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Literacy and numeracy practices of market women of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

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LITERACY AND NUMERACY PRACTICES OF MARKET WOMEN OF
QUETZALTENANGO, GUATEMALA

A Dissertation Presented

by

JOAN B. COHEN-MITCHELL

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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School of Education

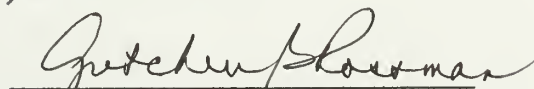# LITERACY AND NUMERACY PRACTICES OF MARKET WOMEN IN QUETZALTENANGO, GUATEMALA

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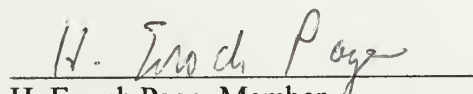
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ABSTRACT

LITERACY AND NUMERACY PRACTICES OF MARKET WOMEN IN QUETZALTENANGO, GUATEMALA

FEBRUARY 2005

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Current policy statements concerning adult literacy in Guatemala state that Mayan women need literacy skills in order to better themselves and their families socially and economically and need to possess these tools and skills in order to participate in the emerging civil society. Responding to this rhetoric, and a chance to win funding, organizations that design and develop literacy programming have responded with adult literacy "classes" that focus on a single model of literacy learning for women that tends to be equated to a school model of basic education. Central to this single model for literacy learning, is a single conception of literacy, as a unified, quantifiable easily attainable goal. This reductionist tendency in Guatemala has led to focusing on a single literacy as the solution to the problem of indigenous women's illiteracy. Assumptions about the needs and desires of beneficiaries are made by literacy experts and planners without taking the time to understand the literacy practices that Mayan women and communities are already engaged in.

Examining and analyzing the literacy and numeracy practices women are already engaged in is a very different approach to program planning than the hegemonic

centralism of the more traditional autonomous model. By using ethnographic methods to conduct literacy research, a potentially empowering model for literacy programming can emerge that is sensitive to local context and needs.

The following guidelines resulted from this study: It cannot be assumed (1) that programs designed for literacy acquisition are in the best educational or social interests of the target audience; (2) that 'best practices" of teaching and learning developed and advocated by Western educators and planners are the most effective and successful in all contexts. Whole language approaches or learner-generated materials may work in some contexts and not in others and we cannot simply impose "state of the art" approaches in all contexts and expect them to work well.

Any sustainable, meaningful literacy intervention in Guatemala would best be conceptualized as a long-term process that helps to establish an intergenerational network of communicative relationships that focus on the social, cultural, economic and linguistic processes of communities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While many societies enter into the information and knowledge age, and modern technologies develop and spread at rapid speed, 860 million adults are illiterate, over 100 million children have no access to school, and countless children, youth and adults who attend school or other education programs fall short of the required level to be considered literate in today's complex world according to UNESCO's latest statistics ("United Nations Literacy Decade," January, 2003).

Hoping to energize governments of the world to reconsider the goals of "Education for All" not met in the last decade, the United Nations has recast its literacy efforts as "Literacy for Freedom" and announced 2003-2012 as the Literacy Decade.

UNESCO, the World Bank, UNICEF as well as other international non-governmental organizations continue to be fixated on eradicating illiteracy as if it were some terrible disease that a single dose of antibiotics should easily cure. The discourse promoted by these large funding and policy-setting bodies stems in large part from the belief that if community members change; then society will be more developed; that if community members become literate, then they will be less ignorant; if they are less ignorant, they will make more socially concerned decisions; and if they make more socially concerned decisions, the whole of society will benefit. This more traditional and linear development discourse is of course seldom justified in practice. What is often overlooked is that, for example, when people develop literacy and numeracy skills, they are not necessarily more knowledgeable, or that the skills they learn in literacy classes

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are in any way relevant to their daily life activities. Nor do these assumptions make mention of the need for structural changes in society for development to occur. In particular, the so-called "plight" of the "illiterate" and the benefits of learning literacy skills are oftentimes exaggerated in order to increase the motivation for non-literate persons to join literacy classes.

The value of single-injection models of literacy learning underlies much of this discourse revealing how this traditional mode of literacy is couched in short-term and simplistic linear progression of one time learning rather than sustained efforts with varied literacy practices. This belief lies at the foundation of many literacy programs throughout the world. When the newly literate graduate from the initial literacy classes and move into post-literacy programs to consolidate and extend their newly acquired but yet tentative literacy and numeracy skills, little thought is given to how individuals will use these skills to move forward into diverse and more self-directed forms of development activities or further education and training. Governments and communities do not typically consider how to create a literate environment that will sustain and enhance how community people practice and use literacy and numeracy in everyday life.

Statement of the Problem

Current policy statements concerned with adult literacy in Guatemala state that Mayan women need literacy skills in order to better themselves and their families socially and economically and need to possess the necessary tools and skills in order to participate in the emerging civil society. Responding to this rhetoric, and a chance to

win funding, organizations that design and develop literacy programming have responded with adult literacy classes and programs that focus on a single model of literacy learning for women that tends to equate literacy classes to a school model of basic education. Central to this single model for literacy learning is a single conception of literacy, as a unified, quantifiable, easily attainable goal. This reductionist tendency has led to the tendency in Guatemala that focuses on the acquisition of a single literacy as the solution to the problem of indigenous women's illiteracy. Prior assumptions about the needs and desires of beneficiaries are made by literacy experts and planners, without taking the time to understand the literacy practices that Maya women and indigenous communities are already engaged in.

Examining and analyzing the literacy and numeracy practices women are already engaged in is a very different approach to program planning and policy formation than the hegemonic centralism of a more traditional model. It is my belief that by using ethnographic methods to conduct literacy research, a potentially empowering model for literacy programming can emerge that is sensitive to local context and needs.

For the purposes of this study, I implemented an alternative approach to understanding literacy and numeracy practices of women in the market of Quetzaltenango. From the understanding I gained of the purposes, desires and goals market women themselves attached to their literacy and numeracy practices, I was able to make recommendations for programming for women in this context.

The embedded hypothesis I worked with is that the demands of the marketplace require different and varied uses of literacies and numeracies, and by examining these

multiple literacy and numeracy practices in context, program planners can make more informed choices based on grounded accounts of "which literacies people need" (Street, 2001, p.17).

Purpose of the Study

In this dissertation, I have attempted to document the various literacy and numeracy practices being used by *K'iche* Mayan market women in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, as they move through their daily lives. There are multiple literacies at play in the social contexts of Mayan women, and literacy programs that purport an empowering approach to working with Mayan women need to understand these multiple literacies (and numeracies), when and how they are used and by whom and with whom. The purpose of this study was to make clear that literacy and numeracy practices are not simply a set of technical skills learned in either formal or nonformal educational settings, but are social practices embedded in specific contexts, interactions and discourses.

Since the view of literacy and numeracy researched is so dependent on context, I have chosen to introduce my dissertation with a description of one women's literacy and numeracy practices in the marketplace that offers insights into the complexity of her everyday life in the market of *Xela*[1] which is at a major point of transition between the world of Mayan language speakers and that of the Spanish-speaking world.

> Maria climbs down from the large open-backed freight truck along with sixty or seventy others from *Cantel* who are bound for the *Xela* market in the early morning chill at 4:45 am. After she gets off the truck, she waits her turn for three men to hand down to her the many crates of carrots,

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[1] Xela is the K'iche' Mayan word for the town known in Spanish as Quetzaltenango. Throughout this study I will use the names Xela and Quetzaltenango interchangeably, depending on how others use it.

cauliflower and potatoes she has brought to sell at the Tuesday market. Their interactions as they unload her wares takes place in *K'iche* with occasional Spanish words thrown in. One of the men jumps down from the truck, and begins to engage in what appears to be negotiations about money or payment. This conversation begins in *K'iche* but quickly switches into a predominately Spanish conversation with some *K'iche* words thrown in as they discuss cost. After about three minutes of discussion regarding the payment, (a conversation I had completely understood) a figure has been agreed upon by Maria and her helper. As the two of them make their way over to Maria's stall, their conversation once again switches back to *K'iche* with occasional Spanish words peppered throughout the dialogue. As they move between the truck and Maria's stall, their conversation remains in *K'iche* until it is time for Maria to pay the gentleman who has been helping her. Again, the conversation switches to Spanish as she counts out the quetzals into his hand and he counts the money in front of her. As they say goodbye, the conversation is once again in *K'iche* until I hear the familiar *"adios, que le vaya bien"* (goodbye, may you be well) from both of them.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 of this dissertation, "The Historical, Political and Educational Context of Guatemala" provides a brief overview of the socio-political history of Guatemala and the state of the indigenous languages. Following that is an overview of the Maya education movement during the twentieth century, and its impact on formal education and literacy efforts. I tie this chapter together with a short discussion of the role of the Pan-Mayan movement in pushing the literacy agenda forward in Guatemala.

Chapter 3, "Quetzaltenango and the Marketplace," presents my research sites. By familiarizing the reader with my research sites, it is my hope that they will be able to better relate to the information shared in my two analysis chapters.

Chapter 4, Review of the Literature, provides an overview of past and present literacy efforts and policies that have supported these efforts. I begin this chapter by reviewing better-known approaches to literacy education, as well as the research

conducted and policy developed as a result of these approaches. Interestingly enough, in past literacy efforts, research conducted often happened after the fact, looking solely at the impact that these literacy programs had in a given country or context. Writers from the New Literacy Studies support the approach that I am taking, conducting research before creating literacy programming. At the end of this literature review I move into examining the current research coming out of the New Literacy Studies movement that has begun to point us in new directions for literacy programming and policy. The purpose of this overview is to document the shift over time as the "problem" of literacy has not been solved. Is it time to question whether literacy can be presented as a panacea for a variety of social ills and a passport to social and economic development?

Additional literature review includes examining writing about the Maya Language Loyalty Movement and the relevant issues of language loss, revitalization, and language and literacy planning in the Guatemalan context.

Chapter 5, the Methodology section, introduces the ethnographic approach I chose for my research study and also reviews some of the literature that supports my choice for this research methodology and its relationship to literacy research. I guide the reader through my research process and include all of the tools and methods of analysis I used for my study. I also review literature that discusses the issues related to using translators and operating in a second language.

Chapter 6, the first analysis chapter, introduces the reader to the seven women in my study and the three overarching themes that emerged from the data. Using data from observations, interviews and the two focus groups, I share with the reader my insights into the complexity of the multilingual situation of the Guatemalan context. This

chapter looks closer at the women's use of literacy and numeracy in the market place of Quetzaltenango as well as their desires and thoughts about language choices, reading and writing and the utility of literacy learning.

Chapter 7, a second analysis chapter presents three literacy events that occurred during the research process and recounts how these literacy events impacted the study.

Chapter 8, "Conclusions and Recommendations," reviews the original intent of my research and looks towards how thoughtfully examining and understanding literacy and numeracy practice is a critical first step in planning meaningful literacy programs for Maya women. This chapter also discusses implications for policy and programming outside of the Guatemalan context. Suggestions for further research and inquiry stemming from the findings are included.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL
CONTEXT OF GUATEMALA

In order to understand the state of literacy learning and language policy today

in Guatemala, it is important to review the historical, economic, political, and ethnic

circumstances of Guatemala.

This chapter looks at the factors that have influenced educational and

language policy and planning in Guatemala beginning with an historical overview of

Guatemala. The following section explores historical information about language

policies in this multilingual context. The next section looks at the relatively new Pan-

Mayan movement that has been active in creating educational policy in Guatemala

since the 1970s through today. Finally, the last section reviews the emerging field of

Mayan language literacy, as it has been conceptualized and practiced today in

Guatemala.

<u>Historical Background</u>

Guatemala is a country rich in geographic, biological, and cultural diversity.

Within its relatively small territory the size of Tennessee, (108,889 square kilometers)

there is an estimated population of 12,639,939 (Pan American Health Organization,

July 2002 estimate). Stuart (1956) identified eight natural regions in Guatemala, each

encompassing a number of microclimatic variations (see map 1). These areas may be

grouped into three basic zones: a highland area comprising a chain of volcanic

mountains cross-cutting the country from west to east, flanked to the north by a large,

forest-covered lowland expanse and to the south by a low, narrow strip of Pacific

coastline. Ecologists classify the forests of the northern lowlands as quasi-rainforest,

because although average rainfall is about eighty inches, there is still a pronounced

dry season with little or no rain (Morley, Brainerd, and Sharer 1983, 39-40). In this

highland region the Classic Maya (A.D. 250-900) built the famous city-states, where

they enjoyed several hundred years of unparalleled development in political

organization, the sciences, and the arts for which they are most remembered today by

the rest of the world. To work this fragile environment, the Classic Maya employed a

variety of agricultural techniques, ranging from simple slash-and-burn methods to

complex systems of irrigated raised fields. Around A.D. 900, due to years of

increasing population and overproduction that led to environmental degradation and

escalating political tensions between Mayan groups, this period came suddenly to a

halt, as one Maya city after another "collapsed" (Culbert, 1973).

A common assumption is that the Spanish encountered in Guatemala

culturally pristine societies whose cultures were contaminated and invalidated by

their presence. Yet the highland Maya cultures that flourished during the Post-classic

period (A.D. 900-1200) had been profoundly affected by repeated invasions from

Mexico for at least a thousand years before the Spaniards' arrival. As Lutz observes,

the highland Maya had been "Mexicanized" and "Toltecized" before they were ever

"Hispanicized" (Lutz, 1976, p. 50). These cultural intrusions would affect most

strongly the urban populations, while the rural peasantry would be least affected. This

pattern of response to foreign influence continues through the present time. The

material and ceremonial aspects of highland Maya culture were most affected by the

repeated invasions, while linguistic behavior remained relatively untouched. Suarez remarks that "linguistic contacts were primarily among the upper classes... and their potential effects reached lower groups only sparingly" (Lutz, 1976, p. 92). Hence, amid the constant intercultural contact fostered throughout Mesoamerica's history of trade, migrations, and warfare, a large proportion of the lower strata apparently carried on in linguistic isolation. This hypothesis is supported by the linguistic fragmentation found in present-day Mesoamerica.

The late Post-classic period began some ten generations prior to the Spanish invasion when Toltecs from the Tabasco-Veracruz region of Mexico entered Guatemala and eventually controlled large sections of the central highlands (Fox, 1978). The Toltecs had a profound influence on their new subjects, who in turn absorbed their new rulers. As Lutz notes, though the Toltecs introduced many new forms and customs in architecture, secular administration and religious practice and they themselves adopted the local Mayan languages (1976, p. 50). The Toltec invaders became priests and rulers of many of the highland groups, including the *K'iche* and *Kaqchikels*.

By A.D. 1250, the highland Maya were organized into five Toltecized groups: the *K'iche, Poqomam, Tz'utujil, Mam*, and *Kaqchikel*. The largest and most cohesive of these was the *K'iche* polity, whose military expansionism had brought under control many neighboring groups by A.D. 1450 (Carmack, 1981). Around 1470, the *K'iche* kingdom had grown administratively cumbersome and suffered periodic revolts by its subject peoples. Taking advantage of this growing instability, the western *Kaqchikels*, formerly *K'iche* allies, embarked on their own campaign of

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military expansion. At the time of European contact, the *Kaqchikel* rulers of Tecpan controlled over forty surrounding towns and were in military and political ascendance (Fox, 1978). The Spanish invasion and subsequent European migration superimposed Spanish hegemony on a fluid and complex web of Maya ethnic/linguistic groups, the legacy of which still rules ethnic relations in Guatemala today.

The country's Maya population comprises twenty-one separate language groups concentrated in the western highlands which include: *K'iche, Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi , Mam , Poqomchi', Poqomam, Tz'utujil, Achi, Uspanteko, Sakapulteko, Sipakapense, Tektiteko, Popti', Chuj, Q'anjob'al, Akateko, Awakateko, Ch'orti' and Ixil.*

Scholars believe that of Guatemala's approximately 12 million inhabitants, between 50 and 60 percent are Maya (although official statistics site a smaller amount, about 40 percent). Much smaller groups of Garifuna (blacks of African/Caribbean origin) Germans, and other European and Asian immigrants make up less than 1 percent of the total population.

Ladinos, most easily defined as everyone else, make up between 39 and 49 percent of the population and dominate the national realms of politics, economics, education, agriculture and the sciences. While Ladinos consider themselves to be a biologically distinct group and heirs to the Spanish/European cultural tradition brought to the New World by Spanish colonists, the demographics of immigration during the colonial period show that they are mostly of mixed Spanish and Maya blood.

Linguistic Map of Guatemala

Figure 1. Linguistic Map of Guatemala

Carol Smith writes,

> what has distinguished Indians and non-Indians over time has not been biological heritage, but a changing system of social classification, based on ideologies of race, class, language, and culture, which ideologies have also taken on different meanings over time. (1990, p. 3)

The dominant ideology in Guatemala does indeed define the category Ladino in opposition to Maya ethnic markers: Indians wear typical dress, *traje*, Ladinos do not; Indians speak an indigenous language, Ladinos speak Spanish; Indians practice indigenous New World folkloric culture, Ladinos practice European high culture. Recent research on Guatemalan ethnicity has shifted focus from defining boundaries to recording the fluidity of boundaries and the changing system of meanings assigned to cultural symbols (Warren, 1978, 1992, 1993; Watanabe, 1992, 1995; Wilson 1995). This new approach recognizes the essential continuity of the Maya cultural tradition while noting, "new criteria of identity gravitate around traditional signs of community, even though at times they may express opposite meanings"(Wilson 1995, p. 11).

Nonetheless, in looking beyond static representations of the diametric opposition between the categories Maya and Ladino, John Watanabe cautions scholars not to forget that "while the subtleties and ambiguities of actual relations between Maya and Ladinos belie such stark oppositions, these racist stereotypes pervade-and shape-Guatemalan life"(1995, p. 301). Guatemalan stereotypes categorize individuals as Maya or Ladino based on a few conspicuous cultural traits most prominent being dress and language.

Maya are not naturally precluded from integrating themselves into the Ladino community. Indeed, the fluidity of Guatemala's ethnic boundaries is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that many Indians have chosen to become Ladinos in an effort to

avoid cultural discrimination and to facilitate their integration into the national education system and regional commercial networks controlled by Ladinos. Successful "passing", however, requires not only that Indians adopt Ladino cultural traits and identify themselves as Ladino, but also that others recognize them as Ladino. Thus it is often hard for a Maya to successfully make the transition to being Ladino while living in his or her home community. If, however, her or his Spanish is good enough and her or his adoption of Ladino ways is convincing enough, a Maya may move to another community where she or he is not well known (ideally a large city) and integrate her/himself into the Ladino community. The newly Ladinized person's upward mobility is nonetheless still limited by a glass ceiling that excludes not only all Indians but also most Ladinos from the close-knit network of elites that effectively controls the upper levels of the Guatemalan government and the national economy.

Guatemala's demographic situation and highly unequal distribution of wealth have contributed to the long-standing fear of the country's Ladino elite of an Indian uprising. Sam Colop (1996, p. 67) suggests that this fear results from Ladinos projecting their own racism onto the Maya people. Regardless of its cause, one concrete result of this fear is that the Guatemalan state has consistently attempted to culturally integrate Indians into Ladino society as an underclass in an ethnically homogeneous, modern nation-state rather than a distinct ethnic group with its own political agenda. Even the casual traveler in Guatemala can see that the government's efforts to eradicate Maya culture have failed. There are twice as many Indians in Guatemala now as at the time of the Spanish invasion (Lovell & Lutz, 1992), and the Indian community is ubiquitous throughout the western highlands.

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The biggest threat to the status quo in Guatemala for the last three decades had perhaps been the country's armed revolutionary movement. Yet this movement also failed to offer a feasible solution to the country's ethnic problems. Like the establishment it sought to overthrow, the revolutionary leadership saw assimilation as the answer to Guatemala's ethnic conflicts. When it started in the 1960s, Guatemala's guerrilla movement, led by disenfranchised Ladino labor activists and leftist intellectuals, was based in the eastern part of the country, which is mostly populated by Ladino peasants.

After suffering a crushing defeat in the late 1960s, the guerrilla movement went into a several-year-long hiatus, reemerging in the early 1970s in the Indian-populated western highlands. While the guerrillas' base of support became largely Indian, their ideology remained firmly rooted in the idea of class struggle, leading them to underestimate and undervalue the importance of ethnic and cultural issues. The guerrillas believed that ethnic affiliations disguised exploitative class relations and inhibited the unification of Ladino and Mayan Indian peasants and workers, and that ethnic concerns could only be addressed after a class-based revolution (Payeras and Diaz-Polanco, 1990).

As the guerrillas made inroads in the Indian highlands, the Ladino elites' cold war-inspired fear of Marxist revolutionaries converged with their long-smoldering fear of an Indian uprising, creating an ideological justification for ethnocidal campaigns directed by the military. Ostensibly the military effort aimed to stamp out Marxist revolutionaries, though it targeted not only active subversives but also potential subversives, a category often understood to include all Indians. The military's brutal

counterinsurgency campaign reached its height in the early 1980s, leaving tens of thousands dead and hundreds of thousands in exile. In 1986, nominal civil rule was reestablished with the election of Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo.

In 1991, the presidency was passed between two freely elected civilians for the first time in Guatemalan history when Jorge Serrano Elias took office. In early 1993, Serrano conducted an *autogolpe* (self-coup) in which he disbanded Congress and the Constitutional Court and gave himself broad powers. Serrano, however, seriously misinterpreted the country's political climate, and within two months an unlikely coalition of leftists, unions, businessmen, Maya groups, and the military leadership forced him into exile in Panama.

In an equally surprising turn of events, the Congress elected the government's human rights ombudsman, Ramiro de Leon Carpio with the military's explicit blessing, to continue Serrano's term. De Leon, not a member of any political party and lacking a political base, but with strong popular support, launched an ambitious anticorruption campaign to "purify" Congress and the Supreme Court, demanding the resignations of all members of the two bodies. Despite considerable congressional resistance, presidential and popular pressure led to a November 1993 agreement brokered by the Catholic Church between the administration and Congress.

This package of constitutional reforms was approved by popular referendum on January 30, 1994. In August 1994, a new Congress was elected to complete the unexpired term. Controlled by the anti-corruption parties--the populist Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) headed by ex-Gen. Efrain Rios Montt, and the center-right National Advancement Party (PAN)--the new Congress began to move away from the

corruption that characterized its predecessors. Under De Leon, the peace process, now brokered by the United Nations, took on new life. The government and the URNG signed agreements on human rights (March 1994), resettlement of displaced persons (June 1994), historical clarification (June 1994), and indigenous rights (March 1995). They also made significant progress on a socioeconomic and agrarian agreement. National elections for president, the Congress, and municipal offices were held in November 1995. With almost 20 parties competing in the first round, the presidential election came down to a January 7, 1996 runoff in which PAN candidate Alvaro Arzu defeated Alfonso Portillo of the FRG by just over 2% of the vote. Arzu won because of his strength in Guatemala City, where he had previously served as mayor, and in the surrounding urban area. Portillo won all of the rural departments except Peten. Under the Arzu administration, peace negotiations were concluded, and the government signed peace accords ending the 36-year internal conflict in December 1996. The human rights situation also improved during Arzu's tenure, and steps were taken to reduce the influence of the military in national affairs.

Guatemala last held presidential, legislative, and municipal elections on November 7, 1999, and a runoff presidential election December 26, 1999. In the runoff on December 26, Alfonso Portillo (FRG) won 68% of the vote to 32% for Oscar Berger (PAN). During his campaign, Portillo promised to continue the peace process, appoint a civilian defense minister, reform the armed forces, replace the military presidential security service with a civilian one, and strengthen protection of human rights. During the campaign, Portillo had been criticized for his relationship with the party's chairman, former Gen. Efrain Rios Montt, the de facto president of Guatemala in 1982-83. Many

charge that some of the worst human rights violations of the internal conflict were committed under Rios Montt's rule. Nonetheless, Portillo's impressive electoral triumph, with two-thirds of the vote in the second round, gave him a claim to a mandate from the people to carry out his reform program.

Since Portillo's landslide victory combined with an FRG majority in congress suggested possibilities for rapid legislative action. However, under the Guatemalan Constitution of 1985, passage of many kinds of legislation requires a two-thirds vote. Passage of such legislation is not possible, therefore, with FRG votes alone. The political balance was disrupted in 2000 when allegations surfaced that the FRG had illegally altered legislation. Following an investigation, the Supreme Court stripped those involved, including President of Congress and FRG chief Rios Montt, of their legislative immunity to face charges in the case. At roughly the same time, the PAN opposition suffered an internal split and broke into factions; the same occurred in the ANN. As a result, reforms essential to peace implementation await legislative action. New cases of human rights abuse continued to decline, although violent harassment of human rights workers presented a serious challenge to government authority. Common crime, aggravated by a legacy of violence and vigilante justice, presents another serious challenge. Impunity remains a major problem, primarily because democratic institutions, including those responsible for the administration of justice, have developed only a limited capacity to cope with this legacy.

A General Election was held in Guatemala on 9 November 2003. Voters went to the polls to elect a new President, a Vice-President, a new legislature (deputies for the

unicameral *Congreso de la Republica)*, municipal governments, and Guatemala's deputies to the Central American Parliament.

The ruling Republican Front of Guatemala nominated former military ruler Efraim Rios Montt to succeed outgoing president Alfonso Portilla Cabrera. Rios Montt's human rights record from his time in power (1982-83) led to strong opposition from both inside and outside the country. In the first round of voting, Rios Montt came third behind the centrist mayor of Guatemala City, Oscar Berger, and the left-wing candidate Alvaro Colom. In a run off on December 28, 2003, Oscar Berger was elected with 54% of the vote.

The Mayan Education Movement in Guatemala

For cultural activists, speaking a Mayan language is the predominant marker of Maya ethnicity and one that has been relatively well maintained during the five hundred years of Spanish contact. Demetrio Cojti Cuxil vice-minister of Education in the Portillo government wrote, "Mayan people exist because they have and speak their own languages" (1990a, p.12). Nevertheless, over the last several years, cultural activists have increasingly focused on other aspects of Mayan culture, forming organizations to study topics ranging from economic development, Maya religious practices to modern maize rituals.

The Mayan language movement in Guatemala shares many features of such movements around the world (Brown, 1996a). It is led by a largely urban, educated minority of Mayas, some of whom are not fluent in a Mayan language. Although some claim that the Mayan language activists do not represent the great majority of rural

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Mayas, most of the educated Mayas grew up in indigenous towns and villages and return to them regularly, staying in touch with the rural reality despite their current urban residence (Brown, 1996, p. 46). A more representative Mayan voice is not likely to emerge, given that language revival movements commonly originate and have their greatest impact in cities.

Another feature of the movement is its apolitical nature, at least in the sense of the Left-Right dichotomy of Guatemalan politics. Edward Fischer (1992) and others have noted that the progress and survival of the revitalization movement are owed in large part to the ability of its leaders to carve out a new political space in which to agitate. The revitalist agenda carefully avoids explosive topics such as land reform and social-class ideologies and consistently maintains a discourse of cooperation with the state. In the Guatemalan context, linguistic and educational reforms may prove the safest and surest paths to real structural change. Maya activists today also seek to mobilize the language-ethnicity link by raising the Mayas' consciousness of their roots and promoting the value of the languages as a link with the glorious Maya past and also as a symbol of authenticity. Maya activists seek to mobilize affective factors in the struggle between language maintenance and language shift. The movement seeks to raise perceptions of the prestige of the Mayan languages in Guatemala.

There is a broad consensus that many of the language-internal phenomena produced by intense contact- loanwords, for example-reduce the prestige of the Mayan languages for both speakers and nonspeakers. Many varieties of Mayan languages are disdained because they are perceived as "contaminated" or "diluted" by the infusion of foreign-most commonly Spanish-elements. However, a growing body of literature

(England 1992, 1996) argues that the Mayan languages possess rich structures that allow for subtlety not found in Spanish or other Western languages. Additionally, the publication of various types of grammars enhances the prestige of the Mayan languages.

The Mayas active in the recovery and promotion of their cultures are particularly sensitive to the implications of a decrease in Mayan fluency among the young. One of the most urgent needs of revitalization is to reverse the trend toward language shift. Through the mobilization of ethnic identity, parents must be persuaded to speak regularly to their off-spring in Mayan and must be guided in finding ways to help their children meet their future language needs. However, to date, there has been a lack of a detailed, cohesive prescriptive model for Maya parents much beyond the general exhortation to speak Mayan to their children. Maya activists themselves may present contradictory examples, since they are largely drawn from the more urban, educated Mayan population, and their fluency in the Mayan language-or that of their offspring-is often notably less than that of rural Mayas.

Maya parents recognize that Spanish language acquisition is necessary to prepare a child to deal with schooling, Spanish literacy, and mastering the intricacies of the dominant bureaucratic system. However, adequate opportunities outside the home for Spanish acquisition are lacking. Most parents do not see public schools as a good point to begin learning Spanish. Many parents recall their own traumatic experiences arriving at school with no command of Spanish and the abuse they suffered from Ladino teachers who did not respect their language or culture. They do not wish for their children to repeat this experience. And despite the improvements and expansion of

bilingual education today, the great majority of classrooms are still not able to serve the monolingual Maya student adequately.

Despite the practice of speaking Spanish in the home, many Maya parents still recognize the value of Mayan languages and do not claim to be intentionally precipitating their demise. Parents may not speak Mayan at home for a combination of many reasons, including what Laura Martin (1991) has termed a "genetic" view of language-that it is such an essential part of the people, like skin color, that it need not be consciously taught or learned to be acquired. Many parents are aware that language is only acquired easily during childhood and that if their children do not learn the Mayan language at home it will be much more difficult for them as adults. Parents need to be assured that bilingualism is indeed feasible, and they need specific suggestions on how to distribute the two languages among communicative settings within the home. Specifically, they need strategies to teach their children Spanish in a Mayan-speaking household. Until recently, larger issues, such as the recently signed Peace Accords, have preempted language planning at this microlevel.

Literacy in Mayan Languages

Literacy in Guatemala is intimately tied to historical, economic, political, and ethnic circumstances. Illiteracy rates, some of the highest in the Americas, reflect the profound marginalization of much of the population. Although the majority speaks a Mayan language as a mother tongue, most national literacy campaigns focusing on adults in the past promoted literacy acquisition in Spanish. In fact, almost all Mayas literate in a Mayan language have prior, and in most cases greater, literacy in Spanish.

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Since programs in Mayan language literacy involve the standardization of orthographies and the production of educational materials, their net effect empowers the Mayan population. The current movement for Mayan revitalization or nationalism has roots in efforts to promote literacy in Mayan languages. In fact, many of its leaders began their training and organizational experience in the study of Mayan linguistics. Today many Mayas speak of a personal process of *concientizacion*, which occurred as they learned more about their language, culture, and history. They came to appreciate the worth of Mayan culture and chose to dedicate themselves to its promotion.

For many scholars, the relation between writing and political power is quite direct. Some describe literacy-and, by extension, education- as the social space in which dominance is reproduced and hegemony established (Hogben 1965; Lankshear 1989). Paulo Freire (1987), on the other hand, sees literacy as liberating, enabling the oppressed to distance themselves from their oppressors and to perceive their situation objectively. Thus, the relation between literacy and political struggles can be two-sided. As Daniel Wagner (1987) notes, since the advent of printing (coinciding with the Reformation and the birth of capitalism), the written word has been used to intimidate those in power, as well as the other way around.

For the Mayas, literacy can be repressive or liberating, depending in part on the process and the product. In terms of process, one can compare literacy to the acquisition of oralcy, which generally takes place under psychologically favorable conditions, and learning to write, which generally takes place in the authoritarian socialization process of the school. Spanish-language literacy often takes place in an environment that is foreign and unfriendly to the Mayas, while Mayan language literacy training, almost by

definition, is a Maya-only enterprise since very few non-Mayas read and write a Mayan language.

In terms of product, one must ask what materials will be accessible to the newly literate reader, who writes them, and to what end. The literacy campaigns of the past five hundred years, motivated by religious or political agendas foreign to the Mayas, were foreshadowed in the last paragraph of Antonio de Nebrija's (1492) grammar, in which he wrote:

> Soon Your Majesty will have placed her yoke upon many barbarians who speak outlandish tongues. By this, your victory, these people shall stand in a new need; the need for the laws the victor owes to the vanquished, and the need for the language we shall bring with us.

Arnulfo Simon (Wuqu' Ajpub') (1994, p.176) argues: "If the content is Western, comprehension is going to be very difficult." He offers an example: "Many have translated Apocalypse, chapter and verse into a Mayan language. What comprehension are Maya readers going to have of that? And the less one understands, the less interest there will be in literacy." One product of Mayan language literacy can be a new way of viewing the world. Jean Piaget (1995) established that new concepts develop as a result of challenges from experiences that contradict a person's existing conceptual systems. Becoming literate in a Mayan language provides just such a challenge by contradicting many of the myths used to justify Mayan oppression: that the languages are inferior, have no grammar, and are not fit to be written or used pedagogically.

The benefits of initial literacy training in the mother tongue of the learner have been widely recognized for many decades (UNESCO, 1972). Nevertheless, arguments against wide-scale education in Mayan languages are common in Guatemala, and they point to the logistical complexity and expense of multilingual material production. Until

very recently, most literacy education for children and adults was conducted in Spanish. Lower educational rates among the Mayas are one result of this educational policy, not surprisingly, since initial literacy training in a second language has been shown to delay reading skills (Downing, 1987). There are however, more profound implications: not only is the academic performance of Maya students affected, but also their self-esteem and cultural identity. The decreased use and prestige accorded Mayan languages by Maya youth are one result of this policy.

As the political landscape has shifted in Guatemala, the conception of illiteracy as a social problem has been highlighted. On December 29, 1996, with the signing of the Peace Accords, these documents created a road map for long-term development strategies for Guatemala to rebuild its society. Key to the success of rebuilding civil society is human capacity development, focusing on broad-based education for the Guatemalan population, including adult literacy[2]. One of the more important Peace Accords on Socioeconomic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation calls for literacy to be achieved in as many indigenous languages as possible by 70% of the Guatemalan adult population by the year 2000. This is a severe challenge for Central America's most populated country of approximately 12 million people.

Guatemala literacy rates are amongst the lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly within rural indigenous groups. The National Literacy Committee's (CONALFA) National Strategy on Literacy cites the national literacy rate

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[2] These introductory paragraphs draw heavily on the COMAL project proposal developed by CIE and Save the Children/USA. As stated in USAID / Guatemala's Literacy Activity announcement, education particularly supports the Peace Accord on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Accord on Socioeconomic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation, and the Global Accord on Human Rights.

of persons 15 and over at 48%; the World Bank reports an overall literacy rate of 52%; and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports an overall literacy rate of 56%[3], with literacy rates in certain rural indigenous populations ranging as low as 23-30%.

As in much of the world, many more men than women in Guatemala are literate. Nationwide estimates from the Government of Guatemala and CONALFA indicate that 55-63% of all Guatemalan men are literate as compared to 40-45% of all women. Additionally, many more people living in urban settings are literate compared with their rural counterparts. CONALFA estimates that 23% of all illiterate Guatemalans live in the cities while 77% live in rural areas. Literacy rates for rural indigenous women are estimated at 28% but, according to USAID, literacy among some Mayan women is as low as 10% (USAID 2000, p.1), while the overall literacy rate of non-indigenous women is calculated at 75% (Government of Guatemala, 1995).

The political focus on literacy is reflected in the Peace Accords and subsequent programming. The negotiated nature of the Peace Accords and the incorporation of both sides of the conflict into government beginning in 1996 and continuing until the present time with the election of President Alfonso Portillo, meant that legacies of the past abuses directed at Mayan communities became the collective burden of all present in the post-Peace Accords governments. The problem of adult illiteracy, particularly among Mayans has become a development issue, which has demanded new working strategies of redress in order to make up for the social backlog that was the legacy of Ladino controlled policies and discriminatory practices regarding Mayan education.

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[3]UNDP (1997) reported in Siglo Veintiuno (19 April 1998).

The problematic of adult literacy in the present has become a set of concerns that are a subject of policy debates and are being rearticulated in new discourses of education policy and development.

Adult literacy however, was earmarked originally as an arena for small national funding through CONALFA and for larger scale donor funding through donor organizations such as the European Union, and USAID. At the beginning of 2000, the Ministry of Education began a four year literacy plan (called plan 2000-2004), the *Movimiento Nacional de Alfabetizacion* (National Movement for Literacy) and has included the national literacy rector, *CONALFA*, and other key players in literacy projects such as USAID's sponsored *COMAL* Project and the European Union's *ALA* program to participate in this literacy campaign approach that is hoping to make 700,000 new literates by the end of 2004.

In Guatemala, there remains a window of opportunity at this time to examine meaningful policy formulation for adult literacy. The policy field remains at least partially open, and the expectations of a quick fix by way of a large-scale campaign having been somewhat subdued, as the targets of the literacy plan have fallen short (MINEDUC, 2004). The research undertaken by me will hopefully complement willingness among key players and developers in adult literacy to reconceptualize the field.

By using ethnographic methods to conduct literacy research, a potentially empowering model for literacy programming can emerge that is sensitive to local context and needs. During my many observations, interviews and focus groups with Mayan market women, clear reasons for wanting to gain literacy and written numeracy

skills were mentioned. However, what also became clear during our conversations was that most of the women were convinced that spending time learning to read and write in the language they already speak and use, *K'iche* was not in their best interests, nor a good use of time and was actually viewed as a way to keep them isolated "*como simpre*" (as always). However, many of the women in my study stated very different reasons for wanting their children to be fully bilingual and for them to respect and value their indigenous culture and language.

All of these beliefs and feelings about literacy, its desires and its potential threats make up a large part of my data, as the women in my study seemed to have many opinions about what educational programming should look like for their families and less often themselves.

CHAPTER 3

QUETZALTENANGO AND THE MARKETPLACE

About Quetzaltenango

Figure 2. Map

Quetzaltenango is the second largest city in Guatemala with a total population of

250,000. It is situated near several volcanoes in the heart of the Sierra Madres, 200

kilometers west of Guatemala City. Quetzaltenango's altitude of 2,333 meters (8,000

feet) above sea level ensures warm days, cool nights and no mosquitoes. The

indigenous name for Quetzaltenango, *"Xe laju' noj"* which means "under 10

mountains". Dwellers of this city frequently refer to it as *Xelajú* (pronounced (Shayla-

who) or *Xela* for short. In Pre-Columbian times Quetzaltenango was a city of the *Mam*

Maya people. The city was said to already be over 300 years old when the Spanish first

arrived. Conquistador Pedro de Alvarado defeated and killed Maya king *Tecun Uman* in *Xela*. When Alvarado conquered the city for Spain in the 1520s, he called it by the *Nahuatl* name used by his Central Mexican Indian allies, "*Quetzaltenango*", or the place of the Quetzal bird", which became the city's official name in colonial times. In 1848, Quetzaltenango won its independence from Guatemala, becoming the capital of "*El Sexto Estado de los Altos*" (the sixth state of Central American Federation). However, the Guatemalan army crushed the movement after two years of independence and Quetzaltenango rejoined the Guatemalan republic.

In the 19th century coffee was introduced as a major crop in the area, and the economy of *Xela* prospered, building flourished and much fine Belle Epoch architecture can still be found in the city.

Some of the most celebrated people in Guatemalan history were originally from Quetzaltenango including Otto René Castillo, who is considered the most influential writer in the country, President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, who was overthrown by the CIA in 1954, and Jesús Castillo, the best known marimba composer in Guatemala and the world.

Xela has a rich history and with its six universities and several technical schools, it is often referred to as Guatemala's cultural center and most progressive city. There are 35,000 students from all over the country and the city taking classes at the universities and high schools and *Xelajú* boasts the highest number of elementary, middle, high school and universities per capita than any other city in the country. Its literacy levels are also enviable, with only a 26% illiteracy rate according to a 2000

report by FUNCEDE (the Central American Development Foundation – a group funded by the Soros Foundation).

With a population 50% indigenous and 50% mestizos, the city is an example of how some traditionally impoverished indigenous people have obtained economic and political power in Guatemala running small and big businesses. In 1986, *Xelajú* elected its first indigenous mayor in 150 years.

The Markets of *Xela*

There are three distinct market areas in the city, an outdoor market and an indoor municipal market both located near the main plaza, as well as the larger and most frequented outdoor main marketplace, *La Independencia,* which is located up the hill from the plaza near the north edge of town and encompasses four blocks of the city. The outdoor and municipal markets are best known for fresh and dried meats, fish, eggs, flours and sugar, cheeses and all kinds of household items. *La Independencia* has fresh fruits and vegetables, beans and rice and separate sections for clothes, shoes and bath and kitchen items.

Just as each market has its own personality, the vendors in each market seemed to share common traits with their surroundings. I found the sellers in the open market to be more open and friendly, and tended to banter more easily with me, while the sellers in the closed market at the other end of town were less likely to engage in conversation and appeared more closed and less approachable.

CHAPTER 4

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I present an overview of the different bodies of literature that have shaped the fields of literacy research and literacy studies and in turn influenced and informed my research project. A review of the literature pertinent to the methodology for my research study has been presented in Chapter 5.

I begin this chapter by examining models of literacy and review the seminal theoretical concepts in the field of literacy studies. I then move on to some newer theories for understanding literacy that are being developed and tested by the New Literacy Studies (NLS) movement and comment on how these concepts are currently shaping literacy research and planning. Borrowing from the NLS the framework of literacy models being either autonomous or ideological, I move on to examine multilingual and bilingual literacy in general and in Guatemala more specifically. After a review of approaches to teaching literacy in developing countries, I end this chapter by reviewing issues raised in language and literacy planning and policy in Guatemala, a field that needs much more attention from researchers and policy makers alike.

Models of Literacy

In their seminal work published in 1963 entitled, "The Consequences of Literacy", Jack Goody and Ian Watt began a discussion in the field of literacy studies that continues to this day when they claimed that literacy was the main factor distinguishing primitive from civilized societies. The ideas in this article and in

Goody's two subsequent books, <u>Literacy in Traditional Societies</u> (1968) and <u>The Domestication of the Savage Mind</u> (1971) voiced many common working assumptions about the obtainment of literacy as a neutral technology independent of its social or political context that would bring with it great benefits for the new literate as well as to society. Goody recognized the social implications behind specific developments in literacy, for example, that the complexity of the Chinese script meant knowledge was confined to a smaller elite group (Goody, 1968, p. 24) but he did not acknowledge the power dimension of literacy as a potentially problematic issue. Ong, writing two decades after Goody's original work went further in articulating the differences between oral and literate societies, detailing the ways in which "literacy enlarges the potentiality of language" (Ong, 1982, p. 7), how "writing separates the knower from the known" (Ong, 1982, p. 46) and the fact that "writing moves speech from oral-aural to a new sensory world, that of vision" (Ong, 1982, p. 85). He believed that literacy had cognitive implications for the individual, enabling more complex abstract thought than was possible in oral societies. Goody's observation that literacy encourages private thought is extended by Ong into "a new sense of the private ownership of words" created by print (Ong, 1982, p. 132). Both Goody and Ong presented a detailed picture of what they believed to be the benefits of literacy and the vast differences between oral and literate societies though Goody & Watt (1968, p. 27) admitted, 'there is no agreement about what the actual boundaries between non-literate and literate cultures are".

These early works conducted in literacy studies can be characterized as conceptualizations of literacy as embodying what is now considered an "autonomous"

view of literacy, (as coined by Brian Street in 1993) where literacy, regardless of context, is seen as generally producing particular universal characteristics and specifically giving rise to good effects. In this autonomous view of literacy, literacy does things to people regardless of context. For example, people possessing or becoming literate have higher cognitive skills and reading and writing helps them to develop the meta-cognitive understanding of the rational skills that are crucial for economic and social progress.

These assumed outcomes subscribed to literacy championed by the thinkers in this body of literature is primarily concerned with literacy and its correlation to cognition and development. In this autonomous view, there is a strong emphasis on the transformation of a literate individual, helping the primitive and mostly oral based culture transform to the modern mindset of the literate. Ong was pivotal in introducing the concept of the "great divide" highlighting the differences between oral and literate cultures and the belief that writing "restructures" thought and promotes analytical thinking skills as well as abstract reasoning.

This thinking on the role and ultimately the purpose of literacy by these pioneers in literacy studies is in line with the prevailing theories of economic development of that time. Modernization theory believed that a primitive society's development relied upon its ability of its citizenry to obtain the attributes of "modern man" so that it could help build a society that could "takeoff" economically (a la W.W. Rostow). The ability to read and write was of course a prerequisite.

Lest you think that this argument is not relevant today, in 2001, Goody has continued his contribution by looking more closely at the role of writing in the

development of intentionality and mind. It seems clear, he maintains, that writing 'formalizes' the semiotic system of language. He contends that spoken language handles easily the flux of everyday experience with its wealth of ambiguities and overlapping experiential categories, whereas written language handles best the development and organization of bounded categories. Writing "creates a beginning and an end, giving rise to the problem of how should we classify 'anomalies', which are only anomalies within a written system of categories". Goody is now concerned with the effect of writing and literacy skills on complex mind-body states, epitomized by the emotions. He believes that people who have the ability to write about their emotions and make them 'visible' in a 'slow-motion', careful kind of way, can reflect upon them and develop them further than those who lack the ability to write.

Critics of these commonly held views detailed above have suggested that this "divide" between orality and literacy is really not a divide at all as much as it is a continuum. Rather than believing in a single and presumably Western idea of literacy (that oftentimes goes hand in hand with the Western conceptions of development), they point out the existence of multiple literacies in a local context. Literacy cannot be "acquired neutrally but in specific cultural, political and historical contexts" (Mackie, 1980, p. 1) so "any writing is a cultural form" (Street, 1984, p. 32). These ideas, known as the "cultural" view of literacy, have great implications for both the research and teaching of literacy: it posits that the understanding of literacy depends on an exploration of the cultural context to see what functions reading, writing and numeracy have. Examples of this kind of exploration rely on ethnographic research to uncover the multiple literacies at play in a specific context. Scribner and Cole's groundbreaking

work in the 1970s with the Vai community in Liberia typifies this kind of investigation. They set out to explore "how the Vai people acquire literacy skills, what these skills are and what they do with them" (Scribner & Cole, 1978, p. 26). They found that there were three different scripts used in this community - Vai, English, and Arabic and each script is learned and used in very distinct ways. This research shows how different "literacy practices relate to the development of certain skills" (Scribner & Cole, 1978, p. 23). For example, the Arabic learners were better at a memorization test that was similar to the way in which they memorized and recited the Koran by heart. Scribner and Cole's work was the first to challenge the work of Goody and Ong and their "speculations about the cognitive consequences of literacy" (Scribner & Cole, 1978, p. 21) and demonstrated the multiple literacies present in just one community. In particular, they brought into question "all our notions of what writing is, bound up with school-based writing" by showing in this specific context that "the kind of writing that goes on in school has a very special status. It generates products that meet teacher demands and academic requirements but may not fulfill any other immediate instrumental ends" (Scribner & Cole, 1978, p. 35).

A newer development in literacy studies, the New Literacy Studies (NLS) movement, created in part by Brian Street with his seminal book, Cross-cultural approaches to literacy (1993) takes the work of Scribner and Cole and others even further by emphasizing the social nature of literacy to illuminate the multiple and sometimes-contested nature of literacy practices. This "paradigm shift" in our thinking about literacy moves the focus from literacy skills as individual, discrete skills to reading and writing (and I add numeracy) as cultural practices. This shift in focus from

the discrete skills of an individual to the cultural practices of a group (as exhibited in the case study of the Vai in West Africa) allows for the existence of multiple literacies, domains and genres of literacy, each practiced in culturally determined places and ways.

This view of literacy, known as the ideological view of literacy, in contrast to the autonomous view of literacy has grown from the belief that literacy practices are part of culture and the surrounding power structures of that culture (Roberts & Street, 1995). Street in his discussion of colonial literacy uses the term "dominant literacy" to describe situations where a "dominant group within a society is responsible for spreading literacy to other members of that society and to subcultures within it", a process paralleling political colonization (Street, 1987, p. 50). He believes that when literacy practices are transferred from one culture to another, as is the case in many Western sponsored literacy programs,

> those receiving it will be more conscious of the nature and power of that culture than of the mere technical aspects of reading and writing. Very often this process has involved some transfer of 'Western' values to a Third World society. (Street, 1987, p. 50)

The outgrowth of this alternative paradigm for understanding literacy as something other than a neutral technology with its own set of power dynamics is parallel to emerging ideas in theories of development at that time. In the late 1980s and early 1990s when this socio-cultural approach to literacy was becoming established by academics of the New Literacy Studies movement primarily at universities in the U.K., post structuralism's influence on development was being discussed by mainly among postcolonial social theorists. These thinkers (Fanon, 1986; Said, 1989; Foucault, 1980; Escobar, 1993; among others) believed that, in Escobar's words, (quoted in Peet, 1999; p. 147), "The system of relations establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of

the game; who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise." This thinking was highly critical of development agencies and other western apparatus charged with knowledge production. Escobar goes on to say, "Development was-and continues to be for the most part - a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach..." (1995, p. 44).

In relation to research being conducted about literacy and its subsequent application in the field, the above critique (along with many others) compelled planners and policy makers to redefine the goals of their work. The New Literacy Studies researchers try to do that by using the term literacy as shorthand for the social practices of reading and writing (Street, 1994, p. 1) and then examine the wider context within which the literacy practices are framed, commenting much less on the consequences of literacy acquisition, but the understanding of its role in a culture and insisting that this be the take-off point for program development, a much different approach than the field had been implementing in the previous decades.

Heath's influential work, Ways with Words (1983), focused on "literacy events" (which had first been used by Anderson, Teale and Estrada in 1980 to explain preschool children's literacy behaviors) to describe those occasions in which written language is part of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies. She was able to highlight the divergent orientations to literacy and learning that differing cultural and communicative traditions produce, particularly by way of initiating children to literacy in culturally specific ways. Some of the traditions were more akin to the dominant school literacies than others thus giving some children an advantage over others when they went into the public school system.

Street (1995), Barton (1991), Baynham (1995) and Prinsloo and Breier (1996) in their research have all begun to capture and theorize about "literacy events" in various setting around the world. These researchers have also begun the study of a more comprehensive concept, "literacy practices", which refers to behaviors as well as social and cultural conceptualizations that give meaning to reading and/or writing.

Literacy events is a useful concept for both researchers and practitioners because it focuses on a particular situation where things are happening and are observable, an occasion that involves reading and or writing and can begin to draw out its characteristics. Literacy practices, which Street considers, "the more robust of the various concepts that researchers have been developing within a social approach to literacy", (2000, p. 11), attempt to handle both the events and the patterns around literacy and to link them to something broader of a social and cultural kind. Part of the thinking behind the broadening of literacy events is that inevitably, we bring to the literacy event social conceptions and ideas about the nature of reading and writing within a particular cultural context that make it work and give it meaning. For example, in my case with the Maya market workers, it was less about the acquisition of literacy per se, as it was about access to the skills of Spanish language and reading and writing that the women had deemed necessary. Asking them simply about the need for reading and writing elicited the usual responses that it was good but got us very little information about which literacies they required and for what purposes.

The autonomous and ideological models of literacy can also be applied to numeracy, a concept that is commonly assumed to be "neutral and culture-free" (Baker & Street, 1994, p. 34-57). Since the autonomous view has dominated our thinking, we

often fail to see how culture has affected our mathematical and numerical understanding. Lewis (in Baker & Street, 1994) gives the example of the Australian aborigines' "ability to locate themselves on a seemingly featureless landscape.... there was no doubt they carried an internalized compass in their heads". The ideological model of mathematics not only stresses the importance of culture in the development of certain skills, but also highlights the social and political pressures that ensure a certain kind of numeracy is valued above others. An example is the "back to basics" approach to mathematics in the developed world which has focused on basic arithmetic rather than broader mathematical understanding Baker (in Baker & Street, 1994) discusses how "the Basic Skills Unit [in the U.K.] itself makes their beliefs explicit by identifying 'basic skills' within mathematics as being able to calculate effectively" (ALBSU, 1993, p. 13). They term this area of mathematics "numeracy" and present it as a set of pure skills separate from contexts in which it may be used, showing their belief that "mathematics is both culture and value free" (Baker, 1996, p. 3). Ethnomathematics by contrast is an approach concerned to "theorize a more liberatory conception of mathematics" (Frankenstein & Powell, 1994, p. 76), based on the assumption that "mathematical ideas exist in all cultures, but which ones are emphasized, how they are expressed and their particular contexts will vary from culture to culture" (Ascher, 1991, cited in Frankenstein & Powell, p. 77).

I have been describing the autonomous and ideological models of literacy as research approaches (and the theoretical roots of the ideological model can be seen to lie in the academic disciplines of anthropology and sociolinguistics) (Street, 2000, p. 4). The view of literacy as reading and writing that is more 'social' in its orientation is

beginning to be adopted by adult literacy planners and teachers in developing countries. Street (2000) extends his argument into the program context by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the autonomous and ideological models. A strength of the autonomous model is said to be "its ability to 'deliver' in pedagogic terms": a weakness of the ideological model is that "it complicates the design of programs and curricula in ways that might actually prevent anything being done" (Street, 2000, p. 5).

<u>Multiple Languages, Multiple Literacies?</u>

In the challenging situation of a multilingual setting such as Guatemala, the autonomous and ideological models provide a most useful framework for examining recent efforts towards understanding multiple literacy situations and the current situation of adult literacy programs targeting Maya women. The "autonomous" model of literacy that focuses on the technical skills of reading and writing is most typified by traditional transference models of bilingual education. This model is characterized by literacy instruction in L1 (the native language) used orally to develop comprehension skills in L2 (the second language), followed by further training to strengthen the development of reading and writing in the second language.

In Guatemala, the transference model of bilingual education is used by the state for both children's school based education as well as adult nonformal literacy education (Duque Arellanos, 1999, p. 23). Using the autonomous view of literacy as a framework, this model can be seen as operating within a paradigm that promotes the development of the discreet sets of skills of decoding, reading, writing and numeracy regardless of the context within which it is operating. Pegging completion (and therefore defining

becoming literate) on the passing of a test where the successful learner achieves a primary school leaving certificate, CONALFA, the state run body in charge of literacy education, reported that in 1998 promotion rates were 36% at this initial stage of literacy and, in 2000, they had reportedly risen to 55% (Anderson, 2001, p. 25). The low level of promotion and continuation of the literacy process as it is defined in Guatemala suggests, along with my small sample, that the literacy model being used is not meeting all of the varying needs of Maya adults.

An ideological model of literacy, on the other hand, would be more flexible to the multiple needs of the literacy learners and be able to conform to the multiple and sometimes conflicting needs as expressed by the women in my study. In Alta and Baja Vera Paz regions of Guatemala, the ALA Program, funded through the European Union, has tried to do just that. Research conducted by *FUNRURAL* in 2000-2001 has suggested that a bi-literacy model, that focuses on moving between a Maya language and Spanish, not one of strict transference, depending on the needs expressed by the learners, was the most successful way to keep adults enrolled in literacy programs and engaged in the learning process. In their small program, their completion rates in their nine-month program hover at over 90%. Their research also suggests that introducing "productive" themes from which to extract literacy learning has proven to keep learners motivated (FUNRURAL, 2001). While these programs cannot claim that the learners will graduate with the equivalent of the primary school leaving certificate as the *CONALFA* transference bilingual literacy program may, their ability to hold learners interests is worth more research. Their model refers to itself as a bi-literacy approach and stresses the use of both Spanish and *K'iche* simultaneously and without separation.

I will now move on to consider how these models of literacy and numeracy can be seen in the kind of literacy programs developed over the past fifty years. I think it is important to consider these varying approaches to literacy teaching because in my experience, what the program planners and the practitioners say they may be using as an approach may not be what is translated in the literacy teaching evident in the classroom. For example, in Guatemala both the *CONAFLA* and the *ALA* programs described above see themselves as relying on Freire's generative theme approach to literacy learning. But on closer examination (field visits conducted by me in 1999 and 2000) showed that the *CONALFA* program relies on pre-developed curriculum focusing on formal school themes for literacy acquisition, while the *ALA* program develops its curriculum as it goes along much akin to the REFLECT approach developed by Action Aid UK.

First, however, I will briefly discuss the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills and the challenges faced in the development of programs that teach both Spanish and a Mayan language. Because program planners and practitioners not only must consider an approach, they must constantly be thinking about the technical skills of literacy learning and their relationship to the approach they are using.

Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Reading, writing and calculating involve different skills. The skills involved in reading are mainly those of recognizing, decoding and understanding what someone else has written. They also involve reacting to the information that has been read, making it one's own and making use of it. This is generally the case, regardless of which writing system is being used.

The skills involved in writing are more demanding: most people learn to read sooner and more easily than they learn to write. Learning to write involves mastering manual manipulation of a pen and pencil; remembering the exact form of a letter or character and recreating it; and transferring thoughts into signs, in order to write something down.

The skills involved in numeracy are different again. Although they include recognizing and reproducing signs and symbols, the symbols represent quantity and have no relationship to their spoken form.

Generally, but not necessarily, adults use the skills of reading, writing and calculating in combination with each other. The combination of skills needed by the learners will help to determine which methods should be used to acquire which skills and in what order. Most adult literacy programs work with a combination of methods.

There are generally two approaches to teaching reading and writing: the bottom up or the top-down approaches. The bottom-up approach begins with learning letters first and putting them together to make words and sentences. The most used approach to literacy instruction, the phonic approach, is an example of the bottom-up approach. A top-down approach starts with concepts and phrases and breaks them down into sentences, words and letters. An example of the top-down approach is language experience approach where learners' stories are transcribed and used as the text for language learning and reading and writing. Both approaches are valuable and depending on the language of instruction, one approach may be a better jumping off point than another.

In most literacy programs in Guatemala, regardless of whether it is a Mayan language or Spanish that is begin introduced, literacy instruction begins with the generative word approach and is combined with syllabic/phonics approaches. This approach often confounds learners because of the vast differences of the structure of Spanish versus Mayan languages. According to Martin Chaquach of the Linguistic Institute of the University of Rafael Landivar[1], many Mayan languages are structured in such a way that phonic and syllabic instruction is difficult. In these cases, he suggests what he calls a "global method", the method of teaching sentences first. Whole language strategies and learning experience approach are akin to this approach.

Strategies For Literacy Teaching in Developing Countries

In their 1986 work, <u>Adult Literacy in the Third World: A Review of Objectives and Strategies</u>, Agneta Lind and Anton Johnston describe a number of international literacy strategies found in developing countries, showing how they evolved historically after World War II. The 'Fundamental Education' approach, promoted by UNESCO during the post-war period 1946-64, was a term "adopted to describe a broad field of development activities, whereof one was nonformal literacy programs for adults" (Lind & Johnston, 1986, p. 32). During this period, the promotion of practical skills that accompanied the literacy teaching was stressed but the "results of actual literacy activities were very poor" (Lind & Johnston, 1986, p. 9). Because of this failure in measurable gains and in the participating countries' literacy statistics, UNESCO launched the Functional Literacy approach in 1965 within the framework of the

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[1]Interview, March 15, 1998.

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Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) with strict economic growth aims. "The idea was to experiment with the economic returns of literacy, when linked to specific areas or target groups in industry or agriculture undergoing rapid development" (Lind & Johnston, 1986, p. 9). The term 'functional' was used by UNESCO to describe "the process and content of learning to read and write to the preparation of work and vocational training, as well as a means of increasing the productivity of the individual" (Verhoeven, 1994, p. 6). 1975-1980 was "A Turning Point for Literacy", as expressed in the Declaration of Persepolis in 1975, in which literacy is critically reviewed and conceived as a "political, human and cultural process of consciousness-raising and liberation" (Lind & Johnston, 1990, p. 9). This has become known as the 'conscientization' approach of Paulo Freire which links literacy directly to social and political action.

At this point, it may be useful to detail Freire's approach to literacy learning, since in Guatemala (as well as many other developing countries), a majority of both government and NGO programs claim to be based upon this approach to pedagogy. Freire was Professor of Education at the University of Recife until 1964 and from 1947 became interested in adult education, working among the poorer illiterate population of North East Brazil (Sanders, 1968, p. 2). He was dissatisfied with the traditional literacy primers which used similar material for adults as for children and felt that the "language and situations ... were drawn from urban middle class life and bore little if any relation to the problems and interests of the lower classes, chiefly rural, that he was trying to teach" (Sanders, 1968, p .2.). Sanders identifies three main sources from which Freire's new method emerged: the language, culture and problems of the illiterates themselves,

philosophies of knowledge, human nature, culture and history and the dependency theories emerging as explanations of the failure of modernization policies in South America (Sanders, 1968, p. 2).

Freire departed from the usual alphabetic approach to literacy teaching, by basing his methods on the recognition of "generative words". These words were chosen to be representative of certain social and political themes that would lead the literacy class participants to discuss the issues in the context of their own lives. Freire's key concepts are of a process of "conscientization" through dialogue, with reflection leading to action (which he terms "praxis" – "reflection and action upon the world to change it", [Connolly, 1980, p. 72]). Freire's ideas of literacy being either for "liberation or domestication", the "banking concept of education", the "culture of silence" whereby the oppressed are powerless to act, need to be seen in the specific context of Latin America in the 1970s. The language of dependency theorists and the reaction against colonial domination gives a specific meaning to "oppression" and the "oppressed" which can be redefined in the post-modern society (McLaren & Lankshear, 1994, p. 4).

Freire has been criticized for romanticizing "voice" - even if the oppressed are given "voice", they still have to contend with the structures of oppression (Luke, 1996). Prinsloo (1987, p. 3) discusses Freire's relevance in the context of South Africa, suggesting that "his worth remains at a rhetorical level" since his writing does not explain precisely how literacy leads to social action, "One seeks in vain through Freire's work for a clear exegesis of the dynamics whereby reflection leads to action, conscientization is party to praxis" (Prinsloo, 1987, p. 18). He criticizes Freire's "mode of theorizing" (Prinsloo, 1987, p. 13) as "his notions of oppressor and oppressed are

empty and abstract categories and there is no sense of the dynamics of their conflict." (Prinsloo 1987, p. 14). "The Freirean curriculum is not located with any sense of facilitating group formation and group identity in the context of struggle" (Prinsloo, 1987, p. 20). These criticisms are similar to those made by feminists regarding the nature of oppression and the neutrality of the facilitator.

Despite these criticisms, Freire's approach to literacy teaching has been widely adopted in developing countries, though the political content as imagined by Freire is oftentimes diffused by choosing key words around development topics (e.g., *"milpa"* [intercropping in Spanish]) rather than social action. With all criticisms aside, the elements that have appealed to literacy planners as well as learners are Freire's methods of constructing an adult-focused literacy course, which can be made relevant to the needs of rural populations.

Other approaches identified by Lind and Johnston are the "Mass Campaign" approach (which can consist either of a one time campaign to eradicate illiteracy [kind of like a vaccine] or a series of campaigns), 'General Literacy Programs' (which are often large scale but "politically cool") and 'selective small scale programs'. Bhola (1984, p. 35) describes the literacy campaign approach as "a mass approach that seeks to make all adult men and women in a nation literate within a particular time frame". He goes on to suggest how this approach can "provide the people with a deeply felt political experience resulting in a sense of nationhood". The campaign approach used in Nicaragua and Cuba can thus be seen as political, though not necessarily in the critical sense promoted by Freire.

Alan Rogers (1994a) lays out a similar framework for looking at literacy programs, but with a more analytical lens. He identifies three clear stages: i) the traditional view which "is founded on a deficit view of illiteracy, on the belief that autonomous learning and development activities can start only after the acquisition of literacy" (Rogers, 1994b, p. 46); ii) Freire's approach of the early '70s which is based on a "deprived" view of illiteracy (Rogers, 1994a); and iii) The New Literacy or socio-cultural approach of the '80s which puts the emphasis on "different" literacies. Rogers' analysis is particularly useful in that he shows the link between ideology and methods: the traditional view leading to a "literacy first" and top-down approach, contrasted with the more participatory New Literacy Approach where "literacy comes second" (Rogers, 1994b, p. 46) and is not necessarily considered "a prerequisite for further development programs". In the transition from describing learners as "deficit" to "deprived" to "different", Rogers shows how the choice of literacy methodology reflects a political stance (1994a).

The above labels given to the various approaches to literacy teaching (Freirean, functional etc.) can be quite misleading in practice. Particularly in settings where literacy facilitators receive very little training and have had very little schooling themselves, an approach to literacy is something traditionally given more thought by planners and policy makers. In Guatemala, complicating these issues is the challenge of facilitating literacy in more than one language. Seen as a primarily technical field, language planning has been seen as something experts do, not literacy practitioners, when in fact, literacy programmers and facilitators are making choices about language

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everyday when they enter a supposedly bilingual literacy classroom or a bi-literacy classroom.

In these next two and final sections of this chapter, I review the issues connected to language planning in general and language issues in literacy programs more specifically. Operating within the framework of autonomous and ideological models, my hopes for these sections are that I show educational language planning needs to be seen in the context of language policy for the country as a whole, since the use and value of languages within the "domain" of the classroom will be determined by how they are used in public life.

Planning in Educational and Development Contexts

In order to frame my later discussions of the language planning and policy arenas in Guatemala today, I begin by presenting a brief overview of general planning traditions as described by Caroline Moser. It is important to understand the potential links to the current state of language and literacy planning and policy in Guatemala and it is my hopes that this information will help me make my case for revisiting existing planning traditions in Guatemala today.

Moser (1993, p. 84) describes the various planning traditions in terms of their methodologies, showing the link between the changing roles of planners and the methods they employ. She traces historically three planning traditions: classical, applied and transformative.

The classical tradition, associated with the blueprint plan, began in the 1890s and was popular into the early twentieth century. The traditional survey-analysis-plan

was "product-oriented and its best-known form was the national plan, adopted in many Third World countries" (Moser, 1993, p. 84). In the 1950s and '60s, the applied traditions were developed, characterizing planning as "a set of rational procedures and methods for decision making" (Moser, 1993, p. 85). Educational change at this time was conceived entirely from the developer's point of view. This procedure of planning allowed for content to be separated from context and thus "depoliticizes planning" (Hambleton, 1986, p. 133). Project planning has tended to adopt the rational comprehensive planning methodology which consists of several logical stages: problem definition, data collection and processing, formulation of goals and objectives, design of alternative plans, decision making, implementation, monitoring and feedback (Moser, 1993, p. 87). Criticism of this approach to planning has led to variations on the rational comprehensive model including advocacy, strategic planning and action oriented planning which take into account the recipients' point of view and allow for more interaction and dialogue in the planning process. Nevertheless, rational comprehensive planning, albeit in modified forms, continues to be the planning model most used by national governments, NGOs, and donor agencies in developing countries.

The third and most recent are the transformative traditions, marked by their potential 'transformative' impact on the way we "perceive and wish to experience life in all its aspects" (Safier in Moser, 1993, pg. 87). Examples are environmental planning and gender planning: Unlike the previous two traditions, the transformative traditions are based on recognition of the political dimension of planning. Thus the purpose of transformative language planning for example would be the means by which to operationalize this political concern. By characterizing planning as "debate" and

making the "political dimension of negotiation its central concern", the transformative tradition challenges the traditional view that planning can "adopt an existing 'neutral' and universally applicable set of technical procedures" (Moser, 1993, p. 87). The planner is seen as an actor affecting the field situation, as "an expert providing 'value-laden' advice" (Moser, 1993, p. 87). We can see in Moser's description of the transformative traditions, a concern not just with the planner as decision maker but as collector and processor of information. "The assumption that data are objective and 'value-free' is particularly problematic for a planning tradition concerned with transformation" (Moser, 1993, p. 97).

I will now move on to address specifically issues related to language planning and policy.

Language Planning and Policy

The question of which language(s) to use in literacy programs needs to be seen in relation to specific educational policies, but also in the context of language planning within the country as a whole. Language planning is a relatively new field, dating from the 1960s (Crystal, 1987), and was adopted in many developing countries as part of their attempt to modernize the economy as describes earlier in my discussion about modernization theory and the development of "modern man" popular at that time. (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971). The latter writers suggest that "such a policy approach to language and communications development contrasts with the 'cultivation' approach of many Western nations where language problems are solved through a variety of public and private institutions" (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971, p. xiv). The advantages of language

planning "if used in the right contexts" can be, "to eliminate wastage (including human wastage); enhance communication both within and between nations, and encourage feelings of unity and democracy" (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971, p. xvi).

There have been two major approaches to language planning (Crystal, 1987): corpus planning (changes introduced into the structure or corpus of a language, e.g., changes in spelling, pronunciation and vocabulary) and status planning (changes proposed in the way a language is to be used in society). Rubin and Jernudd (1971) suggest that there was at that time a need for a more "coherent theory of language planning" since "the linguistic literature on language planning, instead of emphasizing the change process has rather focused on the linguistic product".

A third approach to language planning was added in the 1980s. Acquisition planning, described by Nancy Hornberger in the context of her research in Latin America. She describes acquisition planning as "efforts to influence the allocation of users or the distribution of languages/literacies, by means of creating or improving opportunity or incentive to learn them, or both" (Hornberger, 1990, p. 82). She usefully summarizes the three approaches to planning as being "about language" (corpus planning), "about uses of language" (status planning) and "about users of language" (acquisition planning). We could thus see the approaches on a continuum ranging from a technical to a more social/political view of language planning.

The development of the field of socio-linguistics has also influenced the way planners look at language. Seemingly technical linguistic questions such as the difference between a language and a dialect now "take non-linguistic criteria into account" (Crystal, 1987, p. 284). Pride and Holmes (1972, p. 7) assert that the social

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issues around language choice and development are considered to be inseparable from the technical issues, "the ways in which linguistic variation serves to reflect and clarify socio-cultural values" (Pride & Holmes, 1972, p. 7).

More recently, researchers now contend that, "questions of language are basically questions of power" (Chomsky in Grillo, 1989). As Grillo suggests, "the politics of language are about ways in which the domains of language use are defined by the forces which determine those relationships" (Grillo, 1989, p. 8). The recent interest in the "relationship between orders of discourse and language systems" (Fairclough, 1996) can change the focus of language planning from the idea of a language policy fitting a country's "needs" to a consideration of the linguistic and power relationships between the state and individuals, "ongoing change has all sorts of problematic language-related consequences for people's lives" (Fairclough, 1996, p. 4).

This more political view of language leads us directly into the issue of language policy within education. Although educational planning may be intended to reinforce or implement language-planning policies for the state as a whole, the power relationships at the local level, even between individuals in a classroom may lead to contradictions or conflicts in practice. As Yates (1994) suggests, there is a need to consider both the "micro and macro implications of language policies" so "planners may benefit from adopting a micro ethnographic approach" (1994, p. 309).

Language Policy in Literacy Programs

I will first give a brief overview of the language policy options adopted in literacy programs worldwide over the years, along with the main issues to emerge. In

1953 UNESCO declared that literacy work was best done in the vernacular (Barton, 1994b) and since then there has been much debate around the social, political, linguistic, educational and economic implications of such policy. There is however general agreement that "most third world countries are highly multilingual and thus some form of language policy must precede literacy planning" (Heath, 1990, p. 180). The original UNESCO policy arose from the educational conviction that "learners generally acquire reading and writing skills more rapidly in their mother tongue"[2] (Heath, 1990, p. 180). As I suggested in my overview of language planning approaches, there is now more attention paid to the social and political dimensions of implementing such a policy.

For example, the idea of using the mother tongue only as a "bridge" to the national or international language, as defined as transference in Guatemala has now been felt to devalue the mother tongue. "there are examples of where people learn the mother tongue in order to move to another language and this itself destroys the first language" (Barton, 1994b, p. 6). How far the language chosen is considered as a bridge or valued in itself will depend partly on the language policy within the formal education sector and the intended relationship between formal and nonformal education programs must also be examined. As Yates (1994, p. 272) suggests in the case of Ghana, the "language policy in formal education has important implications for attributing prestige to different languages" (i.e., Hornberger's "status planning"). Another factor affecting which language is chosen for literacy work is the language policy adopted in the

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[2]As Gorman (1990, p.207) points out, there is a lack of clarity about the term "mother tongue" - whether it is the language is which a person "first learns to formulate and express ideas about himself" or "the language he first learns to speak". When there is not an overlap, I have taken it to mean the latter, "first language".

country as a whole. "Although literacy work has often concerned itself with what happens at the beginning of learning to read, choice of language is an issue throughout life. It permeates all literacy practices and choice of language in education and in public life is a crucial decision" (Barton, 1995, p. 23).

The question of language is therefore not just a matter of which language will be best understood but which language is valued as a social, economic, cultural or political asset. Agnihotri (1998), writing about India, describes ironically how the ruling elite "perceives local literacies as a threat to the existing power structure" so tell the poor that "their only salvation ... is to become literate in the standard language" (as opposed to their mother tongue). Ghose and Bhog (1994, p. 5) present the opposite case for using a fusion of Hindi with local languages in a literacy program for non-Hindi speaking women: "official languages are also languages of governance and power and it is imperative that marginal groups enter into a critical language engagement with them". Whether literacy is regarded, as more empowering in the mother tongue or standard language is dependent not just on the use of each language in society but on how it is taught.

The importance of understanding the value and use of languages within different domains (including education) is however a crucial step in language policy formulation: different languages are used in different domains (Barton, 1994a). When transposed to a different domain, some languages are no longer valued or deemed appropriate. For example, minority languages may not be considered appropriate in higher education or national level institutions. All these factors will influence how participants and planners regard a mother tongue language policy in literacy programs. It is also important to see

how these factors change over time, "the ever-changing relationship between different languages and literacies" (Education for Development, 1994, p. 102). Barton (1994b, p. 3) identifies the ways in which language and literacy are currently changing as due to globalization (the spread of a small number of world languages) and diversification (e.g. more and more languages being written down). These trends affect not just how languages are valued by participants but also the choice of languages available for literacy teaching.

Aside from the political and social considerations, there are many practical constraints to implementing a mother tongue policy in literacy programs. Ryan (1990) mentions several of these problems in relation to developing a multilingual literacy program in Ethiopia: the need for materials and training in fifteen languages entailed great human and financial costs. Other issues include linguistic dilemmas such as how far to standardize dialects, how to reflect diglossia[3] in the literacy program and providing scripts for previously unwritten languages. My own experience in Guatemala working with the COMAL project also reflects this dilemma. While the bilingual literacy program of CONALFA had received enough external support from the US and various European countries to develop and produce materials in twenty-two languages, they were unable to handle the demands of producing enough copies for the learners, transporting the materials to the oftentimes remote areas and finally, they lacked the teacher-trainer apparatus to train teachers in how to teach in their mother tongue.

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[3]Diglossia is defined as "the use of two varieties of a language throughout a speech community, each with a distinct set of social functions" (Crystal, 1987).

Language Policy in Guatemala

Before Guatemala's long civil war ended with the final Peace Accords signing in 1996, an accord called *Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas* (Accord about the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Communities) had been signed into law by the government in 1995. The aim of this accord was to stop the marginalization and discrimination of the Mayas and other indigenous people of Guatemala (although the majority is Maya, there are also two minority groups with their distinct languages: *Xinca* and *Garifuna*). The treaty promised official status for the twenty-two languages spoken in the country, educational reform, recognition of cultural rights and a constitutional change. The peace accords were successful and the accord spelling out the identity and rights of the indigenous communities indicated great changes to the language policy and the education sector of Guatemala. Subsequently a proposal for official status for indigenous languages based on linguistic, territorial and technical criteria was drawn up and the process of education reform, *Reforma Educativa*, got started. However, a power shift from the Ladino technocrats historically in control of education in Guatemala towards power sharing with Mayan educators and policy makers never truly occurred and the accord was compromised (Karita Laisi, 2002, paper presented at the World Congress of Language Policies). Despite the strong Maya movement with an intellectual elite that had led the movement and engaged in successful planning within the government for years, and with almost unlimited financial resources and international support (particularly from USAID) for the education reforms and language changes in civil society, the language policy change

failed. In the 1998 referendum on the constitutional reforms, Guatemalans voted no to extending official status to indigenous languages.

As a result, education reform became the only battlefield where the language policy changes were to be carried out. Because the case for official language status was lost, the Maya sector had to focus on the one possibility that remained which was to participate fully in the nation-wide education reform and insert the Mayan language policy agenda into curricular and planning issues (Cojti Cuxil, 1996).

The Maya sector continues to negotiate for a policy change and continues planning for the new language policy, trying to bolster the status of Mayan languages and have them inserted into public life. However, in Guatemalan society there has been very little support or desire to understand a language policy change and what extending official status to indigenous languages would really mean. Given the defeat of a constitutional change to recognize indigenous languages as mentioned above, Maya language activists have chosen to focus most of their attention on formal schooling for children, promoting not only bilingual education, but Maya and intercultural education with proposals for the development of Maya only schools and the revamping of the entire Guatemalan educational curricula so that it includes Mayan perspectives and their contributions to the development of Guatemala (Cojti Cuxil, 1996).

As part of the Maya movement's revitalization efforts and desire to formalize and extend the uses of Mayan languages in the public sphere, there has been the creation of a language loyalty movement (coined by famous sociolinguistic Joshua Fishman in 1988). Within this movement, there are concentrated efforts that seek to

deter and reverse the loss of languages and gain for them a broader, more formal, legitimized and institutional role in Guatemalan national life.

According to R. McKenna Brown (1996, p. 169), the Mayan language loyalty movement in Guatemala can be characterized by: (1) led and organized by a largely urban, educated minority of Maya; (2) apolitical in the sense of the left-right dichotomy of Guatemalan politics; (3) seeks to mobilize the language-ethnicity link; and (4) seeks to increase prestige of Mayan languages for speakers and non-speakers through education and publication of linguistic works.

Critics of the language loyalty movement frequently point to the fact that the Mayan language activists do not represent the great majority of rural Maya they claim to represent. In fact, it may be the very difference of their experiences that enables them to lead such struggles. Fishman notes that

> advocates of languages that are undergoing displacement are often much more exposed to the values and methods of their linguistic competitors than were their less exposed and less threatened predecessors. As a result, they are more likely to adopt organized protective and publicity measures from more advantages co-territorial [other tongue] models to serve language maintenance purposes. (1988, p. 44)

A basic irony in this movement also exists: urban dwellers are more inclined to language shift than rural dwellers. Yet language loyalty movements and organized maintenance efforts have commonly originated and have had their greatest impact in cities (McKenna Brown, 1996, p. 171). In his research in four *Kaqchikel* communities, McKenna Brown (1991) found that the group reporting stable intergenerational bilingualism was the youngest and most highly educated. This group represents a pattern of stable bilingualism upon which the survival of their Mayan language may

depend. Contrary to assumptions, the young educated elite may constitute a necessary ingredient to successful language revitalization.

Critical to the understanding of the development and planning of language in education and on a national scale in Guatemala is the separation of bilingualism and language shift. Fishman (1988) notes that the causes of bilingualism are not the same as the causes of language shift. Bilingualism, defined as the acquisition of a language of wider currency in addition to the native language, is often a pragmatic response to political and socioeconomic forces. Language shift, on the other hand, is usually brought about by significant proportions of parents speaking their second language to their children, a choice motivated by affective factors. This discussion takes us to an emotional intersection of the macro-within the micro- in Guatemalan linguistic and language circles.

Maya and non-Maya often conceive of Spanish acquisition as somehow un-Maya and perceive the monolingual as somehow more "pure" than the bilingual Spanish Maya speaker (McKenna Brown, 1996). But historically, Maya cultural survival can be traced to the ability to master certain Spanish cultural elements, including language and using them as an addition to the Maya culture (Lovell, 1991).

Undeniably, Spanish language acquisition, and other modern Western accoutrements, has allowed Mayas to stay Maya and to use the master's tools to tear down the masters house, as in the case of Rigoberta Menchu who learned Spanish in order to communicate with Maya of other language groups and the rest of the world in order to challenge the murderous Guatemalan government. Thus, Spanish language acquisition is not incongruous to Maya identity. And in this case, bilingualism can be

seen as a linguistic manifestation of the ability to successfully straddle two worlds: the Maya world and that of the Spanish speaking Ladino.

In terms of language planning for adults in Guatemala, more outspoken Maya linguists and planners, Chacach (1987), Cojti Cuxil (1992), Sam Colop (1996), Otzoy (1992, 1996), stress the need for mother tongue literacy developed only by Mayas as a means for a "personal process of *concientzacion*"(Simon, 1994, p. 161) which will occur as the new literates learn more about their culture, history and their language. They will come to appreciate the worth of the Mayan culture and value its survival more (McKenna Brown, 1996). Using Freire's concepts, these theorists describe how literacy can lead to questioning the hegemony and dominance reproduced throughout Guatemalan society and "revitalize" Maya language use for liberatory purposes.

However, language planning and programs for adults in Guatemala appears inconsistent in its goals and objectives. While Mayanists (many of whom help with the government's literacy planning) on one hand stress native language literacy for all Maya adults citing fears of language loss and eventual language shift, the government body *CONALFA* has promoted a bilingual literacy approach that requires initial instruction in the native language followed by a bilingual transference process with emphasis on the development of written and spoken Spanish at a sixth grade level (CONALFA, 1993). This transference process is meant to help serve "as an effective agent for language maintenance and revitalization" (Richards & Richards, 1999, p. 209). On closer examination, the goals put forth for this revitalization effort, a bilingual process that focuses on transference to the national language rather than revitalization,

maintenance and use of the Mayan languages, leaves many questions about the efficacy of such an approach.

As shown in a 1999 study conducted in *K'iche* speaking department of Quiche (Gish & Paz, 1999) in the municipalities of Chichicastenango, San Antonio Ilotenango and Joyabaj, most women and youth who participated in the study do not want to learn in their native language. Most young women and youth are eager to learn Spanish and some even mention English as a desired second language to learn (Gish & Paz, p. 5). Unfortunately, few studies that could help shape language and literacy policy exist at present, making it difficult to assess how programs are guided in their desire to create a literate (and bilingual) society.

Additional studies to better understand the attitudes towards their native language of the mostly rural Mayas are needed. As the field of language planning becomes more formalized and better documented in Guatemala, it will be important to look at how more concrete links between the goals and objectives of the Mayan language loyalty movement can be made with the majority of rural Maya speakers whose goal is to speak, read and write the Spanish language in addition to their native language.

One of the most urgent needs of the revitalization movement is to reverse language shift and reverse the trend of language loss. One goal of this movement should be helping Maya parents guide their children to meet their future language needs. To my knowledge, no language planning or policy work has been conducted to help programs develop ways in which Maya parents can prepare bilingual children.

I hope that this overview has shown how language planning for literacy programs, though originally regarded as a technical field, can also be seen as a social and political exercise, since every language has a different and changing value to its users. Language planning in Guatemala must be seen in the context of language policy for the country as a whole, since the use and value of languages within the "domains" of the home, school or the literacy program will be affected by how they are used in public life. This theoretical perspective on language and literacy planning has implications both for research and policy. As I mentioned above, much more research is needed to see how Maya language loyalty movement's proposals for language planning and policy can be implemented in light of the majority rural Maya's desires to learn Spanish. Researchers need to examine not only statistical and macro issues, but also micro ethnographic accounts of literacy and language use in practice in Guatemala so that the goals for the maintenance of Maya languages can coexist with rural Mayans' needs and desires.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

Approach to the Problem

The disparities I have seen and experienced between policy intentions that assume uniform large-scale demand for adult literacy classes and the reality of literacy work in the field, where such demand for the kind of "literacy" being offered appears questionable, turned my attention towards the writing of the New Literacy Studies and the study of literacy and numeracy in social context. Understanding that a general study of the social context of literacy and numeracy in Guatemala would be much too large for a dissertation, I decided to focus on a specific area that has long interested me and one that I have conducted prior research: the role of literacy in the marketplace and the uses of literacy and numeracy for the specific purposes of market interactions. In my second comprehensive examination paper, I examined a women's literacy program in Jacmel, Haiti, the *Maman Machann Program (Mother Market worker)*, which began its literacy program with numeracy in the context of market uses as a strategy to interest market women in pursuing literacy education.

In thinking about this topic, I began to ask myself questions such as: How do literacy programs relate to the actual practices of literacy and numeracy in real contexts such as the market? What do these uses of literacy and numeracy look like, particularly in a bilingual market setting in Guatemala? Do these "real" literacies and practices relate to literacy programs' conceptions of literacy? On what assumptions about literacy and its social uses are policy statements based and corollary programs designed?

A review of completed research[1] concerned with literacy programming in Guatemala done over the past decade specifically focusing on Mayan communities outlined particular foci:

1) Studies on the provision of literacy. Studies with literacy as their main concern have been mostly focused on literacy provision and the successes and challenges faced by particular interventions. This research has little to say about what exactly the people had acquired in these literacy programs, or what it had meant and done for them in relation to the tasks of their daily lives.

2) Research about persistence and motivation for literacy. Since Mayan women have been identified as the target population of the majority of literacy interventions in Guatemala due to the overall low literacy rates in indigenous communities, studies have tried to "uncover" why women may or may not persist and what or whom are the influences for those who do persist in literacy classes.

These dominant accounts of literacy programs and the supportive research I have come across remain concerned with the effectiveness of literacy provision, often measured quantitatively through statistics of outcomes, attendance, etc, and justified through correlations with important development indices such as maternal/child health, economic growth, etc.

What appears to be missing from these accounts is information from the potential beneficiaries, women themselves, about whether to attend or not attend a

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[1]Study undertaken in 2000 by Werner Ramirez and Associates and analyzed by Joanie Cohen-Mitchell under the auspices of the COMAL project.

literacy program. Are the programs relevant to their lives? Will they learn the skills they deem important?

In this study I used a qualitative research process to examine the multiple literacies at play in the lives of market women of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. In this chapter, I explore the justification for using ethnography as a research approach for analyzing social processes, such as literacy and numeracy. I begin by considering more generally the appropriateness of qualitative research approaches for studying social processes, then look specifically at the implications of using ethnography and how these issues affected my own research strategy. Following this, I share my research design and explain the research activities I conducted in the field.

Rationale for the Ethnographic Approach

The positivist research tradition in education, with its assumptions that the "subjects of research can be treated as 'objects'... and that they can be studied in an objective, value-free way" (Vulliamy, 1990, p. 8), has been challenged by the introduction of more qualitative approaches, such as ethnography. Certain assumptions of science - for example, that events have causes, that phenomena should be explained in the most economical way possible and "generality" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 13) - have now been criticized as being inappropriate if applied to social phenomena. The various approaches that have developed as a reaction to the positivist tradition of social science differ in their methods but are "united by a common rejection of the belief that human behavior is governed by general laws" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 26). The interpretive paradigm is thus based on the recognition of the subjective nature of

research and emphasizes, "how people differ from inanimate natural phenomena" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 5).

In my opinion, the choice of research methodology - whether to follow the positivist or interpretive paradigms - is not so much a technical decision as a reflection of a certain ideology. As Hammersley discusses, "the rationale for ethnography is based on a critique of quantitative, notably survey and experimental, research" (1992, p. 11) which he feels leads to "an incoherent conception of its own goals" (1992, p. 11). The fact that the interpretive paradigm arose as a reaction to the positivist paradigm means that the debate around research methodologies tends to be seen as a choice between qualitative or quantitative methods and that the terms "ethnography" and "qualitative approaches" are used synonymously. Hammersley (1992) challenges the idea of a quantitative-qualitative divide, showing how the various characteristics of the qualitative approach can be equally seen in quantitative research. For example, though quantitative research is associated with 'artificial' settings, qualitative research could be similarly said to set up artificial rather than natural situations (such as an interview). The use of case studies does not necessarily indicate a more qualitative approach to researching literacy, since they can be used in a quantitative way to "provide evidence of the effect of literacy programs on social, economic and personal change" (Bown, 1990a, p. 28). As Bryman (1984) discusses, there is a tendency to equate methods with methodology and thus to confuse technical and philosophical issues. He points out "there is no necessary 1: 1 relationship between methodology and technique in the practice of social research" (Bryman, 1984, p. 89).

The other implication of the qualitative-quantitative divide is that there can be a tendency to treat "the alternatives to quantitative research as a single approach" (Jacob, 1987, p. 1). In the US context, Jacob describes several qualitative research traditions, showing how educational research has tended to operate almost totally within psychological traditions. Her paper is, however, criticized for talking about 'traditions' since this "carries with it a danger that they will be regarded as self-contained paradigms based on distinctive philosophical assumptions" (Atkinson, et al, 1988, p. 232). Atkinson et al. suggests instead the term "types" since the different qualitative approaches overlap and draw from each other. The "types", which include feminist research and participatory action research, are more related to ideological standpoints than to choice of techniques. Though Bryman argued that there is no necessary link between methods and methodology, in practice one has often been made and researchers need to recognize how it has been conceptualized in specific cases.

The qualitative approach that I have pursued in my study draws attention to the people, Guatemalan Maya market women in this case, who are the typical and potential recipients of adult literacy programs. The research I embarked upon makes it clear that the focus is to be directed away from the discourses and practices of policy-makers and program providers who already know what kind of literacy rural Mayan women need, or at least they believe they do, onto those who are their potential objects of attention - women with little or no formal schooling or literacy training. I believed that the information gathered through qualitative methods could ultimately help enrich facts and figures produced by quantitative research.

For my study, I employed ethnographic methods because ethnography is "the study of people in their natural settings; a descriptive account of social life and culture in a defined social system, based on qualitative methods such as detailed observations, unstructured interviews, analysis of documents" (Bowling, 1997, p.33).

In recent years, ethnographic methods have been adopted by a number of disciplines. Originating in anthropology, ethnography was seen in terms of 'participant observation' involving detailed descriptions of small groups of people and their social and cultural patterns (oftentimes referred to as thick description). Educationalists have taken over the term in recent years to refer to close, detailed accounts of classroom interactions, with sometimes attention given to the lives and roles of students and teachers outside the classroom setting. Sociolinguists have used ethnographic methods to examine networks and immediate contexts of interaction between speakers. In all three cases, anthropology, education and sociolinguistics, new accounts of literacy in practice are being generated to supplement our understanding of literacy and numeracy practices.

The ethnographic approach to literacy derives from recent theoretical approaches which argue that literacy is not just a set of uniform skills to be imparted to those lacking them (the autonomous model as coined by Brian Street), but rather that there are multiple literacies at play in communities and that literacy and numeracy practices are socially embedded (Heath, 1983; Street, 1993, 1995; Barton, 1994; Barton and Hamilton, 1999). The academic research emerging from this new field of interest is of considerable practical significance, with implications for literacy programs and policy formulation. Ethnographic approaches offer an accommodation of both theory

and practice and address larger issues raised in policy formulation while maintaining a focus upon local meanings through which such processes are experienced. Implications for program design, including pre-program research on local literacy (and numeracy) practices and for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and evaluation are major tasks that require first a more developed conceptualization of the theoretical and methodological issues involved in understanding and representing local literacy practices.

My assumptions of the roles ethnography can play in understanding literacy and numeracy practices in the marketplace of *Xela, Guatemala* could be related to what Hammersley sees as the two areas challenging traditional ethnography: i) the issue of representation, and ii) the relationship between research and practice (1992, p.2). As he suggests in the ambiguity of his book titled, <u>What's Wrong With Ethnography?</u>, the above areas of challenge can be taken as both the criticism of and the justification for an ethnographic approach. In the following section, I look at the issues underlying two assumptions concerning the purpose of this research (as to inform policy and practice: Hammersley's relationship between research and practice) and the potential of ethnography (as a way of documenting literacy and numeracy processes: the issue of representation).

My own orientation towards ethnography as a research approach is an indication of methodology (the philosophical level of analysis that Bryman argues) rather than simply methods (the techniques). Since the early days of anthropology and the "colonial overtones of Malinowski and other 'founding fathers'" (Street, 2001, p. 2), ethnography has itself changed in meaning. Street (2001, p. 4), citing Todarov, describes how the

"essence of the ethnographic experience" lies in the anthropologist "always shifting between proximity and distance in any cultural setting": "the experience involves, then, epistemological relativity, reflexivity and critical consciousness". The concept of reflexivity, "that social researchers are part of the social world they study" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 16), challenges the ideal of the detached researcher associated with earlier ethnographic research:

> ...rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher completely, we should set about understanding them... Data should not be taken at face value, but treated as a field of inferences in which hypothetical patterns can be identified and their validity tested. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 19)

The researcher therefore becomes viewed by the researched as "just like anyone else, an actor experiencing a situation" (Cameron, 1992, p. 9) and "rather than trying to extract the researcher from the data and analysis, increasingly there is an emphasis on making the researcher's influence as explicit and accountable as possible" (Rampton, 1992, p. 54). The issue of bias implicit in the concept of reflexivity links directly to issues around the purpose of research and the relationship of research to practice.

The concepts of reflexivity and epistemological relativity affect not just the researcher's role in carrying out fieldwork, but also the writing of the ethnography itself. Recent critiques of ethnography have focused on the texts produced by researchers: "Ethnography is enmeshed in writing and reading that extends before, after and outside the experience of empirical research" (Clifford, 1990, p. 40). The ethnographer is not simply an actor in the fieldwork situation, but the creator of the ethnography, the resulting text. The distinction perhaps needs to be made between "ethnographic experiences" (Street, 2001, p. 1), in which reflexivity is described as "a

process of continuously moving from the intensely personal experience of one's own social interactions in the field to the more distanced analysis of that experience" (Wright & Nelson, 1995, p. 48), and the ethnography (the text itself), where this reflexivity has to be translated into writing conventions, such as the use of first person or the present tense. These conventions are not simply techniques; they reflect ideological assumptions: "ethnographers do not so much describe culture as inscribe it in discourse" (Gitlin et al, 1993, p. 193).

Sanjek's Fieldnotes (1990) is an attempt to analyze the writing process of ethnographers and the relationship between field notes and ethnographies, building on the earlier work of Clifford and Marcus (1984). Fieldnotes discusses how "writing takes the ethnographer from the 'context of discovery' in which field notes are written, to the 'context of presentation'" (Sanjek, 1990a, p. 390), even within the fieldwork situation. Rather than considering the writing of the final article or thesis as the "text", this book looks at how other texts, such as field notes, not only reflect but shape ethnographic experiences. Long (1992a, p.269) in describing an actor-oriented approach to research, similarly points out the complex relations behind the production of a text: "Although difficult to disentangle, fieldwork practice, reflexivity and the formulation of research findings are necessarily interwoven." Sanjek (1990a, p. 385) discusses the need for "an ethnography of ethnography" to show how the text has been constructed: an example is de Vries' A Research Journey (1992).

Critiques of ethnography have focused on the way that theories are said to "emerge" from the "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) of fieldwork situations: "description encompasses the context of action, the intentions of the actor and the

process in which action is embedded" (Dey, 1993, p. 31). Hammersley (1992) analyses the ethnographic goal of "theoretical description", questioning on what basis the link between data and theory is made. An analysis of the use and form of case studies in ethnographic research provides a more concrete way into this debate. Platt (1988, p. 5) makes the distinction between the "rhetorical" and the "logical" functions of case studies in terms of how they contribute to the overall analysis ("aesthetic appeal" as opposed to "suggesting hypotheses"). In other words, not all case studies (or descriptions) could be said to contribute to theory building. Mitchell (1982, p. 204) discusses how "an illuminating case may make theoretical connections apparent that were formerly obscure". Building on Znaniecki's definition of "analytical" and "enumerative" induction in relation to qualitative and quantitative data, Mitchell shows how the case study rests on the method of "analytical induction". He goes on to show that "the rationale of extrapolation from a statistical sample to a parent universe" (the basic assumption of quantitative analysis) "involves two very different and even unconnected inferential processes - statistical inference and logical inference" (1982, p. 207). Case study analysis, he argues, does not involve statistical inference,

> the inferential process turns exclusively on the theoretically necessary linkages among the features in the case study. The validity of the extrapolation depends not on the typicality or representativeness of the case, but upon the cogency of the theoretical reasoning. (1982, p. 207)

This analysis of the link between case studies and theory thus provides useful tools for looking at how theory emerges from ethnographic data. Mitchell also tackles the issue of how far ethnography can be said to be generalizable by making the distinction between a "telling" case as opposed to a "typical" case. He suggests that there is "no advantage in going to a great deal of trouble to find a 'typical' case" (1984,

p. 203) since its value in analysis lies in "its explanatory power" rather than "its typicality" (1984, p. 203). Stake makes a similar point in relation to different kinds of case studies: that the "intrinsic case study" is itself of interest as compared with the "instrumental case study" where "a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue...The case is of secondary interest" (1994, p. 237).

I do not view literacy in terms of outcomes or products, which could be easily quantified. Whereas previous studies on women's literacy have focused on quantifiable indicators of change (even to measure less tangible outcomes like 'empowerment'), an ethnographic approach can lead to "a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior" (Vulliamy, 1990. p. 11). I have described how adopting an ethnographic approach was related to my theoretical concern with literacy as a social process. Within ethnography, the debates around reflexivity, the ethnography as a product of ethnographic experiences and the relationship between theory and data have implications for the role of the researcher, in the field as well as at the writing stage.

The flexibility of an ethnographic approach has appealed to planners and practitioners, since rather than having a pre-determined strategy, the researcher can adapt to new areas that appear during the course of fieldwork: "divergences between policy and practice can be highlighted through a sensitivity to the unintended, as well as intended, outcomes of innovation" (Vulliamy, 1990, p. 25). The complexity of ethnographic processes that I identified above - that analysis and data collection go hand in hand - has also been associated with a more dynamic model of planning and evaluation. Long (1992b, p. 34) describes how the conventional "separation of 'policy',

'implementation' and 'outcomes' is a gross over-simplification of a much more complicated set of processes". He argues,

> planned intervention cannot be adequately comprehended in terms of a model based on step-by-step linear or cyclical progression. Rather... an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated process with unintended consequences and side effects. (Long, 1992a, p. 270)

The actor-oriented ethnographic approach that Long advocates allows the planner a more holistic view: "the notion of intervention practices allows one to focus on the emergent forms of interaction, procedures, practical strategies and types of discourse and cultural categories present in specific contexts" (Long, 1992b. p. 35). Literacy practices can be viewed as "being the social practices associated with the written word...the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy which people draw upon in a literacy event" (Barton, 1994, p. 37).

The relationship between ethnographic research and practice can be seen as unproblematic: ethnography is to allow for a more flexible, holistic approach to planning and evaluation through the wider perspective afforded on social situations. Both Long and Parlett put the emphasis on how planning or evaluation processes need to change in response to the use of ethnographic research approaches. By contrast, the advocates of action-ethnography argue how ethnography as a research methodology needs to change to meet the needs of practitioners and policy makers. Hammersley (1993) articulates this argument in the context of the teacher-as-researcher movement. He discusses how conventional educational research has been criticized on the grounds that it is "irrelevant, invalid, undemocratic and exploitative" (Hammersley, 1993, p. 215). Implicit in these criticisms are questions about who determines the agenda of the research, who carries it out and who benefits from the results. Although it was assumed

that by making teacher- researchers the power relationship between researcher and practitioner would be reversed, the ideal of "emancipatory action research" (Kemmis, 1993) is rarely achieved:

> it can be argued that some of what passes for action research today is not action research at all, but merely a species of field experimentation or 'applied' research carried out by academic or service researchers who co-opt practitioners into gathering data *about* educational practices for them. (Kemmis, 1993, p. 186)

Ethnography can contribute to practice through being a more flexible, holistic approach to studying social situations, whether classrooms or development projects. Some of the methods of presenting and analyzing data associated with ethnography, such as case studies, are also felt to be more accessible to practitioners than statistical data associated with the traditional research paradigms. However, in all the examples I mentioned above, the researcher still owns and controls the research findings (even if the researcher is the teacher).

The relationship of ethnography to practice can be seen from two perspectives: those who feel that systems of policy/evaluation/practice should change to fit the more dynamic, flexible approach of ethnography versus those who see limitations in ethnography as a methodology, such as undeclared biases in presentation of results or methods, and who feel that it is ethnography that should change. The latter group of critics believes that the research approach should be made more action-oriented to lead directly into social change. The issues that I discussed above - the power of researcher over the researched, the form of the text and the relationship of research to practice or policy - remain problematic within ethnography as a research approach, despite attempts to challenge the authority of the ethnographer through rhetorical devices such

as using informants' own texts or words or basing the aims of the research around the subjects' concerns.

My Location

Because I had been working in Guatemala on the COMAL (*Communidades Mayas Alfabetizadas*) project under the auspices of the University of Massachusetts and Save the Children, USA, between July 1998 and June 2000, I had many opportunities to observe and interact in different marketplaces throughout Guatemala. During the first year of the project while I was developing my dissertation proposal, I was able to practice, in small doses, what would later become the methods I would use for my research study. Each weekend I was in the country, I would spend both Saturday and Sunday mornings in the marketplace, often in Guatemala City, but also in Antigua, Totonicipan, Quiche or Quetzaltenango. I observed and bantered with the sellers in the market, particularly the women, asking them about their market experiences. I was intrigued with their ability to know immediately how low they could go on a price for a particular item whether it was a handicraft or a piece of fruit, how quickly they seemed to do math in their heads (particularly in the wholesale market of Guatemala City where *gringos* came to buy Guatemala handicrafts to sell in the US or Europe). I would ask how they kept track of their earnings, whether they manipulated numbers in their heads or on paper, in what language they did their calculations, how they decided to lower their prices and for whom; the entire enterprise of the market intrigued me. During the second year of the COMAL project, the office moved from Guatemala City to the highlands of Quetzaltenango. It then became obvious to me that I had the perfect

opportunity to pursue my research in the markets of Quetzaltenango because I would be able to access my research site and participants frequently.

It seems important to mention here my own opinions about the literacy approaches that I was able to observe being implemented in Guatemala and any bias my opinions may have brought to my research study. During my two years working with the COMAL project, I had the opportunity to observe in over 20 literacy classrooms throughout many of the communities in the departments of *Quiche, Quetzaltenango,* and *Totonicipan.* I was also able to observe and participate in the training of trainers (of literacy facilitators) conducted by the government literacy agency, CONALFA, as well as a few of our partner NGOs.

While the COMAL project staff was trying to implement a concept known as integrated community literacy, a hybrid of the functional literacy approach that stressed combining whole language and Freirean problem posing with participatory teaching techniques using community development themes, what I most often saw in the field were phonics-based instruction and school based techniques and approaches. Not surprisingly, most literacy facilitators drew on their own educational experiences in a very rigid and formal school model adopted from the Spanish colonizers. Repetition, being called on by the teacher, copying words on and from the chalkboard, if one existed, and the phonetic approach to both Spanish and the Mayan language were the norm. The topics most often followed a school curriculum for primary school, beginning with the family, moving onto the community, the government, etc.

In contrast, I witnessed two indigenous organizations, one in Solola and the other in Guatemala City, that were teaching native language literacy from a Mayan

perspective incorporating what we call nonformal education teaching-learning techniques using Guatemalan history from a Mayan perspective rather than a Spanish one as the curriculum.

I feel very strongly that for most adult literacy learners, a school-based approach using traditional formal school teaching-learning techniques is not the ideal literacy learning situation. Because I have had the privilege to experience the richness of Freirean/problem posing techniques in Haiti and El Salvador and see them work well, I am committed to and believe strongly in a more emancipatory and participatory literacy teaching and learning approach that uses nonformal techniques and themes relevant to learners' lives. Thus, it was with a heavy heart that I watched Mayan women, oftentimes with their babies in tow, repeating syllables of Mayan words that they already knew, that were not connected to any themes or ideas of interest to them or were not important to their lives.

Research Assistants

Through my involvement in the COMAL project, I worked with Maya colleagues who were bilingual in Spanish and *K'iche* (and some in *Kachikel* also) and who could write in *K'iche*. I asked two of them, whom I had worked closely with over the past year and developed good relationships with, if they would be interested in working with me as transcribers and translators during the data collection phase of my study. Both Gerardo Vasquez and Rosa Zapeta agreed, and I offered them each a stipend at the end of the data collection phase.

An added benefit was that Rosa was trying to finish her thesis for a bachelor's degree in education. She was stuck at the design phase of her study of women's persistence in literacy programs. I agreed to help her design and conduct her study while she honed her research skills by assisting me with my study. The exchange with Rosa proved to be a rich sharing opportunity that enriched the collaborative aspects of my project. Although both Gerardo and Rosa contributed much to my study through their excellent transcription and translation work, Rosa's insights into the interpretation of the interview responses and the focus group data, as well as her willingness to accompany me to the market at 5 a.m. on many occasions, were invaluable to my ability to complete my research project.

It is important to note here that, although I am a fluent Spanish speaker and can read and write Spanish proficiently, I am not a *K'iche* speaker. Therefore, all of the material collected during the fieldwork was recorded in either Spanish or *K'iche* and translated into Spanish for my benefit. Translation into English, done solely by me, was not completed until the writing of my dissertation and only for sections of text that have been put into this document.

The use of translators and the choice to operate in a language other than the one the research is written up in is not without problems. One of the major difficulties of any kind of research in which the language of the people under study is different from that of the write-up is gaining conceptual equivalence or comparability of meaning. Phillips (1997, p. 291) sees this "in absolute terms an unsolvable problem" which results from the fact that "almost any utterance in any language carries with it a set of assumptions, feelings, and values that the speaker may or may not be aware of but that

the field worker, as an outsider, usually is not". Whether one is trying to translate a survey instrument, an interview schedule or a test, as several researchers caution us, even an apparently familiar term or expression for which there is direct lexical equivalence might carry 'emotional connotations' in one language that will not necessarily occur in another. On those occasions where two languages do not offer direct lexical equivalence several researchers and linguists suggest that one's efforts should be directed "towards obtaining conceptual equivalence without concern for lexical comparability" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980; Overing, 1987; Broadfoot & Osborn, 1993; Temple, 1997). For many researchers (Brislin et al., 1973; Warwick & Osherson, 1973), the process of gaining comparability of meanings is greatly facilitated by the researcher (or the translator) having not only a proficient understanding of a language but also, an 'intimate' knowledge of the culture. Only then can the researcher pick up the full implications that a term carries for the people under study and make sure that the cultural connotations of a word are made explicit to the readers of the research study.

Furthermore, since the written report is the only opportunity that readers of the research have to see for themselves what participants "look like" (Wolcott, 1994), the use of direct quotations deserves careful attention in discussions about translation. Decisions about translating quotations are of course dependent on the intended function of the quotation in the research text and whether one perceives translated words as a direct quotation (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p.162). One of the first decisions that researchers are asked to make when translating participants' words is whether to go for 'literal' versus 'free' translation of their text. A literal translation (i.e. translating word-

by-word) could perhaps be seen as doing more justice to what participants have said and "make one's readers understand the foreign mentality better" (Edwards, 1998, p. 197). At the same time, however, such practice can reduce the readability of the text, which in turn can test readers' patience and even ability to understand what's going on. In translated quotations the risk of losing information from the original is greater. In some studies, the researcher and the translator or interpreter are not the same person and there might even be more than one translator involved in a research project. These people might be professional translators, bilingual people with knowledge of the topic under investigation (or not), or native speakers employed to help the researcher communicate with respondents who do not speak English. As Temple (1997, p. 614) points out, the use of translators and interpreters "is not merely a technical matter that has little bearing on the outcome. It is of epistemological consequence as it influences what is "found". Kluckhohn (1945) suggests that there are "three basic problems which arise from the use of interpreters: a) the interpreter's effect on the informant; b) the interpreter's effect on the communicative process; and c) the interpreter's effect on the translation" (quoted in Phillips, 1997, p. 297). Focusing on the latter, Temple (1997, p. 608) argues that researchers who use translators need to acknowledge their dependence on them "not just for words but to a certain extent for perspective". In doing so, researchers need to constantly discuss and "debate" conceptual issues with their translators in order to ensure that conceptual equivalence has been achieved (Temple, 1997, p. 616).

Given the debates mentioned above about translation and interpreters, some of the measures I took to ensure accuracy of translation included having Rosa and Gerardo read each other's translations from *K'iche* into Spanish. If a glaring discrepancy

existed, the three of us discussed it to see if the discrepancy was due to the context within which the comment was made. Another measure was that, in order to verify the quality of the translation from *K'iche* to Spanish, when I had completed my study I sent off a page from the first focus group that had been transcribed in *K'iche* and translated into to Spanish by Rosa to a Professor at the University of Kansas. His translation mirrored the one done by Rosa with one exception, and it was a grammatical difference not a conceptual difference.

<u>Goal of the Research</u>

The findings of the ethnographic approach I embarked upon lead to very different measurements and claims for literacy programs in general and in Guatemala more specifically and suggest a shift to different curriculum and pedagogy than many traditional programs now embrace. "What counts as 'effective' cannot, then, be prejudged, hence the attempt to understand 'what's going on' before pronouncing on how to improve it" (Street, 2001, introduction).

The embedded hypothesis I worked with was that the demands of the marketplace require different and varied uses of literacies and numeracies. Therefore, the goal of my research was to develop an account of the uses of literacy and numeracy practices of seven women in the marketplace of Guatemala and take the information shared and analyzed though my interactions to help program planners and policy makers make more informed choices based on grounded accounts of which literacies people need and use in their daily lives.

Therefore, the research questions I wanted to answer include:

1. What are the uses of literacy and numeracy in the market setting in Guatemala?

2. Are both languages (*K'iche* and Spanish) used in the market? If so, how and when? With whom? By whom?

3. What is the relationship of literacy and numeracy to success in the marketplace? Do women themselves see reading, writing and written numeracy as important skills for market workers?

4. What number system are the market women manipulating? How do they do calculations? Give change? How do they make decisions about pricing?

5. What are their ambitions and goals? Motivations for being in the market?

6. Do they see the need for K'iche, Spanish or other literacies for their work and lives?

Research Design

Between January and June 2000, I conducted opportunistic observations, held interviews and facilitated focus groups with the seven women who participated in my research study. Below is detailed information about each activity. I begin by describing my observation protocol.

Observations

I observed and interacted in the marketplace of *Xela* for 13 hours in January 2003, for 22 hours in March 2003 and approximately 31 hours in May 2003.

In January 2000, I observed women for 10 hours in the main marketplace of *Xela, La Independencia.* One of my goals besides familiarizing myself with the market place patterns was to identify potential research participants. For 3 hours, I observed in the municipal, indoor market by the main plaza, again to familiarize myself with the market patterns and also to identify potential study participants.

In March 2003, I observed for 6 hours in *La Independencia*, 8 hours in the municipal, indoor market and 8 hours in the outdoor market. By March I had identified all of the potential participants (sixteen in all) and I began to observe the women who would become my research subjects. Once a woman declined participation in my study, I did not observe her any longer.

In May 2003, I conducted 10 hours of observation in the *La Independencia* market, 6 hours in the outdoor market, 8 hours in the municipal market, and 4 hours in *Cantel* where three of the women in my study went each Sunday to buy their produce in bulk between the hours of 5am-8am; and three hours in the market of *Momostenango* where one women sold her wares on the weekend.

Each observation session was written in a journal in Spanish. I decided to use Spanish rather than English because I wanted to lessen the amount of translation I would need to do in the analysis phase. Because I did not have names for all of the women, I used a descriptive marker and a location so that I could find the same woman again. While I was observing, I wrote key words for the things I wanted to recall and would write a very brief entry while I was still in the marketplace. After the observation was over, I would immediately sit in a restaurant or café (most often with a few cups of

coffee) and review the observation and fill out the entry's description more fully using the guide questions to keep each observation consistent in format.

These observations informed the development of the three overarching themes presented in the first data chapter and some of these observations are presented to the reader. Below is the observation guide I employed to help frame what I was observing.

Observation Guide.

1. I will observe market activities throughout a typical market day (5 am – 7 pm).

2. During these observations, I will pay particular attention to literacy events and practices at two crucial times during the market day: Early in the morning as the market is getting set up and some sellers are bargaining with wholesalers and towards the end of the day as women begin to leave the market and tend to bargain and compromise on a price a bit.

3. I will focus the observations on all market interactions including any literacy events, numeracy practices or other activities that connote various uses of "literacies".

4. Additionally, I will pay particular attention to interactions between speakers of the different language groups (Spanish and *K'iche*) to see how the understanding and market negotiations are mediated.

Interviews

Two sets of interviews were conducted with each of the seven women outside of their working hours. The first set of interviews was conducted in January and March

2000, and the second interviews were conducted in May 2000. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Although I could do some of the interviews alone in Spanish, I had Rosa (translator) accompany me to all of the interviews. I had originally intended for the first interview to be more unstructured; however, I realized that since I would not be conducting all of the interview, both interviews needed to be structured so that I could gather the same information from all of the women and so that Rosa would have a guide to follow for the interviews conducted in *K'iche*.

During the interviews that were held in *K'iche*, it was useful for me to take detailed notes, not about the content of the discussion, which I could not understand, but about the body language, facial expressions and the general mood I could feel during the interview. After the interview when Rosa and I had returned to review the details of the responses, I would ask her if she had noticed similar things and whether in her opinion, I had "read" the situation correctly. Together we would review each response and as we were talking I would write down any notes I thought might be useful.

We were not always able to get answers to all of the questions in my interview protocol. A few of the women were more interested in telling me (or Rosa) about what they thought were the difficulties of working in the market while one woman in particular spent a great deal of time talking about her family and her personal problems. In these situations, Rosa and I did our best to get responses to most of the questions, and when we realized that we would not, we either went on to a different question or ended the interview. In both sets of interviews we employed the protocols below.

Interview Protocol I. Tell me (us) about yourself and family background.

1. Tell me (us) about your education and that of your family.

2. Tell me about your work in the market: have you been selling long?

3. Tell me (us) what you like about your work, the challenges and what you wish was different?

Interview Protocol II. What language(s) do you speak while you sell?

1. Do you know how to read or write? In which languages?

2. Did you attend school?

3. What constitutes a good day at the market for you?

4. How do you know when you have made a good sale?

5. How do you know when you make a profit?

6. Do you keep written records?

7. How do you calculate? (I may also ask them to calculate something for me, if this is culturally acceptable)

8. How do you decide what your lowest price can be?

9. Do you grow your produce or get it from a supplier/wholesaler?

10. Do you think you need (oral) Spanish for your work in the market?

11. Do you think you need reading or writing skills in Spanish and /or K'iche' for your work in the market?

12. Do your children or other family members speak Spanish and/or K'iche'?

13. Do you think that Spanish speakers are able to be more economically successful?

14. Do you think women who have been to school and can read and write are able to be more economically successful in the market?

Focus Groups

I conducted two focus groups with the research participants, one at the end of March 2000 and one in May 2000. The first focus group lasted three hours and the second focus group lasted two hours and twenty minutes. In the first focus group, I asked the group two of the questions I myself was trying to answer though this research study:

1) What is the relationship of literacy and numeracy to success in the marketplace?

2) Do the women themselves see reading, writing and written numeracy as important skills for market workers?

In the second focus group I presented the major themes that had emerged from the data collected in the first focus group and the interviews. I used this focus group as a validation process because I wanted to make sure that the themes I had identified reflected the thoughts and experiences of the seven women participating in my study.

Because of the difficulty of working between two languages (Spanish and *K'iche*), Rosa and Gerardo participated as translators in both focus groups. Also, all of the women agreed to my taping the focus groups discussions because they felt certain that they could not be identified in a large group. Having the focus groups audio-taped greatly helped in the analysis stage.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is "a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit" Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 203). When I wrote my dissertation

proposal, I had identified the following categories or documents to be analyzed:
documents about market women and market practices in Guatemala and Central
America, documents about market math and other numeracy practices among
"illiterate" women in market settings; research studies about Mayan women and literacy
in Guatemala, and ethnographies done examining the social uses of literacy.

However, documents that discuss market practices of women in Guatemala and
Central America as well as documents about market math and other numeracy practices
among "illiterate" women in market settings have not been easy to come across. Thus,
my document review focused mostly on the recent research conducted in Guatemala
about the phenomenon of literacy in general and on women most specifically. Most
often the papers I encountered were theses written by CONALFA employees who were
completing bachelor degrees in education, much like Rosa. These studies were not
particularly helpful to me. I was able to review anthropologic and linguistic research
conducted mostly by North Americans that examined issues of language use and
maintenance both in Guatemala and many other settings where native languages were in
jeopardy or were experiencing a revitalization.

Most helpful were research studies from other parts of the world that employed
ethnographic and qualitative framework such as those in the New Literacy Studies
movement.

Selection of the Research Participants

I identified seven women between January and March 2000 who agreed to be
observed, interviewed and participate in two focus groups. The process of selection was

much more complicated than I had imagined it would be. Although I began observing women in the three market areas of *Xela* in January 2000 and approached a total of twelve women in January and four more in March, it wasn't until the end of March that I had identified and had verbal agreements from the seven women who completed the process with me. Toward the end of the selection process, I decided to offer an honorarium of 150 Quetzales (approximately $19) for each woman who participated in the entire study.

Many of the women I approached were fearful of me, an outsider *gringa*, despite the fact that I often had a *Maya K'iche* woman, Rosa, at my side. Given the history of persecution of the Mayan Indians at the hands of the government during the 36-year civil war, it is not surprising that the fear of strangers still exists. Some of the women who spoke Spanish would tell me they had seen me watching and wanted to know why I was so often in the market, particularly the women who would see me in the mornings during set-up time at 5 a.m. As I explained to them my research, they listened politely but the majority of them then declined to participate. Most often, reasons had to do with time and family commitments, but one woman seemed particularly honest and perhaps said what the other women may have been thinking when she looked at me and said, "Maybe you are just a spy". Fair enough, I thought, for there was no real way for me to verify my role or intentions. At the larger market, *La Independencia,* one woman I approached asked me to follow her over to a group of men selling dinnerware a few tables down from her to repeat to them what I had told her about the research for my thesis. Despite their intense questioning and my assurances that the research was only

for the University, she decided not to participate, although a few of the men, in typical Latin style, offered to help me out.

Another glitch that I hadn't anticipated was that, given their mistrust of strangers, with the exception of one woman, no one would let me record their interviews. Although I explained many times that the information was only for my eyes, the fear of retribution from sharing information about themselves and their families that might find its way into strangers' hands became reasons for six of the women to categorically say no. This meant a lot of work for Rosa and Gerardo and me, because interviews are very difficult to record by hand particularly because we were moving between two languages.

Analyzing My Data: A More Detailed Look at the Process

I used an inductive process of identifying analytical categories as they emerged from the data and have adopted and adapted the framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Throughout the analysis phase I kept the following questions in mind:

- What patterns and common themes emerge in responses dealing with specific questions I have asked?

- How do these patterns (or lack thereof) help to understand and make sense of the broader study questions?

- Are there any deviations from these patterns? If yes, are there any factors that might explain these atypical responses?

- What interesting stories emerge from the responses? How can these stories help to understand/think about my research study questions?

- Do any of these patterns or findings suggest that additional data may need to be collected?

- Do any of my questions need to be revised?

The first stage was to read through my fieldnotes (from the observations, focus groups and interviews) and begin to note the recurring themes: some of these ideas were from the literature I had read, such as literacy events, others arose from the situations I observed such as code-switching as it related to bilingual settings. Below are the themes I had developed for the second focus group in March 2000.

Table 1. Themes Presented at the Second Focus Group

Lack Of Places To Practice And Use Written K'iche'
No K'iche' Language Materials That Are Of Interest
Immediate Needs vs. Strategic Priorities Regarding Language Choice
Need for Spanish Language for Market Purposes
Need Spanish Skills Immediately And Cannot Wait For Them
Lack of Time and Motivation for Current Options
Social and Economic Mobility
Lack of motivation to learn Spanish

I collected together all the events and comments relating to a particular theme or question, summarizing them in a line and referring to it with the name of the woman

who made the comment and where the comment came from (for example: Margarita, interview 1 under "Lack of motivation to learn Spanish").

For each main heading, I drew together all the references and analyzed them as a group: for example "reasons for not learning Spanish" or "reasons for not learning to read and write *K'iche*". This more in-depth analysis pointed out gaps in my data or further questions and issues for some of the women, which I then followed up in the next period of fieldwork. At the end of each period of fieldwork, I brought together the key themes that had emerged during that time and worked out how to follow up on these.

Another important process of analysis was to note the critical events (from my perspective) during the research. Sometimes these events would be "critical" to my understanding; sometimes they would be "critical" to our process. I decided to highlight three of these in my second analysis chapter. These incidents were important in framing the overall thesis. Periodically, I also reflected on my original research proposal in the light of the data I had collected and analyzed how my strategy was shifting or I was straying from my original intent.

Final Analysis and Structuring of the Thesis

Sanjek (1990b, p.93) makes the distinction between "headnotes" and "fieldnotes", suggesting that once back home, the fieldnotes also evoke many memories that were never written down. Since coming back to the U.S., I have found that my "headnotes" also add structure to the fieldnotes and have added another dimension of analysis. I tend to think of the fieldwork period in terms of key events, which caused me

to reconsider certain concepts I had taken for granted. Burgess (1995, p. 41) referred to a method of analysis based on critical incidents, "certain turning points in an organization or social situation that expose how the group operates", which is how I have come to view the way that much of this thesis is structured. As will be evident in the remainder of this thesis, my analysis chapters are focused on key events taken from my fieldnotes which serve a dramatic purpose, like a scene in a play: the reader can observe (through my eyes) how certain events or interactions led to the theoretical conclusions that I make. I am aware that this is a highly subjective process and am not attempting to suggest that the extracts from my fieldnotes are objective "evidence" for the argument of this thesis. Rather, I see them as one method of data analysis - an "illuminating" case (Mitchell, 1982, p. 204), which helps to "make theoretical connections apparent".

In structuring the thesis, I also drew on the organizing and headings that I had written in the field. Once back in the U.S., I began to consider what concepts emerged for the research as a whole particularly as they related to my deepening understanding of language issues in Guatemala and my shifting ideas about literacy learning.

In the following two chapters, I present my data to the reader. In the first data analysis chapter, I present the three overarching themes that emerged from the data collected from observations, interviews and the two focus groups. In the second data analysis chapter, I highlight three instances where literacy events were negotiated within our group and how these literacy events informed my thinking about my research questions and the data I collected.

CHAPTER 6

FALSE DICHOTOMIES AND (UN)FORTUNATE CHOICES: LITERACY AND LANGUAGE IN RURAL GUATEMALA

In this chapter, I begin by presenting short vignettes of each of the women who participated in my study. Of the seven women, three speak fluent Spanish, and one speaks limited Spanish, three speak only *K'iche* and have almost no understanding of spoken Spanish.

After the vignettes, I move to the presentation of three major themes that emerged from the data collected with the seven women through two individual interviews, two focus groups, and my observations. For each of these themes, I have used the women's words and experiences to illustrate it for the reader.

Margarita

Margarita works in the main marketplace, *La Independencia*. Most days, Margarita arrives at the marketplace by 6 a.m. to set up her stall which she fills with seasonal vegetables: carrots, potatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes, radishes, small and large onions, garlic, cucumbers, peppers, spinach, as well as rice and red and black beans.

Margarita's stall is artfully arranged, with the bright colors of the produce jumping out at the observer. Wooden crates and boxes are arranged in a semi-circle around Margarita with flat baskets and boxes on top of them that hold large heads cauliflower and broccoli, bunches of carrots, onions and other assorted vegetables attractively arranged next to each other to catch the eye. In the middle of the semi-circle

are two huge shallow baskets set atop burlap bags filled with two different grades of white rice, at first glance they look the same but on closer inspection one can notice that the more expensive rice is whiter and the individual grains seem more uniform. Behind the two large baskets of rice are two cloth sacks filled with beans, one sack of red beans and one sack of black beans. The beans have a quality about them that suggests they have been polished because they are so shiny. In the middle of this lush semi-circle of garden delights sits (and more often stands) Margarita with a small metal scale at her side so that she can weigh the produce. Most of the produce Margarita sells is sold by the *libra* (pound), but some of the smaller items such as cucumbers, peppers and garlic are sold individually or in bunches. Margarita does not grow the produce that she sells; she gets it from a wholesaler at the nearby community of *Almolonga*.

The bright colors of Maragarita's *traje* (dress or costume) match her produce. She is wearing a lively *huipil* (the traditional woven blouse worn by Maya women) from *Zuñil*, a nearby community. Her *huipil* that has bright colors of pink, blue, green and red against a black background tightly woven throughout the bodice into a carefully patterned design. Her *corte* (heavy woven skirt) is covered by a *delantal* (apron). These three item, the *hiupil, corte* and *delantal* make up the typical outfit for a *K'iche'* Maya women. The apron Margarita is wearing is made from richly woven *corte* cloth from one area of the country, it ties around her waist and falls down the front of her to her ankles and is finished with grosgrain ribbons sewn around the edges in a bright pink color. It has two deep pockets with zippers on each side, which are perfect for holding money and change in the market environment.

Margarita is about 45 years old, as she tells me, "45, *mas o menos*" (more or less). Her stall was once her mother's stall and for the last ten years she has been running it by herself. When she was younger, she ran the stall with her mother. In those days, it would be her job to come to the market earlier that her mother and set up the produce for the day. Her mother would arrive in time for the early morning market rush that begins about 7 in the morning during the warm weather and 8 or 9 in the morning when it is the rainy season and the weather is much cooler. Margarita tells me that she has never held any other kind of job except working in the market place. She explains that her grandmother also ran a stall, but in their smaller *barrio* (neighborhood), not in Xela. In those days the market in Xela only happened a few days a week.

When she was younger and her mother ran the stall, Margarita would take small bundles of garlic, onions, lemons or limes and walk around the marketplace hawking them. She also mentioned that when she was younger, her family did grow most of the produce her mother would sell at the market. However, times have changed and Margarita says that it is no longer economical nor practical for her family to grow the produce.

Now Margarita comes to the market by herself, and her youngest child, a boy who is 8 years old, joins her in the afternoons after he gets out of school. Her boy stays with her until she is ready to go home for the day, partly due to her own fears of leaving him alone at home and also because he occasionally helps her out, particularly speaking with the *gringo* tourists who are living in Xela studying at Spanish language schools and whose broken Spanish is difficult for Margarita to understand. She tells me that her Spanish is very limited. Her young son, who is much more at home with Spanish than

she is, seems to have an easier time deciphering what the *gringos* are trying to say to Margarita as she bargains with them about vegetable prices.

Since she cannot read or write any language, Margarita considers herself to be illiterate. She had attended school for a few years but says she didn't learn much, "*no me entra*" (literally, it wouldn't enter, or I didn't absorb it). She seems to understand quite a bit of Spanish, and she is comfortable talking to me about "market" concepts in Spanish, things such as prices, names of the produce and small talk related to her work. She is also able to do mathematical equations in her head and uses the Spanish language to talk about the prices. Her native language is *K'iche*, which she converses in at home and in the market but, she reminds me, "I cannot read or write that language either".

Margarita works Monday through Saturday in the market of *Xela* and she sometimes takes an occasional Tuesday off. She used to work on Sundays but says that it was a waste of her time to set up because she never made much money. Since she doesn't work on Sundays, it is important for Margarita to get rid of as much of her produce as she can at the Saturday market (which is the biggest one of the week) so that she can begin fresh on Monday. Usually, Margarita tries to get rid of older produce that is not keeping as well at the end of each day by substantially lowering the price while holding onto the better produce that could likely catch the going price for the next morning. Margarita says she does not do a large amount of bookkeeping, but tallies her earning at the end of each day. Rather than worry about how much she is making, she said she thinks in terms of how much she needs to feed and clothe her family of five. She tells me that if she can make 150 *quetzals* each day, she is doing quite well. According to her calculations, if she earns between 100-150 *quetzals* a day (about $18-

$22) she can continue to work with her wholesaler, provide for her family and save for other necessities, like her youngest son's education.

Rosa and Isabel

Rosa and Isabel are an aunt and niece who run a market stall in the enclosed municipal market near *Xela*'s town plaza. Their stall is small, perhaps an 8' x 8' cubicle, with two sides of concrete and two open sides that face onto the corridor of the marketplace. Rosa and Isabel's stall is on the ground floor of the market near the slaughtering area of the market, giving it an earthy, moist and somewhat cramped feeling. Because their stall is in an enclosed concrete setting with no electricity and no windows only doorways, it is dark, gray and appears gloomy. However, Isabel and Rosa have done their best to compensate for the environment by decorating their stall in a lively and cheerful manner. As one passes by their stall, the first thing that strikes the observer is the sheer number of baskets and woodenwares that are artfully strung from strings and wires from the walls and ceilings. Shelving on the two concrete walls is filled with rows and rows of every kitchen article imagined creating a rich visual tapestry of wood, wicker, glass, china and aluminum. Egg beaters, whisks, wooden spoons, handheld dusters, miniature brooms, egg holders, forks, knives, spoons, strainers, mixing bowls, tableware and drinking glasses are among the many assorted items that visually assault the observer. It takes the observer at least ten minutes to take in all of the possible items for sale before one can even engage with Isabel or Rosa; it is so overwhelming and intriguing.

Rosa has been working in this stall for four years, and Isabel her niece has been helping her for three of the four years. Rosa does not own the store; she has a *patrona* (patron) who owns the stall and pays the monthly rent to the municipality. Rosa's responsibilities include working in the stall, keeping up the inventory by going to wholesalers and vendors to get what she needs, keeping the stall clean, and any other necessary maintenance. Rosa does not receive a salary from her *patrona*; instead, Rosa receives 40% of the profits from her sales. The *patrona* is responsible for providing the money to keep up the inventory and even pays for Rosa and Isabel's bus trips to the wholesalers in nearby communities of *San Francisco el Alto* and *Cantel*.

Rosa is a 48-year-old woman with a smiling face and easy manner. When she smiles you see that the entire top row of teeth is outlined in gold leaving only the front of each tooth natural, a common practice in Latin America that demonstrates wealth. She wears her *K'iche traje* (a *corte*, heavy woven skirt and a *huipil*, a woven blouse) and over it wears a lively blue plaid bibbed apron edged with white lace that covers her from her ankles to her neckline and ties in the back. Rosa wears her long hair in a traditional *K'iche* manner; two braids that begin behind each ear and extend straight down her back. Each braid is intertwined with a piece of colored ribbon and the two braids are joined together at the bottom by the ribbon. Rosa has been working in market settings and sales for about 15 years in various places and selling various items. Before working in this particular stall, she worked for another women *patrona* for almost 5 years, but it didn't work out because the women was always giving her a hard time about not selling enough. Before working in the enclosed market, Rosa said that for many years she sold things from her home that she would buy in quantity from

wholesalers in different parts of the country. She said that she enjoyed that much more than working for someone else, but that circumstances had forced her to leave her home and thus, she had nowhere to sell from now. Rosa mentioned many times that she thought if she could read and write in Spanish (she already speaks some and is convinced she does not know any) and in particular if she were able to write receipts and calculate numbers, she would be better able to have her own business and not have to rely on a *patrona*. Rosa is not married and has no children, as she tells it, "That is why Isabel is like my daughter"(*Por eso, Isabel es como mi hija*). Right now, Rosa is living with her younger sister's family, and Isabel is the oldest girl of that family.

Isabel takes care of the bookkeeping aspects of the business. She put in writing (in Spanish) the sales that Rosa has made over the course of a month, writes out estimates for the costs of replenishing the inventory of the business, and writes out receipts for customers. Oftentimes, when Rosa is alone, she is asked for a receipt from the buyer and since she cannot write she asks the person requesting the receipt to return the next day so that Isabel can write it out for her in the evening. Isabel is 23 years old and is currently enrolled in an accountant-training program offered to women by FUNDAP, a local non-governmental organization. Isabel studies three mornings a week and spends most of her afternoons including Saturdays and Sundays in the market stall with her aunt. When the stall isn't busy, she sits on a stool and does her homework. During the many times I sat with Isabel, she asked me to help her with her English, one of the things she is studying as part of her training as an accountant. Isabel talks openly about her life and smiles frequently when asked about her job. She considers her work with her aunt a temporary condition although she has been assisting her aunt for 3 years

now. Isabel is eager to learn English so that she can interact with the many *gringos* in *Xela*. She tells me that she will have her own business someday; she would like to have a shop not a market stall, perhaps selling *tipica* (typical handicrafts). Isabel completed her primary education in *Xela*, studying through grade six. In addition to the accountant training program she is now enrolled, she mentioned that she has enrolled in other training programs but has never followed through because she couldn't understand how the course would help her find a job; this time however, she feels confident that this program will give her skills she can use to get a job.

When I speak to Rosa and Isabel, Isabel usually answers for her aunt and then asks in *K'iche* whether she agrees with her answer. When I came to the stall along with my interpreter, Rosa, it was an interesting dynamic to watch whether Isabel would let her aunt answer first, in *K'iche* or whether she would jump right in with the answer that she seemed to think I wanted to hear. Because of Isabel's habit of answering for her aunt, after the first few interviews I would go to their market stall in the mornings to see Doña Rosa alone with an interpreter while Isabel was studying.

Mari

Mari is a very small, beautiful woman who has a stand filled with fresh vegetables located on one of three streets of the big *La Independencia* market in *Xela*. Her soft-spoken manner and tendency to turn away her eyes from you when speaking hides the fact that she is very eager to converse, and of all the women I interviewed, Mari was by far the one most willing to share her thoughts, engage me in conversation and also invite me into her home so that I could meet the people she had been talking

about. Mari was exactly the same age as me, thirty-six, which might have accounted for our ability to "relate" to each other. She is a widowed mother of three- two boys and a girl- and she lives with her mother and a sister who is a schoolteacher.

Mari was educated for six years in one of the better church-run primary schools of Quetzaltenango, and she tells me that it was very difficult to be an Indian in those schools because she was made to wear a school uniform and could not appear in her traditional *traje*. One of the first school memories Mari has is hearing the teacher say, "*¡Aqui no lengua, solo Castellano, aqui no lengu!*"("Here no Mayan language, only Spanish, here no Mayan language." *Lengua* is the derogatory word for language, which literally means "tongue".) She remembers that she was hit by the teacher if she was caught speaking to her friends or brothers in *K'iche*; and when she first started school at the age of eight, she had known only a few Spanish words and couldn't understand what was going on around her. Her parents believed in education as a way of progress so they sacrificed much for Mari and her siblings to stay in school. She remembers wearing the same uniform day after day even when it was too small and began to tear. She completed six years of schooling; her sister completed seven years of primary schooling and was also trained as a teacher; her two brothers, however, dropped out of school and decided to go to work, one worked the *milpa* (land where beans and corn are intercropped) with their father and the other began seasonal migratory work on the coast.

Mari always thought she would be a teacher like her sister, but instead of continuing at a teacher-training institute, Mari got pregnant and had her first child when she was seventeen. She says that her parents were disappointed in her, but that they

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were also happy to have a grandchild in the house. At that point she was not married and was still living at home. Her future husband was working on the coast doing seasonal labor, and she only saw him every few months. She had met him when he had returned to Xela with her older brother who was also working on the coast.

Mari explained that when her first child, José, was born (José is now nineteen and is in the capital, Guatemala City, living with an aunt and studying at the University San Carlos) she didn't work outside of the home. She worked with her mother in their small kitchen garden, tended the chickens, made the tortillas, and carried lunch to her father and younger brother who worked their bigger plots of land, washed the clothes and tended her new baby. When José was almost two and she was pregnant with her second child, her father confronted her future husband and told him that he thought that he should marry Mari and make their relationship legitimate. Mari and Roberto were married at town hall shortly before Mercedes their daughter was born.

When Jose was nine and Mercedes was seven, Mari decided that she needed to go back to work. At that time, Roberto was still working on the coast but had been sending less home money and also coming home less frequently. Oftentimes, Mari wondered whether she still had a husband and had no idea of his life on the coast. When her older brother came home from the coast, she would ask about Roberto but get vague answers from her brother leaving her doubtful that she was still really married.

About eight years ago, Mari saw Roberto for the last time, and he left her pregnant with their youngest son, also named Roberto. According to Mari and confirmed by her brother, it seems that Roberto had been involved with the union that was trying to organize the sugar cane workers of the coast so that they could receive

better pay and better treatment. It also seems that Roberto was living with another woman and had a second family, but Mari didn't know about that until after his death at the hands of the sugar cane owner's henchmen who were instructed to exterminate the union agitators.

Since before Roberto's death, Mari has been very active in an Evangelical Protestant church and attends prayer meetings at least three times a week. Her children often accompany her and she feels that her path to G-d has saved her from despair over the future of her family. When I asked her whether she thought that traditional Mayan religion had any part in her family's life, she said that she respected the "old ways" but that she didn't see them as that important any more except for certain healing prayers for the sick and elderly. She did mention that at her church, the congregants are told by the pastor to forget about the "old ways" because they do not lead to the path of Jesus.

Glorimar and Rosa

Glorimar is a 32-year-old woman who has been working in the market of Quetzaltenango for the past year. Glorimar and her sister Rosa sell *tela* or fabric, the vividly colored locally woven cloth that is used for the *corte*, the women's skirt that makes up the traditional *traje* or outfit. They have had their tiny stall only a year now. Before opening up their stall in *La Independencia* market in Quetzaltenango, they worked with their aunt selling *tela* and *huipiles* in *Cantel* where much of the local *tela* is produced. Glorimar and her sister decided to make a go of it on their own because they were sure that they would be able to buy and sell good quality cloth at low prices to a clientele that was not looking specifically for the cheapest cloth. They prefer to cater to

a clientele that is happy with the quality they are able to offer at a very reasonable price. Glorimar said that, "the average *Quetzalteka*, not a tourist, is the customer they are aiming for because a local knows the quality they are offering and also do not want flashy fabrics as much as good quality, careful weaving and a cloth that will last." (personal interview 4/00).

Glorimar and Rosa's stall is in the bowels of *La Independencia* market, hard to find for an outsider who does not know the market well, Glorimar refers to the clientele they want, "the kind of (*K'iche*) Maya women I want to find me and my *tela* does" states Glorimar confidently. The stall is about 4' by 4' and is a simple wood frame with a shelf across the front of it. There are about ten bolts of cloth in the stall and most of them are simple (by Guatemalan standards) tightly woven cotton cloth. I ask Glorimar to show me what she means by quality, and she pulls down a bolt of navy cloth with a simple white pinstripe. This is typical *Quetzalteka tela* for making the typical *corte*. In Quetzaltenengo, the women's *corte* is a wide a-line pleated skirt, rather than a simple straight folded cloth, unlike anything else in the rest of the country. Both Rosa and Glorimar are fluent in Spanish and *K'iche*, and Rosa even says random words in English. Glorimar feel strongly that to protect the Maya identity, both women and men need to value everything about the culture: language, customs, dress, religion and way of life. Glorimar says that one of the reasons she thinks that Ladinos do not value Maya culture is because so many Maya they interact with, especially in the capital, do not declare publicly their ethnic identity, but rather switch to Western dress and customs. She said that once Mayas stop being ashamed of who they are, the Ladino culture will have to start adopting more of the Mayan majority's ways of life. Rosa, Glorimar's

sister does not entirely agree with her sister's analysis of why Ladinos do not value Maya culture. She thinks that the system is set up to exclude Mayas so that not many of them can become successful enough to get to the capital to study and work. Rosa adds that "oftentimes the ones that do 'make it' forget about their sisters and brothers in the countryside and begin to expect the peasants to act like them, the *Ladino-ized* Mayas".

Carmen

Carmen sits in front of the *Xelaju* language school every Tuesday and Thursday mornings from about 9am-12pm. Carmen travels about two hours each way from *Momostenango* and brings with her pieces of weaving, *huipiles* and other pieces of *tipica* (typical crafts) from two women's cooperatives in her community and some items from individual women who live in the town next door to *Momo* of *San Francisco de Alto*. Carmen started her business about three years ago and says it happened quite by accident. Originally, she would visit the different language schools around *Xela* randomly and set up her wares. However, with time, she noticed that at the *Xelaju* school, students would spend more money and there were always lots more gringos so she decided to set up a regular schedule at the school. She occasionally visits the other schools in town, but does it randomly. The reasons she says she is allowed to set up shop at the schools is because her things come from a women's cooperative, which makes the people happy. She tells us that "*gringos* love the Guatemalan fabric and have lots of money to spend. They often ask for specific orders and I bring them back, adding to the price for my travel time." She tells me that this arrangement works well for her and since coming to the *Xelaju* language school, she has done most of her sales through

the many special orders she places, usually typical weavings with a persons name embroidered into it, which she says the *gringos* are willing to spend a good deal of money for. Coming right to the school also gives her the added security that the person who places the order will be there to pay for it when it is done. The one problem she struggles with is that to her, all the *gringos* look alike and since she cannot read or write, she cannot account for who has ordered what.

When an order is taken, a language teacher from the school writes out the order in Spanish, which Carmen takes to her women weavers. The students seem to remember when they see her and ask her about the status of their orders. She now takes a small deposit for the special ordered weavings; she learned the hard way because at the beginning some *gringos* placed orders with her then disappeared. No one wanted the *tela* that had names they could not pronounce woven into it and she lost money. She admits that she wished she could speak better Spanish because sometimes she would like to be able to have more conversation with the *gringos*, but she also tells us (my interpreter and I) that speaking mostly *K'iche* is also a benefit because then she can refuse to bargain with the *gringos* who always want to try to get a lower price. She goes on to tell us that she thinks that they learn that they should bargain with the Mayas at school and not accept the first price given, and that while it is how the *K'iches* do it at the market, the *gringos* need to remember that Mayas are poor and they are not and they shouldn't be so insulting with the prices they offer. She tells us that in her hometown, *Momostenango*, which is famous for the woven blankets they make and sell, vendors haggle with tourists all the time and when they are offered an insulting price for such beautiful work, they tell them to go away. She has never been that forward with the

gringos, but she occasionally turns her head away and the person who gave her such an insulting price gets the idea.

Now that the reader has a picture in his/her head of the seven women portrayed in my study, I will now turn to the three macro themes that emerged from my data.

Theme I: Cultural Loss and Fear

The seven women in my study spoke passionately about their fears related to language loss and its connection to the loss of cultural and ethnic traditions. For them, as with many speakers of minority languages, they see their language intimately tied to their cultural/ethnic identity and according to them, many of their ways of knowing and being as Maya are expressed in their Mayan language and these cultural markers cannot possibly be translated into Spanish. "There are certain things that cannot be told in Spanish. Our relationship to the earth, our history, our weaving, our cloth, these things all belong in Mayan" (Glorimar, interview 5/2000). Carmen, who possesses the least Spanish in the group, and may be the eldest (she doesn't know her age) agrees:

> At the school [the language school where she sells her *tipica*], there are young *Maya* who come from cities and do not speak *K'iche* very well. I don't understand how they can say they are *Maya* really, because if they cannot speak the language, how are they *Maya*? They cannot communicate very well with me and always add *Kashlan* [*K'iche* for foreign words, most likely Spanish] when they talk *K'iche*. They teach the *Kashlan* about our culture, but how can they do that when they don't speak the language?

In the focus groups, there was consensus among the seven women about fears related to what would become of their culture if the younger generation chose not to speak *K'iche*, practice the traditional ways in regard to dress, food and religion and, as the trends portend, continue to leave the rural areas and move to the cities.

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Margarita thinks it is very important for people to hold on to the traditions and remember who they are and where they came from. She worries about the next generation of Maya.

> My mother and father were very poor and never spoke anything else other than *lengua* (literally this word means tongue, and is often used as derogatory slang for native language or mother tongue). There was never any question like there is today if Mayas would 'lose' their language because there was never another choice, everyone grew up only knowing their own language and that was all that was needed to get by. People got what they needed at the market and spoke in their own language and occasionally would encounter someone who spoke *Kaqchikel* or *Mam*, but no one in the markets spoke only Spanish. Today it's different. So many Ladinos around who are the bosses and only speak Spanish. (focus group notes, 3/2000)

Margarita tells me that today the kids go to school and are exposed to different things, things that she never knew about until she came into *Xela* as an adult. In the countryside, when she was young Mayas could still just stay among yourselves and get along just fine.

> But now, no one can make a living in the *milpa* [traditional intercropping of corn and beans] anymore, so everyone comes to the city and forgets all the important things about our people. To eat and have a roof over your children's head, you need to let go of the things that my grandparents and parents thought were important.
> I worry that my children will go to the capital, and stop using the traditional *traje*, forget our language and eat differently. That would be sad. That is why I do what I can to keep my children near me. But I know that eventually they will decide to go to a more modern place and there is nothing I can do but help them, because they will want what is best for their children just as I do. I think women need to make hard choices like interacting with the Ladinos and the gringos and speaking Spanish rather than *lengua* so that they can feed their children, and that really isn't a choice, is it? (interview, 3/2000)

Although Rosa would like to be able to speak and write Spanish for her business and to prevent the problems she has had with her *patronas*, she laments that that is the

case. She remembers when all she needed was *K'iche* to get by and when she would

hear other Mayan languages, others could often translate.

> I didn't always need to have someone like my niece to help me with my
> accounts because before no one required me to write down things like
> they do now. No one else in the market was able to read and write either.
> I would often keep figures in my head and sometimes use the Mayan
> counting system, and everyone understood that, even if they spoke
> another *K'iche* dialect that was difficult to understand, but no one really
> uses it any more (She is referring to the Maya vegesimal system of
> numeration based on ancient Maya hieroglyphs which is based on 20
> rather than 10, as in our decimal system) (interview, 2/2000).

Rosa fears that when her niece gets another job, she will run into problems

because she needs someone she can trust and that understands her. Rosa is concerned

for the increasing need for Spanish and says that she does not think that it is good for

the community in the long run. "Children will want to leave their family and home and

go to the capital and forget their traditional ways." She worries that women won't want

to wear their *traje* and that "after awhile all of the '*Indios*' will look just like the

Ladinos" (interview, 2/2000).

Mari talks about the traditional medical and religious practices that Maya in the

countryside continue to use.

> Before I joined my church, I was more willing to follow some of our
> traditional [religious] practices. It is an interesting mix of practices that
> mostly old people follow. Some of us younger Maya have decided to
> follow a more organized church practice and for me, I have joined an
> evangelical protestant church, which has helped me a lot, especially after
> my husband abandoned me and then was killed. (interview, 5/2000)

She describes a difficult balance between holding onto traditions and moving

forward and uses herself and her religious choice as an example. She sees nothing

incompatible between her Protestant religion and keeping other traditional ethnic

markers such as language, dress, foods and some of the medical practices, which make

more sense to her than the western notion of giving a shot for everything. She does know however that some of her neighbors don't think very highly of her abandonment of Catholicism and some of the traditional Maya practices that are embedded in indigenous Guatemalan Maya Catholic practices. Mari feels that out of necessity, the future will include a *"mezcla"* (mix) of the old and the new.

Glorimar and Rosa have some very strong ideas about the needs for Spanish and the long-term threat to the preservation of indigenous ways of being in the world. Rosa blames the way that Guatemalan society is structured.

> Maya will always be discriminated against because the Ladino majority has the power and doesn't want to share it. One of the biggest mistakes the Mayas could make would be to "give in to the Ladinos" by abandoning their ethnic identity and not being very public about who they are and not insisting that the Ladinos acknowledge their customs. (interview, 3/2000)

While acknowledging that most people, especially in the rural areas, aren't given choices about using their language when they are faced with a Spanish speaker and a system that excludes those who do not speak Spanish, she says the fault most clearly lies with those Mayas who went to the capital and then did not push for changes but went along (with Ladino ways) so they could get ahead. She also mentions that because of years of oppression, many Mayas are ashamed and embarrassed by their traditional ways and long to be Ladinos.

Glorimar's sister Rosa adds that it is not just that the Ladinos do not value the Mayan culture but that they are also threatened by the potential power the Mayas could have if they were organized and informed so that they need to keep them down and marginalized. As long as they can, they will insist that Mayas adopt Ladino ways, hoping that in the long run, they will abandon their dress, and their languages and just

blend in with the Ladinos. Both women are involved with a local Mayan NGO whose works includes cultural resuscitation through indigenous language training and they feel that this is the only way Maya culture will survive in the long term as well as in the short term. They both express the need for educated Mayas to take risks and give up the good life of "Guate" (Guatemala city) and stay in the rural areas and work with the peasants and help them keep their traditions alive. Glorimar used themselves as examples, citing that they could go to the capital and work for an NGO and make more money, but that they were doing their part by selling traditional fabrics and *traje* and working with the indigenous.

According to Paulo Freire, "making oneself conscious of one's life conditions and contradictions and taking action against the oppressive elements of reality" (conscientization in Paulo Freire's terms, 1972) is a powerful tool for counter hegemonies and liberation, and he believed that language is central to this. Freire argued that language is not and cannot by definition be a neutral or an objective tool. It is always interpretive and subjective, regardless of whether those using it know or admit it or not. It is both a tool for domination and a tool for change and self-determination. Some scholars are critical of approaches that give prominence to language in general and to mother tongue in particular for identity and other psychosocial purposes. Their position can be labeled a kind of instrumentalism. For these scholars, languages are instruments; tools only and mother tongues (or native languages) are in no way special- any language can fulfill the same function. Instrumentalists believe that language is a socially constructed and learned behavior, possible to manipulate situationally.

Primordialists, on the other hand, see language as something more ascribed than acquired and believe that people are born into a language and do not choose it. Many primordialists support the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis[1] either in its most strong form "our language is our fate; it decides our worldview" or its weaker form, "our languages influence initially the way we interpret and create our world". Instrumentalists often label primordial arguments as emotional, romantic, and traditional.

As described by the seven women in my study, language is a central core cultural value, and they seem to draw on the primordial, ascribed view that says that

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[1] The Sapir-Whorf theory, named after the American linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, is a *mould* theory of language. Writing in 1929, Sapir argued in a classic passage that: Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation. (Sapir 1958 [1929], p. 69) Whorf, who, in another widely cited passage, declared that: We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, *but its terms are absolutely obligatory*; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data, which the agreement decrees. (Whorf 1940, pp. 213-14; his emphasis)

they were born into a specific ethnic group and this decided what their mother tongue would initially be.

But what has happened to them (and their family members) later and how their language has been shaped and actualized has obviously been influenced by social circumstance, political and economic forces and concerns. A few of the women, particularly the younger, better educated ones, also hint that to the extent they are aware (like the sisters Glorimar and Rosa) of the importance of the connections between ethnicity and language, the more likely they are to be able to articulate the impact of the contradictions they and other *Maya* are now facing.

Examining the situation of fear and loss of cultural and ethnic identity and its relationship to language from a policy and planning perspective, adopting either the primordial or the instrumental point of view appears to miss the point. While instrumentalists frequently dismiss the authenticity of the experience of the people whose language is in some way threatened, labeling their feelings as overly emotional and not rational, an attachment to native language to mobilize negative nationalistic sentiments in opposition or to attempt to romanticize and suspend a culture in time is not useful either. More important as a policy maker would be to ask under which circumstances can *K'iche* women's ethnicity and their language(s) become positive forces and strengths and sources of empowerment for their lives?

Looking at this situation from a "both-and" rather than an "either-or" viewpoint, it may be possible to formulate policy and planning decisions that validate the very real fears the women I worked with are expressing while acknowledging the growing role of Spanish language as Guatemala becomes more influenced by the forces of

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globalization. Part of the dilemma that appears to force policy makers as well as native language advocates to fall into the either-or perspective rather than the both-and one, seems to stem from the way in which languages have been analyzed in relationship to culture.

Linguist Tove Skuttnabb-Kangas (1983, p.61-68) defined cultural competence in terms of four components. They include cognitive, affective, behavioral, and awareness-related. These four components cover knowledge (including language), feelings, and behavior as well as metacultural/metalinguistic awareness. When positing language as a core cultural value as most Mayanists and linguists do, it is impossible to ignore the cognitive component of cultural competence as it relates to knowledge about the relevant culture. The knowledge component of cultural competence includes knowledge of the language (s) pertaining to that culture, and also includes some knowledge about the history, and traditions of that culture, knowing how different institutions function, how people behave and react, what they grow, what they eat, drink and how they think, what they wear, read, write, do or do not do, and how they pattern their family and kinship life, what the relationship between and among genders are, how they raise children, in short, everything that is necessary to be part of that culture. Most definitions of ethnicity include language as one of the cultural traits that belong to defining characteristics of that ethnic group. This is often the case even when some kind of ethnic identity remains even when the capacity to speak the language has been lost (Skuttnabb-Kangas, 2000, p.117).

Even when the linguistic heritage has been stolen or lost (Fishman and others frequently cite Yiddish and Irish as examples) and even where the ethnic language has

been killed off (or nearly so, as in Yiddish, where it can no longer be considered a necessary condition for Jewish ethnic identity, at least in the context of contemporary Jewish society but some competence in Yiddish-isms in English may well be) linguistic markers of ethnic identity may still be very significant. Thus, claims that a culture can survive even without its language should be seen as an exception to the rule, particularly from a policy perspective when deciding whether to support minority languages or not. In writing about Maori minority language in Australia, Paulston (1994, p. 31) states that if children marry those of the host culture, there will be no need for different educational policies, but if they marry their own kind, learn the national language poorly, and show other "trends of strong cultural maintenance" (Paulston, 1994, p. 31) then a strong case can be argued for bilingual education. This typical either-or stance often reduces part of a minority's cultural competence that relates to the cognitive component in relation to mother tongue. This would appear to have consequence for cultural competence as a whole. Some linguists claim that with the loss of linguistic diversity, a culture cannot survive for more than a couple of generations because what is transmitted as culture is really just reduced to the folkloric conceptions of that culture rather than the rich ethnic identity and solid cultural core that language provides which includes creativity and economic potential.

The affective component of cultural competence relates to the deep feelings and attitudes toward a culture, understanding of it from the inside, internalizing it and identification with it, including acceptance of its norms and values (most of them anyway). Included is this component is discourse and conflict style differences between ethnic groups. A few of the women make mention of this in relation to their interactions

with ladinos in the marketplace. The elder Rosa, who has struggled with her *patrona*, relates an example of this part of cultural competence, which for her is not simply a matter of *Ladino* vs. *Maya*, but also reflects part of the linguistic differences and is complicated by literacy expectations.

> There are more difficulties dealing with a *patrona* than being your own boss. She wants me to write out my accounts, something that I wouldn't have to do with another Maya. She also likes to raise her voice and gets angry when things aren't as she wants them. Although she doesn't tell me what she wants just what she doesn't want and since she can't tell me in Maya, how do I really know? (interview 4/2000)

Carmen also expresses dismay with the linguistic and cultural differences even between Maya, in her experiences with non-Maya speaking Maya from the capital who work at the language school. When she has had some difficulty with a weaving order that a student didn't want because it wasn't exactly what she had in mind, Carmen only speaks with the Mayan speaking Maya.

> When I have a women weave for a *Kashlan*, they have to pay for it, even if it isn't exactly what they wanted because I have to pay that woman for her time. I only speak with the *K'iche Maya* who know us, they understand the problems if I cannot pay the woman for her time at the loom. Those from the city, they do not understand our culture and often side with the *Kashlan*. One spoke to me disrespectfully, so I will not talk to them anymore. (interview 5/2000)

Carmen's comments also reflects the third component of cultural competence, the behavioral component, the capacity to act in culturally appropriate ways with members of a given cultural group. According to Carmen, city Maya cannot do that and therefore are not to be trusted with important things such as her earnings from weavings. Ethnolingustic vitality theories discuss conditions under which speakers attune (converge) or contra-attune (diverge) discoursally, para-lingustically and non-verbally. Carmen's sense of these non-Maya Maya may be related to the crossing of a

class border, age border or a gender border and the inability of these Maya to attune to her or perhaps vice-versa, her inability to attune to them. Also to consider is that it may be possible to possess the cognitive and behavioral competence but choose not to use it. Sisters Glorimar and Rosa repeatedly express that their fellow Maya sell out (my words) when they go to the city, adopting the Ladino ways and forgetting their Maya cultural competence.

Finally, the fourth component of cultural competence is metacultural and metalingustic awareness, an understanding of the distinctiveness and relativity of one's own and others' culture and consciously being able to reflect on and look at them objectively. Again the sisters Glorimar and Rosa seem to be the ones in the group most adept at this. In their individual interviews Glorimar and to a lesser degree Rosa tell me that part of their concern for their language and culture's demise revolves around those Maya who have "made it" (my words) the ones well educated enough to have the metacultural and metalinguistic awareness, but choose not to apply it to the project of cultural resuscitation like they do.

> Educated Maya have a responsibility to those in the countryside. They should return to the country and work with the younger generation to conserve their culture and make sure every Maya can speak their language. It is also our responsibility to create opportunities to use our language in the community because if there are no opportunities to use the language it will be lost. (interview with Glorimar 3/2000)

Linguists interested in the social-psychological aspects of language seem to suggest that this understanding of self/other is necessary for a more heightened ethnic consciousness and ethnic awareness. The difference between the two is that ethnic awareness refers to a knowledge of one's descent, without necessarily resulting in any kind of conscious evaluation of it, while ethnic consciousness involves using one's

ethnicity as a dynamic force, something that Glorimar and Rosa are urging all Maya to do. Fishman states "Ethnicity, as a highly conscious, instrumental, outward orientated ideology, is abundantly in evidence in the Western world… and heightened language consciousness… mobilizes and solidifies the ethnicity collectivity"(1977, p. 35). Thus, one might conclude that a group that meets with fierce resistance to using its language as a medium of education may as a result develop an even higher degree of ethnic consciousness especially vis-à-vis language as part of their multicultural and metalinguistic awareness. Or, like Glorimar and Rosa, and other Mayanists, it may become a part of the political dimension of this awareness.

Finally, from a language planning perspective one could further speculate metalinguistic consciousness may be linked to the awareness of status planning aspects of language planning and policy (as hinted at by Glorimar and put forth by some Mayanists in the Guatemalan context), rather than just corpus awareness, that is, the awareness of different forms of a language (like many linguists).

The next two themes that I will discuss: economic sustainability and mobility and language and power can be best examined through the lens of globalization and the changes that the global economy are forcing on the Guatemalan marketplace and the market women who must confront it every day. Juxtaposing the comments and insights of the seven women in my study with the issues surrounding globalization will help place the issue of language choice in a wider context, highlighting some of the more macro-societal, ideological and economic reasons that the issue of which language, where, has become so contested in Guatemala.

Globalization can be understood in various ways and even differently within various disciplines. Economic globalization seems to be at the center of many of these discussions. Postcolonial studies argue that early globalization was implied in colonization and slavery. Today's globalization includes neo-neo-colonialism (Galtung, 1980) and direct and indirect slavery. Despite decolonization, the industrial world still has much power over what the lands and bodies of other countries are used for and the industrial world continues to extract and appropriate both material and non-material resources.

The predominant economic development model, modernization, with capitalism and the lingua franca English as both the means and goals, has been exported worldwide neo-colonizing the countries of the "south". This model is at complete odds with most southern countries multilingual realities and with their own definition of development. Among the impediments that many underdeveloped countries have is their "traditional" cultures and their language(s), especially their linguistic diversity, which have been seen as preventing both a free flow of information (through education and the mass media) and goods, and the national unity needed to allow for centralized planning needed for development.

Modernization theories of development as they relate to educational planning often insist on the need for a common language (or a few common languages) for the spread of new technologies and ideas making the likelihood for the need and desire for multilingual societies questionable. The free market response inherent in globalization

that touts centralization, homogenization, and monocultural efficiency portend disastrous consequences for educational and linguistic diversity.

In the second focus group, the issue of economic mobility and sustainability became the central theme for the seven women. They expressed having little choice when it came to participating in the changes they were experiencing around them. The non-Spanish speakers felt an acute lack of being able to speak to others in their work environment as well as some fears about going out into the wider community without Spanish. While not all seven women spoke of the need to write in Spanish, the need to speak and read were noted by all seven women as extremely important for their livelihood and the future of their family's well being. When talking about the rapid changes and what was needed to survive and thrive in *Xela* today, they expressed some dismay and chagrin at Mayan youth's desire to learn not only Spanish but English as well. The women I interviewed expressed daily dilemmas, albeit on a small scale, as they plan for their future and the future of their families.

Mari, in her second interview, commented that the idea of economic gain through the ability to speak a new language (Spanish) made her feel angry. She thought that it shouldn't be that way, that people should be taken at face value and remember what the bible says about how people should be treated by each other. She said that it was sad to think that if someone wanted to get ahead they had to leave their home and forget about what their parents had taught them. She recalled her sister-in-law and mentioned that she has become a maid and now cleans houses in the capital. She said that she thinks that although her sister-in-law says she is better off, Mari doesn't agree and wonders if the compromises she has had to make regarding her children's refusal to

speak their native language and the fact that her sister-in-law is now a maid have been worth the move to the city. She said that she is actually ashamed that her sister-in-law is a maid and doesn't tell the truth when friends and neighbors ask her how her sister-in-law is making out in the capital. She also wonders if staying in her community and getting by without the need to adapt to the foreign ways is actually better although she may not have all the modern luxuries her sister-in-law refers to.

This problematizing of the link between literacy (in the dominant language, in this case Spanish) and development, as Mari has hinted at in the above passage, is critical to the reframing of this ongoing debate between literacy and development. Instead of accepting Spanish literacy as simply the

> motor for the emergence of modern man or women and the development of attitudes and dispositions of flexibility, adaptability, empathy, willingness to accept change and proneness to adopt innovations (Papen, p. 53, 2001)

that ultimately and automatically lead to social and economic mobility, it can also be viewed as an imposition on groups that the dominant section of society (and also the international community) has determined to be marginalized.

While is true that the desire to participate in new social and economic opportunities also entails the necessity to participate in new literacy and discourse practices as well, the important question that further ethnographic research needs to address is whether there are opportunities for adults (like Mari's sister-in-law) to acquire the language and communication practices they need to participate fully in the new post-conflict Guatemalan society and economy.

Isabel has very definite ideas about language choice and her own economic and social future. She tells me in private that she would like to speak English and live

abroad, maybe in Los Angeles where there are a lot of Guatemalans. Perhaps because of her age (23 years old), Isabel thinks that young people her age need and should learn Spanish and even English otherwise they will be left behind and be forced to live lives that are hard. She tells me, when we conduct our interview alone, that she feels some conflict and responsibility towards her family, but at the same time, she doesn't want to end up like her aunt, renting a stall from an unreasonable *patrona* who makes her life miserable and then have nothing to show for all her years of hard work. She strongly believes that education and training and access to the Spanish language will prevent her from repeating her aunt's history. When I ask her if she worries that her generation will abandon their native language and customs and become "Ladino-ized" she says no, she thinks that the other young people she knows feel very strongly about their Maya identity and traditions especially those about family and community but that they just want the same opportunities like the Ladinos.

While Isabel is confident that Maya youth will negotiate the changes and successfully pick and choose from the various cultural adaptations research tells a different story about language loss. Many Maya parents worry about their children not getting ahead and see the speaking of Spanish as the only "true" way to succeed in life, given their own difficulties and the discrimination they have faced. Some Mayas decide to implement Spanish as the home language in order to help their children prepare for the formal education system hoping to give their children a head start, not requiring that their children possess fluent native language skills. The result is often loss of the ability of the children to function fluently in their native language. According to R. McKenna Brown (1996, p. 46) these results are compounded by 1) Spanish being seen as the

language of prestige therefore it is believed by a majority of parents that it has to be taught to children at home; 2) Large migration of formally rural Maya to urban areas and the proximity to urban centers where Spanish is the "lingua franca" and has shifted the environment to a monolingual (Spanish) one; 3) Mayas and non-Mayas criticize the "impurity" of Mayan languages due to Spanish influence and therefore resist using it; and 4) Parents desire to prevent their children from suffering rejection and inferiority because of their inability of speaking Spanish.

Also cited in this research is the fact that frequently the parents, who are native language speakers and second language speakers of the dominant language, do not realize that they need to be intentionally teaching the native language and do not comprehend that children will not just pick it up by hearing other family members speaking the Mayan language.

Mari says she is concerned about what she sees happening in the schools and what she also sees happening in some homes. She again refers to her sister-in-law who moved her family to Guatemala City so that her children could have access to what her sister-in-law thinks are better schools.

> At first, the children had a really hard time because they spoke very little Spanish and were made fun of by classmates and didn't fully understand what was happening around them. After a while, the children picked up Spanish and began to speak more fluently than my sister-in-law and now refuse to use *K'iche* at home. My sister-in-law doesn't insist they speak it and although she might speak to them in *K'iche*, they will answer her in Spanish. (first focus group, 2/2000)

Mari's analysis of this is confused, as are her attitudes about the changes confronting women like herself. After offering this story (in the first focus group) she says that it is too bad that the children refused to use *K'iche* and that it will surely be lost in their

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family, but a few moments later, after an opportunity to reflect, she returns to the story and goes a bit further with her thoughts. She blames her sister-in-law for not insisting that the children speak *K'iche* at home and also blames the city for requiring that everything happen in Spanish and shaming Indians for being themselves.

Margarita, reflecting on Mari's story, adds that as a parent she knows how hard it is to demand that your children do something they don't want to do. She says she feels for Mari's sister-in-law and wonders what might have convinced her that leaving the countryside would be better for her children. She says she is convinced that her children will hold onto their traditions because she has kept them near her in the countryside away from the influences of the city. She says that by having her children near her, she can have more control over what they do and help them feel good about themselves as *K'iche* Indians. She adds that because her extended family all lives together, the children need to speak fluently in *K'iche* to talk to their *abuelos* (grandparents) but goes on to say that having her children going to school and learn Spanish is equally important so that they can defend themselves in the outside world.

Fishman's theories on preventing language loss suggests that Margarita's situation, where three generations are speaking the native language at home, is the most important scenario for reversing and preventing language loss among younger generations. He further suggests that the native language needs to be spoken in as many contexts as possible, not only in the home. For these women market workers who are confronting changes in the markets where they work, the challenge I see is how they can hold onto an economic arena where *K'iche* remains the dominant language rather than Spanish. As the younger generation sets its sights on the city and a city-life,

planning efforts must examine where Mayan languages will fit into economic activity of rural Guatemalans.

The older women of the group expressed concern that although they would continue to use oral *K'iche* for their work in the market, more and more they were required to speak, write and read in the Spanish language when it came to interacting with the slew of tourists in *Xela*, dealing with some of the wholesalers and also working with the municipality. Carmen spoke of her every day dilemma.

> I am too old to learn a new language, and I wouldn't be able to anyway. Part of the problem is that I only need Spanish for a very certain set of interactions in my life and most of the time I do just fine in *K'iche*. She admitted that it was becoming increasingly troublesome to go to the language school and try to sell and negotiate with the *gringos*, although she thought she got by okay and was usually able to give change and take in and give out money. "I don't think that I would be able to go anywhere other than the language school to sell the wares from my village [*Momostenango*] because the primary market for them are tourists and for that, I really do need Spanish language skills. (interview 3/2000).

In addition to speaking Spanish, Carmen mentioned that she also has difficulty because one of the things she sells, personalized weavings with people's names in them, requires that she write down the names and then be able to decode the names later after she has returned to her village. Although she asks one of the professors at the language school to write down the name(s) that will go in the weaving, more than once she has misinterpreted the symbols (her word) because the paper got ripped or folded and the buyer didn't want the cloth because the name was incorrect. That has happened a number of times and has cost her a lot of money. Now she always makes sure she checks with a Spanish speaker in *Momostenango* before she has the weaver begin.

Mari tells of similar concerns around the need for Spanish but adds that some of her decisions are not dictated solely by economics, but by her faith in Jesus. At her

Protestant evangelical church, the pastor urges the congregants to look to the future for the betterment of their family and community. Speaking and conducting business in Spanish is part of that betterment according to Mari. Knowing how to speak and read and write in Spanish is important to progress, it makes life better because,

> we can get along with others in the country and particularly here in Xela. Of course, I want my children to consider themselves *K'iche Maya* but I also want them to be full Guatemalans and that means participating in Spanish. I want them to speak their language but not only their language or they will not get by (interview 2/2000).

She mentions that it is unfortunate that it seems impossible to have it both ways -- meaning to her that progress often means the loss of traditions and language. She wonders why the two cultures can't live side by side, but sees from her own experience that the Ladinos need to have things their way (meaning the language spoken and the western dress).

Margarita feels strongly that Mayan language reading and writing will never catch on because the majority of peasants in the countryside are like her and cannot read or write and are quite content to speak their language and get the information they need through word of mouth. Carmen agreed with this, adding that,

> The younger ones don't want to read and write in a language they already understand, they want Spanish. It makes sense; things change over the generations and the older ones are resistant to changes while the younger ones want to be more modern. I am happy that many of the language teachers at the school can speak Maya but I am no longer surprised at the ones who don't come from *Xela* who speak only Spanish. (second focus group 4/2000)

Isabel, who had remained quiet during this conversation, had the last word on this topic during our second focus group. Isabel spoke repeatedly about her hopes for increased social and economic mobility after completing her FUNDAP accounting

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program. She referred to her growing English language vocabulary as another sign of her increasing marketability and how these new found skills would help her strike out on her own in Guatemala City or even in the United States. Isabel expressed no doubts that her ability in the Spanish language was what had and would continue to propel her forward. She said that if she only spoke *K'iche*, she would be afraid to leave her home like her mother is and she would need to go everywhere accompanied by a Spanish speaker like her mother and her aunt Rosa. Eager not to sound like she is criticizing her mother, she adds that since her mother is older and is used to the "old ways" when married women didn't leave the home very much, her mother doesn't understand why Rosa wants to leave their community and work outside the home. She repeatedly explains to her mother that she would like to earn money so that she can give her mother and siblings things they do not currently have.

She sees the possibility of leaving her community as exciting although a bit scary, but explains that because of her skills she will be able to get by and find what she needs. A command of Spanish and having the confidence she has gained from the FUNDAP program has been very important to her. She adds that before taking the FUNDAP course, she felt doomed to live a life much like that of her aunt, working in the market and making very little money. However, with her certificate in accounting from FUNDAP, she is confident that she will be able to get a job in *Xela* and eventually go to the capital and earn even more money. She repeats that her dream is to go to the United States someday so that she can live well and send back money to her family.

One other observation I gleaned from the second focus group was that the older women, while resigned to the changes around them and the significant move towards

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embracing the Spanish language in the marketplace, expressed that they did not feel responsibility for accommodating to these changes. Rosa used her niece Isabel to write things down for her *patrona* and to communicate with non-*K'iche* speakers in Spanish; Margarita used her young son as a mediator and translator with the *gringos* who frequented her market stall; and Carmen relied upon the professors at the language school and other Spanish speakers in her community of *Momostenango* to sell her *tipica*.

Rosa, one of the oldest of the group spoke of much difficulty not speaking and writing Spanish. She mentioned that ten years ago it wasn't the case, but since the end of the violence and the signing of the Accords (the historic Peace Accords that were signed in 1996 and officially ended 36 years of violence aimed primarily at the peasants of the highlands) there has been a growing number of tourists from the U.S. and Europe and even tourists from Guatemala City so she feels that she needs to speak Spanish to increase her sales. She also goes on to tell us,

> I also have to create written accounts of the purchases, which I never had to do before, so thank God I have Isabel to help me to write out my sales and keep track of my expenses. Sometimes when she is in class and I am by myself I ask the buyer to write down what s/he bought and how much s/he paid for the items. But I would never ask a *gringo* to do that so I have to keep it in my head, which is hard, and I am not always accurate. I cannot let the *patrona* know that, or she would be angry with me (focus group 4/2000).

Margarita, who uses her young son as a translator and mediator, was the most blunt about not taking on the responsibility to adapt to the changing needs for Spanish language skills.

> I do know I need to speak Spanish with the *gringos*, but I have always had one of my children stay with me after school to help me. Children should always help their parents and this is the kind of help I need. I

could never learn to speak Spanish as well as my children do and I really only need it for the times that the *gringos* come to my stall. Spanish isn't my concern, I am too old, but it will be the concern of my children and their children. That is why I send my children to school.(Interview 4/2000)

This interesting tension between knowing what is needed to survive (economically) but then making the decision not to take on that responsibility may be in part related to the next theme I will explore, that of language and power. It may very well be that the decision made, particularly by the older women, not to embrace the Spanish language in the market setting, is an area they feel they can still choose to exert control and power over: the language they choose to speak in for business purposes.

Theme III: Language and Power

Recent contributions to social theory have explored the role of language in the exercise, maintenance and change of power. Language has come to be the major locus of ideology and of major significance with respect to power. Foucault (1980) has ascribed a central role for discourse in the development of specifically modern forms of power. Moreover, social linguists argue that language, assumptions, meanings, values, and attitudes constitute discourse and that the concepts of discourse allows us to speak of the importance of language as a way of framing reality and shaping how we see ourselves and the world (Foucault, 1980; Horsman, 1987; Gee 1990). It can be argued that Foucault's concept of discourse refers to not only language but to the processes of social interaction through which meaning is constructed, recognized, contested and negotiated. Inherently, literacy practices would also be part and parcel of these processes. Literacy practices invoke other practices and larger social patterns as they are

rich in individual, cultural and social meanings, and are perhaps the place where larger institutional and cultural practices may be questioned or subverted.

In my observations of the seven women in my study, I noticed some very interesting interfaces of gender, cultural, and age systems at play in the marketplace of *Xela* as they related to language and literacy events and practices. In particular, the uses of translators and mediators seem to differ depending on gender, age and culture. One thing is certain, however, in the examples illustrated below, that the women in my study were most often the ones in control, the ones determining when a translator was used and when the role of their helper was more of a mediator.

This first observation is of Margarita 2/2000 in the central market place of *Xela*. The three students- two young women and a young man no more than 20 (who are at a Spanish language school in town) approach Margarita's stall cautiously. They are chatting among themselves in German (?) pointing to the beautiful vegetables, perhaps talking about what they will cook for the evening's meal.

Margarita looks up at the three students and her young son puts down his copybook and moves closer to them. One of the girls says "*hola*" and the young boy says "*hola*" back to her. She asks him how much the carrots cost, speaking very slowly in her new Spanish. He looks at her and says in Spanish, "I will ask my mother", a phrase I am not sure the young woman understood. He talks quickly to his mother in *K'iche*, Margarita stops what she was doing, bagging up bunches of onions, and says something back to him in *K'iche*, without looking at the group of three. The boy tells the girl (in Spanish) a price and adds that since it is the end of the day, it is a good price. In her new Spanish the girl adds, "If I want more will price be better?" but the young

boy doesn't answer her question. She asks about the lettuce, "How much is the lettuce?" is given a price (without having to ask his mother) and then asks about the rice, and then the beans. Except for the carrots, the boy has been giving the young woman the prices without talking to this mother. The young woman turns to her friends, maybe asking them if they think the prices are reasonable, because then she turns to the young boy and says that she will take a pound of beans, a pound of rice, a single lettuce and much carrots (I think she meant a bunch but didn't know the word).

This whole time Margarita seems not to be paying attention, but then what seems like out of the blue, she begins talking to her son in *K'iche*. When he gives the young girl a price, it appears his mother has been telling him what to ask for as the total price. I have kept a running tab and the total is 5 quetzales less than the total for each item quoted separately. Nevertheless, the young woman says she will give the boy 5 quetzales less than he quoted her. He quickly says no without consulting his mother (perhaps the directions not to lower the price was given to him before he names his price). The young woman hesitates for a moment and then says "okay" and pays the young boy. As the group leaves, the boy calls after them, *Que le vayan bien* (travel well).

In this observation, Margarita's son does not translate for her, but acts more as a quasi-mediator, leaving the decision-making and control to his mother while mediating the transaction between the two parties. While it appears he can answer without consulting her up to a point, she ultimately controls the prices and his role is conveyor of her decisions into the Spanish language. These language interactions between the young boy and the *gringos* and his role is distinct from the next observation of his

mother, Margarita, in the *Alomonga* wholesale market, where she travels weekly with her daughter and son, demonstrating that Margarita is clearly in control of how and when she uses her translators/mediators.

Margarita and her young son and an older daughter are at the weekend wholesale market in *Alomonga*. She has come to negotiate with middlemen for large crates of carrots, lettuce, cucumber, rice and beans.

During the early morning (6 a.m.) Margarita and her daughter are each talking separately with wholesalers about the various kinds of rice and beans. They both are speaking in *K'iche* to the men and the daughter, while carrying on her own negotiations, frequently comes back to her mother to get her approval for prices. By seven in the morning they have three kinds of rice in sacks that have been put near the bus they will take back to *Xela*.

At the bean area, the seller that Margarita approaches speaks in Spanish. She says "*Buen dìa* Don Jorge "(good morning Mr. George, in Spanish) and then she and her daughter stand next to each other and Margarita speaks to her daughter in *K'iche*, beginning the negotiations, the daughter speaks in Spanish to Don Jorge, the bean seller, and then she translates back to her mother who then continues to negotiate in *K'iche*. The back and forth continues for a good fifteen minutes before they seem to have reached an agreement for the large sacks of beans, one red and two black.

Examining these two instances of Spanish and *K'iche* language use with Margarita, it is interesting to contrast when a mediator is used and when a translator is necessary. It appears that for Margarita it is very clear that in high stakes interactions such as the one with the Spanish speaking bean wholesaler, direct translation is

necessary not merely some mediating as in the case with her young son and the *gringo* shoppers at her stall in *Xela*. The other part of this equation worth closer inspection is that of gendered literacy practices in the marketplace. While there were many market women at the wholesale market, there were hardly any women wholesalers. In my rough estimate, I only saw a handful of women wholesalers in a market that had at least 500 people milling about.

From all appearances, Margarita was very clear about when to use her children as mediators and when to use them as translators, but I am not convinced that this is the case in all inter-lingual circumstances of the women in my study. Below I will highlight two other instances of translation and mediation, one with Carmen and the other with Rosa and Isabel.

From the first time we met, Carmen had talked often of the difficulties she has with the situation of selling her *tipica* (crafts) at the *Xelaju* language school. While she says it is better than when she roamed around the *Xela* market, dealing with the *gringos* and the non-Maya speaking Maya appears difficult for Carmen. I spent a morning observing Carmen at the language school to see how she interacted with a new group of students who had arrived one week prior to study Spanish.

Carmen sits at the entryway of the school, her *tipica* laid out on a beautiful woven cloth. She has an wide assortment of things: small purses, worry dolls, headbands, weavings with names and designs in them, pieces of fabric, hackysacks, mini-purses and backpacks and a few of the famous *Momostenango* woven woolen blankets. At the break a few of the students wander over and begin fingering the items, asking in their new Spanish, "*cuanto cuesta* (how much does it cost)?"Carmen looks

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one student directly in the eye and states a price, "8 *quetzales*". The student then says, "no, 5 *quetzales*". Carmen says "no" and ends the conversation by turning her head away. A few of the students capitulate and give her the amount she has asked; it appears that Carmen doesn't negotiate. One student, however, went and got a teacher from the break room and has brought him back to help her negotiate. The young woman is saying to the teacher in broken Spanish, "ask her to take 100 *quetzales* for (she points to the blanket not knowing the word)". [From my own experience in *Momostenango*, I know that the inferior woven blankets cost at least 200 *quetzales* and that the one she wants would be at least 300 Q]. The teacher says to the student, "ask her yourself in Spanish" But the student replies that her teacher told them that Carmen doesn't speak Spanish and that they should find someone to talk to her in *K'iche*. The teacher says okay (appears reluctant) and asks Carmen in *K'iche* how much the blanket costs. She replies that it is 350Q. The teacher tells the student how much and then the student gets a piece of paper and writes it down, apparently to make sure she heard the price right. The student says "no, too expensive" and writes down a price, 250Q and the teacher tells Carmen in *K'iche*. Carmen replies in *K'iche* and then the teacher tells the student that she wants to sell it for no less than 325Q. The student appears a bit exasperated and says again in her new Spanish "too much" and walks away, muttering under her breath in English that it is a rip-off. Carmen and the teacher chat for a while in *K'iche*, so I do not understand any of their conversation.

Later, another student approaches Carmen to negotiate for a hackysack. Unlike the other student he doesn't ask a teacher for help and begins the negotiations by asking where the hackysack is from. Carmen smiles at the student but doesn't say anything. He

then says "how much?" (in Spanish) and Carmen immediately answers "12 Q". The student hands a 10Q note to Carmen and says, "All I have". Carmen looks at the 10Q note and then at him and hands him the hackysack. The student says "*gracias*" and walks away.

I asked one of the language teachers if he could ask Carmen why she sold the hackysack to the student when he didn't offer her the price she asked for. In *K'iche* he asked her my question. She said she did it because she liked his smile and that he had tried to talk to her himself and that on a small item like a ball, 2 quetzales didn't make a difference.

For Carmen, having a translator seems to be a necessity, but I did not see an instance of one of the *K'iche* speaking teachers acting as a mediator. In other conversations with Carmen, she mentions her distrust of non-Maya speaking Maya, perhaps indicating that the mediator role has to do with relational proximity and trust. Although Carmen has most likely over time developed rapport with a few of the teachers at the language school, there is not enough of a rapport for her to trust them with a financial transaction as in the case of Margarita and her son and daughter, or in the observations below in the stall of Rosa and Isabel.

In the case outlined below of Rosa and her niece Isabel, Rosa lets Isabel mediate for her in some situations where Rosa needs to speak in Spanish, but does seem to want to play a role in the translation when talking to Rosa's *patrona*. The interaction between Rosa, Isabel and her *patrona* is a bit more complicated, and was confusing because there seemed to be both mediation and translation going on in the conversations between Rosa and her boss and I couldn't tell whether this was a usual pattern or not.

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It is early on a Sunday morning and three Ladinos (two women and a man) approach the stall (they are obviously Guatemalan from the way they speak and not Maya because of their features and the fact that the women are not dressed in *traje*). They are talking among themselves about the beautiful things on the wall: baskets, kitchen appliances, brooms, etc. Rosa is closest to them near the perimeter of the stall and Isabel is on the side practicing English with me. They approach Rosa and ask her in Spanish how much a dozen of the brooms would cost. She smiles at them and says in Spanish, "I don't speak Spanish" and switches to *K'iche*, obviously talking to Isabel.

Isabel gets up from her stool and goes over to the group. One of the women begins by asking her how much a dozen brooms would cost and then adds that they want to buy at least a dozen of many kitchen things. The man takes over the conversation and says he has a list; if she can read it he can give it to her. Isabel says, "Of course I can read" and the man hands the list to her.

Isabel begins talking in *K'iche* to her aunt as she reviews the list. The conversation between Rosa and Isabel lasts a few moments and meanwhile one of the women asks me what I am doing at their stall. Not wanting to miss the interactions, I try to answer her quickly, but she goes on about the states and her family that lives in California and asks whether I knew anyone there.

Isabel has finished talking with her aunt and begins to negotiate with the man. She tells him, "Of course, you will get better prices buying by the dozen" and begins to write down next to each item on his list how much one costs and then how much a dozen would cost. She hands the list back to the man. He reviews the list and says that he thinks that the prices are still high and that he will give her 100 Q less for the entire

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list. Isabel says that her aunt couldn't possibly meet that price because she has a *patrona* who has determined the prices (I am not sure this is true and mark down to ask Isabel this afterwards). Isabel continues, " If you are serious, we can give you 50Q off this time and perhaps my aunt could talk to her *patrona* about doing better next time." The man turns to his companions and they talk quickly in Spanish, I do not hear it all, except for one of the women saying that the prices are so much cheaper than Guate (Guatemala city) that they should just take it all and they could look around other places for next time.

The man turns to Rosa, not Isabel, and says, "couldn't you do a little bit better?" She looks at him but doesn't answer. Isabel says to him, "This is the best we can do right now". He says okay and adds that he needs a receipt. Isabel begins writing up a receipt in an account pad and calculates the total on a calculator. It comes to Q 2265, and she says to the man, "I will round it out to Q 2250, taking 15 quetzales more off." The man smiles and hands Isabel the cash and says *gracias*. Rosa meanwhile has begun organizing the dozens of items in piles on the floor of the stall.

After the group leaves I have a few questions for Isabel and Rosa. I want to know if Rosa understood anything the man had said. I asked Isabel in Spanish and she translated for me. Rosa said she understood some of what the man had said and that she could follow the conversation about price.

I asked Isabel if it was true that the *patrona* fixed the prices and she said no, it was up to Rosa to fix the prices depending on what prices she got at the wholesale market. Isabel added that the man made her very angry when he asked if she could read his Spanish list. She said, "Ladinos from the city always think that the Indians are

ignorant" and for that reason she had charged him a bit more for each item but that he was still getting a good deal.

This mix of translation and mediation was interesting because it was clear that Rosa and Isabel are well practiced as a team at the use of both translation and mediation skills when dealing with potential buyers and that the combination of the two different techniques is important for them. I also found it interesting how the gentleman spoke to Rosa, not Isabel, even though he knew she did not understand (or at least claimed not to), he realized who was in control and wanted it made known he knew who held the power.

This second observation involves Rosa's interactions with her Spanish speaking *patrona*. As the reader will note in the following passage, there is also a mix of translation and mediation taking place.

The *patrona* was scheduled to come today and inspect the stall. I had asked Rosa and Isabel if I could observe while she was there. Rosa said it was okay as long as I explained to the *patrona* why I was there.

The patrona was a short, squat woman, with dark skin, eyes and hair, somewhat *Maya* looking, but not dressed in *traje*. She seemed in a hurry and appeared ill at ease with me; while I was talking to her she kept looking away rather than at my face. She said that it was okay to observe as long as no one would hear the conversation. I told her that no one here would hear it verbatim, but that people in the U.S. might read it. I am not sure she took in everything I said in, but she said okay nonetheless.

She began her visit by asking Isabel to see her account book. She looked over the carbon receipts of each purchase and took out her calculator, adding up the separate

receipts for a running total. After she did that, she made some comments about what had been selling well, and what had not, and without giving time for Isabel to translate, she began asking about when Rosa intended to go on some more buying trips. At this point she paused, and Isabel was able to translate the conversation thus far to her aunt. Rosa began speaking to Isabel in *K'iche*, pausing to give time for Rosa to translate what she said into Spanish for the *patrona*'s benefit. Rosa said that she was planning on traveling over the next weekend and that the following week as long as Isabel was able to cover the stall. Rosa began to tell the *patrona* a list of things she was going to buy and where she thought she could get a good price. The *patrona* began responding in Spanish and again, did not wait for Isabel to translate but kept speaking, asking Isabel questions about the location and number of items, for example:

> Why will you go to *San Francisco de Alto* to get the mats when you can get them at *Cantel*? Do you think you should buy six dozen brooms? Do you sell many eggs? Are the mats welling well?

Isabel did not translate these questions to her aunt but answered them without consultation, obviously knowing the answers or at least the answers she thought the *patrona* wanted to hear. Rosa seemed to be listening too and, at one point in the conversation when the *patrona* had asked why Rosa would travel to *San Francisco de Alto* instead of *Cantel*, Rosa entered the conversation in *K'iche* and said to Isabel that she would go to *San Francisco* because she could also get the brooms and baskets there for comparable prices (this was translated by Isabel).

In my observations notes I had exclamation points by this entry and a note to follow up on this interaction, which surprised me because Rosa insisted she didn't speak or understand any Spanish.

The rest of the visit was pretty much the same except towards the end when the *patrona* seemed to want to let Rosa know who the boss was. After handing Rosa money for her bulk purchases, she looked her in the eye and said (in Spanish), "I really think you should be trying to do more bulk selling of your products, because not everyone wants to go to *Cantel.*" She tuned on her heel and was gone, no *adios* (goodbye) to any of us.

I was interested in following up on the one part of the conversation when Rosa seemed to take in everything in Spanish and commented back to her *patrona* via Isabel. I asked Isabel to translate my question to her aunt, but she said that her aunt was too upset with the *patrona's* visit and that we shouldn't bother her. I asked if she could comment on the fact that her aunt had followed the Spanish well enough to make a comment back to the *patrona*. She said that as long as it had to do with the market, her aunt could follow a conversation in Spanish although she didn't want anyone to know that because she was embarrassed about her lack of speaking ability.

This last observation brings up the issue of translation and mediation again and seemed to confirm my suspicion about the relational aspect of when one was done rather than the other, and also reinforces my hypothesis about the different approach to a high-risk (economic) versus low-risk situation. In these cases of Rosa and Isabel, Rosa seemed comfortable having Isabel mediate the situation with the three *Ladinos* after giving her initial consultation to Isabel. In the second situation with her *patrona* Rosa seemed more eager to be a part of the conversation and negotiation and, although it appeared that Isabel could satisfy the *patrona,* Rosa felt the need to have more control over the situation and was paying close attention to the comments of her boss.

Two other systems, that of age and the power of the dominant language, come into play in these observations that warrant more investigation. In the situation with the *Ladino* man, he spoke to Rosa about lowering the price of her goods a little bit more although he was in negotiation with Isabel. It appeared that he thought the control was really in the hands of the elder woman, Rosa (and he was correct with his assumption), even though it meant speaking to her in Spanish. In the second scenario, the *patrona*, in what appeared to me as a clear power play, spoke in Spanish to Rosa in a bit of threatening tone about her need to drum up more business for her stall. She may or may not have known that Rosa had understood her, but it seemed that she wanted to make the point that she should have the last word because she was the boss and that the boss spoke in the language with more power, Spanish. She seemed to understand that if her message was pointed enough, Isabel would tell her aunt exactly what had been said.

Throughout this chapter, I have looked at the different themes that have been gleaned from my data collected with the seven market women of Quetzaltenango. One issue raised is how the different literacies and different uses of literacy occupy different spaces and spheres and form as part of the communicative practices of Guatemalan social groups. While *K'iche* remains the dominant literacy in the market of *Xela*, the way in which Spanish inserts itself into this market ecosystem is on some level troubling because it seems to assume such a superior position over the indigenous Mayan language. As my study suggests, many people have internalized this attitude, a few of the women saying they couldn't learn because they were too old, their head was too hard and new knowledge wouldn't go in, etc. Such hegemonic ideas come from the dominate literate group, and the spread of formal schooling in many countries has

helped to spread negative ideas of non-literate persons and helped to demean non-school literacies.

On the other hand, as noted in some of my descriptions, the resistance of some people to the dominant form of literacy is not just a defense against intrusion or a defense of a traditional way of life. It can be noted that many people are willing to change when they feel it is in their best interests to do so, as in the cases of Isabel and Mari.

I would like to suggest that what we are witnessing here and in many other multi-lingual countries is a confrontation of different literacy communities, a confrontation that has been propelled in part by globalization. Different literacy cultures and linguistic communities with varying literacies and with varying degrees of what may be called "literacy penetration" (Street, 2001, p. 211) meet up. Rather than look solely at the impact on the minority language by the dominant literacy group, I think it would be useful for further research to look at the impact on both communities. What is the effect on dominant literacy communities of their continual contact with Mayan languages? What is the ongoing effect on the various Mayan languages by the dominant Spanish paradigm? And from a planning and policy perspective, it may be helpful to ask, "How do we effectively plan for the present and the future for the meeting up of these very different literacy cultures"?

CHAPTER 7

SITUATED LITERACIES AND NUMERACIES: NEGOTIATING LITERACY EVENTS IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

Some of the more memorable parts of conducting this research study were the literacy events the participants, the translators and I negotiated throughout the study. Three events in particular challenged us all and brought to life what I have been theorizing about in relation to the multiple literacies and numeracies the women in my study manipulate in their daily lives.

As I explained in my literature review, literacy events (Heath, 1983) are those opportunities and occasions in which written language is part of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies. In these constructed literacy events described below, it was necessary to use a written text to facilitate meaning and to make sure all of us where understanding the information in the same way.

Code Switching

Before moving on to look at the three literacy events, I will briefly look at code switching, a concept which I argue is not only helpful in the analysis of these three events, but also needs to be considered at a policy level within possible language policy options, particularly in a case like multilingual Guatemala. Conversational code

switching is described by Gumperz (1982, p. 60) as different from diglossia[1] where "distinct varieties [of a language] are employed in certain settings (home, school etc.) that are associated with separate bounded kinds of activities". Whereas in diglossic situations, speakers only employ one code at any one time, conversational code switching refers to when bilingual speakers mix languages within one conversation or even one sentence. Gumperz refers to this as "metaphorical switching" since speakers switch codes to communicate "metaphorical information about how they intend their words to be understood" (Gumperz, 1982, p.60). He suggests that this form of code switching is "most frequent in the informal speech of those members of cohesive minority groups in modern urbanizing regions who speak the native tongue at home, while using the majority language at work." (Gumperz, 1982, p.64).

Gumperz's analysis of code switching can be used as a basis for looking at how and why speakers switch codes within a classroom or other learning setting. "Code switching provides evidence for the existence of underlying, unverbalized assumptions about social categories, which differ systematically from overtly expressed values or

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[1]Diglossia is a linguistic situation in which a particular society uses different languages or dialects for different functions. Narrow. First proposed by Ferguson (1959) to mean a stable linguistic situation in which two varieties (of a language) coexist such that the high (H) variety is used in written literature, education, religion, and other formal situations while the low (L) variety is used in casual, daily, conversational situations. This is a widespread phenomenon. Examples include:
Classical/Modern Standard Arabic (H) versus colloquial varieties of Arabic (L)., Standard German (H) versus Swiss German (L).Standard French (H) versus Haitian Creole (L). Broad diglossia was proposed by Joshua Fishman (1980) when he extended Ferguson's definition to include *bilingual or multilingual* social situations in which two or more different languages (or varieties of the same language) serve different societal functions. This definition is more inclusive since the language varieties do not have to be considered by the speakers to be the same. Bilingualism and multilingualism are *individual* situations while diglossia is a *social* situation (the individual is contrasted with the society at large); and the diglossic situation has existed for at least 3 generations.

attitudes" (Gumperz, 1982, p. 99). As you will see in the first case about the university consent form in Spanish, I can use my observations about the groups' insistence of switching between Spanish and *K'iche* with me to draw conclusions about their "unverbalized assumptions" about their social and ethnic positions. Gumperz's analysis is useful in that it points to the importance of political and social meanings that may lie behind code switching. However, he goes on to suggest that there must be a strong notion of necessary consensus between speakers, "there must be some regularities and shared perceptions on which these judgments can be based" and "switching strategies serve to probe for shared background knowledge"(Gumperz, 1982, p. 70). As evident in the first case, the group seemed to be checking out where they stood with each other, and the "probe for shared background knowledge" appeared to be the decision they all felt about the importance of critical information coming across from me in Spanish, not from Rosa in *K'iche*. Additionally, in the second literacy event, a discussion of the form of focus groups themselves, it is important to note that there was a fair amount of code switching with Spanish words as a part of the *K'iche* comments and translations among not only the bilingual members of the group but also from the self-proclaimed monolingual *K'iche* speakers.

Strangely, there is very little information written about the use of code switching among bilinguals or even monolinguals in Guatemala except in an urban context among youth.

Literacy Event I: The Consent Form in Spanish

As part of the University requirements for participation in my research study, each potential participant had to sign a statement entitled "Consent for Voluntary Participation". After identifying the women I wanted to ask to participate in my study and then obtaining the woman's verbal permission, I explained to them that I needed them to agree to the conditions in a document created by the University and either asked them to read it in Spanish (in the cases of Isabel, Mari, Rosa and Glorimar) or had Rosa read the document in *K'iche* (for Carmen, Margarita and the elder Rosa) and asked them to sign it or to mark an X if they could not write their name. Thinking that the women would understand, as I did, that this document was really just a formality, I expected each woman to sign the document without much hesitation and we would be done with it.

However, there was hesitancy on the part of five of the women, with exception of Glorimar and her sister Rosa, and they did not want to sign the document right away but suggested they take it with them and get back to me. Fearing that I would lose the women and have no participants, I proposed meeting with the seven women as a group to go over the document together and clear up any doubts or concerns. At that time, I could also reiterate the requirements of their participation in the research study to make sure we were all on the same page.

On the agreed upon Sunday afternoon we met at the COMAL office, the seven participants arrived and five of them had brought family members with them. Altogether, there were fourteen attendees in the meeting. Rosa Zapeta and I had written

up the consent form on flipchart paper in Spanish and *K'iche* and posted them on the wall of the conference room where we were meeting.

We began by welcoming the group and asked everyone to introduce him or herself. I spoke in Spanish and Rosa translated into *K'iche*. For the first time, I sensed that this process was going to be much more complicated than I had realized, because the only person who didn't speak *K'iche* was me and all the translation was for my benefit since everyone else could have moved along smoothly in *K'iche* without the need for translation.

I gave a brief overview of the project and the commitment required by the participants. I then explained the requirements the University placed on me in researching and writing about my subject. Finally, I told them about my experiences in Guatemala and why I wanted to undertake this research.

Then Rosa introduced the consent form, explaining each item on the list in *K'iche*. After Rosa read each item, she asked the group if they had any questions. But a strange thing happened, and although all of the women with the exception of Glorimar and Rosa had wanted an opportunity to have more information, no questions were forthcoming. After the third point on the list, Rosa stopped and asked the group why there were no questions. Glorimar, apparently speaking for the group, told us that they would all feel better if I were the one who read from the consent form in Spanish and answered any questions in Spanish.

Rosa and I quickly regrouped and we started over from the beginning. I read first from the flipchart in Spanish followed by Rosa reading from her flipchart in *K'iche*. We allowed time for questions or comments after each point. Questions were

mostly asked by the family members who were acting as mediators, although some of the participants asked questions, too. The table below lists (in English) the nine points from the form "Consent for Voluntary Participation" in column one, with a list of the questions asked by the participants or their family members in Column Two.

The back and forth of translation of the comments proved very challenging because although the questions were mostly asked in *K'iche*, everyone wanted me to answer them in Spanish, so that meant that Rosa would have to translate them into Spanish for my benefit, I would answer in Spanish and then Rosa would have to translate what I had said back into *K'iche*. Following my answer and Rosa's translation, the families would continue to converse for a few moments in *K'iche*, most likely commenting on the response from me.

A few things became apparent in relationship to the women and their family members making meaning from this text and this concocted literacy event. Firstly, not all present in the meeting were making meaning from the consent form as a text per se. We (Rosa and I) were using the text as a guide, but the meeting members (with the exception perhaps of Glorimar and Rosa) seemed to be taking in the information by listening, and not everyone followed the reading of each number in the list by looking up at the flipcharts. As you can see from column two of this diagram, not all of the questions they asked were in relationship to the item number within which they had asked for clarification.

Table 2. Points From and Questions About Consent for Voluntary Participation Form

1.	I will be interviewed by Joan B. Cohen-Mitchell using a guided interview format consisting of fifteen questions.	No questions
2.	The questions I will be addressing are my views related to how I use reading, writing and numeracy in my work in the market of Quetzaltenango. I understand that Ms. Cohen-Mitchell will use the findings of her research to address how to better design adult literacy programs and policies.	What if I do not know how to read? What if I don't speak Spanish? What if I haven't participated in a literacy program?
3.	The interview may be tape recorded to facilitate analysis of the data.	I don't want to be taped (5 comments) Who will hear the tape? How do I know you won't share the tape with another outsider?
4.	My name will not be used if I decide that I rather have Ms. Cohen-Mitchell use a pseudonym.	Can I choose the name? What if I want everyone to see my name?
5.	I may withdraw from this study at any time during the study.	If I leave the study early, will I still get paid? If I leave the study early, will you still use my words?
6.	I may review the material prior to the final oral exam or publication.	How can I review the material if I don't read? Will I get a book? Will my name be in this book? Will my family be in this book?
7.	I understand that the data collected will be included in Ms. Cohen-Mitchell's' doctoral dissertation and may also be included in manuscripts submitted to the professional journals for publication.	Will this go into the *Prensa?* (A national newspaper) Will the government read the book? What does this have to do with the Peace Accords?
8.	I am free to participate or not participate without prejudice.	No questions or comments
9.	Because of the small number of participants in this study, approximately, seven, I understand that there is some risk I may be an identified participant in this study.	Who from *Xela* will read this? Will people in the government read this? Who will see a copy? Will it be in a library?

This experience made me think further about the interpretation of the concept of literacy event and its cousin term literacy practices. While these concepts are presented as more culturally "correct" and sensitive to the context within which they happen, I have begun to wonder if there isn't still an imposition of our Western concepts of how to use a written text and what its purpose might be in relation to an event where meaning is derived from written information. How many times had I attended a meeting where a Guatemalan colleague leading the group hadn't put things up on a flip chart, but had insisted on talking "at" the group? While I sat frustrated and assumed that using a visual aide such as a flipchart was something so obvious and necessary for a competent adult educator to do, it dawned on me that it might have more to do with how the facilitator and the participants have, in their lifetime, experienced the relationship between text and reading and the need for the a symbolic representation of the information.

In hindsight, I would have liked to repeat this activity without the use of the text prop to see if the correspondence of the item number and its questions and concerns remained the same or the reaction to the consent form was the same.

This initial meeting, which we had estimated would last an hour or so, ended up taking us the entire afternoon, approximately four hours including time spent drinking coffee and eating cookies. Not only had the entire process taken longer than I had imagined, but the intensity of the activity was quite considerable as well. Both Rosa and I were exhausted after this meeting and I began to worry about the complexities of negotiating the two languages simultaneously throughout the rest of my study.

In this first of many challenges regarding language choice and literacy practices within our research group, I realized how important it is to pay attention to my role in the very things I was examining and would later write about. Beyond the communicative and logistical impact of multiple languages, the literacy practices we used and languages we communicated in with the group would no doubt come to symbolize and mediate social relationships and separate the relative power and status differentials inherent in life in Guatemala.

By continuing to operate within a bi-literacy model, despite the time and intensity it required, we were demonstrating on the micro-level how language choices and language and literacy uses (as frequently applied in policy formulation and language planning) contribute to patterns of access to power and exclusion from it.

The fact that the women all wanted me, the *gringa*, to explain the consent form in Spanish, despite the fact that more than half the women and their family members did not understand it in Spanish and needed it translated into K'iche, was telling, and helped me form preliminary insights that aided in my data analysis.

Literacy Event II: The Focus Group Process

The focus groups themselves were a comedy of errors, as well as a learning experience for us all about the nature of multilingual settings. To be quite honest, I had not really thought through the complex routines we would need to create to move the conversations forward. After the Consent Form activity, where it became apparent to me that the women wanted me to take the lead, not Rosa, it wad obvious that despite the

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extra step of Spanish, the translation would have to go back and forth between the two languages much more than I had anticipated.

We ended up creating a script of sorts for when the entire group got together that was shared in advanced with the two translators and discussed with everyone at the beginning of the first focus group so that we could all understand the flow of the discussion.

Again, since I hadn't really thought this through until after the "Consent Form Incident", I hadn't envisioned the need to assign Rosa and Gerardo very concrete translating tasks. However, in order not to overload Rosa the way she had been the day of the consent form activity, I assigned each one a fixed translation job. Rosa's job became translating everything I said and Gerardo's job was to translate back to me everything said in *K'iche*.

This seemed to work well enough although I think that the process remained difficult for Carmen and Rosa (Isabel's aunt) to grasp because they understood the least amount of Spanish.

Additionally, after the first focus group, I made the executive decision that the bilingual speakers (Mari, Glorimar and her sister Rosa, and Isabel) should always answer in *K'iche* for the benefit of the non-Spanish speakers even though it meant another level of translation and the need for the next person wanting to talk to wait for the translation to take place. This became very important because the tendency at the first focus group was for the Spanish speakers, in their eagerness to share, to bypass the translation and speak directly back to me in Spanish. I had to catch myself a few times in order not to get caught up in the discussion and hold myself back and wait for the

JOAN:	Spanish introduction of question/theme
ROSA:	Translation in *K'iche* for the group
PARTICIPANT:	Comment in *K'iche*
GERARDO	Translation into Spanish
JOAN:	Solicitation of additional comments
ROSA:	Translation into *K'iche*
PARTICIPANT:	Comment
GERARDO:	Translation into Spanish

Figure 3. Sample Script

translation. Also, I realized that the Spanish speakers were in essence talking to me and not energizing the discussion with comments to their peers.

Upon reflection and listening to the tapes of the two focus groups, the first focus group sounds stilted and resembled more of a group interview with my questions and the responses to me much more the focus of the discussion. The second focus group sounds much more like a real conversation that the seven women were having in relation to the themes. While in the second focus group I still kicked off the conversation of the themes and how I came to extract them from the data, the resulting conversation that follows in *K'iche* appears much more conversational in nature and the women definitely are speaking to each other and to the two translators, Gerardo and Rosa. Another interesting thing that happened as we all got more comfortable with the format was that a few of the bilingual speakers, Glorimar and Mari, would translate for themselves, which was a big help to Rosa and Gerardo.

Because of the formalizing of the flow of the translation, my role changed and I must say, I felt much more like an outsider in the second focus group than in the first. Because we used more Spanish in the first focus group, I really felt like I was able to follow the information clearly and make connections in my head. In the second focus group, although I thought the process made much more sense given my goals for the discussion, I was left feeling much less able to assess whether it had been a success and whether I would be able to use the data in the ways I had hoped.

Literacy Event III: The Data Table

The third literacy event that influenced the research process was the use of the data table created by Rosa and me. After collecting data in the individual interviews and the first focus group, I wanted to engage in discussion with the research participants about the preliminary themes that were emerging from the data so they could verify them before I went back to the United States.

As discussed in Chapter 5 in the methodology section, I spent quite a bit of time reviewing the data, highlighting the transcripts in different colors to note frequently mentioned ideas and themes that were coming across in the data. At one point, because I was having trouble keeping it all clear, I put up a flipchart in my bedroom with the emerging themes in Spanish and begin putting post-it notes with the page and line from the interviews or comments made in the first focus group next to the theme. Because I am a visual learner, this visual representation of my data made it much easier for me to think through the information, and thinking that it had aided me, I asked Rosa (Zapeta) if she thought it might be a useful tool to present to the group at the second focus group.

She agreed that it had potential, but in order to not alienate the women who were not readers in any language (Carmen, Rosa and Margarita) she suggested that we alter the language to make it a bit to simpler, using Spanish key phrases and then try to add a drawing to each theme, if the theme lent itself to visual representation. Unfortunately, not many of the key phrases lent themselves to pictures.

In order for the reader to follow this table, I have written the theme in English followed by the abbreviated theme in Spanish and then in the third column a drawing of the theme if one was used in the original document. The original table presented to the group of seven women in the second focus group only had the second and third columns. We had decided not to write the theme in *K'iche* since only Glorimar and Rosa read *K'iche*, and we were worried that too much text would confuse the group.

Confident that the data table was simple and clear with few words in order to not overload the table and make the women nervous, we thought that the few drawings were simple and appropriate. Rosa and I were pleased with our work and were also excited to present the data to the women.

However, we were mistaken. The table proved confusing to many of the women, mainly because they had never encountered text represented in that way. Carmen was the first to tell us that she didn't understand the "pieces of paper" on the wall. Rosa tried to help by telling her in *K'iche* that it was written in Spanish and she would soon translate it for them in *K'iche*. However, Carmen was not concerned with the text but wanted to know what the drawings had to do with the letters. In order to keep us on task, I invited each woman to come up close to the flipcharts and look at the words and the pictures. Rosa translated and everyone gathered close to the flipcharts.

Table 3. Themes and Pictures

Theme in English	Theme in Spanish	Picture
Immediate Needs vs. Strategic Priorities	Necesidades contra el futuro	
Lack Of Places To Practice And Use Written K'iche'	Falta lugar para leer o escribir K'iche	
No Materials in K'iche' That Are Of Interest	Falta materials interesante en K'iche'	
Need for Spanish language for Market Purposes	Castellano por el mercado	
Different Decisions For Their Children Than For Themselves	Decisiones por los ninos	
Already Speak K'iche' Why Would I Need To Read And Write It	Ya hablo K'iche	
Need Spanish Skills Immediately And Cannot Wait For Them	Destrezas immediatos en Espanol	
Not Motivated to Learn Spanish	No hay motivacion para aprender espanol	

I really wasn't sure what to do next and I was confused because we had used flipcharts before at our first meeting and the women hadn't seemed so surprised. The comments, as much as Rosa could follow and quickly translate were about the drawings and not about the text per se. Taking this as an opportunity, I asked the group to bring their chairs up close to the flip charts and we would begin the discussion.

I began by explaining the pictures and then working backward, pointing out the theme that went with the drawing and talking about that. But instead of wanting to comment on the theme, as I had been hoping they would, a few of the woman seemed intent on talking about the drawing and what was right or wrong about it in relation to the theme. As much as I tried to get them to focus on the theme, it wasn't happening. So I decided that the best thing to do was to let them get out what they needed to about each of the pictures and perhaps I could even learn something that I hadn't had in mind at all. Most of the comments focused on whether the depiction was accurate or not or whether a different drawing or conceptual representation would have made more sense.

This experience reminded me of what I had just read in Allan B. I. Bernardo's book, <u>Literacy and The Mind</u> (1998). In Chapter III of his book, entitled "Conceptual Understanding: Knowing the Elements of Experience", Bernardo discusses research done mostly in the 1970s by Bruner and Olson (1977, 1978) who argued that it was the demands of a literate practice that provide the context within which people can develop a more decontextualized understanding of the meanings of concepts. Russian psychologist Luria (1978) went further, arguing that literacy was a necessary prerequisite to the development of abstract notions like concepts and word definitions. The comments generated by the group and the "illiterate" members of the group in particular seemed to be in direct contradiction to these assertions. The ways in which Carmen, Margarita and Rosa (the three "illiterate" members of the group) talked about the pictures I had drawn and what might have been a better representation for them, left no doubts in my mind that this early research (that Bernardo was hoping to debunk in his research conducted in the Philippines) was not accurate in my small sampling. I

wondered what role Maya history of abstract representations in their hieroglyphs, their weavings and their oral traditions might play in explaining these women's conformability and ease interpreting the abstract representation and also their confidence that my representation was faulty and their was more correct.

After exhausting the possibilities of the pictures, we were back to the task at hand, talking about the themes. The laborious nature of moving back and forth between Spanish and *K'iche* worked to my advantage and I was able to reintroduce the themes, ask them what they thought of them and to add additional information to the themes that are fully discussed in the previous chapter.

These three literacy events, an outgrowth of the methodology, can also be considered artifacts of the literacy practices and events that we as a group engaged in throughout this study. Taken separately, each vignette appears to illuminate the challenges encountered in multilingual settings and the relationships between the dominant and local literacies.

Taken together, however, I suggest that these three literacy events, as described by Brian Street, (introduction, 2000) "attempt both to handle the events and the patterns around literacy and to link them to something broader of a cultural and social kind". In this case, I maintain that the "something broader" is the socio-cultural context of Guatemala and the complex dance between and among languages and cultures and literate and non-literate approaches to making meaning.

Instead of the usual dominant vs. local literacy mantra of most development agencies and development workers, my data hints towards the women's desire and ability to make use of the dominant literacy (Spanish) to achieve their goals.

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Preliminary readings of my data also suggest that the culturally sensitive and nowadays more appropriate conceptions of literacy developed by the New Literacy Studies movement may also need to be unpacked further in order to get a better grasp on how and why different communities use and need different literacies.

I also hope that this chapter has shown the importance of trying to understand how these complex processes take place, considering multiple approaches to language within one setting and how these in turn should influence any formulated language policy and hopefully literacy program planning. As Yates (1994, p. 308) suggests in relation to the use of the vernacular rather than English in literacy programs in Ghana, "if a language policy is imposed upon learners within nonformal education without any dialogue as to their language needs, it is hard to see how this process could be considered to be 'empowering'". An ethnographic approach to research, such as I have used in the above analysis, as well as in the previous data chapter can reveal how language choices are made in everyday situations and how these relate or conflict with the stated language policy. This approach to language planning could be seen as based on the model of acquisition planning mentioned in my literature review section (Hornberger, 1998).

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The educational formation and framing of a literate tradition, an official language of instruction, texts, reading and writing practices and events, are all an extension of the extant ideological, discursive and material relations of a society. How policies and programs are created, curricula and methodologies refined and what they enable or disenable practitioners and learners to do is further defined by local and regional contexts. Therefore, while we can identify particular trends in educational policy, to judge any literacy intervention in terms of its putative "universality" is to deny in the first instance its basis in local realities.

An alternative to this is to reconsider literacy program planning in terms of the kinds of literacies they are capable of constructing for particular people, and of the applicability of these literacies to the economic, social and political possibilities and aspirations of the people in question (Baker & Luke, 1991). If indeed pedagogic discourse and power are realized differently in different institutional sites (Foucault, 1972) then the same policy, the same program, the same text, the same curricula can potentially generate varying, and sometimes contradictory effects. What might appear an emancipatory agenda for one specific group of people may have very different effects and consequences in other educational settings and contexts.

When we hope to transfer our understanding of literacy and numeracy practices in one context to other localities and contexts, a conclusion developed by Heath (1986) as she worked at the micro-ethnographic level may prove to be critical: without

significant institutional supports and functions in everyday life, literate practices are at best difficult to teach, and at worst, practically unsustainable. The propagation of literacies in any given community is contingent on first, enabling institutional supports, strategies and policies; and second, the necessity for texts and literacy "events" in daily social, economic and cultural practices. These would appear to be necessary and sufficient conditions for sustainable cultures and subcultures of literacy.

My discussion throughout this thesis has addressed issues around the use of an ethnographic research approach to analyze the literacy practices in the specific context of the marketplace of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala with the hopes of insights for potential planning and policy for Maya women's literacy. The outcome of my research has been to describe and analyze the processes I observed, including the implications that such data and methodology have for planners and policy makers. Because of the nature of my research, my findings are not about how to develop women's literacy programs as much as they are about what I found out about individuals' uses (and desired uses) of literacy and numeracy.

I began this research project by setting out to document the various literacy and numeracy practices being used by *K'iche* Mayan market women in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala as they move through their daily lives. It was my contention that there are multiple literacies at play in the social contexts of Mayan women, and that literacy programs working with Mayan women need to understand these multiple literacies (and numeracies), when and how they are used, and by whom and with whom. The purpose of my study was to make clear that literacy and numeracy are not simply a set of

technical skills learned in either formal or nonformal education, but are social practices embedded in specific contexts, interactions and discourses.

Through my ethnographic research process, I was able to uncover the literacy practices that the women I interviewed and observed were using or desiring to use in their daily lives. Through this process, it became clear to me that even though in the long run the women I worked with do want to change their literacy practices and adopt some of those associated with Western or more urban society, a crude imposition of the latter that marginalizes and denies local experience is likely to alienate even those who are initially motivated. Likewise, demonizing or ignoring those desires to adopt some of these Western literate practices will not prevent those motivated from doing so.

The role of an ethnographic approach as I see it is to making visible the complexity of the local, everyday, community based literacies and numeracies and challenge dominant stereotypes and myopia about how this information can be channeled into program planning and policy. Implications for policy, planning and program design, including pre-program research on local literacy practices and how these will influence curriculum, pedagogical approaches as well assessment and evaluation are all major tasks that requires a more developed conceptualization of the theoretical and methodological issues involved in understanding and representing local literacy and numeracy practices.

Ideological vs. Autonomous Literacy

As I mentioned in both my literature review, Chapter 4 and methodology section, Chapter 5, critical to an ethnographic approach is to be clear about the how literacy is defined and used in the planning and policy context.

The failure of many literacy interventions worldwide (Abadzi, 1996; Street, 1999) that have operated under the autonomous model which describes literacy as technical, neutral skills to be injected into a population has led researchers and academics in many parts of the world to conclude that the autonomous model of literacy has not been an appropriate intellectual tool for understanding the diversity of literacies and numeracies around the world nor for designing practical programs (Aikman, 1995; Doronilla, 1996; Robinson-Pant, 1997; Hornberger, 1998). These researcher-practitioners have turned to the ideological model of literacy as a framework to help them decipher the landscape of literacies and also ask questions about the power dynamics and cultural implications involved in the choices made around literacy.

In Guatemala, the very real issue of Mayan language literacy vs. Spanish language literacy continues to be framed as an either or proposition rather than an opportunity for dialogue about what the power relation between Mayan languages and Spanish looks like. What will it mean for a Mayan to take on Spanish literacy rather than Mayan language literacy? What implications will the development of multiple literacies have for the Maya nation? Or for the Ladino minority?

It is my belief that many literacy interventions in Guatemala have only marginally succeeded and will continue to do so because behind the guise of teaching and learning lurk unarticulated ideological and political pressures and dogmas – historical colonial beliefs, urban/ rural dichotomies and other pressures based on local and national conflicts and hierarchies. Making explicit our theoretical tools help us to see such biases and decide how to accommodate and challenge them in practice.

Linking Ethnographic Research to Planning and Policy: Implications for Guatemala

At various points in this document, I have suggested that my findings have implications for the way literacy programs are planned and implemented in Guatemala. I have also implied that an ethnographic approach to researching Maya women's literacy and numeracy can and should influence planning processes and policy formulation in Guatemala. In this section I will analyze more specifically the advantages and constraints that I see, from both my own field experiences and using this research approach in a policy and planning context.

Street (1995, p. 1) describes the field of literacy studies as being "in a transitional phase". The new theoretical perspectives are affecting practical programs unevenly, while the experience of on-the-ground practitioners is feeding differentially into academic research. He suggests that "traditional divisions between academic research and practitioner research... be broken down" (Street, 1995. p. 132), 'the teacher, curriculum designer and program developer.... in 'development' programs, need to have an understanding not only of educational theory, but of linguistic theory, of literacy theory and of social theory" (Street, 1995, p. 136). In my own work in the COMAL project, at various times I tried to explain to my colleagues who were literacy planners and trainers some of the concepts associated with the New Literacy Studies, such as literacy practices and events. Though the theoretical concepts of linguistics, literacy and education may be relevant to practitioners, I see the task of presenting them as analytical tools to people who are not familiar with academic discourse as almost impossible. In this respect, ethnographic analysis is likely to remain less accessible to grassroots planners and implementers than quantitative results in a table with which

they are more familiar and which they have been trained to read. Training programs for literacy planners could try to meet this need, for example, by teaching people how to 'read' and analyze ethnographic case studies as well as quantitative data.

Another constraint in using an ethnographic approach in planning could be in separating an ethnographic approach to research from the popular PRA (participatory rural appraisal) methodologies used in many development planning contexts. Again, in the COMAL project, the few instances when I did try to introduce literacy practices and events as tools of analysis, the trainers immediately assumed they were tools from the REFLECT literacy approach which relies heavily on PRA methodologies. While an ethnographic account might appear akin to a PRA process, they are quite different and reveal very different things. Using an ethnographic approach to document the "meanings" of literacy held by different individuals and groups, and analyzing how these meanings are constructed, is very different from a PRA approach that would produce a (most often quantifiable) list of literacy events observed in different community settings. Thus teasing apart generalizable things such as how many people make lists in their homes, how many family members tell stories, may leave the analysis at the quantifiable level rather than at a conceptual level. Literacy events are easy enough to understand and link to defined interventions that can be determined and measured in literacy programs. Literacy practices, on the other hand, are much harder to link to planning and policy and could lead to greater confusion for a planner and developer.

Having said that, as a theoretical tool, using an ethnographic research approach allowed me to explore literacy and numeracy as social practices in the context of the

markets of Quetzaltenango and move away from the traditional approach of looking at the impact of literacy. I have taken the stance that before examining the effectiveness and possible outcomes of a literacy intervention; it is imperative that we better understand the already existing uses and desires for literacy and numeracy within a given context. Taking an ethnographic approach has allowed me to step back from some commonly held assumptions about the educational aims and agendas of planners and policy makers. It cannot be assumed that (1) programs designed for literacy acquisition are in the best educational or social interests of the target audience; and (2) that "best practices" of teaching and learning developed and advocated by Western educators and planners are the most effective and successful in all contexts.

Whole language approaches or learner-generated materials may work in some contexts and not in others, and we cannot simply impose "state of the art" approaches in all contexts and expect them to work well. An ethnographic approach to literacy and numeracy compels us to better understand the local context: its communicative practices in general and its literacy and numeracy practices specifically before assigning approaches and methods for literacy teaching and learning.

In designing literacy programs, it is my belief that planners cannot assume that their definition of literacy matches the definitions and meanings of literacy held by the target population. Planners must first investigate the reality of the literacy events and practices within the target group of learners. After conducting participatory needs analysis and ethnographic assessment of existing literacy practices, planners should ideally negotiate, with the people concerned, an appropriate curriculum and system of

assessment. It is my conviction that over time, programs developed in this conceptual framework will be more cost effective because of higher retention rates.

Planning as Both a Micro and Macro Issue

Having participated in planning activities during my time working with national, local and international partners in the COMAL project and also watching the language planning and policy issues unfolding at the national level, my own theorizing and beliefs about educational planning have changed. I have moved away from the idea of planning as a technical area best left to experts at the macro-level towards the need to analyze the ideological and political dimensions of a planning exercise and involve stakeholders at all levels in the process. In light of the Mayan revitalization movement and its resulting policy and programming supported by bilateral donors and Mayan language activists, planning in Guatemala cannot be seen (and could never quite frankly) as simply a technical activity that happens at the upper echelons of an organization without looking at the historical, socio-political roots of educational and development planning.

As introduced and discussed in my literature review in Chapter IV, I will draw upon the categories for thinking about planning developed by Caroline Moser (1993) focusing my attention on two of the three planning traditions: rational comprehensive planning and transformative planning.

In Guatemala, the role of the planner has changed dramatically from a technician merely creating plans to that of a political actor using information to challenge people's attitudes. Not only has the function of planning changed, but also the

actor him or herself has changed. In the past, planning was conducted primarily by Ladino technocrats whose plans carried with them serious consequences for the Mayan majority population. Since the signing of the Peace Accords and the emergence of a strong Maya movement with educated and politically savvy leaders, the technocrats crafting language and literacy planning and policy are primarily Mayas. Unfortunately, the framework within which the Maya or Mayanist planner is operating has not changed. As a result, while Mayas own conceptualization of needed revitalization efforts to create a strong Maya linguistic-cultural connection has epistemologically and theoretically advanced and been transformed within the vibrant Pan-Maya movement, the planning traditions and programs that accompany such efforts have remained stagnant and conventional. Most of the planning being conducted by both governmental and donor bodies alike continue to use the applied methods which consists of several logical stages of thinking done solely by the planners to conclude what programs need to be put in place. While consultative processes were used exhaustively in the development of the Peace Accords, they have yet to be adapted for educational planning purposes in current policy contexts.

What appears to be missing is the ability to create a more dynamic process for planning where the ideology that Maya activists bring with them can be incorporated into planning processes. Caroline Moser's discussion of planning is useful for highlighting the fact that the transformative traditions of planning that I am suggesting are not only "political" in nature but also "technical" as well in that specific techniques are implemented for achieving the ideological goal. In the case of planning for Mayan languages, what is needed is a transformative process where planning can take into

account the various needs, goals and ideologies of the Maya majority as articulated by the educated Maya who represent them and also of the Ladino minority. Finally, perspectives offered by the planner, the potential program facilitators, and the population that will be effected by the policies and participate in the programs are critical.

My analysis and conclusions about planning challenges the usual polarization of macro versus micro policy, adopting Long's view (1992c, p. 6) that "local practices include macro representations and are shaped by distant time-space arenas". Thus micro-ethnographic approaches to research can be seen to have relevance for literacy policy on a macro level. By bringing together differing perspectives of planners, facilitators, researchers and participants of literacy programs, a planner would be able to more thoroughly explore the interrelationship of policy, planning and implementation. Following the 'transformative' planning approach, the concept of planning as "debate" (Moser, 1993, p. 87) is central to my analysis of how planning could be transformed and in turn effect language planning and literacy approaches being presented by the Guatemalan government as well as NGOs and donors. This kind of account, the "ethnography of a particular project" (Conlin, 1985, p. 85), has long been seen as a strength of anthropology in the development context.

Insights into Policy

It has been argued that policy and planning processes more often influence research approaches than research approaches influence policy and planning. King (1991) discusses how "[aid] agency analysis over the past twenty years has increasingly

dominated the discourse and debate on education in the poorer countries" (p. 13, 1991).

His use of the word "discourse" points to how aid agencies such as the World Bank and

USAID have not just determined which topics should be researched (such as the link

between literacy and fertility which is now commonly cited in literacy research), but

influence the research approaches adopted and the way in which findings are presented.

He describes how UNICEF tries to produce health messages that are generalizable and

easily communicated: "like a bullet - short, sharp and aimed exactly at the problem"

(King, 1991, p. xiii). King's analysis can be seen as relevant even at the local level. In

our COMAL project, the proposal followed this example of quoting global statements

and statistics to support our approach to the "problem" as defined and researched by

USAID. The trend of "donor-as-researcher" (King, 1991, p.16) - where the major

donors of development projects, notably the World Bank and USAID, finance and carry

out most research - has limited the kind of educational research conducted in

developing countries and even whether it is regarded as research at all - it is more

commonly termed an evaluation or an impact study.

King assumes that the researcher has a defined role of "information gathering"

within the rational comprehensive planning methodologies. Though King questions the

researcher bias (Southern versus Northern perspectives on educational problems), he

does not analyze alternative ways of planning or using research within policy-making

structures. He tends to present planning and research in a dependent and static

relationship: researchers rely on policy makers to set research agendas and to decide

how to use their findings.

I would like to suggest that the relationship should be more dynamic: that researchers can also influence the kind of planning procedures used. For example, I have concluded that my ethnographic data and analysis points to the need to replace the current rational comprehensive approach to Mayan language and literacy planning with the transformative approach. My emphasis in the thesis was not to discover how my research could fit into current planning procedures. Rather, I have used ethnographic data of literacy practices to critique and suggest that a more flexible approach to literacy and language planning needs to replace the current planning models. By stating that the kind of research undertaken can influence planning processes, I am thus questioning the dominant research-policy relationship which King and many others seems to take for granted. I suggest that using an ethnographic approach raises questions that do not arise in the context of more quantitative research: for example, who is involved in the planning? Who is involved in the research and why? What social practices are associated with planning and research? How are research findings used and communicated by planners? By considering planning and research practices together rather than as separate parts of an equation, I believe that we would shift the emphasis onto considering what kind of planning practices lead from and arise from an ethnographic approach to research such as I have used.

Process vs. Products:
Using an Ethnographic Approach to Plan Programs

My experience using an ethnographic approach to research literacy practices has implications for the value of observing the process of literacy teaching, as compared with only measuring literacy outcomes such as drop-out rates or what percentage of the

class pass the test, or to examine retention rates. Using an ethnographic approach to more closely examine how local people interact with literacy and numeracy can lead to a more in-depth understanding on the part of planners and facilitators. As well as providing me with an insight into local beliefs around literacy and numeracy, this more holistic approach to research raised issues around how planning and literacy methodologies can be used by planners. As I showed in relation to approaches to literacy teaching and language policy, planners often introduce Western theoretical models or approaches (such as LGM or mother tongue teaching policy) to development programs without considering local teaching situations or beliefs about education. Planners therefore need to be made aware of the whole process of introducing new methodologies and that; for example, 'functional literacy' may not be a static label characterizing an approach but describes just one influence on a literacy classroom. There is a danger; otherwise, that such terminology remains at a symbolic rhetorical level particularly in plans and reports, only serving to widen the gap between policy makers and implementers. Theoretical models - such as the gender policy approaches - need to be regarded as analytical tools rather than descriptive labels. Instead of considering policy in terms of outcomes, language planners, for example, need to understand the social power relations that affect the whole process of policy and implementation. Introducing a mother tongue policy thus needs to be seen in the context of how languages are perceived and used by women and men of different ages in different communities and in varying situations.

A transformative approach to planning, using ethnographic data, will allow providers the opportunity to adapt policies, plans, and curriculum if, for example,

mother tongue teaching does not prove empowering for women in practice. Such changes in policy may help to ensure that programs are effective - not just in the moral and ideological sense (Conlin, 1985, p.84) associated with anthropological research - but in technical terms of lowering drop-out rates and successfully helping participants learn.

Planning and Literacy Practices

A challenge raised by an ethnographic approach to research would be to see if the planning processes of NGOs could draw more on the informal research that field staff carry out in the course of their daily work. A major achievement of PRA as a planning methodology is the focus now encouraged on how field-based staff and participants can contribute to central planning processes. Although new ways of presenting research findings have been experimented with (such as visually or through community meetings), still the range of information collected can be limited by the methods used such as mapping, ranking etc. From my own experience, I feel the difficulty lies in how to convert ethnographic material into a form suitable for planning and policy level. NGOs could look more closely at how they can draw on field staff as researchers and provide less formal channels for "feedback" from the district to central offices. Looking at the purpose and audience of different kinds of reports would also enable staff to decide which language(s) to use and what kinds of information it would be appropriate to present.

Languages and Literacies

In setting out to understand and document the literacies and numeracies of Maya market women, it was not my intention to participate in the on-going, very political debate taking place in the linguistic circles of Guatemala about language choice for literacy instruction and the issues of language loss and the reversal of language shift. Fearful of taking either side in this polarized debate, I (wrongly) concluded that I could sidestep these issues by focusing solely on the literacy practices I witnessed. However, as time went on, it became clear to me that the issues related to language shift and language loss were inextricably linked to the understanding of the multiple literacies I was witnessing, and, the ways I was hoping my research approach could create a theoretical and methodological connection to literacy planning and policy.

As best stated by Joshua Fishman, "specific languages are related to specific cultures and to their attendant cultural identities at the level of doing, the level of knowing, and at the level of being" (2001, p. 3). Such a huge part of a culture is linguistically expressed that it is not inaccurate to say that most cultural behaviors would be impossible without their expression via that particular language with which these behaviors have been traditionally associated. Interpersonal interactions, religious beliefs and observances, the self-governance operations (such as the *Cofradia* system in Guatemala), the folklore, the literature (both written and oral), the philosophy of morals and ethics, kinship ties, and many more instances are not only linguistically expressed, but they are normally enacted at any given time, via the specific language with which these activities have been identified and have been intergenerationally associated. It is the specific linguistic bond of most Maya's cultural doing and being that make the very

notion of a translated culture so inauthentic to those deeply involved in Mayan language revitalization efforts. The question for me remains as to where the functions of both Mayan languages and Spanish can be differentiated and shared so as to prevent further language shift and help develop bilinguals for the present and future.

Fishman (1991) suggests that the ideal for a threatened or potentially threatened language vis-à-vis its dominant counterpart is for the threatened language to become "the normal language of informal, spoken interaction between and within all three generations of the family, as well as the language of interfamily interaction, of interaction with playmates, neighbors, friends and acquaintances" (1991, pp. 92-93). In his exhaustive research, he states that once this stage of language use is lost, there is great difficulty of obtaining it again. The ideal as stated by Fishman is partly based on the premise that functional differentiation between languages leads to stable bilingualism within a community. Others (Hornberger; 2001, Luykx, 1998 in their research on Quechua in the Andes) have suggested that in certain situations disglossia's functional differentiation might be what allows for the maintenance of bilingualism. More research is certainly needed in Guatemala to examine more closely the relationships between disglossia, code switching and their relationship to bilingualism before the intergenerational transmission of Mayan languages is interrupted.

Given this situation and the very real issues of concern of the language revitalization movement's goals for preventing future language shift and loss among Mayan speakers, it would be naive to conclude from my study that the Maya market women want and need Spanish, so that alone should be the language of instruction. At the same time, without attending to the perceived needs and desires of potential

learners, programs setting out to reinforce Maya language literacy without permitting the learning of Spanish for the contexts within which they are needed and desired are most certain to fail. I would like to suggest that the one or other approach is flawed and simplistic and what is needed is a more comprehensive planning approach for literacy and languages and that they cannot and should not be separated. Fettes (1997, p. 69), building on Fishman's work has suggested that effective language renewal practices are best conceived of as a "triple braid" interwoven of three discursive strands: (1) critical literacy; (2) local knowledges; and (3) living relationships. The braid metaphor reminds us that one strand (approach) is never enough and only when they are woven together can the strands endure (a most fitting metaphor for Guatemala).

Through my literacy lens I would concur with the above and add that any sustainable and meaningful literacy intervention in Guatemala would best be conceptualized as a long-term process that helps to establish an intergenerational network of communicative relationships that focus on the social, cultural, economic and linguistic processes of communities.

In conclusion, this thesis has aimed to analyze, not just what literacy and numeracy practices were being used by market women in Quetzaltenango, but also how my insights into those practices could inform planning and policy .The link between literacy practices, literacy programs and their outcomes therefore needs to be seen not as a passive equation that planners can somehow calculate, but a dynamic process in which local practices, local literacies and local beliefs begin to influence how that link is perceived by planners.

APPENDIX A

DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS PROCESS

Timetable of my fieldwork

In Guatemala

January 2000: week 1- observations; approached 2 women to participate in study

January 2000: week 2 – observations; approached 5 women to participate in study

January 2000: week 3 – observations; approached 4 women to participate in study

January 2000: week 4 – observations; approached 1 woman to participate in study

January 2000: week 4 – conducted first interview with 4 participants; reviewed

interview data with Rosa

In US

February 2000: returned to US, reviewed data from observations; reviewed list of

potential study participants; reviewed first interview data

In Guatemala

March: 2000 week 1 – observations; approached 2 women to participate in the study

March 2000 week 2 – observations; approached 2 women to participate in study

March 2000 week 3 – observations; first interviews with 3 women, reviewed interview

data with Rosa

March 2000 week 4—observations; first focus group; reviewed first focus group with

Rosa; second interviews with 4 women

In US

April 2000 – returned to US; reviewed frist and second interview data, reviewed first

focus group data; began extracting patterns and themes

In Guatemala

May 2000 week 1 – observations; second interviews with 3 women

May 2000 week 2 - observations; continued to analyze data and extract themes;

May 2000 week 3 – observations; reviewed analysis with Rosa, developed second focus group

May 2000 week 4- observations; conducted second focus group data

June 2000 week 1 – reviewed second focus group data with Rosa

June 2000 week 2 –returned to US

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM IN SPANISH

Un Estudio de la Lecto-Escritura y la Matematica de Mujeres en el Mercado en Quetzaltenango, Guatemala
Formulario de Permiso de Participacion

Voluntariamente estoy participando en este estudio cualitativa y entiendo que:

1. Yo sera entrevistada por Joan B. Cohen-Mitchell que usara una guia de entrevistas que consista de cinco preguntas

2. Las preguntas que contento san mis opiniones sobre el uso de la lecto- escritura y matematica en mi trabaja como vendedora en el mercado de Quetzaltenanga, Guatemala. Tambien entiendo que los resultados de su investigacion sera usado para el diseno y politicas de alfabetizacion.

3. La entrevista podria ser grabada por cassette.

4. Mi nombre no ser usado en el documento si decido que no quiero.

5. Tengo derecho de salir del estudio a cualquier tiempo.

6. Tengo derecho a revisar el material antes que la senora Cohen-Mitchell se presenta su examen oral o por publicacion.

7. Entiendo que los datos colectados sean incluidos en el tesis de doctorado de la senora Cohen- Mitchell y tambien incluido en documentos para publicaciones.

8. Soy libre de participare sin prejuicio.

9. De hecho de tener poco participantes en el estudio, aproximadamente once, entiendo que hay riesgo que ser identificada en este estudio.

Leido por: Joan B. Cohen- Mitchell

Firmado por:

Fecha:

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