

IMAGINING CONVIVIAL MULTILINGUALISM:  
PRACTICES, IDEOLOGIES AND STRATEGIES IN *DIIDXAZÁ*/ ISTHMUS  
ZAPOTEC INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

### IMAGINING CONVIVIAL MULTILINGUALISM: PRACTICES, IDEOLOGIES, AND STRATEGIES IN *DIIDXAZÁ*/ ISTHMUS ZAPOTEC INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Haley De Korne

Nancy H. Hornberger

This study documents practices relating to the use of Isthmus Zapotec or *Diidxazá*, an Indigenous language of Oaxaca, Mexico, in formal and non-formal education. Drawing on ethnographic monitoring and ethnography of language policy methodologies, I document, interpret, and ultimately engage in Isthmus Zapotec education with the aim of countering social inequalities produced through language hierarchies.

Within the historical and socio-political context of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec where Isthmus Zapotec is spoken, I describe and categorize the actors, practices, and socio-political processes that currently constitute the educational language ecology. I draw on participant observation, interviews, photographs and documents collected during 17 months of ethnographic fieldwork and several subsequent visits in the Isthmus (2013-2015) in order to illustrate the linguistic landscape and the prominent practices in this domain. Increased official recognition for Indigenous languages in Mexico and state-level promotion of local languages are influencing some education practices, although

exclusion of Isthmus Zapotec remains the norm. A variety of Isthmus Zapotec teachers, learners, and advocates are working to reverse this exclusionary legacy, however.

The ideologies and social imaginaries of actors in two education sites are analyzed in-depth, illustrating a convivial multilingual paradigm through which teachers and learners of Isthmus Zapotec are creating inclusive communities of practice, in contrast to the exclusionary and manipulative norms in many social and educational spaces. Additionally the strategies of Isthmus Zapotec advocates across education contexts and social scales are compared, exploring how strategies of representing, connecting, and producing are employed to address language inequalities, with differing degrees of speed and visibility. I analyze my own strategies of engagement in Isthmus Zapotec education and discuss conceptual and methodological shifts in how I approach advocacy work in relation to marginalized languages. Endangered or minoritized language education will continue to hold different meanings for different actors from local to global levels; a multi-perspectival approach is necessary to develop new strategies and to support inclusive and convivial imaginaries of multilingualism in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and other contexts of language inequality.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*Para mí es importantísimo difundirlo [[zapoteco]]. Pero siento que el gran error ha sido--- el gran error antes era enseñar español y se perdió el zapoteco. Y ahora el gran esfuerzo es rescatar el zapoteco. Pero el gran error está en querer forzar a las personas a hablar zapoteco. Ya no puedes recurrir a la barbarie de antes obviamente. Pero entonces ahora, ¿cómo le haces? Hasta que no crees una conciencia real en las personas, no va a haber eso.*

For me it's extremely important to spread [[Zapotec]]. But I feel that the big mistake has been-- The big mistake before was to teach Spanish, and Zapotec was lost. And now the big effort is to rescue Zapotec. But the big mistake is in wanting to force people to speak Zapotec. You can't return to the barbarity of before obviously. So now, how do you do it? Until you create a real awareness in people, it won't happen. (IN 140508 UO2)<sup>1</sup>

The presence and status of Indigenous languages in education has shifted over time as the above comment by Mayoli García, a student of Isthmus Zapotec, suggests<sup>2</sup>. Indigenous languages such as Zapotec have often been-- and in many places continue to be-- excluded and delegitimized by educational practices that favor dominant (often colonial) languages and cultures, becoming marginalized and minoritized in their place of origin. Although this colonial legacy continues in many places, there are also currently increased supportive laws and opportunities for inclusive education systems in many parts of the world which have the potential to resist processes of marginalization (Canagarajah, 2005; Hornberger, 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009). This is not a smooth or linear process however; minoritized language education holds different meanings for different actors from local to global levels, and is often a topic of intense debate.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are mine. Please see appendix A on transcription, citation, and abbreviation conventions.

<sup>2</sup> I use a mixture of pseudonyms and real names in this study, following the preferences of interviewees.

In this study I document current practices relating to the use of Isthmus Zapotec or *Diidxazá* (hereafter IZ or Diidxazá), an Indigenous language of Oaxaca, Mexico, in formal and non-formal education. I consider how the practices and ideologies in and around IZ education relate to social inequalities, and examine how diverse social actors imagine and enact strategies which aim to contest these inequalities. In the first three chapters of this dissertation I develop my conceptual framework: a presentation of the considerations-- theoretical, empirical and personal-- that motivate and guide this research, and the methodology appropriate to meet my research goals (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). I begin with a presentation of the theoretical and disciplinary orientations from which I approach this topic (chapter 1), drawing on the fields of language documentation and revitalization, new literacies, critical and constructivist pedagogy, and social theory. I provide an introduction to the sociolinguistic context of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, the region where most speakers of Isthmus Zapotec live (chapter 2). I then discuss my positionality as a researcher, the questions that guide my research, and the ethnographic monitoring methodology (Hymes, 1980a) and methods I have employed (chapter 3). I use descriptive questions and methods to document the complexity of the IZ language ecology, including connections between different actors, practices, and socio-political processes (chapter 4). Based on an ethnographic understanding of the context, I interpret social meanings manifest in discourses and evaluations around IZ education; I analyze the perceptions and practices of actors in a formal and a non-formal education setting, focusing on the creation of inclusive and convivial multilingualism within these educational spaces (chapter 5). Additionally, I analyze the ways that actors who are members of different communities of practice engage in the promotion of IZ education

and/or use, reflecting on the repertoire of practices and strategies employed by others and myself (chapter 6). Finally I discuss the aim of non-exclusionary, convivial multilingualism as a social imaginary, or normative understanding of social existence, which is co-created by diverse communities of practice in relation to the use and teaching of marginalized, endangered languages. I argue the need to maintain a multi-perspectival approach in endangered language advocacy in order to engage in this social imaginary. I reflect on changes in my conceptual and methodological approaches as a result of this project, highlighting some directions of future exploration (chapter 7).

In the following sections of this introductory chapter I situate my study through a discussion of key concepts (1.1) and an overview of contrasting paradigms in the study of language (1.2). I then discuss the relationship between communication practices, power, and inequality, in particular in education (1.3), and some prominent approaches to engaging in minoritized language contexts (1.4). I conclude by summarizing the disciplinary and social gaps to which my study aims to contribute (1.5).

## **1.1 Foundational concepts**

This study grows out of a fascination with the ways that communication practices are linked to many other aspects of social life. Following an interactionist sociolinguistics tradition (Goffman, 1967; Haugen, 1973; Hymes, 1968), I understand communication and/or language practices to be sociocultural and political phenomena, which are performed by a variety of actors and organizations and are media for negotiating social relations. As Pennycook (2010) articulates it, "To look at language as a practice is to

view language as an activity rather than a structure, as something we do rather than a system we draw on, as a material part of social and cultural life rather than an abstract entity" (p. 2). As discussed further below, I am especially interested in the unequal social relations created through language education practices and language ideologies. In particular I examine how different actors aim to rectify inequalities experienced by minoritized language speakers, although their actions may range from promoting linguistic homogeneity to promoting equal status for diverse languages (Hymes, 1973). Minoritized language practices are thus an interesting political site through which social realities are created.

In order to examine the social and political dimensions of communication practices in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, I have adopted several guiding concepts which inform my study. I begin by considering different *IZ education actors*, who I define as both individuals and organized groups (communities of practice, as elaborated below) that engage in or impact language education practices in some way. Based on this broad definition, both Mayoli, the IZ student quoted above and the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* (National Institute of Indigenous Languages) are actors that may influence educational practices. I am also interested in actors' *practices*, which I define broadly as the ways that different actors engage in a minoritized language context, from a student's communicative practices to their (non)attendance in classes, to policies promoted by the Oaxaca state teachers union, and/or how a school director chooses to implement such policies.

I additionally consider *socio-political processes* that have clear impacts, but which may be driven by multiple actors and could thus be overlooked by a framework that focuses only on social actors. For example, the significant increase in migration to the US from Oaxaca in the past 20 years (Faudree, 2013), the development of wind farms and other resource extraction projects on land that was previously communally owned (Pardo Brügman & Acevedo, 2013), and the increased presence of the internet in remote communities are processes in which multiple governments, international companies, and local power-brokers all play a part, and which impact life in Isthmus communities. It is important to highlight that these processes occur across social scales, from local to global levels. Although it is not always possible to trace direct connections between national and international socio-political processes and language education practices due to the complexity of these factors, I attempt to bring some of these connections to light as they have emerged over the course of my study.

*Discourses* and *ideologies* play a significant role in motivating and guiding communication practices, and thus are an additional guiding factor in this study. I define these terms in closely related ways, where discourses refer to "particular ways of representing part of the world" (Fairclough, 2003, p.26), and ideologies refer to the assumptions or beliefs that inevitably color those representations. My use of ideology is thus similar to Gee's (1990) "big D" Discourse, in that it refers to a generalized way of seeing or being in the world, made visible through many instances of discursive practice. I prefer the term ideology in order to place my work in conversation with other scholars who consider similar questions relating to minoritized languages (Kroskrity & Field,

2009; Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998; Stebbins, 2012). To exemplify my use of these concepts; a discourse that represents Indigenous Oaxacan languages as valuable and of equal status with Spanish, such as the *Todos se llaman lenguas* (They're all called languages) campaign, by the *Centro Académico y Cultural San Pablo* in Oaxaca City ([www.todas-lenguas.mx](http://www.todas-lenguas.mx)), is informed by an ideology that values linguistic diversity and resists language hierarchies. The discourses produced by the campaign through flyers and on-line publicity reinforces and re-creates this ideology, attempting to spread it among members of the public. This ideology also helps to motivate the *Centro Académico y Cultural San Pablo* to undertake practices which promote Indigenous languages in academic spheres, including hosting a bi-annual conference on Oto-manguean languages (the language family within which IZ is classified) and maintaining a large collection of IZ books (among other languages and topics). At the same time, the fact that many people refer to IZ as a *dialecto* (less than a language, as discussed further in chapter 4) shows that the colonial-era ideology which places Spanish above all Indigenous forms of communication is widespread and present in daily discourses. These differences in ideologies surrounding IZ and other minoritized languages contribute to the tense politics of language education.

A further aim of the study is to consider actors' *imaginaries* or ideals and evaluations of minoritized language practices, or what they view as positive or desirable, and negative or undesirable in the context of changing language and education practices in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Social imaginaries express the expectations, ideals and accepted norms in social life (Anderson, 1991; Taylor, 2002). In this case I am interested

in imaginaries related to language practices in general and to IZ education in particular, as they relate to the evaluations and interests of social actors. A central concern of this study is the diversity of evaluations that actors make, and the related diversity of their priorities as they engage in the social domain of IZ education. As a researcher engaging in this domain, I am also a relevant social actor, and thus I interrogate my practices, discourses, and evaluations in addition to (and in relation to) those that I observe. Understanding the different imaginaries and priorities of other actors is a necessary step in allowing my study to move from a description of IZ practices and interpretation of ideologies in socio-political context, to a project through which I seek to engage in the improvement of some of the inequalities that I evaluate in this context (as discussed further in chapter 3).

To this end, the final guiding concept of the study is an interest in *strategies of engagement*, which I understand as intentional practices or praxis (Freire, 1970) aimed at improving IZ education in particular, or contesting the disadvantaged position of IZ in the sociolinguistic hierarchy in general. I am interested in the strategies employed by others, as well as those that I attempt to employ. Correspondent to the diversity of discourses and imaginaries among actors in this domain, there are likewise diverse strategies of engagement through which people attempt to bring about positive improvements, whatever they understand those to be.

These conceptual foundations allow me to attend to the ways that language practices are produced, interpreted and evaluated by different actors, as well as to consider the socio-political or structural factors that influence them in direct and indirect

ways. Better understanding of the many actors, practices, socio-political processes, discourses and imaginaries that are present in multilingual education settings should help to inform the strategies that different actors could adopt for creative and conscientious engagement in such settings.

## **1.2 Language as a contested terrain: From essentialist to constructivist ideologies**

Diversity is an inherent feature of the phenomenon of human language; language forms and functions vary across actors and contexts, and over time (Blommaert, 2010; Labov, 1970). Humans-- from social groups to scholarly disciplines, institutions and governments-- have created a variety of ways of categorizing and/or valuing different language practices, so that language diversity is not neutral in most interactions, but is often deployed in the creation of power and hierarchy (Hymes, 1980b; Tollefson, 1991). What those who study language view as inherent neutral diversity becomes the ground for social hierarchies and discrimination (Haugen, 1973). Perspectives on language, whether relativist or discriminatory, often become totalizing language ideologies, determining "the understandings, beliefs, and expectations that influence all choices made by language users . . . [and] incorporat[ing], often unconsciously, speakers' sometimes-idealized evaluations and judgments of appropriate language forms" (McGroarty, 2010, p.3).

The range of human perspectives or ideologies of language may be painted in broad brush strokes as ranging from constructivist to essentialist views. A constructivist approach views language as something that is created within and by a specific

sociocultural context, and that simultaneously impacts and shapes its context of use (Bakhtin, 1986; Bhabha, 1994; Goffman, 1981; Hymes, 1972; Pennycook, 2010).

Recognizing the differing literacy and oral language use patterns of cultural groups, such as Native Americans in contrast to European Americans (Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 1994; Philips, 1972), is a result of constructivist ideologies of language use. This perspective can also be applied to processes of language learning, viewed as a social process that is co-constructed between the learner and those around them. The learning process involves building on all available "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) in order to develop a contextually appropriate communicative repertoire (Gumperz, 1968; Rymes, 2010) or a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) that allows the learner to engage in a community.

On a larger social scale, a constructivist perspective attends to the linguistic ecologies that emerge through interaction and contact among language communities, creating flows of influence and exchange, especially in multilingual territories (Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001; Haugen, 1972; Maffi, 2001). Power and influence among speakers and speech communities is not understood as top-down nor unilateral, but rather as a dynamic relationship in constant negotiation as a result of numerous contextual factors from local to global scales (Hornberger & Hult, 2008; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Additionally constructivist perspectives typically claim criticality and a humanist agenda, examining power relations and inequalities that may be established and perpetuated through language practices (Bourdieu, 1991; Pennycook, 2001).

Constructivist scholarly perspectives are often articulated against the essentializing views of language promoted in formal education, politics and the media, whereby a language is seen as autonomous, fixed, and governed by rules to which users must adhere, and is often closely fused with a place and a national identity (Blommaert, 2010; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). The political discourse that English is the authentic language of the United States, or that all Mexicans should speak standard Spanish in order to preserve national unity and because it is superior to Indigenous ways of communicating, are examples of essentialist language ideologies which overlook language variation over time and across populations. Some scholarly discourses also essentialize language, such as the theoretical linguistic notion of a universal, logical foundation for language derived from Saussure's *langue/parole* dichotomy, by way of Chomsky's (1965) competence/performance dichotomy. The desire to standardize linguistic practices to conform to an essentialized "target" or "native" speaker has motivated much Applied Linguistics scholarship, and influenced many language classrooms. Although there are discussions about the need to go beyond simplistic notions of mother tongues and native speaker competence (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), these essentialist notions remain commonplace in much language education practice.

Indigenous, minority languages in particular are often presented in simplistic or essentialized ways in the media and in some scholarly discourses; as exotic structures for linguists, as countable, diminishing resources for the media, or as the channel to an authentic culture and place (Moore, Pietikainen, & Blommaert, 2010; Muehlmann, 2008,

2012). Many of these representations take place amidst discussions about the minoritization or decline in use of Indigenous languages around the world, generally called language endangerment (Hale et al., 1992). The ideologies of actors who advocate for a response to language endangerment are diverse, falling all along the continuum from essentialist to constructivist perspectives and exhibiting varying expectations and beliefs about Indigenous language use in education, as well as other social domains. As discussed in 1.1 and further elaborated in 3.6, my conceptualization of language is fundamentally constructivist, however I regularly participate in essentialist language discourses as I interact with different disciplines and actors. The ways that different actors perceive and consequently engage with minoritized Indigenous languages are a central concern of this study, in particular when these forms of engagement become institutionalized and codified within political systems, social projects and/ or intellectual disciplines.

### **1.3 Social projects and inequality: Governance of (language) diversity through education**

Just as social groups are significant contexts of learning language as mentioned above, they are also key sites for the negotiation and reproduction of language ideologies and forms of inequality. As examined in Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991; Wenger, 1998) situated, constructivist theory of learning, in order for an individual to become a member of a community of practice-- whether it be a speech community, an education institution, a workplace, or other grouping-- they must participate in *mutual engagement* towards a *joint enterprise*, making use of a *shared repertoire* to achieve their common

goal(s). Through participation in a shared repertoire of language practices and discourses, community members may be socialized into specific ideologies as well as communicative norms. Whether the community of practice shares an ideology that is accepting of language diversity, or views other community's norms as inferior, or something in-between, it has a significant impact on the perceptions and practices of its members. For example Mayoli, the IZ student quoted in the introduction to this chapter, expresses her desire for the current community of people promoting the use of IZ to avoid taking up the same ideologies through which Spanish was promoted in the past, noting that they were barbarous and forceful; *"el gran error está en querer forzar a las personas a hablar zapoteco. Ya no puedes recurrir a la barbarie de antes"* (the big mistake is in wanting to force people to speak Zapotec. You can't return to the barbarity of before) (IN 140508 UO2) she warns.

As Wenger (2000) comments,

Communities of practice cannot be romanticized. They are born of learning, but they can also learn not to learn. They are cradles of the human spirit, but they can also be its cages. After all, witch-hunts were also community practices. (p. 230)

The socialization that occurs within a community of practice can thus align with exclusionary ideologies and result in marginalization for certain people and groups. Avoiding or finding alternatives to engrained language hierarchies and ideologies can be challenging. As Mayoli goes on to ask, *"entonces ahora, ¿cómo le haces? Hasta que no crees una conciencia real en las personas, no va a haber eso"* (So now, how do you do it? Until you create a real awareness in people, it won't happen) (IN 140508 UO2). Just as prejudice may be recreated and disseminated through social communities, awareness,

*conciencia*, and/or a pluralist ideology may also be negotiated and promoted through communities of practice. With this in mind, my study aims to bring attention to some of the places and practices which foster such ideologies as a response to language inequalities.

In addition to considering group-internal dynamics as framed by the community of practice model, I am also interested in considering the wider context in which the community operates, including socio-political processes as mentioned in section 1.1, and the relations among different communities of practice as they relate to potential social changes or imaginaries of social change. To this end I draw on the concept of *social projects* as used by social theorist Elizabeth Povinelli (2011). Povinelli describes a social project as "a metadiscourse that aggregates aspects of the social world" (p. 11), and a space for social change similar to "counterpublics" (Fraser, 1992; Warner, 2002). Povinelli notes that social projects "extend beyond simple human sociality or human beings. [...] a social project is dependent on a host of interlocking concepts, materials, and forces that include human and nonhuman agencies and organisms" (p. 7). The specific social projects that interest her are "spaces of otherwise" such as Aboriginal Australian ways of being, and how these can "endure" in the hostility of what she characterizes as late liberal forms of governance aiming to eliminate "all social projects that do not produce market forms of life" (p. 29). She singles out social projects (separate from smaller "individuated projects" and larger "social worlds") as spaces of potentiality for new ways of being, echoing Mayoli's question by asking "How do new forms of social life maintain the force of existing in specific social spacings of life?" (p. 9). In other

words, how does a non-imposed, non-hierarchical Diidxazá speech community develop in today's post-colonial, neoliberal Mexico? This is a central concern of my study. Like Mayoli, Povinelli, and Hornberger, I am interested in social projects that open "ideological and implementational spaces" for "multiple languages, literacies, and identities in classroom, community, and society" (Hornberger, 2002, p. 45).

The fact that multiple voices share an orientation in favor of a pluralist (and plurilingual) way of life is evidence of what Charles Taylor (2002, 2004) describes as modern social imaginaries, expanding Anderson's (1991) imagined communities beyond a nation-state frame. Taylor (2002) describes the social imaginary as:

the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (p. 106)

He discusses how normative social imaginaries shift over time, noting that notions of equality and mutual benevolence among individuals (including inherent human rights) have developed through a "long march" from governance by naturalized hierarchy towards the social imaginary of shared democratic control, a transition which is not complete. I situate the social project of contesting language inequalities within this overarching social imaginary, which projects a specific "moral order of society" (ibid, p. 92) in which all voices deserve equal value. Unlike Povinelli, who locates the potential for social change within marginalized spaces and projects, Taylor suggests that "what start off as theories held by a few people may come to infiltrate the social imaginary, first that of elites perhaps, and then that of society as a whole" (ibid, p. 106). While debating

the origin and directionality of social change is beyond the scope of this study, I aim to consider the social scale of actors engaging in imaginaries of social change in relation to minoritized languages, and to attend to the historically and culturally contingent contexts from which they emerge.

Current social projects and imaginaries in favor of Diidxazá use (and educational use in particular) emerge from contexts characterized by the presence of colonialism, nationalism, economic inequality and universalized formal schooling. The social project of colonialism in Mexico and elsewhere in the world created enduring linguistic and racial hierarchies. The post-colonial projects of nationalist assimilation followed by neoliberal cultural recognition shifted the discourses about Indigenous languages to some degree, although the hierarchies remain largely intact (as discussed further in chapter 2). The on-going social project of formal schooling creates countless communities of practice in individual schools, each an important site of negotiation and reproduction of language ideologies day to day. Although communication norms and ideologies may be reproduced through projects and communities other than schools, schools typically manifest language ideologies with extra clarity through policing language use and socializing participants into language norms. Formal and non-formal education play an undeniably central role in socialization, including the formation of language ideologies and identity (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996; Wortham, 2005).

The following section discusses education as a social project with special potential to create and/ or dismantle language-related inequalities. I touch on historical

trends in language education (section 1.3.1) and discuss ways that diverse languages are included in education today (section 1.3.2).

### **1.3.1 From nation-state repressive homogeneity to neo-liberal commodified multiculturalism**

Language use in formal education settings has patterns of form and function that are considerably narrower than those which exist across human language behavior in general. The varieties of language (standardized, national languages, often through written modes), the roles that interlocutors take up (expert teacher, novice student), and the kinds of turn taking exchanges that occur (initiation-response-feedback) provide a more or less rigid structure to the linguistic practices of participants (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; McHoul, 1978). Education typically aims to socialize participants into specific language practices and away from others, with the practices that are chosen being those that will privilege people already in positions of power (Bourdieu, 1991; Pennycook, 2001). As such, formal education has often been a key means through which nation-states have attempted to govern and ultimately assimilate internal diversity, whether through overt means such as obligatory boarding schools for Indigenous children established in the Anglophone colonial countries (Canada, US, Australia; see McCarty, 2013 for an overview in the US context) and elsewhere in the world, or more subtle forms of assimilation. In many contexts around the world this has meant that languages in use in a certain place have been excluded from the schools established in that place, because the schools orient towards linguistic practices that are in use in a center of national (or international) power, elsewhere (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). Languages that are excluded from education are

pushed down the linguistic hierarchy in their place of origin, becoming minoritized (May, 2006)<sup>3</sup> or displaced, and eventually may cease to be used.

Nationalist schooling has not only been detrimental through fostering language hierarchies, but more significantly it can create multiple forms of disadvantage for those who are erased by the system (whether for linguistic or other reasons). Ivan Illich (1970) has argued that obligatory schooling as designed by a dominant social group is a key mechanism for creating and controlling social hierarchy in Latin America and in the world in general, as poorer classes with less access to formal education are "schooled in a sense of inferiority" (p. 7) on the grounds of having restricted membership to the discourses and communities of formal schooling. Maldonado Alvarado (2002) argues that writing-focused education intensifies this: "*La escritura abre espacios de sometimiento que aprovechan las sociedades dominadoras, y todos los 'analfabetas' dominados, independientemente de su 'ignorancia', conocen y sienten las características de la dominación mediante lo escrito*" (Writing opens spaces of subjugation that dominating societies take advantage of, and all of the dominated 'illiterate' people, independently from their 'ignorance', know and feel the characteristics of domination through writing) (p. 41). Building his critique within the context of the development of Spanish education in the multilingual, oral Indigenous language ecology of Oaxaca, Maldonado Alvarado

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<sup>3</sup> While there may be numerous minority (numerically non-dominant) language groups present in an educational context, this frequently includes speakers who have somewhat recently come to reside in that context. There are common concerns between all non-dominant language groups in education, however this study will consider specifically those languages that are autochthonous or originate in the place in question. May (2001) differentiates between these groups, labeling them national minorities (minoritized groups), and ethnic minorities (immigrant groups).

joins Illich in pointing out ways that the promise of human development and enablement through education can result instead in submission and restriction.

Unsurprisingly, the exclusion of local language practices from formal education, and the adherence to a prescriptive, non-local speech norm has been found to be detrimental to children's acquisition of literacy and content material, as well as their social and psychological development (Cummins, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997), while inclusion of these languages can have positive effects on overall academic outcomes and identity development (Freire, 1969; García, 2009a; Hornberger, 1998, 2005). Overt assimilation policies have fallen out of favor since the post-WWII human rights era, and policies that promote language diversity have increased in many parts of the world. A variety of what might be called *pro-diversity* education approaches now exist (as discussed further in section 1.3.2 below), aiming to include diverse learners in formal education, and these approaches appear to be increasing around the globe.<sup>4</sup>

Implementation and political support for such approaches is far from stable in many contexts however (Hornberger, 2009), as will be discussed in greater detail in the context of Mexico and Oaxaca (see chapters 2 and 4).

Pro-diversity education in practice has been critiqued as resulting in the commodification and essentialization of minoritized languages and cultures within a neo-liberal framework of sanitized multiculturalism (García, 2005; Muehlmann, 2008). The new ways that language diversity is approached in schools-- often through pre-existing

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<sup>4</sup> Including North America (De Korne, 2010, 2013; Warhol, 2012), Latin America (Hamel, 2008a, 2008b; López, 2009), Southeast Asia (Bautista, Bernardo, & Ocampo, 2009; Kosonen, 2005), South Africa (Bloch & Alexander, 2003) and Europe (Hélot & Young, 2006; Le Nevez, Hélot, & Erhart, 2010).

hierarchical, normative frameworks-- may ultimately assimilate and render diverse human subjects governable, with impacts similar to those of monolingual norms (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Povinelli, 2011). Additionally the promotion of language diversity in the form of marketable plurilingual skills may risk supporting "a commodification of language in service of transnational corporations" and a homogenizing neoliberal agenda (Flores, 2013, p.515). These concerns indicate the need to pay close attention to minoritized language use in education and the social relations that it creates. In summary, schools alone can neither eradicate Indigenous languages nor ensure their social acceptance (Hornberger, 2008; May & Aikman, 2003); however, education initiatives remain central to any project that seeks to create new potentialities for marginalized languages and peoples (Levinson et al., 1996, p.19).

### **1.3.2 Pro-diversity education approaches: From strict immersion to plurilingual repertoires**

Pro-diversity education for Indigenous languages draws on a range of ideologies, from essentializing to constructivist, and takes many forms in practice. Immersion is viewed as the gold standard for endangered language education by scholars of language maintenance and revitalization, exemplified by language nests in New Zealand, Hawai'i, and in a growing number of Native communities in North America (Kipp, 2000; McIvor, 2005). As Grenoble and Whaley (2006) note, "While many would argue that full-immersion programs are the surest route to language revitalization and maintenance, few communities have the resources necessary to see them through" (p.50). Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), as developed by PRAESA in South Africa

(Alexander, 2005; Plüddemann, 2010) and additionally promoted by UNESCO (2003) and other transnational development organizations, prescribes sole use of a "mother tongue" (assumed to be the Indigenous language) for acquisition of literacy, eventually transferring to additional (national) languages (Benson, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009). Immersion and mother tongue education, while both designed to make spaces for minoritized languages and improve the quality of education for populations that have been marginalized by formal schooling, nonetheless draw on fairly essentializing notions of language and identity such as fusing language with identity and place, while overlooking that people may have multiple "mother tongues" or wish to develop language capacities in non-linear ways. In practice however, these classrooms may make space for multilingual practices such as translanguaging and recognition of multiple mother tongues despite their rhetoric of positive discrimination in favor of one minoritized language. For example, Hawai'ian immersion schools instruct students in Japanese and English as additional languages, and incorporate various forms of visual and spatial expression and different learning styles (as I observed in visits to several schools in 2011, see also <http://www.k12.hi.us/~kaiapuni/>); Hawai'ian language and culture is thus a base for a wide-ranging and diverse curriculum, rather than being a rigid or limiting frame.

Dual immersion, content-based learning (CBL; or content and language integrated learning, CLIL), and other program models orienting to a bilingual or plurilingual<sup>5</sup> norm attempt to incorporate multiple languages. To the extent that they do not prescribe a

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<sup>5</sup> 'Plurilingual' is sometimes used to express a flexible orientation towards language use and transfer across languages, in contrast to 'multilingual' which is then used to refer to multiple discrete languages (e.g. Le Nevez et al, 2010)

linear or hierarchical development trajectory (one language mastered before another can be introduced), they may be seen as adopting a more constructivist approach to language learning than immersion or MTB-MLE models. On the other hand they may also create forms of "separate bilingualism" (Blackledge & Creese, 2010) through the common practice of keeping languages apart and upholding a nativist ideal of "parallel monolingualism" (Heller, 1999) where learners strive to appear monolingual in each language of their repertoire (Flores & Baetens Beardsmore, 2015). Transitional or "subtractive" bilingualism (Lambert, 1975) that incorporates a minority language into schooling for the purpose of transitioning students towards improved competence in a dominant language is unlikely to change language practices or power structures, maintaining a monolingual hierarchy. This is the norm in the "bilingual" schools for Indigenous students in Mexico (Coronado Suzán, 1992; García & Velasco, 2012; Hamel, 2008a), as discussed further in chapters 2 and 4. The incorporation of Indigenous languages as subjects without using them as a medium of instruction at any time, which also occurs in some "bilingual Indigenous" schools in Mexico, is also unlikely to result in significant changes in language use. Teaching Indigenous languages as subjects may create new communities of practice and increased awareness around issues of language prejudice and endangerment, however (Hornberger, De Korne, & Weinberg, 2015; Weinberg & De Korne, 2015).

Actual practices at the classroom level are not necessarily controlled by program types, and thus it is important to also consider the educational goals and ideologies of each program, and how they put them in practice (Hornberger, 1991). Often teachers

and/or directors have the ability to negotiate the program model or policies that they are asked to implement, developing their own norms and practices (Canagarajah, 2005; Menken & García, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Promising practices in education for linguistically diverse students (and arguably all students, within a pluralist education paradigm) include providing culturally and linguistically responsive education (Berryman, Soohoo, & Nevin, 2013; Osborne, 1996) by recognizing the communicative resources that students bring with them. This requires acknowledging students' multimodal communicative repertoires (Cazden et al., 1996; Kress, 2000; Rymes, 2010, 2011), including non-alphabetic literacies (López Gopar, 2007) and translanguaging practices (García, 2009a). Rather than separating languages and communicative practices into idealized categories, multilingual students benefit from incorporating receptive and productive, oral and written abilities, through flexible modalities ranging from simultaneous to successive use of different languages as they develop biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989).

Educational communities of practice may foster pluralist language practices through locally-informed, flexible approaches to communication, or they may ultimately pressure students to use only certain standard varieties of socially privileged languages through adhering to top-down norms (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Weber, 2009). In this respect it is not enough to have a seemingly pro-diversity society or school program, it is also important to interrogate the ideologies that influence language use in the day to day practices of the educational community of practice. Table 1 (adapted from De Korne, 2012) summarizes this tension between

essentialist or monoglossic ideologies and constructivist or heteroglossic ideologies of language in society, in school programs, and in classroom communicative practices.

**Table 1. Tensions between language ideologies in society, school models, and classroom communication**

<b>Language ideologies</b>	<i>Language(s) in society</i>	<i>Language(s) in school</i>	<i>Communicative practices</i>
<b>Essentialist/ Monoglossic ideology</b>	Homogenous, fused to identity and national territory	Separate, autonomous, elite, native-like competencies, standardized	Top-down knowledge transmission from expert to novice
<b>Constructivist/ Heteroglossic ideology</b>	Diverse, constant variation among people and practices	Flexible, translanguaging, multimodal repertoires, emergent innovation	Co-constructed knowledge, shifts in expert-novice relationship

Discussing these ideologies in the context of Luxembourg, a trilingual country with a separate, elite and standardized approach to multilingualism, I wrote:

[A] standard, monoglossic language ideology values separate, individual multilingualism, or the acquisition of discrete languages that correlate with powerful nation-states and national identities. In contrast, heteroglossic language ideology promotes flexible, societal multilingualism, or the acceptance of diverse communicative repertoires, whether they are socially dominant or not. It is important to note that these relationships are not fixed, and in reality mix and overlap. For example, an education system may take a heteroglossic approach to incorporating language varieties into the curriculum (such as students' home languages traditionally excluded from the curriculum), but may standardize them and treat them as separate from other languages once they become part of the education system. On the other hand, heteroglossic participation frameworks may be used as a means to achieve native-like competence in a standardized language of power. (De Korne, 2012, p.483)

In other words, education may be a space that includes diverse language practices, *and/or* a space that restricts them. While there is an underlying argument in this study that the promotion of diverse, minoritized languages is desirable in education and society, I do

not assume that *any* form of promotion is necessarily desirable, or that all potentially homogenizing actions are undesirable.<sup>6</sup> Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue that there may not be a *solution* to complex language education planning issues, but there are *alternatives* worth exploring, and that "in some situations the viable solution may lie in essentializing mother tongues, in others in problematizing them" (p. 30). Following Makoni and Pennycook's (2007) invitation, this study attempts to deconstruct practices and ideologies in IZ education settings but also to reconstitute them, exploring ways that different actors are engaging in the pursuit of educational quality and equity. By observing an educational community of practice in action it may be possible to understand what potentials they create or remove for their participants in relation to the socio-political context that they are embedded in, and thus look beyond the more transparent aspects of pro-diversity education models.

Regardless of the critiques that can be leveled at them, it remains noteworthy that there are numerous educational models which aim to meet the needs of multilingual students, or to provide a multilingual education, and which are therefore relevant to the social project of minimizing language inequalities. Alongside developments in classrooms, efforts continue in academia and government to expand "ideological and implementational spaces" for Indigenous language education (Hornberger, 2002). Almost 20 years ago Teresa McCarty wrote in the US context that "the legal right for indigenous language and culture maintenance appears to be won, yet the struggle continues [...]" A

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<sup>6</sup> For example, I choose to group a wide array of languages together to talk about "minoritized Indigenous languages"; in effect I am restricting a diverse reality through this grouping, but doing so allows for solidarity, enhanced visibility, and wider networks of support which all seem to me to be valuable.

stable but locally flexible system of educational delivery [...] still is urgently needed” (1997, pp.52-53). Twelve years after the official recognition of Indigenous languages in Mexico in 2003, the same might be said of the Mexican context. And yet as days and years pass by, and new generations grow up under the same discriminatory regimes, we continue to ask what exactly *is* needed to implement minority language rights or to reverse language endangerment? A first important step is to consider what has been and is being done across several of the prominent disciplines or communities of practice that engage in the promotion of Indigenous and minoritized languages.

#### **1.4 Engagement in minoritized or endangered languages**

Contesting language inequalities, advocating for minority rights, revitalizing endangered languages, promoting Indigenous language education, developing culturally-responsive pedagogy-- I argue that these overlapping endeavors can be viewed as contributing to the same social project and social imaginary, despite their differences in orientation and priorities. These endeavors all relate to leveling the hierarchies that are constructed around language by subjective biases and maintained through institutionalized prejudices. Changing these social realities is indeed a project in need of "new social imaginaries", new potentiality, the ability to think and behave "otherwise", as explored by Povinelli (2011) and Taylor (2004). As Einar Haugen noted decades ago, "Language is not a problem unless it is used as a basis for discrimination, but it has in fact been so used as far back as we have records" (1973, p.54).

There are multiple communities of practice who have engaged in the wider social project of untangling language-based discrimination. I am especially interested in academic disciplines as communities of practice that engage in this project because they act in particularly public and visible ways, and because I am a participant in several of them. I also consider other organized, intentional groups such as non-government organizations, community activists and missionary linguists that have engaged in public ways. Individuals or communities of practice whose forms of engagement are less visible or public (such as a specific school community, parents or grandparents) are also relevant actors, but are harder to consider due to lack of access to their actions; the practices of less-visible actors may be made visible through ethnographic observation, as undertaken in this study (see chapters 4 and 5), and are considered in greater detail in my analysis of strategies of engagement (chapter 6) and conclusions (chapter 7).

Scholars have engaged in minoritized language issues from a variety of perspectives, orienting towards language use at different social scales and carving out corresponding units of analysis. The following discussion illustrates how the engagement of different domains of scholarship (also referred to as disciplines or communities of practice) can be characterized. I draw on the notion of social scales to help illustrate different forms of engagement. As Blommaert (2010) notes, "scales organize different patterns of normativity, of what counts as language" (p. 37). Disciplines have different perspectives on what language is (ranging from essentialist to constructivist, as discussed above), and their practices and priorities can be linked with different social scales, including international, national, or regional territories, languages, ethnic groups, school

systems, classrooms, individual learners, and instances of learner language use. However, disciplines do not consider only one scale or unit of analysis, and as in all communities of practice, they engage in constant negotiation of their shared assumptions and undertakings (Wenger, 1998). Here I aim to discuss the tendencies that I observe across disciplines, providing a general sketch of these areas of scholarship in order to explore the conceptual terrain upon which endangered or minority language projects have been occurring. Each community of practice that I describe is ultimately more diverse than the description and consists of evolving practices that I do not capture here; I attempt to map out only the most salient conceptual paths that have been demarcating the social project of minoritized language promotion.

#### **1.4.1 Scales of engagement: From nations, to languages, to learners**

Traditional language planning and policy (LPP) considered the shift or maintenance of a specific language at the scale of a territory or political unit as influenced by political or intentional initiatives (Cooper, 1989; Fishman, 1991). Language ecology scholars discuss the organic interplay of multiple languages within a territory (Fill & Muhlhausler, 2001; Haugen, 1972; Maffi, 2001), noting that languages thrive or become threatened in complex linguistic ecologies many of which are undergoing dramatic shifts worldwide (Calvet, 1974; Hornberger & Hult, 2008). More recently LPP research has attended to political processes at local scales such as the classroom or the family (Canagarajah, 2005; Menken & García, 2010; Shohamy, 2006), and across scales (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Achieving a balance between different language varieties or redressing past

imbalances is often the goal, in addition to describing how political processes influence language use.

Interactional sociolinguistics has examined language politics at regional and local scales, including discursive and interactional forms of inequality such as diglossia and prejudice among speech communities (Ferguson, 1959; Goffman, 1967; Haugen, 1973). Variationist sociolinguistics has illuminated patterns in language use that relate to social inequalities, providing further insight into the social differences constructed through language, despite underlying structural equality (Labov, 1970, 2008). More recent work in the interactionist sociolinguistics tradition continues to make visible the social dynamics at play through and around minoritized languages (Moore, 2012; Nevins, 2004; Webster, 2010).

The field of documentary linguistics has expanded exponentially in recent decades, aiming to record and archive as many language varieties as possible, as they are declining in use, or as frequently expressed, before they die or go extinct (Grinevald & Bert, 2012; Hagège, 2000; Hale et al., 1992; Harrison, 2010). Taking discrete languages or dialects (and often specifically their structural or systemic properties) as units of analysis, the goal is to conserve the oldest variety of a language, with minimal interference from other varieties. Although the focus on "endangered languages" is more recent, this discipline has conceptual roots that go back to the "salvage linguistics" of early American linguists (Moore, 2000) such as Franz Boas, Leonard Bloomfield, Edward Sapir, and Morris Swadesh (e.g. Boaz, 1911). The process of recording a language is considered to save the language from extinction, as it will be conserved in

archival format whether or not it continues to be used. The quantitative and archive-focused practices of this discipline have been critiqued in relation to the ultimate goal of supporting threatened language communities (Dobrin, Austin, & Nathan, 2007), bringing new forms of reflexivity and an emphasis on collaborative models (Stebbins, 2012; Yamada, 2007) as the field continues to expand with its own graduate programs, conferences (<http://icldc4.weebly.com/>) and journals (<http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ldc/>; <http://www.elpublishing.org/>).

Applied linguistics and second language acquisition research traditionally has taken a largely quasi-experimental approach to understanding the linguistic, cognitive, and social variables and processes of language acquisition and language education, with the goal to ultimately improve language education practice (Pica, 1997). Individual learners are often units of analysis which are studied under the influence of controlled contextual variables, such as age, additional languages spoken (especially first language or L1) (Lado, 1959), and different forms and amounts of language input (Krashen, 1982). The errors or "interlanguage" produced were seen as part of the learner's unidirectional trajectory towards native or monolingual-like mastery of a language (Selinker, 1971), creating a paradigm of "native speakerism" which remains ingrained despite efforts to challenge it (Kumaravadivelu, 2014). Although the acquisition of dominant languages has been most studied, some scholars in this discipline have drawn attention to other populations, especially heritage language learners (Valdés, 2005), and adopted a variety of qualitative methodologies. These scholars argue that culturally appropriate communication and education practices are intertwined with language, and are essential

factors in language education (Byram, 1997; Norton, 2000). Current trends in applied linguistics recognize the multiplicity of factors that influence language learning, not all of which fit into experimental designs, and many of which exist on scales beyond the individual learner (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Pennycook, 2001).

Consideration of multilingual learners' processes of language development has led to a more flexible view of language acquisition and use among scholars in education, with attention to the agency that individuals use to move between different language resources and registers (García, 2009a; Lüdi, 2004) and the interrelation of competencies across languages (Cummins, 2000; Heller, 2007). Applied linguistic and education scholars' engagement in the preservation of language use has expanded through attempts to teach threatened languages and/ or develop learning materials in collaboration with language communities (Cope & Penfield, 2011; De Korne et al, 2009; Hinton & Hale, 2001), and to promote endangered languages in schools (Hornberger & King, 1996). As the promotion of Indigenous languages in schools gains traction, Indigenous education practitioners and researchers have encouraged the use of “indigenous frameworks for thinking about schooling” (Smith, 2005, p.94), leading to some of the culturally responsive forms of education discussed above in section 1.3.2.

Another key community of practice are members of minoritized speech communities and outside sympathizers who take up roles as activists or advocates in promotion of a language. Activists typically aim to raise the status of a language both within and beyond the community and to increase use and especially intergenerational language transmission. Their engagement involves producing various forms of publicity,

learning materials, and scholarship about the language, emphasizing its historical and cultural significance and current relevance for community identity, well-being, and spirituality (e.g. Hermes, Bang, & Marin, 2012; Norwood, 2007; Seldin, Ruth, & DePaul, 2008). Activists may also be academics in various disciplines, but many are affiliated primarily with the language community as their scale of engagement. In contrast to linguists who orient towards the form or structure of a language, activists typically orient to the cultural, historical, or "mythic" significance of a language for its speech community (Costa, 2010; Meek, 2010).

Some scholars have also focused on the discourses and ideologies that circulate around minoritized languages in the wider society, including the media, policy, and popular discourse, as well as activist discourses. Beginning with Richard Ruiz's (1984) classic typology of orientations to language as a problem, a right, or a resource, numerous critical discourse analysis studies have illuminated language ideologies in different contexts, on different scales (Fairclough, 2003; Jaffe, 2009; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Schieffelin et al., 1998). Discourses that have come to be stereotypical of language endangerment media and scholarship have been examined and critiqued, in particular the tendency to essentialize and enumerate languages, cultures and communities (Hill, 2002; Moore et al., 2010; Suslak, 2009), and to resist what may be considered to be natural changes in language practice (Duchêne & Heller, 2007; Blommaert, 2010). Discourse analysis studies thus often deconstruct ideologies of language endangerment and point out potential harms, such as Cameron's (2007) analysis of language preservation

discourse as qualitatively the same as discourses underlying the formation of nation-states and supremacist movements.

In contexts in which minoritized languages are used by children entering formal education, "mother tongue" or "vernacular" education has been officially endorsed by UNESCO (UNESCO, 1953, 2003) and argued for by the recent field of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994). It has been incorporated as a strategy in the efforts of numerous Aid/ Development organizations (MTB-MLE network ([www.mlenetwork.org/](http://www.mlenetwork.org/)); Save the Children (Pinnock, 2011); UNICEF (Ingram, 2010); USAID (Carolyn Adger, p.c. July, 2012)) and many smaller NGOs and missionary organizations (Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), New Tribes). These civil society organizations may have a significant impact on actual education practices through funding schools and collaborating with national governments.<sup>7</sup> Their programs tend to focus on the scale of ethnic or linguistic groups, assuming that one mother tongue can be attributed to each group, and that these groups will prefer to receive education in their vernacular language (Ball, 2010; Benson, 2004; Dekker & Young, 2005). The aim is to improve the educational outcomes of children in specific groups or schools (although how "improvement" is understood can vary, and is often measured by standardized tests). The goal of literacy in the minoritized language is also a common goal, but often included only as a secondary measurement of program success, with transition to literacy in the majority language receiving greater emphasis in NGO programs (e.g. de Guzman,

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the Philippines DepEd Orders 74 of 2009 and 16 of 2012 (establishing mother tongue education as national policy) were directly influenced by the research and reporting of SIL members (e.g. Walter & Dekker, 2008).

2005; Premsrirat & Samoh, 2012). Missionary linguists, SIL in particular, generally invest more time in local language literacy, creating first alphabets and then primers and workbooks usually available for free distribution alongside translated religious texts (in the case of Isthmus Zapotec this includes a "pedagogical grammar" and other workbooks as well as translation of the new testament (Pickett, Black, & Cerqueda, 2001; <http://www.language-archives.org/language/zai>)).

The conceptual trajectories and practices of public disciplines may have significant impacts in minoritized language contexts, including discouraging youth from viewing themselves as speakers (Meek, 2010) and devaluing the heteroglossic resources that youth employ, while upholding an idealized, monolingual-like norm (García, 2009b). The attitudes and ideologies of members of Indigenous communities have received relatively little attention; in some cases they align with those of pro-diversity scholars, and in others they have other priorities and educational goals (Hornberger, 1988) and create their own discourses (Hornberger, De Korne & Weinberg, 2015; Kroskrity & Field, 2009). In a context where an Indigenous language constitutes a small part of young speakers' repertoires, García (2009b) discusses that "the youth are comfortable with their translanguaging, although they want to develop more complex Indigenous-language practices. For the teachers, however, the notion persists that there is either a standard Indigenous language or nothing" (p. 379). There is thus a need to understand the diverse ideologies and discourses circulating at many scales, including within internally diverse communities.

### 1.4.2 Bringing different community practices into relation

The communities of practice that contribute to the social project in support of Indigenous or minoritized communication practices are made up of a wide range of actors, with differing imaginaries, goals, and forms of engagement. Some of the actors whose practices I have outlined here would probably disagree with my argument that they are all contributing to a shared social project; there are certainly moments when their actions may seem to oppose or even to undermine each other, such as critical discourse scholars' deconstruction of community activists' work (which in turn has been nicely critiqued by Briggs 1996). The social project that I sketch here is certainly not cohesive, however it is a space where language hierarchies are being questioned, resisted, or deconstructed, where the dynamics of language, education, and social relations are being explored, and where new possibilities can emerge.

The following table summarizes several disciplines that engage with minoritized languages, highlighting the scales that they typically engage in and some of their practices of engagement. As previously mentioned, these characterizations are far from exhaustive.

**Table 2. Comparison of communities of practice engaged in minoritized language projects**

<b>Discipline/ Community of practice</b>	<b>Typical scale of engagement</b>	<b>Typical practices</b>
Language policy & planning	Political or territorial unit with language conflict; Growing attention to actors, local socio-political units, and politics across	Description of political dynamics, occasionally prescription/ recommendation

	scales	
Sociolinguistics	Region with multiple speech communities; Speech community; Social domain(s) of interaction	Description of communicative patterns, analysis of social dynamics in relation to communication practices
Documentary & theoretical linguistics	Formally-defined language or dialect, or linguistic structure	Description, documentation, archiving
Applied linguistics & educators	Classrooms, individual learners, or learners' processes of language development	Quasi-experimental analysis of variables; Qualitative & pedagogically-focused analysis of variables
Language activists	Language & sociocultural context	Promote status & use through various means (teaching, learning, media)
Discourse analysis	Discourses about languages & speakers produced by various actors	Description & critique
Education aid & development	Ethnic group, school or program participants 'in need'	Intervention for educational success
Missionary linguists	Community literacy practices & religious beliefs	Documentation, development of writing systems, creation of literacy materials & religious texts
Less-visible communities: Schools, families	Specific institution, family, individual language practices	Teaching, learning, language use

While linguists orient to languages and applied linguists orient to learners, critical sociolinguists orient to the ideologies and social meanings around languages and learners-- which, they argue, are responsible for creating languages, learners, speakers, etc. as recognizable social phenomena in the first place. Education development

researchers and practitioners orient to overall education outcomes (however they choose to conceptualize and measure those), while missionary linguists focus on alphabets, literacy materials and text production. Community-based activists orient to language use and transmission, as well as cultural, identity-related and often spiritual meanings. Speakers and learners of minoritized languages who are less publicly visible have their own practices and priorities, which may be harder to capture and typify than those of scholarly disciplines, but which represent a crucial domain to be recognized and better understood.

My own orientation-- towards minoritized languages-- focuses on the scale of a language, but also aims to incorporate the social, historical, and contemporary context responsible for giving speakers of the language the status that they have. This orientation is a result of my participation in a variety of scholarly and activist domains, and my discussion of these domains is informed by my experiences studying and participating in them (see also chapter 3 on positionality). In laying the groundwork for this study I have drawn on concepts and tools from linguistics and anthropology, although I find the lack of direct engagement in social concerns to be a limitation. I likewise draw on methods from education development, although I aim to avoid the rapid intervention approach through which they are often applied. Additionally I am informed by theories and strategies of pedagogy, curriculum design, and education policy, although I am often dismayed at the gaps between education research, policy and practice. In this study I aim to bring these different disciplines and discourses into relation with each other through considering their contribution to IZ education practices.

## **1.5 Synthesis: Future minoritized language engagement**

As more and more disciplines and social actors become engaged in "saving" Indigenous languages, from local to international actors, this is an area in need of focused attention. While there may well be benefits to this diverse pool of practices and ideologies, it is nonetheless important to consider them carefully, taking into account their possible impact. Jane Hill made this clear by analyzing the "ways in which linguists and anthropologists may unwittingly undermine their own vigorous advocacy of endangered languages by a failure to think carefully about the multiple audiences who may hear and read advocacy rhetoric" (Hill, 2002, p. 119). Hill leaves fellow scholars with the challenge to "develop thoughtful forms of advocacy [...] which will make the global conversation in support of endangered languages fully intelligible and useful to all who participate in it" (p. 131).

By considering engagement and ideologies around a minoritized language on multiple scales, as pursued by multiple communities of practice, I hope to provide insights into the practices and processes occurring in this social domain. My study illuminates some of the ways that the ideologies and practices of different actors and disciplines play out empirically in IZ educational settings, although due to my study design and limitations I do not have equal insight into all of the disciplines summarized above (as discussed further in chapter 3). Engagement in endangered language issues has been theorized, although not often documented or studied in empirical detail; more often those with extensive experience in these domains have shared their perspectives based on years of engagement (Dobrin, 2008; Leonard & Haynes, 2010; Rice, 2009; Whaley,

2011). By considering the discourses and practices of a range of actors, as well as my own, I aim to provide further insights into strategies of engagement and shifting language practices in a post-colonial setting where efforts to increase Indigenous language rights are underway.

My approach to this study is thus both descriptive and engaged. As an ethnographer I aim to document and describe Isthmus Zapotec education practices in order to better understand how different actors and ideologies interact and perhaps influence each other across social scales (from policy makers, to foreign researchers, to parents). As an educator and activist scholar I also aim to use my understanding of the complex factors at play to inform eventual active engagement in efforts to improve IZ education. Taking action while adhering to a constructivist paradigm is not straightforward, due to acknowledgement of the validity of multiple points of view, and the inability of any individual to consider a context in its entirety. This predicament has been considered by numerous scholars, who question whether and how to take action when multiple approaches are considered valid. Pennycook (2006) advises that constructivist activists should pay attention to difference, dominion, disparity and desire in education contexts, while Janks (2000) proposes attention to diversity, domination, access and design. I share and am informed by their concern with hierarchies, social boundaries, and the agentive desires and creations of individual actors, although I chose to adopt the more emergent framework of ethnographic monitoring, rather than either of these analytic frameworks. Ethnographic monitoring (as discussed further in chapter 3) allows for a constructivist evaluation to be made as the basis for action and locally-

informed improvement. Through this framework my analysis is reached as a result of extended observation (of actors practices and relevant sociopolitical processes, as described in 1.1), in conjunction with interpretation of the discourses, ideologies and imaginaries manifested by actors in specific settings. While affiliating with constructivist ideologies of language education myself, I do not reject other ideologies or approaches per se, but rather hope to examine the roles that different ideologies-- mobilized in the practices of different actors-- play in the pursuit of educational goals in the IZ context.

During my study I began to consider practices of *inclusion* and *exclusion* within IZ education initiatives as a framework around which to evaluate and plan strategies. Developed further in chapter 5, this very broad framework provides a way to think about social relations in Diidxazá-related communities of practice. I additionally began to consider forms of *manipulation* and *conviviality* that are created in IZ use and education, as a way to capture further nuances of the social relations in the contexts that I observed and participated in. Conviviality (or *convivencia*) emerged as a common characteristic of positively-evaluated social spaces in the Isthmus. I draw the conviviality--manipulation contrast from Ivan Illich's (1970) discussion of the potential harms of certain forms of institutionalized education, in contrast to the potential benefits of convivial "learning webs" (as discussed above, and also developed further in chapters 5 and 7). Illich's strongly anti-institutional stance on education resonates with social learning theories like the community of practice and community funds of knowledge, although Illich goes further in rejecting mainstream education practices. He argues that:

learning is the human activity which least needs manipulation by others. Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting. Most people learn best by being "with it", yet school makes them identify their personal, cognitive growth with elaborate planning and manipulation. (p. 39)

Illich's main goal is not a flat rejection of formal schooling practices, however; he goes on to explore in detail a democratic and social theory of education through which all learners should have free access to educational objects, skill modeling, peer learners, and elders or mentors (1970, pp. 79-104). His social project-- one that has in some ways been realized through the participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006) of the internet age-- overlaps with the project to resist language inequalities, as he discusses the need to dismantle current unequal power dynamics, and provide new forms of access and networks towards social learning spaces.

As I strive to understand the potentials and shortcomings of the different Diidxazá-related communities of practice that I have observed and participated in, and my own potentials and shortcomings within them, these social dimensions (inclusion/exclusion; manipulation/ conviviality) provide a helpful focus that I bring to my previously language-centric work. They have helped me to attend to the potential of inclusive, convivial communities of practice to facilitate not only multilingual practices, but also pluralist ideologies and ways of being. Although these spaces may remain unstable or short-lived, they provide important opportunities for me and others to imagine and negotiate what is yet to come.

## **Chapter 2. Language use and education in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec**

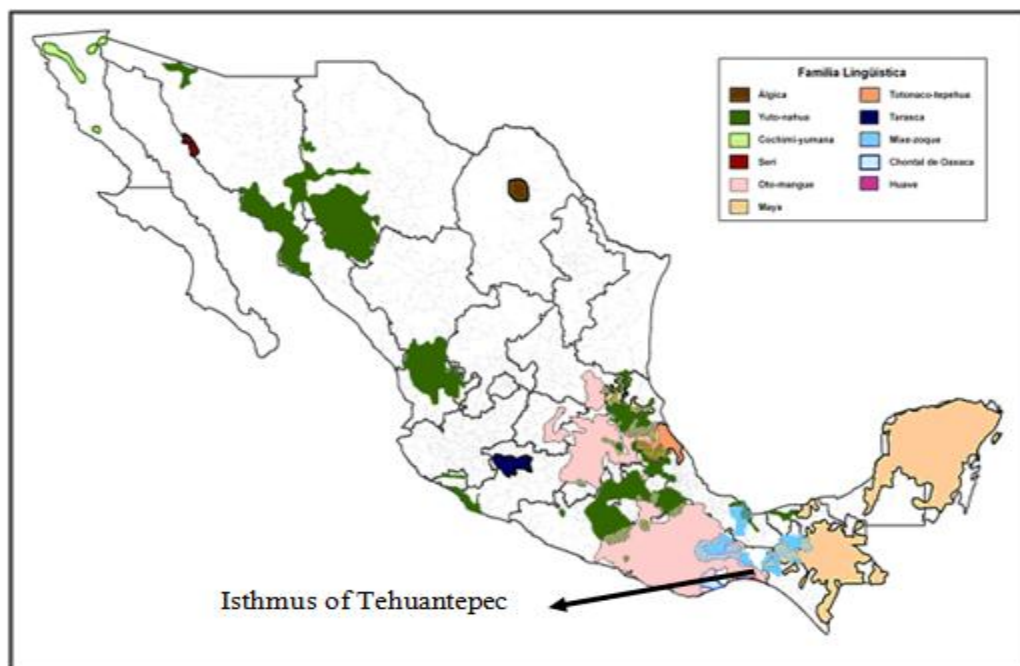
The language ecology of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec has long been multilingual and fraught with political tensions. Over time the political environment in Mexico and in the Isthmus has shifted to promote Indigenous language use in some ways, while in other ways it has remained discriminatory, as discussed further below. This makes it challenging to tease out the dense stories around language use, language politics and education in the Isthmus, yet it also makes the region of especial interest in studies of Indigenous education and multilingual education practice and politics. With numerous Indigenous languages and a history of local resistance to colonial imposition, the Isthmus is a fertile area for the growth of pro-diversity education, despite the homogenizing influences that remain pervasive. In this chapter I give a brief background to language use and education in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec from the pre-colonial period through the present, centering around use of Isthmus Zapotec (IZ, or Diidxazá).

### **2.1 Pre-colonial languages in the Isthmus**

The territory that is now Mexico has been inhabited by numerous sociolinguistic groups, who have come into contact and conflict over many centuries. A common way of identifying and dividing social groups in Mexico is through classifying their communicative practices into categories of language families and languages-- the essentialist paradigms of enumeration and categorization discussed in section 1.2. Following this dominant perspective, there are 11 language families and a debated number of languages spoken in Mexico today (the current official estimate being 364

(*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI)*, 2008). Zapotec, a part of the Oto-manguean family, is considered a language group with 62 variants, many of which are not mutually intelligible (Pérez Báez, 2011).

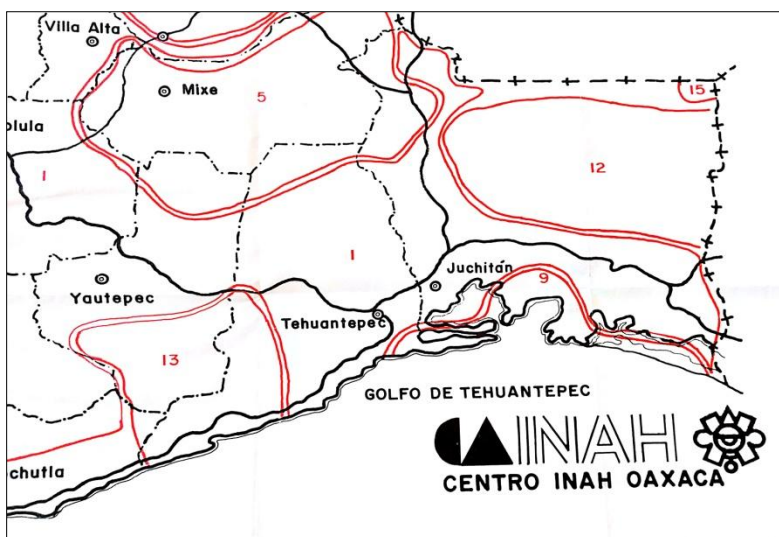
Figure 1 (adapted from [http://dof.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle\\_popup.php?codigo=5150513](http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle_popup.php?codigo=5150513)) illustrates the language families of Mexico, indicating the location of Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Five languages are present in the Isthmus, hailing from 4 different families: Ayuuk (Mixe) and Zoque (both from the Mixe-Zoque family), IZ (Oto-manguean family), Ombeayuits (Huave) (isolate) and Chontal (isolate)<sup>8</sup>.



**Figure 1. Language families in Mexico.**

<sup>8</sup> I attempt to use auto-determinations of Indigenous groups in addition to the names used in Spanish as much as possible, although I acknowledge that preferences for these names can vary within each group. Here I use the auto-determinations which I heard most frequently during my time in Oaxaca.

The rough geographic distribution of these languages is illustrated in more detail in the map of language distribution in the Isthmus (Figure 2, adapted from Barabas & Bartolomé, 1999, p. 56). The region with a 1 corresponds to use of Zapotec languages across the coastal plain of the Isthmus; 9 is the Ombeayuits zone along the coast; 13 is the Chontal zone along the coast to the north; 5 is the Ayuuk/ Mixe zone in the mountains to the northwest, and 12 is the Zoque zone in the mountains to the northeast.



**Figure 2.** Map of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, with language zones delineated in red

Of the language families in the Isthmus, Oto-manguean (shown in pink in Figure 1) is by far the most geographically expansive, covering much of what is now Oaxaca state where many varieties of Zapotec are spoken. After Nahuatl and Yucatec Maya, Zapotec is considered the Indigenous language with most speakers in Mexico (441, 769 according to the Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015)), although these figures overlook the

internal diversity and lack of intelligibility between varieties of Zapotec. The larger Zapotec branch is most commonly split into four regional categories; the central valleys, the northern Sierra, the southern Sierra, and the Isthmus (Barabas & Bartolomé, 1999).

## **2.2 Pre-colonial socio-political trends**

The geographical spread and relatively large number of speakers of Zapotec today is an echo of the presence and power of the Zapotec empire in pre-colonial Mesoamerica.

Zapotecs developed a wealthy and hierarchical empire, governing much of what is now Oaxaca from around 500 BCE to 900 CE . The oldest signs of habitation in the central valleys of Oaxaca date from 950 BCE, where density and social organization continued to develop, partially through contact with Olmec civilization between 1200-900 BCE.

Around 400 BCE what would become the imperial city of Monte Alban was founded on a mountaintop at the intersection of several valleys (Barabas & Bartolomé, 1999, pp. 62-63) overlooking the site of the state capital today. The auto-denomination, "people of the cloud" (*Binnizá*), now used in the Isthmus could have been inspired by the dramatic clouds that form a striking part of the landscape in the Oaxacan mountains. Covarrubias (1946) in his classic study notes that Zapotecs in particular have no origin or migration story, but claim to originate in the region. He quotes an early historian, who wrote "I have found no reference, with semblance of truth, of the first arrival of this nation, nor of the origin of their lords, from which it may be deduced they were very ancient...To boast of bravery they claimed to be sons of jaguars and other wild beasts; if they were great chiefs of ancient lineage they considered themselves descendants of old and shady trees;

those that were proud of being untamable and stubborn, said they were born of rocks and cliffs..." (p. 174).

The Zapotec empire produced significant achievements in architecture, astronomy, medicine, and writing, with up to 30,000 people residing in Monte Alban at its peak (Barabas & Bartolomé, 1999, p. 63). Like the Aztec and Mayan empires, the Zapotecs had a sophisticated calendar, a base-20 numerical system, advanced architecture, and writing which was used in elite circles (de la Cruz, 2008). The first phase of Zapotec writing is dated from 600 BCE to 800 CE, and included semi-phonetic writing as well as logographic or hieroglyphic writing (ibid, p. 12). A second phase is identified from 800 CE to the Spanish invasion in 1521 CE, consisting of symbolic or pictographic representations (ibid, p. 13). De la Cruz questions why Zapotec writing seemingly regressed from more sophisticated phonetic representations to pictographic representations, and proposes the hypothesis that it was due to

*la multiplicidad lingüística existente en el territorio dominado por los binnigulaa'sa': sacrificaron el apego a la gramática de su lengua, para usar una forma de escritura que pasaba directamente del signo visual-- sin referencia a los sonidos de una sola lengua-- a la imagen mental que generaban los pictogramas o ideogramas* (the linguistic multiplicity existing in the territory dominated by the ancient Zapotecs: they sacrificed the attachment to the grammar of their language in order to use a form of writing that passed directly from the visual sign-- without reference to the sounds of a single language-- to the mental image that generated the pictographs or ideographs) (ibid, p. 13).

Whatever the motivations for change, Romero Frizzi (2003) notes that the Zapotecs were among the first Mesoamerican civilizations to develop writing, and almost certainly influenced other civilizations whose writing systems are now better known. The Zapotec

writing system is not fully understood at present, there being fewer remnants than there are of Maya, although it is currently a subject of study (Urcid, 2005).

Monte Alban began to decline for reasons that probably included political conflict and environmental stress, resulting in networks of smaller city-states throughout the valleys. Zapotecs from the valley city-state of Zaachila migrated down to the Isthmus around 1400 CE as the Mexica influence was creeping in to the region. In the Isthmus the Zapotecs displaced the Ikoots, reducing their territory to a narrow strip of land by the ocean, and took over the fertile plain, ruling from a city-state based in Tehuantepec, and maintaining contact with other Zapotec seats of power in the mountains and central valleys. Their power was not unilateral however; by 1486 CE the Mexica had founded the garrison of Huaxyacac (now Oaxaca) in the central valleys and were extracting tributes from Zapotecs, Mixtecs, and others throughout Oaxaca (Barabas & Bartolomé, 1999, p. 64). Already in 1484 the Mexica recorded the towns of Tehuantepec and Juchitán in the Mendocino codex as places where they extracted tribute (Ruíz Martínez, 2013). Juchitán was represented with the symbol of a flower that has been interpreted as *guie' xhuuba*, a fragrant flowering tree unique to the region, and given the Nahuatl name *Ixtcxochitlán* (place of white flowers) (Ruíz Martínez, 2013, pp. 17-18), which is the presumed origin of the name Juchitán.<sup>9</sup> Tehuantepec means Jaguar Hill in Nahuatl, and a large hill that borders the town still bears this Zapotec name today (*Dani Beedxe*).

Despite the military dominance of the Mexica, the regional Zapotec rulers still wielded

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<sup>9</sup> One of the current names for the city is, *Guidxi Guie'*, town of flowers, which some interpret as more authentic than other recent names (*Lahuiguidxi*, central town, and *Xabizende*, San Vicente) (IN 140430 J-1).

considerable power in the Isthmus, where the king Cosijoeza banded with the Ñuu Savi (Mixtec) and successfully resisted an attack from the Mexica army in the *Guie' Ngoola* fortress near Tehuantepec, brought on by the Zapotecs' refusal to pay tribute. These struggles amidst Mesoamerican powers took an unpredictable turn a few decades later however with the beginning of the Spanish invasion in 1519 (Miano Borruso, 2002).

### **2.3 Colonial socio-political trends**

Under Spanish colonization the Isthmus became part of the *Marquesado del Valle*, and was developed for cattle ranching, as well as trans-oceanic trade through the port of Salina Cruz. Although records of Zapotec life under colonial rule are sparse, it was generally a time of hardship, including heavy tolls from new diseases and hard labor to pay tributes. In 1521 there were 24,000 Indigenous residents of the Isthmus paying tribute; in 1550 there were 6,000, and only 60 years after the invasion in 1580 the population had dropped over 80% to 4,000 (Acuña, 1984, in Barabas & Bartolomé, 1999, p. 71). There were rebellions against Spanish exploitation throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, with the most famous being the 1660 rebellion of Tehuantepec, where the Zapotecs succeeded in governing the city for one year before the colonial government retook the city (Miano Borruso, 2002). Numerous subsequent rebellions occurred in Juchitán as well, leading to the stereotype that Istmeños, and in particular Juchitecos, are "*rebeldes, rudos, y laboriosos*" (rebellious, rough, and hard-working) (Barabas & Bartolomé, 1999, p. 72).

While the Spanish began instructing some Indigenous elites in Latin literacy during the colonial period (Brice Heath, 1972; Montemayor, 2004), there was a general erasure of existing literacy and numeracy practices. "The Spanish conquest obliterated every manifestation of high Indian culture" (Covarrubias, 1946, p. 292) through burning manuscripts and killing people in possession of traditional religious items, contributing to the limited understanding of pre-colonial Zapotec writing today. Already in the 1500s missionaries in Oaxaca were studying and recording Indigenous languages, and using this knowledge in pursuit of evangelization. Fray Juan de Córdova, a Spanish-born Dominican monk who arrived in Oaxaca around 1547, is the best-known of numerous missionaries who produced extensive documentation and linguistic description of the Zapotec then spoken around Oaxaca City (Jiménez Moreno, 1942). Of all the varieties of Zapotec, modern-day Isthmus Zapotec is the closest to what Córdova recorded, so that his 1578 dictionary is still considered a valuable reference by Zapotec scholars today.

The Latin-based education provided by missionaries to some Indigenous people was not the norm, however; the majority of the population was not engaging in formal education under colonial rule. As Robles (1977) comments, "*Una organización predominantemente feudal colocaba a la gran mayoría de aborígenes en posición explotada y marginada de los favores del gran desarrollo de los servicios educativos de entonces*" (p. 17). (A predominantly feudal organization placed the vast majority of Indigenous people in an exploited position, marginalized from the favors of the great development of educational services of the time). While excluded from European-model

education, Indigenous groups were perpetuating their own oral and communal forms of teaching and socializing youth. Maldonado Alvarado (2002) argues that

*"Aunque los zapotecos fueron una cultura dominante en tiempos prehispánicos, la mayoría de su población organizaba la vida de manera oral mientras que las minorías en el poder desarrollaban un sistema de escritura elitista que murió con ellas. Siete siglos después, [...] los zapotecos siguieron organizando su vida de manera oral, aunque sufriendo el peso de la dominación en español por escrito"* (Although the Zapotecs were a dominating culture in prehispanic times, the majority of the population organized life in an oral way while the minorities in power developed an elitist system of writing that died with them. Seven centuries later [...] the Zapotecs continued organizing their life in an oral way, although suffering the weight of the domination in Spanish through writing.) (p. 45)

He goes on to state that the development of Spanish-origin, text-based education did more than exclude the Indigenous population, it created a form of symbolic domination because *"lo escrito descalifica lo oral, o más concretamente una cultura con escritura descalifica a las sociedades orales"* (pp. 40-41). ("writing discredits orality, or more concretely a culture with writing discredits oral societies"). The devaluing of Indigenous communication practices was thus pervasive throughout the colonial period, and intensified when the political tides turned to post-colonial assimilationist nation-building.

## **2.4 Nationalist socio-political trends**

Following independence from Spain in 1810, a Spanish-dominant nation-building ideology prevailed in Mexico, with political leaders no longer ignoring the Indigenous population, but instead attempting to include and assimilate them (Brice Heath, 1972). The first law establishing free primary education was passed in 1867, and in 1883 the first public primary classes were held in Juchitán, with *Escuela Primaria Oficial numero 1* opening in 1890 where the Casa de la Cultura is today (Ruíz Martínez, 2013). By 1895

Spanish had become the language spoken by a majority of people in Mexico (Hamel, 2008a). This was not yet true of Juchitán or the Isthmus, however; despite the physical and ideological dominance of the Mexican nation-state, many Indigenous languages remained prominent in their own regional and local spheres throughout this period.

The Mexican revolution in 1910-1920 resulted in a further centralist, assimilationist political environment, for which the national *Secretaría de Educación Pública* became a tool and support following its founding in 1921 (Martínez Vásquez, 2004). The first regional teacher training college, the *Escuela Normal Regional de Juchitán*, opened in 1926, and numerous primary and secondary schools followed (Ruíz Martínez, 2013). It was as a result of this aggressive national campaign for school construction and Spanish-language literacy that use of Spanish began to spread in Oaxaca in the 1940s (Hamel, 2008b; Sicoli, 2011). Juchitán politician Heliodoro Charis Castro, one of numerous rebel-turned-politician icons who was elected mayor in 1935 and later congressman and senator, was instrumental in the creation of schools (and other public and infrastructure works) in his municipality. He was known for speaking Spanish with a heavy Zapotec accent, and is supposed to have said "*niños y jóvenes, estudien, porque en la vida se ganan más batallas con las letras que con las armas*" (children and young people, study, because in life you win more battles with letters than with weapons). A "bilingual" primary school in Juchitán bears his name.

## **2.5 Socio-political trends in the era of mandatory public schooling**

Despite the high hopes of political leaders like Charis Castro, the era of mandatory public schooling in Mexico-- officially beginning with the 1867 *Ley de Instrucción Pública*, although not becoming truly established until the founding and subsequent expansion of the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) in 1920 (Robles, 1977)-- has perpetuated social inequalities and largely been a space that excludes Indigenous languages and ways of knowing and being. López Gopar (2007) discusses the dominance of a Eurocentric and autonomous ideology of literacy, which excludes past and present Indigenous multimodal literacies in favor of an alphabet-centric view of language development. Rebolledo (2008), writing about education for Indigenous students in Mexico City, describes the "national monolingual educational model imposed on bilingual students" as characterized by "a series of conventional teaching patterns and the curricular rigidity of basic education: school has been designed for a culturally homogenous population, within which Indian characteristics do not fit" (p.104).

A process of decentralizing education in Mexico was initiated in 1992 (*Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica y Normal*), including officially giving control of primary education to individual states with the goal of increasing local relevance and education quality, although the process of decentralizing what was initially a highly centralist system remains incomplete (Martínez Vásquez, 2004). Even programs that might appear to have an inclusive or multiculturalist agenda, such as the recruitment and training of *promotores bilingües* (Indigenous bilingual classroom assistants) have followed an assimilationist agenda. Julia Noriega Sánchez, a Zapotec teacher, recounts her experience being trained as a *promotora bilingüe* by the *Instituto de Investigación y*

*Integración Social del Estado de Oaxaca* (Institute of Research and Social Integration for the State of Oaxaca, IISEO) as follows: "*nos mandó a acabar con nuestras lenguas porque la meta era castellanizar. Al IISEO veníamos de todo el estado de Oaxaca y teníamos la misión de acabar con nuestra cultura, con nuestra lengua*" (We were told to finish off our languages, because the goal was to castillianize [[spread use of Castilian Spanish]]. At IIIESO we came from everywhere in the state of Oaxaca, and we had the mission to finish off our culture, our language) (Noriega Sánchez, 2012, p.26). Efforts to make "interculturalism" part of public schooling have likewise been superficial, characterized by celebrating cultural difference without considering the hierarchies and power dynamics among groups (Velasco Cruz, 2010).

Despite the assimilationist ideology of mainstream education, alternative approaches to Indigenous education have also had a presence in Mexico through pilot studies since the 1930s (Hamel, 2008b) and numerous initiatives by teachers and communities. In 1978 diverse programs for Indigenous students were centralized under the *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* (DGEI), a branch of primary education responsible for running bilingual schools. In comparison with mainstream Spanish monolingual schools, bilingual programs typically lack resources (Coronado Suzán, 1992; Hamel, 2008a, 2008b) and are known for the political activism of their teachers and administrators. Pedagogical training for teachers in bilingual schools has become more rigorous in the past decade, however in a case study in Chiapas, García and Velasco (2012) found "bilingual" teachers to be poorly equipped to meet the learning needs of their students. The linguistic and cultural pride expressed by teachers in interviews did

not translate into the sample of classroom practices that these researchers observed. The need to learn Spanish for participation in many economic activities and to follow a fixed national curriculum may make teachers and parents indifferent or uninterested in Indigenous language education in many parts of the country (Hamel, 2003; Rebolledo, 2010). Additional challenges in Oaxacan schools include the near-constant conflict between the main teacher's union, *Sección 22*, and government authorities; while the federal government has been trying to increase standardized testing for students and teachers, as well as centralized curriculum reforms and new labor regulations, the union is pushing an anti-standards agenda via a constructivist education paradigm called the *Plan para la transformación de la educación de Oaxaca* (Plan for the transformation of education in Oaxaca, PTEO) (IEEPO, SNTE, & CNTE, 2013) (see section 4.3 for further discussion of the current politics of formal education in Oaxaca).

Against the backdrop of different assimilationist and multiculturalist national and regional policies, IZ promotion initiatives have been going on for over 78 years. A group of students from Juchitán began publishing a pro-Zapotec newsletter (*Neza*, Path) in México City in 1935, which, albeit published largely in Spanish, included some IZ poetry and strongly pro-IZ rhetoric, characterized as "*ferviente nacionalismo étnico de los intelectuales zapotecos*" (Miano Borruso, 2002, p. 108) ("fervent ethnic nationalism of the Zapotec intellectuals"). For example, an article entitled "*Zapotequización*" defines this term as "*...el entrometimiento de caracteres zapotecos en el alma de las cosas o de las personas extrañas que con sólo situarse o vivir en los pueblos del Istmo juchiteco, adquieren un revestimiento peculiarmente zapoteco*" (...the intermingling of Zapotec

characteristics in the soul of the foreign things or people that, by merely situating themselves or living in the cities of the Juchitán<sup>10</sup> Isthmus, acquire a peculiarly Zapotec covering) (Morales Henestroza, 1935). Further publications followed, and a standard orthography was adopted in 1956 by intellectuals based in Mexico City and by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), and further promoted by the *Casa de la Cultura*, an independent organization in Juchitán which has been printing IZ poetry and other literature since being founded by painter and activist Francisco Toledo in 1972 (see sections 4.4.2 and 5.3 for more in-depth discussion of IZ literary initiatives).

While Oaxaca is among the poorest states of Mexico, the region of the Isthmus has enjoyed greater wealth and perhaps less political marginalization than other Indigenous communities, and has consistently promoted its language and culture in regional and national arenas. Tehuantepec is known for the embroidered *huipils* (blouses), long skirts, and extravagant gold jewelry that was made famous by Frida Kahlo's wardrobe. Juchitán is known for the election of the independent, left-wing *Coalición Obrero-Campesino-Estudiantil del Istmo* (COCEI, Laborer-peasant-student coalition of the Isthmus) party in 1981 at a time when the rest of the country was run by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), drawing the attention of political anthropologists and occasionally the wrath of the national government (Campbell, 1989, 1994; Rubin, 1994). A discourse of pride for Istmeño history, bravery, and beauty pervades much of the music and poetry composed

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<sup>10</sup> Referring to the *Istmo juchiteco*, instead of the more common Isthmus of Tehuantepec, gestures towards the long-time rivalry between the cities of Tehuantepec and Juchitán, a complex topic that will not be taken up here.

and made popular by Istmeños. Juchitán in particular has generally received more attention from media and researchers, as the base of the COCEI and a large *muxe* (third gender men) community which has been the subject of several documentaries and numerous studies.

Providing a backdrop and support to language and culture activities in the Isthmus, the state of Oaxaca is home to a variety of organizations promoting Indigenous languages in general, including the *Coordinación de Maestros y Promotores Indígenas de Oaxaca* (Coordination of Indigenous Teachers and Aides of Oaxaca, CMPIO), founded in 1974, the *Centro Editorial en Literatura Indígena, A.C.* (Indigenous Literature Editorial [Publishing] Center, CELIAC), founded in 1988, and the *Centro de Estudios y Desarrollo de las Lenguas Indígenas de Oaxaca* (Center for studies and development of the Indigenous languages of Oaxaca, CEDELIO). There are numerous Indigenous language and culture initiatives elsewhere in the state, each with their own local particularities (e.g. Faudree, 2013, 2015; Suslak, 2009). SIL has also been very active in Oaxaca, with a base in Mitla outside of Oaxaca City. They have produced a pedagogical grammar and basic vocabulary of the Juchitán variety of IZ (Pickett et al., 2001), in addition to many decades of documentation and translation of Biblical texts into IZ.<sup>11</sup> The presence of multiple languages and cultures is often cited as a key characteristic of Oaxaca in government and tourism discourse, in particular in promotion of the yearly *Guelaguetza* dance festival which some view as important revenue for the state, while others view it as further exploitation of Indigenous communities.

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<sup>11</sup> At least 90% of the search results for 'Zapoteco' in the catalogue of the *Biblioteca Juan de Cordoba* in Oaxaca are religious text translations by SIL (FN 130326).

At the national level the past few decades have seen increased rights for Indigenous communities. Beginning with the recognition of Indigenous cultural rights in the constitution in 1992, the 1996 San Andres accords achieved as a result of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas gained important ground in raising awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity in Mexico, and demanding education that is based in Indigenous cultures, rather than including them as "intercultural" tokens (Rebolledo, 2010). The *Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* (CGEIB) founded in 2001, followed by the Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2003 and the founding of the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* (INALI) in 2005, are all "fruits" of the "*discurso intercultural bilingüe sembrado por el zapatismo y el movimiento indígena*" (intercultural bilingual discourse sown by Zapatistas and the indigenous movement) (Rebolledo, 2010, p.147). INALI has been engaged in training interpreters, among other language documentation and education projects, helping to make at least small changes in the way that Indigenous language speakers are treated in some public spaces.

On the international scale, the influences of economic globalization, including the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement of 1994 which weakened the livelihoods of farmers in Oaxaca and elsewhere, has led to increased political tension and migration (López Bárcenas, 2009). These socio-economic changes are also leading to challenging shifts in the linguistic and educational landscape, including a growing presence of youth who speak English due to increased migration from Indigenous communities to the US (Pérez Báez, 2005), and a growing interest in learning English.

US-origin businesses, such as Wal-mart and its derivatives Sam's Club and Aurera Bodega, take business away from locally-run markets and small stores; the 4th Wal-mart-owned store in the Isthmus opened in 2014 in a part of Tehuantepec that was previously a public market. Destabilized local economies also lead to internal migration away from rural regions and towards urban centers. Extensive internal migration within Mexico and Oaxaca is resulting in mixed urban schools where students who speak Indigenous languages often do not want to admit it, and instead attempt to blend in with the Spanish mainstream (López Gopar, 2009).

The effect of economic migration in the Isthmus is not as stark as in some parts of Oaxaca, however there is a different process underway, that of the arrival and rapid development of wind farms by international corporations. Since around 2007 this process is leading to land disputes (ElDiario.mx, 2013), a visible presence of foreign (largely Spanish) workers, and increased stratification of Istmeño society as some landowners benefit from the developments and others do not. In the development of the most recent project, a "community consultation" between the *Comisión Federal de Electricidad* (CFE), the investor (a large Mexican company), and citizens of Juchitán has taken place as a result of Mexico's ratification of the International Labor Organization's convention 169 (International Labour Organization, 1989), guaranteeing the right of previous consultation for projects on Indigenous lands. While many see this as a farcical "consultation" with no benefits, it is evidence of the influence of global politics on local realities in the Isthmus.

## **2.6 Summary: On-going change in language and education practices**

Whether or not the increased policy support at national and international levels will eventually result in local improvements in the disappointing education and political systems discussed above remains to be seen. Pride for Istmeño heritage, including language, is evident throughout history and in public spaces today, and a significant number of formal educational and social institutions also include the use of Indigenous languages such as IZ as an official part of their agenda. The influence of centuries of *castellanización* cannot be undone by government rhetoric alone however, and the current education system, where young Istmeños spend many obligatory hours, does not promote anything more than transitional bilingualism in the majority of cases. Spanish, and increasingly English, are now added to the multilingual ecology of the Isthmus alongside the enduring use of IZ and other Indigenous languages. It is clear that the economic powers now influencing subsistence in the Isthmus emanate from Spanish and English-speaking sources, a trend which no-one expects to change. The socio-political influences which are currently impacting language and education practices in the Isthmus are taken up from local perspectives in chapters 4, 5 and 6, where the continued presence of historical factors remain visible alongside emerging practices and discourses.

## **Chapter 3. The present study: Researcher, questions, methodology, methods**

What motivated me to research IZ education, and why did I go about my research the way that I did? In this chapter I explain my positionality and motivations as a researcher (3.1), the research questions (3.2), methodology (3.3) and data collection methods (3.4) through which I approach this study. I then discuss the methods of analysis, issues of validity, and the results achieved.

### **3.1 Researcher positionality**

The conceptual framework of any study is derived not only from theories and contemporary concerns, but also the positionality of the researcher (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). In developing a conceptual framework, methodology and methods, and in carrying out this study I have been informed by my experiences as a student, advocate and researcher in Indigenous language programs and multilingual programs over 11 years, in a variety of socio-political contexts<sup>12</sup>, as well as by the theoretical positions and

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<sup>12</sup> My experiences include participating as a student in tribally-run Anishinaabemowin classes and events in rural Michigan (with varying degrees of intensity, from several times a week to once or twice a year, between 2004-present); documentation, data management, grant writing and materials development as a linguistic consultant for a tribe (2006-2008); research on policies and higher education programs relating to Indigenous language education in Canada as a student and assistant in an Indigenous-run research project (2007-2009); research on multilingual policies and programs in Europe (including contrasts between immigrant and autochthonous minorities) as a research fellow in a trilingual university (2009-2010); attempting to strengthen the implementation of the national 'mother tongue' education policy in the Philippines as an employee of an international NGO (through development of multilingual materials and assessment tools in collaboration with teachers, the national Department of Education, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics) (July-August 2011, follow-up throughout 2012); serving as an 'Ojibwe linguist' in a program designed to help 'community members' (some of whom are linguists in their own right) access Smithsonian archival materials in their language (2011, 2013); and participation as co-investigator in a collaborative ethnography of an education movement targeting a 'sleeping' Indigenous language in Pennsylvania (2012-present). I have found myself in many other spaces for shorter periods of time where these issues are discussed, from the Native-run *Anishinaabemowin-Teg* conference, the activist-oriented Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization, and the political-diplomatic European Bureau of Lesser

contextual variables discussed in chapters 1 and 2. During this time I have held a variety of roles (inside-outside, novice-expert) and have engaged in many discussions with teachers, administrators, students, politicians, linguists (from theoretical to descriptive to applied), sociolinguists, education scholars, anthropologists, development/ aid workers, missionary linguists, writers, artists, Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists (from jaded to revolutionary, and everything in between), and pro-assimilation Indigenous people. In addition to becoming acquainted with social actors engaging in language education issues from many different angles, I have at different times myself been a student, activist, theatre performer and director, linguist, teacher, development worker, and social researcher. As a European-American, I have no insider heritage in any of the language communities I have been involved in. Also as a European-American, or settler-colonial (Wolfe, 2011), I have come to be aware of many privileges which I have received as a result of geo-political inequalities, and which people indigenous to the land I live on (and many other lands) have been denied. I have been motivated to participate in Indigenous and multilingual education programs because I view them as part of a larger social project to resist racism, poverty, and structural inequalities, as discussed in chapter 1.

One of my motivations in undertaking this project has been to engage in further reflection on the myriad ways of engaging in endangered or marginalized language education, with increased attention to the social and human elements that can be invisibilized by language-focused paradigms. I have witnessed the complexity of issues and actors surrounding Indigenous language education and the need for an understanding

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Used Languages conference, to the International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation, run by university linguists.

of the histories, diverse cultural ways of being, political-economic circumstances, and ideologies in each context. I have also observed the benefit of connecting and sharing common concerns, practices, and political strategies among different language programs, and sharing perspectives across different disciplines. With these issues in mind, this study does not aim to evaluate or define one approach to engaging in effective Indigenous language learning or quality education in minoritized language contexts. Rather I aim to make this multitude of perspectives, experiences and objectives more audible and visible to each other, and to reflect on the potentials and limitations of activist researchers, such as myself. I continue to seek an approach (or stance, strategy, praxis) that is engaged, ambitious and creative, while also being reflective and respectful.

I was introduced to the Isthmus in 2013 through the invitation of a Mexican linguist, Gabriela Pérez Báez, and an Isthmus Zapotec linguist-writer-activist, Victor Cata. Pérez Báez had been working on documentation and a dictionary of IZ for over 10 years, and was looking for an applied linguist to assist with education outreach in an ethnobotany documentation project that began as part of the dictionary project. Cata had moved back to the Isthmus a few years before to pursue his writing and teaching of *Diidxazá* literacy, having spent two decades in Mexico City earning a BA in History and MA in Amerindian Linguistics, as well as working in the library of the National Anthropological Museum for 10 years. Both of these colleagues were (and are) eager to encourage scholarship on language use in the Isthmus, noting that the current legal climate has created opportunities for changing the discriminatory norms surrounding Indigenous languages. I was interested in the convergence of different actors around

language issues and the historic multilingualism present in the Isthmus, as well as the opportunity to incorporate collaboration into my study through working with Pérez Báez (I later developed additional collaborations, as discussed below). After a month of pilot research in the Isthmus (April 2013), I returned to conduct my study from the beginning of August 2013 through the end of November 2014, with additional shorter visits in March-July, 2015.

During this study, including 17 months living in the Isthmus and on-going communication in the months since, my identity has been that of an education researcher, a *Maestra* of applied linguistics (the official title of my MA), and a student and admirer of Diidxazá. I am inherently a physical and cultural outsider in the Isthmus where tourism remains rare, and the only notable white residents are (primarily Spanish) men called *eolicos*, after the *parques eolicos*, or wind farm developments where they work. When I first arrived in spring of 2013 there had recently been a fight between some Juchitecos and some *eolicos*, and a few people advised me to be cautious, in case I was mistaken for a wind farm worker, or more probably, one of their wives. I was occasionally asked if my work was related to the *eolicos*, but once I said that I was a researcher interested in language, this explanation was always accepted positively or at least neutrally. I often came across people who had had contact with a linguist in the past due to the residence of (primarily female, American) SIL linguists in Juchitán and La Ventosa for several decades beginning in the 1940s, and more recently extended stays by anthropologists Anya Royce Petersen, Deborah Augsburger, and Melanie McComsey who are all remembered very fondly by residents.

Over time I developed an insider-outsider identity in three focal contexts in which I conducted research, eventually participating in lesson and curriculum planning, co-organizing educational events, and speaking at public outreach functions. This insider-outsider status was illustrated in a conversation with several friends and collaborators where I was asked if I preferred to be called *huada* Haley, a fairly neutral IZ word for foreign women, or *Teca* Haley, a female resident of Juchitán and/or female Zapotec. It seemed that both were acceptable labels to describe me, and I said either one would be fine with me (FN 131223). On another occasion in a group conversation when a visiting Mexican researcher made a negative comment about foreign researchers (not directed at me, although I was present), a teacher whose classes I had been observing quickly excluded me from the comment, saying to the group 'Haley isn't a foreigner, she's a *Teca*' (FN 140429). Although I remained visibly, audibly, and behaviorally distinct from most of the people around me, I almost always felt that people reacted positively to my presence and to my interest in Diidxazá.

I conducted my research primarily in Spanish, while continuing to learn Diidxazá and use it frequently in observations and to a more limited degree in conversations. While I attempted to adopt a neutral stance with regard to Diidxazá practices in my conversations and interviews (i.e. not taking a stance on standardization, child rearing, etc.), from the beginning I was associated with well-known pro-Diidxazá activists such as Cata, and people would often associate my work with efforts to *rescatar*, rescue the language, although I avoided describing my work with such terms. As I began to collaborate in several programs, this identification increased. What people knew about

me influenced my subsequent interactions and interviews, and I was frequently told primarily positive comments about Diidxazá use, which were not always reflected in my observations of the social practices of the commenter. Unable to invent a neutral identity, I accepted that my identity created a bias through which I often heard what people thought they *should* say to an outsider who likes the local language, which is interesting in its own right. Fortunately the extended nature of my study also allowed for closer acquaintances leading to more candid discussions with some people, as well as observation of communicative practices. My description of this context draws on the multiple perspectives shared with me by people with whom I had varying degrees of acquaintance, as well as the perspectives I developed from observing language use in different settings over an extended period of time.

### **3.2 Research questions**

As a result of my experiences working in Indigenous language education settings, my constructivist conceptual framework, and scarcity of research on language use in the Isthmus, I approached this project with a desire to observe and describe as many contextual factors as possible in the IZ language ecology. However, I also approached the project with a desire to go beyond description, and to engage in the promotion of language education improvements where possible. As discussed in section 3.3 below, my study follows a methodological cycle of ethnographic monitoring (Hymes, 1980a), moving from description, through interpretation of social meanings, towards collaborative evaluation as the basis of action for positive change. My research questions are oriented towards these three phases, guiding my observation and description of the

complex and changing context of IZ education in relation to the previously discussed guiding concepts of actors, practices, socio-political processes, ideologies, imaginaries, and strategies (see section 1.1).

*1. What actors, practices, and socio-political processes are significant in IZ education?*

This question guided my observation of IZ education settings, as I attempt to provide a multi-factor structure to my description of the language ecology in the Isthmus, while also remaining open to observing and describing other factors.

*2. What ideologies and imaginaries are expressed by stakeholders and/or observable in IZ education?*

This question guides my interpretation of the social meanings of IZ education. I consider evaluative comments made by actors (their perceived challenges, successes and desires) which illustrate their imaginary or ideals in relation to IZ education. I further analyze the ideologies, discourses, or characteristic ways of talking that circulate in IZ education settings. Understanding the perspectives and common ways of making meaning in IZ education settings is a pre-requisite to reaching my own evaluations of possible improvements and forms of engagement.

*3. What strategies of engagement in IZ education do I and other actors identify and adopt?*

This question considers the strategies of engagement exhibited by me and other actors. These strategies, through which we attempt to create improvements in IZ education settings, are a form of evaluation-turned-action and are based on

observations and interpretations. In answering this question I consider different conceptualizations or imaginaries of improvement, which may subsequently be turned into strategies.

These research questions reflect my interest in description, while also probing possible channels of interpretation, evaluation, and engagement.

### **3.3 Methodology**

In responding to these questions I implement an overarching methodological framework of ethnographic monitoring (De Korne & Hornberger, in press<sup>13</sup>; Hornberger, 2013a; Hymes, 1980; Van der Aa & Blommaert, 2011) through a variety of methods that will be discussed further below. Hymes (1980) formulated ethnographic monitoring as a methodological paradigm through which to research educational realities and contribute to their improvement, taking into account that *improvement* or *success* may have different meanings in different settings. Ethnographers are frequently in a position to observe effects of hierarchical language norms, but they are less often believed to be in a position to challenge either the norms or their negative effects. Ethnographic monitoring counters this, combining the thick description and cultural relativity achieved by ethnography (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Hymes, 1968) with a critical perspective and commitment to supporting educational practice for social change. As Hymes (1980a) argues, "Ethnography must be descriptive and objective, yes, but not only that. It must be conscious of values and goals; it must relate description to analysis and objectivity to

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<sup>13</sup> This section includes some material adapted from an early draft of this chapter.

critical evaluation" (p. 104). Crucially, this critical evaluation is undertaken on the base of initial description and careful interpretation of emic perspectives and values.

Hornberger (2013a) discusses the process of ethnographic monitoring as moving from description towards shared interpretation and eventual evaluation, in three steps:

1) describe and analyze current communicative conduct in programs, 2) uncover emergent patterns and meanings in program implementation, and 3) evaluate the program and policy in terms of social meanings, specifically with regard to countering educational inequities and advancing social justice (p. 3).

My study follows this trajectory from description through analysis and interpretation, to evaluation aimed at social improvements. Much of my study is focused on the first or descriptive phase, giving a thick description of what people are doing with and through Diidxazá-in-education practices and other Diidxazá promotion practices. In the second or interpretive phase, I have analyzed patterns and interpreted local meanings in relation to stakeholders' imaginaries and ideologies, considering what stakeholders view as success, failure, and potential for improvement (their goals and desires) in Diidxazá education practices. Finally, in the third or evaluative phase I have identified practices and discourses that I choose to support or resist, considering the factors influencing potential for positive social change in this context.

Hymes (1980) discussed ethnographic monitoring at the level of an educational program, however, as acknowledged by Hymes and included in Hornberger's (2013a) description above, inclusion of social domains beyond the program, such as relevant policy, can be important factors to consider when interpreting and evaluating social practices. In this study I attempt to apply the ethnographic monitoring framework to a

variety of formal and non-formal education practices across a geographic region, considering a domain of social action that is considerably larger than a specific program. As discussed in chapter 1, I conceptualize this domain of IZ educational use as including a variety of communities of practice, actors, socio-political process and ideologies, among other factors, at a variety of social scales from local to international. In seeking to understand links among local, national, and international factors, I am informed by the methodological frameworks of *ethnography of language policy* (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) and *vertical case study* (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006), both of which attend to education policies and practices at multiple social scales, with grounding in the local scale which has traditionally received less attention in education policy research. These two frameworks complement ethnographic monitoring by giving explicit attention to factors across social scales, while maintaining close attention to the local or program-level practices that Hymes' paradigm foregrounds.

The ethnographic monitoring framework does not establish specific methods, but rather encourages collaborative and critical ways of conducting research, and the use of ethnographic research towards social ends. In this way, ethnographic monitoring builds connections between traditional ethnography and the range of established methodologies and methods for engaged, action, or practitioner research in education, where researchers have some degree of participation and engagement in the context that they are studying (e.g. Freire, 1970; Lewin, 1946; McIntyre, 2008). As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) note,

inquiry and practice are [...] related to each other in terms of productive and generative tensions.[ ...]Inquiry and practice [...] have a reciprocal, recursive, and symbiotic relationship, and [...] it is not only possible, but indeed beneficial, to take on simultaneously the roles of both researcher and practitioner (pp. 94-95).

The "practice" that fosters these "productive and generative tensions" in ethnographic monitoring may vary, depending on the identity of the researcher relative to the context of research. Unlike traditional practitioner research, ethnographic monitors may begin their work as outsiders, while finding ways to communicate and if possible collaborate with local stakeholders throughout the research process. Hymes (1980) encourages collaborative work between outsiders and insiders in order to produce research that resonates with insiders and which they can put to use. There is no mould for what collaboration or applied research should look like, however. As Hornberger (2013b) discusses, reflective engagement is a crucial component of critical ethnographic work, which

may take a number of forms – it may be about working with multiple members of a research team; it may also be about relationships between researcher and researched; and may range from consultative to fully participatory relationships. It may be about collecting and analyzing data; it may also be about writing up and reporting findings. It is without doubt about reflecting critically on all of these (p. 105).

By recognizing oneself as a social actor with the potential to impact a context of research, a researcher automatically becomes a practitioner, someone with a role and a stake in a real context. All researchers are in fact practitioners in knowledge creation within their disciplinary communities of practice. This often goes unacknowledged, however, making paradigms such as ethnographic monitoring and action research especially useful for fostering this awareness and reflexivity. As indicated by Hornberger (2013b) above, the

best way for practitioner-researchers to engage in successful collaboration and socially-useful research is to commit to on-going critical reflection on the foundations, processes, and uses of their research.

Recognizing the position of the researcher as a social actor is beneficial to the research design and outcomes in multiple ways. Aside from paying attention to ways that the researcher can contribute positively to the setting they work in, the ethnographic monitoring paradigm also considers the biases that researchers bring with them. Hymes (1980a) states that an ethnographer "must come to understand his/her own attitudes [...] and the reasons for them. Only explicit concern with values, in short, will allow ethnography to overcome hidden sources of bias" (p. 104). Research and education interventions involving Indigenous groups have historically been fraught with hidden biases (Smith, 1999), leading to movements for Indigenous control of Indigenous education (e.g. National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) and Indigenous-run research (e.g. Smith, 2005; Wilson, 2008).<sup>14</sup> Reflective research and collaborative models are encouraged for research involving Indigenous communities, as an important step in changing this legacy of exploitation (Stebbins, 2012). In their classic discussion of research on language, Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1992) described different levels of engagement as research *on*, *for*, or *with* a population. In relation to her work with First Nations language revitalization, Czaykowska-Higgins

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<sup>14</sup> I am leaving out the issue of Indigenous identity politics here (by whom and how Indigenous identity and authenticity is claimed, performed, etc.), while noting that this is a paper-length topic in its own right, especially when considering variation across European nation-states, post-colonial countries, and internally-colonized countries, and the transnational policies that have recently raised (at least rhetorically) the value of Indigenous identity.

(2009) extends this typology to include research *by* the community. At the same time it is crucial that participation be voluntary and genuine, avoiding superficial and tokenized participatory approaches that have been observed in international development research (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). The framework of ethnographic monitoring aligns perfectly with these considerations, requiring communication and if possible, collaboration with stakeholders in the process of interpretation and evaluation, as well as careful attention to the potential social uses of the research in order to develop thoughtful and appropriate models of engagement and collaboration.

In summary, the methodological framework for this study is 1) ethnographic-- based in extended participant observation; 2) critical-- attentive to social inequalities, connections across social scales, and the potential impacts of the researcher and the research; 3) participatory-- oriented towards the insights and possible collaboration of local stakeholders; and 4) emergent-- developed through on-going reflection by the researcher, and through input from stakeholders. While the goal of conducting socially-relevant ethnographic research was present from the beginning, the kinds of collaboration and contributions that I was able to undertake emerged during the study.

### **3.4 Methods**

I adopted a variety of methods in order to collect multimodal data to respond to my research questions, to facilitate regular reflection, and to allow for emergence or flexibility in the study design.

### **3.4.1 Noting IZ education actors, practices and socio-political processes through participant observation and audio recording**

During 17 months of residence in Juchitán (April 2013, August 2013-November 2014), the largest town in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, I documented observations through written field notes and through audio recordings. While focusing in particular on actors, practices, socio-political processes, discourses, and strategies in IZ education contexts, I also noted my observations of daily life, especially communicative practices and literacy practices. My unstructured observations of life in the Isthmus were influenced by where I lived: a middle class neighborhood just outside of the wealthier city center and near to the crossroads from which buses to other towns in the region depart. The neighborhood was inhabited by a mix of families whose parents and grandparents lived in the older center of the city, some people who had migrated to the Isthmus for work, and crucially for me, two of the IZ writer-activists who I spent a lot of time with. While many of the adults in the neighborhood could speak Diidxazá, the children largely could not, and Spanish was the most common language on the street. The neighborhood was bordered on one side by the train line known as the *Bestia*, running up towards Mexico City from Central America and made infamous by the quantities of Central Americans who ride on the train as part of their journey towards the US border. Hearing the train whistle, or seeing it roll by-- too quickly to count the silhouettes crowded on top-- was a regular reminder of the overwhelmingly large-scale social and economic inequalities in this context, of which language hierarchies are but one part. My living choice allowed me to travel easily to other villages in the region, and thus to get a sense of the diversity within the Isthmus,

and to learn about different education initiatives outside of the cultural hub of Juchitán. I was also able to host interviews and meetings in my house. I was not immersed in family life or a Diidxazá-speaking environment, but my frequent trips into the city center market, cultural center, visits to friends and other communities meant that Diidxazá was a part of my daily communicative repertoire, if in a fairly limited way, as is the case for many residents of the Isthmus. Most of my observations of daily life were captured in field notes, with some audio recordings of public civic events, ceremonies and poetry readings.

The majority of my observations were focused on explicitly educational events and activities, and events in which metalinguistic talk (about Diidxazá and/or other languages) was likely to occur. During such private events I requested permission from the organizers and participants to observe, to audio record, to take photos, and to video record, giving each person the option to be excluded from any of the above, using an informed consent form, and in most cases giving additional explanation orally. In only one case one participant in a workshop chose not to be video recorded, but gave consent for everything else; in every other case consent was given for all forms of observation. Participants kept a copy of the form with my contact information, the description of the study, and assurance that they could remove themselves from the data if they chose. Ultimately I did not conduct video recording in any sites because I felt that other forms of data would be sufficient and I did not want to remove myself from participant observation to the degree necessary to get behind a video camera. Several of the events I observed were relatively short-term, including two workshops on standardization

conducted by the INALI, one workshop on tone conducted by a descriptive linguist, one workshop on second language teaching for Indigenous languages conducted by a pedagogical materials developer, several conferences related to Indigenous issues, several political forums related to education and Indigenous issues, several preschool and primary school ceremonies, several radio interviews that I participated in, and one religious event.

I conducted extended observations and audio recording of education practices in three focal IZ education sites, and also developed different kinds of collaborative relationships in these sites (as discussed in 3.4.5 below). The first site was an ethnobotany documentation project run by Pérez Báez with sponsorship from the Smithsonian Institute and located in La Ventosa, a village of 4,600 people 20 minutes southeast from Juchitán, which I began to observe in August 2013. I took field notes and audio recorded team meetings, photographed activities, interviewed a sample of participants, and eventually co-organized 3 workshops for children in a local cultural center<sup>15</sup>.

The second site was a program designed by Cata and fellow Juchitán native poet, Natalia Toledo, with the initial aim of teaching Diidxazá literacy and encouraging Istmeños to read and write literary genres. Called *El Camino de la Iguana* (The path of the Iguana, an animal prized in the region) this consisted of an itinerant two-week workshop with two hours of teaching per day, delivered repeatedly in a variety of locations around the region, including public schools and cultural centers. The program

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<sup>15</sup> I am continuing to assist in the planning of future workshops with this team.

had been in existence for a year and a half when I began to observe it in April 2013, audio recording classes, taking photos, and interviewing a sample of participants through November 2014, including 10 different locations/ iterations of the workshop.

The third site was the regional campus of the Faculty of Languages of the public state university of Oaxaca, the *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca* (UABJO), located in the second largest city of the region, Tehuantepec, with about 50,000 inhabitants, 30 minutes to the northwest of Juchitán. In my pilot visit in April 2013 I was introduced to the director of the Casa de la Cultura in Juchitán, who mentioned that he had recently begun to teach Diidxazá at this campus the month before, and agreed to take me with him to observe his class. I attended two classes that semester, and subsequently attended a majority of the weekly classes in the following 3 semesters, from fall of 2013, spring of 2014, through fall of 2014, audio recording classes, taking photos, interviewing a sample of participants, and eventually working with program managers on planning and promotion of the Diidxazá classes, including co-organizing a two-day conference and training activities for new teachers.<sup>16</sup>

My extended observations are thus focused on the sites I found where there was the most active interest in teaching and promoting Diidxazá use, and in which I felt I might have something to offer considering my training and my locally-ascribed identity as a pro-Diidxazá researcher. I had initially been interested in observing in public schools, and I began by interviewing directors and teachers in public bilingual and non-bilingual programs, giving me some insight into this domain. In most cases there was at

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<sup>16</sup> I am continuing to provide feedback and various kinds of support to the program managers.

best mild interest in exploring further teaching of Diidxazá; towards the end of my study I met three teachers and one school director with possible interest in engaging further in this area, but I was unable to work with them due to time constraints at that point.

#### **3.4.2 Semiotic landscape documentation through document and photograph collection**

I tried to document the semiotic and linguistic landscape through collecting photos and documents as part of my general observations. Numerous languages and culturally-affiliated symbols are visible around the Isthmus and in the visual communication practices of Istmeños (for example on facebook, in clothing choices, and in documents produced in education programs or other social events). Similar to my attempts to observe communication practices in everyday life as I moved around the region, I attempted to observe the semiotic landscape of everyday life, in particular writing practices through their public manifestations. In addition to photos and paper documents, I collected screen shots from public facebook posts, and saved a sample of relevant on-line news articles.

#### **3.4.3 Stakeholder perspectives through audio-recorded semi-structured interviews and surveys**

I conducted 82 semi-structured interviews with a range of actors (3 of which were small focus groups involving 3 people each), all of which were audio recorded, with the interviewees' consent. Interviews range from 20 minutes to over 2 hours, with the average time being about an hour. I attempted to get representation from different social, generational and geographic perspectives (teachers, administrators, policy actors, parents,

students, linguists and members of activist or development organizations), although my sample contains many more participants of young adult age, due to my active participation at the university, the willingness of this age group to meet with me, and my keen interest in this generation. Many of the people interviewed could be identified through multiple roles or geographic affinities, for example as a teacher, a parent, and a resident of a certain community. The following tables and map provide an overview of social roles represented by interviewees (table 3.1), and their geographic affiliations (table 3.2 and figure 3.1). In table 3 the tallies do not match the number of people interviewed, as most people have more than one social role, and a few have more than one geographic affiliation, for example a public teacher who is from Union Hidalgo, but teaches in La Ventosa, and is also a parent. Table 4 indicates the number of people interviewed per location in relation to the population of that location (population data from INEGI 2010 census, *Census de población y vivienda 2010*, [www.inegi.org.mx](http://www.inegi.org.mx)). Figure 3 provides similar information in visual format, showing the location of prominent towns in the Isthmus and the number of people interviewed per town (map adapted from Google maps; see section 4.2 for additional maps and geographic information).

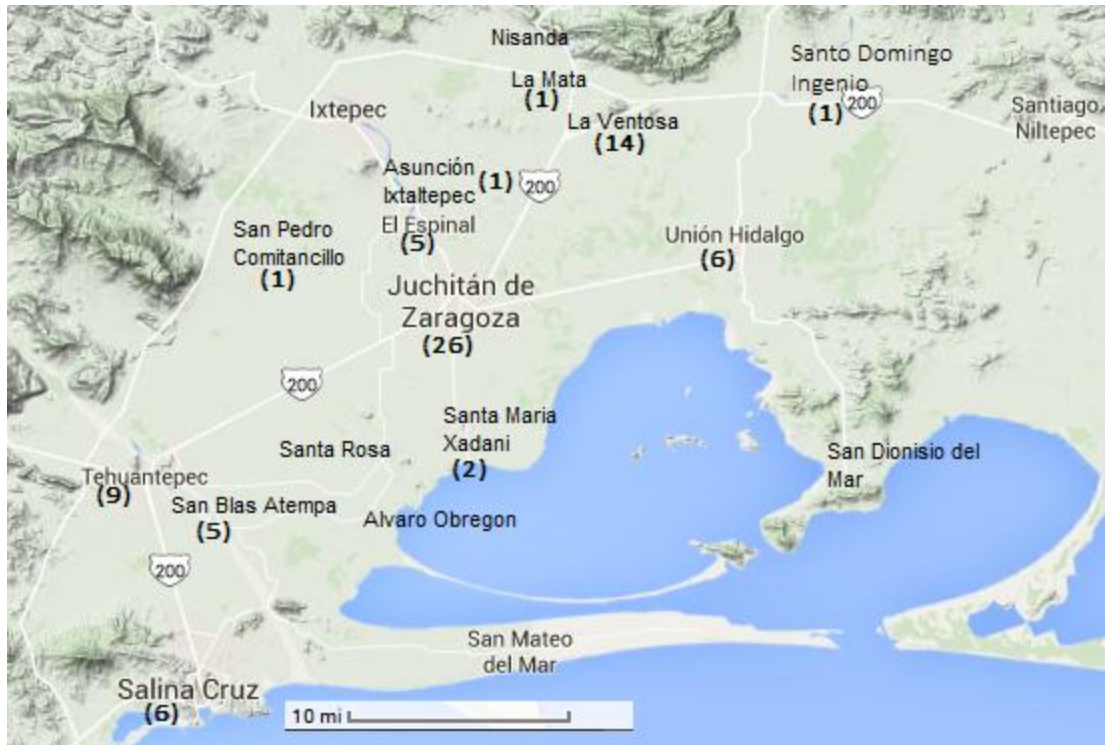
**Table 3. The social roles of interviewees**

<b>Social role</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>
Public school teacher or director	22

University teacher or coordinator	10
University student	28
Member of cultural organization	14
Non-formal teacher	14
Non-formal student/ workshop participant	21
Linguist	5
Writer/ musician	13
Parent	25
Political official	3

**Table 4. The number of interviewees and total population of locations**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Population</b>
Juchitán	26	74,825
La Ventosa	14	4,884
Xadani	2	1,042
Union Hidalgo	6	13,970
Espinal	5	8,310
La Mata	1	813
Ixtaltepec	1	7,203
Comitancillo	1	3,944
Sto. Domingo Ingenio	1	5,895
Tehuantepec	9	42,082
San Blas Atempa	5	11,959
Salina Cruz	6	76,596
Mexico (other)	12	112,336,538
Non-Mexico	2	na



**Figure 3. Map of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, indicating the number of people interviewed in each location**

I offered interviewees the opportunity to receive a copy of the recording and comment on anything they might want removed. Several accepted the offer of a copy, but none requested any changes. I also asked if interviewees would prefer to be confidential or have their names used. In the case of a few officials and school directors the interview was more or less my first real communication with the individual, while in the majority of cases the interview occurred subsequent to meeting them as a participant in an education event, asking if they would be willing to participate in an interview, and following up with them. Interviews were conducted in both public and private places,

dependent on the choice of the interviewee. Interviews were conducted in Spanish, with some metalinguistic use of Diidxazá.

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews in order to allow for interviewees' interests and preoccupations to surface, while more or less touching on the issues that I wanted to explore. I used three slightly different interview protocols for students, teachers, and other actors (table 5). These protocols served as a rough guide, but I did not necessarily address the questions in order nor to the same degree with all participants. Each interview was influenced by the availability and willingness to talk of the interviewee, and their interest in talking about certain subjects. Some interviewees stayed close to the question prompts in their responses, while others took the discussion in different directions. As mentioned above, my identity as an outsider with a positive stance towards local language use clearly influenced the interviews. In my analysis I take into account the co-constructed nature of these interviews, where and how they took place, and my role as interviewer in co-creating the discourses that emerge from each interview (Briggs, 1986; Talmy, 2010).

**Table 5. Interview protocols**

<b>Educators</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Others</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>¿Objetivos generales de esta programa?</i></li> <li>– General objectives of this program?</li> <li>– <i>¿Hay objetivos lingüísticos (oral/escrito; niveles; capacidades) en esta escuela/ programa (todos los idiomas)?</i></li> <li>– Are there linguistic objectives (oral/ written; levels; capacities) in this school (or program)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>¿Cómo usa usted el idioma zapoteco?</i></li> <li>– How do you use Zapotec?</li> <li>– <i>¿Qué le motiva a estudiar el zapoteco?</i></li> <li>– What motivates you to study Zapotec?</li> <li>– <i>¿Qué son sus objetivos generales? ¿y lingüísticos (oral/escrito; niveles; capacidades)?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>¿Cómo usa Usted el idioma zapoteco? ¿Qué usos vea usted?</i></li> <li>– How do you use Zapotec? What uses do you see?</li> <li>– <i>¿Qué influencias y cambios ha visto en el uso de zapoteco?</i></li> <li>– What influences and changes have you seen in the use of Zapotec?</li> <li>– <i>¿Cómo imagines va a ser el</i></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Hay <b>uso</b> o presencia de zapoteco en la escuela (o programa)?</li> <li>- Is there presence or use of Zapotec in the school (or program)? <b>Cuando? Cómo? Usted? Programa?</b></li> <li>- ¿Qué <b>recursos</b> hay?</li> <li>- What resources exist?</li> <li>- ¿Qué <b>funciona</b> bien? ¿Qué podría ser mejor?</li> <li>- What works well? What could be better?</li> <li>- ¿<b>Preocupaciones</b> (generales y sobre desarrollo de capacidades lingüísticas)?</li> <li>- What are your concerns (in general, and about developing language capacities in particular)?</li> <li>- ¿Qué materias cuestan a los alumnos? ¿Qué les gustan?</li> <li>- What topics are difficult for students? What topics do they like?</li> <li>- ¿Qué piensa del uso de zapoteco para <b>leer y escribir</b>?</li> <li>- What do you think about the use of Zapotec in reading and writing?</li> <li>- ¿Qué <b>influencias y cambios</b> ha visto en la escuela (o programa)?</li> <li>- What influences and changes have you seen in the school (or program)?</li> <li>- Favor describe sus <b>experiencias de escolarización</b></li> <li>- Please describe your experiences of schooling</li> <li>- ¿Cómo imagines va a ser el uso de zapoteco <b>en 20 años</b>? ¿Cómo querría que sea?</li> <li>- How do imagine the use of Zapotec will be in 20 years? How would you like it to be?</li> <li>- ¿Quién o qué está <b>apoyando o fomentando</b> al uso de</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are your general objectives? And linguistic objectives (oral/ written; levels; capacities)?</li> <li>- ¿Qué <b>recursos</b> hay? ¿Cuales usa?</li> <li>- What resources exist? Which do you use?</li> <li>- ¿Qué le <b>cuesta</b> en el proceso de aprendizaje? ¿Qué le <b>gusta</b>?</li> <li>- What's difficult for you in the learning process? What do you like?</li> <li>- ¿Sus <b>ideas o acciones</b> para lograr objetivos (generales y objetivos lingüísticos)?</li> <li>- What are your strategies to meet objectives (general objectives and language objectives)?</li> <li>- ¿Qué piensa del uso de zapoteco para <b>leer y escribir</b>?</li> <li>- What do you think about the use of Zapotec in reading and writing?</li> <li>- ¿Qué <b>dice la gente</b> cuando aprende que esté estudiando zapoteco?</li> <li>- What do people say when they learn that you're studying Zapotec?</li> <li>- ¿Qué <b>recomendaciones</b> tiene para otras personas que están interesados en estudiar el zapoteco?</li> <li>- What advice do you have for other people who are interested in studying Zapotec?</li> <li>- Favor describe sus <b>experiencias de escolarización</b></li> <li>- Please describe your experiences of schooling</li> <li>- ¿Qué <b>influencias y cambios</b> ha visto en el uso de zapoteco?</li> <li>- What influences and changes have you seen in the use of Zapotec?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo imagines va a ser el uso de zapoteco <b>en 20 años</b>?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- uso de zapoteco <b>en 20 años</b>? ¿Cómo querría que sea?</li> <li>- What do you think use of zapotec will be like in 20 years? What would you like it to be?</li> <li>- ¿Quién o qué está <b>apoyando o fomentando</b> al uso de zapoteco en la sociedad? ¿Quién o qué está <b>en contra</b>?</li> <li>- Who or what is supporting or encouraging use of Zapotec in society? Who or what is against it?</li> <li>- Favor describe sus <b>experiencias de escolarización</b></li> <li>- Please describe your experiences of schooling</li> <li>- ¿Qué son sus <b>objetivos lingüísticos</b> personales/ para su trabajo/ para (sus) hijos?</li> <li>- What are your personal linguistic objectives/ objectives for (your) children?</li> <li>- ¿Qué tanto importancia tiene las capacidades lingüísticas en <b>el campo laboral</b>, para lograr un trabajo?</li> <li>- What importance do language abilities have in the labor market, to get a job?</li> <li>- ¿Si querría ver cambios, tiene <b>ideas o acciones</b> para lograrlos?</li> <li>- If you would like to see changes, do you have ideas or actions for achieving them?</li> <li>- ¿Qué piensa del uso de zapoteco para <b>leer y escribir</b>?</li> <li>- What do you think about the use of Zapotec in reading and writing?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo definiría 'zapoteco'? ¿Qué <b>representa</b> para usted 'el zapoteco'?</li> <li>- How would you define Zapotec? What does Zapotec represent to you?</li> <li>- ¿Hay algo más que querría comentar, o algo que no he preguntado que es importante</li> </ul>
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<p><i>zapoteco en la sociedad?</i>  <i>Quién o qué está <b>en contra</b>?</i>          – Who or what is supporting the use of Zapotec in society? Who or what is against it?</p> <p>– <i>¿Qué tanto importancia tiene las capacidades lingüísticas en <b>el campo laboral</b>, para lograr un trabajo?</i>          – What importance to linguistic capacities have in the labor market, to get a job?</p> <p>– <i>¿Sus <b>ideas o acciones</b> para lograr objetivos (generales y objetivos lingüísticos) en la programa?</i>          – What are your ideas or actions to meet objectives (general objectives and language objectives) in the school or program?</p> <p>– <i>¿Cómo <b>definiría</b> 'zapoteco'?</i>  <i>¿Qué <b>representa</b> para usted 'el zapoteco'?</i>          – How would you define Zapotec? What does Zapotec represent to you?</p> <p>– <i>¿Hay algo más que querría comentar, o algo que no he preguntado que es importante para usted?</i>          – Is there anything else that you want to mention, or anything that I didn't ask that's important for you?</p>	<p><i>¿Cómo querría que sea?</i>          – What do you think use of zapotec will be like in 20 years? What would you like it to be?</p> <p>– <i>¿Quién o que está <b>apoyando o fomentando</b> al uso de zapoteco en la sociedad?</i>  <i>Quién/qué está <b>en contra</b>?</i>          – Who or what is supporting or encouraging use of zapotec in society? Who or what is against it?</p> <p>– <i>¿Qué tanto importancia tiene las capacidades lingüísticas en <b>el campo laboral</b>, para lograr un trabajo?</i>          – What importance do language abilities have in the labor market, to get a job?</p> <p>– <i>¿Si querría ver <b>cambios, tiene ideas o acciones</b> posibles para lograrlos?</i>          – If you would like to see changes-- ideas or actions for achieving them?</p> <p>– <i>¿Cómo <b>definiría</b> 'zapoteco'?</i>  <i>¿Qué <b>representa</b> para usted 'el zapoteco'?</i>          – How would you define Zapotec? What does Zapotec represent to you?</p> <p>– <i>¿Hay algo más que querría comentar, o algo que no he preguntado que es importante para usted?</i>          – Is there anything else that you want to mention, or anything that I didn't ask that's important for you?</p>	<p><i>para usted?</i>          – Is there anything else that you want to mention, or anything that I didn't ask that's important for you?</p>
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There were some changes to the questions during the first 5 months of the study as I noticed gaps in the issues I was covering, or chose to explore issues that previous interviewees brought up. The question about reading and writing practices was added in late August 2013, as I wanted to gain more explicit perspectives on the written use of the

language since I was observing a lot of literacy teaching. The questions about the job market and projections of IZ use in 20 years were added in December 2013, as I attempted to probe beyond the politically correct and largely positive comments I was getting in relation to language attitudes and use, and to collect more data relevant to my research question on socio-political processes. At the same time I stopped using a question where I asked interviewees to interpret a saying in Diidxazá which I had hoped might evoke interesting metalinguistic commentary, but generally did not.

I collected two small samples of survey responses (17 and 10 respondents respectively) to obtain the perspectives of groups who I was not able to interview. One survey was conducted on-line and distributed to people who noted their email address when participating in a two-day conference, and was focused on their experience at the conference. The other survey was conducted through paper, distributed to a group of students who were studying Diidxazá in a cultural center, and followed the questions in the protocol for students. Due to scheduling conflicts I was unable to visit this class, but I had interviewed the teacher of the class and he expressed an interest in participating further in my study by collecting responses from his students. This survey data expands the sample of participants, and complements the more nuanced data of interviews.

#### **3.4.4 Reflection and emergent design through memos**

I wrote spontaneous memos on issues that I found striking or troubling, as well as regular (almost) monthly memos on three themes that I chose at the outset of the project to guide my reflection and to help document emergent collaboration in the study.

Theme 1- Strategies: What strategies have I been using? What strategies have I been observing?

Theme 2- Crossing categories and scales: What connections do I observe across conceptual units and scales (for example between practices and socio-political processes, etc)?

Theme 3- Emergent concepts and design: Is there anything in my research design or conceptual framework that I want to adjust at this point? Why? How will I go about doing that?

The practice of memo-ing helped me to remain attentive and critical of how language practices in general, and my research practices in particular, might relate to social inequalities. These reflections augmented the transparency of the study, and also inform my analysis, in particular analysis of my own strategies (discussed further in Chapter 6).

#### **3.4.5 Collaboration in three focal sites recorded in field notes, audio recordings, photos, and memos**

I engaged in varying kinds of collaboration in the three focal sites described above. In each case my collaboration was shaped by the interests and requests of stakeholders, as well as my own perspectives on the potential of each site and my capacity to contribute. I recorded planning meetings and events that I was an active contributor to in essentially the same ways that I recorded other events, although my field notes were often less thorough, and filled in afterwards, or augmented by memos. The strategies and stances that I adopted or accepted as a collaborator were directly informed by my observations

and interviews, and my evolving understandings and evaluations of the settings I worked in, as discussed further in chapters 6 and 7.

### **3.4.6 Sequencing**

Observations, interviews, photo collection and memos were conducted throughout the entire study. As mentioned, many interviews were conducted subsequent to observing the interviewee as a participant in an IZ education event, although this was not always the case. I began active collaborations in December 2013, about 6 months into the study, and became more involved in subsequent months. As I neared the end of my time residing in the Isthmus I began to shift my focus towards trying to enable certain activities to continue without my participation, and to finding ways to be supportive from a distance. Each phase presented its challenges, from outsider-etic observation, to insider-emic collaboration, and returning to being an outsider without dropping the trust and responsibility gained through collaboration. Several of my collaborations have required me to share some of my analyses and intermediate results of the study. A crucial phase of the project-- that of further dissemination of results through publication and other media-- is just beginning as I prepare my dissertation. I continue to reflect on ways to make the results phase of the study more accessible and valuable to stakeholders in the Isthmus.

### **3.5 Analysis**

All data (field notes, transcripts of interviews and recorded classes, images, collected documents and memos) were analyzed in Atlas.ti software. Due to the volume of recorded interviews and observations, the data set does not include full transcriptions of

all recordings. About half of the interviews have been fully transcribed (with the assistance of several wonderful people in the Isthmus who I trained), while others have been partially transcribed or interview notes have been included for analysis. Selections of classroom recordings have been transcribed (by me) in conjunction with fairly extensive field notes that accompany the recordings. Transcriptions include turn-taking and emotive information, including pauses, interruption, and emphasis. Multimodal data such as images and media are also included for coding.

The first round of coding in Atlas.ti was descriptive and organizational, corresponding to the pre-determined guiding concepts, and the key themes of the research questions (table 6).

**Table 6. Descriptive codes**

IZ advocacy actor	inclusion/ exclusion
IZ advocacy practice	IZ learning
formal IZ education practice	IZ teaching
non-formal IZ education practice	IZ listening
socio-political process	IZ reading
desires	IZ speaking
successes	IZ writing
challenges	Place/ event codes

A second round of coding using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) identified emergent themes. Finally, I employed multimodal and textual discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Janks, 2010) to interpret discourses and ideologies, noting links and patterns among representations, ways of speaking, and ways of behaving. A sample of emergent codes are presented in table 7 below.


**Table 7. Emergent codes**

group orientation	multi-dialect norm
individual orientation	local-global
anti-mixing norm	<i>convivencia</i> / conviviality
instability	manipulation
resistance	visibility
anxiety	literary heritage

These rounds of analysis allow for a constructivist description of factors in the IZ language ecology, building from the guiding concepts of actors, practices, and socio-political processes to consider other issues that arose in observations and interviews. The data and analysis also allow for comparative perspectives on the strategies and ideologies that are present across several education sites, and reflections on my role and forms of participation.

Table 8 provides an overview of how I operationalized the ethnographic monitoring methodology through specific methods and analysis techniques.

**Table 8. Overview of methodology, methods, analysis techniques and research questions**



Methodology	Methods	Analysis	Research Questions
Description and Interpretation	1) Observation (field-notes & audio recordings); 2) Semi-structured interviews (audio-recorded); 3) Semiotic landscape (Collection of photos & documents in education settings; Collection of images/texts from social and news media)	Thematic coding	- What actors, practices, and socio-political processes are significant in IZ education?
Interpretation and Evaluation	1) Observation (field-notes & audio recordings); 2) Semi-structured interviews (audio-recorded); 3) Semiotic landscape (as above); 4) Structured memos	Thematic coding; Emergent/grounded coding; Discourse analysis	-What are the ideologies and imaginaries expressed by stakeholders and/or observable in IZ education?
Evaluation and Engagement	1) Structured memos; 2) Collaborative projects; 3) Observation of collaborative projects through ethnographic methods as above	Thematic coding; Emergent/grounded coding; Discourse analysis	-What strategies of engagement in IZ education do I and other actors identify and adopt?

Description and observation remain the base of the research at each phase, while allowing for interpretations and forms of engagement to develop that seek to link descriptions with socially-oriented insights and actions.

### 3.6 Validity

As discussed in chapter 1, I choose to try to work with both constructivist and pragmatic, or action-oriented research paradigms, each of which has its own criteria of validity.

Burns (2005) notes that applied social research typically has a positivist or structuralist orientation, aiming to collect a representative sample of data in order to arrive at best practices or solutions which may be generalizable across social settings. She contrasts this with teacher action research which may be more relativist and context-specific, aiming to produce results that are trustworthy and resonate within a specific situated context (pp.59-60). Critique of generalizations and adherence to "situated knowledge" are at the core of a constructivist, or postmodernist orientation, although as Pennycook (2006) notes, this commitment to relativism can make socio-political engagement challenging (p. 63). While promoting postmodernist research, Pennycook does not discount research that takes a more positivist or structuralist approach in order to arrive at "complex understandings of how new flows of language and literacy relate to new flows of capital, media, technology, people, and culture" (p. 61). The methodology of this study is designed to incorporate elements of constructivist research (such as emergent design and collaboration), as well as elements of structuralist or traditional social science research (such as representative sampling and guiding concepts). This design supported engagement with local stakeholders through collaboration and flexibility, and I hope that it will also support engagement with researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders through presentation of longitudinal, triangulated data, as discussed further below.

The methods of this study are constructivist and relativist, aiming to "disinvent" (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), in several ways: 1) open participant observation is the foundation of data collection; 2) interviews are semi-structured and aim to allow for participants' priorities to surface; 3) my position and values as a researcher cannot be

erased, but instead are explored; 4) in my analyses I orient towards language practices and explore what Diidxazá means to different people, as a way of deconstructing objectified ideas of The Language; 5) I spent most time in places where my participation was welcomed, and my communication and collaboration with stakeholders in these sites shaped the study significantly; and 6) I allow for analytic themes to emerge through cyclical coding. In order to maintain validity within this paradigm I engaged in extended ethnographic research over 17 months as a way of enhancing trustworthiness (Burns, 2005), and I consider some of my results to be the actions that I took in order to support desires and improvements in specific contexts. Additionally I discussed my work with stakeholders, getting formal and informal feedback on my ideas and perspectives, and allowing this feedback to shape my work.

The methods of this study are also structuralist, pragmatic, and aim to "reconstitute" (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) in several ways: 1) pre-established conceptual categories help structure the data collection and analysis, attempting to provide a thorough and systematic description of a complex local-global language ecology; 2) interview protocols attempt to cover the same themes and allow for comparison across the responses of diverse participants; 3) in my research and interview questions I use the objectifying labels "Isthmus Zapotec" or "Diidxazá" to refer to what are actually a variety of communicative practices, allowing me to communicate more effectively with stakeholders, but risking reinforcing a language-as-thing paradigm; 4) individual and group strategies for positive change are an explicit focus, which, although far from a universalized, positivist model of progress, is nonetheless linked to a

structuralist orientation to social change; and 5) I aim for maximum transparency in my processes of data collection, analysis, and reporting. In order to uphold validity within this paradigm, I have attempted to collect a maximum quantity of data from a wide and relatively representative sample of actors and education sites, and to do so over a longitudinal timescale. This rigor in data sampling and size enhance the reliability of the study, as well as its validity. Systematic reflection on my own position is intended to help control for bias in my observations and analyses. Finally, I triangulate a variety of data sources in my analyses in order to arrive at results that are generalizable from (at least) several perspectives.

Although it is a bit of a headache to shuttle between different epistemological paradigms, I think that it is a useful exercise and a necessary skill for a socially engaged researcher. Designing research with the possibility of engaging in different paradigms of validity only stands to enhance the quality of the resulting research. For example, rigorous sampling, although not a requirement of a constructivist or post-modernist project, will in no way diminish the value of such a project, and could certainly improve the trustworthiness of the interpretations that emerge. Problematizing and probing common concepts, such as "Ithmus Zapotec", can improve the specificity and validity of a structuralist project, even when the dominant form of the concept may inevitably continue to be present alongside alternative perspectives (in this case of IZ practices). A constructivist project that aims to contribute to positive socio-political change must adopt some reductionist concepts and/ or perspectives in order to identify positive potentials and communicate about them with a wider audience, while a pragmatic project that aims

to contribute to change must take seriously the constantly-shifting, locally-specific place and people from whom change might emerge. As I hope to be able to have productive conversations in both local spaces and the centralist spaces of government and academia, I have found it useful to work towards a research repertoire that includes these different paradigms and their discourses.

### **3.7 Results**

This dissertation presents some of the results of this study, and identifies several areas of analysis and further results to be produced in the future. There are numerous emergent themes that are not fully explored due to volume and time constraints, however I aim to respond to the guiding research questions, and to delve into several of the most salient emergent themes. Throughout the study I draw on data from interviews (IN), field notes (FN), photographs and documents to illustrate my analyses and interpretations (see appendix A for transcription and citation conventions). The specific interviews and field notes that I cite to support discussion or generalizations in the text are representative of things that I heard or observed multiple times. Each data chapter in this study responds to one of the research questions, and to one of the phases of the ethnographic monitoring cycle, moving from description to interpretation and evaluation, to action. Chapter 4 will provide a description of the IZ language education ecology as I observed it during my stay in the Isthmus, with an over-arching view of the participants, practices, and socio-political processes in formal and non-formal education contexts. Chapter 5 examines some of the ideologies, imaginaries, and evaluations circulating in specific IZ education and promotion spaces. Chapter 6 explores strategies employed by IZ advocates

including my own actions and collaborations. Having engaged in observation, interpretation, and evaluative action, in chapter 7 I conclude with a summary of how this methodological process has influenced my perspectives and my work, including insights gained into how to be an effective ethnographic monitor and engage in the politics of minoritized language advocacy.

## **Chapter 4. Diidxazá education in a changing language ecology**

In 2013 the Mexican Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous People, which officially recognizes Indigenous languages like Isthmus Zapotec as "national languages", turned 10 years old. Most of the children attending a 2-week Diidxazá literacy workshop that spring in Gui'xhi' ro' (Monte Grande, or officially, Álvaro Obregon), a rural town about 40 minutes outside of Juchitán, were the same age as the law, some a few years older or younger, and all of them spoke Isthmus Zapotec as their preferred language of communication. When it came to writing, it was another story however; when told to write a poem or an autobiography, students repeatedly asked the IZ-speaking teachers "In Zapotec? Or Spanish?" Some wrote in Spanish even when told several times to write in IZ. After years in a Spanish-only education system, for many students writing seemed to be synonymous with Spanish, while the new vowels and consonants being taught by the IZ-speaking, yet cosmopolitan-looking teachers who arrived in a taxi from the urban hub of Juchitán (with an unusual foreigner in tow), were unfamiliar. Some students took to IZ writing and reading more than others, and the teachers encouraged them to follow in the footsteps of past and present IZ literary figures, giving them booklets with some well-known IZ poetry. They reminded the students that a man from their town, in fact the father of 2 of the students, was one of the winners of a competition for Zapotec writers hosted by a non-governmental arts foundation in the state capitol a few years previously (FN 130424).

The challenging learning curve for IZ speakers being taught a written norm for the first time was visible in every iteration of the literacy workshop that I observed over

the following year and a half, with IZ speakers consistently more comfortable reading and writing in Spanish due to the predominance of Spanish in schooling and the linguistic landscape. The age of the speakers in the workshops changed, however; in some parts of the Isthmus the youngest speakers participating in the workshop were in their 20s; in other areas in their 30s or 40s; and in others in their 50s and 60s. I learned that Gui'xhi' ro' was one of only 3 towns where a majority of children spoke IZ. Children always showed up to participate in the literacy workshops, often with more gusto than the adults, but in many locations the children were speakers of Spanish who understood a few IZ words or phrases, if any. Some came from families who had immigrated to the region, with parents who were also speakers of Spanish or of another Indigenous language, while the majority came from Istmeño families and had been raised in Spanish by IZ-speaking parents and grandparents.

Through this glimpse of language practices in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and others to follow, I will attempt to illustrate the language ecology of IZ education. Echoes of international, national, regional and local efforts to promote Indigenous languages-- such as the 2013 law, the writing competition, and the non-formal literacy workshop created by local actors (after substantial time away from the Isthmus)-- are present in language education practices in the Isthmus. However, a well-established trend away from Indigenous language use and towards greater valuing of Spanish in public, and increasingly in private spaces, is also very apparent. Informed by an ecological and ethnography of language policy perspective that encompasses contexts, agents, and processes across different social scales (Haugen, 1972; N. H. Hornberger & Johnson,

2007), I aim to tease apart this complex language ecology by discussing 1) IZ education actors; 2) IZ education practices; and 3) touching on some of the socio-political processes that influence all of the above across different education spaces or contexts.

In discussions about Diidxazá use it was widely recognized that "Diidxazá education" or "Diidxazá learning" did or could occur first and foremost in the space of the home and among family and community networks. As discussed in the conceptual framework, this study is informed by a socio-constructivist view of education and learning; however since the data collection and analysis cannot cover all social domains of learning, I focus primarily on the actors and communities of practice producing structured or mediated forms of education. These include practices in formal education spaces such as preschools, primary schools, and universities, as well as practices in non-formal education spaces, such as workshops in cultural centers, conferences and public advocacy activities by individuals and groups.

These structured education practices are significantly shaped by the language ecology in the specific part of the Isthmus where they occur, however. There are a wide range of language practices within what is generally considered the geographic and linguistic region of Isthmus Zapotec, ranging from agriculture-dependent villages where IZ is the dominant form of communication (such as Gui'xhi' ro') to urban centers where residents have some degree of affiliation with IZ music, clothing, food, and history, but have almost no contact with IZ language use (such as Salina Cruz, and to a lesser extent Tehuantepec). The presence of other Indigenous languages, most notably Ombeayuits (Huave), Zoque, Chontal, and Ayuuk (Mixe), and other varieties of Zapotec, are also a

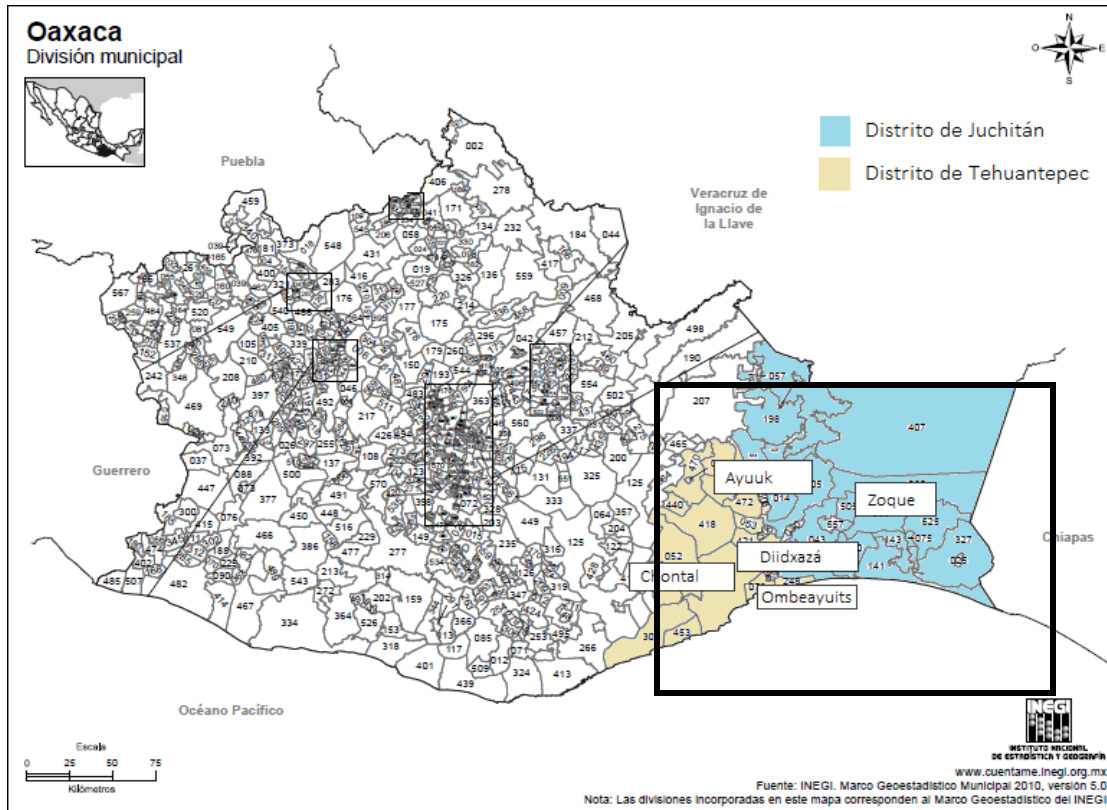
part of the regional ecology, with Spanish as the undisputed lingua franca. In section 4.1 I will discuss the variety in IZ use in municipalities across the Isthmus as groundwork for describing structured education spaces in the sections that follow.

#### **4.1 Community and home socialization**

*No, yo no lo hablo tanto porque, este, mi papá siempre nos hablaba en español pero como mi abuelita siempre hablaba el zapoteco entonces al escucharlo lo entendí y lo puedo, este, pronunciar. Pero así platicarlo mucho, este, sí-- Hay personas que no pueden hablar acá español y es forzosamente hablar con ellos zapoteco y ahí es donde lo hablo pero así, este, pues no tanto así con la gente más qué--, pero sí le entiendo, sí puedo.*

No, I don't speak it much because, um, my dad always spoke to use in Spanish but since my granny always spoke Zapotec so through listening to it I understood it and I can, um pronounce it. But like that to speak it a lot, um, yes-- there are people here that can't speak Spanish and it's necessary to speak Zapotec with them and there is where I speak it but lit that, um, well not much like that with people more than-- but yes I understand it, yes I can. (IN 131113 LV-3)

This 25 year old woman lives in La Ventosa, a village of almost 5,000 people inside the district and municipality of Juchitán, located near the center of the windswept coastal plain of the Isthmus. As discussed in chapter 2, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is the southernmost region of the state of Oaxaca, containing a large coastal plain along the Pacific and surrounded by mountains along the borders with the states of Chiapas to the southeast and Veracruz to the northeast. Mountains also separate the Isthmus from much of the rest of the state of Oaxaca, and the capital city is a winding 5.5 hour bus ride away in the central valleys to the north.



**Figure 4. The state of Oaxaca showing municipal boundaries and the districts of Juchitán (blue) and Tehuantepec (tan).**

The above map shows the region of the Isthmus within the state of Oaxaca, which consists of 41 municipalities divided between the district of Juchitán (in blue) and the district of Tehuantepec (in tan), and indicates the general location of the 5 Indigenous languages spoken (to varying degrees) across the region. The black box corresponds to the area highlighted in figure 5 below (Map adapted from INEGI, Marco Geoestadístico Municipal 2010, [www.cuentame.inegi.org.mx/mapas/pdf/entidades/div\\_municipal/oaxacampios.pdf](http://www.cuentame.inegi.org.mx/mapas/pdf/entidades/div_municipal/oaxacampios.pdf)).

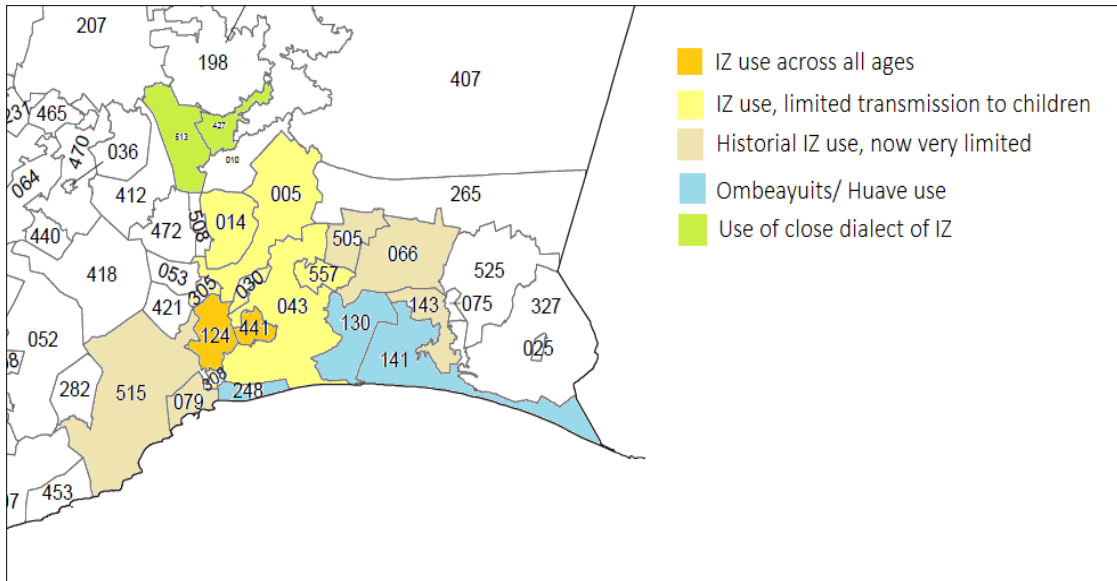
Use of IZ is concentrated in communities along the coastal plain, straddling the border of these 2 districts. Although many people associate IZ culture most strongly with the urban centers of Juchitán and Tehuantepec, my study shows that the center of

language use has shifted to the largely rural region in between these 2 towns; to the south and west of Juchitán and to the south and east of Tehuantepec. In this region with 4 towns and numerous small farms, a majority of children are growing up speaking IZ, while in the surrounding regions there is much less transmission to children occurring. In several towns transmission to children stopped decades ago, and the current speakers are in their 30s, 40s, 50s or older (e.g. Espinal, FN 141402, Tehuantepec IN 131017 U-1). The following map shows municipalities with active IZ use, where most children are speakers (orange); limited IZ use, where children may have passive abilities, and those who live with grandparents may speak (yellow); and historical use, where speakers are primarily elderly (tan).<sup>17</sup> The map also indicates the close proximity to communities of Ombeayuits speakers (blue), and the reasonable proximity to communities where other varieties of Zapotec are spoken (green). Ombeayuits/ Huave, a neighboring Indigenous language is also indicated (blue). The data is drawn from my interviews, observations, and from Marcial Cerqueda, 2014 (map adapted from INEGI, Marco Geoestadístico Municipal 2010, [www.cuentame.inegi.org.mx/mapas/pdf/entidades/div\\_municipal/oaxacampios.pdf](http://www.cuentame.inegi.org.mx/mapas/pdf/entidades/div_municipal/oaxacampios.pdf)).

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<sup>17</sup> The municipalities which will appear in this study are:

Municipality of Juchitán = 043; Santa Maria Xadani = 441; San Blas Atempa = 124; San Pedro Huilotepec = 308; Tehuantepec = 515; Salina Cruz = 079; San Pedro Comitancillo- 305; El Espinal = 030; Asunción Ixtaltepec = 005; Ciudad Ixtepec = 014; Union Hidalgo = 557; Santo Domingo Ingenio = 505

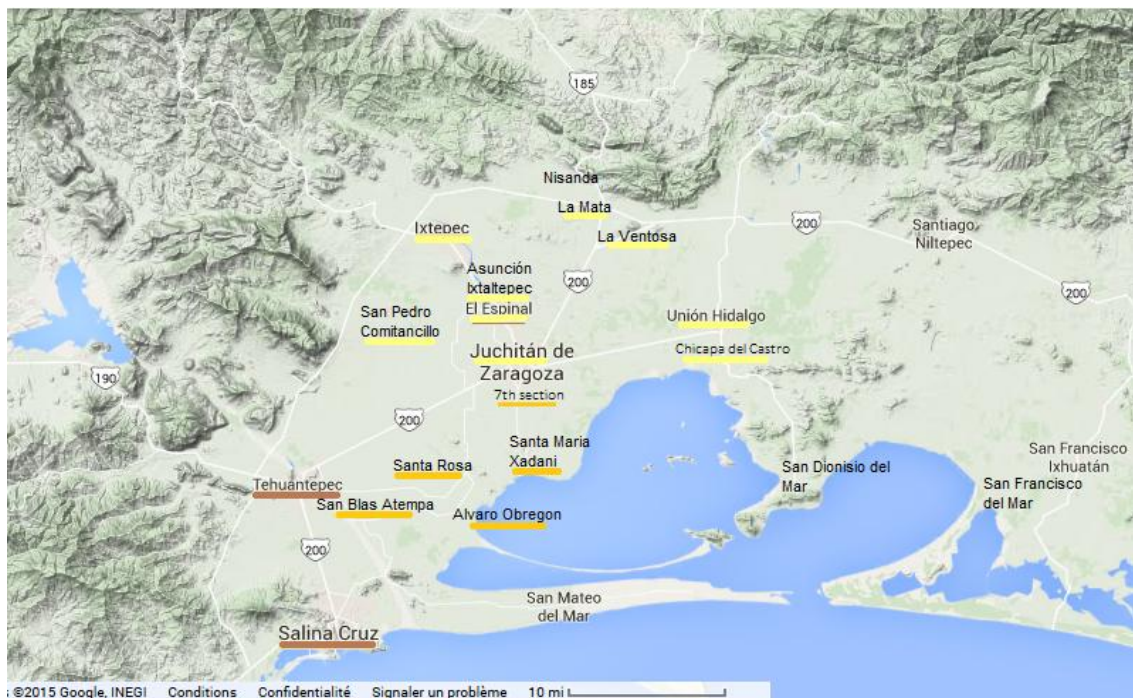


**Figure 5. Municipalities in the districts of Juchitán and Tehuantepec, colored to indicate general degree of use of IZ**

My observations and interviews also allow me to provide a broad analysis of the diversity of language use within municipalities. Juchitán is a prime example; the sprawling political boundaries of the municipality include part of the Huave/ Ombeayuits-speaking zone; the town of Álvaro Obregon, where IZ is dominant among all ages; the town of La Ventosa where most people 30 and older speak IZ; and the city of Juchitán itself where in the northern neighborhoods very little IZ is spoken, while in the southern neighborhoods (in particular the "7th section") IZ is used frequently and some children are acquiring it.

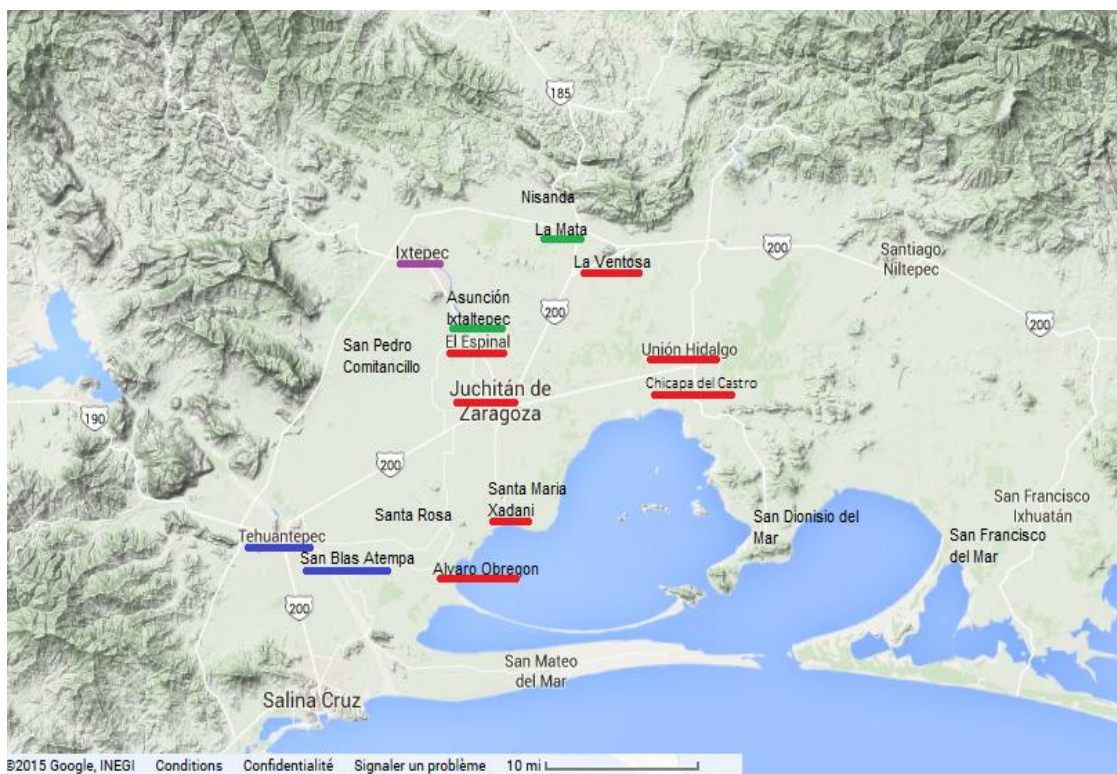
The following map represents my analysis of approximate levels of IZ use by town based on observations and interviews, where the towns underlined in orange (in the countryside in between Juchitán and Tehuantepec) are the areas of dominant IZ use; the towns underlined in yellow exhibit IZ use, but little transmission to children; and the

towns underlined in brown have a cultural affinity but minimal IZ use at present (map adapted from Google Maps). Salina Cruz is included as a city with historical connection because they practice Isthmus Zapotec traditions such as *velas*, and affiliate with IZ clothing, food and music, however the city grew up with a mixed populace around the development of the oil refinery in the 1970s, and has never been an IZ speaking city. Tehuantepec on the other hand was a Zapotec city prior to colonization by the Aztecs in the 15th century and the Spanish in the 16th century, and continues to affiliate strongly with IZ culture, but only elderly people speak IZ there today. Ombeayuits is used in the coastal towns of San Mateo, San Dionisio and San Francisco del Mar, respectively, while Chontal, Ayuuk, and Zoque are traditionally used in the more mountainous areas beyond the coastal plain.



**Figure 6. Geographic representation of IZ use across the Isthmus**

A further important distinction to be made is that speakers of IZ recognize dialect differences among the IZ speech community, although they note that these dialects are mutually intelligible. The people who I worked with readily recognize three significant dialects which vary primarily as to vowel phonation and tone, as well as some lexical differences; the dialects of 1) Juchitán and surroundings ("*los tecos*"), 2) of San Blas/ Tehuantepec ("*los blaseños*" and "*los tehuanos*"), and 3) of Ixtaltepec/ La Mata ("*los binni guiati*"). Victor Cata (unpublished manuscript) notes a 4th dialect unique to Ixtepec. These 4 macro dialects are indicated on the following map (map adapted from Google maps).



**Figure 7. Geographic representation of IZ dialects**

Most speakers also comment that there are further differences from one town to another (e.g. IN 131113 LV-4, FN 140914). These differences become significant in the teaching and learning of IZ, as speakers from one dialect often wind up as teachers in another dialect zone, and the Juchitán dialect has been overly represented in IZ documentation and publications.

It is interesting to note that what appears to most readily define the towns within the zone of greatest active IZ use (around Xadani, Álvaro Obregon, Santa Rosa and San Blas) is not a political or dialect affiliation (they are split between dialects and between municipalities), but rather geographic isolation from the highway (in miles it does not look far, but the roads are only partially paved and public transit is intermittent), participation in agriculture and fishing subsistence, and low income relative to the rest of the region. These observable characteristics are echoed as tropes in negative stereotypes about IZ use as an index of lower class or lack of education (as discussed further in chapter 5). Locally, this area is also often viewed as *brava* (fierce), politically volatile, and an area where "good" or "pure" Diidxazá is spoken. I did not spend enough time in this area to gain insights into other characteristics relevant to their patterns of language use, although this would be a useful area of future research. While many people who I interacted with are aware that IZ is used more in some of those towns "over there", they do not conceptualize an area or zone of active IZ use as I am suggesting here; I came to view this area as a zone over time, after observing literacy workshops taught in Xadani and Alvaro Obregon, interviewing people from Xadani, San Blas, and the southern 7th section of Juchitán, and visiting schools in Xadani, Santa Rosa, Alvaro Obregon, and the 7th section.

During my study I lived in the north of the city of Juchitán, a zone where IZ is used among adults, but is not being transmitted to children. A study of IZ home language

socialization in Juchitán in the late 1990s found that wealthier families, while continuing to state that they wished their children to be bilingual, were raising their children mainly in Spanish (Augsburger, 2004). More recent research has documented the increasing use of Spanish among children in the southern 7th section of the city, still popularly viewed as IZ dominant despite these ongoing changes (McComsey, 2015, IN 130916 R-1). During my study I travelled to towns in other dialect zones, and with varying degrees of language use, in order to observe education programs and events and to conduct interviews. In almost every locale I observed adults conversing in IZ amongst themselves and using Spanish to address children. Many interviewees and acquaintances told me that their father in particular forbade the use of IZ in the home, although some eventually learned it from their mothers, grandparents, or peers in the street (e.g. IN 131107 LV-2, IN 131113 LV-5, IN 140717 UT-1, IN 140729 UT-3). Spending time with grandparents, who in many cases live with their extended families or act as primary caregivers when parents travel or live away for work, is a common way through which younger generations are acquiring at least passive comprehension abilities (e.g. IN 131113 LV-3, 141007 U-17, 141017 UH-3). This same phenomenon has been noted elsewhere in Mexico as the "grandparent effect" (Hill, 1998; Suslak, 2009).

These observations and conversations gave me a comparative perspective of the use of IZ across the region, indicating a three-generation shift pattern where the current grandparent generation speaks primarily IZ, the current parents are often bilingual in IZ and Spanish, and the children are dominant in Spanish, although some appear to eventually acquire abilities as adolescents or young adults due to extended exposure to the language over time (FN 141224, FN 141231, FN 141017). The trends of increasing socialization through Spanish documented in Juchitán are clearly present in most other towns, albeit to varying degrees. Tehuantepec, the former colonial capital and commercial hub has only speakers in their 70s and 80s (Cata, 2003;

IN 141007 AO). Espinal, one of the most uniformly wealthy towns, has mainly senior adult speakers (IN 131114 E-1), while Juchitán, La Ventosa, Union Hidalgo and La Mata, towns with a mix of economic levels, have speakers in their 20s and 30s, and older (FN 131112, FN 140101, FN 140905). Finally in the rural communities of Xadani, Alvaro Obregon, and Santa Rosa, and to a lesser extent in the suburban communities of San Blas and the southern sections of Juchitán, children typically arrive in school speaking IZ, and acquire Spanish in school (FN 140424, FN 131219, IN 131115 X-1, IN 141007 AO). As will be discussed further in sections on education actors, the diversity of language use in homes and communities across the Isthmus results in a diverse community of education stakeholders, with often widely differing educational needs and priorities.

## 4.2 Semiotic landscape

The linguistic diversity of the Isthmus is visible on the streets and in homes. Although Spanish text predominates in public spaces, IZ is used in commercial signage and a smaller amount of official signage, as well as some public art. When entering Juchitán on any of the three main highways, visitors are greeted by a sign (see figure 8 below) which welcomes bilingually in Spanish and IZ, and shows a famous photograph by Graciela Iturbide of an Istmeña with iguanas on her head (as many women continue to carry the products that they will sell in the market). The IZ translation uses one of the three common IZ names for Juchitán, *Lahui guidxi* (central town)<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> The other names commonly used are *Guidxi guie'*, town of flowers, and *Xavizende*, a zapotecization of San Vincente, the patron saint of the city



Figure 8. Sign displayed at the 3 main entrances to Juchitán (photo January 2014)

Less permanent official signs, such as banners produced by the mayor's office to commemorate an event, also often include a few words or small translation of IZ, although they are not usually fully bilingual. As a result of a Diidxazá promotion campaign launched in February of 2015 (discussed further in section 5.1.4) several new permanent signs entirely in IZ have been put up around the city hall to label the various offices (FN 150323). The table below shows the results of a tally of the languages present in commercial and official signage collected along 12 blocks around the busy central squares of Juchitán. Brand names displayed by stores (such as Microsoft) were not counted. Official place names were considered to be Spanish because they index the official, dominant code, although etymologically many of them are Nahuatl.

Table 9. Tally of language use in signage around the central squares of Juchitán, collected 23 March, 2015

Language use per entity (shop, building, mural)	tally (order of frequency)	percentage of total
Standard Spanish only	130	70%
Spanish & English	19	10%
Spanish & Diidxazá	13	7%
Spanish & Foreign language (other than English)	8	4%
Diidxazá only	5	3%

Spanish & Spanish slang	5	3%
English only	4	2%
	184	

As indicated in the table, Spanish and other foreign languages, especially English, figure prominently in the textual landscape, however IZ is also present.

IZ use in signs is often limited to nouns, specifically proper nouns that give the locale (business, school, etc) a name, rather than words which explain the function of the locale. They are thus not intended for monolingual IZ readers. Figure 9 provides an example, where the function of the locale is displayed in a word which indexes Spanish ("super", a convenience store, taken from the abbreviated form of *supermercado*, supermarket), brands are displayed without translation, and IZ is used to give a personal name to the store ("*Nadxieli*"<sup>19</sup>, a common female name, which literally means "I love you"). The paint job extends the semiotics of the storefront, using the recognizable colors of Corona beer and making this particular product more salient than the merchandize advertized in the other visible posters.

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<sup>19</sup> I reproduce the IZ spellings as present in the linguistic landscape without prescriptive comment or notation. Many of these spellings do not follow the Popular Alphabet, however my purpose here is to describe language use, and thus I am not using prescriptive notations such as *sic*. Readers interested in the writing norms of the Popular Alphabet should consult (Pickett et al., 2001).



Figure 9. A convenience store in Juchitán (photo December 2013)

Another example of a Spanish-Diidxazá sign is shown in figure 10. This sign also uses a noun to name the locale ("*Ba'du-huini*", little child), however it does provide information as to the purpose of the locale, a *Centro de Desarrollo Infantil*, child development center, which could assist residents who are dominant in IZ.



Figure 10. Centro de desarrollo infantil "Ba'du-huini" (Child development center "little child"), Juchitán (photo January 2014)

Other towns in the Isthmus have similar landscapes to that of Juchitán, with some Diidxazá present in an official welcome sign and other commercial signage, but far more Spanish and a noticeable amount of English. A fancy dress shop sign in Tehuantepec is shown in figure 11; the store name is "*Dxi Laani*" which is translated in small letters as *día de fiesta* (festival day), with larger Spanish writing indicating that clothing can be rented or bought (*Renta y Venta*), and official Spanish road signs nearby to name the street and direct traffic.



Figure 11. Commercial sign and official signs in Tehuantepec (photo January 2014)

Aside from official and commercial signage, IZ can be observed on a sizable number of Evangelical Churches (such as figure 12), and a small amount of graffiti (such as figure 13, in an alley).



Figure 12. Templo Bet-El, *Yu'Du' Lidxi Diuxi* (Church House of God), La Ventosa (photo November 2013)



Figure 13. Shunco Frida (Sweetheart Frida), San Blas Atempa (photo December 2013)

In the more private linguistic landscapes of peoples' homes, the most common texts in Diidxazá are pamphlets produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Invitations to parties are another common text, some of which also use IZ, but are usually largely in Spanish. Finally, the popularity of social media across generations in the Isthmus is resulting in regular use of written IZ on facebook and other virtual media. IZ circulates on peoples' screens through memes and reproduced images, as well as through comments

and direct communication. The on-line presence of Diidxazá is rich and complex, and I will not deal with it in depth here. On one hand it is functioning to reproduce and amplify elements of IZ use among those who already use it regularly in their daily lives.

Translanguaging is common in conversation threads, especially among people of middle age or older generations, although some youth also write IZ on-line. Circulation of IZ poetry, music, humor and political comentary is also common.

An example of the circulation of translanguaging and multimodal literacies is shown in figure 14, a photo posted on facebook of a graffiti painted in Juchitán as a commentary on the threat of GMO corn being grown in Oaxaca. The image of a totopo, the iconic istmeño tortilla, gushing blood was tagged (painted) several places around Juchitán in 2014, although not all reproductions were accompanied by text.



**Figure 14. Graffiti protesting the threat of GMO corn in Oaxaca (photo copied from public facebook post 3 April, 2014)**

In this version the text is in IZ and Spanish without translation and reads: "*Ba'du' bazendu*" (bad/ uncontrollable child) and "*Mi totopo no será transgenico*" (My totopo won't be genetically modified). "*Ba'du' bazendu*" has a double meaning in this image; it was used in this instance to refer to the modified corn that GMO proponents want to produce, but it is also a name which the painter sometimes uses to refer to himself as a hip-hop musician, a way of indexing his identity (IN 140812 J-10). The lack of translation of "*Ba'du' bazendu*" suggests consideration of an audience with the ability to read IZ, although again the IZ used is a noun phrase (and/or a proper noun, like "*Nadxielii*" in figure 9 above, depending on the interpretation), while the political message of the painting is encoded in Spanish and visual media, making much of the meaning accessible to people who are literate in Spanish. Although it was created for a physical audience, due to its circulation on social media it reached a much wider audience. The use of IZ is common in counterculture media, such as t-shirts and posters which protest government policies in the Isthmus.

There is also a considerable amount of meta-commentary about Diidxazá and Istmeño culture that occurs on social media. Negotiating spellings and translations can occur in public and private conversations (IN 131114 E-1), and multiple pages and profiles exist to disseminate information about the language or culture. Figure 15 shows a meme (a recognizable image that circulates with variations within a cultural group, in this case facebook) published in October 2014 which resonates with the Istmeño youth population; adapting a meme of Kermit the frog saying "Sometimes I would like...X...but then...Y... and I let it go" that was widely circulating at the time, it says "Sometimes I

would like to put on screen(display) that I know how to speak Zapotec. But later I remember that I only know how to say Eat shit... and it passes/ I let it go."



Figure 15. Meme posted on facebook October 5, 2014

The (virtually) laughing commentators suggest other words that people "only" know how to say, in a minimal IZ repertoire: "Or only iguana!!", "Or only *getabingue*" (a kind of corn and shrimp tamale that is made locally and doesn't have a Spanish name). The trend of maintaining a repertoire of curses and insults when other domains of language are no longer in use as discussed by Muehlmann (2008) in northern Mexico is also apparent in the Isthmus among younger generations (IN 141007 U-16), although a few culinary words and familial terms are also in widespread use among Spanish-dominant speakers.

Written use of Diidxazá in both the tangible and virtual linguistic landscapes varies considerably as to orthography practices. As discussed further in section 5.3, the recognized 1956 alphabet remains unfamiliar to many people. Writing on store fronts and official signs often does conform more or less to the spelling norms of the alphabet, however writing in on-line forums does so less frequently. Diidxazá is thus a regular part of the textual lives of people in the Isthmus, alongside the de facto dominance of Spanish and the presence of English and other national and international referents.

### **4.3 Formal education**

In addition to the home domain, public schools are the most commonly discussed spaces relative to IZ speaking and writing, and are generally considered spaces in which Spanish is learned and IZ is discouraged. Even before the founding of the nationalist *Secretaría de Educación Pública* in Mexico in 1920, schools were viewed as a vehicle for *castellanización*, or assimilating students to Spanish (Brice Heath, 1972; Hamel, 2008a). Numerous people recounted punishments that they or their parents had received for using IZ in school, and attributed their or their parents' decisions to raise children as Spanish speakers to these formative experiences (IN 141017 UH-3, 140430 J-1). In this section I examine actors (4.3.1), practices (4.3.2) and socio-political processes (4.3.3) in formal education in the Isthmus.

Legally, IZ should no longer be forbidden in schools in today's era of supposed multicultural tolerance in light of the legal changes since the 1996 San Andrés accords, including the 2003 linguistic rights law and ratification of the 2007 UN Declaration on

the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Unfortunately these pluralist policies are far from being universal practices, as discussed in the conceptual framework. At the state level a political project created by the teachers union, *Sección 22*, the *Plan para la transformación de la educación de Oaxaca* (PTEO), also calls for inclusion of local language, culture and history in the mainstream school curriculum. This state-level policy was much closer to the schools that I visited than the national and international policies, and did result in some changes in language practices in certain cases. In some cases I observed, formal schooling continued to perform the function of discouraging use of IZ. In other cases I observed individual teachers and administrators who chose to promote IZ use to some extent (discussed further in section 4.3.2 on practices).

Schooling in the Isthmus includes preschool (3 years), primary school (6 years), and secondary school (3 years), after which some students choose to go on to study preparatory (high) school or vocational colleges, followed by university, as represented in the following table. I was able to conduct more interviews and visits in some areas of formal education than in others, gaining more insight into practices in primary schools and higher education than in other levels. The amount of data I collected in each kind of context is also included in the table (additional data collection included interviews with parents and informal conversations with education stakeholders, as discussed in chapter 3).

**Table 10. Formal education institutions available to students in the Isthmus and data collection**

<b>Level of schooling</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>IZ education</b>	<b>Data collection</b>
Preschool	Bilingual	Some	1 interview & visit

	Monolingual	No	1 visit
	Private	No	none
Primary school	Bilingual	Some	4 interviews & visits
	Monolingual	No	5 interviews & visits
	Private	No	none
Secondary school	Public	No (some unofficial)	2 interviews & visits 3 interviews retired 2 interviews supervisors
	Private	No	none
Preparatory	Monolingual	No	none
	Alternative models	Some	1 visit
Higher education	Vocational	No	none
	University	Some in UABJO; Not yet in others	4 staff interviews, numerous observations, 27 student interviews

While not everyone attends preschool or preparatory school and beyond, 95.27% of children between the ages of 6 and 14 attend school in the Isthmus (*Carpeta Regional Istmo: Información estadística y geográfica básica*, 2012), which in the vast majority of cases means Spanish-only instruction. As indicated in the table above, there are three main types of preschools and primary schools: public with monolingual mandate (often called "*normal*", "*general*", or "*formal*"), public with nominally bilingual mandate (called "*bilingüe*" or "*indígena*"), and private (some of which are "bilingual" in Spanish and English, or identify with European methods such as Montessori). The public bilingual and monolingual schools are run by separate supervisions/ offices, but have only slightly different curriculum (bilingual school curricula calls for one hour per week of Indigenous language teaching) and similar underlying aims. There is a long history of nominally bilingual education in Mexico, yet today's bilingual schools are universally judged to

result in transition towards Spanish, rather than development of bilingualism or biliteracy (García & Velasco, 2012; Hamel, 2008b; Rebolledo, 2010). My observations in the Isthmus are generally in line with what these scholars have described in other parts of the country, as discussed below in relation to formal education practices. The staff of public bilingual and monolingual schools are all members of either Section 22 or Section 59 teachers unions, and thus most of them are subject to the PTEO plan, regardless of their language mandate, as discussed below in relation to socio-political processes.

There is no bilingual secondary or preparatory school system, however recent state-level politics have created opportunities, and some actors have seized them, to teach IZ at these levels. The teachers union, through the PTEO, created an "*asignatura estatal*" (state subject) in secondary schools, which some schools have chosen to use to teach local languages, as well as traditional arts and skills (FN 14032, FN 141118). While most preparatory schools do not include IZ in any way, a new form of preparatory designed for Indigenous communities in Oaxaca has recently been established in two communities in the Isthmus. The program for the *Bachillerato Integral Comunitario* (Integral/ holistic community baccalaureate, BIC) was created in 2002, building on numerous alternative secondary school projects at the state level (Pérez Díaz, 2008), and includes instruction of Indigenous languages 4 hours per week. A BIC was founded in Álvaro Obregon around 2011, and another was founded just outside of La Ventosa in the autumn of 2014.

Of the 130 public schools providing "*educación básica*" (preschool- secondary) in the municipality of Juchitán where my data collection was focused, at the preschool level 21 out of 51 schools are classified as bilingual/ "*indígena*"; at the primary level 10 out of

59 schools are classified as bilingual/ "*indígena*"; there are 8 "general" secondary schools, 8 "technical" secondary schools, and 4 "*telesecundarias*". There are 8 registered preparatory schools, one of which is the BIC in Alvaro Obregon (Data retrieved from <http://www.snie.sep.gob.mx/SNIESC/> March, 2015, do not reflect the recent founding of another BIC in La Ventosa, which would bring the total number to 9). It is not uncommon for students to travel to neighboring towns for secondary or preparatory school. Students from La Ventosa often travel into Juchitán, while students from Juchitán often travel to the neighboring, wealthier municipality of Espinal, and still others attend preparatory schools in the state capitol of Oaxaca.

There are numerous higher education institutions in the region, none of which have programs dedicated to study of IZ. At the tertiary level a new opportunity to use IZ was created in February of 2013 when the Tehuantepec branch of the *Facultad de Idiomas* of the *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca* (Autonomous Benito Juárez University of Oaxaca, UABJO, the state public university) initiated two Diidxazá classes within their offerings of public weekend classes. One level was for beginners, and the other for "speakers", and both students from the university as well as members of the public enrolled. These classes have continued every semester since then, despite changes and challenges in teachers and enrollment levels. As of autumn of 2015 the classes have expanded to encourage more students in the Bachelor's program in *Enseñanza de Lenguas* (Language Teaching) to study Diidxazá, in order to give the class more weight within the program that has traditionally been dominated by English. There have been

talks about creating IZ classes at the *Escuela Normal* (teacher training college) in Ixtepec, but at the time of my study this had not materialized.

There are two additional domains of formal education that I became aware of, but I was not able to have any contact with and thus will not discuss in this study. One is the *Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo* (National Council on Educational Support/encouragement, CONAFE) that runs programs for students who have dropped out of public schools, and/ or live in remote regions (<http://www.conafe.gob.mx/>), with 2 primary schools and 2 preschools within the municipality of Juchitán. The second is the *Instituto Nacional para la Educación de Adultos* (National Institute for Adult Education, INEA) that conducts training with adults (<http://www.inea.gob.mx/>). Both are likely to serve IZ-speaking populations, and would be interesting to include in future studies.

#### **4.3.1 Formal education actors**

In addition to having different mandates, schools differ significantly in relation to the characteristics of the teachers, administrators and students who inhabit them. There are "bilingual" schools in areas where most children prefer to use Spanish; there are monolingual schools in areas where most children prefer to use Diidxazá; not all teachers in bilingual schools speak the Indigenous language of the locality. One common thread among bilingual and monolingual schools was that all teachers agreed that fewer and fewer students arrive at school speaking IZ (with estimates ranging from 7 speakers out of 25 students, 1 out of 25, and 2 out of 100 in April 2013). The following table represents this diversity, showing that the needs and abilities of students, parents and

teachers may not be aligned, regardless of whether the school format is intended to promote use of Indigenous languages. The communicative characteristics and motivation of students, parents and teachers are compared across different school sites, based on interview and observation data (where the motivation is "reported" this is based on interview data only, otherwise it is based on observation data). Parents are not included in the university site because they were almost never mentioned and were never present in the site.

**Table 11. Comparison of actors' characteristics across education sites**

<b>Example 1. Bilingual Primary school in northern Juchitán</b>	<i>Speaks IZ?</i>	<i>Speaks other Indigenous language?</i>	<i>Motivation to use IZ?</i>
Student population	majority no	a few	reported positive
Parent population	some	a few	reported neutral
Teacher population	majority yes	no	positive
<b>Example 2. Monolingual Primary school in southern Juchitán</b>	<i>Speaks IZ?</i>	<i>Speaks other Indigenous language?</i>	<i>Motivation to use IZ?</i>
Student population	about half	no	positive
Parent population	majority yes	no	reported positive
Teacher population	majority yes	no	positive
<b>Example 3. Secondary school in southern Juchitán</b>	<i>Speaks IZ?</i>	<i>Speaks other Indigenous language?</i>	<i>Motivation to use IZ?</i>
Student population	majority yes	no	reported positive
Parent population	majority yes	no	reported positive
Teacher population	some	no	positive
<b>Example 4. Monolingual Primary school in La Ventosa</b>	<i>Speaks IZ?</i>	<i>Speaks other Indigenous language?</i>	<i>Motivation to use IZ?</i>
Student population	majority no	no	positive
Parent population	majority yes	no	neutral
Teacher population	about half	no	none
<b>Example 5. University campus in Tehuantepec</b>	<i>Speaks IZ?</i>	<i>Speaks other Indigenous language?</i>	<i>Motivation to use IZ?</i>
Student population	some	a few	positive/ neutral
Teacher population	no	no	very positive

In the cases where IZ-speaking teachers were working with IZ-speaking students, and were motivated to develop IZ abilities, it was very rare for them to know how to write it or to have any training in language pedagogy. Although most education actors spoke positively about IZ use when talking to me in recorded interviews, observation of practices showed me that teaching IZ was not a priority for a majority of teachers and/or was approached in ways that are not likely to lead to bilingual and biliterate development (IN 140513 E-8, FN 140714). An exception are the classes at the UABJO, where conscious efforts are being made to raise the quality of the Diidxazá instruction, although this has proven to be a slow process.

Additional actors who are not represented in the table above are the local government officials and administrators or supervisors of schools, who may have an influence, although less so than the teachers and parents in most cases. In relation to public schooling, each municipality appoints a "*Regidor(a) de educación*" (Education councilperson) as a liason between the local government and the schools. The *regidor* in Juchitán during my study was not active in promoting IZ in education, although he said politically correct things about it in an interview (IN 141127 J-8). In contrast, the administrators of the Faculty of Languages at the UABJO were pivotal in creating and maintaining IZ education in that context, although this was not part of their job description.

#### **4.3.2 Formal education practices**

In all of the formal education sites that I observed or learned about through interviews, Spanish was the primary language of oral and written communication, and efforts to use IZ, where present, were a relatively small part of academic activities. Nonetheless, throughout my study I continued to hear about more individual teachers and schools who were using IZ in some way, in many cases due to their motivation and circumstances, rather than the mandate or established curriculum of their school. The practices may be limited and somewhat isolated, but there are numerous attempts to promote IZ use in formal education spaces underway in the Isthmus which typically go unrecognized. Below I categorize the education practices I observed as 1) subtractive monolingualism; 2) flexible monolingualism; 3) passive bilingualism; 4) responsive bilingualism; and 5) heritage bilingualism. I provide brief examples of each.

***Subtractive monolingualism***

The stereotypical prejudice against bilingualism coupled with support for transition to Spanish is widespread. A director of a monolingual primary school in La Ventosa (himself an IZ speaker) told me that IZ was useful for him to communicate with the parents of students (and incidentally also good for poetry, music, and talking to women), but it did not have a place within the educational activities of the school. This position came from his own experiences, noting that his father did not speak Spanish well. He generalized that,

*Las personas que hablan en zapoteco, el español no lo hablan bien. No sé si se ha dado cuenta de la gente de acá, de por acá, que el español no lo hablan bien porque hablan el zapoteco.*

The people who speak in Zapotec don't speak Spanish well. I don't know if you have noticed the people here, from around here, that they don't speak Spanish well because they speak Zapotec. (IN 140313 E-7)

The observation that (at least some) IZ speakers did not produce standard Spanish led this director, and others, to assume a causal relationship. As a result neither he nor his team of teachers were interested in promoting use of IZ in school when I and a young woman from La Ventosa proposed organizing activities there. In another monolingual primary school I was told that a student who came to school dominant in IZ and who continued to struggle with Spanish would be held back a year to improve her Spanish (IN 140917 E-10).

***Flexible monolingualism***

A different primary school director in the same village discussed in an interview that he was in no way opposed to the use of IZ, however teaching Spanish was the ultimate goal of their establishment and had to take priority. He described how when he began teaching in La Ventosa 30 years ago all the children arrived at school speaking IZ and with little or no knowledge of Spanish, but that now the children who arrive hardly understand IZ.

*E-4: Ya se está perdiendo, ya-- son muy raros los niños que hablen en zapoteco. Porque yo le-- hay veces, pasando los salones les... les hago una pregunta en zapoteco y se quedan y [no]--*

*H: [Ujum]*

*E-4: son poquitos los que más o menos me contestan. Algunos dicen que lo entienden pero no lo saben hablar. Entonces este... pues por eso se les hizo la invitación a los compañeros que sí saben--- conocen el zapoteco para que ya lo trabajaran con [los niños]*

E-4: It's being lost now-- children that speak in Zapotec are very rare. Because I-- there are times, visiting the classrooms...I ask them a question in Zapotec and they sit there and [no]--

H: [Uhum]

E-4: There are few who more or less answer. Some say that they understand it but don't know how to speak it. So um... well because of that an invitation was made to the colleagues that do know-- know Zapotec so they would now work on it with [the children] (IN 140318 E-4)

Visiting his school in spring of 2013, I had observed that one of the teachers had done a unit on local poetry, songs and sayings, and that a bulletin board with the results of this project was displayed in the public corridor of the school under the heading "*Caninu Diidxazá ne Diidxastia*" (We speak Zapotec and Spanish), containing poems and sayings that children had copied out in IZ on colored paper. The director and teachers welcomed the idea of incorporating more IZ activities into their curriculum where possible, or in afterschool activities. When I interviewed the director in March of 2014 I asked about the project, and he said that they would not do it that school year because of strikes that had delayed the start of classes until October. Regarding the use of IZ in educational activities he commented,

*E-4: Tampoco es un objetivo porque no... no llevamos ningún programa que nos diga: bueno, hay que encauzar a los niños, ¿no? A que vuelvan otra vez a su lengua este... materna. Que le podemos llamar así porque aquí nació el zapoteco. Ya ves que en la región del Istmo se habla mucho el zapoteco. Hay comunidades que sí, la mayoría de los niños hablan en zapoteco. Pero hay unos que ya no. Ese es el pequeño detalle pues.*

E-4: It's not an objective either, no... we don't have any program that tells us: right, it's necessary to direct the children, right, so that they return again to their language um...maternal [language]. We can call it like that because Zapotec was born here. You see now that in the region of the Isthmus Zapotec is spoken a lot.

There are communities where yes, the majority of the children speak Zapotec. But there are some that now don't. Well that is the little detail. (IN 140318 E-4)

This "monolingual" school provided more opportunities and support for IZ use than others, but was ultimately guided by the priorities of the monolingual system, and what the director assumed to be parents' choices in raising their children in Spanish.

***Passive bilingualism***

The bilingual teachers and school directors who I interviewed or spoke with in Juchitán also noted that fewer and fewer of their students arrived speaking IZ, with some variation depending on the location of the school (IN 140513 E-8, IN 140128 E-2). The director of a bilingual primary school in a section of the city with traditionally strong use of IZ commented:

*E-3: En el área donde nos encontramos pues se habla lo que es el zapoteco original. Y aquí nosotros la mayoría de los maestros somos zapotecos. Gran parte del grupo de maestros que estamos acá, son originarios de aquí de Juchitán. Otros alrededores.*

*H: Ujum.*

*E-3: Entonces, este... nosotros asignamos una hora todos... todos los fines de semana, o sea los viernes... asignamos una hora para trabajar en la lengua indígena. Dependiendo del grado que... en el caso del primer grado, pues ahí estamos con los alumnos que... que ya traen la noción del zapoteco.*

*H: [¿Sí?]-*

*E-3: [Ya la traen.] Algunos ya entienden, ya lo hablan. Otros, no. Desconocen el significado del zapoteco. Entonces, lo que tenemos que hacer temas en zapoteco. Claro, con la autoridad de los papás, porque no todos los papás aceptan pues... que sus hijos hablen.*

*E-3: In the area where we are well the original Zapotec is spoken. And here the majority of us teachers are Zapotecs. A big part of the group of teachers that are here come from here in Juchitán. Others nearby.*

*H: Uhum.*

E-3: So um... we assign one hour every... every end of the week, in other words Fridays... we assign one hour to work in the indigenous language. Depending on the grade that...in the case of first grade, well there we're with the students that ... that already bring some knowledge of Zapotec.

H: [Yes?]----

E-3: [They already bring it.] Some already understand, they already speak it. Others no. They don't know the meaning of Zapotec. So what we have to do themes in Zapotec. Clearly, with the approval of the parents, because not all the parents really accept... that their children speak. (IN 140114 E-3)

Working within the one hour per week plan, accommodating to teachers who do not speak IZ or speak a different dialect of IZ, and accommodating to parents who don't want their children to speak IZ adds up to very little educational use of IZ in bilingual schools like this one. As a result of students' limited competence, the one hour per week of Indigenous language instruction was reported to be delivered with a focus on nouns and basic vocabulary, or essentially beginning lessons for non-speakers. Of the teachers who were speakers, very few felt comfortable writing the language, but some attempted to do so in order to teach. Several noted that the most pressing issue for them was trying to serve students whose basic needs were not met at home, who came to school hungry, tired, or were aggressive (IN 140513 E-8, 140717 E-9). Whether or not the children spoke (or read or wrote) IZ was clearly of secondary concern.

### ***Responsive bilingualism***

In the spring of 2014 I met several teachers and the director of a monolingual primary school who had been working throughout most of the school year to incorporate local and traditional practices into their regular school activities, including crafts, food, mural painting, and spoken and written use of IZ. The delayed school schedule that the La Ventosa director and teachers considered prohibitive for investing energy in IZ that year

was somehow not a barrier for this team. The school was located on the urban northern edge of the 7th section of Juchitán, and the director informed me that 80% of the students spoke IZ, while the other 20% understood it (my observations led me to believe this was somewhat exaggerated, but nonetheless there were at least as many IZ speakers as in several of the bilingual primary schools that I had visited). The school's project received extra support from the teachers union, as they framed it as an attempt to put the PTEO into practice by involving parents and undertaking school-run projects to meet local needs. I met them when they requested the Camino de la Iguana literacy workshop to come and work with their students; they heard about the workshop because one of their students was the niece of Natalia Toledo, the co-instructor. When I visited the school in May 2014 in the company of Toledo and Cata, I observed a student-made poster with drawings and writing in both IZ and Spanish in one of the classrooms, which had been created prior to the beginning of the literacy workshop. Teachers informed me that they had hosted a Diidxazá book fair and invited students to bring in books they had at home, as well as bringing books from the libraries in Juchitán. During the workshop students engaged in writing poems, autobiographies, and other texts, as well as learning the basics of the popular alphabet and being further exposed to IZ literature in several genres.

One of the most involved teachers told me that the project began as a way to improve the overall school environment, including students' motivation and parents' participation-- not in pursuit of a language-focused goal. The school director, who had worked in the school for 23 years, reinforced this in an interview, noting that their main motivation was to respond to issues of violence and lack of participation that they felt

were increasing in the school. The pro-active inclusion of the local language emerged as part of their response. In the interview we had been talking about the amount of students who spoke IZ, but when I asked about changes in the school over time, the most salient changes for him were not linguistic:

*H: Y... ¿en esos años ha visto cambios en la escuela o en el alumnado?*

*E-9: Pues mire, realmente usted sabe cómo está la situación en el país, ¿no? En cuanto a la violencia y las drogas y todo eso. Y sí se ha notado porque... hay niños que acá vienen y pues ya platican--- el año pasado egresó de aquí un niño que dice: yo me gano cien pesos si vendo tres bolsitas. [...] ¿Qué esperanza tenemos en esos niñitos que ahorita ven a sus papás que están haciendo eso? El alcoholismo sobre todo, nos afecta bastante acá.*

*H: [Y]---*

*E-9: [Pero] aquí dentro de la escuela lo tratamos de sobrellevar. Hace aproximadamente quince días tuve un problemita ahí. Había una bolita como de once niños, contra dieciséis, diecisiete niños de otra escuela vecina... con piedras.*

*H: ¿Ah, sí?*

*E-9: Sí. [Entonces]---*

*H: [¿En la calle?]*

*E-9: En la calle. Aquellos los venían a esperar ahí en la esquina. Y entonces este... pues se tuvo que, que agarrar este... tuvimos que ir a platicar con la mae-- la directora del otro plantel y pues gracias a dios pudimos parar. Pero son problemas de bandas, de banditas de niños. Hay muchas banditas de niños aquí alrededor. Y eso es lo que nos ha estado afectando un poquito, poquito.*

*H: ¿Y eso no era tanto así antes?*

*E-9: No, antes no estaba así, no. Antes había una bandita pero hasta allá al fondo. No, ahorita, ahorita como a dos cuadras hay bandas. [...] Ese es el detalle de esta sociedad. Pero pues aquí vamos construyendo y tratando de reforzar los valores de la familia. De hecho, nuestro proyecto tiene--- está fundamentado en el rescate de los valores de la familia para, para tener un poco más, ir rescatando---*

*en base a los valores, rescatar todo lo bueno que tenía nuestra sociedad antes, ¿no? Aquel "buenos días". Aquí en México en la cultura zapoteca eso era. "Buenos días", sea tu tío, no sea tu tío, sea tu abuelo, "buenos días".*

H: And...en those years have you seen changes in the school or the student body?

E-9: Well look, really you know how the situation in the country is, right? In terms of the violence and the drugs and all that. And yes it's been noticed because...there are children who come here and well already talk--- Last year a boy left here who said: I earn one hundred pesos if I sell three little bags. [...] What hope do we have for these little children that now see their parents that are doing that? Alcoholism especially effects us a lot here.

H: [And]---

E-9: [But] here inside the school we try to endure it. About 15 days ago I had a little problem here. There was a little group like of 11 children, against 16, 17 children of another neighboring school... with stones.

H: Oh yes?

E-9: Yes [so]---

H: [In the street?]

E-9: In the street. The others came to wait for them there in the corner. And so um... well we had to, to grab um... we had to go to talk with the tea-- the director of the other school and well thanks to god we could stop. But they're problems of gangs, little gangs of kids. There are many little gangs of kids around here. And that is what has been affecting us a little bit, little bit.

H: And that wasn't so much like that before?

E-9: No, before it wasn't like that, no. Before there was a little gang but over there at the bottom/ end. No, now, now like within two blocks there are gangs. [...] That is the detail of thie society. But here we're building and trying to reinforce family values. Actually our project has-- it's based in saving family values in order, in order to have a bit more, go saving-- based on values, save all the good that our society had before, right? Those "good days". Here in Mexico en the Zapotec culture that's how it was. "Good day" be it your uncle, your grandfather, "good day". (IN 140717 E-9)

Referring to the practice of greeting people in the street with "*Buenos días*" or another appropriate greeting, the director expressed a view of traditional behaviors as more respectful. IZ education had been included in their project as part of a broader program seeking to achieve more positive social interactions and "family values". In this case an extensive amount of IZ teaching and use resulted from a project aimed at better serving the population of a certain urbanizing neighborhood of Juchitán.

The Diidxazá classes at the UABJO arose through a combination of responding to the circumstances of the institution, and through individuals' motivations. The first class in spring 2013 was taught by the director of the cultural center in Juchitán, and was organized due to the motivation of one coordinator, Ximena León Fernández. In the fall of 2014 students began to show interest in participating, and a new approach was adopted through which students in the faculty who spoke IZ would be invited to teach IZ classes. The first group of students interested in participating all came out of the same cohort, having worked with a specific teacher who, I was told, had encouraged them to pursue IZ teaching as part of one of his classes. I interviewed the teacher, Manuel David Ramírez Medina, about how the use of IZ in his class began, and then spread through support from the department coordinators.

*H: Y, ¿cómo, cómo pasó que--- pues yo sé que en tu clase de, de este semestre pasado los alumnos se pusieron a elaborar materiales didácticos en zapoteco. ¿Podrías contarme cómo surgió este proyecto?*

*UT-5: La materia en sí se llama recursos didácticos, estrategias y recursos didácticos y me piden la elaboración de material didáctico. Se supone está orientado a inglés, francés o italiano. Entonces, eh, Carlos, Carlos Gómez levanta la mano y me dice: ¿podríamos hacerlo en zapoteco? y a mí se me*

*ocurre: sí, adelante. Háganlo en zapoteco. No fue algo planeado, fue así de, de improviso. Ya después comentando con [los coordinadores] Omelino y con Ximena. Decían: es que ahorita ya también estamos tratando de hacer todo el proyecto para [que] el zapoteco tenga el mismo peso que los demás idiomas políticamente fuertes. Entonces fue que ya les empecé a abrir más la puerta en cuanto a elaboración de todo el tipo de material en zapoteco que ellos quisieran... en parte para este, que ellos se sientan cómodos con el material que están trabajando, porque para ellos es más cómodo trabajar en zapoteco que trabajar en inglés. Entonces esa fue principalmente la, la causa, la petición de un alumno.*

*H: ¿Ah, sí? Eh, en los años que llevas trabajando aquí, ¿ningún alumno antes había mostrado un interés?*

*UT-5: No. No en la elaboración de material. Sí habíamos tenido algunos que hablan zapoteco, y este--- pero ni uno de ellos se había interesado en enseñarlo o en elaborar algo en zapoteco. Es la primera vez que me encuentro con eso.*

H: And how, how did it happen that--- well I know that in your class in, in um this past semester the students started to make didactic materials in Zapotec. Could you tell me how this project emerged?

UT-5: The subject itself is called didactic resources, strategies and didactic resources, and they ask me for creation of didactic material. Supposedly its oriented to English, French or Italian. So eh, Carlos, Carlos Gómez raises his hand and says to me: could we do it in Zapotec? And it occurs to me: Yes, go ahead. Do it in Zapotec. It wasn't something planned, it was like that, improvised. Then afterwards talking with [the coordinators] Omelino and with Ximena. They said: actually now also we're trying to make a whole project so [that] Zapotec would have the same weight as the other politically strong languages. So that was when I started to open the door to them in terms of creation of all of the kinds of material in Zapotec that they wanted... In part so um, that they feel comfortable with the material that they're working on, because for them it's more comfortable to work in Zapotec than to work in English. So that was primarily the, the cause, the request of a student.

H: Oh yes? Ah, in the years that you have been working here, no student before had shown an interest?

UT-5: No. Not in the creation of didactic material. Yes we've had some students who speak Zapotec, and um--- but not one of them had been interested in teaching

it or in making something in Zapotec. It's the first time that I find that. (IN 140113 UT-5)

This teacher's response to his student's interest, alongside the existing initiative in the department to provide IZ classes, resulted in the participation of initially 7, and later an additional 5 students in the design and teaching of IZ classes, including instruction in speaking, listening, reading and writing to adult beginning learners.

### ***Heritage bilingualism***

A teacher in a monolingual primary school in the northern, Spanish-dominant neighborhood of Juchitán also used the PTEO as a back-up and justification for IZ use in her classroom. I met María Isabel García Rasgado when she attended the Camino de la Iguana in November of 2013 in Union Hidalgo, where she lives. She invited me to visit her class in Juchitán, saying that she wanted her students to see that someone from far away was interested in their language, so that they might become more interested. None of her 5th grade students were conversant in IZ, although several understood and spoke some. In her classroom there were several posters relating to the pre-colonial history of Mexico and one sign in Spanish and IZ "*Rincon Baduhuiini*" (Children's corner). Her class was conducted in Spanish, but with more discussion of local culture, history and language than what would typically appear in the curriculum. Her students seemed to react positively to this.

On my first visit to her class several students had written or drawn cards for me. In the card shown below one student informs me that she knows a little IZ and a little English, but that her ancestors and extended family, including her parents speak the "mother language", Zapotec.

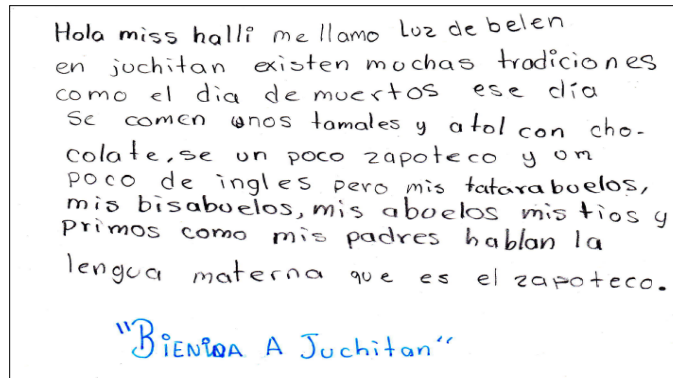


Figure 16. Card written by student in monolingual primary school in northern section of Juchitán (Nov. 2013)

The students did not see IZ as something to be avoided, nor did they seem to worry that it might cause them to speak poor Spanish-- although they all spoke comfortable Spanish already.

García Rasgado had taught her class songs in IZ, which she had them sing for me, and again in front of the whole school when it was their class's turn to present in the weekly "*homenaje*" flag ceremony (FN 131115, FN 140113). I attended the flag ceremony, where she made some comments about the PTEO policy to valorize local culture and language, followed by readings by the students in Spanish, and a song in Spanish and IZ. Then one student read part of a story in IZ about a lively iguana, while another read the corresponding Spanish part, and other students distributed copies of this story to all of the teachers in the school, so that they could look at it with their classes. When I spoke with García Rasgado afterwards, she explained that the boy who read in IZ is the slowest in the class for most topics, but that he speaks the most IZ, and so she was pleased to have him show off in this way. I agreed that he had seemed confident on stage. She also commented that her fellow teachers were supportive of her efforts, although

what she did was limited to her classroom rather than being a school-wide project (FN 140113). In this case use of IZ-- largely, but perhaps not entirely in tokenistic ways-- was pursued by a motivated individual who viewed it as an enriching but under-appreciated part of her students' backgrounds, and this use received passive support from her colleagues.

More ambitious enrichment activities were undertaken by a group of teachers from a secondary school in southern Juchitán. I met them in April of 2014 when they attended a conference that I co-organized with colleagues at the UABJO, where they told me that they were taking advantage of the "*asignatura estatal*" slot in the curriculum to develop a plan to teach IZ literacy with their students (an approach I had heard from several other secondary school representatives), but were unsure how to go about this. The conference included workshops and talks on teaching Indigenous languages, and thus they had requested time off to attend it, and appreciated the event. I visited them in their school the following November, and they described their efforts to teach traditional handicrafts, as well as IZ reading and writing. They were motivated by the need to create lessons to fill the new class slot, and the fact that most of their students spoke IZ and responded positively to the classes, but also their personal motivations to promote IZ bilingualism and literacy. They showed me some flashcards that their students made with images and labels for common objects, and were pleased when I offered to give them some IZ texts for students to read. They were also interested in bringing the Camino de la Iguana to work with their students and expand their literacy abilities (FN 141118).

School communities like this one are clearly increasing IZ practices and positive valuation of IZ language and culture. However, of the various orientations towards use of Diidxazá in schools, none are designed to achieve additive bilingualism. Differing desires and priorities among stakeholders within each school community of practice also stand out, as some parents view use of IZ positively, while others reportedly do not want their children learning it. Teachers within the same school may have different priorities as well, with some viewing inclusion of IZ as a resource, while others adhere to the top-down curriculum which excludes local languages.

#### **4.3.3 Formal education socio-political processes**

Education politics at the state and national level are influential in formal education spaces. Resistance to the federal Education Reform of 2013<sup>20</sup> has resulted in multiple strikes and school closings, in particular in autumn of 2013 when public schools in Oaxaca opened almost two months late on October 14th due to teachers' protests in the state and national capitals. Subsequent protests did not always close schools, but instead a percentage of teachers would be absent from school in order to attend.

One of the points of contention is the system of standardized testing being promoted by the federal government, both for students, and most controversially, for teachers. The ENLACE test of students that was in place from 2006-2009 in a sample of schools is no longer being administered in Oaxaca (<http://www.enlace.sep.gob.mx/ba/>), although it continues in the rest of the country, having been redesigned and renamed

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<sup>20</sup> This federal reform includes changes to the constitution ([http://dof.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle.php?codigo=5288919&fecha=26/02/2013](http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5288919&fecha=26/02/2013)) and to the Ley General de Educación ([http://dof.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle.php?codigo=5313841&fecha=11/09/2013](http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5313841&fecha=11/09/2013)), and requires all states to harmonize their education laws with the federal law.

PLANEA (Anzures Tapia, 2015, <http://www.inee.edu.mx/index.php/planea>). During my study in general teachers did not seem concerned about testing of their students when asked directly (IN 140128 E-2), and rarely brought the subject up as a topic of concern spontaneously. This stood out to me because they were much less pressured by testing of their students than teachers I have interviewed in the US and the Philippines, and when the subject arose the general comment was that standardized tests are inappropriate in a state as economically and socially diverse as Oaxaca. With the weakening of the teachers union through the restructuring of the *Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca* (Oaxacan State Education Institute, IEEPO, <http://www.ieepo.oaxaca.gob.mx>) in August 2015, and the revised PLANEA exams poised to be used throughout the country, it appears likely that standardized exams may begin to loom larger in schools in the Isthmus.

Another recent reform in the Mexican curriculum is the inclusion of an "additional language" to be studied in the monolingual primary school curriculum. I met one teacher who interpreted this as an opportunity to teach a local language to her students (IN 140729 U-13), but in general it was viewed as a politics in favor of increased English teaching. In general the federal reform and politics in opposition to it were mentioned by the teachers I spoke with, but most did not discuss these politics as issues of pressing importance in their schools, except in relation to school closings, which angered parents and made their work more difficult. The presence of other national and international organizations promoting Indigenous languages can sometimes be felt, albeit less directly-- for example posters made by the INALI that made their way onto the wall

of the director's office of a bilingual school; IZ bingo games made by researchers from central Mexico during their fieldwork in the Isthmus with one bilingual school; and IZ botany bingo games made by Pérez Báez's Smithsonian team and distributed to 19 schools.

As mentioned several times, the *Plan para la transformación de la educación de Oaxaca* (PTEO) policy promoted by the Oaxaca state department of education and teachers union Section 22 has a positive impact on the use and/or valorization of IZ in both monolingual and bilingual schools, with perhaps a greater impact in monolingual schools that did not previously have a mandate to promote local languages. Not all schools are actively implementing the PTEO, although most school representatives that I spoke with mentioned that they were obliged to create a school-specific project or plan in order to conform to PTEO. Other teachers mentioned that the PTEO might disappear at any moment if the federal government succeeded in imposing a uniform Education Reform on Oaxaca, as it has on the majority of states in the country. Despite the tentative status of the PTEO, many teachers appear to be taking it seriously.

Poverty and problems in the home were mentioned by several teachers as an important factor, although these were not commented on in all schools. Wealth disparities in the Isthmus, and in Zapotec culture, are not new (Royce, 1975), and play out differently in different parts of the region. Raising children in Spanish is often associated with being a "professional" or having an education, thus linking IZ use to low socio-economic status and Spanish to economic mobility. Lack of job opportunities in the region leads many educated young people to go elsewhere for work, where they

inevitably need Spanish or other languages. One young woman from La Ventosa who became involved with IZ teaching while studying English in the UABJO, spent many months looking for work in the area and eventually took a job in a tourist resort several hours away where English became the most highly valued part of her communicative repertoire. As a member of the UABJO community of practice she came to value her IZ capacities, but when she left the UABJO and entered the job market she oriented towards English (FN 130422). The complex links between IZ use, educational success and professional success will be discussed further in chapter 5.

#### 4.4 Non-formal education programs

There are numerous non-formal IZ education programs providing structured IZ teaching, operating primarily on temporary and short-term bases. Some of these are run by individuals, while others are supported by a variety of different organizations. Unlike in the discussion of formal education spaces above, in relation to non-formal education I only collected data in places where IZ education was an explicit goal. The following table illustrates the non-formal programs that I observed and the data that I collected, with the programs most focal to my study highlighted. The educational goals of these programs varies from helping speakers to become literate, to introducing the language to non-speakers, to promoting greater awareness and interest in IZ literacy and heritage.

Table 12. Non-formal IZ education programs observed April 2013-June 2015

Program	Supporters	Participants	Data collection
<b>Camino de la Iguana:</b> popular alphabet and creative	Created by IZ writers Natalia Toledo and Victor Cata, funded	Originally intended for speakers of all	Observation in 10 locales Interviews &

writing classes. 2 hours per day for a 2 week period. Delivered in a variety of locations.	by the <i>Centro para las Artes San Agustín</i> , a non-profit organization based in Oaxaca City	ages, but many non-speakers of all ages also participated.	numerous conversations with founders; 20 interviews with participants
<b>Interdisciplinary workshops in La Ventosa:</b> Speaking, writing, and environmental conservation. 2 day workshop April 2014, 3 hours per day. 1 day workshop July 2014, 3 hours. 3 day workshop December 2014, 2 hours per day. 2 day workshops May, June, August, Sept. 2015. 5-day workshop July, 2015, 2 hours per day	Collaboration between community members from La Ventosa, members of the Ethnobotany research team and myself. Funded by the Smithsonian Institute and through contributions from community members.	Young adults and elders participated as teachers. Children between 6 and 13 (on average) participated as students.	Audio recording of all planning meetings. Audio recording of workshops one and two in 2014; Video recording of workshop 3 and all workshops in 2015. 3 interviews with teachers.
<b>Casa de la Cultura de Juchitán:</b> Summer classes and occasional classes during the rest of the year. Basic writing for speakers; basic vocabulary for non-speakers. Schedules vary, usually several hours per week for 4-6 weeks.	The <i>Casa de la Cultura</i> occasionally runs classes for a generally unspecified public, with broad learning objectives, that have been taught by the director, one of the other staff members, and an IZ translator/ lawyer with linguistics training.	Children in summer classes; Mainly adults in classes during the year.	3 interviews with teachers, 1 observation
<b>Antontio Ortíz Rojas, San Blas:</b> IZ speaking and writing for non-speakers. 3 hours per week for 10 weeks, using a textbook developed by the	Antontio Ortíz Rojas, retired teacher and language activist from San Blas created a curriculum and teaches in cultural centers in San Blas,	Non-speakers of varying ages, mostly adult and adolescent.	1 interview, 10 survey responses from students

teacher.	Tehautepec, and Salina Cruz.		
<b>Occasional one-off writing workshops:</b> Writing for speakers and non-speakers	Juchitán-based writers Irma Pineda and Gerardo Valdivieso. <i>Galeria Gubidxa</i> , private cultural space in Union Hidalgo. <i>Biblioteca Victor Yodo</i> , public library in the 7th section of Juchitán.	All ages.	1 interview with teacher Irma Pineda
<b>Centro Cultural Heron Rios:</b> IZ literacy classes began spring 2015	Cultural center run by non-profit cultural organization Comité Melendre	All ages.	1 interview with director of cultural center prior to the launch of these classes

Other kinds of events that fell within the scope of non-formal IZ education were invitation-only workshops held on the topic of Diidxazá writing, and open conferences that explored topics of teaching IZ (and other Indigenous languages). The following table describes the 5 events that occurred during the period of my study, in chronological order, with the event most focal to my study highlighted.

**Table 13. Non-formal IZ education events observed April 2013- June 2015**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Supporters</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data collection</b>
<b>Workshop on IZ tone</b> and tone marking 2 hours per day for 3 days 14-16 August, 2013	Taught by Gabriela Pérez Báez (Smithsonian Institute) in the library of the <i>Casa de la Cultura</i> , Juchitán, with support from Victor Cata and me	Adult and senior speakers who had participated in previous IZ writing workshops with INALI, primarily teachers and retired teachers	Audio and video recording; 5 interviews

<b>Workshops on an "enriched" IZ writing norm</b> 4-6 hours per day for 3 days, 3-5 September 2013 and 3-5 September 2014	Facilitated by members of INALI, in the <i>Casa de la Cultura</i> , Juchitán (in September 2014 Victor Cata also had an official facilitation role)	Invited language experts, primarily older male teachers, administrators, and retired teachers. Some of the same people participated in both of these workshops, while others were different. In Sept. 2014 three young men also participated.	Audio recording. 4 interviews subsequent to 2013 meeting. 2 interviews subsequent to 2014 meeting.
<b>Encuentro Internacional de Lenguas Indígenas y Educación Bilingüe</b> 2 day conference 31 Oct, 2013-1 Nov, 2013	Facilitated by a team of researchers in <i>Estudios Amerindios</i> from the University of Querétaro, who invited people involved in teaching Indigenous languages in Mexico and Latin America. Hosted at the <i>Casa de la Cultura</i> , Juchitán	Colleagues of the University of Querétaro from across Mexico and Latin America, students from the UABJO in Tehuantepec, a few teachers from the Isthmus, a few members of SIL	Some audio recording; Some discussion in subsequent interviews with members of the UABJO; Interview with lead coordinator
<b>Lenguas Indígenas como segundas lenguas</b> Materials development workshop. 9-19 Dec, 2013	Taught by a researcher in <i>Estudios Amerindios</i> from the University of Querétaro, hosted at the UABJO Tehuantepec	Students in the bachelors in <i>Enseñanza de Lenguas</i> , mainly with IZ speaking abilities	Audio recording; 6 interviews
<b>Compartiendo Experiencias: Enseña, aprende, vive el Zapoteco</b> 2 day conference 4-5 April, 2014	Coordinated by colleagues at the UABJO and me, hosted at the UABJO and the <i>Casa de la Cultura</i> , Juchitán, with some financial support	Students from the UABJO, some teachers from the Isthmus, local activists and artists, guest speakers from Oaxaca and Mexico City (about 250	Audio and some video recording; 17 on-line survey responses; Some discussion in subsequent interviews with

	from the Smithsonian	total)	members of the UABJO
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These events all aimed to provide training, support, or networking for people professionally involved in teaching or writing IZ, and to raise the social status of IZ language teaching in public forums. The IZ tone and writing workshops had the additional aim to create an IZ writing norm that would include tones, with the approval and participation of IZ speakers, and to eventually recognize this norm officially (FN 130813, FN 140904).

There are numerous other initiatives that could fall under the description of non-formal IZ education, including an on-line audio vocabulary and on-line video programs created by the non-profit *Fundación Historico Cultural Juchitán* ([www.zapotecoteco.org](http://www.zapotecoteco.org)), the city-funded campaign "*Gusisácanu Diidxazá do' stinu*" to promote IZ use beginning in February 2015 (IN 150321 VT), and occasional writing competitions (one hosted by individuals in Xadani in November 2013, and the annual competition hosted by the *Centro para las Artes San Agustín* in Oaxaca). In this stage of analysis I will focus on the face-to-face initiatives described in the tables above.

#### **4.4.1 Non-formal education actors**

The actors in these programs and events are included in the two tables above. The programs described in table 12 were all taught by adult or senior speakers of IZ, and in the case of the interdisciplinary workshop a combination of speakers and non-speaking outsiders (myself, a visual artist, and a biologist from Oaxaca City). Most of the teachers were scholars and writers who have had a life-long passion for their language and chose

to pass it on (e.g. Victor, Natalia, Irma, Antonio). Participants ranged from elders to children, and from speakers to people with no prior knowledge, although in many cases participants had some degree of prior exposure or passive competence. Much of the support for these programs came from within the Isthmus itself. The two programs that I was most involved in were at least partially supported from the outside however; in the case of Camino de la Iguana by a foundation in Oaxaca City, and in the case of the interdisciplinary workshops by the Smithsonian Institute in the US.

In contrast, the events listed in table 13 were initiated and facilitated almost entirely by people from outside of the region, and attended by a mix of people from the Isthmus, Oaxaca, Mexico and abroad. The conferences were initiated to bring together a variety of actors with similar interests; in the case of the first conference actors involved in Indigenous language education in general, and in the case of the conference I co-organized, actors involved in teaching Indigenous languages in the Isthmus in particular (the main focus was on IZ, but we chose to invite Ombeayuits teachers and include a few talks on this theme as well, largely due to the presence of Ombeayuits-speaking students at the UABJO, and the proximity of the university to the Huave zone). The actors initiating the tone and writing workshops were linguists who personally think that IZ writing should include tone marking. In the case of the INALI linguists their job was to finalize a writing norm following the input of IZ speakers, however the preference to include tone marking was readily apparent (FN 140904, FN 140905). In the case of Pérez Báez, she did not have the political status or agenda of the INALI linguists, but hoped to

teach IZ speakers more about the properties of tone, discuss with them her dictionary-in-progress, and learn their perspectives (FN 130816).

#### **4.4.2 Non-formal education practices**

All of the programs and events described in the previous section were conducted with more spoken Spanish than spoken Diidxazá. Possible exceptions are the two Camino de la Iguana workshops conducted in Alvaro Obregon, and one conducted in Xadani, where participants were Diidxazá dominant. Another common thread among non-formal education practices is a general focus on IZ writing and promotion of IZ poetry and literature. In this section I categorize the practices I observed as 1) perpetuating IZ use through literature; 2) teaching beginning speakers; 3) standardizing IZ writing; and 4) supporting IZ teachers and building networks.

##### ***Perpetuating IZ use through literature***

The idea for the Camino de la Iguana started, as Toledo and Cata both recounted on numerous occasions, because they felt that if they didn't teach people to read IZ there would be no one left to read the books that they were writing. Creating IZ readers means more than memorization of the alphabet however (as discussed further in chapter 5).

Activities in the workshop begin with one hour of "*lectoescritura*", where Cata teaches and drills the IZ alphabet, introduces the traditional vigesimal (base 20) number system, and often teaches a few archaic words and/or has students read aloud some IZ poems.

One hour of "*creación literaria*" follows where Toledo introduces different "universal" literary genres, including surrealism, haiku, and autobiography, as well as IZ genres including lying, tongue-twisters and singing. She coaches participants in writing these genres, ideally in IZ, although often in Spanish or a combination thereof. Cata's teaching

involves lots of copying and dictation, aimed at providing students with the skills to write IZ in Toledo's class, which is structured around students' writing projects. Both teachers acknowledge that the two week time span of the workshop is not sufficient for participants to become comfortable with the IZ alphabet, but they hope to spark the motivation so that some will continue learning and writing in the future (IN 141121 NT).

Numerous participants arrive speaking almost no IZ, which creates additional challenges for the teachers. In 3 of the 10 iterations of the workshop that I observed there were almost no speakers among the participants; in 4 there were a mix, with non-speakers generally more numerous than speakers; and in 3 locations all or almost all of the participants were speakers. This was due to which geographic area the workshops were held in. The communicative repertoire of the participants impacted the teachers' practices, as they typically switched to Spanish if the participants could not produce IZ, even where some of them could actually comprehend it.

### *Teaching beginning speakers*

Antonio Ortíz Rojas, Vidal Ramírez Pineda, and other teachers who offer temporary classes in cultural centers in Juchitán, Tehuantepec, San Blas and Salina Cruz, often find themselves teaching people who have limited speaking ability, although they may have some comprehension abilities. These classes aim to teach speaking abilities, but often also spend a considerable amount of time on writing and lists of nouns due partially to the beginning level of the students. In a summer workshop in the *Casa de la Cultura* in Juchitán I observed the teacher, German Ramírez, a lawyer who also works as a translator, instructing five 10-15 year-old students to copy a table of verb paradigms into

their notebooks, followed by playing a bingo game with vocabulary of common local animals, foods, and plants (FN 140804). He occasionally used IZ to give commands to the students, modeled the verbs and nouns, and prompted students to repeat, although much of the class was conducted in Spanish. He was very pleased with the results of the class, in particular the three students who were from the state capital and were only in Juchitán for the summer with their extended family. He commented,

*GR: Y estos niños que nunca en su vida les habían hablado en zapoteco y que, fueron los primeros quince, veinte días o un mes que duró el taller, el curso de verano donde ellos aprendieron y hablaban. Entonces me sentí tan... tan emocionado y tan... tan, tan--- ¡Sí! Emocionadísimo porque los niños pudieron hablarlo y se fueron contentos. Sí, dijeron que el próximo año van a ser los primeros en poder inscribirse.*

*H: Y los niños que llegaron de aquí de Juchitán?*

*GR: Los niños que llegaron de aquí de Juchitán pues ya tenían noción de la lengua. Lo han escuchado pero no lo pueden pronunciar. Entonces este... salieron hablando, hablando. No correctamente pero... hablando. Sí.*

GR: And those children that never in their life had been spoken to in Zapotec and that, it was the first 15, 20 days or a month that the workshop lasted, the summer class where they learned and spoke. So I felt so... so excited and so... so, so-- Yes! Really excited because the children could speak and they went away happy. Yes, they said that next year they'll be the first to be able to enroll.

H: And the children that arrived from here in Juchitán?

GR: The children that arrived from here in Juchitán well they already had some knowledge of the language. They have heard it but they can't pronounce it. So um... they left speaking, speaking. Not correctly but... speaking. Yes. (IN 140926 GR)

In my observation of the class the students from Juchitán were slower to understand the verb conjugations and memorize vocabulary than the students from Oaxaca city, and their

superior ability to understand IZ did not seem to be used as an asset, although all students participated with interest and positive rapport among each other and with Ramírez (FN 140804).

This class was representative of other short-term programs offered after school and in the summertime to groups ranging from children to adults, where a variety of activities are used to teach the alphabet, basic vocabulary and some grammar, often involving writing, lists of thematic words, and bingo games. These classes appear to be successful in helping enthusiastic beginners learn vocabulary and some common phrases, but can be less appropriate for learners with some degree of IZ in their linguistic repertoire. Classes taught by Antonio Ortíz stand a bit apart in that he has developed a sequenced textbook and audio CD to support learning of the thematic vocabulary through written exercises. The teachers all note that the limited duration of these classes and students' sometimes irregular attendance does not allow them to advance as far as they would like (IN 130912 VRP, IN 140926 GR, IN 141007 AO).

The interdisciplinary workshops held in La Ventosa contain some similar elements of teaching the alphabet and basic vocabulary through oral and written activities, as practiced in the Camino de la Iguana and the cultural center programs, but also include the use of IZ vocabulary in artistic and botany-focused activities. The fact that some of the facilitators, including myself, were not IZ speakers limited the amount of IZ use, in addition to the fact that the community members of La Ventosa who were recruited to participate as teachers had long had the habit of communicating with children in Spanish. The inclusion of homework through which children were requested to obtain

IZ words from their parents or family was one practice through which we tried to encourage a bridge towards authentic communication (as discussed further in chapter 6 on strategies). As in other workshops, we found some children to have more IZ capacities than others, and most to participate with enthusiasm, being willing to try speaking, reading, writing, or any other task presented to them.

*Creating a new written norm*

IZ literacy teaching occurs through the "popular alphabet" of 1956, the norm created by a group of IZ speakers and linguists from the Summer Institute of Linguistics who lived for decades in Juchitán and La Ventosa (see further discussion in section 5.3 and La Sociedad Pro-Planeación del Istmo, 1956). Although most people I met did not personally know this norm (or participate in much writing of IZ), many knew that it existed. Most people had not heard about the INALI, let alone their initiative to produce an up-dated writing norm. I first asked Cata in April of 2013 what he thought about INALI's work as we were on a bus headed to meet a colleague in La Ventosa. He replied that they have to do things that will look big, because of what they are (a national-level advocate for Indigenous languages). Creating official norms for the Indigenous languages of Mexico looks big on paper, and that's why they do it. He personally did not feel that the IZ alphabet needed to be changed, although as a linguist he recognized its representational inconsistencies (FN 130404).

The following autumn two workshops run by outside experts, the first by Pérez Báez, and the second by a team from the INALI, presented a different view to participants. Through higher-education style lectures (in Spanish), hand-outs, discussions,

and working through problem-sets, the workshops laid out the phonology of IZ and the role of tone in particular. Cata and some other participants agreed that it could be useful to mark tone, but were not eager to choose a system of diacritics, while other participants said nothing and one confided to me later that he found the alphabet to be completely functional as it is, and was entirely opposed to any tone marking (FN 130816, FN 130905). The following May the INALI conducted another workshop, which I was not able to attend. In September I was present when the workshop resumed with similar activities, but with additional participants from other dialect regions who had not been present previously, which highlighted the variation of tonal patterns across dialects. On this occasion the question was not so much whether to mark tone, but *how* to mark it (FN 140904). These series of workshops served to teach some of the members of the IZ (especially Juchitán) literary elite and senior teachers how expert linguists analyze and view the role of tone in IZ, and to convince some of them that there should be a diacritic system for representing it.

***Supporting IZ teachers and building networks***

Attending a conference on Indigenous education organized by outside researchers in Juchitán in late October 2013 gave me confidence to put forward an idea that had been forming based on my interviews and observations. The October conference brought together stakeholders from across Mexico and Latin America with common interests in teaching Indigenous languages, but did not reach many of the people in the Isthmus who might have been interested. After four months in the Isthmus attending various educational events I had met people in different parts of the region who were engaged in teaching or promoting IZ language and culture in their own contexts. It seemed to me that

these people would benefit from meeting each other, and creating a network of actors for support and resource sharing. I proposed this idea to the coordinators at the UABJO, who were also starting to work on supporting some of their students to teach IZ in the near future. They liked the idea, and we began to plan the "*Compartiendo Experiencias*" (Sharing experiences) conference that occurred in April 2014. This event, like the October conference, included talks, panels, and workshops, and was open to the public for free.

The theme of the April conference was specifically the teaching of IZ and Ombeayuits, and additionally included events for children, musical performances, a regional food expo, a photography exhibit, and a poetry reading. In order to promote the event I took personal invitations to bilingual schools and school supervision offices around the region, Ximena León Fernández (the UABJO administrator who initiated the first IZ classes) and I spoke on two radio shows, and León Fernández was also interviewed on regional television. Our goal was to create networks between for example, young poets who had participated in the Camino de la Iguana, and bilingual teachers who had told me they were not comfortable writing IZ, and did not have a plan for the teaching of IZ. We also aimed to provide recognition for people who were taking initiatives in their schools or other social spaces.

One of the respondents to a follow-up on-line survey wrote in response to a question about what they had learned at the event:

*Aprendí que hay personas que se apasionan por su cultura y la educación y a apreciar las lenguas originarias. Aprendí a decir xike xineth ["my name is" in Ombeayuits]] entre otras palabras y quisiera aprender mucho mas.*

I learned that there are people who are passionate about their culture and education and to appreciate the indigenous languages. I learned to say *xike xineth* ["my name is" in Ombeayuits]] among other words, and I would like to learn much more.

(On-line survey completed 21 May, 2014)

Highlights of the event mentioned in surveys range from specific technical workshops, to the poetry reading, to an impromptu rap performance by some of the presenters during one of the lunch breaks. Both the October and April conferences thus consisted of varied advocacy and education practices.

#### **4.4.3 Non-formal education socio-political processes**

The flow of information and discourses about endangered and Indigenous languages from national and international sources into the Isthmus is influential in non-formal education initiatives. This is most obvious in the case of events initiated by outsiders, such as the standardization workshops and Indigenous education conferences, but also played a role in the locally-run workshops, where some of the participants became interested after being exposed to discourses about language endangerment and linguistic rights. The flow of people in and out of the Isthmus was also a factor in generating interest in IZ learning, as some of the participants were people who had migrated to the region for work, or natives of the region who had spent substantial time away and returned wanting to strengthen their local identity (IN 131017 U-3, IN 140515 UH-2). Participation in non-formal events and programs is generally not in large numbers (for example summer class enrollments of 5 - 7, in a city of 90,000 people). Over two hundred people participated in

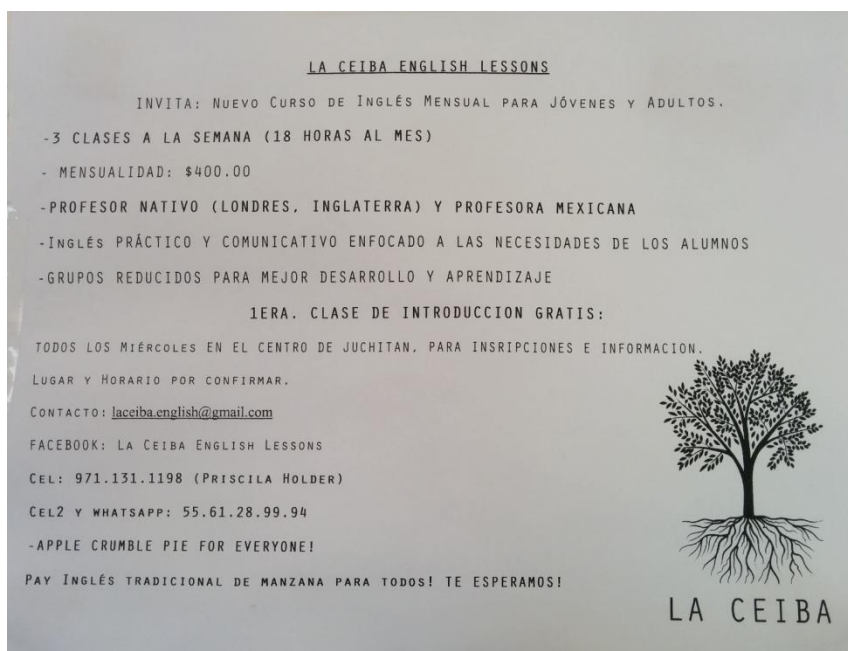
the April conference, however this is still not an enormous turn-out considering the amount of publicity activities. Low attendance in workshops was due partly to poor informational networks, but also illustrates that participating in IZ education is not a priority for much of the population of the Isthmus.

As an extra-curricular activity, IZ workshops are in competition with the many other things filling social calendars, from formal weddings, birthdays, and saint's celebrations, to music and dance groups for children that are comparatively well-attended. In discussions with people who were choosing to study IZ, comparisons with studying English often emerged, with the common statement that most parents would prefer their children to study English. One student who had migrated to the Isthmus for work and participated in a weekend class at the UABJO commented,

*U-2: A mis papás les dije...les dije oye que crees mira aquí donde estoy hablan zapoteco, y estoy aprendiendo, y se empezaron a reír así burlonamente, oh! Oh! Oh! Zapoteco... hola aprende mejor el inglés, y se empezaron a reír.*

U-2: I told my parents... I told them hey guess what look here where I am they speak Zapotec, and I'm learning, and they started to laugh like this mockingly 'Oh! oh! oh! Zapotec...hello better to learn English', and they started to laugh. (IN 131017 U-2)

Non-formal programs for teaching English certainly appear to be more numerous than non-formal programs for teaching Diidxazá, although I did not fully investigate how many there are. One advertisement that appeared in spring 2015 caught my eye because the authors chose a the theme of the *ceiba*, a tree typical in the Isthmus and important in Zapotec mythology for holding down the four corners of the world.



**Figure 17. "La ceiba English lessons" Poster taped to the wall of the city hall, Juchitán, March 2015.**

Rather than invoke a symbol from the anglophone world, this advertisement assumes viewers have positive associations with a distinctively istmeño icon, and links English teaching to the local environment. The class promises to teach "practical and communicative English focused on the *needs* of the students" (emphasis added), suggesting that English has a necessary role in the communicative repertoire of Istmeños (when actual use of English is limited to academic settings and publicity). As discussed above, IZ classes ironically often tend to focus on thematic vocabulary with somewhat less push for communicative language use, despite the fact that there are many real contexts of communicative need.

While there are actors and discourses from outside the Isthmus that are validating IZ use through non-formal education practices, the socio-political processes through which English is being framed as the ultimate economic and educational resource are far

more widespread, and reach a wider sector of the public. As previously mentioned, economic migration out of the Isthmus is not nearly as pronounced as in other regions of Oaxaca and Mexico, however the perspective that English is necessary for future education and professional opportunities is common nonetheless.

#### **4.5 Connections across education spaces and scales**

Lenia Toledo Rasgado attended the very first Camino de la Iguana that occurred in 2012 in Juchitán, when she was in her late teens. A cousin from Mexico City was visiting and was interested in going, so she and her sister went along too. Growing up in the center of La Ventosa her parents had discouraged her from speaking IZ, but she had acquired some capacities over the years and as a young adult she felt she could more or less get by, although she was more comfortable in Spanish. She admired the IZ poets and cultural activists, one of whom had presented at the preparatory school she attended in Juchitán, and she wanted to learn to write IZ. She had never used IZ in school, and they'd been forbidden to use it when she attended primary school in La Ventosa (IN 140514 LV-7).

After the workshop she began writing poetry, but felt that she didn't know the writing system well enough, and when the Camino de la Iguana was offered in La Ventosa in the fall of 2013 she attended again. The workshop was held in the brand new "*Bacusa gui*" (firefly) cultural center (during the workshop participants learned that it should be spelled "*bacuzá gui*" in the popular alphabet, although this didn't motivate anyone to repaint the fancy sign). The cultural center had been completed just a few months before by a Spanish-owned wind farm whose windmills had come to fill the

horizon on all sides of La Ventosa over the previous seven years. Some residents of La Ventosa had benefited economically from this development through employment or leasing land, and now had houses as big and freshly-painted as the cultural center. Other residents hadn't benefited, and remained in one or two-room cinderblock or adobe brick houses, but with the same view of the forest of white windmill towers. (FN 131025, FN 150409)

The following winter I was planning a language and botany-themed workshop for children in La Ventosa as part of the Smithsonian-funded 1-year project to document ethnobotanical knowledge, and I asked if Lenia would be willing to participate in it by teaching some language activities. When she readily agreed we talked about some games she could play through which kids could learn simple, daily phrases. We initially planned to conduct the workshop in one group, facilitated by a visual artist from Oaxaca City, myself, Lenia, her sister, and José López de la Cruz, a senior male member of a cultural committee in La Ventosa who wanted to teach IZ workshops for children, although he didn't have pedagogical experience and his full-time job with the wind farm left him little spare time (FN 131216, FN 140208). I visited the local (monolingual) primary schools to promote the workshop. In one school the director escorted me to each classroom where he added his own words of encouragement for the children to attend the workshop after I had issued the invitation. Another school director told me that he was glad that children could do something other than sit in front of the television, where they spent much of their time nowadays. (FN 140410)

On the 1st day of the 2-day workshop children poured through the door of the cultural center, and we realized we would have to split the 60 participants into two alternating groups. As I went in and out of the rooms, dealing with logistics, I saw that Lenia used a few games, but also followed form-focused teaching practices that she had experienced in the Camino de la Iguana; she wrote the 3 kinds of IZ vowels on a whiteboard and had children copy them, followed by drilling consonants, color-words and numbers. The younger children, 10 and below, appeared to understand very little IZ, while the older children knew considerably more, although none were conversant. Three young sisters who I had seen hanging around the cultural center on previous occasions were among the children who recognized and offered the most words. They were also among the children wearing the most worn-out and stained clothing. The youngest stood out due to her wide grin, showing off a mouth of black baby teeth (FN 140414, FN 140415).

The next time I saw the sisters in the cultural center was a month later, and the older one bragged to me that she knew how to count in Zapotec (a topic covered in the workshop, although she might have known it before). Great, I responded, how? She rattled off the numbers up to 10. Then she wanted to know, how are the numbers in English? (FN 140514).

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The spaces, actors, practices and socio-political processes that make up the ecology of language education in the Isthmus intertwine and overlap in countless ways,

as illustrated in this description of some of the factors influencing just one educational workshop. The Spanish-only ideology of Lenia's parents and schools led her to grow up more comfortable in Spanish, but encouragement from her peer group and admiration for the literary heritage of Diidxazá helped motivate her to work towards biliteracy and bilingualism. The presence of the Smithsonian ethnobotany project in La Ventosa facilitated my effort to create a workshop there, which was then made possible by the existence of the cultural center (built by a foreign wind farm), and most essentially by the interest of a few key local people, including Lenia and José. Despite my hopes to create a workshop based on communicative language use, conductivist pedagogical practices were reproduced, echoing the writing-centric approaches to teaching IZ that occur elsewhere. Fortunately the children remained enthusiastic and participative, and the presence of IZ in their linguistic repertoire was clear. However, interest in learning IZ in a fun, foreign-sponsored event ultimately cannot shift the entrenched preference for Spanish (and English) in a region where IZ remains ideologically and visibly associated with poverty and discrimination, and where meeting basic economic needs remains a pressing priority. The following table summarizes the factors described in this chapter.

**Table 14. Summary of Diidxazá education ecology**

<b>Spaces</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Practices</b>	<b>Processes</b>
Formal education (monolingual mandate)	students, parents, teachers, local officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subtractive monolingualism</li> <li>• Flexible monolingualism</li> <li>• Passive bilingualism</li> <li>• Responsive bilingualism</li> <li>• Heritage bilingualism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National education reform</li> <li>• State and union education politics (PTEO)</li> <li>• Local socio-economic problems; income inequalities</li> </ul>
Formal education (bilingual mandate)			
Non-formal education programs and events	students, teachers, activists, artists, linguists, outside researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of IZ writing</li> <li>• IZ for beginners</li> <li>• Creating new written norm</li> <li>• Training &amp; networking teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discursive &amp; economic flows in favor of minority languages</li> <li>• Migration to the Isthmus</li> <li>• English popularity</li> </ul>

An important facet of the IZ language education ecology has not been explicitly discussed in the above description of spaces, actors, practices and processes: What do these practices *mean* to the actors involved in them? What are their motivations, desires, challenges, and concerns? Moreover, as Hymes (1980) asks in relation to the interpretive phase of ethnographic monitoring, what is the role of IZ in local perceptions of academic success or failure? The practices of actors are influenced not only by the socio-political and community context they find themselves in, but also by the ideologies and imaginaries that they are informed by. IZ education is occurring in formal and non-formal spaces, and ideologies about its use are being (re)produced by a variety of sources, from national policy documents, to regional advocacy organizations, school systems, local perceptions and practices, and outside researchers. The next chapter narrows the focus

considerably to enable interpretation and discussion of some of the social meanings or ideologies and imaginaries that permeate IZ education practices in specific settings.

## **Chapter 5. Social meanings of Diidxazá education practices**

What social meanings, ideologies, and imaginaries are present in Diidxazá education practices? What does it mean when the "slowest" student in class is asked to read IZ in public, because he speaks it better than any of his classmates? Or when a school director laments that after 30 years of running a Spanish-only school, the students who used to arrive speaking IZ now speak only Spanish? Describing, categorizing and quantifying the actions of actors participating in IZ education is not an end in itself, but rather a step towards interpretation and evaluation of these practices, with an eye towards illuminating injustices and strategies for improvement. In this section I analyze shared discourses or ways of thinking that are reflected in the words and actions of IZ education actors, and attempt to trace processes through which these different discourses and ideologies are reproduced, (re)imagined, and repurposed across contexts and social scales. I consider the evaluations and social imaginaries that are audible within these discourses, seeking to understand what social actors perceive positively and negatively as a basis for my own evaluations and strategies for positive social change.

What it means to speak, teach, plan, or research Isthmus Zapotec, and what challenges or desires exist among the social actors engaged in these activities, inevitably varies from actor to actor, and from context to context. These meanings are inherently subjective, and my interpretations of them are additionally influenced by the evaluative orientations that I brought with me to the study, and those I developed during fieldwork. While noting that social meanings can never be represented in a finite or conclusive way, achieving some understanding of what constitutes challenges, successes, and desires for

people in this context is an important step towards a constructivist and locally-informed evaluation of problems and possible improvements. This draws directly on Hymes' (1980) approach to ethnographic monitoring, asking what it comes to mean to succeed or fail in a specific context? (p. 114). My interpretations of these meanings are based on interviews and observations; as throughout this study, I include data and data citations that are representative of practices and discourses that I observed or heard more than once. In this chapter I aim to include extended commentary directly from social actors in order to let their perspectives be represented in their own voices to some extent, in addition to my inevitable framing of their comments.

Section 5.1 gives a glimpse of the diversity of evaluations about Diidxazá in society, comparing different actors' ideologies about Diidxazá as manifest in actions and metalinguistic commentary. Section 5.2 narrows the discussion to the specific site of IZ classes in higher education in order to examine how actors in this setting conceptualize, practice and evaluate the teaching of IZ to non-speakers. Section 5.3 turns to the Camino de la Iguana literacy workshop to explore what it means to be literate in Diidxazá and the desires of actors engaged in writing Diidxazá. In 5.4 I summarize the interpretations gleaned from the social projects considered in this chapter as they relate to my own and others' social imaginaries. I conclude with a discussion of practices of inclusion/exclusion and conviviality as interpretive lenses, which came to inform my eventual strategies and action research practices (chapter 6).

## **5.1 What does "Diidxazá" mean?**

The social meanings of Diidxazá education cannot be extracted from wider social discourses about language in society, and in particular IZ in society. This section examines discourses about and evaluations of IZ communicative practices in general, with special attention to issues of schooling.

### **5.1.1 Saving children from confusion: Diidxazá as a problem**

I was told time and again that Diidxazá is not being passed on in the Isthmus because many people think it is a *dialecto* (a lesser form of communication) and that if children grow up speaking it they will not speak Spanish well, or have a hard time learning Spanish. Through observation it became clear that raising children predominantly in Spanish is currently the practice among a majority of the population. As one mother commented,

LV-4: *Mis hijos, la niña de 12 años y el niño de 9, no hablan el zapoteco. Ya hace como 10 años que los niños que vienen naciendo, a partir de diez años atrás, ya no están hablando, ya no están aprendiendo el zapoteco, ya nosotros los papás como que les hablamos más en el español, para no confundirlos con el zapoteco. Porque a veces cuando nosotros, en mi caso no, que desde niña hable el zapoteco, y aprender el español sí fue un poco complicado, porque, aquí en Juchitán decíamos, en La Ventosa a es..., por el tono del zapoteco, siempre teníamos mal entre el español y zapoteco, la mezcla del español y zapoteco, era muy difícil. Pues la gente que según esto ya sabía mucho, se le parecía como naco, pues hablar así, sí, sí daba un poco de vergüenza.*

LV-4: My children, the 12 year old girl and 9 year old boy, don't speak Zapotec. Now for about 10 years the children who are being born, since 10 years ago, now they're not speaking, now they're not learning Zapotec, now we, the parents, it's like we speak to them more in Spanish, so as not to confuse them with Zapotec. Because sometimes when we, in my case, that since childhood I spoke Zapotec and learning Spanish was a bit complicated, because here in Juchitán we said, in La Ventosa um... because of the tone of Zapotec we always had trouble between

Spanish and Zapotec, the mix of Spanish and Zapotec, it was really difficult. Well the people who apparently already knew a lot, it appeared to them like *naco* [[uncouth, low class]], to speak like that, yes, yes it gave some shame. (IN 131113 LV-4)

Although this mother brought her daughter to an IZ literacy workshop, I observed her interacting only in Spanish with her daughter. The girl did not appear to be very interested, and only attended a few days of the workshop; her mother said she had too much homework (FN 131025). When I visited their home a month later the girl was indeed busy with her homework, in particular her English homework (on that occasion she was struggling to understand a decontextualized paragraph about Amelia Earhart) which she said was always challenging and time consuming (FN 131113). Again and again I observed this practice of using only Spanish with children, as well as the willingness to invest more time in learning English than learning IZ.

While some people acknowledged this stance as their own, it was very common among interviewees to claim a stance in favor of IZ use, while explaining that the majority of other people held a discriminatory stance. As discussed in chapter 3, my identity as a researcher interested in Diidxazá and affiliated with well-known writers and activists very likely contributed to the stance that interviewees took when speaking with me. Over time I observed that many of the people I interviewed who stated they thought it was beneficial for children to learn IZ have in fact raised their own children to be more or less monolingual in Spanish (FN 130912, FN 131101, IN 140917 E-10).

The most common motivation mentioned for not speaking IZ to children is the exclusion and punishment that previous generations experienced in schools and in society as speakers of IZ. This was noted as more common in the past, as in the comments of the mother above (LV-4), but also something that carries on in some places in the present, and certainly in the recent past. A young woman in her early twenties was one of many people who described the legacy of school-based discrimination in an interview:

*H: Cuando estuviste en la escuela en [[un pueblo al rededor de Juchitán]] no había nada de zapoteco en la escuela?*

*LV-2: Nada. Ahí tenía varios compañeros que sí hablaban el zapoteco y para eso deben estar callados toda la clase porque no se les permitía hablar el zapoteco. Entonces se quedaban sin recreo si hablaban, una palabra y se quedaban; entonces ahí fue donde ya se fue perdiendo poco a poco y dice mi mamá que desde que ella estaba, cuando ella empezó ir a la primaria le hicieron lo mismo que ya prohibían desde ese entonces que aprendieran que hablaran el zapoteco dentro del salón, dentro de la escuela más bien. Desde ahí ya como que ya se fue perdiendo.*

H: When you were in the [[primary]] school in [[a town outside of Juchitán]] there was no Zapotec in the school?

LV-2: None. There I had several classmates that spoke Zapotec and because of that they have to be silent for the whole class because they weren't permitted to speak in Zapotec. So they stayed without recess if they spoke, one word and they stayed; so that was where it went being lost bit by bit and my mom says that since she was there, when she began to go to primary school they did the same to her, that they already forbid back then that people would learn, would speak Zapotec inside the classroom, inside the school rather. From there already, like that's how it's been getting lost. (IN 131107 LV-2)

Ironically the director of the primary school that the young woman attended, who had worked there during the time when she was a student, expressed regret that students

in the school are now largely unable to speak IZ, connecting this to parental attitudes and practices rather than school practices.

*E-4: Quién sabe cuál es la idea de que... este... que le diga a los niños: mira, no hables el zapoteco. Porque muchas veces... o... así pasa, ¿no? Te prohíben decirlo porque supuestamente es un dialecto que no está reconocido. En cambio, fuera el inglés, el francés, el alemán, bueno, ya es otra cosa. Pero el zapoteco como que lo prohíbe la gente aquí. Quién sabe por qué, ¿no?*

E-4: Who knows what the idea is that...um...that they say to the children: Look, don't speak Zapotec. Because many times...or... that happens, right? You're forbidden to speak it because supposedly it's a dialect that's not recognized. In contrast, if it were English, French, German, well, then it's another thing. But Zapotec, like people here forbid it. Who knows why, right? (IN 140318 E-4)

In the context of our conversation about multilingualism this director took a stance in favor of using IZ, however in the daily practices of schools and homes around the region, the choice to not use IZ has become normalized and generally goes unquestioned. Families that can afford it are more likely to send their children to a private "bilingual" (Spanish-English) school, whereas the public "bilingual" (Spanish-Zapotec) schools are not sought out.

Exclusion and prejudice in other aspects of daily life, outside of schooling, are also significant factors. A university student from Juchitán explained that although he learned IZ from his grandparents, with his parents and younger sister he uses almost all Spanish, partially for fear of making mistakes, partially due to his mother's desire to learn Spanish and avoid discrimination.

*U-17: De hecho, hasta ahorita se siguen dirigiendo en español. Muy pocas veces hablamos en zapoteco, o cuando entablamos una conversación mi mamá me habla en zapoteco y yo le contesto en español. Entonces tal vez no le hablo en zapoteco porque me da pena equivocarme que no diga bien una palabra.*

*H: Estás más cómodo en español?*

*U-17: En español, sí. Sí, ella a veces prefiere que le hable en español porque--- como mi mamá vende en el mercado, entonces ahí su vida cotidiana es zapoteco, zapoteco. Jamás habla español, más que cuando está en la casa con nosotros. Entonces cuando ella necesita ir al banco o a otro lado es en español y piensa que su español es malo, pero no. Entonces por eso prefiere hablar español con nosotros, porque así aprende el español. Pero por nuestra parte pues nos perjudica porque no practicamos zapoteco.*

U-17: Actually up until now they [[my parents]] keep addressing [[me]] in Spanish. We very rarely speak in Zapotec, or when we start a conversation my mom speaks to me in Zapotec and I answer in Spanish. So maybe I don't speak to her in Zapotec because I'm worried to make a mistake, that I won't say a word well.

H: You're more comfortable in Spanish?

U-17: In Spanish, yes. Yes, she [[my mother]] sometimes prefers that I speak to her in Spanish because-- since my mom sells in the market, so there her daily life is Zapotec, Zapotec. She never speaks Spanish, except when she's in the house with us. So when she needs to go to the bank or another place it's in Spanish and she thinks that her Spanish is bad, but no [[it's not]]. So for that she prefers to speak Spanish with us, because she learns Spanish that way. But for us, well it harms us because we don't practice Zapotec. (IN 141007 U-17)

Beginning with schools, Istmeños encounter many public spaces that are Spanish dominant and which continue to reinforce the message that Spanish is valuable, while IZ is a barrier to success, or a problem in Ruiz's (1984) classic formulation. As discussed below in section 5.1.4, attitudes about mixing or producing non-standard varieties of both

Spanish (in the case of U-17's mother) and IZ (in the case of U-17 himself) are also important factors influencing choices around language use and transmission.

### **5.1.2 My family, my region: Diidxazá as part of being Istmeña/o**

For many speakers and learners, Diidxazá is not a problem, but rather an important part of an Istmeño ontology, a discourse that includes elements of both language-as-right and language-as-resource orientations (Ruiz, 1984). In discussing Diidxazá, it was described not so much as what defined them as an individual, but rather as a defining feature of their family and the region, which by extension made it a defining feature for them. These people generally did not objectify IZ, nor talk about the importance of "being Zapotec" as individuals, rather their discussions and valuations of Diidxazá were embedded in social relations and the spaces of their daily lives, . People who adopt this social or group orientation, whereby IZ is valued as part of the regional speech community, recognize IZ as a resource and right for Istmeños within local spaces, as well as a reality of daily communication. When discussing why they value IZ, or are engaged in teaching or using it in some way, the most common response across generations, gender, and location was related to family, social ties, and place. For many people IZ is viewed as something that belongs in the Isthmus, and among Istmeños, and should not be denigrated as has happened so often. The young woman who described the exclusion in her schooling is now training to be a teacher, and commented that she thinks those kinds of practices should stop:

*LV-2 : yo creo que, algo para mí que sería importante es que no se prohibieran ese tipo de prohibirle a los niños, a las personas que hablen el zapoteco cuando*

*es algo de nuestra región; [...] para mí es importante que ellos sepan y no que les estén prohibiendo que lo estén castigando por aprender algo que es de ellos, que es de nuestra tierra.*

LV-2: I believe that, something that for me would be important is that they don't prohibit that kind of, prohibit the children, the people that speak Zapotec, when it's something from our region. [...] For me it's important that they know and that they're not prohibiting them, that they're [[not]] punishing them for learning something that is theirs, that is from our territory. (IN 131107 LV-2)

A young man from Xadani, where IZ is spoken by a larger percentage of the population, did not feel the need to defend his use of the language, but readily described it as a positive part of his daily life. When asked to define Zapotec he said:

*X-1: Yo siempre defino la palabra zapoteco como esa palabra sicaru que significa hermoso, bonito, porque al fin y al cabo es hermoso hablar zapoteco, convivir con otras personas.*

X-1: I always define the word Zapotec like that word sicaru that means beautiful, pretty, because ultimately it's beautiful to speak Zapotec, interact/ socialize with other people. (IN 131115 X-1)

Being able to "*convivir*"-- live with, interact and communicate-- with people of all generations in the Isthmus, as monolingual Spanish speakers are not able to do, is valuable for him. Other people of younger generations commented that they use IZ most when speaking with grandparents, and that they enjoy this interaction (e.g. IN 131113 LV-3, IN 150705 UT-4).

A common way to refer to one's place of origin in the Isthmus is to say that that is where one's "*ombligo*" (literally navel/ belly button; in context the meaning is umbilical

cord) is buried. German Ramírez, an IZ translator and lawyer who is from the seventh section of Juchitán-- the area known for use of IZ, poverty, and violence-- defends his place of origin in relation to the family ties that he holds there:

*GR: Crecí en Juchitán, sí, en la séptima. Así es. La séptima sección y pues ahí, ahí está mi vida. Ahí está... dijeran los paisanos: está enterrado mi ombligo y este... a veces me siento mal cuando hablan mal de la séptima porque pues yo me siento parte. Yo, yo soy de ahí, ahí crecí, ahí tengo a mi familia. Ahí me casé, ahí nació mi hijo, de ahí es mi mamá. Son mis abuelos, mi abuela, a excepción de que mi padre no es de la séptima, es de la sexta. Entre sexta y quinta pero... me siento más orgulloso de ser de la séptima que de otra sección. Así es.*

GR: I grew up in Juchitán, yes, in the seventh. That's right. The seventh section and well there, there is my life. There is... my countrymen would say, there my navel is buried, and um... Sometimes I feel bad when they speak badly about the seventh because well, I feel part of it. I, I am from there, I grew up there, I have my family there. I got married there, my son was born there, my mother is from there. [There] are my grandfathers, my grandmother, with the exception that my father is not from the seventh, he's from the sixth. Between the sixth and the fifth, but... I feel more proud to be from the seventh than from another section. That's how it is. (IN 140926 GR)

Although it is not uncommon for Istmeños to go away for schooling or work, as Ramírez has done, the strong discourse of place and family-based pride that he expresses is widespread, and many people return to the Isthmus at least for vacations, if not to live.

IZ is not always part of discourses about pride of origin, but it often is. In several of the brief conversations I had with moto-taxi drivers (small 3-wheeled vehicles that are the most common form of transportation within towns in the Isthmus), after giving the usual explanation that I am learning Diidxazá, I would ask "Do you speak IZ?" "I was born

here" was a reply I heard multiple times (Memo 131103, FN 140514), suggesting that being born in the Isthmus means speaking IZ, despite the fact that for many people that is no longer the case.

Among the younger generations that are not learning IZ, some people have become motivated to acquire the language as young adults. Unlike some people who state that young people in the speech community no longer learn IZ, these would-be learners express familial and place-based pride, and often see learning IZ as a resource. Rather than accept the discourse that young people should and do not learn IZ, they aim to join a local community of practice where speaking IZ is part of the shared repertoire. This desire to maintain participation in the local speech community, and also to play a role in negotiating how the speech community functions is illustrated by the comments of a young woman from San Blas who was attending IZ classes in the UABJO:

*U-6: Ahorita lo que me interesa es poder hablarlo, no importa cómo pero hablarlo, y poderme comunicar con la gente, ir al mercado y poder hablar solo el zapoteco. Por el momento no me interesa ser muy científica y saber todas las reglas y todo eso, lo que me interesa ahorita es poder comunicarme.*

U-6: Right now what I'm interested in is to be able to speak it, it doesn't matter how [[well]], but to speak it, and to be able to communicate with people, go to the market and be able to speak only Zapotec. For the moment I'm not interested in being really scientific and knowing all the rules and all that, what interests me right now is being able to communicate. (IN 131022 U-6)

Although she turned to a formal education institution to learn more IZ, her motivation is not to use it in an educational or work setting, but to speak it in the markets-- the vibrant, chaotic hubs of social and economic exchange that exist in almost all towns across the Isthmus. People from towns too small to have their own market travel to the larger towns;

in the two main markets of Juchitán buying, selling and gossiping begins well before dawn and continues late into the night. For some learners, current spaces of daily IZ use such as this emerge most saliently in their discussions of their goals and desires. She went on to comment,

*Bueno pues el zapoteco así en palabras coloquiales pues es la lengua de mi abuelita, la lengua de mi madre y con el hecho de ser la lengua de las personas que me dieron la vida, por las que yo estoy aquí, se vuelve un legado y una herencia muy importante.*

Well Zapotec in everyday words well it's the language of my granny, the language of my mother and with the fact of being the language of the people who gave me life, because of who I am here, it becomes a very important legacy and a heritage. (IN 131022 U-6)

Her valuation of IZ and desire to develop beyond her passive bilingual abilities is rooted in her sense of family and place, and contrasts to the ideology that caused her parents to discourage her from learning IZ as a child.

Another young adult learner described his interrupted acquisition of IZ before his mother migrated to Mexico City for work, a process of language acquisition based in and motivated by *convivencia*, the social life of the community.

*UH-2: Tengo una anécdota de mi primera palabra en zapoteco. Estaba--- mi abuela es Na Anastacia<sup>21</sup>, de Unión Hidalgo, esposa de Ta Nicandro Huave. Su, su hija es Na Hilda Guzmán Villalobos. Y llegaba Na Alejandra de Chicapa. Estaban las tres señoras ya grandes cuando yo a lo mejor tenía tres, cuatro años. Esa edad--- en esa edad yo viví en Unión Hidalgo. Antes de entrar a la primaria yo viví en Unión Hidalgo con mi abuela, mis tías--- mi tía. Mi mamá trabajaba en*

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<sup>21</sup> "Na" is señora and "Ta" is señor in IZ; both terms can be used within Spanish conversations and by Spanish speakers to address elderly people.

*México, entonces... [...] Entonces llegaba esta--- la Na Alejandra y platicaba mucho en zapoteco. Yo seguía jugando con mis cosas, [...] Pero este, yo lo que--- escuchaba toda la conversación, cómo hablaban en zapoteco las señoras. Y curioso porque la señora Alejandra cada que se sorprendía decía: Bīaa guuyu, bīaa guuyu [[Look at that (with sense of surprise)]]. Entonces eso se me quedó muy grabado, entonces cuando yo hablaba puro español, puro español, y de repente: ¿cómo dice Na Alejandra? Bīaa guuyu, yo decía de chiquito, ¿no? Entonces ya, ya tenía relación con el zapoteco, lo entendía--*

UH-2: I have a story about my first word in Zapotec. I was-- my grandmother is Na Anastacia, from Unión Hidalgo, wife of Ta Nicandro Huave. Her, her daughter is Na Hilda Guzmán Villalobos. And Na Alejandra de Chicapa arrived. The three señoras were already old when I probably was three, four years old. That age-- at that age I lived in Union Hidalgo. Before going to primary school, I lived in Union Hidalgo with my grandmother, my aunts-- my aunt. My mom worked in Mexico City, so... [...] So this, Na Alejandra arrived and talked a lot in Zapotec. I continued to play with my things, [...] But um, I what-- listened to the whole conversation, how the señoras spoke in Zapotec. And it was curious because señora Alejandra every [[time]] that she was surprised said: *Bīaa guuyu, bīaa guuyu* [[Look at that (with sense of surprise)]]. So that stayed really engraved in me. So when I spoke only Spanish, only Spanish, and suddenly: how does Na Alejandra talk? *Bīaa guuyu*, I said as a kid, right. So already, already I had a relation to Zapotec, I understood it-- (IN 140515 UH-2)

Both using Diidxazá and some of the motivations for learning or attempting to learn it are thus closely tied to the daily life of people in the Isthmus. Diidxazá is part of the shared repertoire that makes up the Istmeño speech community, maintaining important functional purposes. Although there are a range of lifestyles and economic conditions among people in the Isthmus, cohabitating in large extended families, regularly collaborating with neighbors for social and economic purposes, and obligatorily greeting everyone you pass in the street, preferably by name remain near-universal practices across socio-economic classes. Younger generations are increasingly communicating in

Spanish as they engage in these community practices, however IZ remains an important part of the home and community language ecology.

### 5.1.3 A treasure: Diidxazá as personal and cultural capital

In contrast to the speakers and learners who orient towards local ties when discussing Diidxazá, some people orient towards IZ as a source of social or symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) in relation to domains outside of the Isthmus. While not mutually exclusive of the local/ community discourse described above, this discourse often takes on a more individualist tone, identifying opportunities for scholarships or other positions specific to speakers of Indigenous languages, and the interest of outsiders (such as myself) in IZ as motivations for valuing the language and/or learning to speak it.

The director of a bilingual school where IZ is taught one hour per week and occasionally promoted through other activities in the school, commented

*E-8: ...la lengua diidxazá es un tesoro, es un valor importante para nosotros.  
[Así-]*

*H: [Sí.]*

*E-8: Así lo veo, Haley, yo así lo veo. Pero si niego mi tierra, niego...mi lengua por ejemplo, o dijera idiomas cualesquiera... ¡No! no, para nada. Nuestro zapoteco ha caminado muchos lugares. De veras, ha caminado mucho, ha alcanzado lugares, espacio más allá en otros, en otros países donde ha llegado. Sus costumbres han ido a Alemania igual, ¿no? Este pues... sus bailes, ¿no? Y esa es una ventaja del zapoteco porque pues... está creciendo. Y nosotros los que estamos acá, no le estamos dando importancia. Bueno, ¿qué estamos haciendo? Y decimos que somos de Juchitán, somos zapotecas. No, ese es... así podría decir que... sí, el zapoteco es bueno, bonito y algo. Es un tesoro divino para nosotros, ¿no?*

E-8:...the Diidxazá language is a treasure, it's an important value for us. [So-]

H: [Yes]

E-8: That's how I see it Haley, I see it like that. But if I deny my homeland, I deny... my language for example, or say whatever languages... No! No, definitely not. Our Zapotec has walked many places. Truly, it has walked a lot, it has reached places, space beyond in other, in other countries where it has arrived. Its customs have gone to Germany too, right? Um so... its dances, right? And that is an advantage of Zapotec because well... it's growing. And those of us who are here, we're not giving it importance. Well, what are we doing? And we say that we're from Juchitán, we're Zapotecs. No, that is... so I could say that... yes, Zapotec is good, pretty and something. It's a divine treasure for us, right? (IN 140513 E-8)

This teacher/ director links the value of IZ to its presence in international spaces, evaluating the disinterest of people in the region in comparison with the interest of people from outside the region. Additionally he commodifies the language itself as a "treasure" which has great value, and is part of "being Zapotecs". These comments stand out in contrast to his acknowledgement in other moments of the interview that it is not of great interest to all of his teaching staff nor to many of the parents of his students, and contrast as well with my observations of the minimal use of IZ within the school (FN 131218, FN 140714).

This discourse of valuing IZ as a part of identity, as viewed from the outside, appears especially common among younger, educated or socially mobile people. Several of the young adults who attended literacy workshops or classes at the UABJO had spent time studying or working outside of the Isthmus and had encountered people who asked why they could not speak IZ, if they were from the Isthmus. Upon returning, they hoped

to acquire IZ, now seeing it as part of an Istmeño identity (IN 131017 U-3, IN 131116 U-7, IN 140717 U-12). A university student who grew up in San Blas told me that although her parents had not wanted her to learn IZ, she paid attention and learned it, and now she argues that they need to teach her younger brother because of the scholarships available to speakers of Indigenous languages. Her greatest motivation is to travel and get out of her town, and she sees IZ as a possible resource that she has to achieve that goal (IN 140717 UT-1). A university student from Tehuantepec, who was not able to speak IZ and had not (yet) traveled outside the Isthmus, began to attend IZ classes, commenting to me that speaking a "mother tongue" could be useful for him outside of the region (Memo 130415). Both mobile and would-be mobile young adults are thus seeing IZ as possible capital in spaces outside the region where it is actually spoken.

It is often unclear if or to what degree one needs to be able to speak IZ in order to garner this cultural capital. Applying for one of the government grants for Indigenous students does not always require the ability to speak the language of the community, and speaking IZ is not a prerequisite to being Istmeño for many young people. Other symbols of regional pride, such as traditional clothing and music, are widely popular among all generations, and offer a faster and more visible avenue towards an Istmeño identity. A young woman studying at the UABJO in Tehuantepec who grew up in a town just outside of the IZ speaking zone (although her great grandparents were from Tehuantepec) had taken an interest in IZ as well as traditional clothing, and had participated in a few IZ classes. She won a coveted scholarship to spend a year at a College in the US, and

explained to me that her interest in IZ was one of the things she included in her application, which may have helped its success:

*U-10: Al momento de estar rellorando la solicitud de la universidad de Kalamazoo te piden ciertas cosas [...]. Y una de esas era la forma en que tú ibas a, a enseñar el español. Inclusive también te... te piden tus intereses, que describas lo que a ti te gusta. Lo que te interesa, cursos... cosas que has hecho. Entonces, ahí me eché unas cosas de zapoteco. Y en el español pues también. Pues dije que lo voy a enseñar de una manera que pueda sacarlos más o menos. Eh... cosas que se puedan apegar al contexto real. Y también retomando un poco lo que es la cultura istmeña y obviamente zapoteca...*

U-10: When you are filling out the application for the university of Kalamazoo they ask you for certain things [...]. And one of those was the form in which you would teach Spanish. Also they ask for your interests, that you describe what you like. What interests you, classes... things that you have done. So there I threw in a few things about Zapotec. And in Spanish well also. Well I said that I will teach in a way that could get them out [[ahead]] more or less. Um... things that they could attach to the real context. And also taking up again a bit of what is the Istmeño culture, and obviously Zapotec [[culture]]... (IN 140513 U-10)

The message that Indigenous languages are assets that the outside world is interested in has been taken up-- although certainly not universally-- in the Isthmus, and appears to be part of the imaginary of some would-be mobile youth.

This discourse has been transmitted from international sources (linguists, media about language endangerment, "multicultural" events, etc.), national sources promoting the (post-2003) rights of Indigenous language speakers and the official status of Indigenous languages (the INALI, the *Centro para el desarrollo Indígena* (CDI), researchers from elsewhere in Mexico), and a few local sources (the Camino de la Iguana, the *Comité Melendres*, bilingual rappers and other cultural organizations). My presence and stance as a student of IZ and education researcher promoting multilingual

programs reproduced and amplified this discourse on numerous occasions. One example comes from an event held in the Isthmus but organized by researchers from elsewhere in Mexico in promotion of the study of Istmeño language and culture, where I gave a talk on IZ literacy for a mixed audience of teachers, teacher trainees, researchers, and cultural organizations.

I begin with a brief introduction of myself using IZ, stating what I study, where I teach, that I'm glad they're here and will now share a few words with them. These 4 sentences of basic Diidxazá evoke a spontaneous round of applause from the audience that takes me completely off guard, and I forget to translate what I've said for the half of the audience from other parts of Mexico that don't understand IZ-- instead I just launch into my talk in Spanish, with some examples in IZ throughout. In the question period it appears that my use of IZ had more impact on the audience than anything I said in the talk. Several people comment about how impressed they were that an outsider could speak with confidence, saying that it is shameful that local youth are not learning, and that I am teaching them a lesson. Another audience member asks how many languages I speak, and whether it's true that speaking IZ in addition to Spanish could help Istmeños learn other languages like English? She goes on to comment that they should speak IZ to their children so that they can learn other languages more readily. I respond that it's true that learning additional languages can be easier for multilinguals, but quickly add that speaking IZ can have its own intrinsic value, and mention the easiest examples of the current scholarships and jobs available to Indigenous language speakers in Mexico, such as translation and interpretation. (FN 150702)

Only after the event did I have time to reflect and notice that I was reproducing an outsider discourse of value by mentioning jobs and scholarships, although I had been trying to problematize her idea that IZ is valuable as a path to English.

Whether as an advantage in learning globally valued languages, a form of symbolic capital that increases access to scholarships, or a skill for obtaining work in the

new climate of official language recognition, there are numerous people who participate in individualist ways of valuing Diidxazá. They imagine use of, or affiliation with, IZ to be a resource for them that may increase their material well-being inside and outside of the Isthmus.

#### **5.1.4 *Zapochueco*, *Diidxazá do'*, and variation: Normative discourses**

Beyond the broad orientations that value or devalue Diidxazá, there are a variety of discourses about the quality and internal diversity of language use. Critiques of current language use and interest in a pure or pre-colonial variety of IZ often arise in talk and practices around the language. A pure, uncontaminated imaginary of IZ is popular, in spite of the centuries of evolution, including unequal contact with Spanish, that have created "syncretic" (or fluid) language practices like those observed in Nahuatl communities in central Mexico (Hill & Hill, 1986). The diversity of IZ in different towns across the Isthmus is also a topic of discussion in IZ education settings in particular, as people question which variety is "correct" and thus the most appropriate to be taught (as discussed further in 5.2 and 5.3).

The practice of mixing IZ and Spanish is commonly critiqued, both in the speech of others and one's own speech. A young man who has grown up largely outside of the region and wants to improve his limited IZ abilities expressed concern with how many Spanish words are borrowed into Diidxazá. He calls everyday use of the language "*Zapochueco*", or broken Zapotec, because it incorporates many Spanish loans (FN 140514). Many IZ-Spanish bilinguals who have spent their whole lives in the Isthmus

devalue their own language abilities and ascribe to an ideology that good speakers are monolinguals, or parallel monolinguals (Heller, 1999). In a conversation with an assistant librarian in the Casa de la Cultura in Juchitán he tells me that he speaks IZ "more or less", and comments that Victor Cata speaks "authentic" IZ. I ask what makes it authentic, and he replies "*ningún palabra en español*" (no word in Spanish) (FN 130815). As one highly literate education administrator in his 60s discussed in an interview:

*E-11: En la escuela aprendí el español porque hasta los siete u ocho años, yo nomás hablaba en zapoteco. Mi mundo era mi casa, mis amigos de la... del rumbo. Mis amigos cercanos del barrio, la escuela, en la tarde a cuidar mis chivos que iban a pastar al río y todo era en zapoteco. Y ya en la escuela fue que empecé a aprender español y hasta hoy a veces se me atraviesan unas con otras por ahí, pero... y finalmente y lo peor del asunto es que ni hablo bien el español ni hablo bien el zapoteco.*

*H: [Risas] ¿Cómo, por qué dices eso?*

*E-11: Porque si tú has observado bien, escuchas bien, el zapoteco de nosotros, nuestro diidxazá ya no es totalmente auténtico, original. Ya lleva por ahí--- entre diez palabras que decimos hay una por lo menos que es en [español]---*

*H: [Diidxastiá]<sup>22</sup>.*

*E-11: Diidxastiá. Así es.*

*H: ¿Y eso para ti es signo de mal?*

*E-11: Pues lo ideal hubiese sido que habláramos la lengua tal y como--- que la conserváramos lo mejor posible. Pero es tanta la contaminación, es tanta la aculturación, es tanta influencia de la--- del español que te repito, escúchanos hablar de repente hay dos tres palabras en español o más.*

*E-11: In school I learned Spanish because until 7 or 8 years old, I only spoke in Zapotec. My world was my house, my friends from the... the area. My close friends from the neighborhood, the school, in the afternoon taking care of my goats that I took to graze by the river, and everything was in Zapotec. And it was*

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<sup>22</sup> Diidxastiá means Spanish, or the language of Castilla, in IZ.

in school that I started to learn Spanish and up til today sometimes some [words] trip me up, but... and finally and the worst part is that I speak neither Spanish nor Zapotec well.

H: [laughs] How, why do you say that?

E-11: Because if you have observed well, listen well, our Zapotec, our Diidxazá, now isn't totally authentic, original, now it has there-- among 10 words that we say, there's one at least that is in [Spanish.]

H: [Diidxastiá.]

E-11: Diidxastiá. That's it.

H: And this for you is a sign of something bad?

E-11: Well the ideal would have been that we would speak the language just so-- that we would conserve it the best possible. But the contamination is so much, the acculturation is so much, there's so much influence of the-- of Spanish, I repeat, listen to us speak, there may be 2 or 3 words in Spanish or more. (IN 140925 E-11)

He negatively evaluates the pervasive practice of translanguaging through use of Spanish and IZ, in his own speech and that of others, much as speakers of Mexicano (Nahuatl) documented by Hill and Hill (1986) who idealize "legitimate Mexicano". Numerous scholars have critiqued such a monolingual paradigm that demeans speakers who do not perform like idealized "native" or "L1" speakers, and assumes that languages should be kept separate in schooling and society (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Jim Cummins, 2009; Heller, 2007; Pennycook, 2001), yet it remains common in popular and academic discourses and practices. As Hill and Hill note, "while academic linguistics claims to have abandoned its prescriptive heritage (in spite of preserving some of its terminology), unabashed adherence to a degenerationist, purist theory of language change and language

contact is widespread in vernacular linguistic thought" (p. 56). Self-devaluation among speakers of IZ and other marginalized languages can lead to further marginalization and weakening of a speech community, causing lack of confidence among bilinguals as well as exclusion of emergent or potential members of the language community (Meek, 2010; Muehlmann, 2008).

Critiquing perceived flaws in language use is more common than praising language use in the Isthmus. However, a normative discourse of "*Diidxazá do*" is used by select actors who take a strong activist stance on promoting IZ use, and define this term as meaning "good" or "pure" Diidxazá. This discourse also orients towards purist notions of language use, avoiding Spanish influence as a way of raising the status of IZ. I first heard the term "*Diidxazá do*" from two young, linguistically-trained activists from Union Hidalgo who used it as a way to refer to the kind of IZ that they thought should be preserved, in contrast to the IZ in common use (IN 140514 UH-2, FN 140801). "*Do*" is a dependent adjectival suffix that can mean sacred, refined, immense, peaceful, or calm, among other interpretations, depending on the context. The most common use of "*do*" is in the words "*bido*" (saint) and "*nisado*" (sea/ ocean). The use of "*do*" in connection to the word Diidxazá appears to be a fairly recent practice, or at least one that has been limited to literary and activist circles. After hearing it from these young men, I began to ask other people if they had heard the term and how they would define it. People involved in IZ literature and teaching generally interpreted the term in a similar way, in relation to the quality of language use (e.g. IN 140901 VRP, IN 141121 VC). People outside of these circles did not readily interpret the term in this way, however. A rancher

in his 40s interpreted it as the kind of gentle speech you would use to reason with a child, before giving up and speaking directly or angrily (IN 141119 LV-9). A grandmother in her 60s said she had never heard the word, and did not have an interpretation for it (IN 140802 LV-8).

In February of 2015 a group of writers, education administrators and political figures launched a campaign in Juchitán to promote the use and teaching of IZ, and named their campaign "*Gusisácanu diidxazá do' stinu*" (Let's strengthen our Diidxazá do'). They began to disseminate posters and publicity on-line and around Juchitán, host workshops, and put publicity on several radio stations and a billboard at the main crossroads of the city. Figure 18 shows the poster announcing the launch of the campaign. The brand of the campaign, which was the first thing the organizers created (IN 150321 VT), shows a recognizable adaptation of the head that was used to represent the city of Juchitán on the Mendocino codice, and is currently the logo for the Casa de la Cultura as well. Every word in the poster appears in both Spanish and IZ, including words that are always produced in Spanish in popular oral usage, and the IZ text is larger than the Spanish text throughout. Use of IZ in official and commercial posters is not uncommon, but it is typically used in complementary ways to Spanish, and only for certain words as discussed in section 4.2. The use of terms like "*beeu guiropa*" (second month, i.e. *Febrero*), "*Ruaa yoola'hui stinu*" (mouth of our central house, i.e. *Explanada de Palacio Municipal*) is not common in everyday IZ use, showing that the poster attempts a purist register in favor of maximum IZ use, regardless of the translations that this may require.



Figure 18. Campaign poster "Gusisácanu diidxazá do' stinu", disseminated on-line and in print (February 2015)

This campaign is likely to continue until the next mayoral election in 2016, making the term "*Diidxazá do*" much more visible, and presumably more salient among IZ users, although it is too soon to determine much of its effect to date (summer 2015).

Among IZ users there are also discussions about different pronunciation and lexical choices evident in different parts of the Isthmus. There are 4 main recognized varieties in the Isthmus, and other smaller differences from one town to another. By far the most spoken variety is that of Juchitán and surrounding towns, with a sizable number of speakers of the San Blas variety, and far fewer speakers in Ixtepec and Ixtaltepec/ La

Mata (as discussed in section 4.1). Closely interwoven with paradigms of monolingual speakers and pure language use is the assumed superiority of a standard or universalized language variety that erases the diversity within language communities. Categorizing forms of communication as separate languages and dialects (and their speakers as separate ethnic groups) has been a tool of colonialism, creating hierarchies and promoting ultimate assimilation (Calvet, 1974; Errington, 2001). There is no authority policing the use of IZ in schools or society in the Isthmus, and yet some teachers behave as if there were, following an underlying prescriptivist paradigm. Antonio Ortíz, a retired teacher from San Blas and speaker of the San Blas variety of IZ, commented to me that the teachers who are teaching Zapotec in schools in San Blas are using the dialect of Juchitán. They think that the dialect with a larger population is more correct than theirs, and so should be used in schools (IN 140710 AO).

Most people who I spoke or interacted with adopted a more inclusive posture towards dialect varieties. Many people consider dialect diversity not to be a problem-- all varieties are mutually intelligible-- although the numerical dominance of the Juchitán variety seems to give it normative status in some instances. I observed a bilingual school director from Ixtaltepec talking with parents in Juchitán in IZ, and he later told me that he adapts his variety of IZ to speak with them (FN, IN 140114 E-3). The Camino de la Iguana workshops are explicitly accepting of different varieties; Victor Cata goes out of his way to include the varieties of the students who are present (FN 131011, FN 140211) (as discussed further in section 5.3). During a workshop with UABJO students in Tehuantepec he addressed dialect diversity explicitly, saying "*Hay que ajustar el alfabeto*

*a sus hablas*" (You have to adjust the alphabet to your speech) (FN & Audio 140111 25:44). A few minutes later there was a discussion about different ways of saying tomorrow; "*guixt*" and "*ixt*". A young woman from San Blas commented confidently "*Yo digo ixt*" (I say *ixt*), and a young man from Juchitán sitting nearby teased her, saying "*Lo dices bien?*" (*Do you say it well/ correctly?*) (FN & Audio 140111 29:40). Even where there are no explicit dialectal norms being articulated or enforced, this remains an area of negotiation and possible conflict among social actors who have different ideals in relation to Diidxazá.

#### **5.1.5 Summary: Between persistent prejudice and emergent multilingual pride**

There are a variety of discourses both valuing and devaluing IZ use in the Isthmus, articulated in relation to local and external influences, and individual and communal motivations. While many people note that they have experienced exclusion and prejudice in relation to IZ use, among some of the younger generation there is marked positive valuation and desire to be part of the IZ speech community. There are also discourses and practices at local, national, and international levels that are valuing IZ use both rhetorically and through material means such as scholarships and jobs.

Among actors who are engaged in teaching, learning, or otherwise promoting IZ use there is widespread critique of current translanguaging practices, co-existing with interest in an imagined pure variety of IZ. For most people the diversity of dialects in the region is not seen as a problem, although it does lead to occasional negotiation of norms, with those of Juchitán often winning out. Discourses of standardization, purism, and

ethnic authenticity are present in IZ teaching and promotion, however these discourses exist alongside others which continue to devalue any IZ use, as well as those which ground IZ use in the unexceptional, yet essential relations of daily life. For many people Diidxazá is still something we do, a daily action, while for others it is an objectified thing to attain or show off, an index of identity approved by outside standards. Actors engaged in teaching and learning IZ must negotiate multiple ideological currents, as the discourses of Diidxazá as an exceptional treasure, as a handicap, and as an everyday way of being emerge in education practices, as elaborated below.

## **5.2 What does teaching people to speak Diidxazá mean?**

The issues of dialect variation, close contact between IZ and Spanish, and monolingual norms described in section 5.1 provide an important backdrop to the question of the social meanings of teaching and learning IZ. The use of IZ in formal education appears to be increasing, supported in part by the *Plan para la transformación de educación de Oaxaca* (PTEO) in public schooling, and by non-formal workshops and promotion activities initiated by local and outside actors. This represents an important opportunity for shifting the power balances that have devalued IZ speakers for generations. However, due to the purist and monolingual ideologies through which languages have traditionally been approached in formal schooling, it also represents a possible source of exclusion.

In this section I explore how the wider social discourses that orient towards monolingual norms in education are contested in the practices of two IZ teachers in the community of practice of the Faculty of Languages of the UABJO. For these teachers,

teaching Diidxazá is certainly linked to the transmission of heritage and traditional or "authentic" forms of communication, but ultimately greater priority is given to the creation of an inclusive learning community and adapting to the evolving multilingual realities of the Isthmus. Rather than focusing on the ideologies of purism (Dorian, 1994; Whaley, 2011) and essentialism (Heller & Duchene, 2007; Leonard, 2012) that have been explored in endangered language settings elsewhere, I am choosing to focus this analysis on the alternatives that are present in the practices and discourses of a young female teacher and a senior male teacher. These pluralist, convivial social imaginaries may point the way towards a more inclusive multilingual education in the Isthmus.

### **5.2.1 Discourses of collaboration and inclusion**

Kiara Rios Rios is a teacher in her 20s from La Mata, one of the smaller villages in the Isthmus where the *binni guiatl* dialect of the municipality of Ixtaltepec is spoken. While training to be an English teacher in the Faculty of Languages of the UABJO in the state capital, Oaxaca City, she was invited to give IZ classes, something that she never expected to do. She was at first unsure of her ability to take up this offer, as her own schooling was entirely in Spanish and English, and she had never learned writing, grammar, or any of the other classic scholastic aspects of Diidxazá. She discussed how, with encouragement from members of the university community, she overcame this uncertainty in her abilities as a speaker and teacher:

*KR: Sí les dije; la verdad este de, yo hablo pero nunca he estudiado como escribirlo [...] entonces, y les soy sincera y les digo; no todas las palabras en español están en zapoteco, y algunas cosas del español ya se han traído al zapoteco, y se han zapotequizado. Y esa palabra fue muy famosa, y 'ya se*

*zapotequizó', y todo eso. Y entonces, fui sincera [...] para que, bueno yo misma, por mi seguridad lo hice yo creo, este para que no me preguntaran tal vez si 'por qué no hay' [...] entonces y mostré mucha seguridad también y entonces, cuando [[una autoridad universitaria]] dijo que iba dar clase de zapoteco pues para mí ya no era motivo de pena, sino que al contrario...*

KR: Yes I told them; truthfully um, I speak but I've never studied how to write it [...] So, I'm sincere with them and I tell them: Not all the words in Spanish are in Zapotec, and some things from Spanish have now been brought to Zapotec, and they've been zapotec-ized. And that word was really famous, 'Now it's been zapotec-ized ', and all that. And so, I was sincere [...] so that, well myself, for my security I did it I think, um so that they wouldn't ask me maybe 'why there isn't...' [...] So and I showed a lot of security too and so when [[a university authority]] said I would give Zapotec classes, well then it wasn't a cause of shame for me, rather the opposite... (IN 131230 KR)

After observing a sample of her classes over three semesters, conducting one semi-structured interview and numerous conversations, I observed that her approach to teaching IZ is pluralist and participatory in many ways. Her goal is for her students to be able to communicate, and thus she focuses on how people actually speak and not on an idealized or pure norm of the language, adopting an open attitude to the close contact between IZ and Spanish. Discussing how she teaches her students to say "I'm good", she commented:

*KR: ...nua bien, nua galán, nua bien, es lo mismo... ajá! [...] Estoy bien pues. Entonces, digo no hay problema porque van a escuchar personas les digo si van para allá [...]van escuchar a personas platicando 'bien' y entonces es como, es aceptado pues, y está hablando el zapoteco, mjú!*

KR: ...nua good, nua galán, nua good,<sup>23</sup> it's the same... uhuh! [...] 'I'm good.' So I say there's no problem because they're going to hear people, I tell them if they go there [...] they'll hear people saying 'good' and so it's like, it's accepted, they're speaking Zapotec, uhuh! (IN 131230 KR)

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<sup>23</sup> My translation attempts to follow the intent of the phrase, where the Spanish word 'bien' has been translated to English 'good', while the word 'galán' that is widely viewed as a Zapotec word meaning 'good' remains original. (*Galán* is actually an older Spanish loan from the word *galante* or *galán*, which has been relexicalized to mean 'good' in current Zapotec use.)

Students catch on to this attitude and are very participative, often playing with the language in her classes. Typical class activities include games, songs, role-plays and competitions between students. A second semester student described her experience in the class, saying "*Y pues... mi experiencia en la clase de zapoteco--- me he divertido mucho. Mucho, mucho. Y siento que he aprendido bastante hasta ahorita*". (I've enjoyed myself a lot. A lot, a lot. And I feel that I've learned quite a bit up til now) (IN 140508 UO-1). When asked about the learning materials used in the class, the student noted "*...todo es improvisado. Porque realmente no hay recursos así que ya estén para aprender zapoteco. Entonces, ella... ella va haciendo este... ya viste esas--- las canciones que pone para aprendernos las partes del cuerpo. [...] Las canciones de inglés las pasa a zapoteco*". (...everything is improvised. Because really there aren't resources that already exist to learn Zapotec. So she...she [[Kiara]] is making um... You already saw those-- the songs she uses so we'll learn body parts. [...] Songs in English, she puts them in Zapotec) (IN 140508 UO-1). Figure 19 shows Rios Rios and students socializing after class.



**Figure 19. Classroom ambiance in IZ classes (photo October 2014)**

In addition to creating her own materials, Rios Rios regularly has students create materials that are shared with the rest of the class and future classes, including flashcards and powerpoint presentations, as I observed on multiple occasions:

In their final presentations 1st semester students give an oral presentation describing themselves and their families in Zapotec, accompanied by powerpoint slides with text and relevant pictures. Many students include Spanish words here and there for words they haven't learned or haven't been able to find. A few include English words instead of Spanish. Kiara sits in the audience, gives one or two pronunciation corrections, but largely leaves the floor to her students. (FN 140120)

She also has her students participate in events in the university that previously consisted of students of French, Italian, and other European or Asian languages, such as singing Christmas carols and presenting IZ poetry, encouraging them to show their abilities in public (FN 150603).

Rios Rios adopts a flexible approach to spelling, having students write how the words sound to them in order to aid their memory.

*KR: yo personalmente soy muy exigente en español, pero en zapoteco no, incluso eso le digo a mis alumnos de que no se preocupen tanto, [...] les digo 'no se preocupen tanto por la escritura porque incluso entre, entre, entre los zapotecos mismos nos estamos todavía poniendo de acuerdo como escribirlos' les digo, [...] me interesa más que lo utilicen así hablada a que lo escriban bien, siempre digo eso, no sé si estoy bien, pero siempre les digo eso, que no, no me preocupa tanto la escritura.*

KR: Personally I'm really demanding in Spanish, but in Zapotec no, even I say to my students that they shouldn't worry so much [...] I tell them not to worry so much about writing because even among, among, among Zapotecs ourselves we're still agreeing how to write the words, I tell them [...] I'm more interested in them using it in speaking than writing well, I always say that. I don't know if I'm right, but I always tell them that, that no, I'm not worried much about writing. (IN 131230 KR)

Despite her flexible attitude to spelling and translanguaging with her students, she herself is very interested in improving her knowledge of Diidxazá writing and vocabulary, taking up opportunities to attend literary events and to consult with older speakers. Literacy and formal language study were not a pre-requisite for the development of her successful classes, however.

### **5.2.2 Legitimacy of local diversity**

Another goal that Rios Rios has for her students is awareness and acceptance of the dialect diversity within Isthmus Zapotec. Despite the fact that most published materials are in the dialect of Juchitán and she notes that there is a bias towards that dialect in

society, she confidently chooses to teach the dialect of her village. It is important to her that the ways people speak across the Isthmus are all valued by learners.

*KR: entonces yo pues si intento decir, no pues así se habla en Juchitán, y así se habla en mi pueblo, [...] yo intento decirlo como se diría de las dos formas, pero no, entonces este de, no sé si estoy mal pero se universaliza el zapoteco de aquí de Juchitán... pero no todos hablamos así...*

KR: So I try to say [to my students], no well, that's how they speak in Juchitán, and that's how they speak in my village. [...] I try to say it how it's spoken in both forms, but no, so, I don't know if I'm wrong, but the Zapotec from Juchitán is being universalized, but we don't all speak that way... (IN 131230 KR)

Rios Rios goes on to critique the traditional categorization of Isthmus Zapotec as one language with no attention to internal diversity, saying "*la variante del Istmo dicen siempre, y podrían decir, pues la variante de los binni guiati', la variante de los Tecos también podrían decir también, porque en el mismo Istmo no se conoce eso...*" (...they always say the 'variant of the Isthmus', and they could say, well the variant of the *Binni guiati'*, the variant of the *Tecos* they could say also, because right in the Isthmus that's not known...) (IN 131230 KR).

As a young member of one of the smaller dialects, it is perhaps not surprising that Rios Rios notices and resists the power imbalances that exist among these groups. However, she is not alone in promoting equality of dialects across the region and greater democracy in IZ education. Vidal Ramírez Pineda is in his 60s, a speaker of the dominant Juchitán dialect who was trained as an accountant, but now works as the director of a prominent cultural center. He began to teach IZ at the invitation of the UABJO branch campus in Tehuantepec without any teacher training or experience. Observations of a sample of his classes across 4 semesters, two semi-structured interviews (IN 130912

VRP, 140901 VRP) and numerous conversations illustrated that although Ramírez Pineda's teaching style is quite different from Rios Rios, his classes are also based on a strong paradigm of pluralism and valuing local practices, as discussed further below.

### **5.2.3 Participating in language change**

Ramírez Pineda has an extensive knowledge of Zapotec etymology and has been involved in committees that are creating neologisms for words that are not in the Zapotec lexicon. He often mentions words that are no longer in use, or going out of use, and discusses issues of language shift over time. Rather than imposing a purist norm in his classes (including the neologisms and archaic terms that are being put forward in literary circles), he always discusses what terms are actually in use today so that students will understand the changes that have taken place and have the option to use pre-colonization (and/or newly-coined) words if they choose. He makes it clear that the heritage and continuity of the language is of interest and of value and that he would like some of these terms to achieve wider use, but he knows it can only occur collaboratively.

A student asks Vidal how to name the days of the week and months. He discusses how various traditional festival names have come to be used as time markers in some cases. He teaches "*beeu*" (month or moon) and "*biza*" (year), commenting that these terms are still in strong use. "*Beeu' biza cubi* [[month year new]] could be January. But we're castellanized, in practice people just say October, November, December, and that's fine," he tells students. He pulls out the dictionary of Zapotec compiled by Fray Juan de Córdova in 1578 and has a student check what's there for "Wednesday", while explaining that this is mainly a resource for researchers and teachers. "If you want to speak in original, ancient, elegant Zapotec" this is a resource, he tells them, but it's not how people speak today. Later in the same class he suggests a neologism for the word "blue"

("naguiba", sky colored). "It doesn't exist [[in common use]], but why don't we create it ourselves?" (FN & Audio 130914)

Discussions of culture, history and tradition are common in Ramírez Pineda 's classes, and many students (of both Zapotec and non-Zapotec backgrounds) enroll in IZ classes with interest and expectations to learn these elements. Often letting himself be guided by students' questions and the things they are interested in saying in IZ, Ramírez Pineda draws on his personal knowledge, historical sources as well as participation and creativity in order to respond to students interests. Typical class activities include dialogues and stories in response to students' questions, information displayed on the blackboard through text and drawings, and working with available texts. Figure 20 shows Ramírez Pineda talking with students during a class excursion to the market.



Figure 20. Class excursion to practice IZ in the market with Ramírez Pineda (photo November 2014)

Despite holding a position that would easily allow him to take an authoritative stance on Diidxazá, he does not critique or devalue younger speakers, or speakers of other dialects, and often uses both the Juchitán variety and other varieties if he knows the variation. In relation to an initiative to have young speakers from several communities and with varying degrees of competence teach IZ classes together, he commented:

*VRP: Pues este... pues yo creo que ellos conocen su lengua... posiblemente no, no la conozcan en toda la... eh, porque están jóvenes, este porque todo esto es de aprendizaje, es de leer, es de investigar también. Este... es de preguntar a los ancianos, este a las personas adultas, [...] pues ellos están en ese proceso pero me da gusto porque son jóvenes y se puede sacar un buen material de ahí, sí. [...]Y, y este--- una palabra, dos palabras, tres palabras que se aprendan, van enriqueciendo su vocabulario, su léxico. Sí, sobre todo que se da en las dos variantes, de Tehuantepec y Juchitán.*

VRP: Well um... I believe that they know their language...possibly not, they don't know it in all the... um because they're young, because all of this is learning, to read, to research too, to ask the elders, um the adults.... [...] Well they're in this process, but it pleases me because they're young and you can get good material there, yes.[...] And, and um-- one word, two words, three words that they learn, will enrich their vocabulary, their lexicon. Yes, and above all that [classes] be given in the two variants, of Tehuantepec and Juchitán... (IN 140901 VRP)

On one occasion when the young teachers gave a translation in class that was different from his he backed them up in front of the students, saying he'd heard that variation, it's correct also (FN 141018).

In the language education paradigm that Ramírez Pineda creates, choices about language use should be founded on knowledge and research, but not imposed or standardized. Speakers of varying abilities and learners are all welcome members of the

speech community, and enjoy learning the language, as well as cultural and historical information, as illustrated in classroom practices:

A wide-ranging discussion about history, politics and language use erupts after students have watched a documentary in class. Ramírez Pineda and one of the young teachers comment on some of the difficulties of teaching Zapotec, an undertaking that is still quite new to everyone. Ramírez Pineda says "We're [[teachers]] making history, and you [[students]] are too. (FN & Audio 140927)

For most, formal instruction in IZ remains an innovative practice, breaking with the tradition of Spanish dominance and contributing a new, evolving element of the speech community through the creation of IZ learners and formal teachers.

#### **5.2.4 Summary: An inclusive, dynamic speech community**

As Rios Rios, Ramírez Pineda, and their students define collaboratively what Diidxazá is and how they want to use it communicatively today, they are winning a small, yet significant victory over the colonial and post-colonial systems that have devalued their agency and their speech for centuries. They are imagining a path towards recognizing and valuing the current Diidxazá speech community as a dynamic and participatory group, rather than a colonially-defined or essentialized norm. Inclusion and conviviality are foremost in their classroom dynamics, as all options and dialects are considered, and student participation is the clear priority.

It is worthy of note that Rios Rios has developed her participatory pedagogy and language ideological stance while working with teachers at the UABJO who are explicit proponents of critical pedagogy and translanguaging. Interestingly she does not reproduce these discourses or terminology explicitly in her work as a teacher, however,

but rather bases her evaluations and imaginaries in her experiences as a speaker of a minoritized dialect, and her personal insights into what students will enjoy and find motivating in the classroom. Ramírez Pineda's pedagogical stance is likewise a personal one, as he has not engaged in any explicit teacher training. Whether appropriating discourses which circulate internationally or those which are part of local experiences, these speaker-teachers are claiming the right to be pedagogical authorities for their language and to pioneer their own ways of making sense of Diidxazá education.

### **5.3 What does teaching Diidxazá literacy mean?**

What does it mean to "create new readers" of Isthmus Zapotec, as Natalia Toledo and Victor Cata say they set out to do in the Camino de la Iguana workshops? What does it mean to be literate in Diidxazá? This section explores discourses about IZ literacy present in the Camino de la Iguana which illustrate that "reading" IZ means much more than decoding the phonemes represented in the popular alphabet, additionally requiring participants to be creative and critical.

#### **5.3.1 "As Gabriel López Chiñas wrote...": Perpetuating the literary heritage**

Isthmus Zapotec is known for writers and musicians, both within and beyond the Isthmus. From the journal *Neza* (Road/ path) produced by students and intellectuals in Mexico City in the 1930s (including scholar Andrés Henestrosa), to the journal *Guchachi Reza* (Sliced Iguana) produced by artists and intellectuals in Juchitán from the 1970s through the 1990s (including scholar Victor de la Cruz), to current writers such as Natalia Toledo, Irma Pineda and Victor Terán, the Isthmus has been home to writers of different

genres, many of whom have won praise nationally and internationally. Many of the pillars in the courtyard of the Casa de la Cultura in Juchitán hold plaques dedicated to local writers and scholars. One of the initiatives of the "*Gusisácanu Diidxazá do' stinu*" (Let's strengthen our *Diidxazá do'*) campaign has been to compile a book of IZ poetry for use in schools (IN 150321 VT), where poetry declamation is often a yearly event.

Istmeños are generally aware of and proud of this heritage, even those who are not involved in literature, teaching or other recognized "cultural" activities. On numerous occasions when chatting with women selling in the market, after mentioning that I was learning IZ, they would tell me "There are books in Diidxazá", offering this as a resource to help me learn. I also met people who told me that since you can write IZ, it is a language, not a *dialecto*-- although they themselves said that writing is hard, and they can't do it. Many people expressed respect for the few people recognized as knowing how to write IZ (IN 131113 LV-5, IN 140114 E-3), and living IZ literary icons frequently appear in public events. A very prominent billboard in one of the central parks of Juchitán displayed publicity from at least April 2013 through autumn of 2013 for the annual *Feria del Libro* (Book Fair) in Juchitán featuring IZ poet Natalia Toledo (Figure 21).



Figure 21. Publicity for the Juchitán Feria del Libro, featuring poet Natalia Toledo (photo August, 2013)

Perhaps the most well-known reference in the literary heritage of the Isthmus is poet Gabriel López Chiñas (1911-1983), who wrote a poem called "*Didxazá*" first published in a 1971 collection (López Chiñas, 1971) and reproduced countless times in journals and poetry collections. The poem begins "*Nacabe ma ché' didxazá*" (They say Diidxazá is going), and continues for two verses to describe that the language of the *Binnizá* (Zapotecs) is said to be dying, as *Binnizá* now begin to only speak Spanish. López Chiñas concludes with two verses addressed to the language itself, proclaiming that it is loved, has given him life, and that "*naa nanna zanitilu'/ dxí initi gubidxa ca*" (I know you will die/ the day the sun dies). This last phrase has become a trope in discussions of IZ; on numerous occasions people would be describing to me how IZ is getting lost, how children are not learning it-- but-- Chiñas said it will die the day that the sun dies, so who knows, maybe everything will turn out well (FN 130815, FN 130417,

FN 140711). An example of an intertextual use of this trope comes from a song by a trio of young bilingual rappers in which they intone that "*Gabriel López Chiñas dijo la verdad*" (Gabriel López Chiñas told the truth), referring to the statement that IZ will not die (FN 140518, FN 140713). López Chiñas' grave is prominently marked in one of the main cemeteries of Juchitán, labeling him a Juchiteco poet and including the name of his most famous poem (see figure 22 below).



**Figure 22.** The grave of Gabriel López Chiñas in Juchitán (photo April 13, 2014)

This literary heritage is an undeniable part of what it means to "be literate" in Diidxazá, raising public awareness of the texts that exist in the language, and the people involved in producing them. Ironically despite this recent and on-going heritage (not to mention the history of writing practices in Zapotec society dating back to about 600 BCE (de la Cruz, 2008; Romero Frizzi, 2003)), writing has never been socialized in the general society. In 1956 a standard alphabet was adopted through the collaborative effort of the

*Sociedad Pro-Planeación Integral del Istmo, El Consejo de Lenguas Indígenas, SIL* and IZ intellectuals in Mexico City (La Sociedad Pro-Planeación del Istmo, 1956). This alphabet was promoted for use in the *Guchachi Reza* journal during decades of publication by then-director of the Casa de la Cultura of Juchitán, Victor de la Cruz, leading to its general adoption within IZ literary circles (IN 141014 VC). I heard mention of literacy programs that had been run in the past through religious and social development organizations (IN 131114 E-1, IN 140128 E-2), and unearthed several adult literacy workbooks in the SIL archive, however at present only a small minority of people have had any formal training in writing or reading IZ. In 2007 the INALI produced 20,000 reprints of the original guide to the popular alphabet which are currently in circulation.

As Cata and Toledo commented many times, they were afraid that there would be no one left to read their writing, or to write in the future, and they created the Camino de la Iguana in response to the perceived weakening of IZ use in society (IN 141014 VC, IN 141121 NT). Initially designed to assist speakers of IZ in becoming comfortable with the popular alphabet, from the very first incarnation of the workshop in the Casa de la Cultura in Juchitán in January 2012 there were many non-speakers attending, interested in learning how to speak as well as how to write. As a result the two-week workshop varies each time it is presented, depending on the ages and language abilities of the participants. The basic format is the same however (as also described in section 4.4.2): in the first hour Cata teaches the sounds and symbols of the popular alphabet, often including old vocabulary words as examples, relying on lots of dictation exercises and

peer correction. He often teaches the Zapotec vigesimal (base-twenty) number system as well, and has participants read texts or poems to practice reading pronunciation. Toledo teaches "literary creation", beginning with discussion of the current legal status of Indigenous languages in Mexico and some of the prominent literary icons of IZ. She then guides participants through a series of exercises in which they produce writing (ideally in IZ) in a variety of "*universal*" (international) genres, including surrealism, haiku, and autobiography, as well as genres identified as Zapotec, such as "*adivinanzas*" (riddles), tongue twisters, metaphors, and "*mentiras*" (humorous lies/ jokes). She also often teaches some IZ lullabies and has participants sing. Sometimes a special guest is invited to attend for a day, often one of the young bilingual rappers from Juchitán or another IZ poet, who present their poems or songs to the group. Each workshop concludes with a ceremony in which each participant is supposed to read something that they have written and receive a certificate, and in which there is often some form of food and music. These ceremonies range from very formal to very casual, depending on the location of the workshop.

The dominance of alphabetic literacy over other forms of meaning making has been critiqued in the context of Indigenous education in Mexico (López Gopar, 2007) and in education in general (Cazden et al., 1996). European-origin literacy practices remain prominent, privileging homogenous standard forms and limited registers of communication, and devaluing the communication practices of languages without a tradition of writing. This is visible in the pride that Istmeños display for publications that exist in their language and the popular alphabet; it allows them to claim status within the Euro-centric, alphabet-centric paradigm that pervades formal school (and society) in

Mexico, even if they themselves are not active producers or consumers of IZ texts. A paradigm of literacy as "autonomous" overlooks the locally-situated and negotiated nature of meaning-making, often projecting a deficit view of learners who do not produce the designated standard (Street, 1984). The predominance of education initiatives that focus on IZ writing as a form of promoting IZ use (outlined in section 4.4) may thus be a threat, or at least a double-edged sword for the shifting IZ speech community. On the other hand, the teaching of alphabetic literacy has also been shown to be a fundamental building block of social change and empowerment (Freire, 1969, 1970). Hornberger (1996) discusses a "both/and" approach through which Indigenous educators negotiate and integrate the many factors influencing language use, literacy and knowledge production, ultimately opening a "door of opportunity for the marginalized" (p. 357).

In the following sections I examine how the threats of autonomous literacy and exclusionary standard language ideologies are negotiated in the Camino de la Iguana literacy workshop. I highlight the discourses and desires of the teachers, Cata and Toledo, discussing the ways in which their practices point towards locally-appropriate strategies that ultimately value the current dynamic community of Diidxazá readers, writers, and meaning-makers.

### **5.3.2 Our alphabet: Sharing sounds and symbols**

Cata's approach to teaching IZ literacy has transformed throughout the process of developing the Camino de la Iguana. He describes how the first class he taught was like a linguistics lecture, which bored the children, adults and elders of Juchitán who were in

attendance. He realized that he needed to present content in a more accessible way, and with different activities for different populations, in order to meet the goals of the workshop.

*VC: El taller ha sufrido cambios, se ha ido adecuando...a las condiciones, a las necesidades...pero el...objetivo primordial sigue, eso sí no se ha alterado...el de...darles a conocer la literatura...darles a conocer el alfabeto...que sepan que se puede escribir el idioma...que se puede crear en el idioma...que hay posibilidades para la lengua...eso sí mira...la forma es que ya cambió...*

VC: The workshop has gone through changes, it's been adapting itself... to the conditions, to the needs... but the... primordial objective continues, that yes, has not altered... that of... getting them to know the literature... getting them to know the alphabet... that they know that you can write the language... that you can create in the language... that there are possibilities for the language... that yes, look... the form is what has changed...(IN 141014 VC)

The teaching of the alphabet (and corresponding phonemes) is still pursued in a linguistically-informed way, but Cata incorporates a lot of practice exercises and some peer work to help Spanish-literate students acquire the information with greater ease. The following field notes describe a typical lesson:

Victor begins the first day of the workshop with an entirely adult audience in Tehuantepec by showing the Spanish alphabet, pointing out which letters are not used in IZ. Then he turns to what I already know will be the main focus throughout the workshop: the 4 consonants and 10 vowels that are in IZ but not in Spanish. He gives examples of words starting with each sound in the IZ alphabet. It doesn't take long to come across an example of a word that the participants say in multiple ways: *guelaguidi* versus the more common *laguidi* (sandal), produced through a pattern of dropping "g-" at the beginnings of some words, which many interpret as a kind of language decline. Victor tells the students that 'language always changes, don't fall into thinking about the "correct" and "incorrect"'.

Then he dictates words in IZ and has students write them in silence. Later he calls students to the board to write their answers, asking the group what they think of each answer, and if anyone has anything different. The group compares the different versions, with Victor asking them how they would pronounce each version. When reading them back the students start to notice where the writing doesn't line up with the pronunciation of the word. Finally Victor gives a correct version of each word, signaling correct words with a check and incorrect with a cross.

Victor then writes some minimal pairs on the board, asking if students know the definitions and filling them in. One pair is *nisa* (water) and *niza* (ear of corn). Victor tells a story about a carwash in Juchitán that has painted their name "*Niza yaa*" intending to mean "clean water", but actually meaning "clean ear of corn". Everyone laughs. (FN 140211)

Much focus is given to the 4 consonants and 3 vowel phonations that are not found in Spanish<sup>24</sup>, learning to recognize them through presentation of minimal pairs and practicing them through dictation exercises. Since Spanish uses the graphemes [s] and [z] to refer to the same phoneme, /s/, this can be a particularly challenging for students, and they find examples like the story of "*Niza yaa*" to be amusing and instructive. Although Victor recognizes the risk of making his lessons overly technical, he also notes the importance of the linguistic analysis that he brings to his work, commenting,

*VC: Es distinto que tú hables...un idioma, que tú analices tu propio idioma. [...] Y ahí es cuando te enfrentas realmente a tu idioma y...tienes que explicarlo, no puedes decir de que "ah, pos nada más porque así lo ponemos" "no, explicamelo...explicame por qué primero." Eh comienzas con el verbo, luego el sujeto y luego el objeto...entonces...por supuesto que me sirvió mucho [[mi formación lingüística]]. Siempre...se me hace más claro, veo más claro mi*

---

<sup>24</sup> Consonantes are: dx /d3/, x /3/, xh /j/, z /z/. The vowels are the same 5 vowels used in Spanish (a, e, i, o, u), but are produced in three possible phonations: simple (produced and represented as in Spanish or English); "cortadas", non-continuous/ final glottal stop (represented with an apostrophe following the letter); and "quebradas", laryngealized (represented with a double letter).

*lengua. Como que aquí en mi cabeza pasa la frase...y veo todas las partículas. Cuando me preguntan algo ya sé qué responder. Cuando explico una palabra, ya sé cómo explicarlo...sin que ellos se enreden, sin que ellos se aburran [...] Si sé hacer un análisis, sé...por qué la palabra está ahí, sé por qué cambia...y como siempre me gustó la semántica puedo hacer el análisis del camino de la palabra...*

VC: It's different that you speak... a language, than that you analyze your own language. [...] And that is where you really face your language and... you have to explain it, you can't say that "Ah well just because we put it like that" "No, explain it to me... Explain to me why first." Eh you start with the verb, later the subject and later the object... so...definitely it [[linguistic training]] has been really useful to me. Always... it makes it more clear, I see my language more clearly. As if here in my head the phrase passes through...and I see all the particles. When they ask me something now I know what to answer. When I explain a word, I know how to explain it...without them getting tangled up, without them getting bored. [...] Yes I know how to do an analysis, I know...why the word is there, I know why it changes...and since I always liked semantics I can do the analysis of the path of the word... (IN 141014 VC)

Students appreciate Cata's ability to offer more insight into their questions and a somewhat structured approach to learning the writing system. Two young women who took classes with a senior speaker who did not have linguistic or pedagogical training and subsequently attended the Camino de la Iguana, told me in conversation that they were not willing to take more classes with the senior speaker but would love to study more with Cata because he was able to explain complicated things in a simple way (FN 140219). Figure 23 below shows Cata teaching the "4 graphemes of Zapotec", with words in Spanish that students have had to write in IZ (all containing the grapheme [dx]), and several near-minimal pairs showing different vowel phonations.

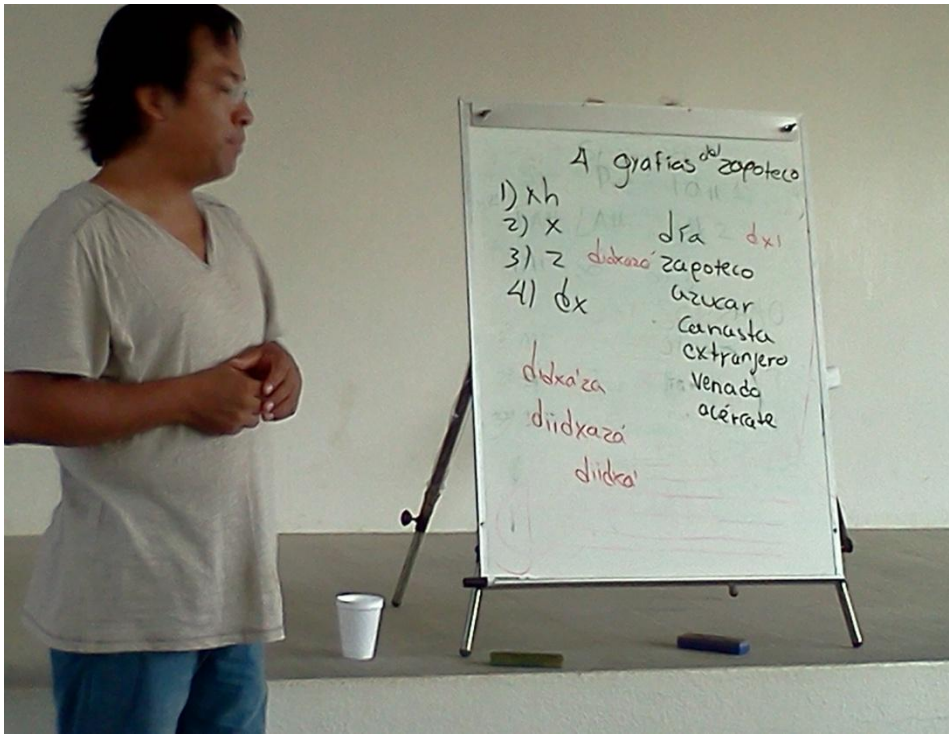
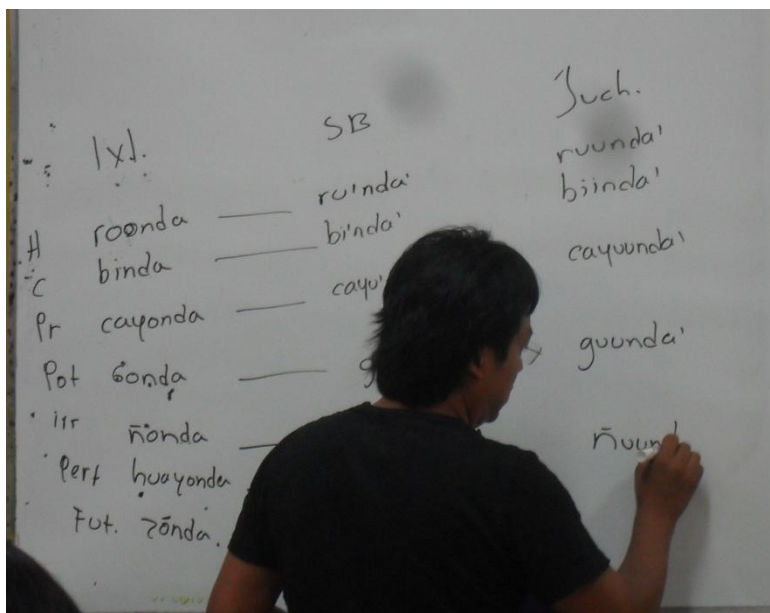


Figure 23. Cata teaching in the Camino de la Iguana in a cultural center (photo October 2013)

As noticeable in the vignette of a typical lesson above, Cata explicitly espouses a non-standard paradigm in which different versions of a word can be correct, however his classes simultaneously emphasize the importance of "correct" spelling, judged at the level of sound-symbol transparency. This approach-- accepting the written representation of diverse pronunciations and regional dialects, while adhering to a normative phonemic inventory-- can be called a "polynomic" (Marcellesi, 1983) approach to literacy, which has been popular in the teaching of Corsican and Occitan in France, as well as other lesser-taught languages (Sallabank, 2010). Figure 24 shows Cata creating a spontaneous comparison table to show verb conjugations across the three regional dialects of the students present in the workshop at that moment, drawing on their input.



**Figure 24.** Cata comparing the verb 'to sing' or 'to read' in the dialects of Ixtaltepec, San Blas and Juchitán (photo February 2014)

This non-standard approach to dialect variation and the use of words that are Spanish-derived or abbreviated is conscious and strategic on Cata's part, as he discussed:

*VC: No me gusta ser como muy normativo porque van a decir "es muy purista" o que...me tomen como muy estricto. Hay veces escucho y no digo nada...pero...si puedo...les digo pero---para no hacerlos sentir mal...namás para hablarles de la riqueza del idioma. Pero por lo regular...me quedo callado.*

*H: Sí...no creo que te he visto haciendo correcciones [[dialectales o léxicos]].*

*[...]*

*VC: No lo hago, no...no me gusta porque...si de por sí no habla y aparte les digo que no hablan bien...pero van a hablar, mejor que hable, ya sobre la marcha ya aprende...ahora sí, sobre la marcha aprende.*

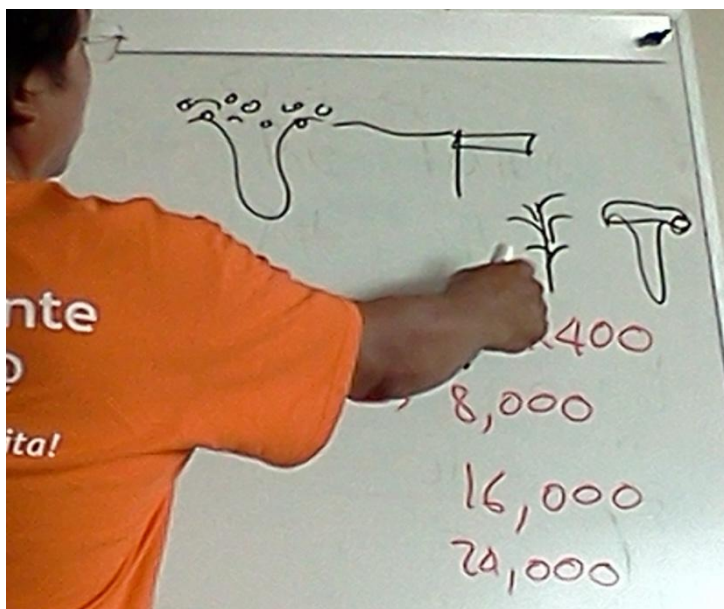
VC: I don't like to be like very normative because they will say "he's very purist" or that... they take me as really strict. There are times I listen and I don't say anything...but... if I can I say to them but--- not so as to make them feel bad...Just to talk to them about the richness of the language. But for the most part... I stay quiet.

H: Yes... I don't think I've seen you making corrections [[of dialect or word choice]].

[...]

VC: I don't do it, no... I don't like it because... if in fact someone doesn't speak and besides ... I tell them that they don't speak well... but they're going to speak, it's better that they speak, then through experience then learn. Now yes, through experience one learns. (IN 141014 VC)

Cata is aware that many students have only limited motivation to learn, and that his actions may have repercussions on their future levels of interest. At the same time, as a historian and linguist, he tries to promote the use of IZ words that have been or are in the process of being replaced by Spanish, without imposing them in a purist way. The figure below shows a lesson on the traditional vigesimal number system, with the symbols that were previously used to represent different amounts in the pre-colonial Zapotec writing system, but are not in use today. In explaining this base twenty number system and the symbols that were used to represent certain quantities in ancient carvings and texts Cata asks the students to convert and translate different sums and impresses upon them the sophistication of the system.



**Figure 25. Cata teaching the vigesimal number system and symbols (photo October 2013)**

While his classes aim to take into consideration the language abilities of the students, they also attempt to transmit vocabulary that is often new for students, even those who regularly use IZ in daily communication. When discussing his stance on translanguaging-- something that he commonly does himself-- he commented:

*VC: Cuando está el nombre en Zapoteco, no. Entonces sí...digo ¿por qué? si tenemos el nombre ¿por qué estás usando el préstamo? Cuando no lo tenemos pues ni modos no lo tenemos...manzana: manzana, pera: pera. Pero sí tenemos "aguacate"... "yaxhu"*

VC: When the name in Zapotec is there, no. So yes... I say why if we have the name, why are you using the loan word? When we don't have it well, oh well, we don't have it... apple: apple, pear: pear. But we do have avocado..."yaxhu" (IN 141014 VC)

Cata explicitly aims to be inclusionary in his teaching of IZ reading and writing and to avoid discouraging students, but he does not adopt an all-inclusive approach and

continues to promote the kind of vocabulary and phonemic knowledge that he thinks is most important for students to have.

Students generally participate well in all of his activities, from dictation and reading aloud, to grading a neighbor's work and translating vocabulary. These pedagogic routines, while relying on the memorization and drills that are generally criticized by more holistic or constructivist approaches to literacy teaching, are very familiar to students who have come through the Mexican education system. Figure 26 shows Cata teaching the IZ alphabet in a typical public school classroom, where the upper and lower-case alphabet is displayed in the front of the room, children are seated in rows, ready to copy, and surrounded by standard Spanish texts.



**Figure 26. Cata teaching in a primary school (photo July 2014)**

The literacy component of the Camino de la Iguana thus has echoes of formal education and linguistics-based teaching, while attempting to avoid the exclusion and shaming that these kinds of standards-focused education can produce. Students do not hesitate to participate, and many note that they feel they learn a lot. Although some participants state that the workshop is not long enough for them to really become comfortable with the alphabet (IN 131113 LV-5, IN 140512 UC-2), for others it is a useful first introduction which they have been able to build upon and use in other aspects of their lives (IN 131114 E-1, IN 141017 UH-3).

### **5.3.3 We have a unique way to name the world: Diidxazá in the canon of "universal" literature**

Toledo's goals for her students include familiarity with some of the IZ literature that exists, although more of her time is spent coaxing them to produce and share their own writing, focusing on projects that bring to light their dreams, personal stories, and observations. Throughout the workshop she combines projects that relate to a kind of literary production identified as "Zapotec", and projects related to literature identified as "universal" or international-- although there is not a clear line drawn between the two in discourse nor in practice. In all their writing, participants are encouraged to use at least some IZ, or to translate into IZ. The first project she assigns them is to write something (usually a poem) about a dream that they have had and bring it to class the next day. "If you don't remember your dream, ask your grandmother for one of hers, she probably has great ones" she joked on several occasions (FN 131011). The projects vary from one location to another due to the age of the students, and various scheduling issues that slow

down or speed up the workshop. In the workshops that I observed, the main projects following the dream assignment were a surrealist poem, an autobiographical piece (with an example of a poem by Venezuelan poet Luis Brito for inspiration), writing based on a childhood photo, "*guendarusiguii*" (the art of lying, with examples collected and published by Juchitán writer Macario Matus for inspiration), and writing or translating a haiku (often with IZ onomatopoeias and/or metaphors, using examples of haikus by Japanese poet Matsuo Basho and Juchitán writer Victor Terán for inspiration). Sometimes Toledo also asks participants to do an interview with someone from their town, and frequently incorporates tongue twisters, old-fashioned games and IZ songs, in particular lullabies. In one workshop where all the participants were children, she brought in black and white images by her father, internationally-famous Isthmus painter Francisco Toledo, and had the children color them in and write a story about the image (FN 140901). In another workshop where many of the participants did not speak IZ she assigned lists of words to be learned (FN 131104).

Participants were always encouraged to write their assignments in Diidxazá-- with help if needed-- although they were not prevented from writing in Spanish or translanguaging, and both were very frequent practices. Most important was for them to write and be willing to read what they wrote out loud to the rest of the group. Figure 27 shows Toledo teaching the workshop in a higher education setting. On the board she has written "*Bigú- polvo, pedaceria, añicos*" (Turtle- powder/ dust, pieces, fragments), after telling an IZ legend recorded by Istmeño scholar Andrés Henestroza about how the turtle got a broken shell, resulting in its mosaic shell today (Henestroza, 1929). She launches

from this story into an explanation of a writing exercise called the "*cadáver exquisito*" (exquisite corpse) where each person will contribute a random phrase and these fragments are then assembled together to make a surrealist poem. She gives a brief description of the era of French surrealism in the 1920s and mentions several French poets associated with this movement, including forerunner Lautréamont. She aligns with their philosophy that "*La poesía debe estar hecha por todos*" (Poetry should be made by all) (FN 140211). On the desk nearby is a stack of books-- a recent reprint of the 1578 dictionary of Zapotec compiled by Fray Juan de Córdova. She gifts a copy to the university library and has others available if anyone wants to buy one. During the workshop both Toledo and Cata regularly give away books that they have written, and occasionally other books that they are able to get copies of, so that participants will have something to read after the workshop ends. The 1578 dictionary holds many archaic words, but Toledo tells students that they can find subtle and beautiful things there, and it is still the largest dictionary of Zapotec to date.



Figure 27. Toledo discusses surrealism with the metaphor of a mosaic turtle shell (photo February 2014)

Toledo attempts to inspire interest in the intricacies of the language among her students with examples like the onomatopoeia in the 1578 dictionary, most of which are no longer in use. She reiterates again and again that being bilingual is a source of pride, that Diidxazá lends itself well to creative expression, and that Zapotecs have their own forms of expression that are just as valid as those of other people and places. In an interview she commented:

*NT: [...] Es complejo porque es una manera de pensar. No, no puedes enseñar palabritas--- claro, ese es el inicio, ¿no? Pero por ejemplo, cuando yo pongo este... esto, ¿no? de las metáforas. Estábamos viendo el otro día, entonces yo les dije que algunas metáforas que existen naturalmente en el zapoteco. Cómo cuando dices que: ay, fui a la marcha de ayer y te--- y alguien te dice: ¿y hubo mucha gente? Dices: binni biri, gente hormiga. O sea, había mucha gente como hormiga, ¿no? Eso es un pensamiento, si yo lo digo en D.F. nadie va a saber qué estoy diciendo. Si yo lo digo aquí [...] a estos niños de esta escuela no tienen la menor idea. Entonces esas expresiones se mueren, como se murieron las onomatopeyas de cómo camina el dolor en el cuerpo. Imagínate que un antepasado mío tuvo--- o esa cabeza que representa a una cultura, tuvo la posibilidad y la maravilla de escuchar su cuerpo.*

*H: Ujum.*

*NT: Esas sutilezas del idioma se han perdido y... sigue habiendo y existiendo onomatopeyas, pero lo que nosotros hacemos mucho en el taller es también preguntarnos y preguntarles: ¿qué les parecen estas cosas?, ¿cómo lo ven?, ¿no? Porque la literatura es eso, es ese... tú sabes que detrás de un libro hay una persona, y esa persona se hizo preguntas y registró muchas cosas de su tiempo. Entonces el lenguaje somos nosotros, el lenguaje somos las personas... Yo me hice persona en zapoteco, el zapoteco a mí me hizo una persona.*

*NT: [...] It's complicated because it's a way of thinking. You can't teach just little words--- clearly, that is the start, right. But for example when I put um... this, right, the metaphors. We were looking [at that] the other day, so I told them some metaphors that exist naturally in Zapotec. Like when you say that "oh, I went to the march yesterday" and you-- and someone says to you "and were there a lot of*

people?" You say "*binni biri*" people ant. Like, there were a lot of people like ants, right. That is a thought, if I say it in Mexico City no one will know what I'm saying. If I say it here [...] to these kids in this school they don't have the least idea. So those expressions die, like the onomatopoeias about how pain walks through the body died. Imagine that one of my ancestors had-- or that head that represents a culture, had the possibility and the wonder to listen to their body.

H: Uhum.

NT: Those subtleties of the language have been getting lost and... there still are and exist onomatopoeias, but what we do a lot in the workshop is also ask ourselves and ask them: What do you think of these things? How do you see them, right? Because literature is that, it's that... you know that behind a book there is a person, and that person asked themselves questions and documented many things of their time. So the language is us, we people are the language... I made myself a person in Zapotec, Zapotec made me a person. (IN 141121 NT)

Her goal is not to teach skills, but to foster an attitude of pride and a "way of thinking" that is critical and engaged. She has drawn great inspiration, identity and opportunity from Diidxazá and encourages others to do likewise. Toledo often comments that it is because of Diidxazá that she and Cata have left the Isthmus, received grants and prizes, and travelled around the world. She tells participants to keep writing, to follow whatever dreams and aspirations they may have (FN 131220, FN 140715).

Figure 28 shows Toledo teaching in a secondary school in a rural community outside of Juchitán where many students do not continue to study beyond secondary level.



**Figure 28. Toledo teaching in rural secondary school (photo December 2013)**

On the wall is a poster that she brought which advertises an annual writing competition for Zapotec writers (of all varieties), supported by the *Centro para las Artes San Agustín*, the same foundation that supports the Camino de la Iguana workshops. Toledo talks about opportunities like this to encourage students to keep writing, and to submit the work that they do to try for prizes. She is a vocal supporter of other forms of artistic expression, including hip-hop and graffiti, and often teaches wearing huipils (blouses) that use traditional embroidery styles, but with her own design adaptations (also shown in figure 28).

While Cata may talk non-confrontationally about "the richness of the language" in order to motivate people, Toledo is more direct about her concerns and frustration with the current state of IZ use (or lack thereof). She described some of her interactions with

students from a well-respected monolingual primary school in a wealthy section of Juchitán:

*NT: Les dije: ¿por qué dicen que son la mejor escuela de Juchitán si no hablan zapoteco? Estaban así [[expresión de sorpresa]]. Les digo: "sí, ustedes saben que---" ay, empecé... les dije cosas, ¿no? Este, les dije: "de ustedes depende que este idioma se siga hablando. Qué responsabilidad tan grande, yo no la voy a tener porque yo sí lo hablo. Pero ustedes no lo hablan, se va a morir." Y así.*

*H: ¿Cómo respondieron?*

*NT: "¡No, no se va a morir porque dice An--- este, Gabriel López Chiñas que no se va a morir!" [[risas]]. Les digo: "sí, pero ese es un poema muy bello. Pero el sol es más fuerte que nosotros, entonces sí tenemos que hacer algo. Imagínense, hace unos años se hablaba tantos, ¿no? tantos hablantes. Ahorita ya hay poquitos, treinta y cinco mil de este pueblo tan grande... y ya--- entonces, ¿qué vamos a hacer?, ¿le van a echar ganas o, o nos vamos todos y cerramos la puerta?" "No, no, no." Y así pero ya--- pero les tiene que meter la cosa esta, ¿no? el gusto [...]*

*[[risas]] "A ver pinches chamacos, piensen que tienen una manera de nombrar única el mundo, y ustedes le están dando la espalda."*

NT: I said to them "Why do you say that you're the best school in Juchitán if you don't speak Zapotec? They were like this [[shocked expression]]. I said to them "Yes, you know that--" oh I started... I said things to them, right? Um I said to them "It depends on you whether this language continues to be spoken. What a big responsibility, I won't have it because I do speak it. But you don't speak it, it will die." Like that.

H: How did they respond?

NT: "No, it won't die because--- um, Gabriel López Chiñas [[says]] that it won't die!" [[laughs]]. I say to them "Yes, but that is a really lovely poem. But the sun is stronger than us, so yes we have to do something. Imagine, a few years ago lots spoke, right, lots of speakers. Now there are already few, 35 thousand of this really big city... and now--so, what are we going to do? Are we going to make an effort or, or we're all going to go and close the door?" "No, no, no." And like that but---but you have to give them something that, right, the appreciation/enjoyment. [...]

[[laughs]] "Let's see you darn kids, just to think that you have a *unique* way to name the world, and you're turning your back on it!" (IN 141121 NT)

Talking about the "death" of the language was not a dominant theme in the workshops, but was occasionally introduced in particular by Toledo to motivate participants. The passion that Toledo and Cata have for Diidxazá-- as a way of being and communicating, and as a linguistic artifact-- is clear, and they attempt to pass it on to the participants in whatever way they can. Toledo makes her interaction with these young students sound harsh as she retells it, but I observed her personal interactions with participants, especially children, to be warm and playful (FN 140409, FN 150522).

Although Toledo loosely structures her teaching around recognized literary genres, she in no way views "*creación literaria*" as a series of skills that she can transmit, nor as something autonomous from the dynamics of life in the Isthmus. Speaking about her own experiences and desires as a writer, she said,

*NT: Pero por supuesto, que como tú eres un poeta indígena, todo se vuelve político.*

*H: ¿Ah, sí?*

*NT: Porque eres una minoría yo creo.[...] No es que tú escribas sobre la política, sino que también pienso yo que ser poeta es una postura ante la vida, porque tú celebras la palabra. Otros están haciendo las grandes cosas, los poetas no. Los poetas están escribiendo palabras, son como esos loquitos que están haciendo versos, están en otro mundo. Y haciendo un mundo más habitable tal vez... porque el horror que acompaña a la vida a veces no--- es como dice Raúl Zurita, ¿no? Si... si fuéramos felices no existiría la música, no existiría la literatura. Pero como no hemos sido felices tenemos que agarrar de aquí para cantar, para decir, para este, pi--- mirar una belleza. Algo así que te provoque humanidad, que es lo que nos falta ahorita.*

NT: But definitely, since you're an indigenous poet, everything becomes political.

H: Oh yes?

NT: Because you're a minority I think. [...] It's not that you write about politics, rather that also I think that being a poet is an orientation towards life, because you celebrate the word. Others are making big things, not the poets. The poets are writing words, are like those crazies that are making verses, they are in another world. And making a world that is more habitable maybe... because the horror that accompanies life sometimes doesn't-- It's like Raúl Zurita says, right. If... if we were happy there wouldn't be music, there wouldn't be literature. But since we haven't been happy we have to grab from here to sing, to say, to um--- look at something beautiful. Something like that that provokes humanity in you, which is what we're missing now. (IN 141121 NT)

Referring indirectly to the disadvantaged condition of Indigenous people under the Mexican government, and the social-political turmoil of life in the Isthmus, Toledo sees writing-- especially writing as an Indigenous/ IZ person-- as a needed response and a way to imagine a more humane world.

### **5.3.4 Conviviality in the Camino de la Iguana**

A significant way in which the Camino de la Iguana breaks from typical formal education practices is in the social and playful atmosphere of the workshop. For most workshops Toledo and Cata provide a snack and drink to the participants each day, taking time to eat and drink together in between the lessons or at the end, and they always have some kind of closing ceremony or *convivencia* with participants. The food is usually a local snack and "*agua fresca*" (fresh beverage of fruit or rice and water), prepared by Toledo's sister-in-law and served on the leaves of almond trees, a traditional practice that has now largely given way to styrofoam, but which Toledo and Cata intentionally promote. As

participants get to know Cata and Toledo they become increasingly friendly, and by the end of the workshop there are always many pictures taken and emotional goodbyes exchanged. Discussion before and after the workshops often turns to local politics, or what festival is coming up next, or any other topic that emerges. Figure 29 shows an impromptu game of basketball that occurred before class one day when a group of primary students who were taking the workshop asked Toledo and Cata to play. Neither of them had arrived prepared for this, but they kicked off their work shoes and played barefoot with great gusto, much to the students' delight.



**Figure 29. An impromptu game of basketball at a primary school (photo June 2014)**

Despite their position as local celebrities and their expert status in the workshop, Toledo and Cata foster a convivial education environment through collaborative activities

and their personal humor which is often present. This is not just coincidental, but relates to their wider vision of how IZ can be promoted. As Toledo commented,

*NT: Estamos hablando el idioma y yo de verdad que obviamente lo que está en los libros es muy importante, pero lo que está, la gente está hablando ahorita zapoteco, esos son los que están salvando el idioma. No en un aula, o sea, algo estamos haciendo porque estamos enseñando, ¿no? "Miren, hay escritores, hay esto, hay lo otro, vamos a jugar. Estos son los juegos zapotecas, aquí hay recetas de cocina, esta es nuestra comida, esto somos nosotros todo el tiempo." Los números, el cuerpo, todo lo que vemos ahí [[en el taller]], jugamos. Pero realmente los que pueden hacer algo son la--- es la gente que está en casa sentada con sus nietos, con sus hijos, con sus... Esos son los que salvan el idioma.*

NT: We're speaking the language and I, honestly, obviously what is in books is very important, but the people that are speaking Zapotec now, those are the ones that are saving the language. Not in a classroom, like, we're doing something because we're teaching, right? "Look, there are writers, there's this, there's that, let's play. These are the Zapotec games, here are cooking recipes, this is our food, this is who we are all the time." The numbers, the body, all that we look at there [[in the workshop]], we play. But really those that can do something are the--- it's the people that are at home seated with their grandkids, with their kids, with their... Those are the ones who save the language. (IN 141121 NT)

Although they are not reproducing these natural interactions, they create an environment somewhere between school and home. In addition to sharing books and the dictionary, they frequently encourage participants to consult the "living dictionaries" of their families.

Participants are often very receptive and appreciative of the workshop, and several took it multiple times or expressed desire to do so (IN 131107 LV-2, IN 141017 UH-3). At the closing of one workshop in a primary school a young boy who spoke better IZ than most of his classmates and had been the star student of the workshop, presented

them with a letter he painstakingly wrote to them (FN 140715); they often received gifts, cards and tokens of appreciation from participants. When asked what the most interesting part of the workshop was for her, a reserved woman in her 50s who participated with her adult daughter told me that it was the first time she had ever been asked to write something personal-- at first she was certain that she had no stories worth telling and nothing to write, but was deeply impacted when she found that she did have things she wanted to express (IN 131105 LV-1). The impact of the Camino de la Iguana on participants is thus not limited to learning parts of the alphabet, or motivating use of Diidxazá, but also has empowered the personal expression of some participants.

### **5.3.5 Summary: (Re)defining Diidxazá literacy collaboratively**

In contrast to autonomous models of literacy that can leave learners feeling less powerful, literacy practices which provide learners the power to name their world and express their perspectives can help to reduce "literacy inequalities" (Street, 2011). "Diidxazá literacy" as imagined and practiced by Cata and Toledo is clearly critical and collaborative, fostering diverse forms of creative expression and opening the door for participants to take whatever they have gained and apply it towards their own goals and desires amidst the realities of their lives. Toledo and Cata know that most participants will not master the alphabet and certainly will not become speakers as a result of the workshop, but they hope that the experience of the workshop may spark the motivation or confidence necessary for them to speak, write, and work towards their own aspirations. Figure 30 shows Cata, an enthusiastic student, Toledo, and her sister-in-law walking away from a

rural secondary school towards the nearby town after the workshop has concluded for the day.



**Figure 30. Cata, a student, Toledo, and her sister-in-law leaving at the end of the day (photo December, 2014)**

For most participants, taking a workshop on writing IZ is a unique experience, standing out from the rest of their schooling; through a convivial atmosphere and the need to contribute their own voice, it becomes a meaningful experience for many in which they become part-- if only briefly-- of a community of practice which frames Diidxazá use and users in valued and inclusionary ways. By accepting learners of all levels as "legitimate peripheral participants" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the principal actors in this community of practice encourage them to take up a shared repertoire as decoders, consumers and producers of IZ texts. This community of practice is also investing in a joint enterprise to establish an IZ-as-resource ideology and a new social imaginary of what it means to be literate in Diidxazá. They project literacy in Diidxazá as something that goes beyond

decoding to include creating and sharing new meanings, as well as being aware of the histories and social context of contemporary Diidxazá practices. By legitimizing the agency of learners as well as speakers in contemporary acts of meaning-making, and reinforcing an awareness of the histories and humanity inherent in Diidxazá use, the Camino de la Iguana seeks to foster conviviality at the heart of communication practices.

#### **5.4 Ideologies, imaginaries and evaluations in IZ education**

Throughout this chapter I have illustrated patterns in the things that people are saying and doing in relation to Diidxazá and Diidxazá in education, interpreting the ideologies that inform these discourses and practices, and the social changes that are implied or imagined through the social project of Diidxazá education. To conclude this chapter I will summarize the ideologies and imaginaries that emerge from this analysis, and discuss how these have informed my evaluations of educational settings.

At the regional level, the desire to speak a socially-valued variety of Spanish is prominent across the Isthmus. Non-standard use of Spanish has been, and continues to be, the subject of negative evaluation through ridicule and exclusion from elite social spaces. Diidxazá use is evaluated negatively by those who see it as a barrier to producing socially-valued Spanish. Among those who do not see it as a barrier to Spanish, IZ use is evaluated positively or at least neutrally, although many express the desire for a parallel monolingualism (Heller, 1999) whereby the close contact, or syncretism (Hill & Hill, 1986), between IZ and Spanish would be erased. Others accept some degree of translanguaging, but promote maximum use of IZ as a form of resisting Spanish

dominance, such as the *Diidxazá do'* campaign. Among those who evaluate IZ positively, the desire to communicate within a familial and community sphere-- *convivir* in Istmeño spaces-- is clear. A growing interpretation that IZ is valuable to individual and social mobility also motivates positive evaluations of IZ use among some actors.

As these varying perspectives on Diidxazá use illustrate, the relationship between Diidxazá use and success or failure in Istmeño society varies across actors, and also throughout different phases of their lives. Throughout this study as I participated in Istmeño society and listened to peoples' experiences, I grappled with the relativity of success, failure, and positive change in IZ use, minoritized education, and indeed in any social endeavor. As I listened to story after story about the processes of marginalization and exclusion through which local speech practices (from use of IZ, to translanguaging, to dialect variation) have been delegitimized in the Isthmus, echoing practices elsewhere, I began to pay more attention to processes or strategies of *inclusion* and legitimation manifest in different IZ education settings. The desire to have one's voice legitimated and included in certain social spheres is universal, and in this context can manifest in both valuation and devaluation of Diidxazá depending on the experiences and perspectives of individuals. This observation has shaped my interpretation of social meanings, and led me to adopt *inclusion/exclusion* as an evaluative lens. As I observe and interpret IZ education initiatives, I have attempted to highlight practices and degrees of inclusion or exclusion.

The discourses and considerations that emerge on the societal scale serve as an important backdrop to closer consideration and evaluation of specific educational

programs and communities of practice-- the scale at which ethnographic monitoring can most readily be carried out. In the context of higher education classes for beginners at the UABJO, the desire to include all interested learners into the IZ speech community is shared by both teachers and the university community that supports the classes. Rios Rios in particular pushes her students to be active independent speakers, asking them to give presentations, create their own materials, and speak or sing in public events. All teachers and learners positively evaluate the inclusion of multiple regional dialect variants, and the attempt to create a more level power dynamic among them, despite the numerical dominance of Juchitán speakers. Internal standardization of IZ is thus not a goal of the actors most engaged in promoting and developing IZ education, although it remains an instinct among other actors who have long been immersed in standard language discourses. Learning and researching archaic or lesser-used terms, as well as developing new IZ-based terms for concepts usually expressed in Spanish is promoted by teachers, especially Ramírez Pineda and Cata, often in response to the interests and questions of students. The teachers also express clearly the desire for students to be aware of the reality of IZ communication practices, so that they can participate in the speech community beyond the university classes, including translanguaging practices and dialect variation which are also important parts of the Ismeño shared repertoire. Students appreciate the participatory and novel nature of these classes, as they contrast with the more normative European language classes that they also participate in. Rather than exclude learners or reproduce deficit ideologies about IZ, these programs imagine and produce participatory speech communities, zapotecizing, or appropriating language use to suit their needs.

In the context of the Camino de la Iguana workshop the initial desire to create readers of IZ has had to adapt to the students that are present, many of whom have limited speaking competence. Rather than exclude this population, the teachers have created new activities and adapted their teaching from context to context. Creating greater metalinguistic awareness-- of IZ, and IZ literature-- has emerged as a primary goal. The teachers hope to give participants more confidence as bilingual people and encourage them to use their communicative repertoires more fully. Whether or not participants acquire full knowledge of the phonemic inventory of IZ is less significant than the attitude or ideology that they have towards the language. Different dialects are specifically included, albeit within a standard writing norm that echoes mainstream education practices. Although this norm results in telling people that some of their writing attempts are "wrong", it also gives status and respect within a mainstream system dominated by standard language ideologies, and is evaluated positively by students who have been frustrated by less-normative IZ programs. The personal activist discourses of Toledo and Cata, and likely also the short duration of the workshop, create a more intense evaluative environment than what occurs in the UABJO classes-- they project the message that Diidxazá is very important and that all can play a part in the speech community. While the UABJO classes are largely a-political (in terms of overt discussions of social inequalities), Toledo and Cata acknowledge the power dynamics inherent in IZ use, and from time to time include discussion of political issues that are relevant to the time and place they're teaching in. They also offset the normative education practices that occur in the workshop with an over-arching convivial atmosphere in which participants become friends, talk, joke, sing and sometimes cry with

them. Participants evaluate this experience very positively, and many hope to repeat it or to continue to learn more about IZ elsewhere.

In the process of analyzing and interpreting the dynamics of an activist education project such as the Camino de la Iguana I have found it necessary to go beyond the potentially dichotomistic framework of inclusion/ exclusion, to consider practices of *manipulation* and *conviviality* (Illich, 1970, 1973) through which people and ways of communication may be included or excluded. While observing practices of *convivencia* to be closely linked to the more positive outcomes of IZ education projects, I came across Illich's (1970) use of conviviality and began to view this as an evaluative lens that intersects with promoting inclusion and resisting exclusion in significant ways. Inclusion and exclusion are not straightforward goals in (language) education; their potential benefit is contingent upon *how* they are pursued. Imposed (manipulated) inclusivity may undermine ideals of self-determination; for example, although Toledo and Cata would sometimes joke that all Juchitán residents should be required to study IZ, they ultimately acknowledge that fostering personal appreciation is the only viable approach, and that requiring people to study the language will not be effective. Ramírez Pineda, despite his passion for archaic words, knows that the only way to promote them is if many people make a personal choice to use them and so does not impose them even on the miniature speech community that he could take control over in the classroom. Additionally, tokenistic inclusion may support covert forms of dominance. As Hymes (1980) observed, "One can honor cultural pride on the walls of a room yet inhibit learning within them" (p. 107). The "bilingual" schools in the Isthmus fulfill the political function of showing that

the government supports Indigenous language speakers and learners, and their directors seem to uphold this discourse, yet upon observing how they function it is clear that they are in many ways another tool of Spanish-language and nationalist culture dominance.

On the other hand, exclusion may not be uniformly harmful in that the creation of boundaries and groups is a regular, reoccurring social phenomenon from which many people (including Isthmus Zapotecs) draw positive identification and value (see for example discussion of "strategic essentialism" in Indigenous revitalization movements in Leonard (2012) and Zavala (2013)). In both the UABJO classes and the Camino de la Iguana, creating a sense of community and positive social cohesion-- a joint enterprise and mutual engagement, to use community of practice terminology (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000)-- is of paramount importance. For example, the fact that students perceive learning Zapotec to be fun in Rios Rios' class, and are willing to be singled out publicly as IZ students by reading IZ poetry or singing IZ songs while dressed in Istmeño clothing in front of the rest of the Faculty of Languages, indicates their positive association with being a member of the classroom community and the imagined socio-cultural community beyond it (Norton, 2001). Fishman (1989) has discussed the mutual coexistence of boundaries and communities, noting that "there can be no heartland without boundaries, however distant they may be" (p.33). He further notes that boundaries are always subject to negotiation: "...boundaries, whether between or within ethnicity collectivities, are no more objective realities than are the ethnicity paternities, patrimonies or phenomenologies that they separate. Boundaries must be noticed by actors, interpreted by actors and implemented by actors" (p.34). Wenger (1998) likewise

notes the necessity of boundaries in the creation and functioning of communities of practice, stating that "boundaries reflect the fact that people and communities are always engaged in learning and that learning creates bonds" (p.253).

Inclusion and exclusion must therefore be negotiated in social projects. Creating boundaries and norms through conviviality, as imagined by Illich (1970, 1973), contrasts with the manipulated or forced groups that are often created through formal schooling. Illich describes a spectrum spanning from manipulated spaces that are oriented towards production and consumption, to convivial spaces that are oriented towards action. Noting that his use of the term conviviality also arose in relation to the Spanish cognate (1973, p. xiii), Illich argues that conviviality is essential to society. He explains conviviality as

autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value. I believe that, in any society, as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrial productivity can effectively satisfy the needs it creates among society's members. (1973, p.11)

The distribution of social power to facilitate individual freedoms is an important part of this project, although Illich recognizes the difficulties of this vision. He states that he is "not proposing a utopia, but a procedure that provides each community with the choice of its unique social arrangements" (1973, p. 15).

Illich envisions convivial education spaces as "learning webs", or "an institutional framework which constantly educates to action, participation, and self-help" (1970, p.

64). He promotes the development of networks enabling learners' access to educational objects, skill modeling, peer learners, and elders or mentors. The fluidity of these communal learning arrangements is emphasized, as well as the need for on-going negotiation. Illich stresses that conviviality is "to be considered as guidelines to the continuous process by which a society's members defend their liberty, and not as a set of prescriptions which can be mechanically applied" (1973, p. 26). He notes that convivial spaces generally exist "precariously" and are "humbler" and "less noticeable" in contrast to spaces of manipulation (1970, p. 53).

Drawing from Illich's discussion of the manipulative-convivial spectrum in human relations, I thus understand conviviality in terms of creativity and balanced independence and interdependence-- as a form of social interaction which allows for self-determination and a participatory negotiation of norms whether in education or other social projects. My use of conviviality (derived from Illich and from my observations of *convivencia*) contrasts slightly with Blommaert and Varis' (2015) recent use of the term to refer to "low-intensity social engagement, seemingly superficial but critical for, in fact, importantly assuring social cohesion, community belonging and social comfort"(Blommaert & Varis, 2015, p. 8), in their discussion of "phatic" communication on social media. The underlying interest in social interaction and negotiated cohesion is shared, however. Williams and Stroud (2013) discuss language politics on a local level as a "politics of conviviality" through which "linguistic citizenship" is negotiated, also orienting towards reciprocal communication and away from top-down power structures.

They argue that "conviviality takes us beyond institutional dimensions of citizenship and the institutionalized recognition of rights to emphasize 'agency'" (p. 292).

Conviviality in a multilingual context thus refers to the democratic negotiation of communication practices and norms, where diverse voices are equally able to engage in self-definition. The UABJO and Camino de la Iguana communities of practice illustrate aspects of convivial multilingualism, where expectations of language use and expectations of language users emerge through group participation, rather than being dictated by an imposed norm. Arguments in favor of flexible (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Heller, 2007; Weber, 2014), heteroglossic, and dynamic (Cazden et al., 1996; De Korne, 2012; Flores & Schissel, 2014; García, 2009a) multilingualism have been articulated in relation to these same concerns for improved participation and social justice in education in contexts around the world. The emphasis of these concepts often tends towards the resulting language forms (the fluid, flexible, heteroglossic languaging that is produced), however, rather than on the political processes through which communicative norms are negotiated. By discussing convivial multilingualism I aim to highlight the social and power dynamics that occur in multilingual social spaces, and the need for locally-determined practices in multilingual education projects.

The inevitable conflicts and ethical decisions that emerge in multilingual social projects-- such as "choices about which languages and which literacies to promote for which purposes" (Hornberger, 1998, p. 454) should, as Hornberger (1997, 1998) has argued, be resolved by "language minority speakers" (1998, p. 455). In the context of endangered language education, "language minority speakers" can be interpreted broadly

to encompass the educational community of practice, ensuring that learners (who might be excluded by a narrow interpretation of speakers) also have a recognized voice. In the same vein, the empowerment of all community members through "language reclamation" has been discussed by Leonard (2012) in political terms, as a "larger effort by a community to claim its right to speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives" (p. 359).

The ideologies and imaginaries that independent group members bring with them are inevitably crucial factors in how language practices and norms emerge in a community, but in a convivial paradigm they are negotiated among the group. For example, the interest of some IZ students and teachers in conserving pre-Spanish words and ideas is present in IZ education, while other students' interest in learning the repertoire of the modern market and appreciation for *zapotequización* of Spanish also has a place. Prescriptivism and purism do not need to disappear from the social imaginary of the group, as long as they are subjected to a process of convivial negotiation rather than being imposed as norms. Neither of the contexts analyzed here are free of elements of exclusion, manipulation, and other potentially problematic practices, such as legitimating certain words or dialects with less attention to others, albeit unintentionally. It is clear that inclusion and conviviality are not static conditions, but rather orientations that emerge through social practice. In observing the practices of the UABJO and Camino de la Iguana, practices of *convivencia* or conviviality emerged as significant in facilitating the positive outcomes of these social projects, suggesting that fostering inclusivity and

conviviality in IZ education is a promising foundation for achieving more equitable education in the Isthmus.

Imagining education which is inclusive not only of communicative practices but also of the priorities and agency of participants, and which is conducted through convivial means, is one way to envision improvements in the project of Diidxazá education and in other social projects related to minoritized/ endangered languages. In line with the vision of culturally-responsive and participatory pedagogies, this framing is attuned to the particular context of minoritized languages which are already at the bottom of or excluded from language education hierarchies in their place of origin. Considering how exclusion is resisted and conviviality is practiced is a lens through which to deconstruct minoritized language projects in interactional (rather than language-focused) terms. Examining which people, practices, and perspectives are included and how social dynamics and boundaries are negotiated may illuminate more about the social futures that these projects are constructing. The next chapter turns to the actors and communities of practice who are engaged in imagining new social futures in relation to Diidxazá, analyzing the strategies they employ as well as my own strategies as an IZ education advocate. As taken up further in chapter 7, the social meanings of Diidxazá use and education will always be multiple, however among voluntary participants and advocates the aim to resist structural inequalities and enact equality from the ground-up contributes to a societal norm or imaginary in which historical inequalities begin to lose some of their social meaning and hopefully also their impact.

## **Chapter 6. Strategies of engagement: The politics of language advocacy**

Throughout the discussion of the social meanings of IZ education practices (chapter 5), I illustrated how stakeholders in IZ education contexts adopt a variety of ideological and evaluative stances and practices. Examining this diversity of imaginaries and ideologies is a useful step towards understanding the kinds of strategies that actors may use in the pursuit of their goals in relation to IZ education. I also discussed inclusion/ exclusion and conviviality/ manipulation as common denominator lenses through which to evaluate IZ education practices and imagine improvements with primary reference to social equality, rather than with primary reference to linguistic or communicative practices. This chapter builds on the description of actors' practices in different IZ education domains (sections 4.2.2; 4.3.2), and analysis of the social meanings of IZ and IZ education (chapter 5), to examine the strategies used by different actors who engage in advocacy around Diidxazá. I begin with a discussion of the complexities of advocacy and working towards imaginaries of positive social change (section 6.1), followed by an analysis of IZ advocacy strategies (6.2) and illustrations of strategies which I observed (6.3) and participated in (6.4). I conclude with overall reflections and on-going concerns (6.5).

### **6.1 Engagement in positive social change (through language)**

From a relativist perspective, all actors are arguably engaged in pursuit of what they understand to be positive improvements in their immediate environment, in line with the social imaginary which frames their norms and assumptions. In the Isthmus, as in other multilingual education contexts, there are varying evaluations of what successful

education and/or successful language use looks like, and inevitably varying imaginaries of what constitutes positive social change. While some parents are pleased to have IZ increasingly taught in school (IN 141126 J-7), others reportedly oppose it (IN 140114 E-3, IN 141014 VC). School directors or parents who use only Spanish with children in the Isthmus are pursuing a monolingual future they view to be better than their multilingual past and/or present, in which they hope that the new generation will not experience discrimination or economic need. Thus engaging in social endeavors despite the multiplicity of evaluations or perspectives present among diverse stakeholders has many pitfalls; certain forms of engagement may be viewed positively by some actors and negatively by others.

In addition to the concern of *what* positive change looks like, there are different understandings of *how* social change occurs. Is change produced through top-down government policy? Can individual actors incite change? Is it something that can be negotiated within a local community of practice? In line with other scholars of educational change, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) use the term "theory of action" to describe "the assumed logic" or "flow of processes [...] by which particular educational changes are enacted" (p. 123). The theory of action presented by Hymes (1980) in the ethnographic monitoring framework focuses on the level of a social program (typically a school), where the ethnographer contributes to "the need to recognize patterns and meanings that may emerge during the course of a program, perhaps outside the classroom" and eventually to contribute to "the evaluation and justification of programs" (p. 104). Through identifying patterns and meanings and evaluating outcomes, the work

of the researcher may create changes in the program, and may also contribute to wider social changes in regards to acceptance of norms that the school represents (Hymes discusses the role ethnographic evaluation can play in the societal acceptance of bilingual education in particular). Research produced by a lone researcher is not sufficient in Hymes' view, however; it must be communicated effectively to members of the program community, and will be more effective if program participants also participate in the monitoring activities. The collaborative nature of the work also increases the likelihood that a mutually accepted view of what change to pursue will emerge. This is thus an interdependent theory of action where positive change in one space (e.g. a bilingual program) may also have ripple effects for a broader social project (e.g. bilingual education).

In the methodological framework of this study I posited that ethnographic monitoring can be carried out on social scales other than a specific program, and consequently I conducted observations in a variety of programs and public contexts on a regional or speech community scale. A broader level of observations has undeniable advantages in terms of understanding social meanings outside of specific programs and classrooms as encouraged by Hymes, and in understanding processes and politics across social scales as encouraged by proponents of the ethnography of LPP (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) and vertical case studies (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). When moving from description and interpretation towards evaluation and action a broad social scope becomes a challenge, however. Engaging others in observation and evaluation, and working towards change through up-take of evaluations, can only (or at least best) occur

within a limited social space. I now believe that ethnographic monitoring is most suited to work at the level of a community of practice-- this is not necessarily as narrow or clearly established as the space of one program, but it is a social space with some degree of self-recognized mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint enterprise. Where communities of practice exist is an interpretive question in and of itself when social groupings beyond recognized institutions are taken into consideration. There certainly remain different goals and imaginaries within each community as well, although it is also possible to note numerous shared imaginaries.

While conducting observations among a variety of communities of practice (discussed more fully in 6.4 below) I came to participate and collaborate in three in particular. My collaborations in the UABJO IZ classes, the Camino de la Iguana, and the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project emerged due to the interest and willingness of the participants. Each of these spaces represented a different kind of community under different circumstances, from a certified university, to an itinerant non-formal literacy program, to a transnational research-outreach project, and thus my observations and collaborations took different forms in each, as elaborated below. If the goal of an ethnographic monitoring project is to achieve extensive up-take of evaluations and change, a more narrowly defined space is better than one which is loosely defined. For example, I was able to engage in productive monitoring work relatively quickly in the structured context of the IZ classes at the UABJO, while working in the less-defined space of the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project was much slower and the changes achieved are less stable due (in part) to lack of institutional framing.

As an ethnographic monitor my theory of social change is a constructivist one, in line with the perspective that has come to be central to LPP studies and Interactionist Sociolinguistics, among other disciplines. Within this paradigm the agency of actors to negotiate and contribute to social realities is emphasized, although there is also awareness of structural and social processes that enable or constrain actors. As an ethnographer I recognize the importance of incremental, cumulative social practices as well as socio-political processes, and the design of this study reflects this by observing practices and processes as a research focus (Research question 1, section 3.2). As an educator and activist I am especially interested in the practices of people who intentionally pursue a more-or-less conscious imaginary of social change, reflected in my choice to include strategies of engagement as a research focus (Research question 3). I thus draw a distinction between automatic practices and intentional strategies of engagement.

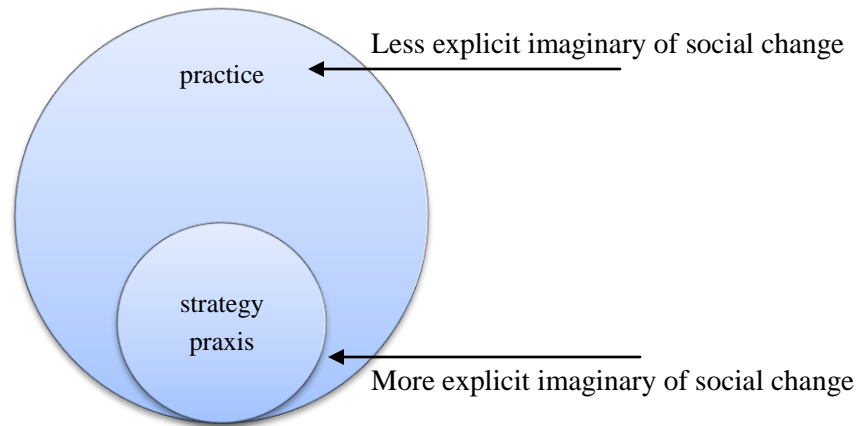
I understand the difference between practices and strategies through their relation to imaginaries and social change. Practices may reproduce or challenge structures of inequality in ways that are not intentional. Strategies on the other hand are practices which orient to an imaginary of social change and are carried out with the intention to influence social life in some way. As Wenger (1998) discusses, social and personal imagination may "conceive of new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures", but alignment of imagination with action or engagement is necessary in order to bring about change (pp. 178-180). The focus of this chapter is primarily on intentional or reflective forms of engagement, noting that this praxis is distinct from generic social practices in that it involves some degree of conscious choice, a dialogic

relationship between reflection and action (Freire, 1969, 1970). Scholars of social change have called for "unrestrained participation in political and social activities" (Sen, 1999, p. 152) and the creation of "deep democracy" in social organization and knowledge production (Appadurai, 2002, 2006), a call which is part of the humanist and pluralist social imaginary within which the project of language equality has developed. By examining strategies of engagement I aim to glimpse ways to respond to this imperative, to counter language inequalities and to promote convivial multilingualism. I see intentional strategies as a form of political participation, an especially important one within local politics. Observing and comparing the strategies of other actors was undertaken in part to inform my own strategies within the evaluative/ engaged phase of ethnographic monitoring, but additionally it is an attempt to sketch out some of the local politics of IZ advocacy.

While I see the conceptual distinction between automatic practice and reflective praxis as significant, during my study and subsequent analysis I have found that this line can often be blurred in everyday life or at least be opaque to a third-party observer. This is an important caveat to make in relation to the study of strategies and intentionality. For example, the practice of speaking Spanish to children has become default in Istmeño society, as described in chapter 4, so that it is not viewed as a conscious choice or strategy, but rather the normal way to socialize children. Nonetheless it may indeed be a conscious strategy among some caretakers, such as parents who suffered discrimination while learning Spanish (IN 130420 J-9), while among others it seems to be an unexamined practice (IN 141125 J-6). When observing the practices of others I am often

not able to confidently determine the degree to which a certain practice may be strategic and the degree to which it may be a reaction or automatic action. Although indications of this sometimes emerge in conversations and interviews, this evidence is not enough to reliably differentiate among practices I have observed. Additionally I am wary of the potential to devalue certain practices in relation to others; for example, an IZ-speaking mother who uses only Spanish with her son has a reason for doing so and her practices make sense within her view of the world. Whether it is unconscious (reactionary), or she chooses not to articulate it to a foreign researcher, or the researcher (me) does not grasp how she does articulate it, does not make her actions random or less worthy of note. However I still find a distinction between praxis and practice to be useful and necessary in examining social engagement, in particular my own, making this an area of on-going reflection.

The following framework illustrates how I currently make sense of the relationship between practice and praxis or strategies. Practices encompass all forms of action, some of which are distinguishable as intentional praxis carried out through strategies in pursuit of an imagined social change. There is not a clear dividing line between practices and praxis, but more of a scale or continuum between practices undertaken in pursuit of an explicit imagined social change, and those performed with a less-explicit orientation towards social change.



**Figure 31. The relationship between practices and strategies in my observations and social engagement**

My discussion of strategies is thus focused around those practices which I observed as explicitly oriented to improvement or change in relation to Diidxazá use and Diidxazá education. As mentioned above I also view strategies as a part of politics; by observing and comparing strategies in this context I aim to examine the politics of IZ advocacy.

It is important to note that many, if not most imaginaries of social change have very little or nothing to do with language in general or with Diidxazá in particular. When discussing desired changes with public school teachers and directors, I found that their evaluations and imaginaries are focused on other social concerns such as poverty and violence in most cases (IN 140513 E-8; IN 140717 E-9). Although it would be useful to consider the strategies of actors who are working with a conscious goal of improving education and *without* a particular focus on language use, this is beyond the scope of most of the data that I collected. My personal orientation led me to interact primarily with people who work directly around language use, although some do so as a means for achieving other ends (such as improved social cohesion within their community of practice, as discussed in section 4.3.2). I have aimed in this study to avoid an essentialist

focus on language, and to consider social practices and processes occurring around and through issues of language. At the same time language practices and imaginaries about languages and speakers have remained prominent in my work. I aim not to ignore other imaginaries of social change, but to include them where possible as viewed through the lens of language practices and politics.

## **6.2 Strategies of Diidxazá advocacy**

There are numerous ways that stakeholders in the Isthmus are working to counteract the processes of denigration that have indexed local ways of speaking and being with poverty and ignorance, and excluded them from educational spaces. I observed many different practices related to the teaching, learning and promotion of Diidxazá, as discussed in chapter 4. My own practices and strategies were bound up in those of the people around me, although also influenced by my personal orientations, theories and priorities. As I observed, participated in and eventually initiated actions, I did not have analytical categories for what I was observing. I thought of my area of interest as activities relating to "IZ promotion", and later "IZ inclusion" or resistance to exclusion. In the analysis and writing of this chapter I have come to look at this area as the politics of IZ advocacy, a material and discursive social project which promotes Diidxazá use and education in various ways, and encompasses various conceptions of Diidxazá.

As discussed in chapter 1 and further contextualized in chapter 5, there are different understandings of Diidxazá among the communities of practices that I am considering, from a conceptualization of language as an object (among descriptive

linguists for example), to a socio-political practice (among literacy advocates for example), to mobile symbolic capital (among some educated youth for example). My use of the term Diidxazá advocacy includes this understanding of the multiplicity of meanings that are attached to Diidxazá, without intending to reinforce any one meaning. Diidxazá advocacy is thus not a homogenous nor teleological social project; it is motivated by valorization of objectified languages, by certain social ways of being, by global opportunities, and by other desires associated with Diidxazá, and does not project a unified outcome. I explore this issue further in my conclusions (chapter 7), where I summarize the deictic and indexical nature of "Diidxazá".

My analysis in this section focuses on the individuals and communities of practice who I observed to be engaged in strategies around IZ use and/or IZ education, who I refer to as *Diidxazá advocates* or *IZ advocates*. I consider IZ advocates within formal and non-formal education domains, as well as actors whose activities would not normally be considered "educational", but do relate to the public promotion of IZ use, such as musicians and writers. Diidxazá advocates can be grouped into the communities of practice in which they work and interact. These communities exist in all of the formal and non-formal education contexts described in sections 4.3 and 4.4, with orientations and ties on local, state, national, and international levels. Some of these communities participate face-to-face in dedicated spaces (such as a team of school teachers), while others can be considered imagined communities as discussed by Anderson (1991), in that all of the members do not necessarily interact in a physical space, or do so only occasionally (such as linguistic researchers). However, all of them can be considered

communities of practice as described by Lave and Wenger (1991; Wenger, 2000) through the presence of mutual engagement in a joint enterprise and use of a shared repertoire. In the case of a team of teachers this includes working to successfully educate students through the communicative repertoire deemed appropriate in the school. In the case of linguistic researchers this includes collecting and disseminating data in support of documentation and analysis of Diidxazá, using a repertoire containing specialized symbols and jargon. The main communities of practice considered in this analysis are represented in table 15.

**Table 15. IZ advocacy communities and geographic ties of participants**

<b>IZ advocacy community of practice</b>	<b>Geographic tie(s) of participants</b>
Participants in Diidxazá do' campaign	Local (Regional)
Cultural center classes	Local (Regional)
Camino de la Iguana workshop	Local, Regional, (State)
Public school teachers/ directors	Local, Regional, (State)
IZ music and literature producers	Local, Regional, (State, National, International)
Cultural/ Heritage activists and Art collectives	Local, Regional, State, National
(Young) adult learners in classes or self-study	Local, Regional, State, National
UABJO IZ classes	Local, Regional, State, National, (International)
INALI standardization initiative	National, (Local, Regional)
Ethnobotany project sponsored by the Smithsonian	International, Local, State
Research community	National, International, (Local, Regional)

The primary geographic ties of the participants within each community are listed first, with weaker ties included in parentheses. Some communities are almost entirely local, such as the classes organized and run out of cultural centers in the Isthmus.<sup>25</sup> Other communities have ties across geographic locales, such as the workshops sponsored through the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project, which occurred through the participation of local, Oaxaca state, and international actors (as discussed further in 6.4 below). The geographic ties of community members have important impacts on the strategies that they adopt, as will be illustrated below. Some individual actors participate in multiple communities, as writers and teachers, or as activists and learners. I participate in networks of Researchers, the UABJO classes, the Camino de la Iguana workshops, and the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project, while observing other communities from the periphery.

A further important factor is how members come to join these communities of practice. In most cases, they are communities which are voluntarily joined by individuals who position themselves within them through participating in a joint enterprise, such as the production of IZ hip-hop (IZ music and literature producers), or linguistic research on IZ (Researchers). The classes in cultural centers, the UABJO, and the Camino de la Iguana are all voluntary; I never came across a case of a learner who was not present through their own motivation. The exception to this trend are teachers and learners in public schools, in particular those which are "bilingual", and thus are positioned through national and state policy as advocates of Diidxazá. While some teachers and students

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<sup>25</sup> Although the cultural centers receive money from the state, the choice to teach the classes and the ways they are taught are determined locally, and so I argue that this is primarily a local community.

intentionally join these schools with an interest in bilingualism, others are there by default, because the school was close to their house (IN 141126 J-7) or because they were told they could have a comfortable career as a bilingual teacher (IN 130420 J-9). Public schools are thus potentially manipulated communities of practice, as discussed by Illich (1970), where participants are required to engage with each other, but not on their own terms. The INALI is also a government-mandated entity, and thus potentially more subject to forms of top-down control. The other groupings are also subject to various influences and forms of external control, but generally are less manipulated and more dependent on convivial forms of mutual engagement in order to establish themselves as enduring social groups.

### **6.2.1 Strategy frameworks**

Through emergent coding of field notes, memos and interviews, I have developed a framework to categorize the strategic practices that I observed and participated in within this domain of advocacy politics. I organize these strategies in terms of 1) a fundamental action and 2) the target of the action. The fundamental actions are characterized as forms of *representing* (representing something through discursive means), *connecting* (creating a connection among existing people, things, or spaces), and/ or *producing* (creating something new). These actions are most saliently targeted at *resources, events, spaces or structures, people, and communication practices*, as represented in table 16 and exemplified further below.

**Table 16. Actions and targets of IZ advocacy**

Actions Targets	Representing	Connecting	Producing
Resources			
Events			
Spaces/ Structures			
People			
Communication practices			

*Resources* refers to non-human materials, such as texts, recordings, videos, or other scholastic or educational products. *Events* refers to limited-term or one-off occurrences that bring people together, such as a conference on Indigenous languages, a bilingual Hip-Hop concert, or a linguistic workshop. *Spaces and structures* refers to more durable social spaces such as schools or long-term education programs, including cultural centers and organizations. *People* refers to people in their potential social roles as speakers, teachers, learners, experts, etc. *Communication practices* refers to any communicative practices, including all forms of reception and production, whether written, visual, or audio.

Actions and targets can be further analyzed in terms of scales of 1) *social level* (or geographical tie), 2) *visibility*, and 3) *time*. The significance of *social scale* was already mentioned above in relation to the geographical ties of IZ advocates, who develop their strategies and act from many different social standpoints, from local to international. The location of the action and target is also worthy of note. For example, actors may try to

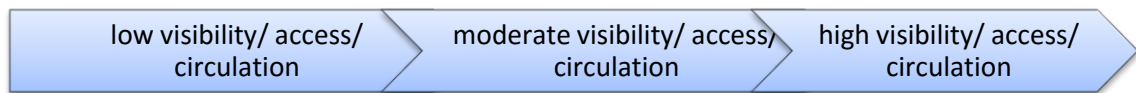
connect local people together (such as bringing IZ teachers together, FN 140206), or they may try to connect local and international people (such as taking IZ speakers to work in the United States, FN 140411). An IZ promotion event may be produced in the Isthmus (such as the *Compartiendo Experiencias* conference, FN 140405), in the state capitol (such as the presentation of a "traditional" dance group in the UABJO, FN 150518), in Mexico City (such as the presentation and public reading of a book of IZ poetry, FN 140223), and/or abroad (such as the presentation of Diidxazá in the *One World, Many Voices* exhibit in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, FN 130626). Social scale is thus significant in terms of where certain actions occur, as well as who participates in them and who initiates them. Salient social scales are illustrated in figure 32, where *local* refers to a specific town (e.g. Juchitán, Tehuantepec), *regional* refers to the Isthmus, *state* refers to the state of Oaxaca, *national* refers to the country of Mexico, and *international* refers to outside of Mexico.



**Figure 32. Social scale**

Each action and target can also be characterized on a *visibility scale*, considering whether it is an action which has a wide or limited social circulation, and the number of people who will have access to it, as illustrated in figure 33. For example, making an introduction (connecting) between IZ teachers may impact only those people (such as a meeting between the person teaching IZ in the UABJO in Oaxaca City, and four new IZ teachers in Tehuantepec, FN140206), while hosting an event (such as the *Compartiendo*

*Experiencias* conference which included public schools and other universities, FN 140405) or establishing a facebook page for learners (such as a page for the Camino de la Iguana that was much talked about, and not (yet) created FN 130426, IN 141121 NT) will likely have greater public visibility and access (Memo 140724).



**Figure 33. Visibility scale**

The *time scale* of the action can be considered in a parallel way, in terms of whether it is a rapid, medium-term, or long-term action, as shown in figure 34. To continue with an example from above, an introduction between a small group of IZ teachers within the UABJO is a faster action than planning an event or an on-line space (Memo 131225). Connecting teachers may be part of supporting a structural change in an institution, such as the development of IZ classes in the UABJO where none previously existed, but actually solidifying this structural change is a much longer-term goal (Memo 140724), towards which one meeting may make an almost insignificant contribution.



**Figure 34. Time scale**

These frameworks (actions, targets, social scale, visibility scale, time scale) are intended to describe the different kinds of strategies in evidence during my fieldwork. I use them as a way of analyzing and reflecting on what I experienced at the time as a generally chaotic and unpredictable flow of events in the Isthmus. The framework and scales will be exemplified further in the discussion below. They are not intended to be

evaluative in and of themselves; rapid or long-term strategies, and low visibility or high visibility strategies can all be useful ways to include IZ practices in education. As discussed in the conceptual framework, my objective has not been to identify "successful" strategies, or "the best" technique, as I do not believe a one-size-fits-all solution is possible. I do believe that if local advocates hope to counter structural inequalities and exclusionary socio-political processes there is a need to design effective strategies for their context. Towards this end, I will discuss some of what I observed the effects of certain strategies to be in relation to the evaluative lens of inclusion/ exclusion and conviviality/ manipulation laid out in chapter 5.

### 6.3 Observed strategies

I observed IZ advocates engaging in all of the sectors of the framework laid out in table 16. Below I list one or two representative strategies that I observed in each area in table 17, and briefly discuss some of these examples below. Each example is followed by representative data and/or reference to the section(s) within which the example is discussed in more detail.

**Table 17. Examples of strategies using different actions and targets**

<b>Actions Targets</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Connecting</b>	<b>Producing</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publishing professionally-edited IZ posters, videos &amp; texts on-line. (Image 140401)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Yaak</i> web site of resources. (sec. 6.3.2)</li> <li>SIL archive of materials. (sec. 2.5, 5.3.1)</li> <li>Resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workbook created by Antonio Ortíz. (sec. 4.4.2)</li> <li>Didactic game created by Smithsonian team. (sec. 6.3.3)</li> </ul>

		connected to spaces through distribution of materials to libraries. (sec. 6.4)	
<b>Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of bilingual Hip-Hop events through posters and on-line images. (Image 140725) (sec. 4.4)</li> <li>• Promotion of conferences and workshops. (sec. 6.4.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• La Ventosa workshops become an on-going series. (sec. 6.4.2)</li> <li>• Events connected to people through publicity. (sec. 6.4.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INALI's normalization workshops. (FN 130904, 140905) (sec. 6.3.3)</li> <li>• Conferences organized by researchers. (FN 131101, FN 150702) (sec. 6.3.4, 6.4.1)</li> </ul>
<b>Spaces/ Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of UABJO classes on-line and through outreach sessions. (FN 140124) (sec. 6.4.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monolingual primary teacher inviting Camino de la Iguana to her public school classroom. (FN 141121) (sec. 4.3.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of IZ classes in the UABJO (February, 2013).</li> <li>• Creation of Camino de la Iguana (January, 2012)</li> </ul>
<b>People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio journalists interviewing IZ researchers, rappers, &amp; writers (FN 131002) (sec. 6.4.1)</li> <li>• Positive valuation of foreigners who learn IZ (FN 140402) (sec. 6.3.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inviting students' family members to participate in cultural revalidation activities in monolingual primary school. (IN 140917 E-10) (sec. 6.3.2)</li> <li>• Meetings between new teachers and more experienced teachers in the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers training IZ youth in language documentation and transcription. (IN 130916 R-1) (sec. 6.3.3)</li> <li>• INALI gathering a committee of "expert" speakers to approve normalization. (FN 130904) (sec. 6.3.3)</li> </ul>

		UABJO (FN 140828) (sec. 6.3.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching new speakers and writers. (sec. 5.2, 5.3)</li> </ul>
<b>Communication Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diidxazá do' campaign positive representation of IZ. (IN 150321 VT) (sec. 5.1.4)</li> <li>Web-site dedicated to "writing good IZ", purist representation. (sec. 6.3.1)</li> <li>Researchers representing IZ and multilingualism as resources. (FN 140506) (sec. 6.3.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UABJO teacher taking learners to speak with vendors in the market. (FN 131214) (sec 5.2.3)</li> <li>Learners writing IZ on facebook (IN 131114 E-1) (sec. 4.2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners' oral and written use of IZ. (sec. 5.2, 5.3)</li> <li>Teacher-trainee choosing to run extra-curricular IZ program for monolingual (Spanish) students in Espinal. (FN 141010) (sec. 6.3.2)</li> </ul>

### 6.3.1 Strategic representing

Ways of representing-- discursively framing something (or someone)-- tend to be fairly visible or accessible and rapid in comparison with other strategies. This does not mean that they are ephemeral, however, as representations may build up over time. For example the creation of an activist web-site, "*Guca'nu jneza diidxazá*" (Let's write good Diidxazá) that espouses a normative view of IZ writing has grown from its founding in March, 2014 to have 347 members (as of 150805), and represents communication practices through a relatively purist ideology. The repeated anti-mixing discourse

published on the site, mainly by its founder, contributes to an overall normative or prescriptivist representation of IZ use. Representations of IZ as a language (not a *dialecto*) and pan-Zapotec ethnic pride are also common on the site. The founder's intention was to both present a unified view of IZ orthography, and to assist in the production of writers (of a standard variety). Complaining that most people who are trained to use the standard alphabet do not make an effort to share their knowledge, he commented in an interview,

*UH-2: Hice ese grupo principalmente para que a la gente que le interese escribir en zapoteco pueda este, pueda ir enseñando. Y además es abierto, ¿no? Es abierto para que cualquiera publique, como foro de discusión. Es decir, bueno, "yo lo escribo así porque aquí dice que así se escribe." "No, pero yo pienso que"- así y ahora viene esta nueva norma que se va a escribir así. "Ah, bueno. ¿Entonces cómo va a quedar?"*

*H: Hum.*

*UH-2: Como un foro de discusión. Sin embargo, no ha tenido tanta repercusión como he querido, pero, pero sí lo hago y yo publico mucho en ese lugar sobre [...] las grafías del zapoteco. Para que la gente también se entere cómo es.*

UH-2: I made that group principally so that people who are interested in writing in Zapotec could um, could be teaching/ learning. And additionally it's open, right? It's open so that anyone can publish, as a form of discussion. That's to say, right "I write it like this because here they say that it's written like this." "No, but I think that it's like this" and now comes this new norm that it's going to be written like this. "Ah, OK. So how is it going to turn out?"

H: Uhuh.

UH-2: Like a discussion forum. However, it hasn't had as much repercussion as I had wanted, but, but yes I do it and I post a lot in that place about [...] the Zapotec graphemes. So that people also find out how it is. (IN 140515 UH-2)

Later in the interview he described a unified writing system as something that would allow Diidxazá to endure into the future, in the way that classic Greek texts are still read

today. This Diidxazá advocate imagines the homogenization of (at least) IZ writing as a necessary goal-- regardless of the fact that it will exclude different forms of expression in the current context where no standard has been taken up. He hopes to achieve this through convivial interactions and discussions, but the public participation is not as lively as he had hoped, resulting in more one-sided representations. This is also a good example of the constantly-shifting nature of the communities of practice that I am discussing here-- this advocate is attempting to create an imagined community among people who are voluntarily interested in IZ writing norms, although the community has developed a fairly passive mode of engagement, contrary to his intentions.

Across Istmeño society there is considerable positive representation of writers and musicians who produce bilingual work (also discussed in 5.3.1). These representations occur both in public forums and in private conversations, as exemplified in the following vignette describing a ceremony in honor of a book translation:

A ceremony has been organized for Victor Cata to present a volume of contemporary Mexican literature that he translated into IZ. He's invited me and another colleague to give a few remarks in introduction of the book; although he is not visibly in charge during the actual event, I know he has thought about and designed how it will go, including inviting us to make preliminary remarks. A stage, sound system and rows of chairs are set up in front of the city hall, stopping traffic as I have seen done on numerous occasions for all manner of public events. I am surprised to find that the mayor of Juchitán has agreed to attend and speak; I have only seen his representatives at other similar cultural events in the past. I am also surprised that although the event was postponed for an hour at the last minute (due to a road block which delayed the arrival of the Mexico-city editor who sponsored the project) there are a good number of people filling the seats. The urban editor is in jeans and a black-and-white artistic t-shirt, while the rest of us on stage are in formal dress (collared shirt and trousers for the men, *enagua* and *huipil* (long skirt and embroidered blouse) for me and the other commentator).

Victor and the mayor both speak in IZ first, then translate to Spanish. The editor (a Spanish monolingual) and other commentator (an IZ-Spanish bilingual) speak in Spanish only. I begin my comments with a few phrases in IZ, and then continue in Spanish. Victor reads from the book in IZ, with no translations. Afterwards a long line of people of all ages forms to get Victor's signature. A few ask for mine as well. I'm praised for my use of IZ and told that I pronounce IZ better than I pronounce Spanish. (FN 140801)

It is not uncommon for IZ writers to be represented as local celebrities, as illustrated by the well-attended, festive launch of this book where all Juchitán-based participants appeared in formal dress (in contrast to the urban editor for whom it was clearly a less-momentous occasion). It is also common for outsiders who use Diidxazá to be inordinately praised for their limited abilities, as I was on this and other occasions. Cata's invitation to me was part of his overall strategy for the event, and exemplifies just one of the many times that the use of IZ by a foreigner (myself and others) was represented positively and strategically.

While all IZ advocates engage in positive representations of IZ speakers and/ or language use, there are differences in the discourses of locally-affiliated people versus non-locally affiliated advocates. Local advocates engage in representations in more personal and specific ways, such as praising an individual writer (IN 131114 E-1), or telling a story about a *Juchiteco* who attended a bilingual school and went on to become a Doctor (IN 140513 E-8). Non-local advocates on the other hand are more likely to promote the benefits of multilingualism in general ways, or take up the "language as universal heritage" and "treasure" tropes warned against by Jane Hill (2002) (FN 130816, FN 140506). The former focuses on the creation of positive representations in relation to IZ speakers, while the latter focuses on representing abstract phenomena--

multilingualism, and the language itself-- as valuable and desirable. The representations made by actors in positions of power at different social scales may be more visible or circulate more than others, such as when researchers are interviewed on the radio or their work is represented in the newspaper (FN 130816).

### **6.3.2 Strategic connecting**

Ways of connecting can be rapid and of low visibility, such as an invitation or a personal introduction, or more longitudinal and higher visibility, such as the creation of an archive or coordinating an event between two institutions. For example, the teachers and director that invited families to participate in activities designed to valorize local culture in their primary school took an action that was fairly quick (the invitation) and resulted in raised visibility (IN 140717 E-9). The creation of the activities was obviously more time-consuming, but inviting parents to participate in the activities once they existed was a strategy that made the activities rapidly more inclusive and more convivial. This inclusion was appreciated by parents; a grandmother who cares for two grandchildren who are students at the school praised the teachers' efforts (IN 141112 J-4). I observed the teachers speaking IZ with her and other family members who are more comfortable conversing in IZ, another convivial practice which one teacher noted as important in maintaining good communication (IN 140917 E-10). The connections which the teaching team made between people (themselves and their students' families) thus resulted in increased inclusion and conviviality.

While the primary school event connected people who were all members of the same school or community of practice, connections between members of different communities of practice can also be advantageous. Meetings between a group of young teachers who began teaching Diidxazá in spring of 2014 in the UABJO and Victor Cata of the Camino de la Iguana were a useful space for exchange of expertise and efforts to improve the quality of the classes. The young teachers had taught their students to use "*Padiuxi*" (a greeting, or literally blessing) when entering the classroom-- a formal greeting that I never heard in a person-to-person conversation, only in contexts where an individual made a formal address to a crowd. This is the only word that approximates to the semantic equivalent of "*Buenos días*" however, and as such is commonly taught (and used) for greetings in the classroom. Cata advised them to use more pragmatically appropriate alternatives, such as "*Ma la?*" (roughly, Already here?) and "*Pa ladu?*" (Where are you going?). He encouraged them to include everyday IZ use, to adapt the classroom around the language rather than manipulating the language to fit the classroom (FN 140828). Their norms for teaching IZ were based in their experiences in university English classes, a community of practice with its own shared repertoire and interactional norms drawing from internationally-circulating pedagogies as well as the state-level university structure. Cata's norms were based in his national and international-level training in linguistics and anthropology, his participation in the regional-level Diidxazá literary community of practice where culturally-unique forms of expression are valued, and his participation in local-level Diidxazá dominant spaces with older speakers. Bringing together these different communities of practice (and their orientations to norms

at different social scales) was enriching for all involved; "*Padiuxi*" did remain a common classroom greeting, but other greetings were also introduced and discussed.

Collecting resources or information, such as the creation of an archive, can also be viewed as a form of connecting. *Yaak* (<http://filosofia.uaq.mx/yaak/>), a web-site created by a group of researchers at the *Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro* (Autonomous Queretaro University, UAQ) and supported by the INALI among other organizations, was developed with the aim to make Indigenous language resources available digitally (IN 131218 R-4). The creation of a collection or archive clearly has an inclusionary objective, especially when publicized on-line. Decisions about what to exclude are also inevitable however, and the knowledge or objects to be archived typically go through considerable manipulation as they are prepared for conservation. The many varieties of Zapotec (at least 62 as discussed in chapter 2) pose a challenge to archivists who must choose if they will include all varieties of Zapotec (some of them not mutually intelligible) or create categories in the interest of greater accessibility for learners who might be searching for materials related to a specific variety. The Smithsonian Ethnobotany project also resulted in an archive about plants which grow in the Isthmus along with their Spanish, Latin, and Diidxazá name, made accessible on-line through the Smithsonian National Herbarium. Which languages to use, including which plant name(s) was also an editorial choice made by the research team. Extensive use of Spanish and Diidxazá was a priority in order to make the collection accessible to possible viewers in the Isthmus.

Static forms of connection, such as a collection, are thus dependent on access and visibility in order to result in convivial social benefits; whereas human connections are perhaps less longitudinal, but can much more readily result in convivial interactions and actual communication practices. For example, by giving a book of IZ texts to a library in Xadani I theoretically made them more widely available. By giving a copy of the book to a teacher trainee who was developing an extra-curricular program for elementary children in Espinal, I had a much greater assurance that actual benefit might result from my action, as I hoped that he would use the texts in support of his teaching and thus eventually the production of communication practices among his students (FN 141010). Similarly, the Smithsonian team has created a variety of didactic games and materials over the course of the project, aiming to make the archival research more accessible and relevant to the public. The majority of the examples given in the table above and discussed here are of connections between like elements, such as connecting resources with more resources in the creation of an archive. Clearly connecting also occurs among different elements, such as connecting resources to spaces and eventually people by distributing didactic materials to schools, libraries, and on-line spaces.

### **6.3.3 Strategic producing**

Ways of producing vary greatly depending on the durability of what is being produced. The production of written or digital materials generally takes a reasonable amount of time, and may become highly visible through promotion across social networks (Memo 140902). For example, a set of plant-themed didactic games created by the team under the umbrella of the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project took around a year to create. They

were subsequently distributed in hard copy not only in La Ventosa where the project was based, but to cultural centers, libraries and schools across the Isthmus, reaching a regional level of visibility. Additionally Pérez Báez, the project director, distributed copies to libraries in Oaxaca City, and took copies to display within the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. A Juchitán reporter published a small news piece about the games, which was also circulated in the on-line version of the newspaper (Cha'ca, 2013). As with the creation of an archive, the static nature of resource production requires editorial choices about inclusion/ exclusion, a process of (creative) manipulation, and is dependent on good accessibility and visibility in order to result in social use. In the case of the botanical games, multiple users complained that they were almost monolingual in Diidxazá and expressed a desire to have Spanish included in order to make them more accessible (FN 140405, IN 140318 E-4). The editorial choices made by the team in order to privilege IZ did not coincide with the view of these actors who expected fully bilingual materials.

The production of certain kinds of people, such as teachers or (new) speakers of IZ, is generally of considerably longer duration, in particular as it is not something that the initiator (teacher or teacher trainer in this case) can control (FN 141105). There is certainly scope for manipulation in the training or selection of people to serve an educational or social role, however there is also scope for conviviality as individual agency is inevitably present. The aim of the Camino de la Iguana teachers is to create IZ readers and writers, yet participants regularly state that they are not comfortable writing in IZ and choose to complete the creative assignments that Natalia Toledo gives them in

Spanish or in a mix of Spanish and IZ. Rather than exclude these participants or their writing, Toledo's response is to accept the work that the participants choose to create in the time that they have. Both teachers and participants note that a longer period of instruction is necessary to feel comfortable with the popular alphabet (IN 131113 LV-3, IN 141121 NT). Regardless, the workshop includes a final presentation that validates whatever work the participants have produced. The production of IZ writers is thus negotiated in a convivial way, and is not contingent upon adherence to a writing norm or other external criteria.

The social scales of different communities and actors can also play a role in the production of new kinds of people. The INALI's creation of an "expert" committee to work on a normalization guide for written IZ is part of their attempt to create a new norm in collaboration with local actors (FN 130904). They do not have an explicit goal to create an IZ academy or a linguistic elite, although the fact that the committee is not open to the public and is relatively small, and that they have received some linguistic training/meta-linguistic awareness raising as part of the workshops, contributes to the production of a small group who are perceived to have expert status (FN 140905, IN 140925 E-11). Researchers who need translation and transcription as part of their quasi-experimental or descriptive studies train computer-literate IZ speakers to assist them in order to meet these needs (IN 131011 R-2). The training may give the speakers a new local status, such as a young woman from La Ventosa who is now known throughout the community for her ability to write IZ, and is frequently sought out by anyone who wants to check their spelling or translation (IN 140114 LV-6). When these local actors become incorporated

into a national (INALI) or international (research) community of practice, it may change their visibility and status locally.

In contrast, all of the spaces or structures directly related to teaching and learning IZ that I observed were produced through local, regional, and occasionally state-level support, including classes in cultural centers, the UABJO, the Camino de la Iguana, and public schools working to implement the state-level PTEO policy.<sup>26</sup> The production of learning spaces inevitably creates the need for increased IZ communicative practices, and the creation of IZ teachers and learners as recognizable social categories. Teachers then aim to produce language practices among their students, although the use of vocabulary-focused techniques and classroom specific vocabulary colors the kind of language practices that are being produced (as described above with the example of "*Padiuxi*"). The production of individual communicative practices may be rapid and ephemeral-- although as illustrated in the examples of the reactions to my brief use of IZ at local events (sections 5.1, 6.3.1) even the production of fairly ephemeral language practices can have raised visibility depending on where and when they occur (FN 150703).

#### **6.3.4 Comparing observed strategies**

A pattern that emerges through comparison of strategies (also visible in the discussion of practices in 4.4 and 4.4.1) is the difference in strategies of advocates who have primarily local ties versus those with primarily non-local, non-regional ties. The actions of non-local advocates tend to focus on resources, including producing, publicizing

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<sup>26</sup> The only exception is the series of interdisciplinary workshops in La Ventosa, in which state and international actors (including me) were pivotal-- this will be discussed below in relation to my strategies.

(representing), and accumulating (connecting) texts, recordings, videos, and didactic games. They also engage in producing and publicizing events. Events and resources can take a medium to long amount of time to produce or collect in one place, but once created they are generally highly visible and lend themselves well to widely circulating positive representations. These representations are rapid and generally reach across social scales. Some resources also lend themselves to geographic mobility. Considering that non-local advocates are by nature not, or at least less, embedded in local institutions and daily life than local Diidxazá advocates are, it is not surprising that their actions focus more around mobile and short-term targets such as resources and events.

The most common strategies of local advocates, on the other hand, are indicative of their position within place-based networks and their potential for long-term engagement. Local actors engage in representing, connecting and producing across all analyzed areas, but unlike non-local actors their actions most often target people, communication practices and spaces, with much less attention to producing resources or one-off events. The only kind of strategy that I did not observe local advocates taking in a public way was connecting or collecting material resources (I did observe two extensive private libraries that were collected by local activists). The lack of an accessible repository for IZ books and learning materials in the Isthmus was commented on by a few local people, but generally it went un-remarked. This contrasts starkly with the focus of the research community of practice on archiving and producing tangible materials.

Among non-local researchers the focus on creation of materials and awareness-raising events and publicity implies the influence of a conductivist theory of action or

change; what is needed in order for IZ to be transmitted are adequate learning or reference materials (acquisition and corpus planning, in the standardized nation-state tradition) and the presentation of sufficient scientific evidence as to the benefits of multilingualism and/ or the imminent loss of IZ language and thus knowledge. The implied theory of action is that people's behavior will then logically shift when the right materials and the right argument have been presented to them (e.g. FN 130816, FN 140506). On the other hand, local advocates often describe their efforts whether in teaching, learning, writing, performing, or otherwise promoting Diidxazá as the way they are "contributing their grain of sand"-- not expecting to bring about a radical shift in the language ecology, but doing something that they feel has value (IN 140901 VRP, IN 140717 UT1). While proud of their work, many IZ advocates are aware that it is not of interest to most of their neighbors (e.g. IN 141007 AO). The creation of educational spaces, public use and valorization of Diidxazá, and modest expectations as to the outcomes of their work point to the influence of a more constructivist theory of change, where numerous contextual factors and others' agency will all influence the outcome of any attempt at social intervention. The strategies of these advocates reflect a place-based understanding of the context they are working in; an environment that they experience as a complex whole, where incremental changes may be possible if lots of people get on board, but nothing will shift overnight.

The underlying theories that influence the strategies of different actors are evident in the following vignette from the final day of a four-day linguistic workshop run by

Pérez Báez who was in the Isthmus on a research trip and was excited to facilitate a workshop there as a way of giving back to the community (FN 130812).

I am attending a workshop on semantic tone in IZ and helping with logistics. Throughout the 4 days of the workshop Gabriela has explained the phonology of IZ with examples and helpful exercises to a group of around 8-10 adult participants, mainly teachers and retired teachers. At the end of the final day she has shown them several different possible ways to represent tone in writing, including the popular alphabet which does not represent it consistently. She would like to represent it in the dictionary that she is preparing, but she wants speaker input on this issue. From her perspective tone needs to be documented because "if in 100 years there are no speakers" this writing system should represent the phonological detail. She says she knows it's been a quick workshop, but she would like to know if they think that tone should be represented, and if so how? Most participants have been fairly quiet throughout the workshop, and this question is also received with silence. Then Victor Cata (the only other person present with linguistic training) jumps in: We need to practice, we need time to experiment with different approaches before deciding, he says. Others nod. Gabriela agrees, it would be helpful to try the styles with children and different potential users, and to use them on facebook. She wonders how to resolve this question in a timely manner though. A man comments that writing is so much harder than speaking-- he only understood the vowel phonations for the first time yesterday (a characteristic much simpler than the tonal patterns that Gabriela has been explaining, and which is already represented in the popular alphabet). As a very junior member of the group I say nothing, but think Cata's practice-oriented approach to establishing a new writing norm sounds like the best possible solution. From the little I've learned of the participants through chatting and observation so far I already wonder if many of the people present actually engage in writing IZ with any regularity? (FN 130816)

From linguists working to create a transparent representation of sound patterns for posterity, to teachers who rarely engage in writing IZ but are interested in learning, and local activists who want any new norms to be as accessible as possible, the perspectives and priorities of stakeholders in just one workshop event are clearly very diverse. As someone with linguistic training, but currently more interest in pedagogy and social organizing, I often found myself with split opinions, wishing each priority could be given

its space and pursued in turn. In the following section I trace some of my own strategies within this political landscape and how they changed over the course of my study.

## 6.4 My practices and strategies

I began my study with the practices laid out in my research plan and the initial strategy of trying to support initiatives that were already underway-- in the first instance, the educational outreach component of the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project. I eventually engaged in a variety of practices and strategies which I will briefly describe and reflect on in this section. Table 18 shows examples of the range of actions that I took, with my most frequent strategies highlighted.

**Table 18. Strategies that I employed, with most frequent actions highlighted**

<b>Actions Targets</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Connecting</b>	<b>Producing</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of didactic or literary resources made by others in private &amp; public forums.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to inventory resources &amp; put them on-line.</li> <li>• Attempt to increase IZ resources in UABJO libraries.</li> <li>• Distribution of Ethnobotany didactic materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus for UABJO classes.</li> <li>• Collaboration in Ethnobotany didactic materials.</li> <li>• Didactic booklets for Interdisciplinary workshops.</li> </ul>
<b>Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting <i>Encuentro</i> on the radio &amp; newspapers.</li> <li>• Promoting Camino de la</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inviting participants from Camino de la Iguana to read poetry in the closing ceremony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Encuentro Conference.</b></li> <li>• <b>Interdisciplinary workshops in La Ventosa.</b></li> <li>• <b>UABJO exchange</b></li> </ul>

	Iguana to possible participants through personal conversation.	of the <i>Encuentro</i> .	<b>trip to Oaxaca</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smithsonian school visit in La Ventosa</li> </ul>
<b>Spaces/ Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promoting UABJO &amp; Camino de la Iguana on-line &amp; in person.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing meetings between stakeholders in UABJO, CEDELIO, &amp; <i>Biblioteca</i> Juan de Cordova</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attempts to stabilize IZ program in UABJO Tehuantepec.</b></li> <li>• <b>Collaborating on interdisciplinary workshops in La Ventosa.</b></li> </ul>
<b>People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promoting UABJO &amp; Camino de la Iguana participants through on-line photos.</b></li> <li>• <b>Presentation &amp; personal conversations about benefits of multilingualism.</b></li> <li>• <b>Positive appraisal of multilinguals.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Connecting UABJO teachers to teachers in La Ventosa, Oaxaca, and the Camino de la Iguana.</b></li> <li>• Connecting public teachers, activists, university students, etc. at the <i>Encuentro</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attempt to train IZ teachers at the UABJO &amp; in La Ventosa.</b></li> <li>• Attempt to produce successful learners (indirectly) through supporting communication-focused classes.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Presentation &amp; personal conversations about language as a resource and language mixing as normal.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging elders in La Ventosa to speak IZ with children in workshops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Speaking &amp; writing IZ where possible.</b></li> <li>• Encouraging others to speak through asking questions.</li> </ul>

All of my strategies remained embedded within existing initiatives to various degrees, although this shifted over the course of my study. Initially I primarily observed and attempted to be supportive of existing projects in ways that were asked of me or presented themselves spontaneously. For example I showed a draft of the Ethnobotany games to teachers in La Ventosa and asked for their feedback prior to the finalization of the games by the Smithsonian team (FN 130417), acting primarily as a conveyor of information since the decisions about revisions were made primarily by Pérez Báez and other team members. I also distributed the final version of the games and asked teachers and stakeholders who I interviewed throughout the region what kind of materials or supports they would like to have that they do not have currently, mentioning the Smithsonian database and dictionary project underway, and the potential to create further didactic materials with Smithsonian support.

My participation in the Camino de la Iguana also primarily involved offering support and publicity for the work of the teachers and participants. During the first time I observed the Camino de la Iguana workshop Cata was called to Mexico City for a visa appointment in the US embassy for an upcoming research visit to the Smithsonian; since Toledo would be left with over 40 students (normally they split the groups in half and alternated them), I offered to take half of the students and guide them to write theatrical dialogues, an intervention which seemed to be appreciated (FN 130418). During another instantiation of the workshop I was attending the closing ceremony and was caught off guard by Toledo commenting to the audience about my efforts to learn IZ and asking me to read something. I was not prepared to speak in public, but quickly flipped through my

notebook to find a draft of a poem I had read during a different workshop some months before and read it for the audience (FN 131112). I eventually grew accustomed to being pointed out by other IZ advocates as part of their strategies to represent IZ use in a positive and future-oriented way. Despite my personal preference not to improvise in public or to draw attention to myself, being a flexible and willing participant observer (and thus performing the parlor trick of saying something in IZ) remained an important strategy through which I attempted to support other actors.

In my fifth and sixth months of fieldwork I began to shift from what I felt was primarily a strategy of observing and supporting, to proposing some of my own ideas and initiatives (as tracked in my repeated memos on the theme of strategies (Memo 131112, Memo 131225)). The degree to which I should put forward my ideas, versus working in primarily responsive and less pro-active ways has remained a topic of uncertainty and reflection throughout. Additionally the degree to which I should present myself as an expert/ consultant versus as a student/ learner remains a challenge. The motivation to take a stance as someone with expertise and to propose some ideas came partially from observing a team of researchers from central Mexico who took a very pro-active, interventionist approach. Their initial project focused on the creation of didactic materials in collaboration with a "bilingual" primary school, and they also organized and hosted a conference on "Indigenous languages and bilingual education" in Juchitán, bringing in their colleagues from elsewhere in Mexico and South America to present, alongside a few local participants (FN 131031, FN 131101).

Observing their strategies, which produced attractive materials and fairly high-profile events, helped me to define where I wanted to direct my energy. In my seventh month of fieldwork, having observed their work over two months, I wrote a memo titled "Things and non-things" and reflected:

A focus on creating 'materials' is limited. It makes these things seem like the solution to much broader problems.  
Now that I've seen [[other]] work & gained a clearer focus on the limits of focusing on materials, I realize I often do the same thing-- make it sound like the whole focus is the production of some 'thing'. Producing a 'thing' is the simplest way to demonstrate support though, so I'm not sure how to get around this.  
Much like the limitations of focusing on language as a 'thing', an object. We know it's not accurate, but it's hard to get out of that way of talking & thinking. (Memo 140112)

Although I still asked people about materials or supports that they might be interested in having, I began to shift my focus towards strategies of connecting people and existing materials, and fostering learning spaces.

#### **6.4.1 Connecting people and resources**

Through my efforts to meet and interview people who were engaged in IZ education or promotion, I had observed that there was no network among these actors and that there were many people with an interest in this area who were not in contact with each other. I had made some efforts to connect people on individual bases-- encouraging learners to attend the Camino de la Iguana, encouraging teachers to invite it to their school, or telling people about the on-line grammar and dictionary available to them. I thought that a conference or forum directed at these local actors could be an effective way to connect people on a larger scale and create a better network of IZ educators in the Isthmus. The

coordinator and teacher who had been supportive of IZ classes in the UABJO, Ximena Fernández and David Medina, also liked this idea, and we began planning a conference together as a way to support the teaching of Indigenous languages in the UABJO in Tehuantepec and in the region in general.

The focus of the event was Diidxazá, however Fernández proposed that we include Ombeayuits/ Huave as a special "guest" language, since it is also spoken in the service area of the Tehuantepec campus and she was piloting Ombeayuits classes there as well that semester. We discussed whether to make the event generically about Indigenous languages of the Isthmus, but eventually decided to keep it explicitly about Diidxazá, with inclusion of Ombeayuits. I sought and was granted some support from the Smithsonian Recovering Voices program and we invited researchers from the *Universidad Autónoma de Queretaro* (UAQ) who were actively working in the region to participate as well. At Medina's suggestion we launched a public call for participation, attempting to make the event as inclusive as possible and encourage local participation from the very beginning.

After much discussion over what we were trying to achieve, we named the event *Encuentro Guendaruchaaga guendanabani: Bisiidi', Bizidi', ne Bibaniné Diidxazá/ Compartiendo experiencias: Enseña, Aprende, Vive el Zapoteco* (Forum "Sharing Experiences: Teach, Learn, Live (Isthmus) Zapotec") (FN 140128). Fernández was especially motivated to bring in a variety of cultural activities, organizing a photography exhibit by a cultural collective, a film projection, and concerts by a youth band and a marimba group. Medina organized a "gastronomic display" by a local university with a

tourism and culinary program, as well as a team of student volunteers to assist with logistics, and I organized the program of individual talks, theme panel discussions, workshops for adults and children, and a closing event where participants in the Camino de la Iguana read poetry they had written alongside Toledo and Cata.

We all made extensive efforts to publicize and invite teachers and other local stakeholders to the event. A colleague at the UAQ, Pedro Cardona, produced a website (<http://filosofia.uaq.mx/diidxaza/>) and other on-line publicity and helped to design posters and certificates. The initial design used a figure reminiscent of the figurines found in Zapotec archeological sites, but due to my and others' concerns that this would index IZ with the past, the design was changed to a geometric shape. After I discussed the event with a local reporter who was also a friend, emphasizing that we are not trying to promote IZ in an essentialist way, but rather to promote multilingualism in the region in general, she published an article about the event entitled "*Promueven multilinguismo*" ([They] promote multilingualism) (140401; <http://www.noticiasnet.mx/portal/istmo/general/educativas/202824-promueven-multilinguismo>). Other news articles in which I had much less influence were published, including "*Promueve UABJO rescate del zapoteco*" (UABJO promotes saving Zapotec) (140404; <http://www.imparcialenlinea.com/portal/?mod=nota&id=37003&cat=istmo>), a representation that I was less pleased with, but which is common in relation to Indigenous languages of Mexico, as elsewhere in the world.

During a radio interview where Fernández and I were invited to talk about the event on a popular morning talk show in Juchitán, when asked to explain the event by the host, Alberto, I said:

*H: Sí, pues gracias, xquixhepe' lii [[gracias en IZ]] Alberto, para la oportunidad de... de compartir ese evento. Hem... es un evento interdisciplinario... para... para apoyar a la enseñanza y aprendizaje del zapoteco de la región del Istmo. Entonces, en ese evento... van a llegar varios investigadores, profesores, maestros, académicos para presentar su trabajo sobre el tema de zapoteco, hum... También va a haber talleres sobre materiales pedagógicos, sobre didáctica del idioma y talleres para niños. Con juegos y actividades para... para que los niños o... también los adultos que quisieran mejorar su conocimiento de zapoteco puedan venir para... para aprender. Para participar. Y finalmente, habrá muestras culturales porque un idioma no es solamente una gramática o un objeto de estudio; es algo que... que disfrutamos. Que vivimos todos los días.*

H: Yes, well thanks, *xquixhe pe' lii* [[thank you in IZ]] Alberto, for the opportunity to... to share this event. Um... it's an interdisciplinary event...to...to support in the teaching and learning of Zapotec in the region of the Isthmus. So, in this event... various researchers, public school teachers, university teachers, scholars will arrive to present their work on the theme of Zapotec, um... Also there will be workshops on pedagogical materials, on language pedagogy and workshops for children. With games and activities for... so that the children or...also the adults that want to improve their knowledge of Zapotec can come to... to learn. To participate. And finally there will be cultural presentations because a language is not only a grammar or an object of study; it's something that... that we enjoy. That we live every day. (Audio 140402)

I attempted to represent the event as an inclusive space, where research and resources would be present, as well as interactive learning opportunities. Fernández summed up the many activities, including workshops teaching IZ and Ombeayuits, saying "*Básicamente lo que estamos eh... buscando es fomentar el multilingüismo que sabemos que se da aquí en la región*" (Basically what we're um... looking to do is to foster the multilingualism that we know is here in the region) (Audio 140402).

The host, a senior male reporter (here represented with R), brought up the issues of the lack of public interest and the divide between Tehuantepec and Juchitán (a result of conflicts during the colonial era when Tehuantepec was the colonial seat). Fernández (and I) responded by presenting the event as a pro-active effort to bridge such gaps:

*R: Lamentablemente... a veces... hemos dejado de... admirar, de amar, de profundizar nuestro conocimiento sobre nuestra propia lengua.*

*H: Ujum.*

*R: Aunque dicen por ahí de que el zapoteco va a morir el día en que muera el sol, a veces, digo: no, creo que primero va a morir nuestra lengua porque... en muchas comunidades zapotecas se ha perdido ya el número de hablantes.*

*XF: Por eso es importante no dejar de hacer esfuerzos en ese sentido, ¿no?*

*R: Claro.*

*XF: Porque si uno piensa: ay, no va a morir nunca, pues todos nos sentamos en nuestros laureles y no... no hacemos nada por... por propiciar que se siga hablando, ¿no?*

*R: Darle importancia de este encuentro: Compartiendo experiencias, guendaruchaaga, guendabaani. Enseña, aprende, vive el zapoteco. Bisiidi, biziidi ne bibaani... diidxaza'. ¿No?*

R: Unfortunately...sometimes...we have stopped... admiring, loving, deepening our knowledge of our own language.

H: Uhuh.

R: Although they say around here that Zapotec will die the day that the sun dies, sometimes, I say: no, I believe that our language will die first because... in many Zapotec communities the number of speakers has already been lost.

XF: That's why it's important not to stop making efforts in that way, right?

R: Clearly.

XF: Because if one thinks: 'Ah, it will never die, well we all sit on our laurels and don't...don't do anything to... to encourage that it continues to be spoken, right?

R: Give importance to this meeting: Sharing experiences, guendaruchaaga, guendabaani. Teach, learn, live Zapotec. *Bisiidi, biziidi ne bibaani... diidxaza'*. (Audio 140402)

Shortly afterwards in describing the decision to hold the event in both Tehuantepec and Juchitán and to invite musicians from Juchitán to perform in Tehuantepec and vice versa, Fernández commented:

*XF: Buscamos también este intercambio, ¿no? De pronto--- a pesar de que estamos aparentemente cerca, no hay tanta oportunidad de que los grupos de baile---*

*R: La historia nos distanció mucho. La historia nos distanció mucho. La historia-- ya ves que la historia al final de cuentas la escriben y la hacen los que resultan vencedores y victoriosos de alguna batalla. Entonces, esos... esos cuates terminaron por distanciarnos a pesar de que estamos tan cerquita, [¿no?]*

*XF: [Pues hay] que ir cerrando esas distancias. Creo que ya será hora, ¿no?*

*R: Está haciendo un esfuerzo ahí la gente que se dedica al ámbito de la cultura en Tehuantepec [y Juchitán]---*

*XF: [Así es.]*

XF: We're looking also for that exchange, right. Suddenly--- even though we're apparently close, there isn't much opportunity so that the dance groups---

R: History distanced us a lot. History distanced us a lot. History--- you see that history at the end of the day is written and made by those that end up winning and victorious in some battle. So those... those mates ended up distancing us even though we're so close [right].

XF: [Well we must] go closing those distances. I believe that it's about time, right?

R: They're making an effort there, the people who devote themselves to the area of culture in Tehuantepec [and Juchitán]---

XF: [That's right.] (Audio 140402)

Our efforts to bring in people of different ages, professions, locales, and language abilities were due to our aim to connect a wider range of people around the issue of Diidxazá use and teaching. While we were aware of some of the factors keeping different actors from connecting on these issues-- including lack of interest and fraught histories as mentioned by the radio host-- we chose to create the space and hope that it would be filled.

Aside from the fairly visible and time-consuming effort of the *Encuentro*, I continued to try to make person-to-person connections throughout my study. Initially I was interested in connecting or inventorying IZ materials as well, however over time I shifted this strategy to giving copies of materials directly to people involved in teaching IZ, and continued to collect as many as possible myself, rather than imagining a central archive. While a bank of digital materials would certainly be useful, I came to think that putting print materials directly in the hands of select motivated individuals was of equal importance, and more within my personal scope of action as someone who is not technologically inclined and was able to interact on a personal basis due to residing in the Isthmus.

#### **6.4.2 Producing spaces and people**

Around the same time that I began to take initiative in collaboration with colleagues from the UABJO and the UAQ to plan the *Encuentro* (December, 2013), I was also asked to contribute my opinion about the progress of the IZ classes in the UABJO, which I had been observing and analyzing through interviews with students and the teacher. This

began my on-going participation in attempting to keep open the "ideological and implementational space" (Hornberger, 2002) created by the presence of IZ classes in the major public university of the state, which eventually included taking initiatives to recruit and train (produce) teachers and attract additional students to fill this space. In December 2013 I also began working more proactively with colleagues involved in the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project in La Ventosa to plan and create interdisciplinary workshops around themes of language and the environment, that has involved training (producing) workshop facilitators and has resulted in an on-going series of workshops for children. Below I briefly discuss my strategies of engagement in the UABJO and in the Smithsonian-sponsored workshops.

When asked to advise on the progress of the UABJO classes at the end of the autumn semester 2013 I interpreted the high drop-out rate of students in relation to the mis-match of expectations between the senior teacher who did not expect much communicative competence (IN 130912 VRP) and the young adult students who wanted to become capable of using IZ in daily contexts (IN 131017 U-3, IN 131022 U-6). Fernández and I discussed the need to make the classes more communicative, rigorous, and engaging, and the coordinators developed a strategy to have current undergraduate students who speak IZ teach the class as part of the pedagogical practice that they are required to do in their degree program. Rather than replace the senior teacher with the undergraduate students, I recommended asking him to teach part of the class and an advanced class, so that the junior teachers could consult with his in-depth lexical, pragmatic and cultural knowledge. The class did become more interactive and convivial

through the participation of the junior teachers, with students asked to create their own learning materials, songs, and dialogues, as shown in the image below (FN 140503, Image 140715). The lack of experience (and pre-planning) among the junior teachers was also apparent to the students, however, and was an area of frustration for several of them (IN 140729 U-13, IN 141117 U-Focus group). Figure 35 shows two students in the Saturday Diidxazá class displaying the pedagogical materials they created as a final project, including a bingo game and an illustrated story book.



**Figure 35. Students showing class projects (photo July 2015)**

It became clear that although Fernández had initiated the classes and was ultimately responsible for allowing them to continue, she was not able to spend the necessary time to trouble-shoot and improve their quality. I attempted to fill this role by observing, offering regular written and oral feedback to the junior teachers and conveying feedback anonymously from the student interviews that I conducted. Fernández recognized the need for someone to fulfill this function officially, and proposed that a

position be made within the department to oversee all Indigenous language programming, but this proposal was not accepted at the departmental level.

In autumn of 2014 I organized a trip for four of the junior teachers to visit two Zapotec teachers in Oaxaca City (whose classes I had previously observed and admired), as well as a linguistic library and the *Centro de Estudios y Desarrollo de Lenguas Indígenas de Oaxaca* (CEDELIO), strategizing that personal observation, exchange, and a bit of big city glamour might be more helpful and motivating in their development as IZ teachers than my written and oral feedback had been (FN 141026-28). Additionally we visited the archaeological site of Mitla, the best-preserved site of ancient Zapotec architecture which three out of the four young adults had never visited, and a nearby geological site *Hierve el agua*, that they were especially excited to see. Figure 36 below shows the junior teachers using their phones to photograph books in the Research Library Juan de Córdova, where the librarian had kindly pulled out books relevant to the Isthmus for them to look at (141028).



**Figure 36.** Junior IZ teachers visiting the Research Library Juan de Córdova, Oaxaca City (photo October, 2014).

The junior teachers commented how surprised they were to see so many books in IZ, far more than they had ever seen in the Isthmus, and they appeared genuinely excited, taking many photos of pages with their phones. The librarian told them they would be welcome to visit the library anytime (FN 141028). One young man, while paging through a copy of *Mexico South* by Miguel Covarrubias suddenly commented that this was the first book he had ever had a personal desire to read. I decided that the trip was worth the effort there and then. The visits to other Zapotec classes and the CEDELIO seemed largely successful, as the junior teachers enthusiastically met with other Indigenous language professionals during the trip, and afterwards expressed their inspiration and desire to make their own professional IZ syllabus (FN 141105), something that Fernández, Medina and I had long been encouraging them to work on. This, and other positive reactions, made me feel that my strategy of improving the UABJO program through fostering competent and motivated teachers (as opposed to writing a curriculum for them) was at least partially effective.

However, several months after this trip three of the four junior teachers opted to stop teaching IZ in order to devote more time to other activities, and their desire to create their own professional curriculum is as yet unrealized. The coordinators have continued to seek and support more new teachers and I have written some curriculum guides and materials as a support, but I continue to believe that the most crucial area to be targeted is the production of competent teachers. Generating and maintaining enrollment has also been a challenge, but one which can most effectively be met through the creation of an engaging learning community, as has been demonstrated elsewhere (see discussion of

Kiara Rios Rios' classes in section 5.2, which have now (150925) expanded to include a remarkable 63 students across 3 levels, despite being based outside of the Isthmus in Oaxaca City). Producing stable institutional change at the UABJO in Tehuantepec remains elusive, yet significant progress has been made through normalizing the presence of IZ classes, getting more people involved in teaching them, and providing professional development to IZ teachers.

Producing interdisciplinary workshops in La Ventosa has been a very different process, in that no official institutional space existed to host them, and they have changed in format depending on who was available to participate each time as the community of practice built around the project continues to shift. The production of these workshops emerged out of my open agreement with Gabriela Pérez Báez to contribute to outreach and educational initiatives in relation to the Ethnobotany documentation project. As mentioned, I was initially involved in editing and disseminating the didactic games, and collected information in relation to possible future materials to produce, but eventually became more interested in creating spaces for language use, rather than materials. This interest in doing workshops was shared by another core member of the Ethnobotany team, Gibrán Morales, a visual artist from Oaxaca City who was conducting the photographic documentation of the plants that were collected during monthly or bi-monthly field trips. Beginning in December 2013 we conducted several talks with members of a local cultural committee made up of three male residents of La Ventosa who expressed interest in collaborating (FN 131216, FN 140208). Morales and I agreed upon a constructivist paradigm that we hoped would be most appropriate for this kind of

project, in which we aimed to explore issues proposed by the members of the cultural committee-- identity, language use, and local heritage-- in a non-essentialist way (Memo 140208).

Although I appreciated having a shared constructivist theory of action, I also found it initially hard to get this project off the ground as the focus shifted several times, Morales was only in the Isthmus once a month for the Ethnobotany fieldwork, and the cultural committee were not taking action on our discussions amidst their other engagements. A significant practice that I performed in most of my collaborations was to keep calling for meetings and to keep people talking about a possibility until it eventually materialized or became clear that no one was interested enough to make it happen. The general interest and willingness that I almost always encountered when discussing possible IZ-related projects did not translate into action without a great deal of patience and persistence in most cases. In one memo I wrote about the process of the La Ventosa workshops:

This is slow & awkward, but not terrible. We have ideas, we just need the logistics to work out how to actually do them. It is the opposite of [[a didactic materials development project]]-- completely constructivist, emergent & social-dynamics focused. To a point where I want some more structure & clarity at times-- or I assume other participants will. Also I don't have the time to really push for this, or keep up the communication with Bacuza Gui [[the cultural committee]], and they have plenty of other things going on. So it's fallen a bit on the back burner, but I hope that good things will come of it yet. (Memo 140312)

Eventually the theme of body parts and landscape (a shared semantic domain in IZ) was settled upon, dates fixed for the 14th and 15th of April, 2014, materials purchased and publicity disseminated.

We were all very pleased with the results of the first 2-day workshop, where 60 children spent an hour and a half doing drawing and painting with Morales and another hour and a half doing language games with 3 volunteers from La Ventosa, José López de la Cruz of the cultural committee, Lenia Toledo Rasgado, Citlali Toledo Rasgado (two college-aged residents who I met when they participated in the Camino de la Iguana in September 2013), and myself (also described in the closing section of chapter 4). We were able to integrate Diidxazá with some artistic activities, which the children participated in with great enthusiasm. Although adults in La Ventosa routinely say that children there no longer speak IZ, we were happy to discover that IZ is clearly a part of their linguistic repertoire in receptive and some productive ways, as illustrated in field notes from the first day of the workshop, which are representative of my observations throughout.

Gibrán puts kids to work as soon as they arrive, giving them big sheets of paper and telling one table to draw *paisaje* [[landscape]], the other table to draw *partes del cuerpo* [[body parts]]. The *paisaje* seems easier. I ask kids if they know IZ names of what they've drawn (scene has hills, sun, path). Boy thinks for a moment, then says '*neza*' [[path, road]] for the path. Doesn't know 'sun' or 'cloud' though. He also knows that *guie* [[stone]] is *piedra* [[stone]]. (FN 140414)

Throughout the workshops we encouraged the children to be active producers of IZ in both spoken and written activities. The image below shows a flower painted by a participant and labeled with the IZ word for yellow, *naguchi*.



**Figure 37. Painting from La Ventosa workshop with IZ word "*niguchi*" (*naguchi*, yellow) (photo April 2014).**

Based on the perceived success of this workshop another workshop was planned for July, 2014, this time with participation of 5 additional residents of La Ventosa who were all employed by the Smithsonian Ethnobotany project, as well as a botanist from Oaxaca City, Kenia Velasco Gutierrez, also an employee of the project, and the on-going participation of Morales and myself. The second workshop was only one day long and involved more discussion of endangered plants and a walk to the nearby river to collect some plants, as well as painting activities. For this workshop I created a booklet with some relevant vocabulary and space for notes to prompt the students to write down some of the plant names, and was surprised by how eager they seemed to engage in writing (FN 140719).

With increasing support from the Smithsonian, via Pérez Báez, for this kind of activity, in the autumn of 2014 I met several times with two of the La Ventosa residents who expressed most interest in continuing with workshops. We worked together discussing learning goals, teaching methods, and creating a detailed plan for a three-day workshop that they would impart independently during the school vacation in December

(when I would not be present). In addition to making specific lesson plans, I brought them to the Tehuantepec UABJO campus to observe an IZ class there and to meet with the teachers (FN 141115). Their December 2014 workshop was also deemed successful, and their motivation to do workshops is continuing. They have acquired more confidence and skills in facilitating workshops over time (IN 140114 LV-6; IN 141119 LV-9), and I have continued to work with them planning lessons along with another Smithsonian-affiliated linguist, Kate Reistenberg. Morales has remained closely involved, although we have been attempting to shift the planning and implementation to the local residents as much as possible (FN 150608). The La Ventosa team have completed five workshops, in addition to the first two described here, for a total of ten to date (December 2015). The combination of art projects, language, and culture themes have remained the focus of the workshops, as well as maintaining a fun atmosphere and the interest and willing participation of the children. The main source of financial support has been the Smithsonian as mentioned, however Pérez Báez is looking for other sources of support at the state level that might help to make the workshops more sustainable in the long run.

Although there are still many instabilities in terms of the local leadership, funding, and space for these workshops, I am encouraged that they have continued with less and less intervention on my part, and more and more direction from the La Ventosa residents. A constant factor has been the ready participation of the children, which is the best motivator for the team who are sometimes discouraged or engaged with other concerns. As one of the volunteer teachers noted in an interview after the first workshop:

LV-7: *Lo más bonito fue ver el resultado. [...] que ya le podían poner nombre a sus dibujos y en zapoteco. O sea que sí aprendieron, sí se les quedó realmente lo que les habíamos enseñado. O también cómo participaban y que cuando decíamos: vamos a repetir y repetían, y así. O sea que sí aprovecharon el curso y lo que más motiva es que te digan, no?, que ¿cuándo otro curso?, ¿cuándo venimos otra vez? El lunes otro... sí.*

H: *Sí. ¿No... no anticipabas a eso? ¿No pensabas [que]---*

LV-7: *No, no me imaginé que fueran a llegar tantos niños. Pero... o sea, lo más importante fue creo yo, lo que ayudó a que tuviéramos esa cantidad de niños fue la promoción del curso, promoverlo. Los volantes que estuviste [repartiendo]---*

H: *[Sí.]*

LV-7: *Los carteles... y todo. Creo que eso fue lo que faltó cuando llegó El camino de la iguana acá.*

LV-7: The most beautiful was to see the result. [...] that they could already name their drawings in Zapotec. Or that yes they learned, yes they really retained what we had been teaching them. Or also how they participated and that when we would say "We're going to repeat" and they would repeat, like that. Or that yes they benefited from the class and what is the most motivating is that they say to you, right, "When is another class? When do we see each other again? Monday another"... yes.

H: Yes. You didn't anticipate that? You didn't think that--

LV-7: No, no I didn't imagine that so many children would arrive. But... like, the most important was, I think, what helped so that we had that quantity of children was the advertising of the course, promoting it. The flyers that you were [giving out]---

H: *[Yes.]*

LV-7: The posters... and everything. I believe that that was what was missing when the Camino de la Iguana came here. (IN 140514 LV-7)

The effort made to make the workshop as visible as possible is praised, an intentional strategy that led me to visit several schools and hand out individual flyers to children, as well as putting up posters. In the Isthmus delivering flyers on an individual level, similar

in format to the invitations that are used for birthday parties and other celebrations, was an effective way to produce a group of interested students. The practice of taking flyers to the local schools has been integrated as part of the regular workshop planning activities, attempting to make this space as inclusive and visible as possible.

Producing a stable space and qualified people to fill it with appropriate activities is an inherently collaborative and long-term effort. In this case I was fortunate to have enough interested colleagues, and enough patience to get past the initial stages of inertia to a point where some formats and systems have been put in place and run locally. Due to space considerations, I am not elaborating on all of the political nuances of this context and the many threats to the continuation of these workshops-- for the time-being they continue to function. Even if they do not continue at some point in the future, I am very pleased with the confidence and experience that the La Ventosa facilitator-teachers have acquired, and the many convivial moments shared among all the workshop participants.

#### **6.4.3 Representing communication practices**

My acts of strategic connection and production were generally tied to specific learning spaces, such as the UABJO, the Smithsonian project, or the Camino de la Iguana.

Representation, on the other hand, is something which outside actors inevitably do regardless of their degree of participation in a local initiative. As a particularly visible outsider (white people are not very common in the Isthmus, as previously mentioned) my public use of IZ in the market, moto-taxis, or the occasional event such as the closings of the Camino de la Iguana, was often noticed and remarked upon. The production of

communication practices is perhaps not one of my main strategies because I did not devote nearly as much time to learning and using IZ as I had originally intended; however, I did use the language strategically in ways that gave a positive representation to IZ use as often as I was able. I also enjoyed wearing Istmeño clothing for both special and everyday occasions, another way to give positive representation to local semiotics.

I quickly noticed how much Istmeños use facebook, including people of all ages, and how crucial this medium is for disseminating information about events and/or giving a positive representation to events that have occurred. I began posting a few photos of the IZ teaching I observed on-line, which was always received appreciatively by the people whose work I highlighted, and so I eventually made a regular practice of posting a few labeled images of each workshop or presentation I attended in order to make more visible the many small events occurring in different places across the Isthmus. I have no doubt that publishing about these events on facebook had a much larger local reach and appreciation by the people involved than publishing about them in an English-language journal would/ will. I also made the effort to use IZ on facebook when possible.

Finally, I have made choices in how I represent what I have observed during my study; as mentioned in chapters 5 and 6, I am choosing to highlight what I see as positive strategies, with less attention at this juncture to practices that I could criticize. Everyone, including myself, says and does things which do not align perfectly with their underlying ideals and imaginaries-- in my opinion calling forward such inconsistencies is most useful in a context in which they can be considered and addressed by the people involved, and a public research publication is not such a context. This kind of selective criticism

seems appropriate in a context where everyone is working with many challenges, my perspective is (of course) limited, and criticisms which I make may receive undue weight due to my privileged position in current linguistic/ racial/ economic hierarchies of knowledge production (see Briggs (1996) for a discussion of potential injustices of scholarly criticism directed at other other cultural contexts). I wrote about this concern in a memo 6 months into my fieldwork:

I waver back & forth about taking an expert stance. I want to encourage all kinds of activity around the language, and so respond positively even to those whose practices disappoint me, such as [[X, Y, Z]]. I still have one of Mario's [[López Gopar]] comments in mind-- the goal is to make students feel intelligent, the rest is less important. I suppose I think that taking a critical expert stance may make these people feel less intelligent, or certainly less supported by me, and that would undermine what I'm trying to do.

I'm definitely being a cheerleader all round at this point. (Memo 131225)

Although I did choose to take an expert stance and to speak against certain practices at a few points in during my fieldwork, I continued to give mainly positive feedback and make positive representations of others' work. As I am beginning to work on publications and other forms of dissemination, I continue to think about the most useful and appropriate ways of talking about what people are doing through and around Diidxazá in the Isthmus.

## **6.5 A repertoire of strategies for the politics of minoritized language advocacy**

This chapter has shown that there are many strategies through which IZ advocates engage in IZ use and education within and across diverse communities of practice. There are some common ways that IZ advocates engage in representing, connecting, and producing resources, events, spaces, people, and communicative practices, such as positive

representations of IZ speakers and communicative practices, and production of learning spaces and/or materials. There are also differences shaped by contextual factors such as the social positioning of actors and the constraints and affordances of time and visibility. These include tendencies towards production of rapid, mobile resources, versus slow, place-based structures. Conceptual factors such as the meanings that IZ may hold within different communities of practice and underlying theories of action may also influence how strategies are developed and employed, as advocates may envision success to be different, and to be achieved in different ways. The valorization and inclusion of Diidxazá remain common goals however, whether through so-called expert planning and influence, or many small grains of sand-- or both. In particular among local-oriented actors the use of conviviality is also a common factor, both through person-to-person interactions and more ritualized "*convivio*" (get-together) events such as bestowing participant certificates, organizing public readings, or incorporating music and art into a conference.

As discussed in chapter 1 and above, I am interested in strategies of engagement not just to describe and analyze this political phenomenon, but also from a practitioner perspective, viewing myself as a social actor with potential to participate in language and education politics, and aiming to do so in appropriate and creative ways. Traditional approaches and types of language policy have privileged the perspective of a state or government decision-making authority, with less insight into local language politics and ideological dimensions (as critiqued by Canagarajah, 2005 and Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). As conceived in this study, the social space within which Diidxazá is valued, used,

and taught goes far beyond formal education settings, and is deeply influenced by socio-political and ideological trends. As such I bring attention to advocates who are choosing to engage in language politics within different social spheres or communities of practice, and attend to the underlying ideologies or conceptual orientations present in their advocacy strategies. This case has illustrated that minoritized language politics are influenced by different perceptions of what Diidxazá is or could represent for social actors, as well as different theories of action or approaches to social change.

Ricento and Hornberger (1996) call for more active engagement of local actors in language education policy processes, noting that teachers "are policy transmitters and can become policy makers if they so desire" (p. 420). Taylor (2002) discusses the "repertory" of political actions that different societies exhibit, from organized protest to democratic elections. In line with a constructivist perspective of language politics, this chapter has described what I consider as a *repertoire of language advocacy strategies* exhibited by Diidxazá advocates in the Isthmus. With the recognition that policy is performed and negotiated across social scales, the repertoire of strategies described in this study may be useful to actors seeking to participate effectively in the politics of minoritized language advocacy from varying positions of social power. The need to go beyond state-centric paradigms of policy and social change has been well established; the strategies discussed here are offered in contribution towards furthering participatory ways of understanding and undertaking language politics. Many actors are not in a position to frame their goals as state authorities would, and more importantly many may choose to avoid framing their goals in positivist or top-down ways. A social constructivist approach to engaging in language politics, as illustrated through examples of IZ advocacy, requires flexible

practices and constant interrogation of the ideological underpinnings of the theory of social change and the goals that are being pursued.

A further contribution of the perspective presented here is the focus on strategies of connection and participation in communities of practice. The heuristic of "ideological and implementational spaces" (Hornberger, 2002) of language policy has been significant in directing attention towards the ideological dimension which has often been neglected in policy studies (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Spolsky, 2010). As a researcher and advocate I found it essential to attend to elements of social interaction and networks as well, which are sites for the (re)production of ideologies (often through discourses and representations) and for the creation and management of implementational spaces (often through producing spaces, social actors and materials). As discussed further in chapter 7, future directions for this work include additional consideration for social networks within language advocacy politics.

It is one thing to acknowledge that working towards positive social change in an intentional, strategic way requires adapting to multiple perspectives and not expecting a final solution-- it's another to sustain the energy, motivation, and humor necessary to keep working at it without the possibility of ever achieving unanimous support or complete success. Minority language activism is no different from any other field of social activism in this respect. Although I entered this project feeling that I had a considerable amount of experience and personal strategies already in place, during the project I generally felt unable to plan any strategies more than a month or two in the future and did not feel like I had a clear or over-arching view of what I (or anyone else)

was doing. Over time I learned more about my own preferred strategies in relation to what I observed other people doing (such as focusing on materials or one-off events), and my own initiatives emerged with greater clarity in response to the actions others were already taking or expressing interest in. As a researcher the strategies outlined help me to better conceptualize my work in socially engaged ways, and to fulfill my goal of conducting ethnography in the service of critical reflection and social change within a constructivist paradigm.

From connecting people one by one and attempting to inventory resources, to creating events for larger scale connection of people, and producing long-term learning spaces, I certainly never felt that I ran out of possible strategies to try while working in the Isthmus. Although I have remained interested in creating resources and providing the greater visibility that my social position allows me to contribute to a certain extent, at this point I am most interested in working with teachers and institutions (people and spaces, in the terminology of the framework used above) on issues of quality and sustainability, as experienced by the local educational community. This work is slower, generally less visible, and more local in scale, but has the potential to create a meaningful inclusive environment and shift the practices of institutions whose default approach to language teaching remains exclusionary.

## **Chapter 7. Summary and future directions: Thinking, strategizing, and acting towards convivial multilingualism**

There are many more stories that could be told about language and education practices in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as I observed them, and about my efforts and aspirations as an ethnographic monitor and minority language advocate. For the time being I will draw my discussion to a close by returning to the key issues discussed in this study and reflecting on how my perspectives and practices have been influenced by the process and results of this research (7.1, 7.2). I then summarize the scholarly contributions made by this research (7.3) and identify areas in which I hope to deepen or expand my analysis and work in the future (7.4).

### **7.1 Reconstituting language through normalized indexicality**

Throughout my involvement in Indigenous language education and advocacy I have worked in different ways and come to talk about my work relative to the repertoires of the communities of practice I have participated in. When I first studied Anishinaabemowin, an Indigenous North America language, in tribally-run classes and worked in materials development and documentation for the Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians in northern Michigan, I adopted the habit of writing about "the Language" with a capital "L" because of the ways my colleagues talked about their heritage way of speaking, often discussing its uniqueness, spiritual significance, and intimate connection with their identity, as well as the threat of "*Chimookaman*" ('American', literally "long-knife") ways of speaking and thinking in contrast. Although

my initial interest was primarily in the different ways of thinking and seeing the world that I thought diverse languages could illuminate (i.e. the Whorfian tradition), learning first-hand about the histories of the Indigenous people of the region I grew up in and for the first time becoming aware of their near-complete erasure in most social and educational spaces (including my own educational experiences) quickly gave me additional and enduring social justice motivations to work in this domain. As a student of Applied Linguistics in British Columbia I was socialized to learn the auto-denominations of First Nations' languages and to use them wherever possible, respecting Indigenous names as part of separate systems of meaning-making, and signaling my respect for the equality of these systems. I also learned about language acquisition within a (predominantly) native-speaker, quasi-experimental paradigm, although I chose to focus in my own research on the issue of "community control" within official language education policies (De Korne, 2010). When I learned about multilingualism and minority languages in Europe within a critical/ interactionist sociolinguistics framework as a research fellow in Luxembourg, the moral superiority of minority groups was questioned for the first time. I began to learn conceptual frameworks that captured the fluid and constructed nature of language, social groups, and power hierarchies; issues which I had already observed in practice but not named as such. This constructivist perspective gained new nuances in my experiences participating in education scholarship in the United States as a PhD student, where I am now talking about communicative repertoires and communities of practice in place of the Language and its People.

Having myself participated in these ways of naming and conceptualizing, I see them all as part of the wider social project around minoritized languages, as discussed in the opening framework of this study. Each community of practice projects a slightly different imaginary of what the problems are and how to address them in relation to socio-historical positionings and disciplinary norms, yet there is a common concern for the inequalities that have and continue to be created along linguistic lines. One result of this study is that I am better able to reconcile these differing ways of conceptualizing what I (and others) are engaged in by viewing them as part of the same compelling, albeit elusive social imaginary of eradicating the inequalities produced through language. This project includes attention to and expertise about linguistic and literacy issues (which inevitably results in objectifying or essentializing conceptualizations of language features, if not linguistic systems), ideological framings of language (including the fluid nature of social categories and identities), communication in education structures and practices (often seen as both a target and medium of learning, formed by both top-down and bottom-up processes), and intersections between communication practices and social and political dynamics (often showing structural and material influences and constraints on speakers). Taking these diverse viewpoints into account I now view Diidxazá, like other named languages, as a deictic or index of these and other concerns, which acquires its meaning in relation to its social positioning within a community of practice.

As discussed by Silverstein (1976), deictic shifters gesture towards specific people, places, or times, having no independent referent. Indexicality is likewise a useful framework for understanding how language is always intertextual and takes its meaning

from other times and places (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Briggs & Bauman, 1992). The deconstructivist tradition in the philosophy of language suggests that all words and speech, not just certain deictics, acquire meaning through indexicality with an absolute meaning indefinitely deferred (Derrida, 1967). By discussing the ontology of "Diidxazá" (and named languages in general) as indexical I am not promoting extreme deconstruction of meaning nor a solipsistic framing however; rather I locate the construction of mutually available meanings within different social groups or communities of practice, as part of their shared repertoire. This is one way to achieve the post-deconstructivist "reconstituting" discussed by Makoni and Pennycook (2007), by understanding minoritized languages as placeholders, windows, perhaps even magnifying glasses onto a variety of social phenomena and shared concerns.

By integrating an understanding of the inherently multiple ontologies of Diidxazá into my work, I am able to better consider the issues that emerge as challenges and concerns in relation to IZ education. For example, I applied this perspective in a presentation that I gave to a local and national audience (one of several times that I gave public presentations as a way of sharing back my research and receiving feedback), where I analyzed the question "¿Por qué parece ser “difícil” escribir en diidxazá?" (Why does writing in Diidxazá seem to be 'hard'?) (FN 150702). Throughout my study people often told me that they found writing Diidxazá to be hard; it was a source of pride and for many an important part of their aspirations and imaginaries of their future use of the language, and yet at the same time many found it daunting. In my analysis of this concern I identified phonetics, phonology, schooling, and ideology as key domains in creating the

perception of difficulty. I began with a discussion of language attitudes (ideologies), asking the audience what makes a language "useful", followed by a discussion of what makes a language "difficult". The goal was to highlight that "difficult" is a social construction, just as "useful" is. In order to show how the perception of "difficulty" is created I began at the level of linguistic features, discussing the relation between the phonemes of IZ and how they are represented in the IZ popular alphabet, and identifying contrasts with the phonemes of Spanish and their representations. I then discussed phonetic and phonological elements which are not represented in the popular alphabet (tone and stress), but which do play a role in meaning making (i.e. are contrastive features), and whose absence sometimes confuses beginning writers and readers in my observations. I then discussed the past and present schooling practices in the Isthmus, which have not only focused uniquely on Spanish as a language of reading and writing, but have also delegitimized and devalued IZ through exclusion and punishment of speakers. I also mentioned that the IZ alphabet is an unpoliced norm, yet the exposure to standard language attitudes in schooling makes many people apply prescriptivist expectations onto IZ writing. In conclusion I argued that greater metalinguistic awareness of the features of IZ and contrasts between IZ and their current (Spanish) repertoire, as well as confidence and motivation to appropriate IZ writing, could considerably enhance the experience of IZ learners and lower their perception of difficulty in the process of learning to write.

In order to bring together appropriate knowledge to tackle such problems, I found it useful to adopt linguistic, social, educational, and ideological perspectives on Diidxazá

writing, without the need to privilege any one perspective. When I began this study I was interested in ways of bringing different actors with different perspectives into conversation, and finding shared perceptions and common denominators (my analysis of inclusion and conviviality being in some ways an attempt at naming common causes). I am now less interested in forging common understandings across communities of practice, and more interested in normalizing a multi-perspectival or indexical approach to minoritized language advocacy. The way that a language is understood within a community of practice may be relatively coherent-- as a medium of convivial interactions in UABJO and Camino de la Iguana classes for example-- but I do not think there will ever be large-scale coherence across the different communities and disciplines engaging in issues around language. Perhaps I am returning to my original inclination towards Whorfian worlds of thought, or I am simply becoming more realistic about the affordances and limits of interdisciplinary collaboration. Regardless, I expect that my perspective will continue to shift as I engage in future projects. At present I am hopeful that more awareness may develop around the plurality of perspectives among minoritized language advocates in particular, which would be helpful in building future knowledge and strategies in this area.

## **7.2 Constructivist social change through advocacy politics**

Another key area of conceptualization in this study is engagement and advocacy around issues of social justice. Engaging in constructivist advocacy requires recognizing that what is viewed as success or improvement will vary from community to community and context to context as previously discussed. This is central to recent work which focuses

on language reclamation (Leonard, 2012), and is in line with other scholars who have signaled the primacy of "community", "local", or "speaker" choices in language education (Cameron *et al*, 1992; Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009; Hornberger & King, 1996). These scholars urge that choices about language be made by community actors so that it is their imaginary of positive change which guides action. This is also part of the imaginary of convivial multilingualism, where speech norms are negotiated within a voluntary community of practice.

In practice there are often contentious political issues about belonging and authenticity in Indigenous communities and community-internal politics through which some speakers and learners remain excluded (Dorian, 1994; Henze & Davis, 1999; Meek, 2010). This results in a tension between the need to have community controlled norms and the subjective and politically-fraught ways through which official community lines are drawn. This tension has been made more manageable for me by focusing on work within a community of practice-- a socially-constructed, inherently adapting social unit, which may or may not align with a geographical or politically-recognized community. In the case of this study the communities that I participated in most closely can also be defined as educational programs, meeting the characteristics of the unit of analysis proposed by Hymes (1980) as the focus of ethnographic monitoring. As I argued in chapter 6, however, more emergent communities are also appropriate sites for engagement and ethnographic monitoring. The workshops that grew out of the Ethnobotany project community of practice were initially unstructured and undefined, and have taken on the form of an educational program only recently. Additionally I

choose to focus my work with communities that are motivated to work towards a social imaginary of improved language education and use.

The politics of (Indigenous) language education will inevitably remain a site of contention over group boundaries and other social ideals. Forms of inclusion/ exclusion and conviviality/ manipulation must be negotiated again and again across social scales, whether in policy documents, program models, or classroom interactions. From this point of view language inequalities are problems that have no final resolution, a conceptualization that differs from the problem-solving orientation inherent in much language planning and educational development work. As a discipline, Educational Linguistics has also been positioned as a problem-solving or problem-oriented endeavor (Hornberger, 2001; Hult, 2010; Spolsky, 2010), especially able to look beyond "linguicism" (Spolsky, 2010, p.140) to address issues of social and community relevance. While this applied orientation is what drew me to this discipline and the problem-solving discourse is well-received (perhaps even necessary) in policy and social programming circles, it is also important to recognize that our problem-solving is never conclusive, and/or is not a solution to everyone's problems. As such it is worth considering whether a problem/ solution theory of social change is appropriate to work on Indigenous language education, or whether it is more appropriate to view our improvements and interventions in another light, such as participating in the creative design of social futures (Cazden et al., 1996) or contributing grains of sand to a hill whose growth may only be visible many years from now.

Being an advocate in language politics in today's local-global language ecologies requires ongoing creativity and adaptation of political strategies. With official recognition of Indigenous languages a reality for over a decade in Mexico, it is clear that national policy has created few new ideological and implementational spaces of language equality, as discrimination and Spanish monolingualism remain the promoted norm. Policies of recognition ("language rights") in Mexico and elsewhere have not resulted in greater social equality, as minoritized communities continue to be denied necessary material rights and resources under neoliberal economic systems (Hale, 2005; Muehlmann, 2009; Overmyer-Velázquez, 2010; Povinelli, 2011). The effort to change inequalities on the ground must clearly go beyond state-generated, rights-oriented approaches to language planning and policy which seem to largely perpetuate marginalization, despite the small spaces of opportunity that recognition policies do open up. Sociolinguists also argue that we are increasingly in a post-national era (Blommaert, 2010; Heller, 2011), and as such it is appropriate that the strategies of engaged political actors orient to units of social organization other than the state, as well as to discourses and influences that circulate across social scales.

With recognition that politics is fundamentally about human interaction I am increasingly interested in social networks, negotiated (face-to-face or imagined) communities, and forms of connection, conviviality and reciprocity as elements in policy analysis and advocacy. In this study I have considered social actors as a unit of analysis since the beginning, but over the course of the study and analysis I came to think more about actors as participants in communities of practice. This framing is in line with an

interest in social projects as a scale of organization where new spaces and practices may emerge in support of marginalized groups which resist homogenizing national and international governance (Povinelli, 2011). It is also in line with social and political life in the Isthmus, where there is universal distrust of national and international government (and corporate) interventions, and intricately-structured social networks. The backbone of social life in the Isthmus is the reciprocity performed among social networks, through voluntary labor (*tequio* or *trueque*), attendance at parties, godfather/ mother (*compadrazgo*) duties at birth, school graduations, and weddings, among other forms of communality (see e.g. Mintz & Wolf, 1950; Royce, 1975, 2011). In this setting the most effective way to contribute to social improvements thus appears to be through collaboration and social networks, rather than structural or official interventions. As has been argued in relation to individual policy actors (Menken & García, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Shohamy, 2006), it is clear that social networks are also important mediators of (language and education) politics, especially in contexts like the Isthmus where official agents of government are considered to have relatively little credibility and influence.

This study has given me ample opportunity to reflect on my preferred strategies as an advocate and collaborator, as discussed in chapter 6. Although at times I incline towards conductivist and/ or "linguicentric" ways of thinking about social change work, the socio-political instability of the Isthmus has been an excellent teacher of patience and flexibility, as well as persistence. Extreme weather, volatile local politics, and last-minute scheduling norms, among other factors, create a comparatively chaotic environment

within which any positivist model of social intervention is clearly unrealistic. At the same time the collaborative work that is achieved through social networks in the production of festivals and other tasks is a marvel of social organizing. Accordingly I now see group dynamics, conflict resolution, and social organizing as crucial issues to consider when working in minoritized language advocacy. The strategy of connecting discussed in chapter 6 is particularly attuned to a group-focused advocacy approach. While representing and producing are important ways to create and maintain ideological and implementational spaces (Hornberger, 2002), building and reinforcing social connections is key to the life of such spaces.

### **7.3 Scholarly contributions**

In addition to the insights I have gained as a researcher and advocate, this study makes descriptive, conceptual and methodological contributions to educational linguistics scholarship, which I will briefly summarize below.

The descriptive contributions of this study include the documentation and analysis of the IZ education actors, practices, and socio-political processes that are salient in the Isthmus today, a region where no other contemporary research exists on these issues. In contrast to the typical depiction of IZ as one language variant spoken across the Isthmus, I have illustrated the variation in dialects in the region (as perceived by speakers) and the variation in language use and transmission practices (as perceived by residents and observed by me). Additionally I provide an overview of formal and non-formal education spaces and categorize the kinds of language education practice that I observed among

them, confirming the observations of other scholars as to the lack of Indigenous language instruction occurring (García & Velasco, 2012; Hamel, 2008a), despite official recognition policies. I document the diversity of actors engaged in IZ education, from local to international actors. I likewise consider socio-political processes such as state policies, national policies, and international economic processes which influence IZ education, although this is an area where further investigation is needed. I document some of the ways the state-level PTEO policy (IEEPO et al., 2013) has been influencing schools to include local language and other local content.

The conceptual contributions of this study include the analysis of convivial, inclusive multilingualism as a social imaginary manifested in the work of IZ advocates. This imaginary helps to address the question posed by the IZ student Mayoli García at the beginning of this dissertation (IN 140508 UO2); how to "rescue Zapotec" without returning to the "barbarity" of before and making the mistake of "wanting to force people to speak Zapotec"? Or in other words, how to build a non-manipulated, non-exclusionary Diidxazá speech community? There are multiple similar formulations of pluralist imaginaries of language education in education scholarship, from flexible and dynamic bilingualism to culturally responsive pedagogies, yet I believe it is valuable to keep reimagining possibilities and producing related discourses on issues of language and power. No one conceptualization has yet nor is likely to produce the social changes that it's originators hope for. Meanwhile each representation of these issues provides an additional angle, much like the prism of a kaleidoscope, from which to view the same concerns in a new way.

By considering the indexical nature of Diidxazá I propose a way to work with conflict among different viewpoints and encourage multi-perspectival analyses. Mutual understandings of Diidxazá emerge among communities of practice who provide lenses through which to better examine and act on language education issues. In relation to language planning, politics, and social change, this study has discussed a view of language politics centered in communities of practice, and within which advocates may engage in strategic practices of connection, representation and production through and around IZ. Crucially this constructivist view of advocacy is non-teleological, and recognizes that participation and outcomes will always be multiple.

The methodological contributions of this study shed further light on the use of ethnographic monitoring (Hymes, 1980a) within an ethnography of language policy (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) framework. Positioning ethnographic monitoring within a social scale framework which recognizes the influences of processes and actors across scales (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006) expands the focus of monitoring individual programs to include the factors beyond the program, in line with the aims of ethnography of language policy. Although consideration of elements surrounding the program context was promoted by Hymes in passing, incorporating ethnographic monitoring within a scaled language policy framework provides a more explicit conceptualization of these elements. Viewing the ideal unit of analysis as a community of practice rather than a program, as I have proposed, also opens new possibilities for the application of this methodology to social and educational spaces beyond classroom communities, including social networks.

Additionally the cycle of engagement in social improvements laid out by ethnographic monitoring can enhance description-oriented language policy methodologies and guide ethnographers to embrace the collaborative and advocacy potential of their work. These methodological strengths respond to the critiques of traditional ethnography made by Canagarajah (1999), including lack of attention to historical and non-local social influences, and lack of attention to ideological factors. He argues that "The challenge [...] is not just to connect the local with the global, the concrete with the abstract, and structure with history, but to do so with a critical edge" in relation to understanding domination and empowerment (p. 48). The ethnographic monitoring methodology that this study contributes to rises to the challenge of what has been called critical ethnography, taking a wide view of relevant factors and engaging in "transformative, action-oriented methods" (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011, p.276).

## **7.4 Future directions**

This study is part of my long-term inquiry into Indigenous and minoritized language politics; it builds on my previous experiences and points towards future areas of interest. To conclude, I will mention areas of future analysis and collaboration that I hope to undertake as a result of this study, some of which are very specific, and others more general and long-term.

In the short term I am working to conduct additional analyses to consider several factors more in-depth. One factor is greater consideration of economic and political reforms and their influence on IZ education. Although this was an area of focus for this

study and has been included in my analysis in chapter 4, there are many issues that I did not delve into for lack of time and space (and in some cases lack of data). The impact of economics and modes of resource extraction in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is complex and far-reaching, including both the local and regional systems of exchange and reciprocity, and the national and international trade policies dating from the construction of the trans-Isthmus rail line and the port of Salina Cruz in the 19th century and continuing to the development of "renewable" wind resources in the present. I would like to look more closely at these histories and current economic practices and how they relate to language politics and practices.

Another factor is the role of the INALI (and its predecessor in Indigenous language planning in Mexico, SIL) and the standardization process that SIL began which INALI is currently continuing. I observed two standardization meetings and conducted interviews with participants, allowing me to analyze the current process of standardization as one which projects a fully biliterate idealized future Diidxazá writer/reader. This imaginary contrasts with the Spanish dominant reader/writer projected by the (SIL-influenced) popular standard, and is at odds with the current concerns and interests of IZ teachers. I presented this analysis at a conference (De Korne, 2014) and am currently expanding and revising it into a paper. Again due to space and time constraints I have not examined the roles and actions of INALI or SIL in much detail in this dissertation; despite their high-profile roles as policy actors in the ecology of the Isthmus, their interventions have had only minimal impact to date on language practices to the best of my observations, also leading me not to prioritize them in my analyses.

I collected a lot of data related to the practices and experiences of people who are studying IZ, as well as the social meanings that IZ has for them, which I have not analyzed in this dissertation due to my focus on IZ teachers and advocates. IZ student perspectives are incorporated in chapter 5 in order to confirm and triangulate my interpretations of social meanings and teachers' practices, however in the future I would like to devote time to this group in particular. Additionally I plan to analyze specific metaphors that are used (by students and others) to valorize or frame Diidxazá education. Examples such as describing Diidxazá as a treasure or a legacy appear in chapter 5; I would like to give more attention to these metaphorical ways of representing Diidxazá as they appear across my dataset.

In future projects I will consider more carefully issues of social networks and community practices as they relate to language politics. As previously mentioned I also plan to learn more about conflict resolution and group dynamics as part of my collaborative toolkit-- this is not a new interest, but one which I am now more comfortable framing as part of my practice as a researcher. As part of this process I will analyze the data relating to my collaborations and consultations throughout this study. I audio recorded numerous meetings between myself and colleagues in the UABJO and the Ethnobotany project in particular, during which we developed ideas and strategies for our work together. These meetings were also the main spaces in which I shared my observations, interpretations and suggestions (in other words my research results). With the Camino de la Iguana coordinators I shared my results in written format at their request, as they were preparing to give a presentation on their work and asked what

elements I would highlight. By analyzing meeting recordings and documents related to collaboration I hope to gain new understandings of how these interactions evolved, and reflect more critically on my unconscious practices.

I plan to continue collaborating in the programs I have been observing, especially the UABJO and Ethnobotany project workshops which remain less-than-stable. In both of these sites the development of teachers has been crucial, and I hope to consider the area of Indigenous language teacher training more in-depth, connecting this to work I have done in the past on certification or regulation of Indigenous language teachers (De Korne, 2013). In collaboration with Victor Cata I have developed a project proposal to train a group of students from the UABJO to conduct and transcribe narrative interviews in Diidxazá with the goal of providing a professional application for their (often passive) interest in their heritage language, and funneling some of the money available for language documentation in their direction. The proposal was praised but not funded by the Endangered Language Documentation Project primarily due to the relatively large number of speakers of Diidxazá and existence of prior documentation, making it not (yet) a priority language. I hope to find alternative funding sources or other ways of carrying out this project, and others that may emerge in the future.

Through this study and other projects I may do in the future a fundamental aim is simply to make visible the experiences and practices of communities of speakers who have been minoritized and marginalized. Noticing inequalities (and resistance) is one important contribution that ethnographic monitors can make towards countering them (De Korne & Hornberger, in press). This dissertation aims to recognize and increase the

visibility of some of the Diidxazá speakers, learners, and advocates in the Isthmus, although it is inevitably a partial perspective. As one young teacher of IZ, Carlos Antonio Celaya Gómez, commented at the end of an interview when I asked if there was anything else he would like to say:

*Pues, que si alguien llega a escuchar eso que sea aquí de la región o de la universidad donde vas a presentar, que se animen a venir a visitar a la región o el estado, a conocer un poco más de esa cultura y de la lengua. Para que no solo escuchen "zapoteco, zapoteco, zapoteco" en tu investigación y en las documentaciones que hagan. Que realmente lo conozcan tal cual es, el contexto y todo eso.*

Well, that if someone hears this that is from here in the region or in the university where you're going to present, that they should get motivated to visit the region or the state, to know more about that culture and the language. So that they won't just hear "Zapotec, Zapotec, Zapotec" in your research and in the documentation that's made. That they really get to know how it is, the context and all that. (IN 150705 UT4)

I wholeheartedly echo Carlos' caveat to my (and all academic) work-- and his suggestion to visit the region, made with the tone of pride with which residents of the Isthmus often describe their homeland as unique and a place worthy of note. At the same time I view this comment as another example of the convivial norm typical of Diidxazá advocates, where everyone is invited to learn through personal interaction and participation. For those unable to take up the invitation, my observations and interpretations presented here offer one small glimpse of the dynamic sociolinguistic ecology of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

## APPENDIX A: Transcriptions, annotations, and abbreviations

### Transcription conventions

- Single brackets with text are used to indicate overlapping speech.
- Three dots are used to indicate a pause.
- Dashes are used to indicate interrupted speech.
- Brackets with three dots are used to indicate an omission of the original transcript.
- Two sets of brackets are used to indicate an editorial or translation insertion, such as a word that is implied but not actually present in the transcript.

### Data annotations

The data used in this study is coded in the following manner:

Interview= IN

Fieldnotes= FN

Audio recording = Audio

Date= YYMMDD

Place/ role (dependant on the most salient theme of the interview)=

LV	La Ventosa
J	Juchitán
X	Xadani
UH	Union Hidalgo
SB	San Blas
U	University student
UT	University teacher/ administrator
E	Public school educator
R	Researcher
Name abbreviations	Natalia Toledo=NT Víctor Cata=VC Vidal Ramírez Pineda= VRP Kiara Ríos Ríos= KR Germán Ramírez=GR Antonio Ortiz=AO Víctor Terán= VT

Number = Unique ordinal interview number in relation to the place/ locale

Example: IN 131017 U-2 (Interview conducted on October 17th, 2013 with a university student (#2).

**Acronyms and abbreviations:**

IZ	Isthmus Zapotec, <i>Diidxazá</i>
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UABJO	<i>Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca</i> / Autonomous Benito Juárez University of Oaxaca
BIC	<i>Bachillerato Integral Comunitario</i> (Integral/ holistic community baccalaureate
PTEO	<i>Plan para la transformación de la educación de Oaxaca</i>
COCEI	<i>Coalición Obrero-Campesino-Estudiantil del Istmo</i> , Laborer-Peasant(agricultural worker)-Student Coalition of the Isthmus
INALI	<i>Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas</i> , National Institute of Indigenous Languages
SIL (ILV)	Summer Institute of Linguistics/ <i>Instituto Lingüístico de Verano</i>
PRI	<i>Partido Revolucionario Institucional</i>

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