference in the current process of language revalorisation. However, given the sociopolitical context of Mexico and Yucatán, there is also the danger of eventually creating another official institution controlled and co-opted by the government, probably at the state level, which eventually designs timid policies with negligible impact on language reproduction. Extreme purism, which is based on language essentialisation, and glorification of the norm are some of the notions that usually, although not necessarily, underpin ideologies of language academies. Despite the sometimes good intentions of these institutions, their work can even be detrimental for the maintenance of minorised languages (for Quechua see Niño-Murcia 1997; Marr 1999; also Howard 2007: 308). In the following excerpt, Violeta expresses concerns about the possibility of establishing an official institution that is eventually alien to speakers of Maya:

Testimony 6.12

Josep: ¿Crees que iría bien lo de crear un Instituto de la Lengua Maya?
Violeta Pool: Antes de crearlo o en el momento de estarlo creando habría que estar armando redes, tanto con distintas organizaciones nacionales como internacionales del área lingüística como con otras disciplinas, entonces así yo creo que sí funcionaría, sin dejar de lado la parte de la población, es decir trabajar con gente

que vaya y opine, esta idea de trabajar con la gente que sabe, que tiene una experiencia académica y metodológica con el tema y con la gente que sabe y que también tiene una metodología más empírica, más cotidiana, que eso se hace muy poco en muy pocos lugares. Así sí le doy crédito al instituto, de otra forma sería una cosa más, que ocupe un espacio y que no proponga mucho.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Setting up grassroots networks, combining both expert and folk knowledge, and taking a bottom up approach that takes into account speakers' direct participation should be, according to Violeta, essential components to make a positive impact on Maya language revitalisation through the work of an institute. The fact is that seldom do authoritative institutions take the ideas and suggestions of speakers on the ground on board. [204] Violeta further pointed out top down unilateral policies carried out by some of the public institutions currently involved in promoting Maya in Yucatán:

Testimony 6.13

Y la gente que está como haciendo cosas para la lengua tampoco tiene, desgraciadamente no es tan, no hay una participación dual, es decir, no hay grupos constantes, por ejemplo el INDEMAYA, CDI, y otras instituciones que vayan y participen de manera coordinada con el pueblo o sea ellos hacen tienen sus ideas, llegan, van, proponen, hacen lo que tienen que hacer y se quitan y eso no ayuda mucho, o sea, sí hay una imagen de que hay gente trabajando con la lengua, la gente sabe que hay un grupo de personas que hace cosas y que hace libros y que organiza cosas pero más allá de eso, no, o sea, no hay: traemos este proyecto ¿qué les parece?, ¿qué proponen ustedes? No, eso no hay. [...] El sector este que ya tiene conocimiento sobre lo que está pasando con la lengua ha hecho como su grupo de poder y no permite que crezca.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

She highlights one central issue of official revalorisation efforts, namely, the consideration of knowledge of Maya as an institutional resource that must not be shared with other people, especially, with antagonistic groups. Political affiliations are clearly marked in Mexico and clientelism is deeply rooted in the political culture of Yucatán. It is not a coincidence that the expression "mercenarios de la cultura maya", applied to some of the people who are thought to live off the Maya language, has come up in both informal conversations and even recorded interviews.[205]

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204 One insightful exception is reported by Eisenlohr (2004: 31). In order to counterbalance the stiltedness associated with purism, the Irish broadcasters of Radió na Gaeltachta have resorted to listeners for neologisms, even if there are official boards in Ireland whose work is coining terminology.
205 Interview with Ernesto González (29.3.2010 Mérida).

'Les pedían que disimularan su acento yucateco': on Yucatec Spanish

In Yucatán linguistic prejudice derived from purism affects not only Maya but also Yucatec Spanish, a variety of Mexican Spanish, which is heavily influenced by its contact with Maya, especially on the lexical and phonological levels (Amaro Gamboa 1985; Lope Blanch 1987; Suárez Molina 1996; Güémez Pineda 2011). While recent research based on variationist sociolinguistics points to an ongoing process of convergence to Standard Mexican Spanish and even to a panhispanic norm (Michnowicz 2012), Yucatec Spanish is a particularly distinct variety whose use raises contradictory ideological issues indexing both pride and prejudice. The variety of Spanish spoken in Yucatán is often seen as a 'deviation' from Standard Mexican Spanish, which is based on the variety spoken in central Mexico where Mexico City is located. This is what Manuel Peraza reported about linguistic prejudice stemming from perceptions of varieties of Mexican Spanish:

Testimony 6.14

Me decía un distribuidor de café que distribuía a toda la zona hotelera de Cancún, una compañía veracruzana, que vendía muchísimo café y les dan estos cursos de superación personal a los trabajadores y les pedían que modularan su acento, lo neutralizaran y que les insistían mucho en el acento que no hicieran, que porque es desagradable. Eran obviamente chilangos los que daban estos cursos, no yucatecos y les pedían que disimularan su acento yucateco, es muy feo, así de plano. Y a los muchachos que van a pedir trabajo temporal en los blockbuster parece que la misma sugerencia les hacen, tú llegas y te empiezan a hablar achilangado, que también en los cursos que les dan les piden que hablen de esta forma y ahora por ejemplo los locutores en la radio local también hay mucho chilango que está trabajando de locutor y los yucatecos tienen que modificar su acento, pero los cachas porque luego se les escapa algo, ese acento yucateco ya no hay mucho en la radio local o si hay se está modificando, lo están cambiando, neutralizando, achilangado de pronto por allá.

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].

This excerpt neatly illustrates what Cameron (1995) describes as 'verbal hygiene', which is closely bound up with the ideology of the standard (Joseph 1987; Milroy 2001). Thus, speaking *achilangado* (*chilango* is someone from Mexico City and *achilangado* the way people from Mexico City speak Spanish) is the 'unmarked' variety, while speaking Spanish with a Yucatecan accent may be socially sanctioned by non-Yucatecans. Manuel reports that for some 'chilangos' Yucatec Spanish is *desagradable*, *muy feo*, that is, unpleasant, very ugly. Moreover, a Yucatecan accent can have connotations of humorous language, which may also be a way to denigrate

speakers. Rocío Esquivel, a Yucatecan researcher, recounted her past experience visiting Mexico City in the following way: "si se daban cuenta en el DF que uno era yucateco, se iban a burlar y nos tomaban el pelo".[206] Consequently, in certain contexts speakers of Yucatec Spanish need to 'neutralise', 'disguise', or 'adjust' their accent, all verbs used by Manuel in the excerpt above. While the influence of Maya on Yucatec Spanish covers all grammatical levels, phonological influence, particularly glottalisation and patterns of intonation, is one of the most salient features (Martín Briceño 1997; Michnowicz 2006) and as a result Yucatec Spanish is often negatively portrayed as *aporreado* (literally 'beaten', 'hammered'). A further example was provided by Rocío Esquivel, who reported that "me decía una chica que la contrataron para un programa de radio, y dijeron que no querían ningún acento, ¡como si eso fuera posible!".

It is worth noting that the negative connotations of the influence of Maya phonology on Yucatec Spanish may diminish when speakers belong to the upper classes. In her analysis of racism in Mérida Iturriaga (2010: 177) underlines the pride shown by elites of that city who speak Yucatec Spanish with a strong Maya accent (*aporreado*). The acquisition of a distinct variety of Spanish heavily influenced by Maya elites may be explained by the fact that being raised by Maya nannies has traditionally been a sign of wealth in Yucatán. Therefore, unlike in other Mexican regions with indigenous population, the appropriation of an otherwise stigmatised accent has helped Yucatecan elites to underpin a differentiated regional identity. Along with this linguistic influence, Yucatecan elites have also appropriated other cultural Maya features such as the *terno*, an elaborated three-pieced version of the traditional Maya female dress (*hipil*).

Two more examples, one from the media and the other from the linguistic landscape of Mérida, highlight the importance of Yucatec Spanish as a symbol of a distinct regional identity. During my fieldwork in 2011 there was a series of radio commercials advertising a well-known local beer called 'Montejo'. Below is the transcription of one of those commercials, which were frequently played on the main Yucatecan radio stations:

> En mi tierra, las cosas no *se acaban*, *se gastan*
> La gente no *se va*, *se quita*
> Las cosas no *se amontonan*, *se achocan*
> Los objetos no *se encuentran*, *se buscan*
> Así es de donde soy, Montejo, mi cerveza Montejo

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206 Interview with Rocío Esquivel (2.4.2012 Mérida).

Montejo, de donde yo soy

This telling example is built around the juxtaposition of two varieties of Spanish, Standard Mexican Spanish, on the one hand, and Yucatecan Spanish, on the other. It is through the lexicon, verbs in italics in this case, that a sense of local origin is conveyed. Thus, the verb 'gastar' is used in Yucatán instead of Standard Spanish 'acabar' (to use up); 'quitarse' instead of 'irse' (to leave); 'achocarse' instead of 'amontonarse' (to cram, to pile up); and, finally, 'buscar' instead of 'encontrar' (to find). These verbal comparisons between Standard Spanish and Yucatec Spanish single out the Yucatecan origin of the advertised beer. Interestingly, both the particular uses of the verbs 'achocar' and 'buscar' in Yucatec Spanish are transferences from Maya.[207] This display of local verbs is framed by the word *tierra* (land) at the beginning and the slogan *de donde yo soy* (where I am from), both of which reinforce the idea of deep-rootedness, proximity, and authenticity of the product that is being publicised.

The second example comes from the linguistic landscape of Mérida, a poster in a bus stop shows a couple at home (husband and wife, we assume) holding a baby in their arms (see picture 6.2. below). The slogan of the advertising, which is sponsored by Mérida city council, reads: *Yo le hago loch a mi familia, ¿y tu?* The phrasing in this message is typically Yucatec Spanish in that it combines the Spanish verb (*hacer*) with a substantivised Maya verb (*loch*), which means 'hug, cuddle'. Sadly, the rationale behind this advertisement is the high levels of domestic violence in Mexico and Yucatán.

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207 The verb *achocar* has a parallel meaning with *chok'* in Maya (to clutter, to pile up) while *buscar* and *no buscar* in Yucatec Spanish correspond to the Standard Spanish *buscar* (to look for) and *encontrar* (to find). In Maya one verb *kaxan* expresses both concepts. A typical way of mocking speakers of Yucatec Spanish, which is influenced by Maya, is using the phrase *lo busco y no lo busco*, which is commonly used instead of Standard Spanish *lo busco y no lo encuentro*.

Picture 6.2 Use of Yucatec Spanish in a bus stop in central Mérida

These examples show that languages, varieties of languages, or accent, in other words, ways of speaking become fertile ground where social identities are expressed, borders are created, and discrimination is practiced. In this vein, sociologists have warned about the saliency of language as a marker of social position. Bourdieu maintains that "differences in terms of accent, grammar and vocabulary –the very differences overlooked by formal linguistics– are indices of the social position of speakers and reflections of the quantities of linguistic capital (and other capital) which they possess" (1991: 18). Along similar lines, Langer and Nesse point out that "[t]he importance of speaking in the 'right' accent or variety becomes especially important at times when other factors that used to identify a person's class, such as clothes or education, lose their distinguishing power" (2012: 612). Language is, in sum, a prominent site where power relations and social inequalities are played out and a common terrain for the indexing of social identities, which need to be seen in relational and situational terms. As I have shown, in spite of the stigmatisation of Yucatecan Spanish, this variety may also proudly index a sense of regional identity, a fact that needs to be considered in the ongoing process of Maya language revalorisation. Within the sociolinguistic ecology of Yucatán, Maya and Yucatec Spanish stand in a dialectic relationship as regards the representation of a particular regional identity.

6.6 Conclusion

As stated at the introdution of this chapter, both speakers of dominant and minorised languages may have purist attitudes. Therefore, linguistic purism must be contextualised within a specific sociopolitical context if we want to unveil the non-linguistic roots of purist attitudes and their covert ideological underpinnings. While purism has played a key role in processes of nation building in Europe (Thomas 1991), the analysis of the ethnographic data gathered shows that in Yucatán purism indexes more than a mere concern about the lexicon of a language and is better understood within the broader picture of the sociocultural and ethnolinguistic recognition of the Maya people. Language ideologies such as purism are, therefore, a reflection of wider social concerns.

I have argued that the struggle for recognition among these Maya activists is a process based on language iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000). Irvine and Gal define iconization as "a transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic features (or varieties) and the social images with which they are linked" (2000: 37). In situations of minorisation a language may increasingly become a 'badge of identity' at the same time as it is being abandoned. When other ethnic markers are discarded, such as clothing, language may gain saliency as one of the few remaining symbols of identity. This iconization strategy may become a crucial component for successful language revitalisation (Kroskrity and Field 2009). I have argued that the Maya identity is being reflected upon Maya, a language that must be authentic if it is to have any strategic weight in the struggle for sociocultural recognition.

In view of this essentialisation of language boundaries entailed in purism, some activists consider Spanish loanwords as the reason for the current lesser social status of Maya. Also, as is common in processes of language revitalisation, two or more versions of a minorised language, tainted with ideologies of authenticity and authority, enter into conflict. This situation is not exclusive of Yucatán and the contradictions highlighted in this chapter also crop up in other geographical areas as distant as Europe. Jaffe (2012) writes about contemporary Corsica that:

> In the current sociolinguistic context, there is competition between the value and authority of an "authentic" Corsican, defined almost exclusively as first-language oral skills practiced in informal domains and a "good" Corsican learned in school and practiced by "professionals": one or the other of these frames of evaluation has the potential to de-legitimize and disenfranchise many Corsicans' knowledge of the language (2012: 89).

This competition among varieties noted by Jaffe is also characteristic of Yucatán. Crucially, while some degree of purism may be a positive component for language legitimation, extreme purist attitudes have the detrimental effect of paving the way for language shift. Purism may lead to linguistic insecurity and, eventually, to abandonment, when minorised speakers make the decision of not using what they perceive as a debased variety of a supposedly authentic, pure, and often pre-contact language. In a nutshell, authenticity and hybridity stand in a contradictory position in this particular context of unequal language contact. Drawing on Dorian (1994), a compromise between available varieties may be necessary for the survival of subordinated languages. The middle ground seems a sensible way to deal with the ambivalent tensions raised by the use of those contrasting varieties. Therefore, rescuing words in disuse, updating terms from the vast epigraphic Mayan records, and coining some new words may be positive and highly symbolic strategies to revalorise Maya. These efforts, though, need to be combined with the legitimation of the 'mixed' variety of Maya, since destigmatisation and changing the negative attitudes towards vernacular varieties, spoken by most if not all speakers of Maya, is fundamental for their reproduction.

Finally, in a situation of rapid language shift, concentrating exclusively on corpus planning may not be the most efficient strategy for revitalisation. This is particularly the case when there is a lack of authority in terminology matters and public institutions, especially mass media and the education system, are not up to the task of massive acquisition planning. Unlike prevalent views of bilingualism in Yucatán based on a dichotomising and essentialising approach to Maya and Spanish, adopting a holistic perspective that legitimates the complex and varied linguistic practices on the ground may work towards the revitalisation of Maya. On a more positive note, I have also shown how some young Maya speakers, who are committed to the use of that language in all kinds of domains, have changed their ideologies thanks to metalinguistic reflection on purism. These are examples of hope for Maya language maintenance in Yucatán. The following chapter further deals with promising practices of revitalisation that include the whole communicative repertoire of Maya speakers.

Chapter 7. Language Promotion from the Grassroots

7.1   Introduction

In the chapters above I have reviewed the historical process that has led to the sociolinguistic minorisation of Maya speakers and both salient discourses and institutional language policies and planning aimed at promoting Maya in Yucatán. More specifically, in chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis I have discussed, on the one hand, the emphasis of governmental policies on the development of literacy in Maya and its concomitant introduction in the formal education system and, on the other hand, significant changes in language legislation that have occurred in Mexico in the last decade. This has led to an increasing public recognition and visibility of Maya in Yucatán, epitomised by the notion of revalorisation. These strategies, and their underpinning ideologies, entail a process of language essentialisation and inevitably raise controversial sociolinguistic issues such as purism, which I have discussed in the previous chapter. The conclusion is that current language policies in these areas have serious limitations for actual revitalisation. In contrast with top down efforts devised and implemented by official institutions, in this chapter I explore complementary and alternative domains of language use and provide examples of complex linguistic practices from individuals who promote Maya from the ground up.

7.2   Some Terminological Clarification

Given the shortcomings of institutional language policy and planning in Yucatán for the actual promotion of Maya, it is important to look at alternative grassroots strategies geared towards the revitalisation of that language. Along with the term 'bottom up', which is firmly established in sociolinguistics, I shall also use 'horizontal planning', since this latter concept puts the emphasis on a non-hierarchical axis of communicative practices. In this horizontal axis, which is made up of networks developing in a 'rhizomatic', acentered and non-hierarchical way (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), the final agents of language management, as Spolsky (2009) would put it, are speakers themselves rather than institutions. Along similar lines, Baldauf (2006) has drawn attention to the importance of micro language planning, which, unlike the historically dominant macro approaches to language policy and planning, focuses on local contexts, linguistic practices on the ground, and speakers as the main actors of planning. As I have emphasised in previous chapters, instituional macro approaches to language promotion in Mexico, which come from federal (INALI) or state agencies (INDEMAYA)

and focus primarily on standardisation, are at odds with sociolinguistic norms and practices on the ground.[208] In this sense, drawing on the work of Bakhtin (1981), Bailey (2009, 2012) has suggested the concept of heteroglossia as a more appropriate framework to explain these plurilingual practices. For Bailey (2012: 499) heteroglossia puts the emphasis on the social tensions inherent in variable speech rather than on structural and formal approaches to languages as abstract and neutral systems of reference. As I show in the Facebook examples below, the focus is not on particular linguistic codes, which are usually called hybrid or mixed because they do not fit within the constraints of standardised languages. Instead, the concept of heteroglossia will help us to stress speakers as social actors that deploy and negotiate social identities through linguistic exchanges.

Aside from rather timid and tokenistic insititutional policies, it is through particular and individualistic efforts that the promotion of Maya is usually undertaken in Yucatán. This lack of organised efforts does not mean that there is not linguistic activism whatsoever in Yucatán or that some individuals cannot lead movements of language revitalisation. Kroskrity (2009b) has noted the importance of individual agency, particularly linked to the central issue of language ideological change, and the impact that individual commitment and efforts may have in language revitalisation. Similarly, Combs and Penfield point out that "all efforts and causes which promote linguistic diversity follow from the development of an active base consisting of either a single individual or a group, and from the conviction that taking action is at the core of all efforts to raise awareness about maintaining linguistic diversity" (2012: 471). Collaboration and networking are, therefore, key strategies for language promotion, but this may even be more necessary in the Yucatecan context where there is a lack of cohesion and even cooperation among several activists that work for the promotion of Maya. It is also worth mentioning that collaboration among public institutions usually depends on the political party (either PRI or PAN) that rules at different administrative levels in Mexico (municipal, state, and federal). In spite of these drawbacks, social media are already being used as a catalyst for language advocacy and cooperation.

7.3   Promoting Maya through Media, New Technologies and Music

In the following sections I analyse some examples of Maya language promotion in Yucatán beyond the education and legislative realms. Apart from these classic areas of

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208 For similar examples from North America see Nevins (2004); for the Indian subcontinent see Canagarajah (2005) and Ramanathan (2005).

language planning, several scholars have noted the need to introduce minorised languages into new domains of use, particularly those which are central for economic advancement (Coulmas 1992; King 2001; Crystal 2004). Coulmas (1992: 170), for instance, points to functional expansion and adaptation to new domains as essential processes for language reproduction.

Unlike the education system and legislation, media such as radio and television foreground orality over literacy. Likewise, the internet and popular culture are domains where orality may play an important part. I show below that in the case of social media and music it is individual actors rather than institutions that are driving some successful strategies to revitalise Maya in Yucatán. These domains of use are becoming ever more important areas of revitalisation and need further attention in Yucatán and beyond. As Aurolyn Luykx has recently written about Bolivia:

> In my opinion, the best strategy to ensure Quechua's future vitality would not only target formal education, but would build on Quechua's traditional strengths: its powerful emotional link to family and community settings; its importance in popular religious practices; its aesthetic value, not only in the narrow domains of poetry and literature, but also in folkloric music, popular theater, and speech play. A televised soap opera in Quechua would undoubtedly find an audience (2011: 147).

Luykx's words strongly resonate with the strategies for revitalisation that I present in this chapter. I will argue that apart from being legitimised in traditional domains of use, Maya needs to be functionally expanded to new domains (not necessarily high domains) if it is to thrive in the future. Popular theatre in Maya is, I believe, another important area of ethnographic study that can provide interesting insights into horizontal practices of revitalisation. In April 2012, I had the opportunity to watch the play 'El caballo de piedra', a Maya legend adapted to the theatre by Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim. Within the context of a seminar on indigenous languages of Latin America the play was performed bilingually by the young troupe Tumben K'in in the municipal theater of José María Morelos, the town where UIMQROO is located. This was another example of using Maya through the arts in an entertaining environment, which again contrasts with the pre-eminence of the school as a domain for language promotion. In short, arts and the media can provide fertile ground for explorations into Maya language revitalisation.

The media, new technologies, popular culture and the arts have all gained prominence in the last decade as sites for language revitalisation (Crystal 2004). Kelly-Holmes (2012: 337) argues that media can play a decisive role in language policy and

planning, since they often carry out key functions in corpus planning, status planning, standardisation processes, language diffusion, and the spread of language ideologies.

The emergence and development of minority language media studies is a very broad topic explored in depth at least since the 1990s. Cormack and Hourigan (2007) provide a recent review of the role of media, particularly television, in revitalising European languages. In that book Cormack (2007) succinctly reviews the foundational work that Riggins (1992) and Browne (1996) developed in the 1990s on media and language minorisation, which has proved useful for the Latin American context as well. Cormack (2007: 5) summarises Riggins' five models of state support for ethnic minority media as the integrationist model (integrating the minority into the majority culture); the economic model (assimilating the minority by economic pressure); the divisive model (setting different minorities against each other); the pre-emptive model (pre-empting more radical media from within the minority community itself); and the proselytist model (assimilating the minority into the majority's values). Empowerment and control ultimately explain the success or failure of minority language promotion through media in Europe (Cormack 2007: 7). This is also the case in Latin America, where sociopolitical empowerment of indigenous peoples through different kinds of media is gaining strength (Wilson and Stewart 2008).[209] I discuss below the ways in which power and control explain the limitations to promote Maya through mass media in Mexico and Yucatán. I shall concentrate on radio and television in the next section as these traditional media are central in the lives of people living on the Yucatán Peninsula.

7.4   Radio and Television and Indigenous Language Promotion in Mexico

In contrast with the television duopoly that exists in Mexico, radio is a much more widespread and consolidated type of media that can offer more realistic possibilities for the promotion of indigenous languages. It bears mention that radio was first used by the Mexican government, especially in the post-revolutionary period, to integrate the non-literate population into the mainstream national life (Hayes 2000).[210] As a pioneer medium of mass communication, which has survived the competition of more modern

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209 Some initiatives, such as workshops supported by the CDI and those organised by the collective group Turix, have used video to promote the Maya culture in Yucatán. For the work of the group Turix, see http://turix.yoochel.org/category/videos/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].
210 Theater has had a similar evolution. As Underiner writes: "[i]f in 1931 Mayan language theatre was used in service of postrevolutionary Mexico's plans for a unified Spanish-speaking country, in later years it was appropriated for more local purposes and ends" (2004: 104).

types of media such as television and the Internet, radio remains a particularly well suited electronic medium to revitalise Mexico's mainly oral indigenous cultures. Browne observes that:

> Radio is ideally suited to assisting in the preservation, 'modernisation' and demystification of minority languages. As an oral medium of communication, it can serve as a channel for minority language songs, poetry, comedy and other cultural vehicles, as well as furnishing an 'oral newspaper' for the speakers of those languages (Browne 2007: 123).

In Latin America several authors have underlined the influence that radio has exerted both on the use of local languages in education and on sociopolitical struggles.[211] Calleja and Solís (2007: 43-50), members of the World Association of Community Radios (AMARC), provide a brief account of the labels and approaches of these grassroots radios in Latin America and analyse the sociopolitical background against which they have emerged in Mexico.[212] These authors maintain that community radios are of special interest for sociocultural empowerment of indigenous peoples in that they are local initiatives used as a form of resistance. These stations are often the result of political mobilisation and a response to federal radios, particularly in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero (Gasparello 2011). The sociopolitical origins and development of community radios are antagonistic to governmentally controlled radios, although in many cases the use of indigenous languages features prominently in both types of stations.

Aside from these grassroots initiatives, a network of official *indigenist* radio stations, established by the INI (now the CDI), has existed in Mexico since 1979. Although this is an area of research that deserves further exploration (Cornejo 2010), the characteristics of this governmentally-run network, known as *Sistema de Radiodifusoras Culturales Indigenistas* (SRCI), seem to differ in important ways from commercial, private, and community radio stations.[213]

According to Castells i Talens (2011a), differences between grassroots community radios (indigenous) and government radios (*indigenist*) may not be as clear-cut as has often been portrayed in the literature. He maintains that this dichotomy

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211 See Luykx (2001) for Quechua in the Andean area, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) for the Shuar in Ecuador, and Murillo (2008) for the Nasa in Colombia.
212 AMARC is the Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias. More information on the Mexican branch at: http://www.amarcmexico.org/ [Accessed 23.8.2013].
213 There are twenty-one stations that belong to the *Sistema de Radiodifusoras Culturales Indigenistas* The latest station began broadcasting on 8 November 2012 in the state of Durango.

should be revised within the context of current neoindigenist policies, owing to daily practices of resistance of local actors and a degree of appropriation of federal stations by indigenous peoples. I return to this topic below in relation with Radio XEPET in Yucatán but it is important to note that, despite various strategies of resistance and degrees of appropriation, the SRCI network belongs to a federal institution with its own sociopolitical agenda. Along these lines, Castells-Talens et al (2009) acknowledge that, while the Mexican government has purportedly tried to promote indigenous participation in federal radios, "the stations had little citizen participation, depended technologically and financially on the state, were ideologically conditioned by their government links, and had not become a forum of expression for the communities" (2009: 525). Drawing on Riggins' classification of ethnic minority media presented above, these authors argue that a combination of a proselytist model and a pre-emptive model has been implemented in Mexico. They conclude that "[t]he top-down approach has been disguised by buzz-words (indigenous, community, participation), but the underlying assumption that the people will turn state media into their own media has failed" (2009: 535). In short, while both community and indigenist radios are playing a significant part in the valorisation and promotion of Mexican indigenous languages, this is a very complex issue with many ramifications and in need of further research.[214]

Worthy of note is the fact that many community radios, which are considered by their members as truly 'indigenous' rather than *indigenistas*, operate clandestinely because of legal restrictions on mass media in Mexico. These restrictions have been imposed by the Federal Law on Radio and Television, which was devised to favour the interests of media conglomerates (Gasparello 2011; Cornejo 2010). This is not surprising if we consider the close ties that exist between political and economic elites and media ownership in Mexico. Thus, the reform of the Federal Law on Radio and Television of 2006 was critically and ironically dubbed 'Law Televisa', which refers to one of the corporations of the duopoly that controls the Mexican television market and whose position was reinforced by the reform.[215] After much political struggle, some community radios finally obtained the required licenses in the mid-2000s and between 2004 and 2005 eleven stations were granted permits after a difficult process full of

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214 See Ramos (2005) on Radio XEZV - La Voz de la Montaña, located in the state of Guerrero and Castells i Talens (2004) on Radio XEPET - La Voz de los Mayas in Yucatán.
215 Hayes (2000) reviews the birth of radio broadcasting in Mexico in the 1930s as a monopolistic endeavour of the Azcárraga family. She notes the long-held ties of that family with the Mexican government and how radio laid the foundation for subsequent development of a television conglomerate (Televisa). The other part of the Mexican television duopoly is TeleAzteca.

bureaucratic hurdles. Calleja and Solís, who were themselves involved in this process, poignantly write that:

> Haber logrado el reconocimiento del perfil comunitario en los medios, es un hecho sin precedentes en la historia del modelo mediático mexicano. Este reconocimiento jurídico puede parecer irrelevante para muchos países, pero en México es un avance sin precedentes. La discrecionalidad y vacío jurídico, la enconada oposición de los radiodifusores privados y la falta de voluntad política del gobierno para reconocer el derecho ciudadano de acceder a las frecuencias del espectro radioeléctrico, parecían obstáculos insuperables (Calleja and Solís 2007: 140).

The term 'indigenous radio stations' has been officially sanctioned only very recently in a reform passed on 4 April 2012.[216] The right of indigenous peoples to operate those stations is now recognised but permits are still needed and must be approved by the CDI and ultimately granted by the federal Ministry of Communications and Transports. Furthermore, grassroots stations usually have economic difficulties because, by law, they are not allowed to sell airtime for advertising and cannot therefore benefit from a main source of media income (Calleja and Solís 2007: 40).

These practical difficulties contrast sharply with the rhetoric of recent legislative changes in Mexico reviewed in chapter 4, which include article 2 of the constitution and article 6 of the General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[217] In a nutshell, indigenous rights to communication are tightly controlled and restricted by the federal government. The specific federal law that regulates media in Mexico overpowers the Law on Linguistic Rights, which remains a mere declarative instrument of good intentions.

Radio and the Use of Maya

Radio XEPET, one of the oldest stations of the SRCI network, began broadcasting from the town of Peto in 1982 with a view at that time to castilianising the majority Maya speaking population of central Yucatán. Radio XEXPUJ in the village of X'pujil

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216 Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes in Spanish. See the complete Law at: www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/114.pdf [Accessed 23.8.2013].

217 Mexican Constitution, Article 2, B, VI. Establecer condiciones para que los pueblos y las comunidades indígenas puedan adquirir, operar y administrar medios de comunicación, en los términos que las leyes de la materia determinen.

LGDLPI, Artículo 6. El Estado adoptará e instrumentará las medidas necesarias para asegurar que los medios de comunicación masiva difundan la realidad y la diversidad lingüística y cultural de la Nación Mexicana. Además, destinará un porcentaje del tiempo que dispone en los medios de comunicación masiva concesionados, de acuerdo a la legislación aplicable, para la emisión de programas en las diversas lenguas nacionales habladas en sus áreas de cobertura, y de programas culturales en los que se promueva la literatura, tradiciones orales y el uso de las lenguas indígenas nacionales de las diversas regiones del país.

(Campeche) and Radio XENKA in the town of Felipe Carrillo Puerto (Quintana Roo) are the other two stations located in Yucatec Maya speaking territories.[218] Although these radios make use of Maya in their programmes, they are owned by the federal government, which raises issues of political and financial independence. As noted, even if a participatory model has been increasingly present, actual ownership and control by local indigenous peoples is still non-existent. Castells-Talens (2004), who has looked at the case of Radio XEPET in Yucatán, points out the diverse range of actors involved in the complex negotiation that shapes the communicative policy of that station. He notes the discrepancies between explicit and implicit indigenist radio policies, which are in need of continuous balancing. Similarly, Cornejo (2002), drawing on cultural reception theory, has examined the symbolic appropriation of Radio XEPET by listeners in central Yucatán.[219]

While appropriation is a legitimate strategy in situations of sociopolitical subordination, these official radios offer very limited scope for political mobilisation. There is an urgent need for truly owned and controlled indigenous media and for the creation of a 'mediascape' with the presence of indigenous languages. In an interview, Diego Che, who works for the CDI, stated that:

Testimony 7.1

Debe haber una estación de radio propia, pero no la radio indígena, la radio indígena es una radio copada, es lo que te decía, Peto, XEPET, no está trabajando para el crecimiento, se usa la lengua ahí, es únicamente para que se vea que la institución está haciendo algo a favor de la lengua, pero en la realidad los contenidos, es una rocola del mundo maya, es la música, y ponen música en español porque no hay mucha música en maya pero no se utiliza el espacio para analizar estos problemas, estas cosas, nada de reivindicación política, le sirve a la institución para poder justificar su actividad a favor de los pueblos pero que no es en realidad una estación que se ponga al servicio del pueblo maya, y habría que reformar también esas estaciones de radio, son bienes del estado, no de la CDI, habría que modificar el esquema para una mayor participación de la población civil y que usen esos medios como sus medios de comunicación.

[Diego Che 28.7.11 Mérida].

This excerpt confirms the lack of sociopolitical demands (*nada de reivindicación política*, according to Diego) that characterises Yucatán. Diego also raises the issue of

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218 There are four tiny stations in boarding schools (*albergues escolares*) in the towns of Samahil, Yaxcopoil, Chemax and San Antonio Sodzil which also belong to the SRCI.
219 See also Ramos (2005) for an in depth study of an indigenist station which has significantly contributed to sociocultural cohesion and indigenous awareness raising among its listeners.

ownership and the fact that Radio XEPET is not being used as a space for political debate but mostly concentrates on music, much of which is in Spanish. He also remarks that indigenist radios do not belong to the CDI but to the state, an essential clarification in a political context where government, political parties, and public institutions are often coalesced. Also, Diego uses the word 'indigenous' radios, while referring to 'indigenist' radios. This may have to do with the fact that the adjective *indigenista*, with negative connotations linked to past governmental assimilationist policies, has been disappearing from public official discourses since the year 2000 when PAN came to power after seventy years of PRI dominance.[220]

I visited Radio XEPET during my fieldwork and interviewed Víctor Canto, its director. In his opinion, the station has done important social work over the years, particularly during catastrophic events (hurricanes are frequent in Yucatán).[221] After two decades as director, Víctor pointed out the importance of media ownership by indigenous peoples, the lack of political mobilisation in the region, and the continuation of deeply rooted assistance-oriented policies for indigenous peoples based on paternalism and clientelism. To my question of the role of XEPET in the revitalisation of Maya, Víctor answered that:

Testimony 7.2

Una cosa es transmitir en lengua maya, y trasmitir para los mayas y bueno eso importante, pero todavía es más importante que sean los propios mayas los que generen sus propios mensajes, los que tengan iniciativas, que no sean el gobierno el que diga, te voy a dar yo tu radio, pero te voy a decir, tu nomás vas a oir la radio, y ahí está el problema […] Falta movilización pero es también parte del entorno que se ha generado a partir de la política, no solo aquí en Yucatán sino en todo México, sobre todo generada para los pueblos indígenas donde se les ha acostumbrado a que estén nomás esperando a ver qué cae, qué les va a caer. Esto tiene que cambiar.

[Víctor Canto 11.04.11 Peto].

This excerpt raises again the issue of power and control. While Víctor deems important the use of Maya in this indigenist radio, he highlights enduring paternalist policies and again the concomitant crucial question of lack of political agency of the Maya in Yucatán. Moreover, aside from the fact that indigenist radios are top down federal initiatives, other technical pitfalls with consequences for potential audience need to be

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220 In this sense, Castells i Talens (2011b: 298) draws attention to the striking fact that the network of radio stations controlled by the CDI, the SRCI, still keeps the now dated term indigenista in its name.
221 Victor Canto (2002) published a detailed account of the role of XEPET during Hurricane Isidoro in the indigenist magazine *México Indígena*.

considered. These are, for instance, the limited range and power of these stations and their location in rural areas, where most indigenous peoples 'officially' live.

Unlike Radio XEPET, Radio Yóol Íik (The Essence of the Wind), a privately funded initiative with state support that existed between 2005 and 2009, was a paramount example of an attempt to provide Maya urban listeners with a radio station in Mérida.[222] This commercial radio was short-lived and had to close down owing to financial problems.[223] Radio Yóol Íik had a significant impact on both the revalorisation and revitalisation of Maya, as I was able to observe when I visited the headquarters in 2008 and through subsequent interviews with members of that station. Salvador Polanco commented on the weak political activism of Mayas in Yucatán and the demise of Radio Yóol Íik thus:

Testimony 7.3

Una de las cosas que también veíamos que evidenciaba la poca importancia que tienen estos procesos (*referring to sociopolitical demands*) es el cierre de esta radiodifusora Yóol Íik. Si bien salió con un proyecto muy definido de revaloración y captar a una audiencia, finalmente no se pudo sostener, la gente no confió como para confiarles publicidad y todo y era interesante porque era una iniciativa privada, esta fue a competir con las mismas reglas y terminó siendo comida, no pudo sostenerse económicamente y la iniciativa privada lo que no se sostiene, se va y esta tristemente se fue. Era una buena iniciativa cuando sintoniza la gente en lengua maya, creo que al ganar estos espacios logran reforzar un proceso de revaloración, el hecho de que tu prendas la televisión y haya un canal en lengua maya que sea tan normal como hay un canal en inglés o que sea tan normal como prender la radio y escuchar, esto ayuda a fomentar la costumbre a otras lenguas aparte de la tuya y la idea que esta es una lengua que está aquí.

[Salvador Polanco 5.8.2011 Mérida].

In short, Radio Yóol Íik helped to promote Maya in Mérida (note that Salvador uses the word *revaloración* twice) but it proved financially unsustainable in the longer term. In the wider context of large media conglomerates in Mexico this experience is an example of the enormous difficulties faced by a private initiative that used a minorised language. There exist other radio stations that sporadically include Maya issues but they use

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222 Bernardo Laris, linked to the radio group Cadena Rasa, is the entrepreneur who set up Radio Yóol Íik.
223 Cotter's (2001) account of the Irish urban based community Raidió na Life and its contrast with the government supported Raidió na Gaeltachta is an interesting parallel. In the Irish case, however, Dublin-based Raidió na Life is a well-established urban radio station.

mostly, although not exclusively, Spanish for their broadcasting.[224] To conclude, a dearth of Maya stations is a backslash for language revitalisation because of the possibilities that radio offers to encourage the oral use of Maya, bypassing the controversial emphasis on literacy.

Television and the Use of Maya

Television is another prominent medium worth considering in language revitalisation that needs a brief account as regards the use of Maya. Several European cases show that television in minorised languages may be an effective tool for promotion because of the possibilities it offers for functional expansion (Cormack and Hourigan 2007; Moriarty 2009). The use of minorised languages in modern, prestigious, and ubiquitous media such as television may also have positive influence on language attitudes. However, there is little research yet providing evidence of actual changes in language practices based on television consumption (but see Moriarty 2009 for the Irish case). Ned Thomas has argued that "unlike radio, television is semi-transparent and acquires an eavesdropping audience beyond the audience for whom it is attended" (1995: 4). It is easier to tune in to television than radio because it reproduces more naturally the way communication takes place in everyday life, which includes non-verbal cues. Furthermore, the literal visibility of subtitles, when used, can boost literacy in indigenous languages.

I believe that a soap opera in Maya would definitely have an audience in Yucatán and might have a positive effect on language promotion, owing to the popularity of that genre in Mexico and beyond.[225] In fact, a short soap opera in Maya called Baktun 13 had its premiere at the University of Quintana Roo in December 2012 (see picture 7.1). Interesting for the discussion below is the fact that the protagonist is a young Maya who uses Maya in Facebook and Twitter.

While a very valuable initiative for language revitalisation, Baktun 13 is unlikely to reach a mainstream television channel. Local television channels and the Internet seem more likely spaces for its promotion and broadcasting. The reality is that the two conglomerates (TV Azteca and Televisa), which control the Mexican market, not only broadcast their programmes exclusively in Spanish but often contribute to folklorising or, worse, fostering negative stereotypes about indigenous peoples (Muñiz et al. 2010;

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224 This is the case of Radio Universidad, which belongs to the Autonomous University of Yucatán. The programme Riqueza Maya has included interviews in Maya, significantly, to celebrate UNESCO's Mother Language Day: http://www.radio.uady.mx/RiquezaMaya.html [Accessed 23.8.2013].

225 See O'Donnell (2001) for an exploration of the impact of soap operas, which have become truly 'sociological phenomena', on several European minority languages such as Basque, Irish and Catalan.

Marañón and Muñiz 2012). In Yucatán Iturriaga (2010) has used discourse analysis to uncover racism based on two programmes shown in two local television channels (Canal 2 and Canal 13).[226]

Picture 7.1 Poster for the presentation of the soap opera Baktun at the University of Quintana Roo.

To conclude, Maya has had some presence in the Yucatán state channel Canal 13 at least since 1986. Fidencio Briceño (2002: 233) has noted that during the 1990s the programme to teach Maya *Ko'one'ex kanik maya* (Let's learn Maya) even had a television version in Canal 13. The current use of Maya is limited to a half-hour weekday news summary broadcast from 7am to 7.30am. In brief, the state-owned Canal 13 offers extremely limited and symbolic airtime to Maya.

7.5   Social Media and Language Revitalisation

New technologies have become an ever more prominent domain for the promotion of endangered languages worldwide. Since the seminal article by Buszard-Welcher (2001),

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226 Although it may be anecdotal evidence, I had the opportunity to watch several instalments of the Televisa soap opera 'La fuerza del destino', which takes place in Sonora and tangentially shows how the Seri people of northern Mexico allegedly live. Unsurprisingly, it is a stereotyped Seri 'healer' and a 'great chief', played by non-indigenous actors (Mónica Miguel and Antonio Medellín), that feature in the telenovela.

which explored the incipient use of the Internet by Native American language communities, there has been growing research with various strands based on the possibilities of new technologies for the revitalisation and, particularly, documentation of minorised languages.[227] These languages are increasingly being used on the web, a phenomenon that has gained attention for the potential benefits in language maintenance and revitalisation, particularly among the youth (Moriarty 2011). Eisenlohr (2004) has argued that the introduction of minorised languages in what he calls 'electronic mediation' entails not only actual promotion through functional expansion but also potential transformation of their 'ideological valuation'. I show below how Maya is being increasingly used in social media. I discuss whether such use may help to revitalise it and at the same time provide a platform for its advocacy. Unlike traditional passive consumption of 'old' mass media, social media such as Facebook offer a range of possibilities for active engagement by the user, who becomes both a consumer and a producer of contents. In this vein, Cunliffe has argued that:

> The real potential of the Internet lies not in the replication of traditional media and the formation of passive communities of minority language media consumers, but in the formation of active communities of collaborative minority language producers. These active communities provide not only the opportunity for people to produce material in their minority language, but also to engage with their community online (2007: 136).

Furthermore, communication on the Internet is a productive field for examining language choice among its frequently multilingual users (Leppänen and Peuronen 2012). New electronic media, which offer possibilities for interaction and constant creation of contents, are actively used by some Maya speakers, especially those committed to its promotion and concerned about its prospects.

As mentioned in the section devoted to literacy, Ismael May (2010) has looked at the use of written Maya in emails, text messages and chat. In his work, he describes the ways in which non-normative uses of orthographic signs, some of which are built on literacy in Spanish, and the hybrid nature of the messages do not hinder intelligibility. The vague division between the spoken and written word, the use of Spanish borrowings, inconsistent spelling, and non-standard spelling of Maya are all features

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227 See Conathan (2011) and Nathan (2011) for updated developments in that field. See also Holton (2011) for a review of web-based products that can be used to revitalise endangered languages, for instance, computer-assisted language learning programmes, electronic dictionaries, web-portals, discussion groups, audio-video conferencing, and podcasts.

that emerge in May's data and, similarly, in my own data below, which is based on Facebook posts.

Computer mediated communication deserves closer inspection not only because of its centrality in contemporary communication but also because of its rapid evolution, innovation, and extension, which may have practical consequences for the increasing use of minorised languages. Two examples from my fieldwork illustrate this point. In the city of Mérida wi-fi connection to Internet is available for free in many public parks and, consequently, it is common to see people sitting on benches using their laptops. Moreover, cybercafés have mushroomed not only in Mérida but also in many small towns across the Peninsula. In short, Internet access is relatively easy and affordable in Yucatán.

A second example comes from a young Maya speaker who told me with satisfaction that with his new smartphone, he could write faster text messages in Maya, since it was easier to locate the apostrophe, a key graphic symbol that represents the glottal stop in Maya. This is not just a minor technological improvement, but one that has a direct impact on language use because text messages are much cheaper than calls and often preferred for daily communicative exchanges in Yucatán. Apostrophes and accents, both used in Maya with phonological value, seem to be recurrent obstacles when writing Maya in 'old' handsets, which were ill designed to write diacritic marks commonly used in languages other than English. A young student who does not have a smartphone yet recounted that "a veces me cuesta utilizar los apóstrofes y acentos cuando escribo mensajes por teléfono, por lo que me lleva más tiempo escribir mi mensaje. Y lo que hago es utilizar las contracciones o buscar la forma más corta de escribirlo".[228] Below I look in detail at three examples of the use of Maya on Facebook.

The use of Maya on Facebook

One key research finding of fieldwork undertaken in 2012 among students at intercultural universities of the Yucatán Peninsula (UNO and UIMQRoo) was the centrality of the use of Facebook in their lives. A questionnaire survey on the use of Maya on social media I carried out among thirty youngsters taking the degree in Maya language and culture at that university showed that all of them have a Facebook account, which is checked at least once a day. Personal contact through fieldwork allowed me to become 'friends' on Facebook as of September 2012 with the majority of students I talked to during fieldwork. In November 2012 I asked permission to gather all

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228 Maritza Yeh, personal communication (2.5.2012).

status updates of three students, Blanca, Clara, and Luz during one month. The three profiles were not chosen randomly but rather on the basis of their frequent use of Maya and their activist stand on the need to promote that language. In that specific month, out of a total of 21 status updates, Blanca (UIMQRoo) posted 11 in Spanish, eight in Maya, and two that included an expression in English (my friend, bye); out of 20 updates, Clara (UIMQRoo) used Maya in four posts, Spanish in 13, and three combined both languages; finally, out of 19 updates, Luz (UNO) wrote three posts in Maya, nine in Spanish, and seven in both languages. These proportions are not necessarily regular throughout the year. In February, for instance, when UNESCO's International Mother Tongue Day takes place (in Yucatán it is celebrated for one month), the number of messages in Maya tend to increase. Facebook offers a variety of methods of communicating with 'friends' such as personal messages, chat, wall posts, and status updates. The three samples analysed below belong to the latter type of communication, which is particularly accessible to the researcher because of its semi-public nature. From a qualitative approach, I argue that the language ideologies expressed by these youngsters when writing on Facebook are particularly significant for revitalisation purposes.

Case one: Sergio, a'alti' a amigo ka u t'aan maya xan

Making Maya-speaking friends and acquaintances in Yucatán has later allowed me to observe, almost on a daily basis, that many of them alternate between the use of Spanish and Maya on Facebook. Maya speakers also use other Internet-based media such as wikis, blogs, chat rooms, etc. but I will concentrate on Facebook because of its widespread use, popularity among young people in Yucatán, and straightforward and open accessibility for the researcher. Although there is still little research on this specific area, social networking has become a key arena that generates a myriad of linguistic uses, all of which are underpinned by language ideologies worth exploring in their own right.[229]

Crucially, the non-institutional and horizontal nature of the linguistic exchanges on Facebook, and their spontaneity and non-prescriptive usage which reflect orality, even if writing is fundamental, are all features that contrast sharply with the emphasis on normative literacy, strict separation of codes, and purism stemming from vertical

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229 Honeycutt and Cunliffe (2010) have explored the case of Welsh. They suggest that not only has Welsh achieved an active presence on Facebook groups and profiles, therefore normalising its use, but it has also become a vehicle for Welsh language activism. See also Cunliffe (2008) for the Internet as a domain of resistance for Welsh.

language planning reviewed in previous chapters. I maintain that social media represent a mirror of the actual linguistic repertoires that users, many of them youngsters, deploy in their daily informal communicative behaviour where, in traditional sociolinguistics terms, code-switching and code-mixing are the norm rather than the exception.

While I have sometimes seen linguistic prejudice against the use of Maya on Facebook, such as complaints from people who do not understand Maya, there is no doubt that social media can play a key part in opening up new spaces for the use of Maya, particularly among the youth. This use can be conducive to its destigmatisation and legitimation. I asked some youngsters about the reactions of non-Maya speakers to their use of Maya on Facebook. On the one hand, Francisca, a young university student, replied that "ha habido algún comentario negativo por parte de unas amigas que no hablan la maya y no la entienden. Me dicen que publique las cosas en español, que no les gusta la maya, pero yo la utilizo porque tengo agregados como amigos a muchos estudiantes de la universidad". On the other hand, from the perspective of language ideologies, social media can become a significant platform for language activism. In this sense, Rita, who is also a university student, was quite straightforward: "utilizo la lengua maya para comunicarme con mis amigos y compañeros en el Facebook, y en gran parte para poner un granito de arena para que mis compañeros no se avergüencen de usarla".[230] Both comments were made by students of the degree in Maya language and culture at UIMQROO.

The following exchange on Facebook between Blanca, Sergio and Adrián, which is held both in Maya and Spanish, neatly illustrates these points. Maya is in bold, Spanish in normal typeface and my translation into English in italics. Pseudonyms are used in all the Facebook posts below.

Post on Blanca's Facebook Wall (9.11.2012)
Blanca: **jach ya'ab in ts'íib máax ku antiken????**
I have lots of writing tasks to do. Who can help me????
Sergio: **mak in woojwli' jajaja**
I don't know hahaha
Adrián: es maya? K chido eh!
is it Maya? How nice eh!
Sergio: jajajja asi es amigo jajjajja
hahaha that's right my friend hahaha
Adrián: Mi admiracion para las personas k ablan ese lenguaje tan chingon! Nta camarada.

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230 Personal communication of UIMQROO students Francisca Chablé and Rita Dzib (2.5.2012).

> *My admiration for those people who speak such a cool language! Cool comrade.*

Sergio: jjajaja gracias se agradece krnal jejeje
> *Hahaha thanks it is appreciated buddy hehehe*

Blanca: y tambien
> *Me too*

Blanca: **Sergio, a'alti' a amigo ka u t'aan maya xan**
> *Sergio, tell your friend to speak Maya too*

Adrián: jejeje k digiste?!! Presumiiiiida jeje ntc
> *Hehehe what did you say?!! Vaiiiiin hehe jk*

Sergio: Dice mi amiga Blanca que tambien hables maya jajajaja
> *My friend Blanca says that you should speak Maya too*

From the linguistic point of view this exchange is a typical example of use of non-standard and informal spoken-like varieties which are characteristic of electronic media, such as text messages, chat rooms, and Facebook. Some common features within this communicative environment are the use of contractions (*y* for *yo*, *k* for *que* and *krnal* for *carnal*); specific acronyms such as *ntc*, which means *no te creas* and is parallel to *jk* in English, namely, *just kidding*; idiosyncratic orthography that includes non-normative spelling and 'errors' in Spanish and Maya such as *digiste* for *dijiste* or *ablan* for *hablan* for the former language, *mak* instead of *ma'* or *woojwli'* instead of *woojli'* for the latter language; lack of accents; and the use of slang Mexican Spanish such as *chido* and *chingon*. This alternative take on writing conventions, which is obviously neither elite nor institutional, provides a stark contrast with normative, school-based literacies.

As for the contents, the exchange above turns into a metalinguistic discussion that shows the language ideological positions of participants. On the one hand, Blanca begins the conversation in Maya by introducing the mundane topic of school homework and Sergio replies to Blanca's question in Maya. Next, when Adrián joins in both the use of Maya and the topic of language choice become central. It is because of Adrián's astonishment at the use of Maya of his peers that language ideologies are explicitly played out by the three participants. While Adrián shows a positive attitude towards the use of Maya by his friends (according to my observation this is not uncommon on Facebook), Sergio needs to translate from Maya to Spanish as Blanca, after a short contribution in Spanish, goes back to writing in Maya. She finally encourages Adrián to use Maya as well. Significantly she uses the verb 'to speak' and not 'to write' in this environment. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Blanca, acting on this occasion as a 'language manager' (Spolsky 2009), is a student of the degree in Maya language and culture at UIMQROO. That fact alone, however, does not necessarily explain her commitment to using Maya. As far as I have been able to observe, an alternate use

between Maya and Spanish on Facebook is common among other young activists. Therefore, based on linguistic awareness and activism, some of these students are becoming key actors to promote written Maya on the Internet, which is increasing its visibility and raising its status and public profile.

Case two: *Tak Saamal es nombre de persona?*

In the second example below the use of Maya triggers another metalinguistic discussion that turns into a sort of Maya language lesson. Maya is in bold, Spanish in normal typeface, English in original is underlined, and my translation into English is in italics:

> Post on Clara's Facebook Wall (27.11.2012)
> Clara: Pil le hace mok a mi **k'áan** y Clara se va dormir, es justo y necesario. **Ták sáamal**.
> *Pil ties a knot to my hammock and Clara goes to sleep. It is fair and necessary.*
> *See you tomorrow.*
> Ana: **Ták sáamal, Clara**
> *See you tomorrow, Clara.*
> Alberto: **Tak Saamal** es nombre de persona?
> *Is tak Saamal the name of a person?*
> Ana: **Ki'ki' wenel Clara**
> *Sleep well Clara.*
> Mario: <u>Good Night Little Princess</u>
> José: que descanses bonita
> *Have a good rest, darling*
> Pedro: jajajaja sale <u>bye</u> Clara dulces sueños
> *Hahahaha OK bye clara sweet dreams*
> Clara: Estimado Alberto, **tak sáamal** es hasta mañana. Saludos a todos
> *Dear Alberto, tak sáamal means see you tomorrow. Greetings to everyone.*
> Alberto: gracias y como se dice buenos dias?
> *Thanks and how do you say 'good morning'?*

In this case Clara posts an update message using both Maya and Spanish within the same sentence. On the one hand, 'hacer mok' follows a common grammatical structure in Yucatec Spanish that combines the Spanish verb 'hacer' and a substantivised Maya verb as a complement. In this case, it is the culturally specific noun 'mok', which means tying a knot to hang a hammock (*k'áan* in Maya). The inclusion of a loanword (mok) from Maya into Spanish and the use of a 'genuine' Maya word (*k'áan*) within the same sentence shows the porosity of the use of vernacular speech on the ground. Clara finishes her contribution with a greeting completely in Maya. Not only are Maya and Spanish used in this exchange but also English, when none of the contributors are native speakers of this latter language. This may be explained by the fact that English is a 'cool' default language that peers are supposed to understand, at least some basic expressions. Aside from this linguistic outline, the post includes again a metalinguistic

component, which is introduced by the only person that seems not to know Maya. Indeed, Alberto is more interested in learning some expressions in Maya than in contributing to the exchange with greetings, as all the other participants do. This becomes particularly manifest when he asks how to say good morning in Maya but the conversation dies out because nobody follows his cue. In linguistics terms, Alberto's concern is metalinguistic rather than phatic, the latter being the baseline of this particular Facebook exchange.

From the perspective of traditional sociolinguistics, the contributions above might be read as examples of both intersentential and intrasentential code-switching. Four nameable languages could be distinguished: Maya, Yucatec Spanish, Standard Spanish, and English. However, this is arguably a view still rooted in a tradition that considers languages as bounded objects, sees monolingualism as the default norm, and analyses code-switching and language 'mixing' as deviant forms of communication that need justification. In this vein, Woolard writes that:

> The fundamental question underlying most anthropologically oriented research on codeswitching is "Why do they do that?" Such a question seems inescapably to derive from the profoundly monoglot and largely referentialist outlook of modern language ideologies, despite linguistic anthropology's overt rejection of such views. It is when only one code is believed necessary to get the job done (a job understood as denotational) that the use of more than one needs explanation (2004: 74).

Khubchandani (2011) proposes the term 'code-floating', which emphasises the fuzziness and arbitrariness of language boundaries, to supersede the terms 'code-switching' and 'code-mixing'. With Bailey (2009), I argue that a purely structural analysis of languages as discrete artifacts is ill-conceived to account for the meaning of the posts presented above. My view is that these Facebook posts yield a richer and more profound meaning if we see them from a social constructionist perspective. Hence, heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981), which focuses on the social and political position of participants rather than on the code they use, is a more fruitful framework to analyse these communicative exchanges. As Bailey writes, "analytical constructs that are based on form, such as code-switching, or that imply anterior, pure essences, such as hybridity, divert attention from the social and political nature of language, behaviour and meaning" (2009: 271). These examples of playful messiness of language use on Facebook do not preclude, however, the possibility for speakers to be psychologically aware of using distinctly nameable codes, a fact that they can indeed use for their own ideological purposes, language advocacy and revitalisation among them.

Case three: No sé escribir en maya pero sí sé leerlo y me gustó

In this third and last example I shall highlight the ways in which Facebook can be used to promote plurilingual practices and raise linguistic awareness among speakers of both minorised and dominant languages. The following post on Luz's wall includes Maya in bold, Spanish in normal typeface, Nahuatl underlined, and my translation into English in italics:

> Post on Luz's Facebook Wall (30.11.2012)
> Luz: **Juntúul chan máas ku k'ayiken, áak'ab ku méek'iken, xki'ichpan na' Uj úuntiken... Nika'aj in je'els in tuukul. Sáamale'ex.** // un grillito me canta, la noche me abraza, mamá Luna me mece... Voy a descansar mis pensamientos. Hasta mañana.
> *A little cricket is singing to me, the night is cuddling me, mother Moon is rocking me... I am going to let my thoughts rest. See you tomorrow.*
> Ana: **jaach malo'ob ak'ab ti teech.**
> *Good night to you too.*
> Luz: **Beey ti' teech ki'ichpan**
> *Same to you darling*
> Esteban: <u>Ximocehui ichpocatzintli, ma tonanametztli cuitlahuia motemictli</u> // Descansa que tus sueños la señora luna cuidara.
> *Go to sleep and lady moon will look after your dreams*
> Alejandro: Muy bonito preciosa no sé escribir en maya pero sí se leerlo y me gustó que descanses
> *Very nice darling I don't know how to write in Maya but I can read it and I liked that you go to sleep*
> Luz: Gracias Alejandro, saludos desde Yucatán. Saludos a todos!
> *Thanks Alejandro. Greetings from Yucatán. Greetings to everyone!*
> Luz: Pero qué bellos son los idiomas! Gracias por compartir.
> *How beautiful languages are! Thanks for sharing.*

Aside from its plurilingual nature, at least two striking facts in this exchange need to be noted. The first is that some participants have decided to translate their contributions into Spanish. This may have to do with the particular nature of the post, which includes poetic verses, rather than the usually more informal exchanges. The second remarkable feature is the reply from Esteban to Luz's post in another Mexican indigenous language, which shows how speakers of minorised languages can mutually reinforce practices of language promotion on the Internet. Also worth noting is Alejandro's positive attitude to written Maya on Facebook. This is a case of receptive literacy skills, namely being able to read and understand Maya but not write it. Nonetheless, this allows the participation and inclusion of Alejandro in the exchange and might have implications for subsequent language activation of productive skills.

My discussion of these exchanges is based on textual-linguistic analysis, which continues to be central in much of contemporary discourse analysis (Blommaert 2011) and in the domain of new technologies in general, despite the growth of multimedia products (Holton 2011: 372). This analysis does not take into account the whole semiotic environment in which not only Facebook but also other internet-based communicative exchanges are embedded and which increasingly needs a 'multi-modal' approach (Blommaert 2011: 132). This approach may prove particularly productive because of the emergence of new forms of literacy owing to the continuous development, insertion and integration of visual and acoustic elements in electronic media. For instance, as I show below, Maya rappers are uploading and publicising their songs on Facebook, combining, therefore, written messages and lyrics with music and images.

The Facebook examples above show the possibilities of social media to provide minorised languages with a functional space which is modern and cool. This use helps to counterbalance the backwardness often associated with these languages. The fact that a 'valuation-enhancing effect' (Eisenlohr 2004: 32) takes place in this domain is the more important since the majority of users are young people. Writing about language activism on the Internet, Crystal has aptly noted that:

> It doesn't matter how much activism you engage in on behalf of the language if you don't attract the teenagers, the parents of the future generation of children. And what turns teenagers on more than the Internet these days? If you can get language out there, the youngsters are much more likely to think it is cool (2007).

The plurilingual and mixed practices by these youths contrast with concerns about language boundary maintenance and purism expressed by writers and teachers of older generations presented in previous chapters. These new domains open up particularly important avenues for language revitalisation in sociolinguistic contexts where it is not uncommon to see cases of (re)activation of Maya at adolescence.

Much attention has been devoted to children in processes of language revitalisation, although rarely as active participants with their own language ideologies (Friedman 2011: 636). This focus on children primarily stems from the implementation of bilingual policies in primary education, at least in Latin America. However, adolescence stands out as a key period in life that can have profound implications for language choice. According to my observations in the field, a good number of

participants have activated Maya in their late teens and early twenties.[231] In this vein, Sallabank states that "adolescence is a crucial age for motivation and language consolidation; encouraging young people to develop their own identification with, and version(s) of, an endangered language might motivate them to use it more and to create a 'language of their own'" (2012: 118). By way of personal example, it was during adolescence, and more specifically when I started university, that I began to make daily use of Catalan, a language that had mostly been a school subject until then. It was in my late teens and early twenties, therefore, that I began expanding my linguistic repertoire, adding Catalan to Spanish, since the latter had been the only language of my primary socialisation.[232]

7.6   Modern Music and Language Revitalisation: Hip-Hop and Rap in Maya

Alongside Facebook, music, a form of art in which orality is a prominent feature, is also being successfully used to promote Maya.[233] The Internet is now a fundamental platform for music production and consumption and different types of popular culture and entertainment can be found increasingly embedded there. Some rap, pop and reggae artists who sing in Maya are uploading video clips and songs on the web, which is also giving Maya the 'coolness' factor that can enhance its use among youngsters (Crystal 2004, 2007). I discuss below examples of young Maya rappers that use Maya in their artistic performances.

Based on micro-level grassroots initiatives with individual actors as central language managers, the achievement of new values and functions for minorised languages is critical for their promotion. In Europe Moriarty and Pietikäinen (2011) have recently explored the knock on effects that the use of Irish and Inari Sámi by two media personalities, a comedian (Des Bishop) and a rapper (Amoc) respectively, has had in the revitalisation of both languages. Similarly, Kelly-Holmes and Atkinson (2007) have examined the complex and ambivalent language ideologies expressed through code-mixing by a television presenter (Hector Ó hEochagáin) and the ways in

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231 See Caldas (2012) for language policy in the family and the specific role of peer group influences in language choice during adolescence. See also Friedman (2011) for the importance of peer social networks in language socialisation, its impact on revitalisation, and the dearth of research on adolescent language practices.

232 See Woolard (2011) for an analysis of analogous cases in Catalonia based on longitudinal research. She points out entrance into higher education, the labour market, romance, and parenthood as 'critical junctures' for an increased use of Catalan among her informants.

233 Apart from music, theater in Maya stands out as another particularly interesting field of popular culture where orality plays a key role. Underiner (2004) is an account of contemporary Mayan theater in Tabasco, Chiapas and Yucatán.

which his non-normative use of Irish challenges the maintenance of language boundaries in Ireland.[234] These European examples foreground complex uses of linguistic repertoires that rely on 'code-mixing'. Crucially, these plurilingual practices are not perceived as a hindrance to communication but rather as a resourceful communicative strategy that fosters linguistic creativity.

As noted, Maya is being used in modern global music genres such as hip-hop and reggae, which have become truly 'glocal' by being adapted to local realities (for hip-hop see Mitchell 2001, Alim et al 2009; for reggae Veal 2007).[235] Indeed, the use of Maya by young rappers has lately drawn the attention of the local media in Yucatán.[236] Along these lines, Sarkar and Low consider hip-hop culture "so important to late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century youth that it is fair to call it a cultural movement in its own right" and go on to write that "there has been a groundswell of academic interest in language mixing by hip-hop-identified youth" (2012: 404). Alim et al (2009) highlight the particular saliency of hip-hop as a 'glocal' culture. They look at the intersection between hip-hop and the politics of language against the background of globalisation, including case studies from such distant cultural locations as Tanzania, Hong Kong and Brazil among others. This is a particularly interesting avenue of research for indigenous languages as well. In the Latin American context, however, I have not been able to locate as yet much research on this topic (but see Swinehart's (2012) work on hip-hop and rap in Aymara).[237]

While I am aware that Maya is also being used in a number of music styles, I shall concentrate on rap, a key component of hip-hop culture, because it is blossoming in Yucatán and the analysis of this phenomenon can shed light on the process of language revitalisation.[238] Furthermore, two particular sociolinguistic features figure prominently in rap as a musical genre. On the one hand, the central role that wordiness plays in its lyrics, and, on the other, the fact that language mixing and hybridisation are common in this modern, transnational and globalised genre on which youngsters are particularly keen. These characteristics contrast starkly again with concerns about purism and

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234 Moriarty (2009) provides evidence of the impact of the Irish television channel TG4 and the 'Hector factor' on university students.
235 For a discussion of the term 'glocalization', see Robertson (1995).
236 See for instance media coverage of Maya rap in the Diario de Yucatán (26.8.2012) and Cadena Sipse (6.1.2013):http://yucatan.com.mx/yucatan/hasta-hip-hop-y-rap-en-maya/,
http://sipse.com/novedades/producen-primer-disco-de-hip-hop-en-lengua-maya-8973.html   [Accessed 23.8.2013].
237 See also Hornberger and Swinehart (2012).
238 Alim and Pennycook (2007: 89) spell out the four elements of hip-hop culture: Mc'ing (rappin), DJ'ing (spinnin), breakdancing (streetdancing), and graffiti art (writing).

literacy that so often emerge in formal contexts of use, namely, what Pennycook (2007) calls "the ortholinguistic practices" usually framed by standard language ideologies. It is no wonder, therefore, that rap has adapted so smoothly to indigenous sociocultural practices which so often give a prominent role to verbal arts (see Burns 1980 for Yucatec Maya). What is more, based on analysis of hip-hop among several cultures in which verbal arts are central Pennycook and Mitchell maintain that "[i]t is not so much the case that Hip Hop merely takes local characteristics, but rather that *it has always been local*" (2009: 30, their emphasis).

In Yucatán Pat Boy and El Cima are youngsters in their early twenties who have decided to make use of Maya in their songs. Pat Boy's song 'La mujer de mis sueños' (The woman of my dreams), sung both in Maya and Spanish, has had at the time of writing over fifteen thousand views on YouTube.[239] The same could be said of 'Sangre Maya' (Mayan blood), a song which is jointly performed by both rappers and includes lyrics both in Maya and Spanish.[240] This latter song illustrates the ways in which hip-hop is taken up by these young artists as a paramount site of identity performance and reclamation.

Picture 7.1 Maya rapper, Jesús Pat Chablé 'Pat Boy'.

This is for example the chorus of the song 'Sangre Maya' (Mayan blood), which is sung alternatively in Maya (bold face) and Spanish:

Chorus
Sangre maya **u k'i'ik'el máasewal**,
Be'elake' kin taasik teech u jaajile' ak ch'i'ibal.
Sangre maya **ma' saajako'on meyaj**.

239 http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=Ee8gv2p3f2g&NR=1 [Accessed 23.8.2013].
240 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1hzf1-_Ibw [Accessed 23.8.2013].

Chíinpoltik lela', bobo'chi' maaya k'aay.[241]

On a Facebook exchange to find out what motivated Pat Boy to sing in Maya, he replied that he does so because it is easier for him to rap in that language and also to fight prejudice against Maya. These are his own words: "Pues la verdad mas que nada a mi me gusta la musica hip-hop pero pues abese me dificulta rapear en español y lo intente en maya y me facilito mas y mas igual k a muchos se aberguensan de su origen".[242] Other posts by Pat Boy on Facebook and interviews he has given to local media further explain the reasons why he includes Maya in his songs: for one thing, it is much easier for him to memorise rhymes and sing in Maya and, for another, it is a way to destigmatise it.[243]

A further example from a rapper who uses Maya in his songs is Victor Chimal Chan, also known as Residente Saban. As is the case with Pat Boy, Victor comes from a small village of Quintana Roo. Both singers rap in Maya and Spanish in their songs but what is also worth noting is that they began rapping in Spanish and only later have they incorporated Maya into their performance repertoire, which shows a process of appropriation, identification, commitment, and even political positioning with regard to Maya. These examples show the ways in which conscious language choice and agency is the basis for language revitalisation. While these two rappers include several topics in their songs, both of them have used rap as sociopolitical critique, which is a common goal of hip-hop cultural production, particularly of 'politically conscious rap' (Alim et al. 2009). A poignant example is Residente Saban's recent song called *Tak'in* (Money). Below is just an excerpt of the song, which is completely sung in Maya and can be found online:[244]

> **Ya'kach óotsital /** Mucha pobreza / *A lot of poverty*
> **yaan máak mina'an u na'je' chen ich sojol ku luxtal /** hay gente que no tiene vivienda que vive entre la basura / *There people who have no housing who live in the rubbish*

xíimbalil tak u bin ichi u kool / caminando van incluso a su milpa / *They even walk to their milpa*

le yaan u kisbuuts'o ma, chen junp'éeli, ma' ka'p'éeli´, ma' xan óoxpéeli', ya'kach / en cambio los que tienen automotores no uno, ni dos, ni siquiera tres, sino muchos! / *However, those who have cars not one, not two, not even three, but many*

ken máanko' ta tsele' ku muts'icho'ob, ku túubo', mix u che'ejo'ob
/ cuando pasan junto a ti cierran los ojos, escupen, ni se ríen / *When they pass by you they close their eyes, they spit, they don't even laugh*

ma ku ya'ko'obe' na'an u k'eebaano'ob, cha in che'ejko'ob / quizá piensan que no tienen pecados, déjame reírme de ellos / *they may think that they have committed no sins, let me laugh at them*

chen la ookolo'ob / son simplemente ladrones / *They are just thieves*

bey le presidenteo': ma' u taa un mak in chi: tuláakal le ba'al kin a'aka' jaa / lo mismo que el presidente (municipal) y que no venga a callarme porque es verdad todo lo que digo / *As the mayor of the village is and do not let him come and shut me up because everything I say is true*

Belia'ake' tin tuklik ba'axten óotsilil yano'on. / Hoy reflexiono sobre por qué estamos en la pobreza. / *Now I'm thinking about why we are in poverty*

Picture 7.2 Maya rapper Victor Chimal 'Residente Saban'. Cover of album 'Yáanal K'iin' (Under the sun).

Chimal's song is a clear instance of localisation, namely "talking about local conditions" (Pennycook 2007: 110). A global music genre such as rap is the means to convey a powerful social critique through a local language (Maya) and local themes (political corruption). Furthermore, this localisation is inextricably bound up with the issue of authenticity or "keepin' it real", which is a basic premise of hip-hop culture (Pennycook 2007). It comes as no surprise that rap, which originated among African American youth in the United States against the background of economic disadvantage and discrimination, can be adapted so easily to the current social conditions of dispossession that many indigenous peoples are experiencing across the globe.

In conclusion, both social media and popular culture as expressed in this case through Facebook and rap and especially when used in combination with each other, may have a significant impact on language revitalisation. This revitalisation, I believe,

must inevitably include the sociopolitical positioning of speakers. Unlike the formal education system and the emphasis on normative literacy, the use of Maya in these domains not only shun the purism fetish which so often emerges in institutional language promotion but also put forward entertaining, ludic, fashionable and creative ways to extend and strengthen its use while complexifying monolithic and reified notions of language and identity.[245]

7.7 Verbal arts and Maya language revitalisation

A last illustration of an alternative approach to language revitalisation through the arts is the *Proyecto de Revitalización, Mantenimiento y Desarrollo Lingüístico y Cultural* (PRMDLC), led by José Antonio Flores Farfán. This project, in which I have been involved, has promoted several Mexican indigenous languages for over a decade now (see Flores Farfán 2006, 2012). It is based on the production of culturally-sensitive materials that include local meaningful oral genres such as riddles and tongue twisters. Riddles are not a minor genre in the Mayan culture but a fundamental heuristic form of 'playful speech' (*ba'axal t'aan*) that can be found for example in early colonial texts such as the Chilam Balam books (Burns 1980, 1991). Although the PRMDLC started with the publication of booklets, it has progressively included multimedia products and a recent repository of audiovisual materials in several Mexican indigenous languages has been uploaded on the Internet.[246] The high quality material, which recreates local oral narratives and is co-authored by indigenous persons, aims at eliciting language use in informal settings, such as gatherings and workshops organised in towns and villages where indigenous languages are spoken. The aim of these workshops, led by speakers of indigenous languages associated with the project, is to trigger oral production with a view to superseding the emphasis given to literacy in official language policies and implemented in the formal education system. For comparative purposes, a quick glance at the sample of the *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* book (picture 5.1) shows that, apart from the low quality of the material, learning Maya stems from repetition of decontextualised dialogues and an emphasis on writing drills. The contents of the riddles refer to daily objects and animals which are both common and meaningful in the local environment and culture.

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245 As Alim (2007) has explored, hip-hop and rap can be used within the educational setting to consciously raise sociocultural awareness and fight prejudice.
246 For more information about this project, see: http://lenguasindigenas.mx/index.php [Accessed 23.8.2013].

In contrast with official material produced by the DGEI, below is an example of one riddle included in the book *Na'at le baa'la paalen* (Adivina esta cosa ninio):[247]

Wa na'atun na'ateche'
na'at le ba'ala':
Chowak, nojoch, polok
búuk tso'ots
yéetel utia'al iit.
Answer: Tsíimin (Horse)

Picture 7.3 Maya riddle from the booklet *Na'at le ba'ala paalen*: Adivina esta cosa ninio.

My direct involvement with this project dates back to 2005 when a booklet on riddles entitled 'Adivinanzas Mexicanas' was published jointly by the prestigious publishing house Artes de Mexico, CIESAS, and Linguapax, an NGO based in Barcelona where I was working at the time. The booklet features riddles in two varieties of Nahuatl (from the towns of Tlaxcala and Oapan) plus translations into Spanish, English and Catalan. The inclusion of Catalan is explained by the financial support provided by the regional Catalan government, which was channelled through Linguapax to CIESAS in Mexico.[248]

During my fieldwork I attended three workshops where these materials were used. Two of them took place in Yucatán state, in the villages of Halachó and San Pedro Chimay, and the third was organised in Xcabil in Quintana Roo. These workshops, which often take place in the central square of towns, are social occasions for people from different generations to meet. In Xcabil, for instance, a projector was used to show the riddles, which turned the main square of the village into a sort of open air cinema. These workshops were fruitful experiences to gauge levels of Maya language proficiency in those locations and to observe the effect of a ludic approach to language promotion, especially, but not exclusively, among children, since the goal is to gather

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247 The riddles are presented in several languages. These are, for instance, versions in Spanish of a Maya riddle "¡A que no la adivinas ninio! / Sirve para el trasero / Es grande, largo, peludo, grueso / ¡Y hasta ligero!"; in English "Guess the riddle, kid: Long, fat and lots of hair, takes your bottom everywhere!; and in Catalan: "Endevina, endevinalla: Pelut, gros i camallarg / Assegut a sobre seu / Aniràs a tot arreu."
248 Further collaboration among the same stakeholders was a booklet on Mixtec riddles and one on Maya riddles.

speakers from different ages. As noted in chapter 3, the vitality of Maya varies greatly across the Yucatán Peninsula. For instance, in San Pedro Chimay, a village (in fact a *subcomisaría* of around 1000 inhabitants) within the municipality of Mérida, children responded to elicitations based on Maya riddles mainly in Spanish. Although they seemed to know some basic Maya vocabulary, they did not produce any complete sentence in that language, which suggests an advanced state of language shift to Spanish.

By contrast in the village of Xcabil, which is about the same demographic size as San Pedro Chimay and is situated in the heartland of the Maya area of Quintana Roo, the workshop was hailed a complete success. The central square of the village where the workshop was organised was full and not only were participants eager to respond in Maya but they also proposed further word games. Many of the villagers were happy to keep a copy of the booklets that were given away after the workshop. Also, this event was co-organised by students of UIMQROO, who facilitated its success since they come from neighbouring communities.

Picture 7.4 Participants in workshop on Maya riddles in Xcabil, Quintana Roo.

At least in my experience as an observer in these workshops, participation and engagement by the local population have always been positive. The strength of these events lies in the promotion of the self-esteem of speakers and the valorisation of Maya within an informal and playful environment. However, there are also weaknesses that need to be pointed out. One important downside is that these workshops are one-off activities. Moreover, the initiative to organise them usually comes from without the

communities rather than from within. A broader appropriation by the community and the continuity of these workshops are still challenges to overcome, although the increasing leading role of students of intercultural universities in organising and replicating these workshops is a positive sign in that direction. Also, to my knowledge no follow up investigation has been done to find out the sociolinguistic effects of these events on language attitudes and, ultimately, on patterns of language reproduction of those who attend them. It would be worth exploring whether the informal nature of the events, which emphasise an emotional attachment to Maya and enhance the sentimental value of that language, has any impact on the (re)activation of Maya among attendees, particularly children. This is especially important if we consider the fact that language stigmatisation persists, especially in urban settings, and that many people continue to see Maya as having little value for socioeconomic mobility.

7.8   Conclusion

In contrast with language policy and planning that focus on formal education, literacy and legislation, in this chapter I have analysed discourses and everyday linguistic practices of young Maya speakers in alternative non-institutional domains such as social media and music. In these horizontal communicative exchanges non-standard language use, emphasis on orality or on written uses of language with a strong oral component, mixing and borrowing from available linguistic repertoires and grassroots rather than institutional language management prevail. Furthermore, an emotional attachment and an entertaining, even playful, component are pre-eminent features of the inclusion of Maya in these alternative domains.

Kelly-Holmes has argued that "media have a major role to play in maintaining or challenging existing language regimes, attitudes and ideologies" (2012: 333). Indeed, national education and media have been the main pillars upon which cultural and linguistic assimilation of indigenous peoples has been built by governmental institutions in Mexico (see e.g. Gutiérrez Chong 1999; Vaughan 1997 for the former domain, and Hayes 2000 for the latter). As noted, in the particular case of indigenist radios, which are owned by the federal government, their ambivalent nature and limitations to actually drive sociopolitical struggles for autonomy and self-determination are especially apparent in Yucatán. As for the presence of Maya in television, its use in a daily news summary makes it residual and tokenistic at most. An extensive introduction of Maya in both these media could have a significant impact on the functional extension and, potentially, on its revitalisation.

Several examples in this chapter attest to ideological change and challenge of existing language regimes based on the engagement of Maya speakers with different kinds of media, and in particular, with loosely regulated media such as social networks on the Internet. I maintain that, along with these new sites of language production, modern music can play a significant role in language revitalisation. Undoubtedly, the visibility of Maya in these new domains has an ideological effect that accrues to its legitimacy from the ground up and from deterritorialised and globalised networks rather than from top down policies devised within the political framework of the nation-state. The fact that youths are particularly keen to engage with these domains is critical for the prospects of Maya. Unlike the core home-family-community domain of the RLS framework (Fishman 1991), social media and music may seem peripheral domains for language revitalisation but, as Friedman points out, "forces operating outside of the contexts of home and school, such as peer social networks and popular culture, may provide the most powerful socialization contexts for adolescents in terms of language practices" (2011: 644). Indeed, the increasingly embedded presence of popular culture such as music and film within new technologies bodes well for the use of minorised languages (Blommaert 2010: 76). As I have shown, the particular case of rap is not only opening up productive new spaces for the use of Maya but it is also becoming a catalyst among some youngsters for ethnolinguistic awareness and political positioning, which is an essential aspect of language revitalisation.

While a consciousness of resistance and empowerment is often, although not necessarily, part and parcel of the promotion of Maya in these alternative domains, it remains to be seen whether a growing activism and an expansion of functional uses in these new areas are enough to counterbalance language shift to Spanish. Abandonment of Maya mainly stems from a combination of a lack of instrumental value for upward social mobility and widespread stigma still attached to it. Furthermore, whereas old or new media can be significant domains for language promotion, some authors have pointed out that they are not key areas for language maintenance (Fishman 1991). Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998: 70), for instance, have argued that too much confidence and hope is often given to the 'technical fix' offered by new technologies, even if these may not be enough for successful language revitalisation. With these cautious notes in mind, for the time being the promotion and use of Maya in the media needs to come primarily from the grassroots, since federal or state-owned media in Mexico have followed the integrationist, pre-emptive and proselytist model (Riggins

1992), as the creation of television conglomerates and the establishment of indigenist radio stations show.

Last but not least, from the perspective of language ideologies, it may be through the inclusion of Maya within a multiple linguistic repertoire made up of heteroglossic practices (Bakhtin 1981) that this language is to thrive. Heteroglossia, as Bailey (2012: 499) underscores, refers not only to the simultaneous use of various linguistic systems but to the social and political nature of speech, which entails tensions, conflict and struggle. In the Facebook examples above it is the plurilingual 'voice' of users that stands out rather than particular bounded languages. In this sense Blommaert has noted that "we need to develop an awareness that it is not necessarily the language you speak, but *how* you speak it, *when* you can speak it, and *to whom* that matters. It is a matter of *voice*, not of language" (2010: 196, his emphasis). Language policies therefore need to incorporate more flexible models of analysis and intervention that take into account the sociopolitical context in which people are embedded, the communicative resources people make use of, and actual plurilingual practices on the ground.

Chapter 8.   Conclusion

Drawing from the contributions of a heterogeneous group of language activists, in this thesis I have identified and teased out the discourses that underpin the current promotion of Maya in Yucatán. The salient themes that emerged in the discourses of both participants and official institutions mainly revolve around the legislative status of Maya, the development of literacy, and the role that formal education play in its reproduction. As I have argued, these areas of intervention, in which language policy and planning is controlled by public institutions, have significant limitations for the revitalisation of Maya. Concomitantly, language essentialisation, an underlying ideological process cross-cutting these discourses, raises the thorny issue of purism, which is a pervasive phenomenon in Yucatán.

While the paradigms of language rights and language ecology have lately been at the heart of the field of language policy and planning (Ricento 2009), in Yucatán activists markedly framed their discourses of language promotion within sociocultural issues that mostly refer to the former paradigm and much less so to the latter. More specifically, some participants, especially those of older generations, stressed in their accounts the need to promote Maya in institutional domains through literacy and education, which they see as key domains for its revalorisation. Efforts to legitimise Maya in public domains of use mainly depend on the implementation of governmental policies. Also, 'traditional' intellectuals deem important to grant official status to Maya in Yucatán, although so far demands in this respect have been unmet. Whether constitutional changes that acknowledge cultural diversity in Mexico and specific laws that recognise indigenous languages as 'national' languages become decisive aspects for their reproduction in the long term remains to be seen. The fact is that after ten years of the General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous People, language shift to Spanish is still underway in the Yucatán. Language laws therefore may have symbolic effects and pave the way for a change in language attitudes of indigenous languages but revitalisation ultimately depends on political mobilisation and commitment to language use on the part of speakers.

As I have also noted, official policies aimed at indigenous peoples in Mexico continue to be to a greater or lesser extent paternalist and assistance-based. What is more, discourses of revalorisation of indigenous cultures and languages are often appropriated by public institutions which, in a sort of 'neoindigenist' twist, may pay lip service to indigenous claims for recognition and rights. While the Mexican constitution acknowledges the right to self-determination and autonomy, these concepts have

remained politically void because essential transformations in the hegemonic structures of the nation-state have not taken place. After seven decades of one party rule, the coming to power of PAN in 2000 did not substantially change deeply entrenched vertical and corporatist official policies in Mexico, despite recent legislative reforms that recognise cultural diversity (Hernández et al. 2004). The return of PRI in 2012 does not bode well for the necessary radical reforms that could improve the sociopolitical and economic situation of indigenous peoples in Mexico.

Despite these caveats, it must be acknowledged that changes in the sociopolitical status of indigenous languages may have positive impact on their valorisation and, eventually, their revitalisation. Education, literacy, and legislation are not intrinsically and necessarily inefficient tools for language revitalisation. On the contrary, although they are usually secondary to language transmission in the home, they can become important domains for the legitimation of minorised languages, which is a critical issue for their reproduction. Indeed, one research area that needs further exploration is the role that intercultural universities are playing in rasing linguistic awareness among students and the impact that degrees in indigenous languages may have on changing language ideologies of youths in Mexico. My argument, however, is that without control and power for decision making from the grassroots, promotion of Maya in a mostly deficient education system exclusively catered for indigenous students may not be particularly effective for language revitalisation. It is the embedding of speakers in a larger sociopolitical and economic framework of inequality and marginalisation that perpetuates language minorisation. As I have highlighted in the historical outline of the sociolinguistic minorisation in Mexico and Yucatán of chapter 3, the school has been a pillar of nation-building and has played a fundamental role in the linguistic and cultural assimilation of indigenous people in Mexico.

In comparison with other Mexican states, indigenous political mobilisation and strong civil associations are conspicuously absent in Yucatán and a coordinated language revitalisation movement is still missing. Against this background, the recurrent activists' discourse of revalorisation, which puts the emphasis on institutional recognition rather than on political empowerment, epitomises ongoing efforts to promote Maya. The revalorisation process in Yucatán contrasts with Maya movements in other locales where social struggle and language reclamation have gone hand in hand. This is for instance the case of Guatemala where the term *reivindicación* was used to convey "demands for vindication, recognition, recovery, and rights" (Warren 1998: xii). In Yucatán, though, the notion of revalorisation characterises as yet a piecemeal

sociocultural process which is not fundamentally challenging the socioeconomic and political subordination of most Maya speakers. The lack of political mobilisation can be explained by a series of historical factors presented in chapter 3, such as the Caste War and the lack of a strong link between the performance of an indigenous identity and speaking Maya in Yucatán. Moreover, the concurrent concept of *rescate* puts the emphasis on bringing Maya back from the past rather than projecting it into the future, which is the basis for any revitalisation process. Organisation and collaboration from the grassroots is much needed to supersede the current situation, which seems to be characterised by factionalism, or as some interviewees put it metaphorically "cada ranita en su charco" (every little frog in its own pond).[249] Moreover, the revalorisation process could be enriched if it was opened up to all those advocates who can contribute to its success, even if they are not Maya or do not speak Maya. If only a few Maya intellectuals feel entitled to lead the revitalisation of Maya, its prospects will be bleak. Pointing to the leadership of intellectuals in language planning issues, Fishman (1980: 55) cautioned long ago that "intellectuals (and even an intelligentsia) alone can rarely establish a movement. Intellectuals can reify language and react to it as a powerful symbol, as the bearer and actualizer of cultural values, behaviors, traditions, goals".

On a more positive note, revalorisation efforts are working for the social recognition of Maya and are having a positive impact on language attitudes. This is not a small feat considering decades of downright stigmatisation of the Maya language and culture. As Nancy Dorian (1987) noted more than two decades ago, we should not overlook the value of revitalisation efforts, even if they are unlikely to succeed. In fact, it is worth pointing out again that language revitalisation processes are not always, or mainly, about language, or more precisely about gaining new speakers, but often become a proxy for wider sociopolitical struggles (Woolard 1998). The notion of 'successful language revitalisation' is, therefore, a dynamic and processual ideological issue with relative meaning that is always context-specific.

Despite the current lack of political mobilisation, it is important to recall that the particular sociolinguistic situation in Yucatán differs in fundamental aspects from other Mexican states with significant numbers of indigenous population. Maya still has high vitality in some areas of the Peninsula (see map 3.1) and, as mentioned, is gaining social recognition. Therefore, while language shift to Spanish is underway, the endangerment of Maya is not a generally widespread perception. Also, speaking an indigenous

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249 Interviews with Jorge Dzib (8.4.2010 Mérida) and Alfredo Ku (11.4.2011 Mérida).

language on the Yucatán Peninsula is almost tantamount to be a speaker of Yucatec Maya and for this reason activists can concentrate efforts and resources for revitalisation on just this indigenous language. Nevertheless, this advantage may also become a drawback in contexts of unbalanced bilingualism. When official language policy and planning on bilingualism is understood from a monoglossic perspective as a juxtaposition of two reified languages in contact, it is the language spoken by subordinated peoples that usually ends up being abandoned. In this sense, descriptions of the sociolinguistic situation in Yucatán that draw on essentialising and dichotomous terminology such as 'mother tongue' versus 'Spanish', 'bilingualism in Maya and Spanish', 'pure' versus 'mixed' Maya need to be questioned. As I have shown, the linguistic ideologies behind these terms, which have become institutionalised and have also been appropriated by some activists, can deter rather than promote the revitalisation of Maya. The saliency of purism in the discourses of particularly activists of an older generation is a case in point.

As I have also highlighted, language ideologies are multiple, situated, interest-laden, and often contradictory and this can be seen in the cleavage between discourses and actual practices of some interviewees. Thus, parents, teachers, an even activists may express positive attitudes toward the maintenance of Maya while their actual sociolinguistic practices effectively work towards its abandonment. The current process of revalorisation of Maya is led by a group of educated urban based activists who have capitalised on their indigenous identity and their competence in that language. It is unclear, however, whether this process will ultimately reach out to the everyday practices of marginalised Maya speakers who live in rural areas or who have recently settled in the outskirts of large cities such as Mérida and Cancún.

Furthermore, it bears mention that language ideologies in Mexico stem from a wide range of institutional actors (international, national, and local) that exert an influence on the discourses of activists. Thus, particular views of language (also of endangerment and promotion) trickle down from international agencies (UNESCO) and national institutions (INALI, INDEMAYA) to individuals. Against this background, one question that needs further research is the increasingly central role that the Maya language is playing in the struggle for ethnocultural recognition of Maya people in Yucatán. Since language is a common terrain for social struggle and language ideologies are changeable, Maya may continue to gain saliency as a 'badge' of identity in a process of sociocultural shift. As noted, though, this emerging picture does create tensions between the legitimation of hybrid practices that are commonly used on the

ground and the perceived need to promote 'authentic' Maya so that it can play a defining part in the social struggle for recognition of Maya people. Strategic essentialism may be used by activists to advance the current process of revalorisation but, as I have noted in the chapter on purism, essentialisation can also have negative consequences for language reproduction. As Woolard has argued:

> Movements to save minority languages ironically are often structured, willy-nilly, around the same received notions of language that have led to their oppression and/or suppression. Although in some minority language movements the standard terms of evaluation are subverted […], minority language activists often find themselves imposing standards, elevating literary forms and uses, and negatively sanctioning variability in order to demonstrate the reality, validity, and integrity of their languages (Woolard 1998: 17).

In short, ideological tensions and contradictions that need to be addressed clearly emerge when the revalorisation of minorised languages replicates hegemonic processes underpinning the spread of dominant languages.

By contrast, from an ecological perspective, promoting diversity and plurilingualism can be a more effective strategy for language maintenance. Thus, legitimising heteroglossic practices, code-switching and code-mixing in classic sociolinguistic terms, may counterbalance the essentialist positions that crop up in a good number of activists' discourses of revalorisation. Recognising the 'checkered' competence and 'truncated' repertoires (Blommaert 2010) that make up the increasingly complex communicative practices of most speakers, particularly youths, may advance the promotion of Maya. In a nutshell, more flexible and less essentialist approaches to language policy and planning may help to narrow the current gap between discourses of revalorisation and actual practices of Maya speakers on the ground, although this clearly raises tensions against the background of institutional efforts to legitimise linguistic codes through 'normalisation'.

The description of the dilemmas and ambivalence that arise from the Yucatecan case leads us to a fundamental questioning of the concept of language. Post-structuralist and post-modern perspectives have emphasised the social construction of languages and the impending need to take into account hybrid plurilingual practices (Makoni and Pennycook 2007). New theoretical frameworks such as 'linguistics of contact' (Pratt 1987), 'crossing' (Rampton 1995), 'translanguaging' (García 2009), and 'heteroglossia'

(Bailey 2012), among others, have emerged to supersede well entrenched essentialist views of language practices in times of burgeoning mobility of speakers, language contact, and communicative repertoires. These conceptualisations of linguistic use on the ground are often at odds with institutional language policies and planning implemented from the top down. As I have stressed, in Mexico official language policies for indigenous peoples are still undergirded by a notion of languages as 'bounded' objects in need of urgent 'normalisation', that is standardisation, and a strict separation of codes. The ideology of standard languages is hegemonic, that is, usually imposed and maintained by dominant groups and institutions. I maintain, therefore, that the effectiveness of these policies to promote indigenous languages remains to be seen. An emphasis on language 'normalisation' rather than on the legitimation of non-standard ways of speaking and, more importantly, the improvement of socioeconomic and political conditions of speakers may just perpetuate minorisation. It is overcoming social subordination and inequality of speakers rather than merely standardising codes that may work towards language maintenance and reproduction.

More promisingly, however, beyond domains under institutional control (e.g. the school and legislation), new areas of language use such as social media and music are becoming an ever more important platform not only for the use of Maya but also for its advocacy. In contrast with top down initiatives, in chapter 7 I have presented examples of Maya language use and activism by young speakers, some of them studying at recently created intercultural universities. Those examples illustrate grounded and improvisational language management as realised by youths in their everyday life. These informal policy-making, which come from individual actors and are performed without institutional constraints, reflect in a prominent way the deployment of plurilingual and hybrid communicative repertoires on the ground and defy puristic ideologies. The introduction of Maya in contexts such as modern music (hip-hop) and social media (Facebook) is a conspicuous example of language resiliency and adaptation to new domains and shows how ideologies that trascend language essentialisation are transformed by youth into social practice.

Finally, at the time of writing (summer of 2013) some Maya activists are using Facebook to organise an 'Independent Festival of Maya Culture' in Yucatán, which has been named *U Cha'anil Kaaj / Fiesta del Pueblo*. This initiative is a response to the celebration of an 'International Festival of Maya Culture', which is officially supported by government institutions and will take place at the *Gran Museo del Mundo Maya* in Mérida between October 17 and November 3 of 2013. The purpose of the grassroots

festival is to counterbalance the institutional appropriation, folklorisation, and commodification of the Maya culture in Yucatán, which effectively excludes the Maya people.[250] Also, a significant aspect of this independent festival is the fact the arts will play a key role in the promotion of the Maya language and culture. The final key point I want to make is that new technologies are increasing the possibilities for sociocultural mobilisation in Yucatán and that activists are identifying non-institutional domains, and particularly the arts, to promote Maya from the ground up and make their voices heard. Crucially, this independent cultural festival may as well have galvanising effects for future grassroots political organisation in Yucatán and may raise awareness about the need for language revitalisation strategies that go beyond institutional control.

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250 See the web of the Independendent Festival at: http://www.chaanilkaaj.org/ and its public presentation on 9 August 2013 at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=orcrKp27S2c [Accessed 23.8.2013].

Appendices

Appendix A. Participants

Bernardo Aguilar: bilingual ethnolinguist and teacher working in indigenous education. He is in his sixties and a member of the civil association Maya'on, which for decades has been demanding official status for Maya in Yucatán.

Carlos Canul: bilingual young teacher of Maya in his early thirties. Carlos has worked in the Academia de la Lengua Maya, Itzimná. He is studying Linguistics at the School of National Anthropology (ENA) in Mexico City.

Azucena Castillo: Spanish-speaking anthropologist and researcher at UADY in her forties specialised in social development, social work, and civil associations.

Valerio Cauich: bilingual primary school teacher and writer in his mid-thirties. Valerio has produced multimedia material to promote Maya and has his own civil association in his hometown.

José Chablé: bilingual teacher of Maya, researcher and writer in his late thirties. José has produced Maya language teaching material in Maya and is currently affiliated with UNAM in Mérida.

Diego Che: bilingual civil servant working at the CDI delegation of Yucatán in his fifties. Diego is an activist who works for the promotion of Maya both within the framework of the CDI and also from without.

Rita Chi: young bilingual teacher in her late twenties with a degree in communication studies at UADY. She has worked in radio.

Javier Díaz: anthropologist and civil servant in his mid-thirties working at the Academia Municipal de la Lengua Maya, Itzimná. Javier speaks Spanish but has good receptive knowledge of Maya. He is studying a Master's degree in Bilingual Education at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional in Mérida.

Mariano Domínguez: Spanish-speaking civil servant in his forties working at the Institute of Culture of Yucatán (ICY). Mariano is a linguist by training and regularly coordinates events for the promotion of Yucatecan culture, including Maya issues, in the state of Yucatán.

Jorge Dzib: retired teacher in his sixties who used to work in the indigenous education system. He is bilingual in Maya-Spanish.

Rocío Esquivel: Spanish-speaking anthropologist in her mid-fifties affiliated with INAH. She is a 'colaboradora' whose academic work has been influential for the revalorisation of Maya language and culture.

Lilia García: bilingual writer affiliated with the department of Anthropology at UADY. Lilia is an activist who has produced pedagogical material to promote Maya and has a civil association in her native town of Tizimín.

César Gomez: retired bilingual teacher in his mid-sixties who has been involved for decades in the indigenous education system. He was director of Educational Development of Indigenous Education, a section of the DGEI.

Ernesto González: bilingual journalist and civil servant working at INDEMAYA. Ernesto is in his forties and was particularly critical with the appropriation of the process of revalorisation by 'traditional' intellectuals.

Osvaldo Itzá: bilingual teacher working in the indigenous education system in his sixties and member of the Association of Maya Elders and Priests.

Alfredo Ku: bilingual 'organic' intellectual (his own label) in his early forties who has worked in different Maya radio stations belonging to the CDI. He is also an agronomist involved in the promotion of local crops in Yucatán.

Jacinto May: Maya anthropologist and linguist in his mid-forties working at INAH. Jacinto has promoted Maya through workshops, translations, and teacher training courses, among other activities.

María Moo: bilingual writer and teacher of Maya in her sixties. Maria is affiliated with UADY. She is particularly interested in oral traditions. Apart from literature, she has produced pedagogical material to teach Maya to adults.

Rosa Nava: bilingual journalist with experience in radio. She is in her early thirties and has worked in Yucatecan media both in Maya and in Spanish.

Adrián Pech: bilingual student at UNO in Valladolid. Adrián, who is in his early thirties, has been involved with the translation of technical material into Maya and has been a teacher of Maya at several education centers in Yucatán.

Manuel Peraza: anthropologist and researcher in his early fifties affiliated with UADY. Manuel is particularly interested in the Maya influence on Yucatec Spanish and has published several works on this variety of Spanish. He is also a medical anthropologist and has reactivated Maya in adulthood.

Salvador Polanco: Spanish-speaking anthropologist and researcher in his late forties working at CIESAS Peninsular. Although a nonindigenous researcher, Salvador is also a 'colaborador' whose works and activism form part of the revalorisation process of Maya language and culture.

Violeta Pool: bilingual anthropological linguist in her mid-thirties who has worked at UIMQROO. Violeta is a young researcher committed to the promotion of Maya from the grassroots and from a non-institutional stand. She did a Master's degree in Linguistic Anthropology in Mexico City.

Sergio Poot: historian in his mid-thirties who has collaborated for long with Valerio Cauich. He is Spanish-speaker but has good receptive skills in Maya.

Carla Rivero: anthropologist in her forties affiliated with UADY. Carla is particularly interested in intercultural issues and gender studies in Yucatán and the use of audiovisual material such as video to promote Maya culture and language. She is a Spanish-speaker but is reactivating Maya.

Fernando Segovia: bilingual writer and civil servant in his fifties who has worked for state institutions such as INDEMAYA and the Department of Popular Culture of Yucatán. Fernando is a leading intellectual in the current process of Maya language revalorisation.

Francisco Tuz: bilingual civil servant working at INDEMAYA in his mid-thirties. Francisco has produced pedagogical materials and literature such as short stories in Maya.

Luis Uc: writer and civil servant in his fifties working at the Academia de la Lengua Maya, AC. Bilingual in Spanish and Maya.

Appendix B. Contexts of observation

Events

Tercer taller de normalización de la lengua maya. Mérida, 29-31 July 2009.

International Congress Vulnerabilities and Exclusion in Globalization. Society for Applied Anthropology. Mérida, 24-27 March 2010.

Ceremony of graduation at Intercultural UIMQROO. José M. Morelos, 20 August 2011.

Celebration of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples. Nolo and Tixkokob, 8 August, 2011.

Seminar on Language and Education at the National Pedagogical University (UPN). Mérida, 19 August 2011.

First Maya Book Fair. Mérida, 24 August 2011.

Presentation of the National Prize of Literature 2011 in Mexican languages 'Nezahualcóyotl' to the Mayan writer Isaac Carrillo. Mérida, 8 September 2011.

Taller de Análisis de la ley para la protección de los derechos de la comunidad maya. Sotuta, 10 September 2011.

Mesa Movimientos Sociales e Incidencia Política del Pueblo Maya. Mérida 20 March 2012, organised by CDI.

Seminar: Etnografía de los Mayas Peninsulares, UNAM-CEPHCIS, Mérida, 21-23 March 2012.

Seminar: Paradigms of diversity and social cohesion: education planning, curriculum design, and language vitality among Latin American indigenous peoples 28-30 March 2012, CIESAS-Peninsular, Mérida and UIQMROO, José María Morelos.

Workshops of the Linguistic and Cultural Revitalisation, Maintenance and Development project: San Pedro Chimay (6 April 2010), Halachó (16 April 2011), Xcabil (31 March 2012).

Seminar on Culture, Identity and Patrimony at UNAM-CEPHCIS Mérida, 7-8 September 2012.

Institutional visits

INALI, Mexico DF (1 July 2009).

Academia de la Lengua Maya, Itzimná (several occasions).

Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya Programme - SEP (30 March 2010).

Unidad Regional Yucatán de Culturas Populares, Mérida (12 April 2010).

ICY, Mérida (13 April 2010).

INDEMAYA, Mérida (several occasions).

UNAM-CEPHCIS, Mérida (several occasions).

Fundación Produce Yucatán, Mérida (3 March 2011).

UNAM in Mérida and in Tizimín. (6 April 2011).

UNAM, Valladolid (12 August 2011).

Radio XEPET, Peto (11 April 2011).

Radio Yóol Íik, Mérida (23 July 2009).

Canal 13 and Diario Por Esto!, Mérida (23 March 2012).

Civil Association Popolnaj, Tizimín (4 August 2011).

Civil Association Cepromaya, Halachó (9 April 2010).

Academia de la Lengua Maya, AC, Mérida. (28 August 2011).

CDI, Mérida (20 March 2012).

Talks

UADY (Tizimín): 'Language diversity and language planning in Spain'. 6 April 2011.

UNO 'The sociolinguistic situation in Spain with special mention to the Catalan case', 12 August 2011.

UNAM-CEPHCIS 'Language diversity and nationalism in Spain', 16 April 2012.

Courses

Maya language course at UNAM-CEPHCIS, August-September 2012, Mérida.

Maya language course at Academia de la Lengua Maya, April 2011, Itzimná, Mérida.

Appendix C. Translation of testimonies

Testimony 2.1

Josep: Do you think there is an ongoing process of revitalisation here in Yucatán?
José Chablé: For the time being the efforts are isolated. We haven't been able to build up a common project. A common project of revitalisation where we all converge, that does not exist yet. But there is a change in the perception of Maya.

[José Chablé, Mérida 5.4.2011].

Testimony 2.2

An example of these strategies [aimed at promoting Maya] is the collective programme that is put forward owing to the international mother tongue month at the initiative of INDEMAYA, for the last six years, well, at several levels, radio stations, basically NGOs, maybe there are also civil organisations but fewer, then it is this work, interinstitutional work that is organised depending on the people who lead it.

[Azucena Castillo, Mérida 13.4.2013].

Testimony 2.3

Josep: What projects would be positive to revitalise Maya?
Rosa: I was thinking of the institutional context of the CDI, because they are the ones that have to support these projects, for instance with a radio online not only in Maya but in all mother tongues of Mexico.

[Rosa Nava, Mérida 6.4.2010].

Testimony 4.1

FS: The fact that the multiethnic condition of Yucatan has been recognised is already important and moreover something happened that even seemed almost funny thanks to the ignorance of our politicians. In the federal legislation indigenous peoples are recognised as subjects of public interest and in the state they never realised that they were put one over on because they recognised Maya people as subjects of public right.
Josep: Which is different.
FS: Of course, some of us understand that and find it interesting but well in reality, in fact not much happens, right? Not much happens as long as we as a people don't have that capacity to claim that political profit.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.2

Definitively, I think we have to move forward to activism, from this discursive position to a more dynamic activism, more, I don't know, corporatist because we need to make it contagious and make people move toward certain goals. It seems to me that that needs to be changed.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.3

Yes, we were talking about that with colleagues the other day, the very presidents of the Chamber of Deputies of Mexico says that it is indigenous peoples that need to participate in politics and be here with us so that we can understand each other and then as long as there is no participation, some are getting those public positions, they are not the true indigenous people, the association, the political awareness, the need to participate, all that is important.

[Sergio Poot 9.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.4

In fact, some activities were carried out during the International Mother Tongue Day, several conferences, one of them for instance was about the role of institutions as regards the Maya language, another one on who is responsible for the survival of the Maya language and the last one took place in the Congress of the State about the role of legislation, what members of Congress are doing, what all those people are doing, and in the Congress there are some members who should theoretically support indigenous peoples and they were there and as we say here they were blaming each other. No, no, well I invite you to come and participate, some of them do not even get close, and what with one thing and the other, three or four years passed by and they didn't do anything for the (Maya) language and then that is a problem.

Testimony 4.5

Maya society needs to be more demanding so that we become conscious of our strength as citizens who vote and as citizens we must demand that and publicly condition our vote. The candidate must commit and if s/he commits and does not deliver, if society demands that, other things would be happening in society, then it is a very heavy task that needs to be done so that the Maya society makes the decision to manage, to get mobilized.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.6

Although the Maya'on association is almost twenty years old, our work has been more on the demanding side, it's been a constant demand particularly to institutions, to the society that rules. Why as a demand? Because if Maya'on begins working on literacy in the Maya language, we'll only spread literacy around people who are near, close to us, if we demand it to institutions that incidentally have the obligation to do it, it would have a wide and massive impact, therefore, our efforts are focused on the demanding side, this demand even argues, suggests that not only institutions should allow or teach the Maya language, but also that this teaching becomes institutionalised based on a juridical framework that makes Maya compulsory and official in the state so that it is used in all domains of social life. That is the demand

we make, Maya'on has even drafted a document called 'Basis for the officialisation of the Maya language', and we delivered it at the time of producing it, we gave it to the governments of Yucatan, Campeche and Quintana Roo.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.7

AC: This issue of officialisation is part of this agenda and was an initiative of this person. He'll tell you in more detail and also from that issue a document came out as a culmination that you'll also be told about with ten items that try to summarise historical but very concrete demands, no? Not all of them equally important, one is how to make the Maya language official and another one is that at least one hundred books are published in Maya, then they are of a different scale, but it wasn't revised, it was an initiative without revision, no? However it does summarise historical demands regarding the Maya language. But you'll see how these demands, this issue of the officialisation of the Maya language, well, it's going to face many considerations and discussions, right, because, mind you, making a language official is not an easy task, especially when there is not one official language, no? Those are big words, I mean.
MD: She said it already. It is a moment when we feel that there are a lot of opportunities, although that law has not been passed.
AC: With, without or against the law, there is going to be work in favour of the Maya language. The regulatory law is stuck, you know that, that was precisely analysed in the round table about the juridical situation. Finally the reflection is with, without or against, the idea is to keep on trying.

MD: How many laws are passed and then become dead letter.

[Azucena Castillo and Mariano Domínguez 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.8

FT: In (the Yucatecan) Congress they talked about officialisation and the fact is that in Mexico there is only one municipality, I can't remember which indigenous language, with an official language, then, why just one municipality, making it (official) in the whole state, that would set an example, an example in the sense that if everyone learns about that, they'll become influenced, the advertisements, everything is going to be (official), I don't know if that the case with you guys (in Spain), when it's official.
Josep: In our case it's co-official.
FT: When we get this fusion of ideas, people will get used to seeing it, they'll become practically and gradually bilingual, maybe not one hundred percent, particularly adult people who find it more difficult even if they try, but younger generations definitely will.

[Francisco Tuz 29.3.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.9

In 2002 I had the opportunity to participate, well since 2001, as vice-director general of the Institute for the Development of Maya Culture. My first proposal is

the bilingual public administration, later I acknowledge the error because well a project no matter how humane it is no matter how important it is, the only way to sell it is (a good) strategy, right? I threw the idea straight out and gave the creeps to almost everybody. Then they said no, they said no. There is this agency called COPLAN, which is the Planning Commission for the State, and I presented them the project for a bilingual public administration and gave them the creeps and they said no, but I still believe that it is a project that can actually change things.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.10

For instance I have written forms in Maya to the state government and to INDEMAYA and they never reply, and sometimes I call and tell them that I sent a form and they say. Ah! Well, if you can send it in Spanish… it's INDEMAYA, but no, the fact is that forms have to be in Spanish. Who says so? Who says that they have to be in Spanish? And I remind them of the regulations, but they don't reply.

[Jacinto May 25.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 4.11

I'd write to the village mayor and tell him about my town, twenty-one districts with Maya speakers and there is a general law of linguistic rights and there is one section on municipalities that reads that a certain amount of the budget must be allocated to language, to culture, and he told me "no, I don't know about that, but I'll be pleased (to learn more)". That is the problem, he doesn't know, nobody knows, that's a big problem, then I'd tell him, I'll send it to you with great pleasure.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.12

Something else is the ignorance of the law, as an association we are considering what we are going to do about it, the law reads that original languages, along with Spanish, are valid in all the country, to sort out paperwork, to do lots of things, which means that if I go to an institution and I am not assisted in Maya, they have the responsibility to offer me that service because my language is valid in all the country and in the context where it is used in this case if I am from Yucatan I can speak Maya, but since I don't know about laws, they say I cannot help you if you don't speak Spanish, then I turn around and leave.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.13

If a law for indigenous peoples is drafted, the first to learn about it should be indigenous peoples because if indigenous people learn about it, what you said a while ago, I think that strengthens institutions, organisations, in this case those non-governmental. Why? Because if I know what the government must do for me, I'll go and tell them, you know what? You're not delivering and I need you to deliver,

but if they (indigenous peoples) don't know, we don't demand it and the government if you don't demand, much better for them, right? Less work. Then, I come back to what I was saying a while ago, we need to raise consciousness, strengthen the identity of people, I speak Maya because it is important, because it is useful for me, because they are not going to look down on me, then it is important for people to speak Maya, but then there is one part that people are responsible for and another part that the government is responsible for. In Yucatan, for instance, the congress is in contempt, contempt is when there is one law they should have passed but they haven't. The regulatory law on indigenous languages should already been drafted, in this case on the Maya language but they haven't done it, then some institutions say well if you don't do it we cannot do anything about it, and I say that is a lie, that is not true, there are a lot of things that we can do and we don't need to wait for the government to do them.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.14

Maybe if we sit and wait for the authorities to do it, they are not going to do it, it has to come from society. But, do you know why nobody dares? I think that a strong network is synonymous with political strength, if your association, your organization is strong, you can push (for Maya) to be compulsory, but nobody is willing to face the consequences, they are fearful.
[Rosa Nava 6.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.15

In 2007 a constitutional reform was made that acknowledges the existence of the Maya people and it is established that within a year an agency designed and run by the Maya people must be created to act as an interlocutor with the state but since it is taken over by INDEMAYA. Well, INDEMAYA tries to legitimise itself as the interlocutor but you cannot be the interlocutor if you are part of the state. Then, it legitimises itself as the interlocutor and that agency is not created as established and designed by the Maya people and when people talk about an agency that can organise and establish norms for the use of the Maya language, well INDEMAYA is already there. But two things: they have shown that they don't have that ability and they have shown that they are not interested and their rules of procedure do not take it into account at that level either.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.16

Note that one of the translations they made said that according to the INALI census, there are more than 800,000 Maya speakers, in Yucatán, Campeche and Quintana Roo and others who are abroad and in any other part of the country. On the back cover of the translated law it reads: printing 10,000, well, how many do you think can read in Spanish? Because the law is in Spanish and Maya. How many of the 800,000 Maya speakers do you think can read? Say a minimum of 100,000, the rest are illiterate, they cannot read, there are 90,000 who will not learn about the law

because there are only 10,000 (copies), and obviously, 1,000 will be distributed out of 10,000 and 9,000 stay in the headquarters, boxed up.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 4.17

I've always said that mass media could play a very important role in the spread of the Maya language because all those laws and decrees, all those translations, of the General Law on the Linguistic Rights, of the Constitution, also that one made in Barcelona, what's its name?, that one is also translated into Maya, but I think that even if it's broadcast as a news bulletin, in radio and in television, people won't understand it. They had to resort to technical language to be able to translate it, then I still think that it is symbolically important, and it was translated, but even if it was read to people, they wouldn't understand the terminology, if they don't resort to Spanish, and almost all the Maya is going to become hispanicised, they are not going to understand because, as I see it, it was made by specialists, but a common lay speaker won't understand half of it. That is still a problem, what to do, I have always said that it (Maya) has to be taught the way it is currently spoken, that's the only way people can understand it.

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].
Testimony 4.18

Some things will come from the top down, but tightly controlled. I see that INALI should be supporting indigenous languages but they already came up with that idea of making it institutional, of certifying those who speak the language, then if you don't pass an exam, they bureaucratise the language. There's one million speakers and you're not going to give one million certificates, but on top of that they want you to write it, and to write it the way they say.

[Lilia García 29.3.2011 Mérida.

Testimony 4.19

I think that we need to learn how to distinguish what is necessary from what is urgent, everything is necessary, writing is necessary, of course it is necessary, normalisation is necessary, the creation of neologisms is necessary, the Institute for the Maya Language is necessary, everything is necessary but what is urgent, namely speakers, are slipping through our fingers.

Testimony 5.1

In Bicultural Bilingual Education, the approach is an analogy between national programmes and an indigenous education programme that was about to be set up. If the national approach was to look at grammar of the Spanish language, then its counterpart for indigenous language would be to look at the grammar of indigenous languages, any of them. It (the indigenous language) has to be wrriten, the grammar must be learned in the same way as it is the grammar of Spanish.

[César Gómez 11.4.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.2

In this state intercultural education was almost a way to justify many things, in the sense that, apart from requiring teachers with the (indigenous) language, that they work in the language, that they teach to read and write in the language. In practice, those who want to do it, they do it, those who don't want to, well they don't do it. Intercultural education came to justify all that because people say that well if we are intercultural, whether I teach in Maya or in Spanish, there is interculturality in either one.

[César Gómez 11.4.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.3

Here in Yucatan, in all of Mexico, there are several kinds of assessment to learn about children's academic progress, one of those assessments is called ENLACE, national assessment of academic achievement. Our schools are low in the ranking and the tests come in Spanish, it is of course a national test, and it has a procedure that not even teachers are used to, an read electronically sheet that must be filled in, then, it has a lot to do with children's command of Spanish to first understand well the instructions, second to understand well the questions of the assessment, and third to be a good student to know the answer, therefore we score low.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.4

In Yucatan an intercultural university was not possible because when the idea of an intercultural university was considered, the idea of interculturality was rejected, because people would not register to an indigenous university. The idea was to take the model of an intercultural university and give it another name.

[Salvador Polanco 5.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.5

In terms of language we'll have to push hard and do our best so that the education system is reformed. A totally radical educational revolution is lacking, there needs to be resources to train people who are going to teach the language appropriately, correctly, the way it's done with all languages. You need to study the language so that you can speak it and write correctly, and in our case we only have the marginal orality when you speak it with your grandma, with your uncle, with the guy who sells pumpkins, so that it is used in an integral way in our society. There are examples worldwide but we are still a bit far. But we believe that thanks to our fight we will get there. The institutions in general are not really interested.

[Diego Che 28.7.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.6

It has to do with concern about attitudes. There are still a lot of people who say: ah, no! Maya is not a language; it is not a language because it is not written. Maya intellectuals have been much concerned about that.

[Mariano Domínguez 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.7

For a long time, there was this wrong idea in schools that Maya was not a language, that it was a dialect and because it is not written, it doesn't have a grammar, you know, it was almost at the national level, as regards indigenous languages, and then when there is an opportunity for the language to have a place, to have value or prestige, well what is most valued around here is Spanish and Spanish, why is it valued? Because it is written, because there is a constructed grammar and people begin to work with that, they begin to write, because if this one (language) has value, if I write mine, it will also have value, and they begin to write and they concentrate on writing and that issue has taken us a long time and yes there has been progress on that side, but it is not the only means, and maybe it is not the most important one either.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.8

Then this story is read in Maya by this gentleman, it is in a book, an object in which his language or the knowledge of people in his community are not written and that sends a series of messages to the community, right?

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.9

I am teaching grammar to professionals so that they can use it in their Jobs, not necessarily to write short stories, but rather to give it a more real use so that they can apply it in their jobs. INDEMAYA is promoting it (Maya) but organises song contests, poetry contests, short stories contests, but limiting (it) just to that, not everyone is going to sing, not everyone is going to write poetry, the fact that you write does not mean that you're necessarily a poet. UADY is also organising short stories contests among university students […] but what about the use of everyday language?

[María Moo 16.4.2012 Mérida].

Testimony 5.10

We cannot link what is done in the academia with what is lived in everyday life when we cannot go beyond short stories and tales. We need to show that it cannot be reduced to that kind of literature, one can write theses, monographs, essays, wills, because in the colonial period there were wills in Maya, legal documents.

Instead of advancing we go backwards, if we do not promote the social and functional use of the language in several contexts we cannot progress, we need to make posters in Maya and Spanish, so that its presence is seen, not in tiny script, but the same (size), so that there is equality.

[Adrián Pech 7.4.2011 Valladolid].

Testimony 5.11

Josep: And do you use the alphabet of 84?
María Moo: No, I don't use the one of 84, I use the Cordemex the *h* is the only difference, no, it was all politics, it was all a political issue, [...] at that time in 84, I was still a bit green, and I said you cannot remove *h*, people are used to it, there are surnames in *h*, town names in *h* and also if they're going to remover *h*, then they'll have to remove *dz* as well because there are some that even now they are using *j* and they are using *dz* y *tz*, you cannot combine them, if they going to use *dz* and *tz* they must use all the alphabet as it is, then I stick to my *h*, but you need to remove it, I've been told, and I reply that I keep using *h* because researchers are coming here to consult books that are written with *h*.

[María Moo 16.4.2012 Mérida].

Testimony 5.12

The issue is that there are many who, being bilingual in Maya and Spanish, prefer to write in Spanish for practical reasons, because it's faster, like for example, "I'll be there in 10 minutes", imagine having to select for apostrophes, that's one thing, for those who are literate. For those who are not literate, the issue is the lack of confidence, because the first thing they think is I don't know how to write Maya, or I don't know how to write it well, or I don't have much vocabulary, or also, there are things that I don't know how to say in Maya. Sometimes when I write to them in Maya, they are all Maya speakers, my emails all in Maya, many of them reply in Spanish, they say, "listen I reply in Spanish because I don't know how to write in Maya", then I encourage them, write to me the way you can and I will understand, that's the most important thing, I try to give them confidence, there are some who react and say, it's OK, and there are some who say, no, no I really need to study it.

[José Chablé 29.3.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.13

I asked her, listen, for you is it easier to write in Maya or Spanish? Like the expected answer is Spanish. "Well, it is Maya", she says. Oh, really? But why? "The thing is that since Maya has no spelling rules you can write it the way you want".

[José Chablé 29.3.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.14

What is happening now is that with normalisation we're going backwards again. Last week I was with INALI's director and he says "you're finding fault with us,

because in the catalogue you're saying that there are six varieties of Tzotzil and as many of Tzeltal but that it not useful to me as a teacher". And I reply "I think that it is the contrary, it is useful to you precisely to learn what variety to teach so that it works". "Yes, but for administrative issues it's not useful, then, normalisation has already been carried out and it is one Tzotzil and one Tzeltal, and we're going to do the same with Zapotec and Mixtec". The fact is that, you know, the idea of normalisation is again homogenisation, that is its purpose and also to certify so that a budget can be accessed. It's a norm given by the Ministry of Finance.

[Jacinto May 25.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.15

Josep: Will there be a workshop on normalisation this summer too? Are they still working on that topic?
Carlos: I don't know. I attended the one in Campeche and the one in Yucatan, as you know. In the first one I could not participate. It's a waste of time. That normalisation is a failure of the Directorate of Indigenous Education, they want to do something big, I've listened to those who support normalisation and they are completely mistaken, they're trying to normalise, they're trying to organise the language, it is from there that the richness of language comes.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.16

There are all kinds of situations in Indigenous Education, from indigenous schools were the teacher doesn't know Maya, to indigenous schools were the teacher knows Maya but s/he is not interested in teaching it, s/he prefers to use Spanish, even indigenous teachers who are against Maya, of course there are some, but also teachers who have a positive attitude.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.17

My brother is director of indigenous education and I would tell him; how is it going? "Well, they send me three teachers who don't speak Maya, there is no material, and I spend the whole day in the directorate with paperwork". That is life in Mexico, lots of bureaucracy.

[Adrián Pech, 15.4.2011 Valladolid].

Testimony 5.18

The SEP can make a big change, they are the ones that can reach the community, there are there every day, they talk to parents, the SEP can do a lot in general, and directly the Directorate of Indigenous Education. There are some 2000 teachers and in theory they all must speak the language but it is indigenous education on paper, it is a shame that SEP cannot make it compulsory because they should fire a lot of teachers or relocate them, but where to relocate them? On Fridays we have seminars with these teachers but it's a shame, they send you many that don't speak the

language when the course is on literacy, then they are likely to get stuck, there are some who resit the course three times, they're not going to pass because they are not in the appropriate course and they don't deliver, they come late, they want to leave early. Also I see that it's old people, I don't understand why they keep training people who are about to retire.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.19

I had no difficulty to combine Maya with Spanish, that's why I am against that idea that says that "no, the thing is that if the child learns Maya then when s/he goes to school, s/he is going to have problems". And that's the excuse, and that idea does not come only from parents, but even from teachers, if the child knows Maya s/he is not learning Spanish", noooo! The fact is that you don't know how to teach, that's the problem.

[María Moo 16.4.2012 Mérida].

Testimony 5.20

Some time ago we had a meeting with some members of Congress here and one member of the PRD, she said, and then I suddenly realised, she said "what's going to happen, we make Maya official, we make it compulsory at schools at different levels, but to begin with we don't have trained people, we are going to face this and this and what this implies", the implications, and she is drawing like a tree, really complicated, which sometimes we anthropologists do not take into account, just launching the initiative, it was clear that she had thought it through. You know, we kept our mouth shut, we were in that meeting with people that really know their stuff, and we were looking at each other, when she described it that way, who is going to do all that, the materials, the human resources, do you know how many schools we have? She counted them and all, ah! Gosh! We didn't know what to say. It's difficult, it's not that easy.

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.21

Josep: Are there any parents who oppose the teaching of Maya, parents who want their children to learn Spanish at school?
Jorge Dzib: Of course, I don't want them to be like me, it's the first thing they say, someone who doesn't know Spanish or doesn't speak it well.

[Jorge Dzib 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.22

Teachers of the *Ko'one'ex Kanik Maaya* were saying that they had had some problems when teaching, particularly because of the prejudice of some parents as regards the teaching of languages to their children. I think that the issue of cultural

discrimination is still very strong, it is still very strong in this Yucatecan society where people are identified by their Maya surnames, their garment, by their physical traits, even by the way they speak Spanish, or also even by the work they do, with all those elements, one identifies the Maya population and is immediately biased.

[Salvador Polanco 5.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.23

I worked in an assessment programme and interviewed one mother and also asked several parents how they would like their children to be taught, in Maya or in Spanish, and she said that in both, she would like her children to be taught in both languages, but that it would be good if they were also taught in English.

[Jorge Dzib 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.24

This guy works in Cancun and has contact with many tourists, I think he's a tourist guide, and his family lives in Xocen, he taught his son Maya and English, but not Spanish, he said, my son he said, when he goes to kindergarten he will need to learn Spanish because the teachers and classmates around him are going to speak Spanish but until he is four I want him to learn Maya and Spanish. And I said how cool, putting the emphasis on Maya and English, first my mother tongue and then the rest that are coming later.

[Rita Chi 12.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.25

I went to that school because what I wanted was to see how children learn to read in Maya or in Spanish and to begin with I asked them if they spoke Maya and in unison they replied that they didn't, and I talked to them and I sang with them and chatted and when I individually asked some of them whether they know Maya, they told me that they don't know Maya and they all actually speak Spanish but since they are children, I asked them in Maya whether they know Maya and they reply in Spanish that they don't know Maya, of course they know and understand Maya! And the thing is that eventually they acknowledged that they do know Maya, but the tendency is to deny it, then, how is that passed on to children? The idea that the language must be displaced, the adult society passes that on to them, we pass on prejudices on to them. That generation of children may still develop their language with an appropriate bilingual programme.

[Bernardo Aguilar 8.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.26

People from the Academy of Maya Languages of Guatemala said that they had a very interesting programme which was aimed at passive bilinguals, because they realised that there was a great quantity of children and youngsters that understand

Maya languages very well but they don't speak them. Then they implemented a programme and materials exclusively designed for them and that was key for the linguistic recovery and I arrive at Santa Elena for example and most kids are speaking in Maya, only the odd kid doesn't speak Maya, although s/he denies it at the beginning but s/he does know, s/he is a bit ashamed but I am sure that children speak Maya, 90% of the population speaks Maya, that town is highly bilingual, it's one of the municipalities with the highest percentages of bilingualism in the state. I speak with a kid and I speak to him/her in Maya and s/he answers to me in Spanish and we can carry on chatting like that for a while, and then at the end I say, why don't you speak (in Maya)? Why? And, I don't know, s/he laughs, mind you, s/he understands, they laugh at the things I say, they understand Maya pretty well, maybe not 100% but it's the same thing with many people in my own town. It even happened to me too, then I began studying, when I'm in my town I understand perfectly and I could say a few things but that was part was like blocked, that language part, and then I began to pull it out, and I understand that situation very well. Then they created a special programme with special ad hoc materials and that was key to recovering (the Maya language).

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.27

They say that the (Maya) language must be recovered, who is going to recover it? We need to work with language recovery, with recovery, because it's being lost, it's being lost, and many discourses are like that, because there's a view but unfortunately that view of Maya language loss is even supported by discourses of academics, of experts on the Maya culture. Then, it needs to be recovered but they are the ones who don't know the language and they are the ones who don't do anything about it. When I participated in this development programme for this administration, I was invited for the media area and what I said is that the Maya language must be learned by those who don't know it, they have to learn it to respect it because now it's the other way around, those who speak it must learn how to write it and read it and they practise it as culture every day, obviously that's what they want the least. That's why parents say, I send my child to learn Spanish and that is condemned by the SEP, because parents don't want to, they are opposed to a bilingual education, they are supposed to be bilingual, them? What about the others? Why are we not bilingual? Because being bilingual is obviously a shame, I can be bilingual but if it's with English, Spanish and English, that means more status for me.

[Carla Rivero 27.7.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.28

There are a lot of people who in good faith say "I don't know why you are ashamed, abandoning your language when it's such a pretty language, such this and that". They don't realise that with that attitude instead of motivating the person it's like rubbing salt in the wound.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.29

The only way to strengthen the (Maya) language is making it useful to the community, making it useful and lots of current official discourses is that, well, why do they stop speaking such a beautiful language? … But the official discourse has not found a way yet to give it practical use. Then, they say, why do you stop speaking such a beautiful language that sounds so particular? While we keep on like that, we're not going to do much about it.

[Fernando Segovia 13. 4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.30

Josep: Do you think that if Maya was useful to find a job for instance fewer people would abandon it?
Rosa Nava: I think we need to look rather at the importance of preserving the (Maya) language not so much because of its economic value but because it's something from Yucatan, it's something that needs to be recovered, if we do it to find a job, many people perhaps may do it because it's being offered in the lawyer's office, some interpreters are being trained, therefore if I know Maya, I have a secured job because I am a Maya speaker and I'll help with that part, but since I know that there are only a few positions and they are already taken and they'll be there for several years, I'd rather not learn Maya for economic reasons.

[Rosa Nava 6.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.31

Josep: And do your children speak Maya?
Valerio Cauich: No, but I'm teaching them, actually my children can read Maya, I'm going to set up here my little school […] I'm going to buy a blackboard and we going to practise.

[Valerio Cauich 9.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 5.32

Josep: And do your children speak Maya?
Luis Uc: Some of my children understand a bit, the have grown up here in Merida, since they were born, that's something we were talking about, why don't we teach them? Well, a few things need to be considered, it's not a justification but firstly my job, I leave home at 7.30 am and come back at 11pm, so I don't have the time to speak to them in Maya. On the other hand, when they begin to go to school, all peers are Spanish speakers, nobody speaks Maya, all neighbours speak Spanish, and they don't really have anyone to practise with, as is the case in villages. Then, all these things influence them not to learn, there comes a time when we tell them that it's important them to not learn, but they have never seen the need.

[Luis Uc 28.7.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.33

For a thousand reasons, this is even happening to me in part, because I have problems with time, I mean, I don't have much time to be at home, I'm more often outside […] My wife speaks a bit of Maya, but her family suffered so much oppression because of the practice of the Maya culture that her dad and mum told them that they shouldn't speak Maya.

[Alfredo Ku 11.4.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 5.34

The change of role also gives you the authority or the limitation to use one or the other language, then in the case of Yucatan, in the case of women is very marked, when you're an adolescent you can use either one, Maya or Spanish, when you get married, if you marry in a rural environment, you need to change your discourse to Maya primarily, because you're going to be with your mother-in-law, with your auntie, with you name it, those are grown up people, adults, who use more Maya than Spanish.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.1

Josep: Do you speak Maya?
Leti: Yes, I do. Maya is a beautiful language but it's not that I speak Maya normally the way I'm speaking Spanish with you because we speak scrambled Maya, a bit of Maya and a bit of Spanish, it's mixed.

[Leti 8.8.2011 Tixkokob].

Testimony 6.2

I have a little brother who says that he speaks modern Maya and chit-chats well because loan words if one incorporates them phonetically, they are understood. There many ways of introducing loan words, in syntax, in tone, and it's fine. I'm not that purist, and they criticise my texts.

[Lilia García 6.4.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 6.3

There came up those ideas about loan words in Spanish, the original language to teach how to read and write. I told him, do you know what? I said to him, I don't agree with you about borrowing because in Maya, in my case, everything can be said. Then I asked him, if you had money, if you were rich, would you borrow (money)? No, I wouldn't, he says. But that's how it is, we, for instance, don't need to borrow, words for examples, and I had this experience when I went to a congress and some time ago the Maya language was called a dialect, the Maya language a dialect, no, that's a language [...] Since then when I say that I start thinking, yes it's true, we don't need to borrow anymore because I tell him, the lorry is *kis buuts'* and

I say the airplane is *xik'nal kis buuts'*, which flies and farts. He tells me, you're right, how nice that we talked about it, let's see what we can do (about it). That's what we have and therefore sometimes colleagues are opposed when we say that it must be like that, because they say, no, the Maya language is mixed, they say, and we talk a lot about that, loan words and particularly endings or beginnings of words we say them and sing them in Maya, we give a Maya intonation to the Spanish word.

[Jorge Dzib 8.4.2010 Mérida].[251]

Testimony 6.4

Then when a book is published we'd give it back to the community through the state network of public libraries, through indigenous schools, through cultural missions, through adult training centers, through some civil organisations, to try to make it available to communities the closer the better, right? But we would also see that because of the living together, to put it like that, of the Maya language and Spanish, well, there certainly were quite a few loan words. We tried to see what could happen if we restored the Maya version of the stories to give it back to the community completely in Maya and we saw that there were many words and expressions that are not far from us, that we can understand, that we remember them, that if we hear a certain word within an expression we identify it perfectly. Then we realised that it was indeed possible to restore the Maya version and then give it back to the community in a more polished way and removed (more clean) of loan words, and since 2007 when we stopped going to the communities to undertake this job, we got to cover 36 municipalities in the state.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.5

Writing in Maya is a possibility to preserve the language although there is one expert, Adolfo Colombres, who says that the living word is the one that lasts, the book is condemned to the dust of shelves and to oblivion of its contents, but the words transcends. The book is intended for just one sector (of the population), those who have the ability to read. The word is intended for nearly the whole of the population, right?

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.6

What this youngster did in that book seems wonderful to me, he recovers several ancient words and in all that he was supported by an epigraphist and the outcome is very cool because he is not creating it, he is recovering it, what he did is a recovery. I think that there many terms in epigraphy that can be recovered and those that cannot (be recovered), well they can be created. I don't quite share the idea of

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[251] The gloss of the Maya terms are: *kis buuts'* = vehicle (literally, to fart smoke)*; xik'nal kis buuts'* = airplane (literally, *xik'nal*: to fly, *kis buuts'*: to fart smoke).

creating neologisms at this stage, I think that we first need to revive the language because if we want neologisms, if we focus on creating them in the coming years, they are going to be neologisms only used by us, there won't be any speakers to use them and then what's the point?

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.7

That problem was created in Yucatan I don't know how many years ago, I don't know the origin but definitely there was someone who messed it up and divided and talked about the authentic Maya, the pure Maya and here pure Maya is not spoken, for me it was really messed up, because you're hitting a raw nerve of people who say that they don't speak pure Maya and now they believe it [...] it had an impact, that work had an impact on me and at some point I said like perhaps I don't speak authentic Maya, at some point I got upset, I got angry, but then I thought about it and said no, you need to take it the way it is, it's an (academic) article but how many people can do that and how many people are going to stick to the idea that, ah! Well look, you know what? I don't speak Maya well so I'd rather not speak it, that is tough. Yes, it did have an impact on me, sure it had an impact on many people.

[Carlos Canul 16.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.8

At the moment people believe that the (Maya) language is corrupt, and you do feel something like embarrassment, like something ugly… it must be said again and again and everywhere, we don't want to feel bad, especially with academic expressions such as *xe'ek'* and *jach* Maya, and they take that talk to a lot of places and students believe it.

[Lilia García 6.4.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 6.9

I have to confess that before the master's degree, when I hadn't done linguistics at all, I'd think a bit like that, in fact when we were talking and someone at home used a word or an expression in Spanish, like I didn't really like it, because one thinks that mixing languages is incorrect, I mean, you have the impression that it doesn't sound well, for instance, that you're putting in things from another language and it wasn't until I studied the master's degree that I saw it more clearly, I said to myself well yes, there's no problem, if we understand each other perfectly, there's nothing wrong and then when you see a bit of historical linguistics and you're learning that what you thought belonged to your language, it actually doesn't, I mean, that it comes from somewhere else, then I was even amazed. You have your own reflection, but well that is something I have had and few people gets to that kind of learning, right? Then most people have the idea that if you're mixing the (Maya) language, you're taking value away from it, I mean, if the language is not being spoken with just the terminology of that language, it loses its value and then a lot of

people don't accept loan words, neither from Spanish nor from any other language. Also writing, talking about writing, they always want but one way of writing it and don't accept the existence of other ways of writing a word and now there's this idea, there's a couple of people, maybe more, that want to carry out a project to recover archaic terms that are not used anymore, or that they're rarely used, to include them in the current vocabulary and remove the most recent ones in Maya, or those that are Spanish loan words, because, as I was telling you, they can't stand the idea that there are words from another language, that is indeed very exaggerated. And then I think that there should be like more information, to bring about more information for people in general, to look for a way, I don't know, maybe a television spot where you see the idea that in communication several language can exist and it's fine.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.11

The idea was that for Maya to have an orderly development, with a path, there needs to be an institution with authority that can standardise and organise that development, then, in 2006 I presented the idea of an institution called *U nojolil u máaya t'aan* or State Institute of the Maya Language whose task was to develop a planning project for the development of the Maya language, we have been bringing up this issue several times but it seems that from the official side there is not acceptance because it is believed that INDEMAYA is one of those institutions that can take up that task. They have the area of language and culture but not even with a proposal aimed at that level [...] Then maybe one should think that if they don't want to set up the State Institute of the Maya Language or whatever its name, that agency that can organise and standardise the development of the Maya language well then maybe from civil society it will be necessary to look for ways to implement it with resources that may partly come from the state but also from elsewhere.

[Fernando Segovia 13.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.12

Josep: Do you think that it would be good to create an Institute of the Maya Language?
Violeta Pool: Before creating it or at the time of being created networks should be established, both with several national and international organisations linked to linguistics and other disciplines, then like that I think it would definitely work, without neglecting the part of the people, I mean, working with people that go there and speak their mind, that idea of working with people who know, who have academic and methodological experience on the topic and with people who know and also have a more empirical methodology, more of daily use, that is hardly ever done in a very few places. If that was the case, then, I would give credit for that institute, otherwise it would be one more thing, which occupies space and doesn't propose much.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.13

And people who are like doing things for the (Maya) language they don't have either, unfortunately they are not so, there is not dual participation, I mean, there are no stable groups, for instance INDEMAYA, CDI, and other institutions that go and participate in coordination with the people, I mean, they do, they have their own ideas, they come and go, propose, do what they have to do, and leave, and that doesn't help much, I mean, there is indeed the idea that there are people working with the language, people know that there is a group that do things and produce books and organise things but beyond that, no, I mean, there isn't. We bring this project, what do you think? What do you propose? No, there isn't any of that. This circle of people that already have knowledge about what's going on with the language have made like their own group of power and won't let it grow.

[Violeta Pool 15.4.2010 Mérida].

Testimony 6.14

A coffee distributor who was distributing to the whole hotel area of Cancun, from a company in Veracruz, told me that he was selling a lot of coffee and they give those self-improvement courses to workers and they asked them to adjust their accent, to neutralise it, and they would insist a lot on the accent they should avoid, because it's unpleasant. They were obviously chilangos (from Mexico City) the ones who were giving those courses, not Yucatecans, and they were asking them to disguise their Yucatecan accent, it's ugly, that bluntly. And the boys that go and ask for temporary work in blockbusters it seems that they are told the same suggestion, you get there and they begin to speak in a chilango way, because also in the courses they take they're told to talk that way and now for instance broadcasters in local radios many of them are chilangos and Yucatecans have to adjust their accent, but you catch them because then they let slip something, that Yucatecan accent is not that common anymore in local radio and if there exists it's being modified, changed, neutralised, becoming suddenly chilango over there.

[Manuel Peraza 11.8.2011 Mérida].

Testimony 7.1

There must be an own radio station, but not an indigenous radio, the indigenous radio is taken over, I was saying, Peto, XEPET, is not working for the growth, the (Maya) language is used there, but it's only to show that the institutions are doing something in favour of the language, but in fact, the contents, is a juke box of the Maya world, it's the music, and they play music in Spanish because there's not much music in Maya but that space is not used to analyse these problems, these things, no political demands at all, it (the radio) is useful for institutions to justify their activity in favour of peoples but in reality it is not a radio station that is at service of the Maya people, and these radio stations should also be reformed, they are state goods, not of the CDI, the scheme should be modified for a greater participation of the civil population so that they use those media as their mass media.

[Diego Che 28.7.11 Mérida].

Testimony 7.2

One thing is to broadcast in Maya, and broadcast to Maya people and well that is important, but it's even more important for Maya people themselves to produce their own messages, to have initiatives, so that the government doesn't need to tell them, I'm going to give you your radio, but I'm going to tell you , you'll only listen to that radio, and there's the problem […] There is a lack of mobilisation but it's also the result of an environment that's been brought about by politics, not only here in Yucatan but all over Mexico, especially brought about for indigenous peoples who have just been accustomed to waiting to get something (from the government). That needs to change.

[Víctor Canto 11.04.11 Peto].

Testimony 7.3

We realised that one of those things that showed the scarce importance of these processes (sociopolitical demands) was the closing of this radio station Yóol Íik. While it came out of a well-defined project of revalorisation and with a view to attract audience, finally, it was not sustainable, people didn't trust them enough to give them advertising and all and it was interesting because it was a private initiative that was there to compete with the same rules but ended up being swallowed, it couldn't support itself economically and in private initiative what cannot support itself it goes, and this sadly disappear. It was a good initiative because people can tune in in Maya and I think that when those spaces are won over the process of revalorisation is reinforced, the fact that you turn on the television and there's a channel in Maya which is as normal a channel in English or that it's as normal as turning on the radio and listen (to Maya), that helps to foster the habit to get used to other languages and the idea that this language is here.

[Salvador Polanco 5.8.2011 Mérida].

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