2016

Making Maya Linguistics, Making Maya Linguists: The Production Of Maya Scientific Expertise And Models Of Personhood In The Yucatan Today

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Abstract
In this dissertation, I explore what it means to be Maya in the Yucatan today. I focus my research on a higher education program in Maya linguistics where Maya is used as a language of instruction. To do this, faculty and students are creating the words and concepts with which to talk about linguistics ich maaya 'in the Maya language', something previously only done in other languages, like Spanish. This is about expanding the conceptual work that can be done in the Maya language, but it also about creating new scientific objects—new linguistics terminology; new categorizations of the language; and a new category of persons, native-Maya-speaking linguists. Through an eighteen-month ethnography, I follow linguists and their students to show how disciplinary linguistics knowledge is being created in the Maya language and how its creation produces and contests categories of Maya personhood. I begin broadly by exploring what it means to be Maya in Yucatan today through an analysis of diacritics of Maya personhood. I show how certain behaviors are linked to ideas about who Maya people are. For example, participation in advanced formal education is not widely associated with models of Maya personhood, thus when individuals pursue higher education, it can call their Mayaness into question. In light of this, some Maya individuals engage in practices to re-associate themselves with widely circulating diacritics of Maya personhood, such as speaking Maya in a way that is perceived to be more authentic. This brings me to interrogate a register of the Maya language, jach maaya, that many highly educated Maya individuals use. I then focus my attention on the creation of linguistics ich maaya, discussing its practice in the classroom and the one text published in Maya on a linguistics topic. Finally, I turn my attention to the creation of Maya linguists to look at the important identity work participation in higher education in the Maya language is affording students. Throughout, I take up notions of linguistic purism, language ideologies, and processes of social identification. I also situate the creation of linguistics ich maaya within broader discourses about indigeneity and modernity.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group
Education

First Advisor
Asif Agha

Keywords
Anthropology of education, Linguistic anthropology, Personhood, Social identification, Social studies of science, Yucatec Maya

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MAKING MAYA LINGUISTICS, MAKING MAYA LINGUISTS: 
THE PRODUCTION OF MAYA SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE AND MODELS OF PERSONHOOD 
IN THE YUCATAN TODAY

Catherine R. Rhodes 
A DISSERTATION 
in 
Education and Anthropology 
Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania 
in 
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the 
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy 
2016

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To my mother,

who chose to spend time with her children instead of pursuing a PhD,

and who helped me obtain mine
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To express my gratitude to all of the people who and institutions that have helped me make this work possible, it makes the most sense to begin at the beginning, with my parents—Mary Alice and Terry. Without you, none of this would have been possible. From an early age, my parents encouraged me to pursue graduate study—undergraduate study was a given; graduate study was the goal. When I think about this and the students whose participation made this research possible—all of whom are first-generation college students, I am overwhelmed by the privilege it is not only to be able to pursue graduate education, but also to take pursuing it as an expected course of action. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to study at the graduate level, with the top scholars in my field, and for the expectation from my parents that I would do so and for their commitment to support me at every step of the way. I also grateful to my sister, Meghan.

Selecting a program of graduate study, however, was not a task taken lightly. My parents were emphatic about the fact that I should not go to graduate school until I knew why I would be going. I needed to find my calling, and then pursue it. It took time to get there; what helped me was their encouragement of my exploration of a question that had been nagging me since I was a little girl—why do I feel different when I speak a different language? While this is not the question I pursued in this dissertation, it did take me to Whorf’s work, then on to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and eventually to John Lucy’s work. This led me to a Master’s degree at the University of Chicago. I took every linguistic anthropology course offered during my time there and knew that I had found my calling. My MA at the UofC was one of the most challenging and exhilarating
experiences I have ever had—I could literally feel my brain grow. Special thanks to Robin Shoaps and Cécile Vigouroux for mentoring me during my time at the UofC. At Chicago, John Lucy and Suzanne Gaskins’ unwavering support of my work helped me find my way into doctoral study. While I did not stay at Chicago with John—to this day I am grateful for the invitation to do so—he graciously continued mentoring me.

Stanton Wortham at the University of Pennsylvania offered me the opportunity to engage in joint studies of Education and Anthropology. There I would also be able to participate in ongoing, ethnographic research with him—an opportunity that not only trained me for conducting my own ethnographic fieldwork, but also positioned me to present and publish on our collaborative research before I had the opportunity to conduct my own, solo work. This positioned me to be successful at earning grant monies for my own work, at designing and conducting my own research, and made me an attractive candidate on the job market. For this I am eternally grateful. Stanton is a true mentor who understands the importance of positioning his students to be successful in the world of academia. His generosity in collaborating with students makes all the difference for our professional academic futures. I cannot thank you enough for your vision and support.

At Penn, I was also given the opportunity to work with Asif Agha, who became my chair in Anthropology. I had poured through Asif’s defining text, Language and Social Relations, at the UofC. Now I had the opportunity to learn from the man who wrote it. Asif further trained me in linguistic anthropology and provided me with opportunities to challenge and refine my ideas. In fact, it was his initial encouragement of the idea for this project that led me to this final product. I am grateful for your support of
this work at every stage and for your support in helping me secure my first academic job.

John and Suzanne Gaskins helped prepare me for the field—both in terms of what to wear, how to behave, and how to speak. I studied the Maya language with them and spent time with them in the summers in the Yucatan. Their expert Maya language skills and local savvy made all the difference in my ability to successfully realize this project. They guided me in different ways—John focused on technical aspects of the Maya language and my research design, while Suzanne provided me with much-needed advice and support on a wide range of personal and professional matters.

I offer my deepest thanks to Asif, Stanton, and John for their willingness to mentor, train, engage, discourse with, challenge, and enlighten me throughout my graduate school career. It has been a privilege and an honor to work with each of you—you are all kind, generous people with truly brilliant minds. My only regret is not having more time to continue to learn from you.

Kathy Hall provided me with support and encouragement at the proposal stage, without which I may not have made it to this final product. Thank you for helping me over that hurdle and for always being willing to lend me a hand when I needed it. Your warmth, kindness, generosity, and astute mind are greatly appreciated. Thank you to Robert Moore for his help through the proposal stage. Special thanks to Greg Urban for mentoring me through independent study in preparation for this work and for his expert advice on preparing for fieldwork. Thank you as well for your contribution to this final manuscript—I quite literally could not have completed it without you!

I am grateful to my peers for their moral and intellectual support across my

To Mary Kate Hildebrandt, Betty Deane, Deborah Thomas, Ramón Monrás-Senders, and Marco Manzo who helped me pull a rabbit out of a hat at the eleventh hour so that I could finish in time to graduate. Thank you for helping me through the related bureaucratic tasks in a hurry. Any errors in the manuscript are my own; it is, as is all academic work, a work in progress.

This work would not have been possible without the financial support I received from the University of Pennsylvania in the form of a Dean’s Scholar Fellowship, which funded the bulk of my doctoral studies, and a School of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Research Fellowship, which funded a portion of my fieldwork. A Fulbright-Hays Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship funded the majority of my fieldwork. I am eternally grateful to Alex Posecznick, who provided me with the vital piece of my application for the Fulbright-Hays grant, without which I would not have been able to apply. Receiving this award both made this research possible and has helped to position me professionally. Thank you, Alex. A Ruth Landes Memorial Research Fund writing fellowship helped to support the development of this manuscript.

I am thankful to the YXU administration for allowing me to conduct this research, and most grateful to the YXU faculty and students without whom this work would not have been possible. Thank you for sharing your lives and your studies with me and for
giving me permission to give voice to your contributions and experiences. I am in awe of you and hope only to do you justice in this work. Special thanks to Jaime, who assisted me with portions of this research, including the design and executing of the student interviews. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these data. *Jach uts a meyaj. Náach je’ a bineche’. Ya’ab uts tin t’aan in meyajtawëetelech.* In particular, I thank Oswaldo and Yasmín who thought with, mentored, and guided me throughout this work. I look forward to a lifetime of work together. You are both brilliant scholars and incredibly kind and generous people. I know that you will change linguistics—*ich maaya* and beyond, and, indeed, already have begun to do so. I look forward to continuing to learn from your contributions. It is an honor to be able to work with you. *Seen ki’imak in wòol in k’ajóoltike’ex bey xan in meyajtawëetele’ex. Jun nojoch méek ti’ te’ex.*

Shortly before completing this manuscript, I became a mom. I am most grateful to Suzanne and to Stanton both for their enthusiasm and complete support of me as I embarked upon this new chapter in my life—I was touched by your understanding of how important this is, and how the work must fit around it. And, again, I thank my parents, who made it possible for me to finish my dissertation and have my Tiki-Tiki.

And thank you to you, Mauricio, my husband, for making this work a priority and for being willing to continue to travel with me wherever the academic winds may take us. Thank you for sharing “your Yucatán” with me and for helping me navigate it. Your contributions to this work are innumerable, and your contributions to my wellbeing, happiness, and reason for being are even greater.
ABSTRACT

MAKING MAYA LINGUISTICS, MAKING MAYA LINGUISTS: THE PRODUCTION OF MAYA SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE AND MODELS OF PERSONHOOD IN THE YUCATAN TODAY

Catherine R. Rhodes
Asif Agha

In this dissertation, I explore what it means to be Maya in the Yucatan today. I focus my research on a higher education program in Maya linguistics where Maya is used as a language of instruction. To do this, faculty and students are creating the words and concepts with which to talk about linguistics *ich maaya* ‘in the Maya language’, something previously only done in other languages, like Spanish. This is about expanding the conceptual work that can be done in the Maya language, but it also about creating new scientific objects—new linguistics terminology; new categorizations of the language; and a new category of persons, native-Maya-speaking linguists. Through an eighteen-month ethnography, I follow linguists and their students to show how disciplinary linguistics knowledge is being created in the Maya language and how its creation produces and contests categories of Maya personhood. I begin broadly by exploring what it means to be Maya in Yucatan today through an analysis of diacritics of Maya personhood. I show how certain behaviors are linked to ideas about who Maya people are. For example, participation in advanced formal education is not widely associated with models of Maya personhood, thus when individuals pursue higher education, it can call their Mayaness into question. In light of this, some Maya individuals engage in practices to re-associate themselves with widely circulating
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Statement of the problem

Widely circulating, contemporary conceptions of Maya personhood in the Yucatan are rooted in ideas about indigeneity and modernity that position Maya people as traditional, indigenous, and non-modern. These ideas affect how Maya and non-Maya people think about models of Maya personhood and the types of activities Maya people can and should engage in, including the practice of science.

These stereotypic associations stand in direct contrast to conceptions of non-Maya people, who are seen as urban; modern; educated; Spanish speaking; economically mobile; and professionally employed or skilled laborers (i.e. not land-working). Thus, what happens when a Maya person gains higher education and becomes an expert in a scientific field, like linguistics, lives in a city, and teaches at a university? Is this person still Maya? This is a crucial question for many people on the Yucatan peninsula today. In fact, this question addresses key notions about what it means to be Maya and what types of activities Maya people can engage in. The issues implicit within this question touch on broader notions about indigeneity in the Yucatan and in the world at large and raise important questions about what it means to be indigenous.

Broadly speaking, the purpose of this study is to understand how models of Maya personhood are constructed in the Yucatan today. More specifically, I seek to understand how engaging in the scientific practice of linguistics via higher education affects models of Maya personhood and ideas about who can engage in this practice. Embedded within
this, I also shed light on how producing knowledge in the Maya language is contributing to the production of new scientific knowledge (via linguistics) and new ways of being Maya (i.e. via new models of Maya personhood).

Some individuals argue that conducting linguistics by using Maya as a metalanguage can open up the opportunity for generating new scientific knowledge by using a language that has not been used to conduct scientific analyses and, as a result, possibly change what is known about the disciplinary science of linguistics. Proponents of this view argue that this could be possible precisely because Maya contains categories and linguistic phenomena that do not exist in the languages that have traditionally been used to analyze Maya (i.e. predominately Indo-European languages). If these individuals are correct, then conducting linguistics ich maaya ‘in the Maya language’ could stand to produce new indigenous scientific knowledge. In light of this, Maya speakers have been creating an undergraduate degree program and curriculum in disciplinary linguistics that uses Maya as both an object language and as the language of instruction. These efforts, however, are met with criticisms by some Maya people who argue that participation in higher education, even when Maya is the language of instruction, may make individuals less Maya by ridding them of their Maya ways of knowing and replacing these with Western, academic ones. This project sheds light on the apparent paradox between these two positions—the simultaneously indigenizing and de-indigenizing processes of higher education and the practice of a scientific discipline (qua linguistics).

I document this and other paradoxes by following a group of Maya speakers as they participate in an undergraduate degree program in linguistics. Through the
disciplinary practice of linguistics, this project shows the resources involved in producing scientific models of Maya personhood and what is at stake for Maya individuals, including what implications these models have for who has access to and can identify as being a Maya scientific knowledge producer.

I study the issues I have laid out here through a Maya Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program at a university I call Yáax Xook University (YXU). In this context, I can study not only how Maya people are creating scientific knowledge (vis-à-vis linguistics), but also how this work is creating the space for a new category of persons—native Maya-speaking linguists. In the process of creating disciplinary linguistics _ich maaya_ ‘in the Maya language’—something that had previously only been done in other languages, like Spanish—Maya speakers are engaging with key questions about what it means to be Maya in Yucatan today. This work is taking place primarily within the context of higher education, which also raises questions about Western academic ways of knowing, Maya ways of knowing, and the relationship between these.

In what follows, I provide an overview of the chapters in this dissertation.

**Structure of the dissertation**

Following this introduction (Chapter 1), in Chapter 2 I lay out the conceptual framework for the dissertation. In it, I discuss the literature on modernity and indigeneity, setting up my exploration of a context in which Maya people are becoming scientific experts: disciplinary linguistics. Because this work is situated in a higher education program, I also position it within research on the anthropology of education. In particular, I focus on its contributions in the area of process of social identification, which are central to
understanding how Maya people are coming to understand themselves in new ways. Central to this discussion is also how the modernizing project of formal education (via schooling) is part of constituting the nation-state and the modern national citizen.

In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of the ethnographic context in which I conducted this research. I begin with broad strokes, providing history of the Yucatan peninsula, narrowing to a discussion of the sociolinguistic situation on the peninsula and a discussion of the Yucatec Maya people and their position within the broader Maya world, and then narrowing further to a discussion of linguistics in the Yucatan. My discussion of linguistics also moves from a broad overview of linguistics in the region, beginning with an historical overview of writing in Maya, then on to a discussion of early Maya linguistics, and finally to the contemporary context of Maya linguistics. This discussion sets up my explanation of my research site, a single undergraduate degree program in Maya linguistics, which forms part of my discussion of my research methodology.

In my discussion of my research methodology (Chapter 4), I discuss my role as the researcher and outline the research questions that motivated this study. I provide an overview of my fieldsite, including entry to the fieldsite. Finally, I discuss my data collection and analysis procedures.

Following my methodology, I then move on to my data chapters. My data chapters also begin with a broad focus—first looking at notions of Maya personhood in Yucatan today—and then progressively narrow as I move toward a discussion of the specific degree program in which I conducted the bulk of my research.
In my first data chapter, Chapter 5, I explore how individuals come to be identified as Maya in the Yucatan today, focusing my discussion on the role that formal education plays in this process. Specifically, I show how models of Maya personhood are constructed as individuals come to be identified as Maya via association with widely circulating, emblematic diacritics of Mayaness. Being identified as Maya involves being associated with a certain combination of emblems of Mayaness in the appropriate context. I first provide a brief historical account of these before discussing contemporary diacritics of Mayaness in the Yucatan and how one becomes identified as Maya. I argue that Mayaness is not fixed; instead it is negotiated through one’s degrees of association with widely circulating emblems of Mayaness. In particular, I argue that primarily through K-12 formal schooling, individuals often become de-associated with widely circulating emblems of Mayaness, often leading to a process that I describe as de-Mayanization. However, at the undergraduate level, I find that individuals actively re-associate themselves with emblems of Mayaness—such as speaking what is perceived to be an authentic form of Maya (jach maaya)—leading to a process I call re-Mayanization. This challenges the notion put forth in existing literature that change in ethnic group membership in Yucatan is unidirectional, away from Mayaness, and it shows that higher education is key to individuals’ shifts in defining ethnic group membership. I find that, in some ways, being identified as Maya is a more fluid, variable, and contingent process than previously thought, but that in other ways, unspoken emblems of Mayaness make the process more rigid than previously imagined.

In Chapter 6, I build off of my discussion in Chapter 5 but narrow my focus to
look at specific linguistic practices associated with Maya individuals who are engaged in higher education and the practice of linguistics. Here, I explore a linguistic register often used by Maya linguists—*jach maaya*. *Jach maaya* is one of two widely recognized registers of the Maya language, the other being *xe’ek’ maaya*. *Jach maaya* is thought to be a pure form of Maya, while *xe’ek’ maaya* incorporates Spanish-language loanwords. Building off of my discussion in Chapter 5, I argue that individuals’ use of *jach maaya* contributes to processes of re-Mayanization. In this chapter, I argue that *jach maaya* is not one but two, unique, previously unidentified linguistic registers of Maya: ancient *jach maaya* and purist *jach maaya*. I argue that the latter, purist *jach maaya*, is widely associated with institutionalized efforts in the Maya language, which lends it a degree of authority. In this chapter, I suggest that the lack of differentiation of these two registers serves as an important tool for local Maya linguists.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I narrow my focus further to look at the process of creating disciplinary linguistics in the Maya language at a higher education institution. I draw primarily on my fieldwork at *Yáax Xook University*, where I observed an undergraduate degree program in *Maya Linguistics and Culture*. I begin Chapter 7 by providing a brief overview of disciplinary linguistics and indigenous grammar, situating linguistics *ich maaya* ‘in the Maya language’ within the discipline. I then turn my focus to classroom strategies for talking about and practicing disciplinary linguistics in the Maya language. I begin by showing how students and faculty struggle with how to talk about linguistics, since the words for doing so are only beginning to be created in this language. I then discuss how linguists and their students are negotiating analysis of the Maya language
using linguistic categories—a task that leads these individuals to question the categories given to them by existing (Indo-European-based) accounts of the language. This is a challenging process for students are simultaneously learning about and contributing to creating linguistics content in Maya. This work has important implications for identity work for linguistics students, work that is of course situated within more widely circulating discourses about what it means to be Maya in the Yucatan today, as I discuss in Chapter 5. Thus, in this chapter I position the implications of the work linguists and their students are doing at YXU within broader discussions on the peninsula about who counts as Maya and what types of practices these individuals are engaged in, including their language practices, in particular as these relate to ideologies of linguistic purism.

While in Chapter 7, I talk about classroom practices for conducting linguistics *ich maaya* at YXU, in Chapter 8 I focus on the one published linguistics text in this language—a text on Maya phonetics. This text is used at YXU in the phonetics and phonology course, which is the only course that has a Maya-language curricular text. I review the linguistics terminology used in this text and compare its analysis of the phonemic structure of Maya with other existing accounts published in English. Across Chapters 7 and 8, I draw on ethnographic data to discuss the people, processes, products, and influences involved in the creation of linguistics in the Maya language. My analysis of the creation of linguistics *ich maaya*—both in the classroom at YXU and via the phonetics text—reveals that this work is creating new scientific objects, new categorizations of existing scientific knowledge, and a new category of personhood.

In Chapter 9, I again return to the question of Maya personhood by looking at the
new category of personhood made possible through creating linguistics *ich maaya*—native-Maya-speaking linguists. Creating linguistics *ich maaya* is in many ways about processes of social identification and making it possible for Maya speakers to finding new ways to be Maya. This process, however, is neither simple nor straightforward. Instead, studying linguistics *ich maaya* places linguistics students in a difficult position. At home, their models of Maya personhood are often brought into question in light of their participation in higher education, which leads them to engage in activities often not widely associated with models of Maya personhood. Yet on campus, these same students are often held up as exemplars of the Maya language and culture. Students navigate these tensions by owning their new position of authority on campus and mobilizing this to redefine themselves on their own terms. Through this process, linguistics students tap into and draw upon national discourses about indigeneity and modernity.

Finally, in Chapter 10, I summarize the findings from this dissertation. I come full circle and return to my discussion of the relationship indigeneity and modernity. Building on my discussion throughout the dissertation, I argue that, Mayaness in the Yucatan is constructed on ideas about indigeneity that circulate at the national level in Mexico and in the Western world at large, both of which stand on discourses of modernity. In particular, being Maya or being indigenous—not necessarily one and the same thing—are antithetical to being modern. I propose that, to be Maya and to be an academic (qua linguist), new conceptions of Mayaness and indigeneity may be required, and I suggest
that the work being done in the linguistics program at YXU is a step toward making this a reality.
CHAPTER 2: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Conceptions of indigeneity are frequently rooted in a traditional-modern dichotomy in which indigenous peoples are seen as holding traditional (i.e. non-modern) values and practices, ones that typically must be lost for them to become modern individuals (e.g., Sahlins 1999; Sieder 2001; Stepputat 2001) and, typically, modern citizens, as notions of modernity are strongly tied to notions about the nation-state (e.g., Anderson 1983; Harvey 1996; Foucault 1998; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Taussig 1992). As Sahlins (1999) points out, traditional anthropology has viewed cultural contact as necessarily resulting in a loss of indigenous societies’ cultural identities and their gradual assimilation into the West, while cultural change in the West is interpreted as “progress.” Thus, notions about both indigeneity and modernity are neatly tied up within notions about the West, and the latter two have come to be seen as synonymous in many lights.

On the Yucatan peninsula, where the research in this dissertation is based, the ideas about indigeneity and modernity found in traditional anthropology are widespread. Local conceptions of the Maya, for instance, widely recognize them as being rural; traditional; uneducated; Maya speaking; not economically mobile; manual, un-skilled, or land-working; and, often, wearers of traditional Maya clothing. These stereotypic associations stand in direct contrast to conceptions of non-Maya people, who are seen as urban; modern; educated; Spanish speaking; more economically mobile; professional, skilled, or non-land working; and wearers of Western-style clothing. What do these

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1 In this dissertation, I use Maya to refer to the people, their language, and their other cultural practices. Mayan is a term developed by linguists that I strictly use to refer to the language family to which the Yucatec Maya language belongs (e.g., Yucatec Maya is a Mayan language).
notions mean, then, for Maya people who gain higher education and become experts in a scientific field, like linguistics? Who live in a city and teach at a university? Who wear Western-style clothing on a daily basis? Are these individuals still *Maya*? This question may seem trivial, but it is a crucial question for many people on the Yucatan peninsula today. This question addresses key notions about what it means to be *Maya* and what types of activities Maya people can engage in, which touch on broader notions about indigeneity in the Yucatan and in the world at large and raise important questions about what it means to be *indigenous*.

In this dissertation, I set out to understand what it means to be Maya in the Yucatan today. In particular, I focus on a group of Maya intellectuals who are creating scientific expertise in the Yucatec Maya language (hereinafter Maya). Such an investigation necessitates an exploration of the concepts of indigeneity and modernity and how both relate to the category *Maya*. This discussion necessitates a discussion of how people come to be “routinely and unproblematically identified in practice,” given the fact that signs of identity can be interpreted in multiple and even conflicting ways (Wortham 2006, 30). That is, a discussion of processes of social identification. I situate my understanding of social identification within the anthropology of education, and both beg a discussion of the relationship of social identity formation to the formation of the modern nation-state, and, in the case of Mexico, the relationship between indigenous communities and modern Mexicans. In what follows, I discuss these theoretical concepts

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2 While linguists tend to refer to Yucatec Maya simply as *Yucatec* to differentiate it from other Maya languages, Maya speakers refer to their language as *Maya*. Furthermore, the linguists and linguistics students with whom I worked referred to their language as *maaya* (‘Maya’) and not as *Yucateco* (‘Yucatec’), so Maya is the term I use.
and how I am using them to structure the conceptual framework for this dissertation.

**Modernity**

Definitions of modernity vary as do the practices through which theorists approach the study of this construct; despite these variations, they all have at least two things in common—they are built upon dichotomies (past/present-future, traditional/modern, culture/science, etc.) and they all include the element of time. Baudelaire is often credited with the first use of the term modernity in the late 1800s, and it subsequently came to define the century that followed. Indeed from its first use—in which Baudelaire (1864[1964]) argues that “‘modernity’” represents “the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent,” which he contrasts with “the eternal and the immutable” (13)—the notion of modernity has been tied to conceptions of time. Latour (1993, 11) argues this clearly:

> The adjective ‘modern’ designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time. When the word ‘modern’, ‘modernization’, or ‘modernity’ appears, we are defining, by contrast, an archaic and stable past. Furthermore, the word is always being thrown into the middle of a fight, in a quarrel where there are winners and losers, Ancients and Moderns. ‘Modern’ is thus doubly asymmetrical: it designates a break in the regular passage of time, and it designates a combat in which there are victors and vanquished.

Thus, past/present-future is one of the key dichotomies upon which the construct of modernity is based.

While Latour (1993) recognizes the importance of time in the construction of modernity, he argues that the concept is premised upon two processes: purification and translation. Purification is the creation of “two entirely distinct ontological zones...human beings [and] nonhumans;” translation is the creation of “hybrids of nature and culture” (10-11). Both practices are key to the constitution of modernity, but it is the
former that Latour considers to be the work of the modern subject—the moderns engage in acts of purification while the “others” (peoples of all other, non-modern cultures) engage in the creation of hybrids. Being modern means considering nature to be separate from culture, humans from nonhumans, science from society. Latour (1993) argues that, it is precisely the moderns’ denial of hybrids that allow them to proliferate. Because translation—the creation of hybrids—has always been a central part of modernity, Latour (1993) argues that, “we have never been modern” (11).

Bauman and Briggs (2003), who theorize the role of language in modernity—specifically “how language came into being and the work of purification and hybridization that makes it a crucial means of structuring social relations” (7), argue that two key elements are missing from Latour’s conceptualization of modernity: language and tradition. (Although, they are careful to note that they use these categories as “shorthand” for they are “modern designations” in themselves (Bauman & Briggs 2003, 5).) When Bauman and Briggs (2003) refer to language, they speak of discourse, “which embrace [sic] ambiguous, unstable and shifting meanings, rhetoric, and intertextuality, transformed words into sources of misunderstanding and vehicles for undermining the rationality and independence of thought” (7). Latour, they argue, in contrast, is modern in his understanding of language—seeing it as “real” and “[relegates it] to the role of carrying out particular modernist functions, such as conveying information” (Bauman & Briggs 2003, 8). Bauman and Briggs (2003), instead, study how language is a key piece of the modernizing project—how it is both “like science and society” and, like these is “continually constructed through purification and hybridization” and how it is “unlike the
other two domains,” which “render language unimportant,” despite its role in constituting
the other two domains (7-8). Perhaps it is Latour’s failure to recognize the role of
language in constructing modernity that also blinds him to the modernizing forces present
in his own work. For, as Bauman and Briggs (2003) point out, Latour’s (1993) own
critique of modernity is permeated by modern categories, specifically the narrative of
time, in his contrast of pre-moderns to those who take part in Western progress.³

The second element Bauman and Briggs (2003) find missing from Latour’s
define it, is a “…classificatory concept or mediating force in the alignment of
premodernity to modernity,” one that, “…consistently lends itself to the articulation of
other asymmetries that have been useful in the construction of modernity and social
inequality: female/male, rural/urban, working class/bourgeois, unsophisticated/educated,
oral/literate, European/Oriental” (11). Indeed, as these authors further point out, the
history of thought on modernity is defined by the following (and, I would add various
other local) dichotomizations: “rural (or aboriginal), lower class, ignorant, old-fashioned,
indigenous—in a word, provincial—versus urban, elite, learned, cosmopolitan, that is to
say, modern” (Bauman & Briggs 2003, 2). These points of contrast bear a striking
resemblance to the emblems of Maya and non-Mayaness that I discuss in Chapter 5. That
is, notions about what it means to be Maya are tightly linked to the provincializing
discourses that Bauman and Briggs (2003) and Latour (1993) identify, while ideas about

³“Latour devotes scant attention to past-future purification and hybridization. Moreover, his persistent use
of the label ‘pre-modern’ for the antecedent side of the Great Divide represents the very historicist usage
that assimilates history everywhere to the temporality of Western ‘progress’…” (Bauman & Briggs 2003,
10).
what it means to be non-Maya are linked to notions about modernity. I am not suggesting that these categories are steadfast; instead, as I argue in Chapter 5, they are fluid, heterogeneous, and variable, but also powerful and recognizable in that widely circulating notions define their canonical types. This is true in the case of the Maya of the Yucatan. Perhaps Latour is correct in arguing that we have never achieved modernity, but, even if this is the case, the perception that we are modern is sufficient enough to do significant social work—it is central in constructing ideas about indigenous peoples, their practices, and their place in “modern” societies.

**Indigeneity**

Indigeneity is an important piece of the modernity construct. It provides the contrast point for the non-indigenous—the European, Western, modernized subject. *Indigenous* is a term that means different things to different people in different places and it is used for different ends. In Mexico, for instance, *indigenous* is a key term in national institutions and politics, such as in the name for the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas*\(^4\) ‘National Institute of Indigenous Languages’ (INALI) or the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI) ‘National Indigenist Institute’. In Mexico today, language spoken and/or self-identification are the factors that are used to define a person as indigenous. This practice began in Mexico in 2000 with revisions to census questions and continued in 2010 (with further revisions to how the questions were asked) (Vázquez Sandrín & Quezada 2015, 184). These are the questions on the census:

- 2000: Is (NAME) Nahua, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec or from another indigenous

\(^4\) In this dissertation, I italicize non-English-language words, with the exception of some longer, original-language data segments in footnotes.
group? (INEGI 2000)
• 2010: According to the culture of (NAME), does s/he consider him/herself indigenous? (INEGI 2010a)

Self-identification is one of two factors used in defining indigenous people based on the 1989 General Conference of the International Labour Organisation, which was convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and which created a new set of international standards for indigenous and tribal peoples’ rights, revising previous conventions. The new convention was called the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention. It states that, “[s]elf-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply” (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989, n.p.). The convention further defines indigenous peoples as those who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989, n.p.)

It makes no mention of the use of an indigenous language. Interestingly, in contrast with the recommendation of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989), the Mexican census makes no use of the ancestral origin of individuals in determining their claims to indigeneity. Instead, language has typically been one of the primary markers of indigeneity in Mexico (and much of Latin America). This is the case so much so that Vázquez Sandrín and Quezada (2015), who analyzed the Mexican and other Latin

5 Original text: 2000: “¿(NOMBRE) es náhuatl, maya, zapoteco, mixteco o de otro grupo indígena?” 2010: “De acuerdo con la cultura de (NOMBRE), ¿ella (él) se considera indígena?” All translations in this dissertation are my own.
American 2010 Census questions about indigeneity, write that, self-declared speakers of indigenous languages who did not self-identify as indigenous on the 2010 Mexican Census had lost the [indigenous] identity. They go on to write that,

With basis in analysis of the results of the 2000 and 2010 censuses, it is concluded that the population self-described as indigenous in 2010 has socio-demographic characteristics less similar to those of speakers of indigenous languages and, it could be said, to those of indigenous peoples in general. The majority of the 9.8 million people who are five years old or older who self-described [as indigenous] in 2010 are found in the category of the population that does not speak an indigenous language. (Vázquez Sandrín & Quezada 2015, 210)

They further support their claim that the self-described indigenous people on the 2010 census are less like speakers of indigenous languages and indigenous peoples in general in that (Vázquez Sandrín & Quezada 2015, 210),

The self-described [indigenous people] in 2000 were principally rural, while in 2010 they were principally urban; the portion of absolute migrants increased by almost double, while those described as not belonging to an indigenous group went down by one percent and scholastic level increased for those self-described [as indigenous] by almost double, an increase that corresponds to that of the total population aged five and older (the first was 1.9 and the second 1.1 years of accumulated schooling). (Vázquez Sandrín & Quezada 2015, 211)

This is to say, that Vázquez Sandrín and Quezada (2015) are orienting to a definition of indigeneity that is tied to speaking an indigenous language, living in a rural area, not migrating (i.e. living in the place where you one was born), and having lower levels of

Original: “En la medida que la población HLI no autoadscrita perdió la identidad principalmente por causa de la migración, parecería razonable que su distribución en el territorio y por tamaño de localidad fuera similar a la del resto de la población Mexicana” (Vázquez Sandrín & Quezada 2015, 195).

Original: “Con base en el análisis de los resultados de los censos de 2000 y 2010, se concluye que la población autoadscrita como indígena en 2010 tiene características socio-demográficas menos cercanas a las de los hablantes de lenguas indígenas y, pudiera decirse, a las de los pueblos indígenas en general. La mayor parte de los 9.8 millones de personas de cinco años o más que se sumaron a los autoadscritos en 2010 se encuentra en la categoría de la población que no habla una lengua indígena.”

Original: “Los autoadscritos en 2000 eran mayoritariamente rurales, mientras que en 2010 fueron mayoritariamente urbanos; la proporción de migrantes absolutos se incrementó casi al doble, mientras que en los no pertenecientes se redujo en un punto porcentual y el incremento de la escolaridad de los autoadscritos casi duplicó al incremento correspondiente en la población total de cinco años o más (el primero fue de 1.9 y el segundo de 1.1 año de escolaridad acumulada).”
formal education. These characterizations of indigenous peoples do not sound too different from the descriptions of the Maya I present in Chapter 5, and they ring through with the dichotomizations listed above that separate the indigenous from the modern. The following statement further emphasizes these authors’ commitment to speaking an indigenous language as a marker for being indigenous (Vázquez Sandrín & Quezada 2015):

A detailed analysis of belonging to an indigenous group that is presented separately by the condition of being a speaker of an indigenous language makes it possible to confirm the permissive effect of the question. Almost the entire population of indigenous language speakers became [self-]identified as indigenous (in 2000 68% self-identified in this way and in 2010 94% did so), they became more urban, more highly educated and more migratory; while those speakers of indigenous languages that do not self-identify as indigenous became a smaller and more selective group of people who have lost the indigenous identity (or who do not wish to ascribe themselves to the indigenous culture), since they live in more single-dweller homes, primarily in urban areas and they tend to have an average level of schooling that is higher than the rest of the indigenous language speakers. The population of self-identified indigenous people who do not speak an indigenous language in 2010 was more similar to that of the national population in all aspects analyzed: schooling, size of the place of residence, relationship to the head of household and total migration. (Vázquez Sandrín & Quezada 2015, 211)

While a lot is going on in this paragraph, one of the authors’ key goals is to tie speaking an indigenous language to being indigenous—whether one self-describes in that way or not. Again, this is interesting in light of the fact that speaking an indigenous language is

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9 Original: “Un análisis detallado de la pertenencia que presenta separadamente la condición de hablante de lengua indígena permite confirmar el efecto permisivo de la pregunta. Casi toda la población hablante de lengua indígena se convirtió en perteneciente (en 2000 fue 68 y en 2010 de 94 por ciento), se volvieron más urbanos, más escolarizados y más migrantes; mientras que los hablantes no perteneciente pasaron a ser un grupo pequeño y muy seleccionado de personas que han perdido la identidad indígena (o que no desean adscribirse a la cultura indígena), dado que residen más en hogares unipersonales, principalmente en zonas urbanas y tienen una escolaridad promedio acumulada más alta que la del resto de los hablantes de lenguas indígenas. La población no hablante de lengua indígena perteneciente en 2010 se parece más a la población nacional en todos los aspectos analizados: escolaridad, tamaño de la localidad de residencia, parentesco con el jefe de hogar y migración absoluta.”
not a factor that the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989) uses to determine membership in an indigenous group and despite the fact that self-description is one of the two factors that the convention does include as a determiner of indigenous group membership. The authors, again, do not understand how someone could speak an indigenous language yet not identify as being indigenous, resulting in their assessment that these individuals “have lost the indigenous identity.” Furthermore, instead of finding that, individuals who ascribe to having an indigenous culture consider themselves to be indigenous, the authors argue that the use of the expression indigenous culture instead of indigenous group has led individuals to “over-ascribe” to being indigenous—leading them they argue either that, 1) the question about feeling that one belongs to an indigenous culture was too permissive or 2) the higher incidence of individuals who self-identified as indigenous in the 2010 census was due to a national ethnic revitalization (which leads non-indigenous people to identify as indigenous in solidarity with the indigenous cause, whatever that may be).10

A report published in 2000 by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista ‘National

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10 This second point, while somewhat beyond the scope of my discussion in this chapter, is based on an argument advanced by Fernández (2011), who suggests that the jump in self-ascription of indigenous cultural membership between 2000 and 2010 was due to a period of ethnic revitalization. Vázquez Sandrín and Quezada (2015) argue that this supposed ethnic revitalization is due to at least two causes: 1) the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, and 2) the Zapatista movement (see p. 173). I will not pursue these arguments here, but they do merit discussion. Vázquez Sandrín and Quezada (2015) further draw on Peyser and Chackiel (1999) to advance their argument about ethnic revitalization, specifically arguing that the increase in indigenous self-ascription is due to sympathizers to the indigenous cause: “si no hubiera aceptación en una parte de la sociedad mexicana a la cultura indígena no se produciría la sobredeclaración por ‘adhesión de simpatizantes a la causa indígena’ que enuncian Peyser y Chackiel (1999) al introducir la ‘cultura’ como referente de la identidad étnica” (210) (‘if there were not acceptance of indigenous culture by one part of Mexican society, the over-declaration [of indigenous self-ascription] would not be produced due to ‘adhesion of sympathizers to the indigenous cause’, state Peyser & Chackiel (1999), by the introduction of ‘culture’ as a referent for ethnic identity’). In the case of the Yucatan peninsula, I know of no one who would identify as Maya specifically to support the “indigenous cause.” Furthermore, as I explain in Chapter 3, pan-Mayanism is not yet an established force in the Yucatan, thus the EZLN movement is not a part of everyday Maya speakers’ lives or daily consciousness.
Indigenist Institute’ (INI) and the Programa de Desarrollo de las Naciones Unidas ‘United Nations Development Programme’ (PNUD), entitled el Estado del desarrollo económico y social de los pueblos indígenas, primer informe ‘A First Report of the State of Social and Economic Development of the Indigenous Peoples’, defines ‘indigenous’ as follows:

Indigenous. Concept of colonial origin that defines a population that shares a cultural tradition with pre-Hispanic roots that reorganizes and founds its formal characteristics in the framework of nouveau-Hispanic society and that retains amongst its most important traits speaking an Amerindian language or assuming an identity in this tradition. (INI & PNUD 2000, 836)\textsuperscript{11}

This definition shares the linguistic and cultural elements found in some of the aforementioned definitions. Yet it also implies a new element—one left highly ambiguous in this brief stretch of text—the idea that the pre-Hispanic cultural traditions are reorganized and founded within a nouveau-Hispanic societal framework. What exactly is this nouveau-Hispanic societal framework? I surmise that the authors are referring to the mestization or ladinization (this refers to the interethnic mixing of people from Spanish-descent or Whites and Indians; I discuss this further in Chapter 5) that frequently is used to define contemporary society in much of Latin America. That is, that the pre-Hispanic cultural roots of indigenous peoples are not cut off from or immune to the broader society in which they are found today. Thus, their origins are recognized, but their practices in contemporary society are reorganized by and founded in a wider, ladinized, Latin American society. If this read of this definition is headed in the right

\textsuperscript{11} Original: “Indígena. Concepto de origen colonial que define a una población que comparte una tradición cultural de raíz prehispánica, la cual se reorganiza y funda sus características formales en el marco de la sociedad novohispana y que retiene entre sus rasgos más importantes el hablar una lengua amerindia o el asumir una identidad con esa tradición.”
direction, then these authors are, at least in some way, attempting to not succumb to the
tide of modernity in which the tradition of indigenous communities is seen as immune to,
separate from, the reality of living in contemporary Latin American society.

While thus far, self-ascription, language, culture, and ancestry have been used as
criteria for determining indigeneity in the various definitions I have cited, other
definitions, such as Caso’s (1996[1948]), also call up biological, racial, and/or
phenotypic criteria in their descriptions of indigenous. Caso (1996[1948]) argues that
there are four criteria for defining someone as indigenous (indígena): 1) biological, which
includes an important and preponderant combination of non-European physical
characteristics; 2) cultural, which includes that the group uses objects, techniques, ideas
and beliefs of indigenous origin or that they use ones of European origin that have been
adapted by the indigenous people and that have ceased to be used by the White
population; 3) linguistic, which applies perfectly to monolinguals, is acceptable amongst
bilinguals, but is an unacceptable criteria amongst Spanish-language speakers (i.e. who
do not speak an indigenous language); and 4) psychological, which consists of showing
that the individual feels part of an indigenous community. Various scholars have

12 Original: “En resumen, son cuatro, a nuestro entender, los criterios más importantes para lograr la
definición del indígena: el biológico, que consiste en precisar un importante y preponderante conjunto de
caracteres físicos no europeos; el cultural, que consiste en demostrar que el grupo utiliza objetos, técnicas,
ideas y creencias de origen indígena o de origen europeo pero adoptadas, de grado o por fuerza, entre los
indígenas, y que, sin embargo, han desaparecido ya de la población blanca. Estos rasgos deben ser,
también, preponderantes en la comunidad. El criterio lingüístico, perfecto en los grupos monolingües,
aceptable en los bilingües, pero inútil para aquellos grupos que ya hablan castellano y, por último, el
criterio psicológico, que consiste en demostrar que el individuo se siente formar parte de una comunidad
indígena [...] Es indio aquel que se siente pertenecer a una comunidad indígena, y es una comunidad
indígena aquella en que predominan elementos somáticos no europeos, que habla preferentemente una
lengua indígena, que posee en su cultura material y espiritual elementos indígenas en fuerte proporción y
que, por último, tiene un sentido social de comunidad aislada dentro de las otras comunidades que la
rodean, que hace distinguirse asimismo de los pueblos de blancos y mestizos.” (Caso 1948, 337)
critiqued Caso’s view of indigeneity (e.g., Villoro 1987; Stavenhagen 1992; Aguirre Beltrán 1990), and others, while not critiquing it directly, disagree with this line of thinking (e.g., Warman 2003). Interestingly, however, I have read self-proclaimed indigenous scholars who both invoke and criticize the use of biological criteria for determining indigeneity. For instance, Montejo (2005), writing about an appeal he made to the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in 1991, argues that,

I proposed…that it was time to take a step forward in the redefinition of our identity and begin to call ourselves Maya. At the time, the term “Maya” was not used in indigenous discourse, but only the term “indio.” It was necessary to analyze the use of various pejorative terms and destroy the intragroup and interethnic racism among Mayas. One issue is that of skin color. Some light-skinned Maya act like ladinos and mistreat their own neighbors who have dark skin or a *Maya phenotype*. These Maya individuals play along with ladino racism and call other Maya by disparaging terms because of the color of their skin. Light-skinned Maya often direct insults such as *k’ej sinhso lej* (black and disgusting) at those who are darker in color. (bold added)

While Montejo writes against the use of race (here understood as skin color) in the determination of one’s Mayaness, in his argument he speaks of a “Maya phenotype,” albeit he does not describe what this is. Later on in his book, he writes against Miguel Angel Asturias’ characterization of the Maya phenotype: “wide nose and mouth, thick lips with turned-down corners, sharp cheekbones, slanted eyes, a straight forehead and large and simple ears often with adhered lobes…” (Asturias 1977:77 quoted in Montejo 2005, 44). Thus, while even Montejo, a self-describe *Maya* and self-described *indigenous* person writes against the use of phenotype for determining one’s Mayaness, it even permeates his discourse. This suggests that these ideologies about what makes someone indigenous (or Maya) run deep, not unlike the modernizing discourses described above that even their critics cannot always escape.
In contrast to Caso’s ideas about indigeneity, de la Peña (2000) argues that, race is no longer a useful construct; cultural criteria still hold value, but must me used with care; language is important, but insufficient; dress has disappeared in many places; and many Indians no longer practice Mesoamerican agricultural practices. Thus, he argues the Indian should be understood as a dimension of identity and understood as such. In his own words,

From the point of view of social analysis, the Indian should be understood as a dimension of identity—today, more than ever—and should be recorded in this way. Of course, it is important to continue to collect information about vernacular languages—whose speakers have not stopped growing in absolute numbers—dress and other cultural features, among them which should stand out participation in community institutions. But attention should primarily be focused on assumed identity: if a person considers him/herself to be Indian, indigenous or a member of an ethnicity or not. And since identity always implies membership in a group, it should also be established which group is the group of pertinent reference: community, neighborhood, family, kin (line), ritual association or ethnic militant organization. It is necessary to think of what is Indian as an analogous concept, not univocal or equivocal, in which distinct combinations and components can be possible in different situations. In the city or in the country, and even abroad. Above all, it is urgent to replace the stereotypes and reifications with a vision of the Indians as subjects of their own history and builders of their own future. (de la Peña 2000, 25)

De la Peña’s (2000) description of how the Indian should be defined focuses on identity, in particular how an individual self-identifies. In this way, it falls within the criteria found

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13 Original: “Desde el punto de vista del análisis social, lo indio debe entenderse como una dimensión identitaria—más que nunca, hoy en día—, y como tal debe tratarse de registrarse. Por supuesto, es importante seguir capturando información sobre las lenguas vernáculas —cuyos hablantes no han dejado de aumentar en números absolutos—, la indumentaria y otros rasgos culturales, entre los que habría que destacar la participación en instituciones comunitarias. Pero la atención debe fijarse principalmente en la identidad asumida: si una persona se considera o no indio, indígena o miembro de una etnia. Y como la identidad siempre implica sentido de pertenencia a un grupo, debe establecerse cuál es el grupo de referencia pertinente: la comunidad, el barrio o vecindario, la familia, la parentela, la asociación ritual o la organización étnica militante. Es necesario pensar en lo indio como un concepto análogo, no unívoco ni equivocado, donde pueden darse distintas combinaciones de componentes para distintas situaciones. En la ciudad y en el campo e incluso en el extranjero. Sobre todo, es urgente remplazar los estereotipos y reificaciones por una visión de los indios como sujetos de su propia historia y constructores de su propio futuro.”
in many of the aforementioned definitions. Yet, he goes beyond these definitions in that he notes that self-identification is linked to group membership. Thus, self-identification also entails group identification and, in particular, group determination—only the individual who self-identifies in a certain way is in a position to state to determine and delimit the group to which s/he considers him/herself to be a member. Thus groupness, de la Peña argues, should not be externally imposed.

While de la Peña’s (2000) favoring of self-determination is more widely accepted in scholarly circles, and scholars have criticized the use of race as a construct in defining indigeneity and the suggestion that it has biological foundations (e.g., Martínez Novo 2006), elements of the type of argument Caso makes carry weight in everyday assessments of indigeneity today—both by indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. For instance, Martínez Novo (2006), citing Caso’s (1980) work writes,

> According to classic post-Revolutionary definitions of Indian status in Mexico, such as that offered by Alfonso Caso (1980), an Indian who leaves his or her community and learns Spanish becomes *mestizo* (“mixed blood”) because speaking a native language and living in a community defined as indigenous have been the preferred markers of official Indian status. (7)

As I discuss at length in Chapter 5, widely circulating ideas about Mayaness in Yucatan are closely tied to ideas about the types of practices Maya and non-Maya people engage in. Being considered Maya (by self or others) is frequently tied to speaking Maya and living in one’s community of origin—a community that is rural and where the Maya language is spoken. Learning or speaking Spanish, living or working in more urban areas (or even traveling between them and home for school or work) can all bring an individual’s Mayaness into question. Thus, indigeneity (or membership in a group such
as *Maya*\(^{14}\) is defined in different ways by different individuals and for very different ends. This raises two important questions that Vázquez Sandrín and Quezada’s (2015) raise in their work, despite its other limitations: What is the objective of measuring *being indigenous*? And, who should do this? While de la Peña (2000) argues that the individual in question should be responsible for self-defining and self-identifying, the answer to the former question is that there are, in the case of Mexico, many, many reasons why one might want to determine the extent of the indigenous population, and there are many institutions that would (and do) make use of the results of such a determination. In particular, indigenous people formulate an important part of the Mexican national imaginary. Indigeneity, however, remains primarily an institutional term and construct.\(^{15}\)

**Anthropology of education, social identification, and the modern nation-state**

This research sits at the intersection of anthropology and education and it takes up questions at the intersection of language, cognition, and culture in an attempt to better understand the relationship between these three constructs. In it, I draw on literatures in linguistic and cultural anthropology, including interdisciplinary work on language and cognition and work on race and ethnicity; anthropologies of knowledge-production, science, and education; social studies of science; and sociology of professions and contributes to understandings of: 1) the creation of scientific categories and how types of persons become associated with them (Hacking 1999); 2) how models of indigeneity are formulated, circulated, and evaluated by indigenous peoples (Kimmerer 2002;  

\(^{14}\) In fact, as I discuss in Chapter 5, being *Maya* and being *indigenous* (or *Indian ‘indio’*) are not necessarily the same thing.  
\(^{15}\) I discuss this further in Chapter 5.
Sachatello-Sawyer, 2004; Snively 2006); 3) how expertise, evidence, and the evaluation of knowledge-production are negotiated within the production of a scientific way of knowing (Battiste 1998, 2000; Cajete 1999; Snively 2006); 4) the role language (the disciplinary language of linguistics or a linguistic code like Spanish or Maya) plays in shaping this new way of knowing (Hanks 2010). This work sits at the intersection of anthropology and education, not solely because it is about epistemological processes that take place in a formal educational setting, but also because it takes up ontological processes that fall under education, broadly defined, such as how individuals come to understand themselves and others. In this dissertation, I follow Varenne & Koyama (2011), who believe that education should sit “at the core of anthropology as the flip side of the concept of culture” (56). Yet I go further to say that education is culture, and that culture is educative. I also follow Levinson and Pollock (2011), who remind us that, “educational processes pervade the everyday conduct of social life. Anything related to teaching and learning, anywhere, at any age, ‘counts’ as fair game for ‘anthropologists of education’” (1). Thus, processes of social identification, such as learning about who one is and who others are and how both function in a social world, fall squarely within the bounds of education. Varenne & Koyama (2011) go on to state that education is not only what people do in the present while they are trying to “[figure] out their exact present conditions,” but it is also about “what to do next” (58). This is particularly relevant to the project at hand, for in it, the Maya with whom I conducted this research are redefining the possibilities of what it means to be Maya today, but they are also creating new possibilities for the future and transforming the conversation about Mayaness along the
way.

Anthropology of education studies of social identification grew out of the relationship between identity formation and cultural anthropology and research on anthropology of the “public” (Levinson 2011, 284). They engage discussions about nation states and stability, the relationship between society and the individual, and draw on innumerable categories of social difference. A central question social identification scholars seek to answer is how individuals are “routinely and unproblematically identified in practice,” despite the fact that signs of identity can be interpreted in multiple and even conflicting ways (Wortham 2006, 30).

Different disciplines and theorists define identity differently. Within the anthropology of education, a vast majority of theorists understand identity as being in an ongoing process of formation and not as fixed in time or space (e.g., Levinson 2011, 280). Identity can involve labeling, as well as processes through which people come to understand themselves and be understood by others (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain 1998; Urrieta 2007). Scholars approach social identification by exploring the ways in which social actors make salient various categories of social difference such as how both linguistic and non-linguistic signs contribute to gender formations (Bucholtz 1999); counterpublics help to constitute citizenship formations (Levinson 2011); gender and race contribute to social identification and learning in classrooms (Wortham 2006); nation-building projects, the learning of nationality, and the production of citizens (Benei 2011); immigrant students are positioned within broader discourses of minority student failure within a larger schooling context (Gibson & Koyama 2011). Wortham (2006) and
Bucholtz (1999) avoid restricting analysis of social identification processes to a single aspect of identity, requiring investigation of multiple aspects at and between different levels of identity and across events. This approach moves beyond the dichotomy of structure and agency and situates social identification in practice. Yet, Wortham (2006) argues that practice must be explained by examining the various timescales and the process of emergence and constraint that inform it, and has described identity as “situationally emergent” (Wortham & Reyes 2011, 142). Levinson echoes Lave (2011), venturing that, “all education is identity formation” (2011, 280).

In the context of indigenous language communities, identity formation and formal education are inseparable from language politics. Indeed, the definitions of indigeneity advanced above show how deeply entwined popular and official national imaginaries of indigenous peoples are tied to indigenous languages in Mexico. In formal schooling settings, the conversation about language rapidly becomes a conversation about language assimilation and/or standardization. In most indigenous community contexts, schools serve as ‘mesticizing’ or ‘ladinizing’ projects (Thompson 1974), projects that are frequently tied to (frequently, modern) nation-building efforts (Anderson 1983; Duranti 2009; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1983; Irvine & Gal 2000; Mannheim 1991). In Mexico, and in Latin America more broadly, nation building is typically constructed on a myth of mestizaje—the mixing of indigenous and Spanish blood (Vasconcelos [1925]1979; Lomnitz Adler 1992; Stutzman 1981). In schools, this typically translates not into a mixing of Spanish and an indigenous language, but instead to assimilation to the Spanish language. While efforts exist nationwide to increase opportunities for schooling in
indigenous languages, these remain limited in both their academic content and in the personnel trained to teach them. In the Yucatan in particular, Maya-language schooling is only offered at the primary school level and only in some communities. (The new program in linguistics at YXU is the only other school curriculum offered in the Maya language to date.)

Assimilation is often viewed as a “process that can follow different paths and lead to differing outcomes” (Gibson & Koyama 2011, 395). Following Portes and Rumbaut (1996) and Portes and Zhou (1933), Gibson & Koyama cite three assimilation models: 1) “linear assimilation, which assumes upward mobility and integration socially and politically into the middle class;” 2) “selective assimilation or accommodation and acculturation without assimilation;” 3) “dissonant acculturation,” which places people who experience it “at risk of downward assimilation” (2011, 395). Downward assimilation, Gibson and Koyama (2011) write, occurs when immigrant children are pressured to acculturate at a faster rate than their parents, leading to communication difficulties between those children and their parents. (In these discourses, non-dominant cultural group can be substituted for immigrant.) In contrast, “other scholars have shown that accommodation without assimilation and additive acculturation are strategies utilized by many minority students, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, and particularly by those who are academically successful” (Gibson & Koyama 2011, 394). Additive acculturation, or “accommodation and acculturation without assimilation,” is a system in which people “can move skillfully among the different cultural groups that surround them while maintaining strong roots within their own community” (Gibson & Koyama 2011, 394).
Such projects stand in direct contrast to assimilationist agendas, they argue, for these preserve what cultural actors perceive to be valuable in their cultures of origin and add (or accommodate, by making room for) what they find of value in the new culture.

Assimilationist discourses within educational spaces often fall into a deficit model. Ruiz (1988) argues that, for English language learners, “US bilingual policy… aims not to produce bilinguals but to promote linguistic assimilation and ameliorate presumed deficits (‘limited English proficiency’) in children learning English as a second language” (McCarty & Warhol 2011, 181). Similarly, Rosa (2010) discusses an “ideology of languagelessness,” in which 1.5, 2nd, and 3rd generation Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. are often understood to speak neither English nor Spanish properly, because, as ethnolinguistic minorities, they are expected to master both languages. They are constructed as speaking no language properly (i.e. languageless) and being less than human as a result. Students in Rosa’s (2010) study were encouraged to abandon their home language (Spanish) and become monolingual English speakers. Lin (2006) documents similar language ideologies and assimilation practices in China. In an effort to resist assimilationist projects Rosaldo’s (1994), Flores and Benmayor’s (1997), and other’s notion of cultural citizenship “challenges the hegemonic official citizenship and assimilationist discourses associated with the assumption of discrete nation-states” (Gibson & Koyama 2011, 400). Hall (2002) documents this among Sikh youth in Britain. Other examples include Keaton (2005); Ríos (2009); Anderson-Levitt (2003); Lukose (2007); Hamann, Zúñiga, and Sánchez García (2006); and Villenas (2007).

In the Yucatan, while projects are advancing to bring a wider range of educational
opportunities to students in the Maya language, these efforts tend to be focused on language standardization and proceed from purist language ideologies. Scholars (e.g., Bloomfield 1935; Duranti 2009; Labov 1970; Baugh 1999; Rickford 1999) have shown that, the development of linguistic standards is historically grounded in hierarchical relationships and the exertion of power, including across and within groups. In most communities, “socially and educationally privileged groups” are typically the promoters of standardization processes (Deumert & Vandenbussche 2003, 458), and indigenous communities are not the exception to this norm. Educated individuals typically form an elite group, and, as a result, often provide the impetus for and control of standardization processes (Moore 2013). Furthermore, educational institutions are sites of literacy production and reception, and literacy tends to drive linguistic standards (Irvine & Gal 2000) and organize register variation (Collins 2011).

As de la Peña (2000) notes above, self-identification is tied to group identification and, in the case of indigenous groups and their language politics, both are tied to the Mexican national imaginary. As Bonfil Batalla (1987) argues, Mexico as a nation is imagined in a Western, modern tradition, one that relies upon the folklorization of indigenous peoples and their practices to paint the diversity of the nation but denies the everyday cultural reality of these same individuals. According to Bonfil Batalla (1987), Mexico’s national imaginary relies upon rural Indian communities, “de-Indianized” rural mestizo (i.e. in the pan-Latin American sense of the term) communities, and the urban poor. To achieve this national imaginary—one that simultaneously reifies and denies the Indian and the indigenous—involves work of purification, as Latour (1993) describes it.
Thus, coming full circle, studying what it means to be Maya in Yucatan today involves studying processes of modernization, conceptions of indigeneity, processes of social identification and education and how these all figure in the Mexican national imaginary.

Finally, before turning to my discussion of the chapters, I offer a final note on terminology. In this dissertation, I talk about notions of Maya personhood, thus I must clarify my understanding of this term. Mauss is first credited with advancing the notion of the person as an analytic category. In his 1938 lecture, “[a] category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self,” he contrasts what he understands to be a non-Western (read: indigenous, native, primitive) notion of “person,” one in which people are ascribed to fixed roles within society, with the Western (read: European, modern) one, which he deemed to be dynamic and based on individual consciousness. This dichotomization has been widely rejected within anthropology, which resists the modernist equation of the West with dynamism and the rest of the world with being static. Despite this, contemporary understandings of personhood, however, owe some credit to Mauss’s (1985[1938]) discussion of how the category person is culturally and historically constituted.

In this dissertation, I orient to an understanding of personhood that is culturally and historically constituted and that is tied up with processes of social identification. I understand personhood as a set of characteristics that inform one’s belonging to groupness but that do not determine it. I draw on processes of social identification—not discrete identities—to understand how Maya personhood is constituted. Thus, personhood is something that is always in the making yet still identifiable. It relates to
groupness but does not determine it nor is determined by it. Kockelman (2006) articulates this more eloquently: “Personhood…might loosely be understood as sociopolitical rights and responsibilities attendant upon being an agent, subject, or self” (15). Agent, he defines as having causal capacity; subject as holding intentional states; and, self as having reflexive capacity (Kockelman 2006, 1). Thus, personhood is related to all of these. It is a relational, dynamic state, but one that is bound by the laws of causality, the intentions of self and others, and the limits of reflexivity. Furthermore, these are locally constituted understandings: The “sociopolitical rights and responsibilities” of personhood “…and the degrees of accountability that come with them, necessarily turn on local understandings of what counts as an agent, subject, or self” (Kockelman 2006, 15). Personhood, then, as I understand it in this dissertation, is contextual, contingent, and both locally and socio-historically constituted.

As something that is simultaneously local, historical, in-the-making, and yet widely recognizable, I draw on social identification theory to make sense of personhood in practice. This requires looking at social events but also across them for, as Wortham (2006) explains, identification takes place only in “actual events” but, in order for it to take place, “models of identity that circulate across events” have to be presupposed (36). These metapragmatic models “must persist beyond specific events,” thus requiring an attention to local timescales within broader sociohistorical context (Wortham 2006, 36). Thus, I attend to trajectories of identification, following “individuals’ trajectories across events to see how individual modes of participation and social constraints help produce social identities” (Wortham 2006, 59).
Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the literature relevant to the conceptual framing of this dissertation. Because the group of individuals with whom I conducted this research are considered by many national and statewide entities in Mexico to be *indigenous*, I provided an overview of the literature on indigeneity. As I discuss at different points in this dissertation, being Maya and being indigenous are not always one and the same thing. However, conceptions of both Maya and indigenous people at for many individuals, institutions, and state and national government entities are deeply connected to discourses about modernity, namely that Maya or indigenous peoples are not modern. Thus, I explored how ideas about indigeneity are connected to ideas about modernity in the literature. Because these are institutional situated practices, I also discuss how these ideas relate to the Mexican modern nation-state. Finally, as an ethnographic project that is situated primarily within an institution of higher education, I position this work within the literature on the anthropology of education and, in particular its contributions on processes of social identification, which are central to this work. I now turn my attention to the ethnographic context in which I conducted this research.
CHAPTER 3: Ethnographic Context

Introduction

Drawing on ethnographic data and existing literature, this chapter provides an overview of the Yucatan peninsula, its role in the larger Maya world, and a history of linguistics in the Yucatan region.

Ethnographic Context

The Yucatan Peninsula

The Yucatan Peninsula comprises three of the thirty-one Mexican states: Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo (see Figure 3.1). The Yucatan Peninsula was an important site for the pre-Hispanic Maya civilization, which reached its peak there prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the region. When the Spanish arrived in the early 1500s, the peninsula was given the jurisdiction of Real Audiencia of Mexico ‘Real Audiencia of Mexico’, the highest level of jurisdiction in New Spain, and was led by a governor (Liss 1975). By 1617, the peninsula had been converted into one political entity, the Capitancy General of Yucatan (Tarver & Slape 2016). As of 1813, just a decade shy of Mexican independence, Maya was still spoken by all people on the peninsula—by Indians, mestizos,16 pardos,17 and even the Spanish (Gabbert 2004).

In 1823, shortly after Mexican independence (which took lace in 1821), the Yucatan peninsula became a republic, the first Republic of Yucatan, and was annexed to the

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16 Individuals of European (in this case Spanish) and Native American (in this case Maya) descent. I discuss this term at length in Chapter 5.

17 Individuals of European (in this case Spanish), Native American (in this case Maya), and West African descent.
Federal Republic of United Mexican States (Benson 1994). Some twenty years later, in 1841, the peninsula succeeded from the Mexican republic and declared its independence. It remained independent as the second Republic of Yucatan until 1848 when it was re-incorporated into the Mexican republic (Cantarelle n.d.). A decade later, Yucatan was divided into two states—Campeche (officially in 1863) and Yucatan (Clendinnen 2003; Roys 1957). Then, during the reign of Porfirio Díaz (called the Porfiriato), the state of Yucatan was further divided into Yucatan and Quintana Roo (officially in 1902) (Casares, Cantón, Duch Colell, Antochiw Kolpa, & Zavala 1998). This political history, coupled with the fact that, until the middle of the twentieth century, Yucatan had more contact with the outside world than it did with the rest of Mexico (primarily via sea to the U.S., Cuba, Europe, and Caribbean islands) (Joseph 1988), contribute to long-standing regionalist sentiment on the peninsula (Cline 1950; Knox 1973; Love 1974). Today, the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo comprise the Yucatan peninsula¹⁸ (see Figure 3.1).

¹⁸ In this dissertation, when I refer to “the Yucatan,” I am speaking of the peninsula. When I refer specifically to Yucatan state, I will indicate that.
It is important to note, however, that this regionalist sentiment is not necessarily Maya in nature. By this I mean that Spanish-speaking Yucatecans tend to think of themselves first as Yucatecans, then as Mexicans, and a number of factors contribute to this feeling of local pertinence (an important one being the local dialect of Spanish spoken on the peninsula). However, monolingual Maya speakers tend not to define themselves as Yucatecans or Mexicans. In fact, they rarely refer to themselves as Maya either—a point I discuss later in this dissertation. Local Maya (primarily those who are monolingual and continue to live in small villages) tend to think of themselves as belonging to their communities—the town that they are from is what defines them geographically. Sense of belonging for many Maya, then, is tied to a person’s family,
religious institution, and town, but not to the state, region, or nation. This distinguishes the Yucatec Maya from other people on the peninsula who readily identify as Yucatecans (or Campechanos or Quintana Rooenses) and it distinguishes them from other Maya in Mesoamerica, who are often referred to as forming part of a pan-Maya movement, a point to which I return momentarily.

**Sociolinguistic situation on the Yucatan peninsula**

The Yucatan peninsula is the home to the second mostly widely spoken language in Mexico, Yucatec Maya. Maya is spoken in the three states on the Yucatan peninsula (Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo), in the Mexican state of Tabasco, and in Northern Belize (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig 2015). Until 2012, it was believed that Maya was the third most widely spoken language in Mexico, following Spanish and Nahuatl. However, a recent study by the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) in Mexico reveals that Nahuatl is actually not one homogenous language but a conglomeration of at least thirty distinct dialectical groups, not all of which are mutually intelligible (INALI 2012; see also Guerrettaz 2013). While Mexico’s most recent census data (from 2000) reflects Nahuatl as the most widely spoken indigenous language in the country, those data do not reflect this most recent discovery. Hence, Maya is the most widely spoken indigenous language in the country and the second most widely spoken language nationally, following Spanish. Again, based on Mexican Census data from 2000, Maya has just over 800,000 speakers (INEGI 2004), constituting approximately 20%\(^\text{19}\) of the population on the Yucatan peninsula (Guerrettaz 2013), and the peninsula

\(^{19}\) This is compared to the national population, which is approximately 6% indigenous (Archibold 2014).
itself contains the most geographically contiguous population of speakers of any indigenous language in the country (Lewis 2009). While the proportion of the total population that speaks Maya has decreased, the absolute number of Maya speakers has increased, doubling since 1950 (Gabbert 2004). Maya exhibits regional variation, but it remains mutually intelligible across the regional dialects spoken.20

In total, there are approximately 30 Mayan languages spoken by approximately six million people today across Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras (and in diaspora countries, primarily the U.S.) (Bennett, Coon & Henderson 2015; Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2015). Their numbers of speakers range from as few as 140 (Mocho’) to as many as 2.33 million (representing K’iche’, the most widely spoken Mayan language) (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2015). Maya ranks with Q’eqchi’ Maya as the second most widely spoken Mayan language with approximately 800,000 speakers (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2015). Many Maya languages are on the decline, have become distinct (at least 3 in recent years—Itza’, Chicomuceltec, and Ch’olti’), or are at risk of becoming extinct, while others are holding strong and experience great interest in maintaining their vitality (Gordon 2005; Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2015).

20 Official statistics (e.g., INALI 2008; Mexican Census 2000 (INEGI 2000)) continue to cite Nahuatl as the most widely spoken language in Mexico, with approximately 1.4 million speakers. However, recent arguments (based on the 2012 INALI Catalog of National Indigenous Languages) suggest that Nahuatl is actually comprised of some 30 dialects, not all of which are mutually intelligible (“La Maya es la lengua más viva de México” 2012; “Existe riesgo” 2012; Hansen 2013; López Sánchez 2012). Because the variation in Maya does not affect mutual intelligibility, some linguists (i.e. Briceño Chel in “La Maya es la lengua más viva de México” 2012; “Fidencio Briceño” 2014; Guerrettz 2013) suggest that Maya is actually the most widely spoken language in Mexico. The argument for not publicizing this information, he claims, is that Nahuatl supports a centralist view of central Mexican culture as the stereotypic image of Mexican national culture (“La Maya es la lengua más viva de México” 2012).
Maya is one of the languages that remains strong today and that has generated great interest amongst its speakers of maintaining its use. Despite the fact that children in some Maya-speaking communities are growing up as monolingual Spanish speakers (although they typically understand spoken Maya), the language is widely spoken on the Yucatan peninsula and its speakership is argued to be on the rise, while speakership of Nahuatl—the next most widely spoken indigenous language in Mexico—is on the decline (Lewis 2009). This is evidenced by the expansion of educational efforts at the primary, secondary, and university levels in the Maya language. For example, schools in the region offer primary school training in both Maya and Spanish and a number of local Maya schoolteachers are working at the national level to further expand existing primary level dual language curriculum and develop secondary level dual language curriculum. There is also a wide and growing movement being led, on the one hand by Maya people, and on the other hand by non-Maya Yucatecans, to promote knowledge of Maya linguistic and cultural practices, including hieroglyphic writing and use of the Maya calendar and number system. Such projects result in extensive written material on the language, including published dictionaries and grammars. Foreign scholars also contribute to these language revitalization (or fortification21, as I refer to it herein), standardization, and documentation processes, but typically not as movement leaders.

\[21\] I use fortification instead of revitalization because most of the activities I observed were not so much concerned with saving Maya. Instead, their focus was more frequently on expanding the realms in which Maya can be used and the types of activities one can conduct in Maya, thus, strengthening, boosting, or fortifying the language.
The Yucatec Maya and their position in the broader Maya world

The Maya world, as it is often called, is made up of three geographic regions—the highlands, the southern lowlands and the northern lowlands—stretching across southern Mexico (the states of Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo on the Yucatan peninsula, Tabasco, and Chiapas), Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. The highlands, found in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Chiapas are cool and temperate. The southern lowlands are tropical or sub-tropical and hot (comprising the northern part of Guatemala, the Petén, Belize, and parts of the Mexican states of Campeche and Quintana Roo. The northern lowlands are dryer and more arid and also hot; they are comprised by the state of Yucatan. The Yucatec Maya (who share geographic and cultural characteristics with the Maya of Belize) inhabit the lowlands. These climactic and geographic differences also contribute to cultural differences.

While the Yucatan peninsula is home to a fairly culturally and linguistically homogenous group of Maya, this is not the case amongst the Maya of Chiapas, Guatemala, El Salvador, or Honduras. The linguistic and cultural make up of the Yucatec Maya (and the Maya of Belize) is fairly homogeneous; the language, Yucatec Maya, is mutually intelligible across the Yucatan peninsula and Belize despite regional variation. In contrast, in the highlands, there is a great deal of linguistic and cultural diversity. For example, in Guatemala alone there are 21 Mayan languages, and between Chiapas and Tabasco there are five others spoken (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig 2015). Moving geographically across the Yucatan peninsula is less cumbersome than it is to move across the highlands, since the peninsula is flat and the highlands are rocky and mountainous.
This leads to greater contact across dispersed communities in the Yucatan than in the highlands; this contact is further fostered by the mutual intelligibility of the language spoken on the peninsula.

In addition to these geographic, cultural, and linguistic differences, political histories and the foci of contemporary political and cultural projects distinguish the Yucatec Maya from their pan-Maya counterparts in the rest of the Maya world. In Guatemala, El Salvador, and other Central American countries and even among the Maya peoples of Southeastern Mexico in Chiapas, armed conflicts have dictated recent histories. In contrast, the Yucatan peninsula has not experienced an armed conflict since the turn of the 18th century, when the Caste War came to a close in 1901. Guatemala and El Salvador in particular have been plagued with violence and genocide for decades during the latter part of the 20th century (America’s Watch 1991; Danner 1993; Menchú 1983; Montejo 1987; Wilkinson 2002), and even the Mexican state of Chiapas has experienced armed conflicts between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals, particularly in relation to efforts of the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), or Zapatista, movement, which took up arms to demand rights for indigenous peoples and peasants (Hayden 2002). In fact, Brody (2004) argues that, “it is very possible that the very turmoil and refugee wandering that the Violence [in Guatemala] caused also incubated the inter-group cooperation and collaboration that allowed pan-Mayanism and a Mayan Movement to emerge” (159). Violence of this nature has not been part of history in the past 100 years or so in Yucatan.
Contemporary political and cultural projects are also sources of difference. Pan-Mayanism, Warren (1998) argues refers to efforts to “promote the revitalization of Maya culture,” and it does so via “scholarly and educational routes to social change and nation building” rather than via “the mass mobilizations of the popular Left” or rebellions (4). Members of the Maya movement, also called the Pan-Maya movement, refer to themselves as “the Maya pueblo, meaning the Maya people, nation, community” (Warren 1998, 8). Warren argues that this movement is primarily lead by individuals who are involved in either scholarly or educational endeavors, and that “Pan-Mayanism is composed primarily of individuals for whom ethnic passing into the dominant mainstream to escape invidious racism and discrimination would be feasible, given that they are educated, fluent in Spanish, and economically mobile” (Warren 1998, 11). In the Guatemalan context in particular, Warren talks about how pan-Maya intellectuals dichotomize Mayas and non-Mayas, the latter of whom are considered to be “colonizers, the categorical ‘other’ with interests inevitably suspect” (21). Essentially, “the Pan-Maya movement seeks recognition of cultural diversity within the nation-state, a greater role for indigenous politics in national culture, a reassessment of economic inequities, and a wider distribution of cultural resources such as education and literacy in indigenous languages” (Warren 1998, 37-38). It also is historically consciousness and brings a “multiculturalist sense of the ways Mayas were written out of national history and its urgency to imagine new histories” (Warren 1998, 38). Projects include:

1. Language revitalization, literacy training in Maya languages, and local language committees.
2. The revitalization of Maya chronicles of culture, history, and resistance to the Spanish invasion....
3. The production of culturally inclusive school texts and teacher training materials for use in intercultural school programs...[as well as] creating Maya elementary and secondary schools in some communities as a viable alternative to national schools.

4. The revitalization of Maya leadership norms, specifically community councils of elders, midwives, and Maya shaman-priests.

5. The dissemination of an internationally recognized discourse of indigenous rights, focusing on recognition and self-determination. (Warren 1998, 38)

Pan-Mayanism is contrasted with popularism—seen as an all-encompassing Leftist movement for social rights that is not specifically concerned with Indian rights, and it has been argued that popularism seeks association with indigenous groups to gain external support for its movement (Warren 1998; Q’anil & Cojti Cuxil 1997).

Contemporary Yucatec Maya political and cultural projects do have overlapping areas of interest with some pan-Maya efforts, but they also contain large areas of difference. Political and cultural projects in the Yucatan focus heavily on language revitalization—or what I prefer to call fortification—an issue important to the pan-Maya. These language revitalization/fortification efforts both in the Yucatan and in the pan-Maya world are also typically led by similar types of leaders—formally educated, bilingual Maya intellectuals. These intellectuals also share ideologies about how language is linked to ways of understanding the world, specifically that being a native Maya speaker provides a person with a unique Maya worldview. Maya speakers are also interested in creating educational opportunities in this language, similar to the pan-Maya’s interest in creating educational opportunities that are linguistically and culturally Maya. Maya intellectual movement efforts and those of the pan-Maya also share common criticisms—that the movements engage in “Maya fundamentalism” and romanticize the
uneducated Maya (Morales in Warren 1998, 41). However, the movements have greater differences than they do points of commonality.

A defining aspect of the pan-Maya movement is political autonomy. This is not something that the Yucatec Maya seek. The Yucatec Maya, while they are working to design curricula and degree granting programs in the Yucatec Maya language, are not forming their own schools to do so. Instead, they are working within the existing national educational system—the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP). In line with their autonomy-seeking projects, the pan-Maya, at least in some settings, however, seek to create their own schools as alternatives to the national schools. Revisionist histories, revitalization of Maya leadership norms, and widely circulating discourses about indigenous rights and self-determination are also not central to contemporary political and cultural projects in the Yucatan. The peace accords that followed the violence in Guatemala, for example, “led to a strong consciousness of indigenous rights and ethnicity in this Central American nation,” which is not the case in Yucatan (Guerrettaz 2013, 35).

Warren (1998) also argues that, “Pan-Mayanism is composed primarily of individuals for whom ethnic passing into the dominant mainstream to escape invidious racism and discrimination would be feasible, given that they are educated, fluent in Spanish, and economically mobile” (11). The same is not the case on the Yucatan peninsula. As I discuss at length in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, and as Gabbert (2001b) remarks, “many of these individuals [who work on the preservation and reaffirmation of cultural differences, especially the Maya language] have found that assimilation is not always possible, that there are still limits to upward mobility and social acceptance, and
that contempt and discrimination persist even against people who have tried to separate themselves from their humble origins” (477). While social and ethnic mobility are possible in Yucatan one can shift one’s perceived degrees of Mayaness, I argue that one never ceases to be indigenous. The aforementioned factors contribute to the anomaly of the Yucatec Maya within the broader pan-Maya world and the fact that the Yucatec Maya are not politically affiliated with this larger pan-Maya movement.

It is possible, however, that some Maya in the Yucatan are beginning to take an interest in the broader pan-Maya movement. For example, fifteen years ago, Berkley (2001) wrote about *MayaOn* (We are Maya), an “asociación civil (nonprofit corporation) of bilingual teachers and administrators, many of whom speak Yucatec Maya fluently as a first language,” who are “dedicated to rescatar los costumbres (saving the customs) (Acta 1160, 1990), a phrase with the moral overtones of vindication and rescue (Cojtí Cuxil, 1996)” (349). Berkley (2001) argues that this *MayaOn* course “was part of a larger Pan-Mayan movement for political and educational reform with indirect links to activist groups in Guatemala (Fischer & Brown, 1996; Warren, 1998)” (349). A little over a decade later, Cesario (2014) mentions the participation of a local Yucateco in a pan-Maya organization—*Grupo Maya Cuzama Hunab*—but this is the only mention of pan-Mayanism I have heard of, and I have not heard of this group or its local efforts firsthand or in any other context outside of Cesario’s writing. In my own work, covering eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork and an additional year and a half living and

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22 Furthermore, while I have not analyzed the *MayaOn* course Berkley describes, today *MayaOn* is more of a campaign to promote the Maya language, and the “on” is an inclusivity marker in Maya, meaning roughly “we are Maya.” I do not see this as a reference to a broader pan-Maya movement, but instead as a local validation of (Yucatec) Mayaness.
writing in the Yucatan, I never once heard someone refer to efforts of Yucatec Maya linguistic or cultural revitalization/fortification as being linked to the pan-Maya movement or of having specifically activist undertones. Some students at Yáax Xook University are interested in the representation of the Maya and how indigenous people are referred to in general, but I have not heard them take up issues related to the pan-Maya movement beyond those I list above on the similarities between local language revitalization/fortification and pan-Maya efforts. Instead, the bulk of efforts related to Maya language and culture conducted in Yucatan today are focused within the educational sector and are being driven by academics and intellectuals; most also have to do with language revitalization/fortification efforts. In the future, however, it is possible that the Yucatec Maya’s degree of interest in the pan-Maya movement may change, especially as issues related to language revitalization/fortification become increasingly politicized.

**Linguistics in the Yucatan**

Language revitalization/fortification, standardization, and documentation projects in Maya are longstanding in the Yucatan (Bevington 1995; Brody 2004, 2007; Hanks 2010). Maya has been written in hieroglyphic for more than a millennium (Brody 2004, 2007), making it a language with a longer written history than Spanish or English (Bevington 1995; Hanks 2010). More recent work on Maya has related to language regimentation, a topic of discussion in Yucatan for at least the past 450 years. Two large regimentation projects mark Maya’s history in Yucatan. The first occurred during the colonial period when missionaries created and codified spoken Maya into a written form using the Latin
alphabet, allowing them to translate their religious messages and use them for conversion purposes (Bevington 1995; Brody 2007; Hanks 2010). The second was a shift from the alphabet developed during this time (the 16th to 19th centuries), called Colonial or Classical Maya, to what is known as Modern Maya; the changes were primarily orthographic, with some changes to vocabulary (Bevington 1995; Brody 2007; Hanks 2010). More recent and less comprehensive efforts to regiment or standardize Maya are also currently underway in the region (Brody 2007), and in 2014, a norm for writing Maya was published (Briceño Chel & Can Tec 2014). Each of these stages in the development of written Maya has involved political and social consequences. In what follows, I provide a brief historic overview of written Maya before discussing the history and current state of Maya linguistics.

**History of writing in Maya**

It has recently been argued that the Maya may have developed writing in Mesoamerica, a task that had previously been attributed to the Olmec or Epi-Olmec (Saturno, Stuart, Beltrán 2006), and the Maya are believed to have developed the only complete writing system in Mesoamerica (Rodríguez Ochoa 1999). The earliest existing known written texts in Maya are written in logograms and syllabic symbols or glyphs23 (Restall 1997; Sharer & Traxler 2006) and have been documented in the Petén region of Guatemala as early as 3 BCE (Hirst 2006; Wilford 2006). Writing was prolific, albeit generally conducted by scribes who were members of the Maya priesthood (Houston, Robertson, & Stuart 2000) until the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century, when much of Maya

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23 A logo-syllabic system uses a symbol (or glyph) to represent a morpheme or a syllable (Sharer & Traxler 2006). This is a system similar to Chinese writing.
writing was destroyed as Spanish priests burned the codices (bark paper folding books),
which they thought to be idolatrous (Clendinnen 2003). In addition to bark paper, other
writing mediums and surfaces included painting on ceramics or walls, carvings on wood
or stone, bone, and molding of stucco (Hanks 2010; Restall 1997). While carvings have
lasted longer, most of the paint has not survived, thus, along with the burning of the
codices, only a fraction of the writing from the early Maya remains. In Yucatan, writing
on codices (bark paper folding books) was common practice. What remains today of
early Maya writing comes from pottery and stone carvings found at archaeological sites.
However, the majority of Maya writing in existence today comes from the post-conquest
period. It includes a wide range of literary texts—primarily short stories and poetry—as
well as pedagogical texts, Maya language learning texts, bilingual dictionaries, and
grammars.

When the Spanish arrived, missionaries, including Diego de Landa, (with the aid
of native Maya speakers) developed a Latin alphabet-based orthography for Maya based
on Spanish orthography (i.e. a graph system) (Brody 2004; Brody 2007). De Landa’s
alphabet was a phonetic alphabet, based on sounds he heard people use when speaking
Maya. Epigraphers later used De Landa’s “alphabet” to decode Maya inscriptions. Tozzer
(1921), in his grammar of the Maya language, provides a list of published alphabets for
the Maya language; the first alphabet he sites is Coronel’s from 1620 (21). The oldest
known publication written in Maya using the Latin alphabet but written phonetically by

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24 The most prominent example of this in Yucatan was Diego de Landa’s auto de fé, a Catholic
Inquisitional ceremony in which Mayan idols and books were burned and people were tortured (Clendinnen
2003).
Books of Chilam Balam (Tozzer 1921), texts that date to the 17th and 18th centuries and include information about Maya spiritual life, medical practices, myths, metaphors, histories, calendars, agricultural classifications, Spanish traditions, and chronicles of daily life. (See the alphabets in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below.)

Other early texts written in Maya using the Latin alphabet developed by de Landa and other missionaries include letters (cartas), land surveys (deslindes), land titles (títulos), accords (acuerdos), wills (testamentos), petitions (peticiones), election records as well as dictionaries, grammars, and pedagogical materials for teaching Maya (Hanks 2010). For, as Hanks (2010) convincingly argues, learning Maya was an important part of the conversion process—Maya had to be given “order” (an order that was recognizable to the Spanish) so that it could be taught to others (both missionaries and Maya) and so that Christian religious and conversion tools could be developed in Maya. Ordering Maya in this way, as Hanks describes, made conversion easier for it allowed the missionaries “to translate Christian doctrine, prayers, sermons, and parts of the sacraments into the Maya language” (Hanks 2010, 7). An early example of this is a missionary school that was established in the capital, Merida, in the mid 1540s, at which “some two thousand elite Maya children were taught to read and write alphabetic Maya” (Hanks 2010, 8). The result was not to rid the Maya of their language; instead, “the Indios would continue to speak their language, but it had to be a new version of that language, purged of the ‘vomit of idolatry’ and the insubordinate genres of hieroglyphic reading and history telling: reduced by erasure, yet incremented with the means to speak to and of God and his designs” (Hanks 2010, 7-8).
Hanks (2010) argues that, “some Maya people in the pueblos learned to write and produced works in alphabetic script as early as the 1550s” (338). Of the earliest surviving texts written in Maya using the Latin alphabet is the *Diccionario de Motul*, a Maya language dictionary that dates to ca. 1585 (Hanks 2010). However, the most widely recognized colonial alphabet is that of Beltrán (1746), provided in his *Arte del idioma maya* (Lehmann 2015). Maya written using the alphabet created by the missionaries is commonly referred to as Colonial or Classic Maya.

Despite the fact that the colonial Maya alphabet existed, there was still a great deal of variation in written Maya. This may have been the case because some texts were written outside of the zone of reducción (the area most widely affected by Franciscan conversion efforts) as Hanks (2010) describes it, and, thus, had less exposure to the influence of missionary texts on their writing. Other variation may be due to the simple fact that, while people and texts circulated, not everyone was trained in the colonial alphabet established by the missionaries nor was there any officially imposed standard at this time. Furthermore, as Hanks (2010) points out, the missionary writing was confined to doctrinal genres, yet the Maya used writing for governance and for legal matters (such as the work done by scribes), thus variation was to be expected in these new genres of writing.

Variation in Maya writing continues to the present day, since the first norm was only proposed in 2014, and it is considered controversial by some Maya scholars. In the

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25 Although Hanks (2010, 395 n1) also notes that, “Quezada and Okoshi (2001, 31) argue that the Maní document, which they call *memoria de la distribución de los montes* (Maní, September 15, 1557) is the earliest extant document written in alphabetic Maya.” Roys (1952) also argues that this is the first document “written in European letters” (418).
1940s, a congress was held in Pátzcuaro, Mexico at which the topic of “a unified alphabet for all indigenous languages of the Americas was one topic of discussion (Richards 1993)” (Brody 2004, 160). Subsequent meetings about the alphabet were held periodically from the 1940s until the 1980s when two rounds of alphabet meetings were held (Brody 2004). From the colonial period until the 1980s, the only alphabet in circulation was the colonial alphabet developed by the missionaries and adapted by the Maya. Because, as I mention above, this alphabet was not official nor was there a widespread mechanism for teaching it to Maya writers, a great deal of variation existed in written Maya.

In 1980, Barrera Vásquez and colleagues published the Maya Cordemex dictionary, recognized by many to be the most complete and authoritative of the Maya dictionaries. This text employs an alphabet called “*alfabeto de este Diccionario*” ‘alphabet for this dictionary’, which, it claims, is entirely for scientific uses (*alfabeto enteramente para usos científicos*) (Barrera Vásquez 1980, 41a-42a). Barrera Vásquez (1980) contrasts the alphabet used in his dictionary with the colonial alphabets, which he calls traditional (“*tradicionales*”) (42a).

By the early 1980s, Maya was still not taught in schools nor was it used for any official texts. Maya writing had come to be used primarily for literary pursuits and everyday needs. In 1981, “representatives from five state-level government agencies of Yucatán plus three university-affiliated delegates met in a small room at the state university” to develop an “official” alphabet and address the variation in written Maya (Brody 2004, 143). Brody (2004) explains, however, that this 1981 alphabet did not
produce a new set of graphs, thus, the alphabet was largely ignored. What the meeting did do, though, was spark public conversation about the alphabet, which led to a meeting in 1984 at which an alphabet was adopted that has become widely used today (Brody 2004). In the two tables below are examples of three alphabets—the first is colonial (based on Beltrán’s dictionary), the second “scientific” (based on Barrera Vásquez’s dictionary), and the third based on the 1984 accords (also called the “modern” alphabet).

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26 England (1996) describes the formation of a Maya alphabet in Guatemala that would unify that country’s twenty Mayan languages. Worried that the proliferation of multiple alphabets was the result of foreign influences, Maya speakers sought to create a standard alphabet to facilitate pan-Mayan projects (England 1996; Brody 2004; Cesario 2014). Interestingly, Cesario (2014), citing England (1996) writes, “the group agreed that decisions would not be guided by Spanish orthographic principles, not only because they were not suitable to Mayan languages but also because writing in Mayan was not to be used as a means for teaching Spanish literacy, but rather for the value of writing itself and to extend its use into other domains” (73). In the case of Yucatec Maya, my interlocutors at YXU suggested that the Maya alphabet could be used both for teaching Maya- and Spanish-language literacy. In fact, advocates of the use of Mayanized, Spanish-language loanwords in fact advocated incorporated the letters from the Spanish-language alphabet that are used in the loans (e.g., “f, “rr”).
Table 3.1. Consonants in phonetic, Colonial, Barrera Vásquez, and 1984 Maya alphabets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Colonial (1746)</th>
<th>Barrera Vásquez (1980)</th>
<th>1984</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p’</td>
<td>p, p, pp</td>
<td>p’</td>
<td>p’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’</td>
<td>th, th; tt</td>
<td>t’</td>
<td>t’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>k’</td>
<td>k’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>ç, z</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j, š</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts, ĝ</td>
<td>tz</td>
<td>ts</td>
<td>ts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts’ , ĝ’</td>
<td>č, dz</td>
<td>ts’</td>
<td>ts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tf, č</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>ch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tf’ , č’</td>
<td>ch, ch, chch</td>
<td>ch’</td>
<td>ch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j, y</td>
<td>i, y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>u, v</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Compiled from Barrera Vásquez 1980, Bricker, Po’ot Yah & Dzul de Po’ot 1998, and Lehmann 2015)

Table 3.2. Vowels in Colonial, Barrera Vásquez, and 1984 Maya alphabets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel class</th>
<th>Phonetic</th>
<th>Colonial</th>
<th>Barrera Vásquez</th>
<th>1984</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple (short)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High tone (long)</td>
<td>á:</td>
<td>aa</td>
<td>aa</td>
<td>áa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low tone</td>
<td>à:</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glottalized (in the middle of a syllable) (rearticulated)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>aa</td>
<td>a’a</td>
<td>a’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glottalized (at the end of a syllable)</td>
<td>a?</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a’</td>
<td>a’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Compiled from Barrera Vásquez 1980 and Lehmann 2015)
The 1984 alphabet, as it has come to be known, is used to write what is called Modern Maya (Bevington 1995). The impetus for developing the 1984 alphabet came from the National Institute for Adult Education (*Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos, INAE*), which sought to develop a “single alphabet for use in their new adult literacy campaign” (Brody 2004, 144). The goal for the INAE was to develop an alphabet that “would be compatible with the Spanish alphabet, in order to facilitate the acquisition of writing in both languages” (Brody 2004, 144). The alphabet was to reflect the diversity of dialectal variation and be “easily produced using available technology...on a typewriter” (Brody 2004, 145). During the actual meetings, however, Brody (2004) informs us that the purpose expanded to encompass the efforts from 1981, with the goal of creating an “official” alphabet, which, she argues, was an “uncontested,” albeit not unanimous, objective (145; 163). The 1984 alphabet made three changes to the 1981 alphabet: “the graphs ‹tz, dz› were changed in 1984 to ‹ts, ts’›,” “the vowel specification for high tone, i.e., ‹áa, ée, íi, óo, úu›” was added, and “high tone on vowels” was specified (Brody 2004, 152-157). These changes, Brody (2004) argues, were not of great interest to everyday speakers; instead, they show the interests of linguists. She writes, while

the overall criteria for the selection of the alphabet—that it facilitate the acquisition of writing in both Yucatec Maya and Spanish, that it be based on a systematic knowledge of the phonology of the language, and that it be easily produced using available technology—were reasonable and would not likely have been objectionable to the communities of speakers[,]...an analysis of the reasons given for the change of the graphs ‹tz, dz› to ‹ts,

27 Although Lehmann (2015) also notes that other institutions were also involved in its development and ratification: Popular Cultures (*Culturálas Populares*), Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), the National Indigenist Institute (INI), the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), and the Academy of the Maya Language of Yucatan (*Academia de la Lengua Maya de Yucatán*).
ts’ provides substantial validation for the popular perception of the 1984 alphabet as an instrument by and for linguists.

Linguists and linguistic research are not new phenomena in Yucatan, but this work has been marked by two distinct groups of individuals who conducted this work—early work, from the mid-1500s through the end of the 1800s was conducted by Franciscan clergy; subsequent work was and continues to be conducted by academics who are principally based at or affiliated with institutions of higher education.

*Early Maya linguistics*

The earliest linguistic work on the Maya language was conducted in the mid 1500s. The earliest known linguistic work of the Maya language is reported to have been written by Friar Luis de Villalpando some time between 1545/1546 and 1552 (Roys 1952). This work was based on Latin grammar. Since that time, numerous other grammars (called *artes*) and dictionaries of the Maya language were written by the Franciscans, who were the first to conduct grammatical analysis of Maya. Roys (1952) lists at least nine other grammars of Maya published in the colonial period: de Landa’s in the 1500s, Coronel’s in 1620, de Cuartas’ and de Acevedo’s both in the early 1600s, de Vidales’ in the 1600s, de San Buenaventura’s in 1684, de Avendaño y Loyola’s in the 1700s, Beltrán de Santa Rosa María’s in 1746, and Ruz’s in 1844. With the exception of the last two of these scholars, who were Franciscan friars born in Yucatan, all of the others were Spanish Franciscan friars. After the mid-1800s, the next known grammar of Maya was published in 1914 by a Maya-speaking priest from the Yucatan, father López Otero. This was the last text published by a member of the clergy on the structure of the language.
Contemporary Maya linguistics

From the 1920s onward, linguistic research on Maya has been dominated by secular scholars, primarily from Mexico, the U.S., and Europe. This secular shift in Maya linguistic research is unique to the Yucatan. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a nonprofit, Protestant faith-based organization that works to document the worlds’ languages with the goal of using them to proselytize, works widely in Mesoamerica and Mexico in particular, and is a strong source of contemporary research on Mayan and other indigenous languages of the Americas. SIL, however, has not been active on the Yucatan peninsula. SIL had been connected to and given permission to work in Mexico by the federal government since the 1930s, but by 1979 SIL’s connections to the Mexican federal government were ended as a result of pressure from “radical anthropologists and nascent Indian organizations” (King 1994, 115 in Brody 2004, 164). Brody (2004) draws from the SIL website, which reports that it has “not developed a program for Yucatec” (SIL 2003 in Brody 2004, 164). As she reports in her dissertation, a SIL official told Brody (2004) that the organization does not work in Yucatan because the bible had already been translated into Yucatec Maya.28 It is interesting that, given the religious origins of the linguistic work conducted on Maya that contemporary work on this language is strictly secular since this is not the case in other parts of the Maya speaking world.

With the end of church-dominated studies of Maya linguistic structure, the topics on which linguistic analysis in this language were conducted began to expand. Initially,

28 “An [sic] SIL official explained to me that since a Yucatec Maya bible had already been developed [by the United Bible Society, likely in the 19th century], there was no need for SIL involvement on the peninsula (Marlette 2004, personal communication)” (Brody 2004, 166).
grammars of the language were published, and continued to be published up until the 1980s. A sample of these include grammars published by Tozzer (1921), Martínez Hernández (1929), Gates (1938), Andrade (1955), Blair (1964), Arzápalo (1973); McClaran (1976); Barrera Vásquez (1980; 1981), Kaufman (1986), and Bolles & Bolles (1996). After father López Otero, Barrera Vásquez was the next native, bilingual (Maya-Spanish) speaker to conduct linguistic analyses of the language. Other publications include studies of the language on topics such as Spanish-Maya language contact (Colazo-Simon 2007; Pfeiler 1991; Pool Balam & Le Guen 2015); pronominal system (Arzápalo 1973); noun and verb morphosyntax (Ayres & Pfeiler 1997; Blair 1964; Gutierrez Bravo 1997, 2008; Krämer & Wunderlich 1998; Lehmann 1993; Lois & Vapnarsky 2003; McClaran 1969; Owen 1969; Po’ot Yah 1981; Raga Gimeno 1993; Skopeteas & Verhoeven 2005; McClaran Stefflre 1972); causation (Bohnemeyer 1995b); time relations in discourse and the grammar of time (Bohnemeyer 1995a, 1996, 1998, 2003; Vapnarsky 1997); possession (Briceño Chel 1992; Lehmann 2002); quantification and number marking (Briceño Chel 1993; Lucy 1988; Miram 1983); phonological processes (Canto 2001); linguistic purism (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015); language and cognition (Lucy 1992a; 1992b), deixis and spatial relations (Hanks 1990; Goldap 1991; Stolz 1996); and writing, linguistic variation, and standardization (Brito Sansores 1986; Brody 2004; Briceño Chel & Can Tec 2014; Guerrettaz 2013, 2015; Pfeiler 1998; Pfeiler & Hofling 2006; Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015). A few studies also cover language acquisition (Martín 1997; Blaha Pfeiler & Carrillo Carreón 2001) and there are programs for learning the Maya language (Blair, Vermont Salas, McQuown 1995[1966];
While no monolingual dictionaries exist in the Maya language to date, bilingual dictionaries are another large source of publications in Maya; these cover both colonial and contemporary Maya.\(^{29}\) There are also a number of contemporary literary authors who write short stories and poetry, among other texts as well (e.g., see Lehmann 2015 for a partial list).

Another important trend in the history of linguistics in Maya is that non-native speakers of the language initially began this work, and this continued to be the case, with a few exceptions (noted above) until about ten years ago. In 2006, Yáax Xook, a university that offers a degree program in *Maya Linguistics and Culture*, was founded. This was the first, and continues to be the only, degree-granting program that offers its curriculum in the Maya language, and it is the only program in disciplinary linguistics in the region. This degree program has made it possible not only for local people to study linguistics without leaving the Yucatan peninsula, but it also makes it possible for Maya speakers to complete higher education in their native language. Thus, Yáax Xook’s undergraduate program in *Maya Linguistics and Culture* is creating the next generation of Maya linguists. This has been the first time that this has been possible.\(^{30}\) I discuss the

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\(^{29}\) *Colonial:* Arzápalo Marín (1995[1877]); Beltrán de Santa Rosa (1746); Coronel (1620); Diccionario de Vienna (n.d., ca. 1670); Diccionario de San Francisco (n.d., ca. 1690/early 1700s); Diccionario de Ticul (Pío Pérez 1690[1870]); Ruz (1844); San Buenaventura (1684); Závala & Medina (1898); Diccionario de Motul (n.d., ca. 1600 [Arzápalo Marín 1955[1877]; Martínez Hernández 1929]). *Contemporary:* Academia de la Lengua Maya (2003); Barrera Vásquez (1980); Bastarrachea Manzano, Briceño Chel & Yah Pech (1992); Bevington (1995); Bricker et al. (1998); Canché Moo (2008); Gómez Navarrete (2009); Máas (2008); Maglah Canul (2002); Martínez Huchim (2008); Montgomery (2004); Obon (2009); SEP & INEA (1997[2001]); Swadesh, Álvarez y Bastarrachea (1991); Solís Alcalá (1950); Pacheco Cruz (1969); López Otero (1914).

\(^{30}\) Only one other program that relates to the Maya language exists on the peninsula, but it is not formally a disciplinary linguistics programs, nor is it taught in Maya. It offers but two courses in linguistics—general linguistics and contrastive grammar. The programs’ focus is Communications oriented.
founding of Yáax Xook University and the Maya Linguistic and Culture Program at length below in my discussion of research methodology.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the ethnographic context in which I conducted this research, including discussions of the geographic region and the intellectual environment. I began with a broad scale overview of the Yucatan peninsula, then narrowed to an overview of the Yucatec Maya people and their position within the broader Maya world. I then turned my attention to the intellectual environment within which this work is positioned. To do so, I provided an overview of linguistics in the Yucatan, beginning with a history of writing in Maya, followed by early Maya linguistics, and finally contemporary Maya linguistics—the context in which the fieldsite at which I conducted the bulk of this research is located. In the next chapter, I discuss my research methodology and provide a detailed overview of my fieldsite.
CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe my role as a researcher, outline my research questions, describe my research fieldsite in detail (including a discussion of my entry to the fieldsite), and outline my data collection and analysis procedures.

Role of the researcher

I designed and conducted this research with careful awareness of the role of outsiders in the history of Yucatec Maya language efforts on the peninsula. In particular, I was keenly aware of how foreign linguists have attempted to regiment the Maya language for their own ends—be it for conversion purposes in the case of the Franciscan colonists or simply for the purposes of receiving academic recognition for their work in their home countries. While I do not deny an interest in having my worked recognized within the scholarly community and benefiting from it professionally, I was in careful conversation with my research collaborators throughout the design, execution, and write-up of this project. I call the individuals who helped me make this research possible collaborators because we worked together, not only to understand the Maya language, its structure, and how to talk about those things in Maya, but also because many of them helped me to design data collection instruments and revise my methods. We have also published together on findings that came out of this work and are preparing future publications together on related topics. Finally, in an effort to give back to the students, faculty, and university that provided me with a place in which to conduct this research, I offered academic professionalization training and, following the completion of my fieldwork, I also taught
a core course in the curriculum pro-bono when the assigned faculty member could not do so.

Another, perhaps less obvious, way in which I hope that this research serves as a contribution to the individuals who helped me execute it is by writing about things that local linguists feel that they cannot say. Many times I expressed my conclusions only to have them confirmed by my interlocutors—things they had long known, yet were in no position to say or do much of anything about. In particular, the political effects of creating linguistics *ich maaya* ‘in the Maya language’ are all too real for many linguists and their students. They depend upon the funding, participation in publications and conferences, and institutionalized resources for furthering their own work and careers. Shaking the boat could and has proved professionally disastrous for some linguists. Thus, I feel obligated to voice some of the realities of creating linguistic *ich maaya* since my interlocutors cannot. While exciting and important work is coming out of local efforts to create disciplinary linguistic knowledge in the Maya language, this process is far from romantic. It is riddled with political favoritism and purist language ideologies—two things that limit the voices and contributions of linguists who do not share favor with the powers that be. I discuss these issues at different points throughout the dissertation. I do so not to undermine the work that is being done, but instead in an effort to bring a wider range of voices to the table.

**Research questions**

I investigated the following research questions:
1. Does doing linguistics in Maya change what can be known about the linguistics of Maya? If so, how? What grammatical and analytic categories are preserved, what new categories are created, what counts as members of those categories, and why?

2. Through the creation of a Maya linguistics, how are indigenous people positioning themselves and others in relation to academic ways of knowing? How do beliefs about linguistics reflect a broader struggle over indigeneity in the Yucatan? Who is involved in this process, who is not, and what is at stake for those individuals?

3. What implications do findings to the above questions have for who can do linguistics in Maya (i.e. who can participate in the production of this scientific knowledge)?

**Fieldsite**

*Entry to fieldsite*

Although the Yucatan peninsula is comprised of three states and covers a large geographic region, it is a small place. People know one another and in any particular world that one might walk, one quickly becomes known. The worlds of Maya linguistics and language fortification are no anomaly. And, the world of Maya academics in particular is even smaller. Through previous language study and research scouting trips to the peninsula and anthropologist colleagues in the region, I knew enough local people to be put in touch with the Yáax Xook’s President (rector). I visited the President at Yáax Xook and presented my research study to him. He readily accepted my request and granted me permission to conduct my research on campus. He introduced me to the coordinator of the undergraduate linguistics program and told her to allow me access to linguistics courses. From there, I received the list of faculty and their schedule of classes and requested permission individual faculty members to sit in on their courses. By participating in courses, I met students and, as I built relationships with students, was
able to recruit individuals to participate in my research project. I found that students were overwhelmingly interested in doing so.

Because I was an academic studying the production of academic knowledge in a university context, students, faculty, and staff generally accepted my presence. In fact, with the exception of one faculty member who was initially wary of my presence in light of the fact that he had had a bad experience sharing his work with other researchers in the past, all welcomed my presence and participation in their courses. Once this wary faculty member and I got to know each other and he better understood my project and its goals, we developed an open and collegial relationship that, to this day, continues to involve us in intellectual discourse on the analysis of linguistics *ich maaya* ‘in the Maya language’. We are even currently discussing the possibility of publishing an article together.

Part of the welcome reception I received may have been due in large part to the fact that, in the linguistics portion of the *Maya Linguistics and Culture* curriculum—which constitutes the majority of the courses I attended—no faculty hold PhDs or Master’s degrees and most are graduates of *Yáax Xook University*. Thus, because they are intellectually curious faculty who are interested in continued graduate study, they welcomed the presence of a researcher who had completed graduate coursework in linguistics and in particular linguistic anthropology—a perspective they readily sought to represent in their courses but had only been exposed to via literature. Furthermore, in the courses on pedagogy, faculty welcomed my training in Education and my interest in the approaches they took to teaching culturally relevant ways of knowing. Thus, throughout the duration of my fieldwork, I made a pointed effort to collaborate with my
interlocutors. I am convinced that this approach not only made my continued presence at YXU possible but it also encouraged faculty and students to participate in my project and to continue to collaborate with me to date.

**Overview of fieldsite**

While education in Maya has been possible for over a decade, it has only been available at the preschool and primary school levels (SEGEY 2016). Efforts to create a curriculum for secondary level education in Maya are underway, but the curriculum has not yet been launched in schools. In 2006, however, Maya speakers gained the opportunity to study higher education in Maya with the simultaneous founding of *Yáax Xook University* (YXU) and the launching of the *Maya Linguistics and Culture* undergraduate program. When the university opened, it offered three undergraduate degree programs, the one mentioned above, *Tourism Development*, and *Gastronomy*. Today, the university offers six undergraduate degrees, adding *Marketing, Public Administration*, and *Library and Information Sciences* to the undergraduate offerings and five Master’s degree programs in *Ethnography, Gastronomy, Human Rights, Public Administration*, and *Library Science*. It plans to open a doctoral program soon.

*Yáax Xook University* (YXU) opened its doors in 2006, but the idea for it began in the early 2000s when the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) (Secretariat of Public Education) announced that it was interested in opening a university in the eastern part of Yucatan state. Wealthy local business people in an eastern city (the *casta divina*31) were

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31 *Casta divina* ‘divine caste’ is an expression that originated in Yucatan and was first coined by the then Governor, Salvador Alvarado (Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán 2010). He used it to describe the *criollo* (individuals recognized as being of exclusively European, in this case Spanish, descent born in the...
interested in ensuring that the university was located there in order to foster tourism in town; to do this, they thought it would be wise to provide further training for the local population. They explicitly wanted the university to be located in the eastern part of the state—in Maní, Peto, Tizimín, or Valladolid, and not in the Yucatan state capital, Merida, thus allowing them to draw on the regional population in that part of the state, which is comprised of higher degrees of Maya language speakers than the population surrounding the capital.

The programs in *Gastronomy* and *Tourism* made sense in light of the local business people’s plans. However, the Maya Linguistics and Culture program was a bit of an anomaly. One of the program’s two designers explains that the local funders wanted future workers who could speak Maya, something often important to tourists, and that this coincided with the release of the *Ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas* (General Law of the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples) by the Mexican Federal government in 2003. Thus, the SEP’s desire to open a new university, the federal government’s release of the law for indigenous linguistic rights, and local business people’s desire to foster tourism in this city all contributed to the creation of the university in that city in 2006 and the decision to offer a degree program in *Maya Linguistics and Culture*. Once this was decided, the challenge was to find someone who could design the linguistics program.

Hispanic American colonies (see Donghi 1993)), oligarchic elite in the region, primarily henequen plantation owners and other wealthy businessmen, who were colluded with US political and economic interests. Often a group of key families in Yucatan in the early part of the 20th century are also referred to in this way. The *casta divina* controlled much of political, economic, and social life in the Yucatan. Today, the term is still used in the region to refer to the elite families who are descended from the original *casta divina* and to families who control large local industries, such as salt mining.
In 2005, as the plans for the university and the new undergraduate degree programs were coming together, a U.S. linguist happened to be conducting research at a research institute in the Yucatan and she was recommended for the position. The U.S. linguist (holding a Ph.D. in Linguistics) was paired with a local Maya linguist (holding an M.A. in Anthropology) to design the curriculum. As the U.S. linguist explains, this resulted in a curriculum that she was able to dictate almost entirely because the university staff knew nothing about linguistics. However, because the U.S. linguist had no familiarity with higher education in Mexico, the program both lacked elements that should be present in Mexican higher education (e.g., \textit{prácticas} ‘practicums’) and contained things that are not found in other Mexican higher education programs (e.g., a critical thinking course).

Interestingly, the impetus for creating \textit{Yáax Xook} and for including the MLC program in its curriculum and the design of the MLC program all contain elements that have come to define the program today. I explore these elements in detail in Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of the dissertation, but briefly I mean that the motivations for creating the \textit{Yáax Xook} and the MLC program were not strictly educational; instead, they were financially motivated and their success would meet the financial ends of primarily non-Maya individuals. The program was designed by a non-Maya, non-Mexican linguist, which has been another trend in the MLC program—the program that does employ Maya linguists who have graduated from it (with the equivalent of a Bachelor’s degree, a licenciatura), but it does not consistently employ PhD linguists and none count amongst the program’s standing faculty. The university did employ its designer as a professor for a year, one
year after the program was launched, and it employed a local Maya-speaking, ABD linguist to teach a few courses.

Finally, the program primarily serves native-Maya-speaking students from Yucatan and Quintana Roo states, most of whom are first generation college students, and students in this program are most likely to be Maya speakers and to identify as Maya than are students in the other degree programs. The MLC program itself and students in it, however, have become tokenized on campus and they are engaged in regular acts of folklorization, as they and their program are held up as exemplar bearers of Maya culture and as examples of Mayaness. These characterizations are in a dialectic relationship with more widely circulating ideas about the Maya on the peninsula and even at the national level, as I discuss to some extent in Chapters 8 and 9. They also create a tension between native speakers and linguists—a theme seen in the alphabet debates described above (see also Brody 2004)—drawing on the common assumption that these form two separate and distinct natural classes.

Data collection and research participants

At Yáax Xook and across Yucatan state, I investigated the formation and circulation of a new Maya linguistics across eighteen months of ethnographic research. Using participant observations, interviews, fieldnotes, audio/video recordings, and related texts (e.g., textbooks, grammars, curricular materials, and other resources that document and disseminate Maya linguistics), I documented the grammaticosemantic, semiotic, and discursive resources involved in the process of creating a Maya linguistics at local and regional meetings of linguistics professors; Maya language and cultural events (on and
off campus); social gatherings; the Yáax Xook (with students, faculty, and administrators); Yucatan educational administrators’ offices; Yucatan state archives; a national meeting of indigenous education leaders; conferences on the Maya language and linguistics in the Yucatan and Mexico City.

At Yáax Xook University in particular, I attended for quarters of linguistics classes with students across the undergraduate program—that is, I sat in on courses with students in the first, second, and third years of the program. I provide a detailed overview of this program in Chapter 7. While observing the creation and teaching of this new Maya linguistics, I documented what terms and grammatical and analytic categories are chosen to define this new linguistics and why and how these are explained to students and justified by teachers in practice. I also documented what existing linguistics categories were preserved in this new linguistics.

Attending first year classes allowed me to see how Maya linguistics was positioned for, justified to, and evaluated by students who were encountering it for the first time. Attending second and third year classes allowed me to see how Maya linguistics was deployed in use as students develop more and more expertise with procedures of linguistics and become increasingly embedded within it as a discipline. I was asked not to film or audio record classes. Thus, fieldnotes allowed me to document the words, phrases, and grammatical and analytic categories used in class, the definitions offered, and evaluations of these. During public events and interviews, audio/video recordings served to back up my written notes and to create transcripts of interactions. Following Jakobson (1944), studying the formation of a Maya linguistics by Maya-
speaking linguists can reveal Maya speakers’ own language categories as they create these categories. To reveal these encodings, I conducted analysis of the grammaticosemantic structures of Maya linguistics to see how these may be informed by Spanish grammatical structures or existing categories in linguistics. Discursive framing of these categories also reveal some ideological motivations behind their content.

Seeing how linguistics students and faculty position themselves and are positioned by others both at and outside of a university setting is an important part of understanding whether and how Maya linguistics is being taken up and enacted and how it is emerging or being constrained in practice. In the city where Yáax Xook is located, Spanish and Maya widely co-exist in public and private life. Students live in the city or in nearby towns where Maya is predominately (or solely) spoken. Many university administrators, including the President, and some faculty live in Merida, where Maya is seldom spoken. Linguistics faculty, however, live in the city where YXU is located, and the program coordinator lives in a nearby town. Following participants across these localities allowed me to compare the discourse practices of Maya linguistics to other, more everyday discourse practices and understand more about how it and its users are being positioned socially and what is at stake in these interactions. For instance, conferences and book release events provided opportunities for me to observe speakers’ evaluations of texts and how their performance of being Maya (scholars, writers, activists, politicians, etc.), or not, takes place. These observations contribute to arguments I make about how creating a Maya linguistics is part of broader social and political work that this language fortification movement is doing and how this expert community of
linguists is being positioned within it. This tells me which models of indigeneity are widely-circulating, which ones are not, and what types of practices are associated with certain models of personhood in these settings; this reveals whether and how linguistics is aligned with any of these models and what that means for social actors. Texts, curricular, and instructional materials created to document, teach, and disseminate Maya linguistics support my findings.

I situate the above work within feedback from interviews conducted with a variety of linguistics’ actors—including students, faculty, activists, and curriculum designers—and a historical framing of linguistics in Mexico in order to position the development of linguistics ich maaya within a broader historical and political context. Interviews help clarify the motivations behind some category formations that may not be transparent in classroom or meeting interactions and allow me to explore students’ and professors’ ideological interpretations of and perhaps institutional motivations for these choices. For example, these motivations reveal an underlying influence of Spanish grammatical structure on the formation of categories in Maya. This informs how individuals are positioning Spanish and Maya in relation to one another and reveals at least some of the political power and authority with which each language is being imbued.

Data analysis

Following Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), I engaged in data collection and analysis as a dialectic process. Thus, my research design was informed by early findings as I began to collect my data and adapted accordingly. I typed up my field notes and audio/video and interview logs daily, making memos of themes that I saw beginning to emerge. I
entered all data as I collected it into an ATLASI multi-medium, relational database. This allowed me to manage, code, map, and analyze my data and see co-occurring codes and themes that emerged across data, which was particularly helpful since I sought to triangulate data as much as possible. I also transcribed audio/video data and included transcripts of these data in addition to the original recordings in the database, both of which were coded. To analyze my data, I followed a process of open coding and the creation of initial memos, followed by focused coding and the creation of integrative memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 1995). In the open coding process, I primarily used descriptive codes, while in the focused coding process, the codes were primarily analytic.

Following Koven (2007) and Agha (2007), I triangulated discursive, grammatico-semantic, textual, and ethnographic data in this project (Maxwell 2013). Specifically, the study of emergent interactional texts provides evidence about the mediation of linguistic difference in the creation and circulation of Maya linguistics. In discourse, I paid close attention to the interactional structure of communicative situations, looking for: turn taking, the negotiation of meaning (i.e. what participants determine to be meaningful or relevant to the communicative interaction), types of questions asked, types of behaviors engaged in, organization and accomplishment of activities, the verbal environment, adaptations to the environment to afford communication, references to disciplinary standards and routines and how these are structured (Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Goffman 1967; Ochs & Capps 2001). This helps me align participants’ evaluations of events with their behavior in events and show if and how speakers are aligning with broader discourses on linguistics (such as disciplinary cannon, institutional norms,
curricula, etc.). The kinds of code-switching speakers engage in and the interactional alignments formed between participants within interaction more fully ground claims concerning the make-up and character of emergent (and perhaps sometime interactionally ephemeral) groups. Finally, I attend to the participation frameworks (Agha 2007) in which individuals engage, such as, who is speaking to whom, about what, and to what end.

I conducted in-depth linguistic analysis of grammatical categories and interactional approaches to grammatical calibration in interaction. Drawing on existing grammars of the language (published in Spanish and English) and my own outline of Maya grammar from fieldwork, I studied the specific sub-register of Maya linguistics and compare it to more everyday speech registers. I correlated my findings with the stereotypes about the kinds of persons who use this register and the values associated with them (Agha 1998b).

I also conducted textual analyses of textbooks, grammars, curricular materials, and other supporting sources that are being used to document and disseminate this register. I use these and my fieldnotes taken during Yáax Xook courses and meetings of linguistics professors in the region to document the grammar of Maya in Maya. At this time, no existing grammar of Maya has been published in Maya. I also attend to what materials are being published on what topics and by what individuals and to whom these resources are distributed. This helps me document the participation frameworks of various Maya texts, showing who has access to these texts and who does not, and what that means for who can participate in the process of producing knowledge with respect to
the Maya language more generally and Maya linguistics more specifically. I compliment each of the aforementioned analyses with ethnographic data, which elucidates the social significance of discourse, grammar, texts, and other social phenomenon in interaction. Ethnographic observations allow me to show not just how Maya linguistics is described, but also how it is used in practice and who uses it.

Finally, I note demographic characteristics of participants, including linguistic history (when and how speakers learned the languages they speak and their degrees of competence in speaking, listening, reading, and writing); place and length of residence; educational history, including type of primary and secondary schools attended; gender; occupation; occupation of parents; age. This helps me show how certain social and psychographic factors contribute to individuals’ participation in the creation and dissemination of Maya linguistics. Because the group of people who have access to this register at present is quite small, gaining a better understanding of who the members of this elite group are is key to understanding the motivations of the promoters of Maya linguistics and who may have the opportunity to become a Maya linguist in the present and future.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I provided an overview of my research methodology, including my data collection and analysis procedures, and described my research fieldsite. In the next chapter, I begin a discussion of my data findings. I start with contemporary diacritics of Mayanness in Yucatan and how one becomes identified as *Maya*. 
CHAPTER 5: Diacritics of Maya personhood and the de- and re-Mayanization of Maya Intellectuals in Yucatan

One of my Maya language teachers, who lives in the capital, helped me find a home stay in a monolingual Maya village so that I could increase my spoken fluency before beginning fieldwork at a local university. My teacher was from a nearby village of approximately 3,500 inhabitants, whereas the village where I stayed only had about 800. Both are rural villages, but my teacher’s village is only a few minutes from the well-known tourist town Izamal, which boasts a church with the largest atrium in the world after the Vatican. Tourists often stop in my teacher’s town to buy embroidered clothing and hammocks. The town where I stayed is on a road that connects to the highway but to no other towns. One turns off of the highway and drives for about twenty-five minutes before reaching the town. The road ends there. There is no through traffic or tourism. My teacher’s father was close with the grandfather of the family where I stayed. The two men knew each other because they were both active members of the Presbyterian Church. My language teacher, who holds both a BA and MA, delivered me to the town in his newish Volkswagen sedan, wearing dark sunglasses, a trendy t-shirt, new tennis shoes, and stylized jeans. In the capital, I frequently heard non-Maya refer to him as an urban Maya. In the village, people wondered about where he was from and if he really spoke Maya, even though they knew him and had spoken with him in that language. They asked me later if he got paid for what he does—for teaching Maya. I assured them that he did, but it was hard for my interlocutors to understand this. Who would pay him? How does that work exactly? Why? Although he was from a larger, more urban town than the one where I stayed, this was not what othered him. His urban attire, clear economic mobility (although, knowing him personally, his financial situation was extremely precarious), and way of speaking both Maya and Spanish made him different. Yes, he was Maya; yes, he spoke Maya; but he was not like the villagers, nor did he speak like them. Not only was he not from that village, but he was also no longer of the village. Something in him had changed. (FN130622)

Introduction

In the Yucatan, 56.4% of homes are considered “indigenous” (i.e. homes where someone speaks an indigenous language) (INEGI 2004), and notions about Maya people and their
practices circulate widely. These notions are often interpreted within an ethnic hierarchy in which people identified as *Maya* are typically positioned at the bottom (Gabbert 2001b; Thompson 1974; Hervik 2003). The lexical items used to name people as *Maya* vary over historical time. Presently, the term *Maya* “serves to denominate the culture(s), language(s) and their users who live in the south of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador” (Voss 2002, 381), but only within the last few decades has it come to be used to describe people on the Yucatan peninsula (Gabbert 2001a; see also Voss 2002). Non-Maya Yucatecans and the Maya themselves use various referents at different points in historical time to describe individuals I refer to in this chapter as *Maya*: *Indio* ‘Indian’; *indígena* ‘indigenous’; *masewal* ‘Indios tributarios’; ‘tributary Indians’; *Hidalgo* ‘almeheno’ ‘native noblemen’; *otsilmako*b ‘poor people’ (Gabbert 2001b); *mestizo* (Hervik 2003; Loewe 2010; Thompson 1974); and *Maya* (Hervik 2003; Loewe 2010).

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32 Original: “En la actualidad el término ‘maya’ sirve para denominar la(s) cultura(s), las lenguas y sus portadores que viven en el sur de México, Guatemala, Belice, y partes de Honduras y El Salvador.”

33 Voss N. (2002, 384) cites Landa, who in a 1983 publication refers to the term ‘Maya’ as the “standard or banner of the Maya”: “‘el pendón de la maya’ (Landa, 1983, 19-20), which suggests that the term has been in use to refer to people who speak Maya for at least the past three decades. Interestingly, in Guatemala, the term was proposed by Indianist activists who sought proposed *Maya* as an alternative to being called *Indian* (Montejo 2005).

34 Gabbert (2001b) writes this term in this way, but in Maya it is typically spelled *máasewáal* and in contemporary speech it is glossed as ‘Indian’.

35 Again, I am respecting Gabbert’s (2001b) spelling here, but this is most frequently written as *otsil mako’ob* in contemporary writing.

36 In the broader literature on indigenous and African-descent populations in Latin America, the term *mestizaje* and its derivatives refer to a mixing of people and their customs from different ethnic groups, mainly individuals of Spanish-descent or Whites and Indians (Gabbert 2001b). This process typically involves the adoption of more Spanish-centered cultural practices and the gradual abandonment of Indian-centered cultural practices. In the Yucatan, the term *mestizo* refers solely to people in traditional Maya dress, which today is “regarded as a symbol of ‘Maya Indian’ identity by the Spanish-speaking public and by many scholars as well” (Gabbert 2001b, 462). In Yucatan, the term does not refer to a process of ethnic intermixing. Thus, to avoid confusion, I use the term *ladinización* to refer to the process of ethnic intermixing and assimilation to non-indigenous cultural practices. Thompson (1974) differentiates between *Mestizos* and *Catrines*. He does not explicitly say that *Mestizos* are *Maya* or that *Catrines* are non-Mayas.
Gabbert (2001b) argues that others used *indígena, indio,* and *masewal* to refer to Maya people, but that “the Maya-speaking lower classes tried to evade such categorisation and adopted their negative connotations (see below)” (472). He further points out that, not all terms are used by all people and who uses them can change what they mean. While, I found this, indeed, to be the case in my fieldwork—in fact some of the students at YXU were emphatic about not wanting to be referred to as *indígenas* ‘indigenous’ and instead preferred to be called members of *pueblos originarios* ‘first peoples’, I still found that today both Maya and non-Maya people use the term *Maya* widely. There is debate, however, about what terms are appropriate; I discuss this further below in this chapter. While the terms change, and the diacritics of the categories may even change, the idea that certain individuals in Yucatan pertain to a distinct ethnic group persists. Here I discuss what the diacritics of Mayaness are today, and how one may obtain membership in the category *Maya.* By this I mean, when and how do certain individuals identify themselves with or are identified by others as belonging to this category?\(^{37}\)

First, I describe widely circulating notions of Mayaness in Yucatan today, using Thompson’s (1974) ethnography of the town of Ticul, Yucatan as a point of comparison. However, the diacritics he lays out for each group adhere to the diacritics for these respective categories—Maya and non-Maya. *Mestizos* speak Maya and wear traditional Maya clothing; they are also the only individuals who would dedicate themselves to *milpa* (‘corn field’) work. The *Catrines* speak Spanish, wear Western-style clothing, and avoid outdoor labor, especially *milpa* work. They are also referred to as the descendants of Hispanic forbearers, and those who have assimilated to this category. In this dissertation, I understand Thompson’s *Mestizo* category to be akin to what I talk about when I talk about the contemporary category *Maya,* and I understand his *Catrín* category to include some contemporary categorizations of individuals as non-Maya, including those who are seen to have undergone various stages of ladinization as well as individuals who would consider themselves to the direct descendants of European ancestors.\(^{37}\) See also Gabbert 2001b on this approach.
I choose to engage with Thompson’s work in this way precisely because many of the earlier contrasts observable in 1970s are still active today. By this, I do not suggest that one system is replacing another, but instead that within the system Thompson describes, there is a speciation going on.

I focus on diacritics because they are perceivable things. Focusing specifically on the context of formal schooling, I argue that being *Maya* is not fixed; instead it is negotiated through an individual’s greater or lesser degrees of association with certain widely circulating and unspoken emblems of Mayaness. Next, I describe the process whereby individuals become less associated with Maya ethnic group membership through changes in behaviors that result from participation in formal schooling. I call this process *de-Mayanization* and argue that formal schooling is one of the key sites where this happens today.38 Following that discussion, I discuss how formal schooling is also paradoxically a site of re-Mayanization; as students pursue and professionals hold higher levels of education (who I refer to as Intellectual Maya further below), they actively work to re-associate themselves with widely circulating emblems of Mayaness. Specifically, I explore this process through my fieldwork in an undergraduate degree program in *Mayan Linguistics and Culture* and consider these processes for Maya linguists. In it I show how individuals engage in new behaviors and use new terms for naming social identities within this intellectual project. Finally, I return to the question of what is associated with being Maya and ask if it is really ever possible to lose membership in that category. Through an exploration of unspoken emblems of Mayaness, I argue that Maya individuals may become highly disassociated with emblematically Maya identity.

38 Others can include occupation, religion, place of residence (i.e. increasingly urban), among others.
practices, but they never cease to be identified as indigenous individuals. My broader point is that the diacritics of Mayaness are shifting in the Yucatan. In some ways, being identified as Maya is a much more fluid, variable, and contingent process than previously thought. For instance, today some people are identified as Maya even when they are not associated with the mostly widely circulating diacritics of Mayaness. In other ways, however, I show that it is more rigid than previously imagined, for, there are certain diacritics of indigeneity with which an individual may not disassociate in his or her lifetime. I also challenge the notion that change in ethnic group membership in Yucatan is unidirectional, away from Mayaness.

Diacritics of Mayaness in Yucatan

Scholars have identified numerous diacritics—perceivable things that come to stand as markers for—of Mayaness in Yucatan. These range from anything as non-specific as age to something quite prototypical (at least in the Yucatan), like type of profession. Only some of these diacritics have come to be emblematic of Mayaness, such as speaking Maya, working in the cornfields, or wearing traditional dress. A diacritic becomes an emblem when it is attached to a social persona and then comes to stand for someone as a sign of that social persona, that is, when “someone can read that persona from that thing” (Agha 2007, 235). At different points in history, the things that have come to stand for being Maya have changed—Maya women (and some girls) are, today, the only Maya people who wear traditional clothing—the ‘íipil39—on a daily basis, and not all Maya

39 Today, the ‘íipil is a stiff, cotton-blend, white dress with intricate (hand or sewing machine) embroidery around the neck and bottom. The embroidery is sewn in bright colors and the designs typically depict flowers or fruits and vegetables. The ‘íipil is traditionally accompanied by a white skirt that is made out of
women do this. (And, in fact, some non-Maya women do so as well (Hervik 2003).)

There was a time when Maya men, too, could be distinguished by their clothing (Thompson, 1974), but today Maya men typically do not wear the “folk costume” (Gabbert 2001, 481) and instead wear Western-style clothing on an everyday basis. They typically reserve traditional clothing for some special occasions (although increasingly infrequently), a practice upper-middle class non-Maya men observe as well.

Being identified as Maya involves not only being associated with diacritics of Mayaness that have come to be emblematic of that category, but also being associated with a certain combination of these within the appropriate context. Previously in Yucatan, there were two status systems—Mestizo and Catrín (Thompson 1974). Today, I interpret these as Maya and non-Maya, respectively. In the late 1960s, however, Thompson (1974) argues that the two status systems became one, resulting in a uniformity in the “dimensions of social status” (i.e. “the prestige of individuals”) in society (117). This did not erase ethnic differentiation or the distinction between Mestizo and Catrín. However, it did create uniformity in the criteria by which social status was determined throughout the society. These uniform dimensions were comprised of income,

the same cotton-blend fabric at the top and lace (either store bought or hand woven) at the bottom. Some women today vary the traditional white color of the dress and skirt fabric to pale blues or greens.

40 Original: “…‘Mestizo’ remains very much as it has always been—a marker of ethnic identity. …their identification and position in the social system of Ticul are structured by their manifest relation to the Indian component of the bi-ethnic heritage of the community” (Thompson 1974, 13).
41 Original: “[Catrines are the descendants of old-line Hispanic forebears or are ex-Mestizos who have disavowed identification with Maya heritage” (Thompson, 1974, 13).
42 Thompson (1974) writes that, “a person is a Mestizo or a Catrín, and no amount of economic or educational achievement can fully overcome the effects of ethnic inequality as long as one remains a Mestizo. … Whether rich or poor, educated or not, Mestizos are uniformly accorded less prestige than Catrines, and the constraining effects of the status differential, the clear limits that the ethnic boundary places on the status potential of individuals, can only be transcended by a change in ethnic group membership” (117).
occupation, education, and fluency in Spanish, and changing them in appropriate ways could allow an individual social mobility in Ticuleño\textsuperscript{43} society. However, Thompson pointed out that, “the single most powerful determinant of an individual’s social status” was the “relative prestige” of his occupation\textsuperscript{44} (1974, 133). Occupation alone was not a sufficient factor in determining or changing one’s social status—economic status was seen as a product of one’s occupation, but to obtain a more prestigious occupation, one often needed to speak Spanish fluently or at least well or to have higher levels of education (which also was key to gaining increased Spanish language fluency). Thus, each of these factors was intricately intertwined. While some diacritics of Mestizoness quickly marked someone as Mestizo—for instance, being a monolingual Maya speaker, wearing traditional dress, and working in a milpa (cornfield)—they only did so in conjunction with other diacritics. For instance, many non-Mestizo shop owners also spoke Maya in order to communicate with their employees and because they were often raised by Maya-speaking wet nurses and nannies and attended to by Maya-speaking servants (Gabbert 2001b; Stephens 1841). This did not, however, lead anyone to believe that shop owners were Mestizo (i.e. Maya). While age may be a diacritic of Mayaness in some settings—for instance, young people are most likely to shift away from stereotypically Maya ethnic practices (Thompson 1974; Briceño Chel 2002; Hervik

\textsuperscript{43} Ticul was the site of Thompson’s ethnography, a town that became a booming shoe- and hat-making industry toward the end of the 60s and primarily in the 70s and early 80s. It was a place where people could go to become more economically mobile. Today, the city where I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork also presents opportunities of this nature, albeit in different industries—primarily tourism. The scale of the city where I worked is also much greater, but some of the structural similarities persist—the heading up of wealth and the most elite families in the center along with the bulk of the respective industry. In both places, the Spanish and Maya languages readily coexist in everyday life as well.

\textsuperscript{44} Thompson’s study focused on the social status of male members of Ticuleño society.
2003), while older people have the least possibility of changing ethnic group membership and typically remain Maya—it is not something that, on its own, can mark someone as Maya. Being a milpero (cornfield worker), however, can.\footnote{Thompson (1974) writes, “...the milpa is the exclusive province of the Mestizo, for Catrines will not plant corn, considering the occupation of milpero to be demeaning to their social rank” (59). Milpero is the occupation of working in a milpa (‘corn field’).} Herein, I explore both widely circulating and unspoken notions of Mayaness and non-Mayaness in the Yucatan and how these categories can be used to construct and deconstruct notions of Maya personhood.\footnote{Following Taylor (1989), Agha (2007) refers to models of personhood as “cultural frameworks of person-reckoning” that have “a particular history” (241; also quoted in Shoaps 2009, 93). Shoaps (2009) cites the notion as originating with Mauss (1985[1938]), and provides a particularly useful exploration of moral personhood in her discussion of Sakapultek discourse and culture in this same work. Again, following Agha (2007), personhood is related to emblems in that an emblem can be said to be enregistered when the signs of identity and the models of personhood that it indexes become durably associated with some group. Thus, not all enregistered emblems (be they linguistic, discursive, or semiotic) of certain types of personhood are equally accessible to all social actors.} Figure 5.1 presents widely recognized emblems of Maya and non-Maya personhood in the Yucatan as discussed in the literature and observed in my fieldwork.

Figure 5.1. Widely recognized emblems of Maya and non-Maya personhood in the Yucatan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Maya people</th>
<th>Maya people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Un-educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-speaking</td>
<td>Maya-speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More economically mobile</td>
<td>Not economically mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, skilled, non-land working\footnote{Non-Mayas do own industrialized agricultural operations and at times serve as the boss or overseer for an agricultural operation, but they do not do agricultural fieldwork (Thompson 1974).}</td>
<td>Manual, un-skilled, land-working (esp. milpa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily, Western clothes</td>
<td>Daily, Maya(women)/Western(men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothes</td>
<td>Special occasions, Maya-style/Western clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special occasions, Maya-style/Western clothes</td>
<td>Special occasions, Maya/Western clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today, widely circulating emblems of Mayaness remain intricately intertwined—type of occupation, language spoken, and level of education all work together to identify
someone in a given way. For instance, as my fieldwork and that of other authors show, Maya men are stereotypically associated with work in the traditional profession of milpero in rural settings (e.g., Thompson 1974; Hervik 2003). Maya women tend to the home sphere, planting and caring for animals in the family solar,\footnote{Solar, while it goes by many names, is found throughout Mexico and refers to a space surrounding a house where inhabitants can plant plants, raise animals, “produce food, medicine, construction material, utensils, fodder and many other items destined to cover the needs of the family, with the particularity that this type of agriculture is realized in immediate proximity to the house [“producir alimentos, medicinas, material para construcción, utensilios, forrajes y muchos otros artículos destinados a cubrir las necesidades de la familia, con la particularidad que esta forma de agricultura se realiza en las inmediaciones de la casa habitación”] (Correa Navarro n.d., 1). In Yucatan in particular, the solar is also used for “washing, cooking, preparing tools, etc.” and “religious cult and recreation” [“lavar, cocinar, preparar las herramientas, etc.), culto y recreo”] (Correa Navarro n.d., 1). Correa Navarro, Pedro Joaquin. n.d. “Los solares yucatecos,” http://www.cruyuach.org.mx/biblioteca/1.} caring for children, cooking, and washing clothes. In most rural villages and small towns, schooling does not go beyond the secondary grades; to attend high school one must travel to a neighboring town. The cost of such an endeavor is often prohibitory. The preponderance of secondary schools in a larger number of rural settings is also fairly recent (in the late 60s and early 70s), and it is not uncommon to find that a large portion of the population over age 15 has only a primary school-level education (nearly 30% in Yucatan). Young people and non-indigenous language speakers are more likely to have a primary school education. Nearly 85% of indigenous language speakers and 93% of non-indigenous language speakers aged 15-19 have completed primary school (INEGI 2005). However, when the 20-24 year old population is lumped in, the percentage of individuals (in the total population) with a primary education drops dramatically to 45% (INEE 2008). As the age groups increase, the numbers continue to drop; for instance, only 10.7% of people aged 55-64 in Yucatan have a primary school education (INEE 2008). Today, it is more likely that
students will complete secondary school, but it is not yet the norm statewide (with 24.4% of 15-24 year olds and 13.8% of all people over age 15 completing secondary school) (INEE 2008). Spanish is typically learned in school, thus, those indigenous-language-speaking individuals who attend little to no school often learn little to no Spanish. And, even those who complete secondary school do not speak Spanish with high degrees of fluency, since, at least in rural areas, speakers’ domain of use of the language is typically limited to school contexts, thus limiting speakers’ linguistic repertoires.

Occupation is also a key diacritic of Mayaness in Yucatan. Milpa work is the traditional work of Maya men. It is hard and highly dependent upon the weather, thus it does not assure a secure income each year. If the crop is good, a corn farmer can keep some of his crop and sell the rest, making enough to buy most of what his family needs to supplement their subsistence. If the crop is not good, then he will need to seek work elsewhere to make ends meet (Thompson 1974). Today, Maya people are associated with other types of labor as well (Thompson 1974; Hervik 2003; Loewe 2010). Some people continue to make milpa in addition to diversifying their incomes with alternative forms of labor, whereas others have abandoned milpa work all together (Loewe 2010). Women often work outside of the home, traveling to the capital to work as domestic laborers in upper-middle class and wealthy Meridianos’ homes. A woman may do this either as a day laborer or as a fija, one who stays during the week and travels home for the weekend. Men often travel to Cancun or other larger building sites around the region to work in construction. They also do highway work. Others drive taxis in their small communities, chauffeuring local people back and forth between a village and the next largest town, to
which there is no public transportation. Others have stores that sell foodstuffs and many young people work in *maquiladoras* (factories) making Western-style clothes (Loewe 2010).

While speaking Spanish and having higher levels of education are important to shifting away from Mestizo (Maya) ethnic group membership, Thompson (1974, 118) argues that the number one thing that contributes to this shift is occupation:

> Throughout the community, manual labor confers less prestige than nonmanual labor, and there is a prominent distinction between indoor and outdoor occupations. A Mestizo may take pride in the ancient and honorable occupation of corn farmer, but at the same time he will recognize the superior social and economic advantages of the craft trades and the professions.

These craft trades, at least at the time Thompson was writing, included primarily shoemaking, hat making, and pottery making. The professions were primarily in medicine, education, and technical fields, like engineering. Most people, however, were not wealthy enough nor highly educated enough to pursue professions, making the craft trades their primary means of ethnic transition. Thompson (1974, 70) illustrates how the shift from working in the cornfields to working a craft trade was key to the process of becoming less Maya:

> [Hat making] still represents to the sons of milperos an attractive and relatively simple occupation that offers a dependable wage that, although it does not compare to the income of shoemakers, opens up social mobility channels to socioeconomic levels beyond the reach of the corn farmer, and usually results in the progressive Ladinization of the individual. Just as in shoemaking, the worker in the hat industry is a distinctly urban laborer, one constantly involved in the life of the town, little affected by the traditional beliefs and cycles of Maya-Mestizo agrarian culture. Although many of his relatives and friends may be milperos, the life and lore of the bush are at a considerable remove from the necessities of his own
existence as a working urbanite whose trade has made him a part of the regional industrial economy.

Thompson paints a complex picture in which, gaining a craft trade position means having the requisite Spanish speaking skills to communicate on the job. To fit in with coworkers, Maya laborers typically spoke Maya less and less and worked to improve their Spanish speaking skills. They also typically abandoned their traditional Maya clothing to avoid ridicule. This transition could easily be seen in the course of a few years. Once complete, the individual would no longer be considered *Mestizo* (Maya). One of the key places in which this process of ladinization could most readily be realized was through schooling; in fact, it was a requisite of staying in school: “To stay in school one has to change to Catrín” (Thompson 1974, 98). Discussing minority student participation in higher education in the US, Tierney (following Tinto) describes how this is often construed as a model in which students feel that they must engage in “cultural suicide” in order to be successful in school (85). In what follows, I describe schooling as a space in which de-Mayanization can happen in Yucatan.

**De-Mayanization: An educational project**

Ethnic change in Yucatan is typically described in terms of a unidirectional shift from Maya to non-Mayan (e.g., Thompson 1974; Hervik 2003; Loewe 2010)—that is, the sole goal of social actors who seek to alter their ethnic affiliation is to become less Maya.  

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49 Loewe (2010) does, however, describes ways in which Maya people attempt to maintain ties to Maya identity and traditional practices; he does not, however, describe ways in which people who have ceased to be identified as Maya attempt to be associated with Mayaness.

50 Although, Thompson (1974) does describe the case in which one is unable to successful make the shift in ethnic group membership and, thus, remains in a sort of limbo—not Catrín but also no longer accepted among other Mestizos, due to the individual’s now public desire to abandon membership in that ethnic group. A person in this position was called *medio Catrín*, or ‘half Catrín’ (96).
This process of “de-Mayanization” involves the slow changing of specific behaviors and associations with specific diacritics that have come to be emblematic of Mayaness. Shifting from speaking Maya to speaking Spanish, for example, is one thing a person can do to be thought of as less Maya. In fact, today, both Maya and non-Maya speakers readily identify speaking Maya as being an important and key marker of Mayaness. For instance, at a book release ceremony I attended, the author, a Maya speaker who identifies as a Maya person, stated: “Todos somos mayas, pues, todos hablamos la maya” (‘We are all Mayas, since, we all speak Maya’) (FN140218). Furthermore, a non-Maya person who identifies someone as Maya may be convinced to change his/her evaluation of that individual if it is pointed out that the Maya person in question does not in fact speak Maya. In such a situation, the non-Maya person may respond by saying, “alright s/he’s an Indio.” Indio, thus, suggests that a person is still indigenous, but not fully Maya. Thus, simply changing one’s spoken language is not enough to change one’s ethnic identification. A variety of diacritics must align in a certain way in order for a person to be socially identified as Maya or not, and the shift from Maya to non-Maya involves realigning a variety of diacritics, such as language, education, occupation, income, and clothing.

51 It should be noted that this term is almost always applied in a pejorative fashion and is typically not welcomed by the individuals to whom it is assigned. In contrast, the term indigenous (‘indígena’) is not typically used in a pejorative fashion and is, in fact, almost always used in an attempt at political correctness on behalf of non-indigenous individuals. Despite this, the term indígena is met with equal disdain amongst the educated Maya, who prefer to be called pueblos originarios (‘original/first peoples’). (See also Gabbert 2001b, 462-463, on individuals’ desires to not be called “Indian.”)
While a shift in alignment of ethnic group membership may be observed in a variety of sectors of society, such as occupational,\(^{52}\) home, and public life, one of the key places in which the shift from Maya to non-Maya can best be achieved is in school. Schooling is widely recognized as a “mesticizing” or “ladinizing’ project”\(^{53}\) (Gabbert 2001b; Thompson 1974), one that is frequently tied to nation-building efforts (and, frequently, modern nation-building efforts) (Anderson 1983; Duranti 2009; Gabbert 2001b; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1983; Irvine & Gal 2000; Mannheim 1991). And, in Latin America in particular, nation building is typically constructed on a myth of mestizaje—the mixing of indigenous and Spanish blood (Vasconcelos [1925]1979; Lomnitz Adler 1992; Stutzman 1982). In the Yucatan, this mesticizing or ladinizing project works through altering behaviors that have come to be emblematic of Mayaness. Among the most prominent emblems of Mayaness affected through the ladinizing process of schooling are dress, language, place, and cognitive models.

In the lower grades, language and dress are the diacritics of Mayaness most affected by schooling. Students typically wear a uniform to school, although this is not a requirement until middle school. Nonetheless Thompson (1974, 93) points out that, in primary school,

Those who attempt to preserve the wearing of Mestizo clothing or persist in the daily use of Maya language beyond the fourth or fifth year of school usually become the objects of mild ridicule by more sophisticated [sic] Catrín fellow students and even on occasion, by the teachers themselves,

\(^{52}\) Thompson’s (1974) ethnography, for example, is principally about the shifting job market in Ticul, with the birth of craft trades in what he calls the “cottage industries.” In it he shows how a shift in job is one of the ways in which one can realize the shift from Mestizo (Maya) to Catrín (non-Maya). However, he makes it clear that a shift in job alone is not enough to make the change in ethnic category.

\(^{53}\) In fact, Thompson (1974) write that, “all aspects of Maya-Mestizo culture are devalued throughout, in a concerted attempt to Ladinize school children” (93), and he notes that schooling is the “ideal way for one to make the transition from Mestizo to Catrín” (95).
whose expressed purpose is the education of children to become fully “modern” Yucatecos and Mexicanos, citizens of the state and nation.

In most rural communities today, primary school girls typically wear Western-style dress to school (and secondary school girls wear uniforms) and change back into the ‘iipil when they arrive home from school. Boys already wear Western-style clothing at home and at school, typically pants or shorts and t-shirts. On a daily basis at school, wearing traditional Maya clothing is not acceptable.

For Maya-speaking primary school students, school is often the first place in which they encounter the Spanish language. Even at bilingual (Maya-Spanish) schools, Spanish is typically the language of instruction for academic concepts and Maya is used for classroom management—this is frequently the case because many teachers do not have sufficient fluency in Maya in order to teach course content in that language. The idea of bilingual education, however, was to present students with core curricular concepts in their native language in order to make it easier to learn those concepts and acquire new knowledge. Studies show that content knowledge and skills learned in the native language transfer to the second language (Genesee, Geva, Dressler & Kamil 2006) and that concepts and skill are learned more quickly in the native language (Collier & Thomas 1989). Once students learned the concepts in their native language, the theory argues, it would then be easier and quicker for them to grasp them in their new language, Spanish (Collier & Thomas 1989; Genesee, Geva, Dressler & Kamil 2006; Genesee, Lindhold-Leary, Saunders, Christian 2006; Slavin & Cheung 2005).

Spanish, however, is typically not used in rural Maya communities outside of school. Only when individuals travel to a larger nearby town to go to the public health
clinic or doctor do they need to speak Spanish. Home, work, and community life is typically conducted in Maya. Having Spanish in the early primary grades may not be enough, however, for students to become fully proficient in the language:

In terms of language development, an important thing happens in primary school: …[the fourth to fifth year of primary school] is of great practical importance in the community, for it is the grade level that is generally regarded by the teachers of Ticul as the one in which students finally develop essential facility in the use of the Spanish language as an educational tool, i.e., in reading and writing with some ease. (Thompson 1974, 99)

Most Maya-speaking students in Thompson’s study, however, did not complete grade four. Thus, if it is the case that Spanish oral and written fluency is attained from grade four onward, it is likely that their internalization of Spanish language structure will be markedly different than will their internalization of the structure of Maya. This is particularly significant since, at least at the time when Thompson conducted his study, he found that “…fluency in Spanish is the sole linguistic determinant of status” (1974, 117).

In Thompson’s study, completing at least the fourth year of schooling was important to becoming less Mestizo. However, the majority of Mestizo Ticuleños completed a mean of only 3.11 years of schooling. In fact, all Mestizos he surveyed shared a low level of education when contrasted with Catrines. Even Mestizos Finos, the most elite Maya in his study, had only 0.09 years more of schooling on average than the poorest Mestizos and 1.19 years less than the poorest Catrines (Thompson 1974) (see Table 5.1).
The data about level of educational attainment available today do not use the ethnic categories Thompson (1974) describes; instead the available data describe level of educational attainment for speakers and non-speakers of indigenous languages. In Yucatan state today, the educational attainment level for non-indigenous language speakers aged 15-19 is 9.0 years (8.9 for men, 9.1 for women) and for indigenous language speakers it is 7.6 (7.7 for men and 7.5 for women). Thus, today, both the average indigenous and non-indigenous language speaker will complete and proceed beyond the fourth year of schooling. In Yucatan, the vast majority of indigenous language speakers speak Yucatec Maya. Thus, these data suggest that more Maya speakers are pursuing higher levels of education. It also suggests that, for those who do, they are dominating Spanish more completely, since there is no instruction in Maya at the secondary and high school levels in this state. The numbers however, still lag far behind the non-Maya speaking population (see Table 5.2).

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54 Thompson’s (1974) original Spanish-language categories are: *Catrines Ricos, Catrines Ordinarios, Catrines Pobres, Mestizos Finos, Mestizos Ordinarios, Mestizos Pobres.*

55 In Thompson’s study, all *Mestizos* and some *Catrines* speak Maya.
While, at the primary school level, there appears to be little difference in school attendance for the indigenous (95.7%) and non-indigenous (97.5%) language speakers, at the secondary school level, there is a drop in attendance for indigenous language speakers of nearly 10%, whereas for non-indigenous language speakers school attendance falls by only about 3%. The high school level represents the most significant drop in indigenous language speakers’ school attendance—only about half as many indigenous language speakers (33.4%) attend high school as compared to non-indigenous language speakers (63.2%).

The decline in indigenous language speakers’ school attendance has a lot to do with logistics (although finances factor in heavily as well). At the time Thompson conducted his ethnography of Ticul, only recently had a secondary school been established in the town. No high school or higher education institutions were present at the time of his study. Students had to travel to the capital, Merida, to attend high school. While, today, there are many more high schools throughout the peninsula, all villages and most small towns do not have a high school. For example, my Maya teacher, described in the opening vignette to this chapter, came from a town with a high school, whereas the town where I stayed did not have one. Some villages only have telesecundarias ‘TV-

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56 Ticul is either 44 or 53 miles from Merida, depending upon the route taken. This trip would take approximately an hour and thirty minutes by car each way and longer by bus. Students would most likely travel by bus.
middle schools’, which are secondary schools at which students watch recorded videos on a TV set that cover course content instead of being taught directly by a live, human, instructor. In those villages and small towns that do not have high schools, students must travel to the next largest town that does have a high school in order to continue their studies—from the town where I stayed, students would have had to pay for a private taxi to take them to the nearby town with a high school. The ride would cost about 20 pesos round trip (a little over one US dollar) and take 35 minutes each way. While the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) provides scholarships to some students to help offset transportation and food costs, those scholarships typically are not enough to cover real costs, and those who do not receive a scholarship are typically even more hard pressed to come up with the needed capital to commit themselves to studying. Furthermore, students do not typically have time to work, so pursuing a high school diploma not only entails added costs, but it also entails a reduction in the family income—a double financial blow. While high schools are scarce, universities are even fewer and farther between (SEGEY 2010a, SEGEY 2010b). Outside of the capital, Merida, and the next largest city, Valladolid, universities exist in nine other towns (SEGEY 2010b).57 Today, Ticul has one public and one private university (SEGEY 2010b).

Thus, staying in school for native Maya language speakers typically means traveling from their homes to attend high school. This is yet another way in which school attendance contributes to de-Mayanization. As mentioned above, Maya individuals do

57 The Yucatan peninsula is made up of three Mexican states: Campeche to the East, Yucatan in the middle and North, and Quintana Roo to the East. Major cities in Campeche and Quintana Roo have universities, but their scarcity is similar to Yucatan state’s.
travel away from home for work. However, this is typically done out of economic necessity. Attending school, however, is voluntary and frequently engenders economic hardship. Traveling away from home to support one’s family financially is an undesirable but acceptable practice in most traditional Maya communities. Travel from home by choice, however, is less commonly practiced particularly if it would generate financial strain on a family. Not only this, but it also means that young girls may travel alone and arrive at odd hours, unaccompanied. Women do travel to the capital to work as domestic laborers in homes, but they travel in the morning. Attending high school may involve attending the afternoon shift at a school, which would require students to travel home at night. Attending university can similarly involve a late night commute or even living alone or with other students in another town. This can be particularly problematic for young, unwed women as it changes how they are seen in their home communities. However, if Maya speaking students are able to obtain a high school diploma, today they have a new option for university-level education in their native language.

As I have argued thus far, formal education in the Yucatan is a particularly ladinizing project. However, something different may be happening at the university level. Through programs like the one in which I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork—the Maya Linguistics and Culture program at Yáax Xook University—it may be possible to counter the ladinizing effects of K-12 schooling. In fact, I argue that it is a formal schooling site in which Maya students can participate in processes of re-Mayanization. I explore this argument in more detail further below.
The *Mayan Linguistics and Culture* (MLC) undergraduate degree program provides its curriculum primarily in the Yucatec Maya language, but Spanish is used as well.\(^58\) The program was founded in 2006 and has graduated six cohorts to date. It is the only program of its type on the peninsula.\(^59\) The MLC *licenciatura*\(^60\) program is premised, in large part, on the idea that Maya speakers possess a unique *cosmovisión* ‘worldview’ and that teaching course content *in the Yucatec Maya language* may affect what and how students learn. Thus, it is proposed as a program that alters the ladinizing path of education in Yucatan by offering students access to Maya cognitive models. From primary school through high school in Yucatan, courses are taught in Spanish and it is thought that content is presented from Western worldview perspectives. In the MLC program, course content deals with Maya cultural practices, including the Maya language, and whenever possible, the language of the classroom is Maya.

The idea that a higher education program in a formal educational setting could proceed from a Maya worldview is controversial. Not everyone is convinced that the ladinizing project of schooling ends at the high school level, as the following fieldnote excerpt illustrates.

Example 5.1. Fieldnote about higher education replacing Maya ways of knowing with Western academic ones

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\(^{58}\) See Chapter 7 for a fuller overview of the program.

\(^{59}\) One other program exists, but it is not a disciplinary linguistics program nor is it taught primarily in Maya.

\(^{60}\) In Mexico, a *licenciatura* is roughly equivalent to a U.S. Bachelor’s degree. However, U.S. Bachelor’s degrees are typically four years in length, whereas the Mexican *licenciatura* can range from three to five years in length. The other main difference is that U.S. Bachelor’s degree programs offer approximately two years of general education before a student spends approximately two years specializing in his or her major field. In Mexico, the full duration of the *licenciatura* is spent on coursework in the specialized field. The *licenciatura*, like the U.S. Bachelor’s degree, is a prerequisite for a Master’s degree level study.
Mayan students attend university, but this does not change anything. They are taught to consume and reproduce the ways of knowing of the academy. They might come in to the university with Maya ways of knowing, but they leave all sounding the same and producing Western academic ways of knowing. There isn’t room for other ways of knowing in the academy. (Fieldnote, 6/20/12)

The man who shared these views with me, Alfredo, owns a business in a popular tourist section of the capital city, Merida, teaches Maya languages classes, and advocates for indigenous rights. He has even participated in TED talks at the national level in Mexico City. He is also a friend of my Maya language teacher, described above. Alfredo’s argument goes beyond speaking Spanish or wearing Western clothing—his argument is that higher education has a worldview-effect. That is, by studying at the university level, Maya students’ worldviews become markedly less Maya. Alfredo leaves open the possibility that Maya students may retain culturally Maya practices by the time they reach the university, despite their experiences in the primary, secondary, and high school educational system. However, upon reaching university, he argues, any traces that are left of a Maya worldview (or of Maya ways of knowing, as he calls it) will be quickly done away with. While a “Maya way of knowing” or a “Maya worldview” is frequently mobilized as the justification for and lifeblood of projects that deal with Maya cultural and linguistic practice in the Yucatan, these notions are rarely ever defined. Nonetheless, they serve as powerful markers of something only a Maya person has access to, thus making Alfredo’s argument a forceful one, and one shared by others on the peninsula.

Despite this, my data suggest that while higher education may expose students to Western academic ways of knowing (and perhaps make them experts in these), it is also an important step toward a process of re-Mayanization.
In the process of gaining higher levels of education, Maya people engage in a series of activities that are widely associated with non-Mayaness, such as attending higher levels of schooling, living and working in urban spaces, having enough money to live and work without doing land-work, speaking Spanish, traveling to and from home alone (often late at night), and possibly even living without family in an urban area during the school week. In fact, in order to obtain higher education in the Yucatan, knowing Spanish is imperative.\textsuperscript{61} Even though an undergraduate program is now offered in the Yucatec Maya language, in order to gain a high school diploma, students have to go through both middle and high school in Spanish in the Yucatan—no schools currently offer education at these levels in Maya. And, furthermore, even though the MLC undergraduate program is largely taught in the Yucatec Maya language, it is not entirely taught in this language. In fact, many teachers in the program do not speak Maya. It is a program in which being bilingual is necessary.\textsuperscript{62} Thus, studying at any level beyond primary school requires knowing Spanish.

Since only about half as many Maya speakers in Yucatan attend high school, as do non-Mayan speakers, those who manage to attend and complete high school form an

\textsuperscript{61} In Yucatan, the only school levels at which Maya is the primary language of instruction are inicial (early childhood, up to 6 years (SEP 2010)), pre-escolar (preschool, from 3-5 years) (SEP, “Educación Preescolar,” http://www.mexterior.sep.gob.mx/1_epe.htm), and primaria (primary; enter between 6 and 7 years old and complete 6 years of primary school). The only recent addition to this is the undergraduate degree program at the university where I conducted my fieldwork. These states currently have secondary-level (middle school) education in indigenous languages: Oaxaca, Veracruz, Chiapas, Coahuila, Puebla, San Luis Potosí e Hidalgo. Scholars are currently collaborating on a curriculum for secondary-level education in Maya for Yucatán state (personal communication, May May October 7, 2014).

\textsuperscript{62} The same can be said for students’ requisite knowledge of Maya, evidenced by the fact that monolingual Spanish speakers in the program dropped out because they simply could not keep up without competence in the Maya language. Others who understand Maya and even who speak it conversationally had a great deal of trouble with program content. Theoretically, all students who are admitted to the program should have a certain level of Maya language competence.
elite group. Even more elite, however, is the group of Maya speakers who continue on to study at the university level. Bracamonte y Sosa & Lizama Quijano (2003) report that, only 1.3% of Maya language speakers hold an undergraduate degree (in Mijangos-Noh & Cardos Dzul 2008) compared to 15.3% of the total population (INEGI 2010b)\(^{63}\) (which includes Maya speakers).

The elite, university-educated Maya population tends to engage in different cultural practices than the non-elite, less-hfihly-educated Maya population. The widely circulating emblematic features of Mayaness that are typically associated with Maya people in Yucatan tend to not apply to this group of highly educated Maya people. In fact, due to their unique nature, a classic process of fractal recursion occurs in which, due to their lack of association with the emblematic features of Mayaness, the diacritics of non-Mayaness come to be associated with this elite group, whom I call Intellectual Maya.\(^{64}\) I use this name to emphasize that it is precisely intellectual labor that works to mark someone from this group as non-Maya. Key to this process are the equally important semiotic processes of iconization (in this case, indexical iconicization through emblematism) and erasure (Irvine & Gal 2000).

Iconization is the process whereby “linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted a social group’s inherent nature or essence” (Irvine & Gal 2000, 37). This process can also apply to non-linguistic forms. Thus, the emblematic qualities associated

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63 This comparison is not ideal, as this percentage includes all people who earned a bachelor’s degree or higher in the age range of 15 years and older, but it is the only number available.  
64 Cru (2014) also describes this group of Maya as “intellectuals,” and he notes that many Maya intellectuals also used it as a self-descriptor (8-9).
with Mayaness are sufficiently widely circulating that, when they are absent from a group or individual’s set of practices, then they are no longer identified as Maya (in the emblematic sense of the term). Erasure is the process by which “facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away” (Irvine & Gal 2000, 38). Fractal recursivity is the process whereby “the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (Irvine & Gal 2000, 38). Agha (2007) describes recursivity as a process of repeating something in a self-similar way. It involves nesting or embedding phrases within phrases or practices within practices and involves the idea that the same oppositions that distinguish given groups from one another on larger scales can also be found within those groups.

Diacritics of non-Mayaness are associated with Intellectual Maya in the Yucatan, thus distinguishing them from other less formally educated Maya individuals who are associated with widely circulating emblems of Mayaness. The oppositions projected through this fractal recursion are presented in Figure 5.2.65

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65 Here I draw on Andronis’ (2003) representation of fractal recursivity in her analysis of linguistic ideologies and standardization in Quichua-Speaking Ecuador to graphically represent the emblems in this table. For a similar analysis of the content I include herein, see Loewe’s (2011) discussion of mestizo.
Figure. 5.2. Fractal recursion of non-Maya emblems onto Intellectual Maya and of Maya emblems onto non-Intellectual Maya categories of personhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Mayan people</th>
<th>Maya people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Un-educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-speaking</td>
<td>Maya-speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More economically mobile</td>
<td>Not economically mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, skilled, non-land working</td>
<td>Manual, un-skilled, land-working (esp. milpa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily, Western clothes</td>
<td>Daily, Maya(women)/Western(men) clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special occasions, Maya-style/Western clothes</td>
<td>Special occasions, Maya/Western clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Maya</th>
<th>Non-Intellectual Maya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Un-educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-Maya bilingual speaking</td>
<td>Maya-speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More economically mobile</td>
<td>Not economically mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, skilled, non-land working</td>
<td>Un-skilled, land-working (esp. milpa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special occasions, Maya-style/Western clothes</td>
<td>Special occasions, Maya/Western clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because such strongly emblematic notions of Mayaness exist in Yucatan, when Maya individuals engage in activities that are not associated with Mayaness, those individuals are marked as being less Maya. That is, their Mayaness is called into question. This works in large part through the erasure of their origins—most Intellectual Maya come from not economically mobile households in rural, tradition-bound communities, do not have educated parents, and claim Maya as their first language. Most also have grown up with ties to the land, either milpa agriculture or farming of some type, including cattle steering. Their present association with urban, modern, educated, economically-mobile, professional-intellectual practices and their fluency at navigating the Spanish speaking world supersede their more emblematically Maya origins. The stark contrast between these two worlds and the deeply ingrained notions about the emblematic features of Maya

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66 Although non-Mayas do own industrialized agricultural operations, but they do not do fieldwork.
personhood make it difficult for Maya and non-Maya individuals alike to conceive of an individual as belonging to both worlds. While individuals can be interactionally fluent in more than one ethnic context, one’s ethnic identity remains clear to others in a given interactional context. In some ways, Intellectual Maya neither belong to the stereotypically Maya world nor to that of the non-Maya. My Maya teacher, mentioned above, is a good example of this—he no longer is of the village, yet in the city, non-Maya people know that he is Maya and not from the capital.

**Re-Mayanization: An Intellectual Maya Project**

As the Intellectual Maya navigate both Maya and non-Maya worlds, their ethnic identification is constantly renegotiated. In particular, as Intellectual Maya’s Mayaness is called into question, some actively re-associate themselves with emblematic diacritics of Mayaness in order to add authenticity to their professional intellectual contributions. This process stands in direct contrast to the unidirectional shift in ethnic group membership described widely in the literature on the Maya in Yucatan—not only do Maya people actively engage in practices that associate them with being less Maya, but they also engage in practice that associate them with being more Maya. This latter process does not typically happen, however, until an individual reaches university education. Thus, higher education poses a paradox—it is simultaneously part of the Mexican ladinizing project, including perhaps the type of cognitive ladinization my interlocutor describes above, but it is also a vehicle for re-Mayanization.

I have seen re-Mayanization happen in at least two ways. First, upon receiving a higher education degree (minimally a bachelor’s degree, *licenciatura*), if an individual’s
profession has something to do with Maya cultural practices, that person can capitalize upon those practices to accentuate his or her association with those practices, thus marking him or herself as a practitioner and bearer of more tradition-bound Maya culture. This can serve to legitimize professional expertise and provide professional advantage over non-native Maya cultural bearers. A second way in which this can happen is that, if the person studies a university degree in which Maya culture is studied, taught, practiced, and valued, as it is in the university degree program in which I conducted my fieldwork, then students and faculty in that program have a space in which to value Maya cultural (including linguistic) practices.

There is one key motivating factor that affects this process. Intellectual Maya’s work typically has something to do with Maya cultural practices (such as the creation of prescriptive grammars or ethnographic research on traditional ceremonies), thus being perceived of as more authentically Maya lends legitimacy to their work. This is further made possible by the fact that, re-associating themselves with more emblematically Maya cultural practices is a move that can be safely made, for, the individuals who are in a position to evaluate the authenticity of their re-associations with emblematically Maya practices are typically not present. Intellectual Maya circulate in a world of non-Maya people, most of whom are not equipped to evaluate these individuals’ renewed claims to Mayanness. And, furthermore, those individual who are more equipped to do so—the non-Intellectual Maya—are not only not part of the conversation, but their own practices are
also brought into question by the Intellectual Maya’s folkloric performance of cultural legitimacy, specifically their linguistic practices. I illustrate these complex relationships in the discussion that follows on re-Mayanization.

The undergraduate degree program I studied is an anomaly in Yucatan in that it is the only university in the state that offers an undergraduate degree program in the Maya language (FIO 2013). It is also an anomaly at the university where it is offered. Of the six licenciaturas offered at the time of my research, it was the only one in which processes of re-Mayanization were happening. While years of schooling led to the de-Mayanization of students, the undergraduate program in Maya Linguistics and Culture is a space in which students and faculty can become re-associated with practices that are thought of as Maya.

Re-Mayanization is a type of re-indigenization. Re-indigenization is defined in a variety of ways. Cajete (2008) argues that it is very “tribally specific” in that each group is involved with the concept in its own ways. It is frequently described as a process of re-negotiating identity (Attanapola & Lund 2013), and much of this involves reclaiming or reconnecting to a historical connection to the land as the main source of survival (Attanapola & Lund 2013). This process of redefining identities becomes increasingly important, Attanapola & Lund (2013) argue, as “[indigenous peoples’] relationship with the land is disturbed (Relph, 1976; Bhabha, 1994; Rose, 1995)” (172). Re-indigenization is also widely described as a de-colonizing process (Nelson 2008; Cajete 2008).

Education is oft cited as both the reason for the need to re-indigenize and the means

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67 I discuss the concept of folklorization at greater length in Chapter 9. In brief, I see processes of folklorization as drawing on modern-non-modern dichotomies to extend the latter as examples of tradition and nostalgia in an effort to benefit from these within a given context.

68 See also Gabbert (2001b, 480) on the ways in which the educated Maya elite engage in the folklorization of Maya cultural practices, although he does not use this term to describe this process.
through which re-indigenization can happen. For instance, Valladolid Rivera (2008, 255) writes,

In the Andes of Perú, the Andean culture is thriving. The campesinos, who seed their little acreage and scattered parcels do not need to re-indigenize themselves. We, the agricultural technicians who come from these rural areas and have gone off to university—we are the ones who need to re-indigenize ourselves. Our professional training has not allowed us to see the vast richness of agrobiodiversity possessed in the knowledge of cultivation in the Andean culture.

Cajete (2008), too, agrees that he had two types of education: “one that was traditional and also one that was formal” (256). Thus, re-indigenization for him involves recovering from colonial power, and “mak[ing] an education system that works for ourselves” (257). One of the primary reasons indigenous peoples cite as a need for indigenous education (a kind of education that contrasts to Western formal education) is that knowing concepts through an indigenous language changes what and how one can know (e.g., Nelson 2008). For instance, Nelson (2008) describes re-indigenization as “using our native languages” (292). This argument is similar to the arguments that some Maya intellectuals in the Yucatan advance for expanding the realms in which Maya speakers can use the Maya language—that using Maya to do an activity infuse that activity with a Maya worldview. This type of thinking was used to design the Mayan Linguistics and Culture program at YXU largely in the Maya language.

In the case I describe, I understand re-indigenization to mean a process through which indigenous individuals become re-associated with certain emblematic diacritics of Mayaness. While the impetus for this process is largely a result of higher education, for these individuals, the process of re-indigenization is largely individual and is not
institutionally organized or motivated. Instead, re-indigenization is a personal process, one that is typically undertaken in order to provide increased credibility, authenticity, or expertise to an individual’s work. And this work typically takes place in an academic or intellectual sector. Herein, I describe my experience with Maya linguists and linguistics students.

My data challenge long-standing views in the literature on Maya identity and ethnicity in Yucatan that argue that any shift in identity or ethnic membership in the region is unidirectional, away from being Maya. In Thompson’s (1974) study, for example, he argues that all social actors are raising their children as Catrines, even the Mestizos Finos. It is only a subset of the older generation—in any given status category—that is either unable to or chooses not to change ethnic group membership. Among the younger generations, however, all choose to shift to Catrín ethnicity. Today, I find that the creation of a new Maya intellectual/academic class is contributing to processes of re-Mayanization. I argue that the shift in ethnic orientation can now go both ways—individuals can engage in practices that contribute to them being associated as less Maya as well as in practices that contribute to their social identification as more Maya. Furthermore, diacritics that have long been emblematic of Maya personhood, such as speaking the Maya language, have typically been considered to not carry prestige value (Thompson 1974). In light of the new processes of re-Mayanization that are taking place in the region, I argue that speaking Maya has now begun to carry prestige value, at least in some circles (see also Gabbert 2001b). Herein I discuss two key practices with

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69 While he does not describe this as a process of re-Mayanization, Gabbert (2001b) does discuss the value that speaking Maya has for the Maya professional class and the ways in which they are working to revive Maya cultural practices and develop notions of a “pan-Mayan ethnicity” in Yucatan (476-477).
which Intellectual Maya work to associate themselves in order to strengthen their social identification as *Maya*: ties to the land and speaking *jach maaya*.

**Ties to the land**

While Intellectual Maya live and work in urban settings and do non-land work, they have ties to rural settings and to the land. The primary difference between Intellectual Maya peoples’ rural and land ties and those of non-Intellectual Maya is that the latter’s ties are directly related to subsistence—that is, they are necessary activities for maintaining these individuals’ livelihoods. While Intellectual Maya may come from rural spaces and may have grown up with subsistence ties to the land, today their ties to rural spaces and to the land are not directly tied to their livelihoods. For instance, numerous Intellectual Maya I know actively sought out opportunities to connect to the land. My Maya teacher, for example, lamenting his distance from the village, planned to plant corn in the backyard of his house in the capital city. Another bought and maintains a *kool* (*milpa* ‘corn field’) in his hometown. He works this cornfield when he has spare time, but he is not able to maintain it on his own or even work as its primary keeper.

What I seek to argue is that, in order to become an *Intellectual* Maya, one must go through a process of de-Mayanization and re-Mayanization; in the case of land practices, this involves a detachment from and re-attachment to the land. In order to become *intellectuals*, Intellectual Maya have attended numerous years of schooling, obtaining high levels of formal education, speak Spanish, live in urban spaces, and have more economic viability. But they are *Maya* in that they speak Maya, are from or are tied to a more rural setting, and are tied in some way to the land.
The way in which one connects to the land is important—the connection can be practical or performative. For those Maya who have become recognized as Intellectual Maya, being Maya is an important part of their professional legitimacy. In the case of Mayan linguists, this is even more so the case. Being able to make claims to Maya personhood lends credibility, authenticity, and legitimacy to one’s professional claims about things Maya, especially the Maya language. Thus, for those Intellectual Maya who have become distanced significantly from emblems of Mayaness, some take them back up as ways of performatively associating themselves with widely recognizable models of Maya personhood. This includes, making *kool*, keeping a home in one’s hometown, performing culturally and religiously Mayan ceremonies (such as the *cha’ cháak* ‘bringing of the rain’), and wearing traditional dress at ceremonial settings. By engaging in these activities, Intellectual Maya reaffirm their Maya-ness, yet, because these activities are not central to subsistence, they do not carry the same cultural value as they would if the person were doing them to subsist.\(^\text{70}\) The recognizability of this, however, varies for different social actors—urban, non-Maya people and tradition-bound, rural Maya people will read these signs of Mayaness in different ways. The former typically see these as authentic displays of the individual’s culture, whereas the latter tend to view these as folkloric performances by a no-longer-very-Maya individual.

Another way in which some Intellectual Maya reconnect to the land is through self-naming practices. While Maya is often a term assigned by the other, amongst

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\(^{70}\) Granted, it can be argued that the fact that these practices do lend legitimacy to Intellectual Maya’s work, they do contribute to their professional and financial wellbeing and, thus, their ability to subsist. However, these individuals’ motivation for engaging in these practices does not stem from the primary goal of subsistence.
students at the university where I conducted much of my fieldwork, it was popular to refer to one’s self not as maaya, but instead as máasewáal. The term máasewáal was originally used in Maya to refer to non-elites and, it “is still occasionally used today to refer to Maya-speaking peasants” (Hanks 2010, 382). Bricker et al. (1998) gloss the term as ‘Indian, inferior’ (180). It is not a term that forms part of the vernacular of non-Maya-speaking Yucatecans, even though many other Maya-language terms do. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the term originally comes from Nahuatl (macehual) (Hanks 2010; Bricker et al. 1998). In light of its lack of use in everyday Spanish on the peninsula (whereas maya is frequently used), it is seen as a more Indian or indigenous (i.e. not-Spanish) way of referring to one’s self. It is often used by YXU students and other members of the new Maya Intellectual elite as a way of re-authenticating themselves as both Indian and peasant—tying themselves to the land and to the disenfranchised, the non-elites, thus making them more authentic. However, while the term does come from an indigenous language, it does not come from Maya, thus lending it a degree of irony when it is used to mark someone in the Yucatan as more authentically máasewáal, or to use an other’s expression, as more authentically Maya. (I revisit this point in Chapter 9.)

Jach maaya

References to jach maaya abound in Yucatan. While they do not always refer to the same thing, they typically refer to the talk of someone other than the person speaking. Jach maaya is often glossed in Spanish as maya puro ‘pure Maya’71 but it is also referred to as maya verdadero ‘true Maya’ (Gómez Navarrete 2009; Briceño Chel 2002; Pfeiler 1991);

71 It is also referred to as “‘old pure Maya’ (jach May’a t’aan), which is the Maya that was spoken 60-70 years ago (Pfeiler 1991)” (in Hervik 2003, 28).
basically it is understood to be Maya that is not “mixed” with Spanish. The following excerpt from Briceño Chel (2002) illustrates this point:

Let’s begin with the first major distinction established by the speakers of this language, for whom “we do not all speak the same” and who differentiate between two types of language:

1) The ancient, pure, and “true” variety, named “Jach maya,” and
2) The modern, corrupted, and “mixed/blended” variety called “El xe’ek” (Cfr. Pfeiler en Arzápalo y Gubler 1997).

Jach Maya, which literally means “the true maya,” is considered to be the Maya language par excellence, the ancient and pure form, while the xe’ek’, which literally means “mixed/blended” or “jumbled/stirred up,” is catalogued as a mixed variety, Mestisized ['crossbred'] and with loan words from Spanish. (para. 20-22)

People who talk about jach maaya typically agree that it is measured in terms of the incidences of Spanish one uses when speaking the Maya language. The more Spanish loanwords one uses in Maya, the less “pure” one’s Maya is. Jach maaya is always typically spoken somewhere else, by someone else, never by the one who is actually speaking. People’s awareness of its existence, however, is pervasive. Everyone knows about jach maaya, just not everyone speaks it (Castañeda 2004). Briceño Chel (2002), again elucidates this point:

A first close look at [the location of the manifestations of speakers of these varieties (edited for clarity)] tells us that jach maya is spoken by

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72 Original: “Empecemos con la primera gran distinción establecida por los hablantes de esta lengua para quienes “no todos hablamos igual” y quienes diferencian dos primeros tipos de lengua:

1) La variedad antigua, pura y ‘verdadera’, denominada la ‘Jach maya’, y

La jach maya, que literalmente significa ‘la verdadera maya’, es considerada como la lengua maya por excelencia, la forma antigua y pura, mientras que el xe’ek’, que literalmente significa ‘mezcla’ o ‘revoltura’, es catalogada como una variante mezclada, amestizada y con préstamos del español.”
grandparents, the ancient or the “jach mayas” [true Mayas], the “meros mayas” [the best, most important, or pure Mayas], who live in small towns. For some people, these Mayas are found in Quintana Roo, for others in Peto, and others opine that they are “near Valladolid and its surrounds,” although for others they can also be located in the areas near Uxmal and Ticul, or where the macehuales [Indians] are located, that is to say, in the zone of the Cruzo ‘ob [Maya rebels from the Caste War] in Quintana Roo…

On the other hand, the great majority opine that the mixed form is spoken in what was the henequen zone and in particular in the areas surrounding Mérida; sometimes as well it is emphasized that it is the way in which young people talk, who are not careful not to blend their Maya with Spanish, using loan words and creating hybrid words. (para. 23-24)

There are hypotheses about where jach and xe’ek’ maaya are spoken.

Interestingly, in Briceño Chel’s description, the blended Maya that incorporates Spanish is spoken around the capital—a space that is heavily marked as non-Maya—and amongst the young, who frequently travel to urban areas for school or work. The places Briceño Chel lists where jach maaya is spoken are in the southern and eastern parts of Yucatan state and along the border with Quintana Roo—areas largely associated with the Caste War and the Maya resistance to population of European descent who were aligned with the Mexican national government and who sought to politically control Yucatan. Thus there is a symbolic representation of the capital, Merida, as the seat of White, Hispanic-descent, political power, that has exerted the corruptive force of the Spanish language on

73 Original: “Un primer acercamiento a las manifestaciones de los hablantes sobre la localización de estas variedades nos señalan que la jach maya es hablada por los abuelos, los antiguos o los ‘jach mayas’, los ‘meros mayas’, que viven en los pueblos. Para algunas personas estos mayas se encuentran en Quintana Roo, para otros en Peto, y otros más opinan que están ‘por Valladolid y sus alrededores’, aunque para otros son también localizables en las cercanías de Uxmal y Ticul, o donde se ubican los macehuales, es decir, en la zona de los Cruzo’ob en Quintana Roo…

Por otro lado, la gran mayoría opina que la forma mezclada es hablado en lo que fue la zona henequenera y en especial en los alrededores de Mérida; a veces también se hace énfasis en que es la forma en la que hablan los jóvenes que no tienen cuidado en no revolver lo maya con lo español, tomando préstamos y creando palabras híbridas.”
Maya (among other things), which is juxtaposed to rural, eastern Yucatan state, where many communities still take political and legal power into their own hands and where Spanish has not yet “tarnished” spoken Maya. For, as Briceño Chel (2002) points out, “...those who speak jach maya do not use loan words and instead they use words that now no one uses” (para. 25). Briceño Chel (2002) also situates jach maaya speaking with the old and xe’ek’ maaya speaking with the young.

Briceño Chel, however is neither young nor old. He is middle aged. He is also from a town not far form the capital, not the region of the Cruzo’ob. He is a strong advocate for linguistic purism and is also considered to be a speaker of jach maaya. So, how is this possible?

In Chapter 6 of this dissertation, I explore the register of jach maaya in greater detail. There, I argue that the jach maaya that the Intellectual Maya speak is actually a new register of jach maaya, one that they use in order to associate themselves with the imagined, more-authentic Maya of the past. It is spoken in the present and imagined future (the linguistic future that Intellectual Maya are actively trying to create through language standardization and fortification projects in the region, including parts of the university program where I conducted my fieldwork) by university-educated individuals. In using this new register of jach maaya, they work to de-authenticate xe’ek’ maaya — the everyday language of monolingual Maya speakers.

74 Original: “los que hablan la jach maya no usan préstamos y en contra parte utilizan palabras que ahora ya nadie usa.”
75 Gabbert (2001b) also describes a similar dynamic, but he does not refer to educated Maya’s use of jach Maya as de-authenticating everyday Maya speakers’ speech. Instead he describes it as a denigrating process that sees everyday Maya speech as “polluted, degenerate and of inferior status” (479). He also does not recognize two varieties of jach Maya (one from the past and one from the present and imagined future).
The following example from my fieldwork illustrates this point:

On a hot July day in southern Yucatan state, I chatted with a man about his village, where I was from, and his work in the milpa. An airplane flew overhead. Excited that I knew how to say airplane in Yucatec Maya, I pointed and exclaimed “péepen k´áak’!” I explained that I live far away—náach—and that I have to take a péepen k´áak’ to get there. Pensively, the man replied that he had never been in an avión. He then asked, “what is this péepen k´áak’?” “A butterfly of fire,” I responded, translating from the Maya into Spanish. “Oh,” he said, “You speak pure Maya. Not like us; we don’t speak jach Maya. We have so much Spanish in our talk.”

(fieldnote 6/20/12)

During this interaction, I was actually on a school outing with my Maya teacher. In fact, we were visiting the same town that I would come to stay in a year later. I learned the Maya words for ‘airplane’ péepen k´áak’ from my Maya teacher in class that summer. My interlocutor was a native, monolingual Maya speaker, yet he was under the impression that he did not really speak pure Maya.

While this ethnographic anecdote may seem trivial or all-too-common, this is exactly my point in including it. This ideology is pervasive in the Yucatan and it works as a force of psychological violence against monolingual Maya speakers. That is, xe’ek’ Maya is not seen as being really Maya, even when it is spoken by native, monolingual speakers. Non-Maya speakers (who speak Spanish), too, will often agree that Maya speakers do not really speak Maya, because they can catch the gist of what is said based solely on the loanwords from Spanish in the Maya speaker’s talk. So, I argue that, to become more authentically Maya, Intellectual Maya speak jach maaya in order to mark themselves as more Maya. This may be due to the fact that their Mayaness is questioned in other ways due to their experiences in educational settings. Speaking in this way, thus,
helps them claims unique expertise to something *Maya* through a purified form of linguistic practice.

This process depends upon a re-centering of authenticity, from the native, monolingual Maya speaker’s speech to the invented speech of the bilingual Maya-Spanish speaking Intellectual Maya. Because monolingual Maya speakers do not speak another language, how could their speech not be authentic Maya? And, if they do not really speak Maya then, what do they speak? The authenticity of their speech is erased in order to ratify the Intellectual Maya’s invented *jach maaya* register. This erasure exerts a strong force of psychological violence on non-Intellectual Maya throughout the region. However, as the Intellectual Maya class grows in Yucatan, purist language ideologies abound and these serve to de-authenticate Maya speech that contains Spanish loan words. Even though many native, monolingual Maya speakers have no awareness of the fact that many of the words they use actually come from the Spanish language—and they would be hard pressed to tell you which ones those might be—the very existence of these words in their talk serves to de-authenticate their speech. At the same time, the absence (or perceived absence) of these Spanish-language loan words in *jach maaya* speakers’ talk lends authenticity to their speech. This is true even though much *jach maaya* speech is unintelligible to native, monolingual (“xe’ek”) Maya speakers, as I illustrate above.

Gabbert (2001b, 479), too, notes this trend, writing a decade and a half earlier:

The backward orientation of many of Yucatán’s Indianists is also shown in relation to language policy. They propagate an idea of Yucatec Maya as a language purified from Spanish influences. The ordinary speech of lower-class Maya-speakers, which contains numerous elements in lexicon and grammar derived from Spanish, is denigrated as polluted, degenerate and of inferior value. Thus, Indianists are themselves contributing to the preservation of the low status
of Maya in everyday interaction. Lower-class Maya speakers would be required to laboriously learn the ‘real’, ‘true’ Maya created by intellectuals (hach maya). Confronted with the few opportunities the knowledge of Maya still offers for social advancement in the peninsula, it is no wonder that most people prefer to acquire language skills in Spanish.

The Indianists Gabbert refers to are indigenous people who “develop group-specific social, economic, and political demands” that proceed from the indigenous community (2004, 208). Interestingly, Gabbert touches on a point made by linguists in other parts of Mexico—precisely that attempting to rid an indigenous language of Spanish often leads indigenous language speakers to stop using that language because they are unable to speak it free of Spanish-language influences, thus ultimately leading to the death of the language (e.g., Hagège 2009).

_Jach maaya _is imagined to exist in the past and to have been spoken by uneducated, rural, land-working individuals who most likely did not speak Spanish. They, too, are not from here, for they live in the past. There is, however, as Briceño Chel points out, the idea that they are contemporaries, only contemporaries that live somewhere else, in the southern and eastern parts of the state. If they are alive today, they are _abuelos _‘grandparents’ and they tell stories of how life used to be. The interesting thing, however, is that if you travel to the places where _jach maaya _is supposedly still spoken today, everyone there says that it is spoken elsewhere. Thus, as Maya people who have adopted lives in places that are different from their places of birth, who have left the life ways of rural communities, who have gained education and new types of talk, the Intellectual Maya, too, are from somewhere else. Thus, the popular, ideological notion of _jach maaya _is easily applied to them. I provide an example from a classroom interaction
at Yáax Xook University that illustrates how students are mobilizing jach maaya to make their talk “more Maya.”

Example 5.2. Whether to say pab or fab

During a sociolinguistics class, the topic for the day was linguistic variation. The students insisted that “f” and “rr” don’t exist in the linguistic repertoire of the grandparents. The teacher responds, but they are in yours. So, why do you say “pab”?76 (FN140115)

Pab is a reference to fab, a popular brand of detergent whose name became the generic word for soap on the peninsula. In Spanish, the term begins with an f, but f is not recognized as part of any official Maya alphabets and, the students argue that it is not used by speakers of older generations. What the students do not explain, however, is that the speakers they refer to (the grandparents) tend to be monolingual speakers from more rural settings with lower levels of formal education (if any). Thus, they have had minimal contact with the Spanish language and they typically do not have metalinguistic awareness about what terms in their speech count as Spanish-language loanwords; to them these terms are just Maya. Thus, monolingual Maya speakers often use /p/ in place of /f/ in their speech (i.e. for Spanish-language loans). The students in this scenario, however, are bilingual—they may be first-language Maya speakers, but all have mastered Spanish through their experience in K-12 schools if not elsewhere, such as at home or work. Thus, when the students, who all have /f/ in their linguistic repertoire, say pab instead of fab, I see this as a form of hypercorrection—an aligning to a more Maya notion of language practice.

76 Original: En un curso de sociolingüística la tema este día era la variación lingüística. Los alumnos insistieron que “f” y “rr” no están en el repertorio lingüístico de los abuelos. La maestra dice, “pero están en el de Uds. Entonces, ¿por qué dicen ‘pab’?”
Hypercorrection describes how a speaker (or actor, in the case of other semiotic forms) uses a form that is considered incorrect by most users, as a result of a misunderstanding of the rules, including an application of the rules that is too broad. This is often a result of an attempt to seem more formal or educated, or to appear as an in-group user of the given norm. An example of this can be seen in Agha’s (2007) discussion of /h/-dropping in David Copperfield; “humble” becomes “numble” instead of the expected “umble,” since the initial “h” is incorrectly preceded by “an” instead of “a,” and the “n” in “an” is contracted with the initial “u” in “umble” (214). In the case of the YXU linguistics students, I argue that they hypercorrect, using \( f \) instead of \( p \) to align themselves with a more recognizably Maya way of talking. While this example incorporates the use of a Spanish-language loanword and, thus, would normally not be considered \( jach \ maaya \), there is a conflation of “the way the grandparents talk” and \( jach \ maaya \), thus the students’ metalinguistic awareness of not only the differences between “how kids talk today” and “how the grandparents talk” and their understanding of the Maya phonemic structure lead them to not reject this loanword but instead to Mayanize it.

\( Jach \ maaya \), then, serves Intellectual Maya in a process of re-Mayanization because it is the most ideologically Maya form of the language, and its use, thus, marks a speaker as authentically Maya. It gives a nod to the pure, authentic Maya past in the present moment, and it creates a new class of experts who not only control its production and use, but also who can access it. They create a new elite Maya class of intellectuals.\(^7\)

\(^7\) As I describe at various points throughout this dissertation, the Intellectual Maya I describe here actually do not form a uniform group. Instead their internal distinctions reflect two groups—one that is powerful
Do the Maya ever really stop being Maya? Unspoken emblems of Mayaness

Before closing, I want to return to the question of Mayaness and ask if it is really possible to ever stop being Maya. To do this, I want to look closely at what differentiates an Intellectual Maya person from a non-Maya person. (See Figure 5.3.)

Figure 5.3. Diacritics of Intellectual Maya and non-Maya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Maya</th>
<th>Non-Maya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More economically mobile</td>
<td>More economically mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-land working</td>
<td>Non-land working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish- and Maya-speaking</td>
<td>Spanish-speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily, Western clothes</td>
<td>Daily, Western clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special occasions, Maya-style/Western clothes</td>
<td>Special occasions, Maya/Western clothes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data suggest that the primary difference between Intellectual Maya and non-Maya people is that the former speak Maya whereas the latter do not. Is speaking Maya, then, the primary determiner of Mayaness? If the Intellectual Maya stopped speaking Maya, would they then pass as non-Maya? The answer to both of these questions is, no. Well, not exactly. As Thompson (1974) points out, it is not any one factor that determines one’s Maya- or non-Mayaness. It is determined by a series of factors, combined in a specific way. In the case of Intellectual Maya, if an Intellectual Maya person were a monolingual Spanish speaker, that person would likely be identified by non-Maya people as an Indio letrado, but an Indio nonetheless; and by Intellectual

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78 A ‘lettered Indian’ or ‘lettered indigenous person’ (‘lettered’ as in (formally) educated or learned).
Maya as an *Intellectual Maya*, but perhaps a little less Maya, for lack of speaking Maya; and by a non-Intellectual Maya perhaps as *ladinized person*, still likely as an intellectual, but a ladino intellectual, for lack of all widely circulating emblematic qualities of Mayaness.

This raises an important point that has not been taken up much less treated in the existing literature on ethnicity in Yucatan. These “enregistered emblems” (Agha 2007) of personhood are relative—they depend upon who is reading them as an emblem. While many of the enregistered meanings of these stereotypes of personhood circulate widely, they are not equally widely circulating for all people, nor are they stereotypic *in the same way* for all people. Furthermore, they cannot be read in isolation. That is, speaking Maya is not a sufficient diacritic for socially identifying someone in some way. Speaking Maya *can*, when combined with other diacritics of some type or category of personhood *point to* some socially recognized identity category, but speaking Maya alone is not enough.

As I argue above, when enough widely circulating emblems of Mayaness align, one can be successfully identified as *Maya*. However, in the absence of sufficient widely circulating emblematic diacritics of Mayaness, or perhaps the total absence of them, unspoken emblems of Mayaness are called upon to differentiate the Intellectual Maya from the non-Maya. These include phenotype, surname, and lineage (which is related to both of the former). I call these “unspoken” emblems of Mayaness because everyone

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79 The actual terms used would vary based on the person in question and the context. But, a Maya person might call a ladinized person anything from *ts‘ul* (or *ts‘ul* ‘gentleman, master’, to *güero* ‘a person with light colored (typically blonde, but also light brown or red) hair’ (even if s/he is not *güero*), *patron* ‘boss’, or *jefe* ‘boss’. Just as *güero* is employed even if the person in question is not light haired, *patron* and *jefe* are employed even if the person in question is not the speaker’s boss.
knows about them, but people typically do not talk about them. Thompson (1974) notes this in some of the cited passages below.

When widely circulating emblematic diacritics of Mayaness are absent, a person can hold up one or more of the unspoken emblems of Mayaness to validate or undermine a person’s Mayaness. As I indicated above, a non-Maya-speaking Maya person can quickly be de-Mayanized by the mention of his/her lack of Maya language competence. This person remains indigenous, *Indio*, but not necessarily fully *Maya*. Similarly, a person who does not speak Maya and who is not associated with any emblems of Mayaness, may still be considered *Maya* (or *Indio*, depending) if his or her surname is a Maya language name. Finally, when all other diacritics of Mayaness are absent, phenotype is sufficient to classify someone as not belonging to the non-Maya category. That is, a white, Spanish-descent, *Meridiano*, may rapidly “other” someone based on how she or he looks. *Indio* (implying an uncivilized quality, see Gabbert 2001b) and *hüiro*, a term with a slightly less indigenous, but highly unrefined, connotation.

Gabbert (2001b) and Thomson (1974) note, and I agree, that these unspoken emblems of Mayaness are not the first diacritics individuals call upon when identifying someone as Maya. Widely circulating emblems are typically used instead. However, in the absence of sufficient widely circulating emblems of Mayaness, I argue that these are used to socially differentiate people in Yucatan:

As in most of Middle America, however, *ethnic differences are seldom phrased by Ticuleños in racial terms* [emphasis added], through expressions presuming innate superiority or inferiority attributed to biological variables. Most commonly they are of a social and cultural character, emphasizing recognized differences in wealth, education, social
prestige, customs, and traditions between Catrines and Mestizos. (Thompson 1974, 80)

Phenotype is one of these unspoken emblems of Mayaness. Phenotype is discussed in the broader literature on indigeneity in Mexico and in Maya communities in other parts of the Maya world. However, it is not generally discussed in the literature on the Maya of Yucatan. Thompson (1974) refers to “race” (a biological category), but limits his discussion to skin pigmentation. He also argues that race is not important to Ticuleños—the focus of his study—in determining social status:

Whether Mestizo or Catrín, the great majority of them are virtually unconcerned with race as an issue and do not recognize real or putative racial differences as distinguishing between them, in recognition of the common and intermingled heritages acknowledged by most. The important differences among people are considered to be those of culture and social prestige, and not biology. In fact, racial distinctions are almost never given voice by Ticuleños. When they are given expression, it is most commonly by a few wealthy Catrines of generations of high social position who regard themselves as being of Hispanic ancestry. Yet, even among the wealthy it is culture and not biology that is important, and racial innuendo is generally held in great distaste. The only other Ticuleños who will occasionally utter a remark directed at race are Catrines of very low economic status, and such remarks are typically construed as a thinly disguised attempt to exaggerate the social distance between one's own low and insecure social position and that of Mestizos as a group.

To illustrate the point that race is an unimportant matter to most Ticuleños, in the random sample only 3 of 38 Catrines and 2 of 85 Mestizos emphasized race as a point of difference between ethnic groups. These few exceptions notwithstanding, considerations of ethnic differences on the basis of blood, la sangre, have practically no significance. One might even wish to make the stronger statement that Ticuleños simply do not care very much about the entire matter of race and racial differences. The subject does not normally enter into conversations [emphasis added] and has little affect on the behavior and social relations of people.

In those extremely rare instances where racial distinctions are made, they are usually based on differences in pigmentation, for a few people regard dark skin as a sign of Maya blood and light skin as an
indicator of non-Indian heritage. Many older Ticuleños, however, find it more significant that dark skin may be the product of the tanning action of the sun that comes from long hours spent laboring in the fields, whereas light skin may be associated with more prestigious activities in which people are not so exposed to the merciless rays of the sun. Those who choose this “prestige class” interpretation of the significance of skin tones considerably outnumber individual who would prefer a facile racial explanation. And, to complicate the matter further, it is widely recognized that the range of skin shades spans all of the social segments of the community, for even among the wealthy and old-line Catrines who stand at the pinnacle of the socioeconomic status hierarchy there are some who have very dark skin, a fact few people would choose to emphasize and that reduces the issue of pigmentation to something of only minor importance. (Thompson, 1974, 81-82)

Today, it remains true that people with dark and light skin can be found across the social spectrum. There are Maya children in villages who have blond hair and blue eyes, a remnant of German ancestry, and there are members of the wealth, “White,” Hispanic descent class who have dark skin. Phenotype, today, has more to do with facial features and body shape than it does with skin pigmentation. When all other widely circulating emblems of Mayanness are missing, phenotype can be used to explain that someone still does not quite qualify as non-Maya, or at least as non-indigenous. The diacritic is used as the primary “unspoken” marker of indigeneity in Yucatan today. For instance, I overheard the following conversation between two non-Maya Meridianos—both of whom were college-educated, of European descent, and from families that were formerly powerful in Yucatan state. They were discussing whether or not someone they knew was Maya:

Example 5.3. Discussion about whether someone is Maya

He’s Maya.
How can he be Maya if he doesn’t even speak Maya?
But, aren’t you seeing his face? He’s more Indian than Juárez.
Well, then, he’s a lettered Indian. The individual in question also held a university degree and worked in the same field as the individuals quoted above. The pair explained to me that, speaking Maya is something they associate with being Maya. And, while being a non-Maya-speaking Spanish speaker, being highly educated, and living in an urban area might convince them that the person is not Maya, he cannot escape his indigenous-ness. The person in question, then, is simply a lettered Indian to my interlocutors. Interestingly, the pair hired workers from small towns along the north coast of Yucatan to work for them on projects. These workers typically did not speak Maya. They had low levels of education and were low income; they did unskilled manual labor for my interlocutors. When I accompanied the pair to work one day, I overheard a pair of workers talking about a former co-worker who had moved on to bigger and better things. One of them said to another—Who does he think he is? He’s just as Indian as us. Thus, the term indio ‘Indian’, is used both to describe the other as well as to name someone as in-group, but in both cases the meaning is not favorable. Furthermore, the term suggests that, while one might not be considered Maya in certain circles in the Yucatan, s/he may still be considered Indian or indigenous—a category from which some individuals do not seem to be able to disassociate.


The speaker here refers to Benito Juárez, President of Mexico from 1858-1867 and 1867-1872, who is widely considered not only the first indigenous president of Mexico but also the first indigenous president in Latin America. Juárez self-identified as being born of parents who were Indians of the primitive race of this country (“indios de la raza primitiva del país” (Benito Juárez 1964[1971])). He is widely recognized as an example of how the Indian can better himself or improve his conditions in life.

Original: “¿Quién se cree? Es igual de indio que nosotros.”
Another key unspoken emblem of Mayaness in Yucatán today is surname.

Thompson (1974, 82) discusses its importance:

In addition to skin color, there is another phenomenon that is occasionally imbued with racial significance. This is the matter of an individual's surname--Maya or Spanish--that some people choose to interpret in explicitly biological terms, although the great majority are concerned with the significance of one's name as an indicator of his cultural heritage and social prestige. Unlike pigmentation, however, the surname may be changed from Maya to a higher prestige Spanish form and such changes have been so common in the history of Yucatán that name-change has practically assumed the status of a folk tradition.

Surname changing typically happens in using semantic or phonological similarity. An example of semantic similarity is changing the Maya surname, 'Ek' 'star', to the Spanish Estrella (Thompson, 1974, 83). Phonological similarity might involve changing the Maya ká'amil to Camara in Spanish (Thompson, 1974, 83). Other options include changing the order of last names. In Mexico, people have two last names. The first is their father's first last name and the second is their mother's first last name. The first last name is more widely used and generally more socially prestigious, since it comes from the father. However, if a father's first last name is Maya (e.g., May) and a mother's first last name is non-Maya (e.g., Hernández), then the offspring may switch the order of these: Juan May Hernández thus becomes Juan Hernández May. A person may simply choose to duplicate the non-Maya surname and drop the Maya surname all together: thus, Juan May Hernández might become Juan Hernández Hernández.83 Finally, Thompson (1974) points out that a person may borrow a surname from a distant kinsperson. Because surname changing is widely practiced, it is well understood that surname alone is not

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83 An interesting contrast to this is my Maya teacher, who has two Maya last names, and has no interest in changing them, for they lend legitimacy to him as Maya.
sufficient for identifying someone as Maya or non-Maya. A Maya surname can readily identify someone as Maya, but the absence of one does not readily identify someone as non-Maya or non-indigenous.

Within a generation, changing one’s surname is not a discrete practice. Many individuals in the community will know that the individual changed his or her surname. Only in larger urban areas and for those unacquainted with the individual in question can this practice have any effect. However, with the following generation, it is possible that the surname will be more readily accepted and its force as a marker of non-Mayaness may be more successful. Still, to be effective, it must be taken into consideration in combination with a host of other diacritics of non-Mayaness. And, as I discuss above, phenotype is an unspoken emblem of Mayanness that can only be changed slowly, over generations. Thus, lineage becomes an important unspoken emblem of ethnicity in Yucatan.

Thompson (1974) notes,

…“Mestizo” remains very much as it has always been—a marker of ethnic identity. …their identification and position in the social system of Ticul are structured by their manifest relation to the Indian component of the bi-ethnic heritage of the community [emphasis added]. … Catrines are not merely Ticuleños who prefer European clothing and who usually speak Spanish as a matter of course. They are the descendants of old-line Hispanic forebears or are ex-Mestizos [emphasis added] who have disavowed identification with Maya heritage. These latter are those who have taken full part in the economic and educational events of recent years, and whose participation has resulted in a change from Maya-Mestizo folk culture to the life of the Ladinized Catrin townsman. Just as the Mayas of yesterday have become the Mestizos of today in Ticul, in many cases the Mestizos of today are becoming the Catrines of tomorrow. (13)
Thompson argues that a person in late 1960s early 1970s Ticul, Yucatan could “disavow identification with Maya heritage” in order to change ethnic membership within a lifetime. Today, I agree more closely with Loewe (2010), who, writing some 25 years later, found that lineage (abolengo) was key to identifying one’s ethnic status, and it could not be changed. Despite the increased social mobility in Yucatan and the new ways of being Maya that have been produced through this process, strong effects of ethnic hierarchies are still very real in Yucatan today. Granted, it depends upon whom you ask. A monolingual Maya person from a small village who still engages in milpa agriculture today will likely opine differently about a person’s ethnic status than will “the descendant of old-line Hispanic forebearers.” Thus, it remains to consider the power and social influence associated with the practice of ethnic group membership in the region (Rhodes 2014). For instance, my Maya teacher’s Mayaness is questioned both in the village and in the capital—the family with which I stayed in the village did not see him as really Maya, and in the capital, non-Maya academics readily identify him as Maya, or at least as indigenous, an Indio urbano ‘urban Indian’.

**Conclusion**

Thompson (1974) argued that, “the two ethnic groups will become progressively less distinct” (173). In some ways, this has happened—so much so that Maya individuals who have become de-associated with widely circulating emblems of Mayaness are actively re-associating themselves with those in an effort to distinguish themselves as Maya. Further evidence of this is the widespread practice of calling upon, what I call, unspoken emblems of Mayaness to differentiate members of Yucatecan society into Maya and non-
Maya groups. This latter practice suggests that another of Thompson’s observations persists in Yucatan today: the “insistent element of an ancient castelike social distance” that Thompson (1974) described “between Ticuleños of European cultural heritage and those of Maya background” (10).

While in the colonial period, knowing Maya was “a form of capital and a justification for claims to authority” (Hanks 2010, 10), in the post-colonial period, the literature shows that ethnic change in Yucatan has been unidirectional, away from Mayaness. Today, however, the tide is changing, at least for an elite group of individuals in the Yucatan. My data challenge the longstanding notion that ethnic change in Yucatan is unidirectional, away from Mayaness. Instead, I find that, today, Intellectual Maya, like my Maya language teacher, are actively re-associating themselves with widely circulating emblems of Mayaness in an effort to increase the legitimacy of their professional contributions. This, too, suggests that the diacritics of Mayaness in Yucatan are changing. Over forty years ago, Thompson (1974) found that speaking Maya carried “no prestige value” (117). Today, it does, but only for an elite segment of the Maya population (and perhaps a few foreign scholars). Thus, Mayaness in the Yucatan is a fluid and contingent category that is steeped in historical distinctions. Today, education is the defining factor in shifting one’s ethnic identification in Yucatan—both away from (primarily in the K-12 enterprise) and back toward (primarily at the university level and beyond) Mayaness. However, as Thompson observed over 40 years ago, it alone is not enough to garner someone the designation of *Maya* or *non-Maya*. 
The process of re-Mayanization that I describe above through the practices of re-connecting to the land and speaking *jach maaya* is successful precisely because it re-associates Maya Intellectuals with emblematic features of Maya identity in Yucatan. It is precisely because Maya Intellectuals are no longer associated with widely circulating, emblematic diacritics of Mayaness in the Yucatan that they can garner prestige value from re-associating themselves with these emblematic features. In fact, key to this process is that the *type of Maya* these Intellectual Maya speak and use in their professional work is not associated with the contemporary Maya, and the *ties to the land* are not their principal means of subsistence—they are folkloric practices.

Now that I have provided a discussion of how the category *Maya* is thought about and constructed in Yucatan today, I hone in on the language variety I described in this chapter, *jach maaya*, to show how ideologies about this type of talk are being mobilized to lend authenticity to certain types of speech practices upon which the Intellectual Maya, and in particular, Maya linguists, rely. I focus on this speech variety because *jach maaya* is an important tool for Maya linguists.
CHAPTER 6: The two registers of jach maaya: purist jach maaya and ancient jach maaya

Introduction

As with any language, in the Maya language there is linguistic variation across individuals and groups of speakers. One of the most significant differences in Maya speech is dialectical (often called regional) variation. Regionally, there are phonological, morphological, and lexical differences in the Maya spoken across the Yucatan peninsula (Pfeiler & Hofling 2006). These include variations in pluralization, word choice, use of contractions, and formation of the first person plural, among others. Yet, despite these variations Maya speech remains mutually intelligible across the regions in which it is spoken. Another type of variation is the use of different linguistic registers. A concept I explain at greater length below, linguistic registers mark social variation within a society. In the literature on the Maya language and amongst everyday speakers of the language, Maya is widely recognized as consisting of two linguistic registers: jach maaya and xe’ek’ maaya. The focus of this chapter is on the latter of these two variation phenomena—linguistic register formation. I argue that, as opposed to the two linguistic registers of Maya widely described in the literature, three registers actually exist. These are xe’ek’ maaya and two distinct registers of jach maaya—ancient jach maaya and purist jach maaya.

84 Pronounced /hač/. This is written both as jach and hach in Maya. ‘Maya’ is also written variably in Maya: maaya or maya. Jach maaya is roughly referred to as ‘pure Maya’, whereas xe’ek’ maaya is considered to be ‘mixed Maya’; I provide a more complete explanation of both of these registers further below.
In this chapter, I discuss the contemporary phenomenon of the formation of purist *jach maaya*, and I show how it is a distinct register from ancient *jach maaya*. I also show how asymmetries of register, as a function of availability and use, both contribute to the reduced intelligibility of Maya in general and hold serious social, political, and intellectual consequences in the region. Finally, I argue that the production of purist *jach maaya* relies on the wide recognizability of the undifferentiated notion of *jach maaya*, which is stereotypically associated with the *jach maaya* of the past (what I call ancient *jach maaya*). By not distinguishing between these two registers of *jach maaya*, purist *jach maaya* grounds itself in the perceived authenticity of ancient *jach maaya*. This move is part of a larger political project in the Yucatan in which the individuals who ascribe to certain linguistic ideologies and preferences hold greater degrees of political and intellectual power. I call these individuals the powerful Intellectual Maya (Rhodes 2014).  

85 I consider this to be a political project for it is not strictly academic or intellectual in nature, nor is its end solely to fortify the Maya language. This project is linked to identity work and processes of re-Mayanization at large on the peninsula.

**Registers of Yucatec Maya**

A register is a set of linguistic practices associated with certain social behaviors or activities and therefore sometimes with the people who engage in them (Agha 1999; Halliday 1978). Legalese and medicalese are established linguistic registers of English. Registers also “typically have a socially distributed existence over populations, so that all

85 I distinguish the Intellectual Maya from the non-Intellectual Maya in that the former are primarily engaged in intellectual labor. However, I do not see the Intellectual Maya as a homogeneous group. It is, in fact, made up of two factions, which I call the purists and everyone else. The purists are a politically powerful group in the Yucatan and they control access to resources and, as a result, the conversation about the Maya language and its standardization in the region, as I discuss in the preceding chapter.
members of a language community are not equally familiar with all of its registers” (Agha 1999, 216). Registers are best identified by, “attending to the metalinguistic practices of language users” (Agha 1999, 216), and their existence is “associated with social regularities of speech valorization” (218). “Such social regularities are identified when metapragmatic judgments offered by one speaker are found to be socially replicable—that is, shared, by many categories of speakers within a population” (Agha 1999, 218).

Through a social process called enregisterment (Agha 1999; 2007), some speech forms become differentiated from the rest of the language as a distinctive pattern of use and come to be treated as signs of social positionality and difference. This process can also apply to other semiotic and non-linguistic forms. When the signs of social positionality and difference associated with a given register are taken-for-granted, that is, when they are seen to be natural extensions of the people who display them, they are said to be naturalized (Parmentier 1994). Here I mean specifically that the naturalized forms of a given register come to be seen as properties of persons rather than situations of use. Naturalization obscures the processes through which social phenomena are produced, making those phenomena appear to exist naturally in the world. Instead of being recognized as social conventions, these signs can seem “…objective rather than socially constituted, invariant rather than malleable, autonomous rather than dependent, eternal rather than historical, universal rather than relative, and necessary rather than contingent” (Parmentier 1994, 176). When this happens, the inequalities of power and authority inherent in their formation are often eclipsed (Keane 2001; Mertz 2007; Mitchell 2002;
Rabinow 1996; Scott 1998). As numerous anthropologists have shown (e.g., Gal & Irvine 1995; Irvine & Gal 2000; Kroskrity 1992; Silverstein 1979, 1996; Woolard 1998; Wortham 2001), language ideologies, or views about how certain types of language use are linked to certain types of people and behaviors in the world (Woolard 1998), naturalize registers and can be used to valorize certain registers over others as “standard” or “correct” or both (recognizing that these overlap but do not necessarily refer to the same thing) within a given institutionalized field. These ideas about types of talk can extend to types of people and serve as a means for interpreting people and their talk in social contexts. This process of enregisterment, as I show below, is key to Intellectual Maya’s successful formation and use of the purist jach maaya register.

_Jach and xe’ek’ maaya_

As I explain briefly in Chapter 5, _jach_ and _xe’ek’ maaya_ are widely recognized registers of Yucatec Maya (Berkley 2001; Briceño Chel 2000, 2002; Colazo-Simon 2007; Cornejo Portugal & Bellon Cárdenas 2009; Cru 2014; Gabbert 2001; Gómez Navarrete 2009; Guerrettaz 2013, 2015; Hervik 2003; Pfeiler 1998; Pfeiler & Hofling 2006; Vrooman 2000). Both scholars and everyday Maya speakers refer to and can identify and differentiate between these two registers. However, only one article that analyzes these as linguistic registers has been published (Pfeiler 1998). In her article, Pfeiler (1998) writes that, ...it is considered that _hach maya_ is the pure Maya, the ancient Maya, the legitimate Maya, or the true language. More recent research conducted by Guerrettaz (2013; and

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86 Original: “…se considera que _la hach maya_ es la maya pura, la maya antigua, la maya legítima, o la lengua verdadera…” (Pfeiler 1998, 131). Note, however, that the idea that _hach_ connotes ‘pure’ in vernacular Maya has been questioned (personal communication with J. Lucy, November 30, 2015).
personal communication) with bilingual (Maya-Spanish) education teachers in the Yucatan also identifies purity as a key aspect of *jach maaya*—specifically, “‘pure’ Maya was often implicitly constructed as a desirable and superior version of Maya in the classroom, one which views influences from Spanish in a somewhat negative light” (145). Furthermore, the teachers with whom Guerrettaz worked placed “a heavy emphasis on learning ‘pure’ Maya as it was spoken in the past by ‘los antepasados’ (the ancestors), the Mayas who lived during pre-Hispanic times” (2013, 145). Numerous other scholars also define *jach* (also *hach* or *hač*) *maaya* in similar ways (e.g., Berkley 2001; Briceño Chel 2000; Cesario 2014; Gómez Navarrete 2009; Guerrettaz 2013; Hervik 2003).

This association of *jach maaya* with the ancient Maya, the pre-conquest Maya of the past, is pervasive. Guerrettaz (2013) argues that, “the construct of *jach maya*, or ‘real maya’, can be traced back to [the colonial period], as Spanish colonists began writing grammars and dictionaries of Maya” (50) (see also Hanks 2010). The notion that *jach maaya* comes from a pure, ancient, pre-Spanish past is perhaps erroneous; however, it is key to the ideological formation of this register. In fact, it is the ideological linchpin upon which the formation of the contemporary version of *jach maaya*—what I call purist *jach maaya*—rests. I explore these ideas in greater detail below in my discussion of the formation of the purist *jach maaya* register. What is important to point out here, however, is that popular notions of *jach maaya* explicitly define it as something from the past. However, everyday references to *jach maaya* often include a register of speech that was learned recently (or is presently being learned) by individuals in formal educational
settings. Further below I tease out the differences between the two registers of *jach maaya* in greater detail.

Everyday speakers and scholars alike typically agree that the primary difference between *jach* and *xe’ek’ maaya* is measured in terms of the incidences of Spanish one uses when speaking the Maya language. The more Spanish loanword focus one uses in Maya, the more mixed (*xe’ek’*) and, hence, less “pure,” one’s Maya is.

In addition to Spanish loanwords, *jach* and *xe’ek’ maaya* are differentiated based on identity focus that includes differences in where, when, and by whom they are spoken. This is in keeping with Agha’s (1999) assessment of the distribution of registers within a language community. Pfeiler (1998) and Briceño Chel (2002) find that *jach maaya* is regarded as spoken in Yucatan state around Valladolid (the East) and Peto (the South), in Quintana Roo around the city of Felipe Carrillo Puerto (an area called the Maya zone), and in Campeche state in the Northeast (the region of the Chenes 87) (Pfeiler 1998, 131).

Briceño Chel (2002) also points out that the grandparents and ancient people in the small towns speak *jach maaya* while the young people in urban areas around the capital speak *xe’ek’ maaya*. Pfeiler (1998) corroborates that only older people speak *jach maaya*; it is not the language of the young. This introduces a temporality to the two registers—one resides primarily in the past, whereas the other resides in the present and the imagined future of the youth who speak it. However, this raises a series of paradoxes. First, neither author specifies what one speaks if one does not live in the regions they specify. What do residents of small, non-southeastern towns away from the Yucatecan capital speak? They also do not tell us what one speaks if one is neither young nor old. Is

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87 Chenes is the Spanish-language pluralization of the Maya language term /če’en/ ‘well’ (for water).
there some other register of Maya spoken by the middle aged and by those from the North and West of Yucatan state, from the South and West of Campeche, and from the greater state of Quintana Roo? Briceño Chel (2002) further suggests that jach maaya uses words that no one uses today—so, then, how is it spoken today? Interestingly, many people, myself included, would consider Briceño Chel to be a jach maaya speaker.88 However, he is from a town not far from the Yucatecan capital, Merida, and he lives and works in the capital. How, then, is it possible that he speaks jach maaya? The answer to this question lies in the differentiation of purist jach maaya from ancient jach maaya. The register that Briceño Chel refers to when he writes about jach maaya, I argue, is actually ancient jach maaya. I further argue that the register that he and many of his colleagues speak today is purist jach maaya. I return to this point momentarily, but first I present some alternative views on the speech forms under discussion.

Armstrong-Fumero (2009) takes a different approach to divvying up the Maya language. Instead of using the terms jach or xe’ek’ maaya, he identifies the two registers of “Deep Maya” and “Imaginary Maya” (362). Deep Maya “uses practices such as punning and code switching to exploit a range of phonological ambiguities that exist at the interstices of Spanish and Maya,” while Imaginary Maya refers to “a style of languaging that tends to constitute ‘good’ Maya” and is “characterized by the excision of calques, lexical borrowings, and other elements that disrupt purity of an idealized language” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009, 362). He locates both Deep and Imaginary Maya in the past and in the present—citing examples of Deep Maya from 19th century documents

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88 Although his speech and the speech of all jach maaya speakers is never fully free of Spanish loanwords, leading some authors (e.g., Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015) to argue that it is imaginary.
and contemporary story telling sessions and Imaginary Maya as ancient linguistic forms as well as contemporary linguistic forms learned through book study and formal schooling.

Armstrong-Fumero avoids using the terms *jach* and *xe’ek’ maaya*, yet his interlocutors do make reference to at least the former. One of his interlocutors hears a radio broadcast in Maya and remarks to Armstrong-Fumero, in what he calls “her more-colloquial Maya,” that the broadcast was in *jach maaya*, and that she did not understand it (2009, 361). On another occasion, Armstrong-Fumero, upon request, provided a little-known Maya term (one he called “obsolete”); the fact that this schooled foreigner could produce such a term when native speaking locals could not provided evidence of “a common assertion that the rural people of Yucatán no longer speak the ‘real’ Maya (Ma. *jach maaya*)” (2009, 363). On another occasion, one of his interlocutors commented that, “[t]he way we speak it has become very mixed” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009, 367). Armstrong-Fumero makes no attempt to equate his notion of Imaginary Maya with *jach maaya* nor does he equate Deep Maya with *xe’ek’ maaya*; however, his descriptions of Imaginary Maya are highly similar to descriptions found elsewhere of *jach maaya*. His concept of Deep Maya, however, is not analogous to *xe’ek’ maaya*. He does describe “everyday” or “vernacular” Maya, which more closely approximate the *xe’ek’ maaya* register of speech—perhaps something akin to his fellow radio listener’s “more-colloquial Maya.” I find his notion of Imaginary Maya to be quite similar to the two

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89 In the quotation, “Ma.” is an abbreviation for ‘Maya’, and the parenthetical text points the reader to how Armstrong-Fumero’s interlocutors refer to what he calls “the ‘real’ Maya” in the Maya language.
90 Personal communication with Armstrong-Fumero (July 2, 2015) suggests that his interlocutor was speaking in Spanish and likely used the term *mezclado*.
91 Guerrettaz (2013) arrives at this same conclusion.
registers of *jach maaya* I identify. Armstrong-Fumero, resides in the present and learned Maya through school. He is not a grandfather from a small village, but he does use words from the past—such as the “obsolete” word for *moon* that he produced above. He learned these words in school, thus I argue that he learned the *jach maaya* of the present and imagined future, what I am calling here purist *jach maaya*.

Armstrong-Fumero is not the only author who writes about this contemporary, school-learned Maya or about the idea that it is something imaginary or unreal. Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) equate “*jach*” or “ideal” *maaya* with something that is *irreal* ‘unreal’ (1). They argue this because *jach maaya* is premised on notions of linguistic purity, yet, under a section of their paper entitled “unreal purity,” they point out that, there are no pure languages; all languages have greater or lesser degrees of loanwords from other languages (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 10). Thus, one could argue that *jach maaya* does not actually exist to the extent that it is never actually spoken in its entirety—no one is capable of speaking Maya without some influence from Spanish (or some other language), even if this influence is limited to linguistic filler, such as *um* or *and*. And, text artifacts, which more successfully approximate purist *jach maaya* than does natural speech, typically require glossaries or explanations of the purist forms they incorporate, given that these often are not readily intelligible to native Maya speakers. While pure *jach maaya* speech may not exist in reality, purist *jach maaya*

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92 Original: “El Maya ideal o jach maaya…” (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 1)
93 Original: “Pureza irreal. No existen lenguas puras, todas las lenguas tienen mayor o menor grado de préstamos de otras lenguas” (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 10).
94 Common filler terms borrowed from Spanish and used in Maya include *este, y, pues, osea.*
linguistic forms are not wholly imaginary, for these have very real effects in Maya
speakers’ everyday lives.

It is clear that there exists a contemporary, purified register of Maya that contrasts
with the everyday, spoken register (Armstrong-Fumero 2009; Guerrettaz 2013; Pomol
*Imaginary Maya*. Guerrettaz (2013) refers to it as *las normas* (referring to linguistic
standardization project95), and Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) call it *jach maaya*.
While the names of these speech forms vary, each describes a purified register of Maya
that is learned in the present (and will be learned in the imagined future, which I explain
further below) by individuals who participate in formal educational programs. I argue
that these speech forms constitute a unique register of *jach maaya*—purist *jach maaya*—,
which contrasts with the *jach maaya* of the past.

**Ancient jach maaya and purist jach maaya**

While *jach maaya* is widely discussed as a monolithic entity in Yucatan, I argue that *jach
maaya* is actually two distinct registers of Maya—what I call ancient *jach maaya* and
purist *jach maaya*. I find these to be two distinct registers for a variety of reasons,
including that the two registers are spoken at different sociohistorical moments, in
different geographical spaces, in different contexts of use, by different populations of
speakers with different socio-demographic characteristics, and for different social ends.

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95 Guerrettaz (2013) summarizes language standardization efforts: “Efforts to standardize Maya address
complex linguistic issues such as the alphabetic inventory, the relationship between regional variation and
written standardization, word-boundaries, the representation of vowels, the representation of graphemes
that originate from Spanish, punctuation, neologisms, and Spanish lexical borrowings” (171).
Ancient jach maaya was spoken in the past, while purist jach maaya is spoken in the present and imagined future. Ancient jach maaya was simply the Maya that people who had not been in regular contact with Spanish speakers spoke. It was widely spoken by almost all native, monolingual Maya speakers as the everyday vernacular. No existing literature suggests that, what I call ancient jach maaya was ever unintelligible to the majority of everyday Maya speakers at the time when it was the primary vernacular. Today, ancient jach maaya is considered the language of the grandparents because these are the only individuals who remain from that time. Furthermore, ancient jach maaya was not intentionally purged of Spanish; instead, it readily incorporated Spanish-language loanwords when necessary (e.g., Gabbert 2001). However, due to the contexts of use and the population of speakers who spoke ancient jach maaya (two characteristics I explore at greater length below), it simply did not have much Spanish in it. In contrast, today’s purist jach maaya speakers intentionally purge Spanish from their Maya through the invention of new words and the borrowing of words from the past that have fallen into disuse. As the literature, everyday life experience, and contemporary ethnographic data from the region show, this readily renders their speech highly unintelligible to non-purist jach maaya speakers (e.g., Armstrong-Fumero 2009; Guerrettaz 2013). Even ancient jach maaya speakers would be hard pressed to decipher it. Today’s purist jach maaya contains specialized vocabulary to talk about contemporary technologies and disciplinary scientific topics (e.g., the Maya-language linguistics neologisms described above are a good example). Ancient jach maaya also contained specialized vocabulary, but it pertained to everyday life and the production of the milpa. During my fieldwork, many of
my interlocutors at the university remarked that much of this specialized vocabulary, in particular the use of classifiers, is rapidly falling into disuse amongst contemporary Maya speakers.

Today, as the number of individuals who produce *milpa* decreases (since almost none are from the younger generations), the use of specialized vocabulary associated with it—including terms for certain flora and fauna—are falling into disuse. The jobs individuals pursue today involve more urban trades and contact with types of technologies not relevant to *milpa* production, such as construction, factory clothing production, domestic labor, or, in the case of a select few, linguistics. These professional activities require vocabulary not readily available in Maya and typically take place in more urban contexts, both of which readily lend themselves to the use of Spanish loanwords—both because those more urban contexts by default put Maya speakers in contact with Spanish speakers and because the words for those technologies are already in use amongst local Spanish speakers. Thus, while in previous generations most everyday Maya speakers likely spoke ancient *jach maaya*, today most everyday Maya speakers have higher incidences of Spanish-language loanwords in their talk—what many would call *xe’ ek’ maaya*.

Rural, un- or minimally-educated, monolingual Maya speakers—individuals whose livelihoods revolved primarily around *milpa* agricultural production—primarily spoke ancient *jach maaya*. This contrasts starkly with today’s purist *jach maaya* speakers, who congregate in cities—primarily the capital, Merida, and the next largest city in Yucatan state, Valladolid. These individuals are typically university educated and all are
minimally bilingual (in Spanish and Maya). Some are middle-aged, but the majority are college-aged students (20s) and young professionals. They typically work in professional jobs, such as language teaching, education (kindergarten through higher education), policy work, or government. Their university studies are typically central to their professional activities. To study at advanced levels and to do the professional jobs they do, these individuals have to learn Spanish, for schooling is not available in Maya beyond primary school.96 Furthermore, their educational and professional activities require the use of vocabulary that is not readily available in the contemporary, everyday Maya lexicon. For some, this results in the use of Spanish-language loanwords and, thus xe’ek’ maaya speech. However, this tends to be the case primarily for those individuals who do not participate in intellectual and professional activities related to Maya cultural and linguistic practices. For many (albeit not all) who work with and study Maya cultural and linguistic practices, there is an active movement to replace the Spanish-language loanwords in their Maya speech. This is done by either reviving antigüïsmos (‘ancientisms’, archaisms) from ancient jach maaya or inventing neologisms (as I describe in Chapter 5). The result is purist jach maaya. Figure 6.1 provides an at-a-glance view of the key characteristics of purist and ancient jach maaya.

96 And, Maya-language schooling in primary school is only available in some areas and is only questionably bilingual. Maya is often used for classroom management (for those teachers who speak at least some Maya) while Spanish is used for curricular content, due to the fact that many indigenous education (i.e. bilingual schooling) teachers do not speak Maya sufficiently well in order to conduct classroom lessons in this language and because the printed curricular materials are often in Spanish (Armstrong-Fumero 2009; Berkley 2001; Gabbert 2004; Guerrettaz 2013). A few years ago, Yáax Xook University began a Maya-language evaluation program that would certify teachers as Maya speakers and thus fit to fill teaching positions in Educación Indígena ‘Indigenous Education’ schools, where instruction is supposed to be Maya/Spanish bilingual.

97 Although, in my discussion of the Poneetika text in Chapter 8, I argue that the neologisms and archaisms used in that text were not created explicitly out of linguistic purist intentions. Nonetheless, they still follow
Figure 6.1. Characteristics associated with purist and ancient *jach maaya* registers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purist <em>jach maaya</em></th>
<th>Ancient <em>jach maaya</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spoken in urban areas</td>
<td>Spoken in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary, modern</td>
<td>Old, from the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned through schooling</td>
<td>No schooling required to learn it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken by Maya-Spanish bilinguals</td>
<td>Spoken by Maya speaking monolinguals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not incorporate Spanish loanwords</td>
<td>Spoken by some <em>xe’ek’ maaya</em> speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses neologisms and <em>antigüismos</em></td>
<td>Incorporates Spanish loanwords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken by economically mobile people</td>
<td>Uses only <em>antigüismos</em> and no neologisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken by professional, non-land workers</td>
<td>Spoken by non-economically mobile people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken by younger/middle aged people</td>
<td>Spoken by <em>milpa</em> workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken for specialist communication</td>
<td>Spoken by very old/now deceased people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally created register</td>
<td>Spoken for everyday communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naturally-occurring register</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other than the use of Maya archaisms, ancient *jach maaya* and purist *jach maaya* share few if any characteristics. These two registers are spoken at different points in time and space, for different sets of activities, by different types of speakers, and for different ends. One of the few commonalities they share is that both registers are spoken by individuals who also speak *xe’ek’ maaya*; one of the key differences is that ancient *jach maaya* incorporates some Spanish-language loanwords while purist *jach maaya* does not. Perhaps more significant is that ancient *jach maaya* was a natural, everyday speech register while purist *jach maaya* is an intentionally invented speech register. Ancient *jach maaya*’s purpose was primarily communicative, while purist *jach maaya* is used largely to serve the political purposes of a contemporary political project. Understanding who is creating it and why can explain a great deal about the effects it has locally. But, first, I explore how this register is formed.

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many of the characteristics of purist Maya terms and would readily be characterized in this way by everyday Maya speakers (and likely by some specialist as well). In fact, the students at YXU considered the phonetics and phonology neologisms to be *jach maaya* forms.
The formation of purist *jach maaya*

Purist *jach maaya* is used primarily by Intellectual Maya in Yucatan who are engaged with the contemporary political project of Maya language fortification. It use, I find, contributes to some Intellectual Maya’s processes of re-Mayanization. As the most ideologically *Maya* form of the language, using *jach maaya* marks Maya individuals who speak it as authentically Maya. It signals the pure, authentic Maya past in the present and it expertise for its users, thus authorizing a new class of experts who control its production and use and limit access to it. These new, elite Maya intellectuals are university educated and work in intellectual professions (such as teaching at a university, writing books, or authoring linguistic standards and norms). In what follows, I discuss one of the key ways in which they go about forming the purist *jach maaya* register—through the use of neologisms.

Both ancient and purist *jach maaya* contain many words that contemporary Maya speakers do not know or understand. Historical studies of the formation of linguistic traditions in non-majority languages (which some call *indigenous*) show that these new terms and categories are typically formed in three ways: linguistic approximation through substitution, calquing, and the adoption of loanwords (Hickey 2001, 545). Each of these

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98 A full discussion of the Intellectual Maya is beyond the scope of this dissertation. My work on processes of de- and re-Mayanization in Chapter 5 touches on this group and its characteristics. In work in preparation, I explore how this group is not homogeneous in nature—it is comprised of powerful and non-powerful Intellectual Maya. The former are associated with contemporary purist *jach maaya*, whereas the latter are *xe’ek maaya* speaking. Both groups speak Spanish in addition to Maya, but the powerful Intellectual Maya tend to have folkloric ties to the land, live in urban settings, be university educated (often not locally), engage in political activities, have federal and state government connections, control access to intellectual work funding, and lead the Maya language fortification movement. The non-powerful Intellectual Maya, in contrast, tend to engage in everyday activities that are tied to the land, live in or near their communities of origin, be university educated (always locally), not engage in political activities, have few or no federal and state government connections, not control access to the funding for intellectual work, and serve as individual actors in language fortification activities.
three are found in the creation of new terminology in Maya; however, only the former two are deemed acceptable amongst speakers of purist *jach maaya*. Based on contemporary fieldwork in the Yucatan, linguists Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) identify four ways in which new words are created in contemporary Maya: the adoption of archaisms, circumlocution, omission, and the invention of neologisms. In what follows, I explore these four strategies as well as the relevant two that Hickey (2001) identifies—linguistic approximation through substitution and calquing—in the formation of purist *jach maaya*.99

Words for numbers are the most commonly used archaisms in contemporary Maya. Contemporary Maya speakers use Spanish-language numbers for four or five and above (although they do so with Maya inflection and morphosyntactic structure) (e.g., 4-*kwaatro*, 5-*siinko*, 6-*seey*, 7-*syeete*, 8-*oocho*, 9-*nweeebe*, 10-*dyees*).100 However, purist *jach maaya* speakers have learned and use the ancient terms for numbers in Maya, which, after the number five, are typically unknown to contemporary speakers (e.g., 5-*jo’o*, 6-*wak*, 7-*uuk*, 8-*waxak*, 9-*bolon*, 10-*lajun*, etc.). (I also briefly discuss this phenomenon in Chapter 7.)

In addition to replacing Spanish-language loanwords, archaisms are also used to replace contemporary Maya-language equivalents that are deemed to reflect more modern practices. For example, the ancient term *kisiche*101 is proposed as an alternative to the

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99 I also describe three of these strategies—linguistic approximation through substitution, calquing, and the adoption of loanwords—in Chapter 7 where I describe the new terminology for linguistics *ich maaya*, and to some degree in Chapter 8.

100 Contemporary speakers sometimes express the number 4 using the ancient Maya term—*kam* or *kan*—and sometimes they use the Spanish-loanword—*kwaatro* ‘cuatro’.

101 Bricker et al. (1998, 129) write this as /s kisib’-če’/. Armstrong-Fumero (2009) writes it variably as both *kisiche*’ and *kisiché* (367). Other spellings and meanings include *kisib che* ‘asiento’ ‘seat’ (“rustic, like a
contemporary term *k’anche*\textsuperscript{102} for ‘wooden bench’ (Armstrong-Fumero 2009).

Armstrong-Fumero (2009) argues that these proposed changes emerge as a response to the modernization of traditional cultural practices. Thus, the attempt to resuscitate the older term may stem from a desire to resuscitate the former practice, or at least keep it present in collective memory. *Kisiche’,* which roughly translates as “the wood you fart on,” references how people in traditional Maya communities previously ate on low stools in a hunched position or hunched forward, which, today, is foreign to Maya youth who grow up in more urban environments (Armstrong-Fumero 2009):

The “wood you fart on” [*kisiche’*] is the traditional seat used during simple peasant meals eaten around a collective plate of food into which family members dipped their tortillas. The posture that it enforced placed the sitter’s body into a position well-suited for good digestion and intestinal movement. This is an experience unfamiliar to younger people accustomed to eating once-exotic foods in individual portions off of urban-style furniture and with forks and knives. In this case, the loss of the term also denotes self-consciously modern transformations in household accouterments [*sic*], foods, and body discipline that are still associated with the agrarian underclass living in more-marginal communities. (367)

Thus, using the term *kisi(b)che’* to replace the contemporary *k(‘á’)anche*\textsuperscript{103} is a means of remembering a former way of life, and perhaps encouraging a return to it in practice.\textsuperscript{104}

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\textsuperscript{102} Armstrong-Fumero (2009) writes this as /k’áan-che’/. Bricker et al. (1998, 147) write this as /k’an-če’/. Armstrong-Fumero (2009) writes this as *k’anche* (367). Other spellings and meanings include *ka’anche*, glossed as ‘rustic alter of wood’ (“altar rústico de madera”) (Gómez Navarrete 2009 31); *k’áanche’* ‘silla’ ‘chair’ (Bastarrachea Manzano et al. 1992, 83); *xaka’anche’, ka’anche’ ‘banco’ ‘armazón de madera’ ‘bench’ (Maglah Canul 2002, 13); and *k’áanche’* ‘silla’ ‘chair’ (Maglah Canul 2002, 70). Lucy (personal communication, Nov. 30, 2015) further points out that, “the variants [ka’anche’, xaka’anche’, and ka’anche’] refer to a ‘high wood’—a raised platform of some type, either a sleeping platform historically or a plant bed to keep herbs, etc. up away from animals.”

\textsuperscript{103} Armstrong-Fumero (2009) provides no explanation of the literal meaning of this contemporary Maya term (as he does for *kisiche’* ‘the wood you fart on’). Bricker et al. (1998) list this term as “stool” (144).

\textsuperscript{104} Although I should point out that, through my fieldwork, I found that Maya people who live in smaller towns and villages use the contemporary term *k’anche’* to describe their seats even though they continue to eat in a hunched position on low wooden benches. Thus, I do not find the argument that modern lifeways
Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) identify a second strategy for riding Maya of Spanish: circumlocution. They cite a student who, for lack of an equivalent in Maya for *taller mecánico* ‘(auto) mechanic (shop)’ instead says, *a house where cars are repaired*\(^\text{105}\) (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 7). The authors argue that, in contrast with archaic terms and neologisms, which are even taught at basic levels of schooling, circumlocutions require great creativity and an advanced linguistic level in the language. The result is that each circumlocution varies given the context and the speaker\(^\text{106}\) (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 7). They illustrate this with the example of how speakers express ‘bicycle’: *xbalak’ ook* ‘rodar pie’ ‘roll foot’, *t’iinché balak’ (ook)* ‘pedelear (pie)’ ‘to pedal (foot)’, and *t’iinché balak’ ka’ap’éel wóolis* ‘pedelear dos bolas’ ‘pedal with two round spheres’ (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 7).

A third strategy these authors identify for purging Maya of Spanish is omission. Drawing primarily from examples in a course on translation techniques, the authors found that when students were translating from Spanish into Maya they would simply avoid naming a word from the Spanish original in Maya for which there was no Maya equivalent.

The final strategy that Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) identify for purifying Maya of Spanish is the creation of neologisms. This typically takes place when no

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\(^{105}\) Original: “…jump’éel najil tu’ux ku yutksinsa’al kisbuutso’” (literal: ‘una casa donde son reparados coches’).

\(^{106}\) Original: “A diferencia del uso de arcaísmos y neologismos, que se enseñan incluso en los niveles básicos, las circunlocuciones requieren gran creatividad y un nivel lingüístico avanzado de la lengua. Esto hace que cada circunlocución varie según el contexto y hablante.”
ancient equivalents exist (or when those that do exist are found to be inadequate) for replacing the contemporary Maya word or Spanish loanword. Hickey (2001) identifies two ways in which neologisms can be formed—linguistic approximation through substitution and calquing. Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) do not describe the first of these. In linguistic approximation through substitution, speakers use an existing word in the target language that has a corresponding meaning in the source language—for example, in Irish, the source language is typically Latin (Hickey 2001) and in Maya it is typically Spanish. Examples of this practice from my fieldwork include the following Maya linguistic terms for substituting existing concepts in Spanish: *chowak* ‘largo’ ‘long’ and *ka’anal* ‘alto; elevado; superior’ ‘high; tall; elevated; superior’, both referring to vowel length (see also Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013 and Appendices B and C for further examples). In this process, the meaning of an existing term in the target language is expanded to include the new meaning the word is being given in this new context. Thus, in the examples given above, the existing words in Maya referred to objects in the world—objects that were long or tall; in the new context of linguistics, long is applied to vowel sounds and tall (or high) to the location in the mouth where a sound is made. Some neologisms in purist *jach maaya* are formed in this way; however, the majority of them are formed through the second process Hickey identifies and that Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) discuss at length—calquing.

Calques are formed by taking a borrowed word or phrase from the source language and translating its components to create a neologism in the target language. This corresponding meaning in the source language is applied to the existing word in the target
language—giving it new meaning by using the meaning of the existing word in a new way. Neologisms based on calques are found in everyday Maya. Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015) cite three of the most widely known terms: *ma’alob k’iin* ‘buenos días’ ‘good morning’, *ma’alob chiinil k’iin* ‘buenas tardes’ ‘good afternoon’, and *ma’alob aak’ab* ‘buenas noches’ ‘good evening/night’ (6). These authors, however, emphasize that these salutary neologisms are not commonly used in everyday speech, and even for those who do use them, there is a great deal of variation in their use, even among those individuals who proposed them. These terms are heard primarily in the university classroom, amongst students, professors, and those who have learned Maya in school. In everyday life, speakers typically omit the *buenos* or *buenas* from their speech, leaving *diiyas, taardes,* and *nooches* as their salutations (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015). In fact, at YXU, students would use *ma’alob k’iin* and the other time-appropriate salutations in an ironic way—they would salute one another, their teachers, or even me with these, but in a singsong way accompanied by a wry smile, as if to say, “we’re all in on the joke.”

Some other neologisms formed through calquing have been successfully adopted outside of the context of Maya-language higher education. Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015, 6) cite examples including *k’osob* ‘tijera’ ‘scissors’ (a pluralized derivation of the verb ‘to cut’) and *ch’ilibts’íib* ‘lápis’ ‘pencil’ (literally ‘little stick-writing’). The authors argue that these neologisms have been successful because their creation relies on

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107 I have included a list of everyday and non-specialized terminology used to talk about linguistics *ich maaya* in Appendix C. Some of the neologisms on this list are calques.
108 Although I am told that this expression is spreading and is used by everyday Maya speakers who interact with outsiders who use or may know the expression (personal communication with J. Lucy, Nov. 30, 2016).
morphosyntactic resources that are common in Maya or because they are ‘sticky’\(^{109}\) (i.e., they just seem to stick) (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 6). Other calques are not quite as successful at “sticking” in the minds of speakers. Pomol Cahum and Chan Dzul (2015, 6) cite the word for ‘coffee’ boxja (literally ‘black water’) and ‘milk’ k’aab iim (literally ‘liquid/ juice from the teat’). These words, they argue, are best used in a controlled context, such as the classroom, where a shared meaning can be established amongst speakers—an argument I make in Chapter 5 about the new Maya-language terminology being created for talking about linguistics ich maaya. Outside of such a context, they state that most people would rely upon Spanish-language loanwords because they provide greater degrees of specificity (e.g., lapis ‘lápi’ ‘pencil’, tijeera ‘tijera’ ‘scissors’, káafe ‘cáf’ ‘coffee’, and leeche ‘leche’ ‘milk’) (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 7). The neologisms for these terms are not as widely known and are somewhat ambiguous—k’aab iim (a neologism for milk), the authors argue, could be understood as mother’s milk or any fluid with provenance in the mammary glands of humans and/or animals, and it presents other problems in contexts in which it is necessary to specify the type of milk, such as powdered milk\(^{110}\) (Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015, 7). The neologism for ‘airplane’, péepen k’aak’ (lit.‘butterfly (of) fire’) that I mention in Chapter 5 falls into this category.

I also documented neologisms formed through calquing in my fieldwork on linguistics, such as the phonetics terms tséel aak’ ‘lateral’ (tséel meaning ‘along’,

\(^{109}\) Original: “…su confección se recurrieron a recursos morfosintácticos comunes en el maya o por lo 'pegajoso’ de la propuesta.”

\(^{110}\) Original: “…k’aab iim que podría entenderse como leche materna o algún fluido proveniente de las glándulas mamarias en humanos y/o animales, además de presentar otros problemas en contextos donde se requiere especificar el tipo de leche, como la leche en polvo.”
‘beside’, ‘side’ ‘alongside of’ and aak’ meaning ‘tongue’); ni’il ‘nasal’ (ni’ meaning ‘nose’ and the suffix –il, which marks associative possession or an inherent quality, resulting in something that possesses an association with or a quality of the nose); and k’alik’ ‘occlusive’ (literally ‘stops the air’, k’al ‘to stop’ and ik’ ‘wind’ or ‘air’) (see also Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013).

The final strategy used to create neologisms in contemporary Maya is the borrowing (and Mayanizing (see Pool Balam & Le Guen 2015)) of (primarily) Spanish-language loanwords. This practice is readily observed across the peninsula, but has yet to be widely documented by scholars (cf. Lucy 1989, 2007; Pool Balam & Le Guen 2015). It is not a practice that is accepted in the purist jach maaya register. In the formation of neologisms through linguistic borrowing, the loanwords incorporated into the target language are adapted phonologically, morphologically, and syntactically and should not be confused with code switching (Hickey 2001; Pool Balam & Le Guen 2015). That is, in the case of Maya linguistics, the loanwords are ‘Mayanized’—they become Maya words and do not represent a code switch from Maya into Spanish. In Maya, examples include bokal ‘vocal’ ‘vowel’ (bokalo’ob ‘vocales’ ‘vowels’, respecting the morphosyntactic pattern of pluralization in Maya, adding the suffix –o’ob for third person plural) and poneetika ‘fonética’ ‘phonetics’ (using /p/ to stand in for /f/, which does not exist in Maya). The use of loanwords is not popular amongst those who create prescriptive grammars and linguistic norms in Maya because they are perceived of as being Spanish (e.g., Briceño Chel & Can Tec 2014), despite convincing arguments that support the fact that they have actually become Maya (Lucy 1989, 2007; Pool Balam & Le Guen 2015).
Although native Maya speakers in the Yucatan widely practice the formation of neologisms through the use of loanwords, it is not an accepted practice amongst purist jach maaya speakers. Yet, Maya speech or writing that uses no loanwords from Spanish is generally unintelligible to native Maya speakers. As I note above, Briceño Chel (2002) points out that, those who speak jach maya do not use loanwords and instead they use words that now no one uses\(^{111}\) (para. 25). Publications written in jach maaya require glossaries to introduce readers to the neologisms used throughout (e.g., see Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, described in Chapter 8) and bilingual dictionaries omit loanwords for which there are no Maya-language equivalents (Rhodes, Pomol Cahum, and Chan Dzul forthcoming), thus leaving gaps in the lexicon. For instance, a Maya language student once asked Chan Dzul how to say ‘chair’ in Maya. He responded, silla. This word, however, was not in her Maya dictionary, and the fact that she was not a Spanish speaker left her at a loss for finding Maya equivalents for this and other Spanish-origin loanwords used in Maya speech—an argument in support of documenting the Maya language as it is actually used in practice (i.e. including Mayanized Spanish-language loanwords in lexicons, the relevant phonemes in phonemic inventories, and describing the relevant morphosyntactic and phonological processes in grammars of the language). These practices also contribute to the type of responses expressed by my interlocutor in Chapter 5 when I described an airplane as a péepen k’aak’ ‘butterfly (of) fire’—the feeling that one does not really speak one’s own native language and the idea that a non-native, barely conversant speaker might speak better than a monolingual, native speaker.

\(^{111}\) Original: “…los que hablan la jach maya no usan préstamos y en contra parte utilizan palabras que ahora ya nadie usa.”
The fact that purist *jach maaya* is highly unintelligible to the vast majority of native Maya speakers is largely irrelevant to purist *jach maaya* speakers. This is because the authorization of their speech does not rely upon the vast majority of native speakers—it relies instead upon non-Maya speakers. Politicians and organizational directors, few or of whom speak Maya or would consider themselves (or be considered by others) to be Maya, hold the power to authorize new norms, norms they, themselves, cannot understand or replicate. More than speech, what these institutions and their individual representatives authorize are text artifacts (Silverstein 1993; Silverstein & Urban 1996) of the purist *jach maaya* register (Berkley 2001; Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul 2015). These take the form of linguistic norms for writing Maya, curricular content for indigenous education (i.e. bilingual Maya-Spanish education) programs, curricular content for US Federal government-sponsored Maya language learning programs (e.g., FLAS), grammars, dictionaries, language teaching manuals, and other discipline-specific content, such as curricula in Maya linguistics.

A perfect example of this is the new *Normas de Escritura Para la Lengua Maya* ‘Norms for Writing the Maya Language’. Before discussing this text, I should note that I provide this discussion as an example of the institutional influence of linguistic purism on the production of published works in the Maya language in which the Maya language is as an object of analysis. However, a fuller discussion of the processes I describe herein require a comparison with the broader literature on standardization in Mexico and elsewhere, a part of my larger agenda that is not undertaken in this present work.

The objective of the *Normas* is for the Maya speakers to have the basic or
fundamental bases in order to plan, design, elaborate, publish, teach and spread materials in and about the Maya language\textsuperscript{112} ("Entregan Norma" 2014, 1). This suggests that, prior to the release of this publication, Maya language speakers lacked the ability to do these things, which seems contradictory to the long history of Maya speakers engaging in activities in which they plan, design, publish, teach and spread materials in and about the Maya language (a point I explain in detail in Chapter 3; see for example, Clendinnen 2003; Hanks 2010; Houston, Robertson & Stuart 2000; Restall 1997; Sharer & Traxler 2006). In reality, the Normas are a set of norms that were created by a small segment of the Maya-speaking community. The document does not recognize regional variation, selects certain forms (i.e. certain types of variation) as correct, and does not recognize the Mayanization of loanwords, among other things. This publication is a clear example of a purist jach maaya text. In fact, to make it intelligible to Maya lectors, the text includes a glossary of terms in which the Maya-language neologisms are glossed in Maya and/or their equivalents are provided in Spanish.\textsuperscript{113}

The Normas were created through collaboration between the Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo state governments in conjunction with the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) and the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (INALI). The project’s content coordinator and chief advisor was Briceño Chel, who is quoted above and who has graduate training in linguistics from a university in Mexico City. His key collaborator was Gerónimo Ricardo Can Tec, who holds an undergraduate degree in

\textsuperscript{112} Original: "Con el objetivo de que los maya hablantes tengan las bases primordiales para planear, diseñar, elaborar, publicar, enseñar y difundir materiales en y sobre la lengua maya."

\textsuperscript{113} The text is in fact bilingual—the first half of the publication is in Maya and then the translation of the Maya is provided in Spanish in the second half of the text. Thus, the lector can also compare the Spanish translation to better understand the Maya when necessary.
linguistics from a university on the Yucatan peninsula. The team also included twelve other individuals from across the three states who contributed to the publication’s content, all of whom speak and write Maya. None of the official representatives of the Campeche, Yucatan, or Quintana Roo state governments; the SEP; or the INALI speak Maya.\footnote{I called each of their offices personally and either asked these individuals directly or their secretaries if they speak Maya. All said “no.”} Briceño Chel and Can Tec were directly selected by the INALI, and the other twelve collaborators were recommended by various indigenous-serving organizations across the three states in response to a call from the INALI. To be an INALI project advisor, an individual has to be a linguist and have published research on the language; to be a content collaborator, the individual has to be able to write the language in question (phone conversation with Sandra Sepúlveda, September 17, 2015).

The INALI lead on the project, Sandra Sepúlveda, informed me that Briceño Chel’s role was to create consensus amongst the group of content collaborators. The INALI lead claimed that, the INALI tries to represent variation in the languages it documents, to which I expressed surprise and pointed out that the Normas do not reflect the variation that exists in Maya. She responded that this was because the content team chose not to reflect them, and then went on to reveal that, actually, the INALI prefers that the groups agree on one norm:

Example 6.1. Fieldnote from discussion with INALI project lead for Normas

They [the team of native speakers] decide to include the variants or not. The INALI recommends that they come up with only one norm…. The most essential part of the project is to reach an accord between the three states [i.e. in the case of this project, Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo]. They arrive at an accord through discussions. They present how they do it [i.e. use the language] and the advisor teaches them the
functionality of each thing, and shows them the things that they use that children would find difficult to write. They arrive at agreements at each meeting and sign those.\textsuperscript{115}

Thus, Briceño Chel’s role was to help the group come up with one way of writing Maya. To do this, Sepúlveda argued, he had to show the group why some ways were better than others and then help the group to reach agreement on that assessment. This suggests that the system was designed to encourage the project advisor to arrive at one best answer to each linguistic item in question, one that privileged normativity over variation.

As soon as the Normas were released, they were sent to all major institutions in the Yucatán that deal with the Maya language in some way and the directors of these institutions were asked to sign their acceptance into institutional policy. During a presentation of the Normas at the International Festival of Maya Culture (FICMAYA), a colleague from a top research institute that offers undergraduate and graduate programs informed me that she received a message from her research center’s director, proudly stating that he had signed off on adopting the new norms and that they would be used in any further institutional Maya language efforts. My colleague is a well-respected Maya language linguist and has published widely on the language, yet she was not consulted about the decision to accept and institute the Normas at the research center where she works. They were simply accepted, no questions asked, by a director who is not a linguist and who is not in a position to evaluate the Normas’ quality, value, or potential

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{115} Original: “Ellos [el equipo de nativo hablantes] decidieron si incluir o no los variantes. El INALI recomienda que se saque una sola norma…. Lo más esencial del proyecto es ponerse de acuerdo entre los tres estados [i.e. Campeche, Yucatán, y Quintana Roo]. Llegan a acuerdo a través de discusiones. Ellos presentan como lo hacen y el asesor les va enseñando la funcionalidad de cada cosa, y demostrándoles las cosas que ellos usan que sería difícil que los niños escriban…. Van tomando acuerdos en cada reunión y firman estos acuerdos.”}
institutional effects. But, since the Normas were produced by the INALI and authorized by the SEP, they received automatic institutional support. In a later communication with this same colleague, she informed me that her research center’s parent institution, a prestigious university in Mexico City, had also adopted the Normas.

As the only published set of norms on Maya to date, the Normas were converted into a standard bearer and its content collaborators into spokespeople for an entire community. The structure of the project was normative from the beginning and intended for participants to come up with one version of the language to be authorized as correct. To do this, the INALI designated an individual who would help them achieve this goal. In this process, individuals who were not qualified to assess the quality of work or the qualifications of the individuals conducting that work (i.e. the INALI, SEP, and three state governments) nonetheless were in a position to authorize the work and the workers. Thus, while Briceño Chel was in a position of political and intellectual power on this project, he was also caught within an organizational structure that is bigger than just the Maya of the Yucatan—that of the INALI, a state entity that promotes linguistic normativity and purism. As I suggest at different points throughout this dissertation, individuals who conform to these organizational values have greater opportunities for intellectual influence, including participating in the conversation to begin with.

**Purist jach maaya: a political project**

Agha (1999, 217-218) reminds us that,

The existence of registers…results not just in the interlinkage of linguistic repertoires and social practices but in the creation of social boundaries within society, portioning off language users into distinct groups through differential access to particular registers and to the social practices that
they mediate; through the ascription of social worth or stigma to particular registers, their usage, or their users; and through the creation and maintenance of asymmetries of power, privilege, and rank, as effects dependent on the above processes.

Guerrettaz (2013), speaking about standard Maya, which I find akin to the purist *jach maaya* I describe in this chapter, writes that, “…the establishment of a standard Maya is more a question of perception and power than of ‘converting’ the entire community of speakers to a certain standard variety” (290). Who then, is this standard Maya or purist *jach maaya* for? And, what are the effects of its perception or of the power associated with it? Guerrettaz (2013) describes standardization efforts as being led by linguists and, indeed, linguists are among the individuals who put into practice and stand to benefit from the use of purist *jach maaya*.

Purist *jach maaya* differs from ancient *jach maaya* most significantly in that the former is an intentionally invented register that serves to distinguish certain Maya speakers and their speech from others. This results in its users’ control of access to and production of knowledge about the Maya language and its linguistic structure in the Yucatan. It also contributes to processes of re-Mayanization, as I describe in Chapter 5. At first glance, this may not seem to be particularly significant. Individuals in all societies seek to self-differentiate and often go to great lengths to do so. However, in the Yucatecan context, the creation of purist *jach maaya* has wide-reaching effects for all Maya speakers. Because there are few native Maya speakers who work as professionals on topics related to Maya language and culture, their work has disproportionately large effects locally.
I describe purist *jach maaya* as a register that is spoken in the present and imagined future. I argue this because this register is used now, but it is also in an ongoing process of creation and further refinement, one that its protagonists hope will result in its increased use in a wide variety of educational and other institutional settings across the Yucatan peninsula. In fact, part of the purist *jach maaya* project is to spread its use through public schools. As I mentioned above, Maya is taught in some elementary schools (indigenous education schools where schooling is, theoretically, bilingual in Maya and Spanish). Guerrettaz (2013) shows that what she calls standard Maya is already the ideal linguistic form sought after by teachers in these schools. Individuals who I know to teach and publish in purist *jach maaya* have been hired by the SEP in Mexico City to create a similar curriculum for secondary schools on the peninsula. It is likely that this individual will infuse this curriculum with purist *jach maaya*. Thus, soon, the schools may be a prime venue for the propagation of purist *jach maaya*. In fact, continuing education classes for indigenous education teachers already use it (Guerrettaz 2013; 2015).

The importance of purist linguistic practices for the future of the Maya language is a topic of hot debate in Yucatan. While there is widespread institutional support for purist *jach maaya* efforts regionally and nationally, many everyday speakers of Maya do not welcome said practices. Berkley (2001, 351) carefully points this out:

To language planners, a pure standard is the key to the cultural future, but for elders it is considered a remnant of their violent past. Senior men most forcefully enunciate this view. They understand pure Maya as a symbol of Mayan otherness, as the speech of distant or dead Mayan others with insulting and archaic overtones.
Furthermore, Berkley (2001) explains how even the names for this linguistic form differ for everyday speakers and language specialists: Local speakers refer to it as *jach maaya*, while language fortification activists refer to it as ‘standard Maya’. Guerrettaz (2013) makes this same observation—linguists refer to ‘standard Maya’ as ‘the new norms’ whereas indigenous education teachers refer to it as ‘*jach* Maya’. The lack of popularity for purist efforts, purist *jach maaya* included, amongst everyday speakers is also not lost on Armstrong-Fumero (2009), who sees room in the future for the *Imaginary Maya* he describes (which I find to be akin to purist *jach maaya*), but not for *Deep Maya* (a creative, playful Maya that draws on both Maya and Spanish):

…it is not likely that a greater recognition of the languaging practices that I have referred to as “Deep Maya” could generate a new standard that would work to the exclusion of the purist registers that figure in official language promotion. Even if there is a degree of disconnect between the forms of Maya used in state-sponsored media and the vernacular speech of rural communities, my own experience suggests that the practices that I have referred to as “Deep Maya” are not valued equally by all native speakers and would probably not be a basis for local consensus in developing a “bottom-up” language policy (see Kaplan and Baldauf 1997) that all speakers would prefer over the Imaginary Maya forms of languaging imposed from the top down. (369)

And, in her discussion of schoolteachers’ perceptions and evaluations of standard Maya (also akin to the purist *jach maaya* I describe herein), Guerrettaz (2013, 2015) argues that standardized, purist linguistic practices are important to Maya language teachers and are something they seek as a tool for their own personal learning and for the instruction efforts in their classrooms.

Thus, the future for purist *jach maaya* seems bright, at least in institutional settings. What this means for everyday Maya speakers and their speech practices has yet
to be seen. But, if the past is any indication of the future, it is possible that the spread and
further institutional support of purist *jach maaya* may lead to an increase in negative
evaluations of everyday Maya speakers and their speech—by themselves and by others.
In other parts of Mexico, such practices have led speakers to abandon their native
language in favor of Spanish, for they prefer not to speak their native language if they
cannot speak it free of Spanish-language influences (Hagège 2009). More explicitly,
Hagège (2009) argues that linguistic purism creates favorable circumstances for the
extinction of languages. Others describe contexts in which bilinguals are thought of as
having no language when they are perceived to not speak either of their languages
correctly (i.e. what Rosa (2010, 20) calls “languagelessness” and Gal (2006, 171) calls
“supposed ‘non-languages’”). For the case of monolingual Maya speakers in the Yucatan,
the ideology of languagelessness may prove relevant given time. Today, some
monolingual Maya speakers already hold perceptions of themselves as not speaking
Maya well or correctly, as my interlocutor in the vignette in Chapter 5 suggests. If purist
*jach maaya* continues to gain institutional support and validation, it may be possible that
ideologies about correct Maya will encourage people who do not live up to that
ideological form to abandon their language, perhaps resorting to Spanish-language
speech as the speakers in Hagège’s account did. The Maya language is widely spoken in
Yucatan today, in it various forms, thus I do not predict that the scenario I have just
described is imminent or perhaps even realistic, at least on a large scale. However, as the
realms in which one can use the Maya language continue to expand and as Maya
speakers come increasingly in contact with institutionalized forms of the language, it is
possible that exposure to purist *jach maaya* will increase and that may in turn affect how Maya speaker speak and how they feel about their language. Identifying purist *jach maaya* for what it is—a register distinct from ancient *jach maaya* that is intentionally being created to further the goals of contemporary political projects in the region—is important. For, purist *jach maaya* is increasingly the language authorized by institutions and deemed appropriate for publications. This may affect who can contribute to the academic conversation both in and about the Maya language and it may have effects for everyday speech that extend beyond the academy.

**Conclusion**

Knowledge of *jach maaya* circulates widely in the Yucatan. It is widely referenced in the literature and everyday speakers are familiar with and readily refer to it. Yet, debate still exists about what *jach maaya* really is and when and where it exists. Referencing Armstrong-Fumero’s (2009) *Imaginary Maya*, Guerrettaz (2013, 206) writes,

> Different conclusions in this previous research on jach maya suggest that there is debate regarding its existence. Yet a critical reading of this literature from both a linguistic and anthropological perspective suggests that jach maya and “Imaginary Maya” actually refer to different dimensions of the same thing, especially since both refer to “pure” Maya.

Guerrettaz does not spell out these “different dimensions of the same thing,” but her comment suggests something akin to what I argue here—that the popular and academic notions of *jach maaya* are not one thing. Instead, *jach maaya* is comprised of two registers of Maya—what I call ancient *jach maaya* and purist *jach maaya*. When most speakers utter the expression *jach maaya*, they are typically referring to the ancient register. However, within certain contexts, more highly educated individuals are also
considered to speak *jach maaya*, and their interlocutors readily recognize that the *jach maaya* that they speak is a school-learned variety, one distinct from that of the *abuelos* ‘grandparents’. Despite this, the term is not parsed to recognize the two registers. Purist and ancient *jach maaya* are spoken by individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds at different points in time, they are learned in different ways, used for different purposes, and constructed differently and for different ends. These differences clearly illustrate how they constitute two distinct linguistic registers. Recognizing their differences is an important project for it draws attention to the effects the use of purist *jach maaya* has in contemporary contexts. In particular, purist *jach maaya* is a key part of the language standardization movement in the region, and it is increasingly becoming the register of choice for academic publications produced in Maya, particularly those related to the Maya language. Its use is also associated with formal education and it is increasingly becoming imbued with institutional authority. Understanding why purist *jach maaya* is being created and what work its use helps to accomplish can shed light on the effects of its use in the region, both for academics and everyday Maya speakers. Not all Maya linguists or linguists who conduct linguistics *ich maaya* (or Maya speakers more generally) are in equal positions to produce authoritative knowledge about the Maya language. This has implications for what knowledge becomes recognized as correct or even standard—such as taking one regional variant as standard and overlooking others or failing to acknowledge and incorporate the Mayanization of Spanish-language loanwords and replacing these with little-known neologisms. This may affect individuals’ interest in using the Maya language and in producing knowledge about it and possibly even limit
who can participate in the production of new knowledge about Maya (be it scientific or everyday knowledge) in institutionalized settings.

Across the two subsequent chapters, I look closely at the language of linguistics ich maaya by exploring the Maya Linguistics and Culture program at Yáax Xook University. In Chapter 7, I discuss how linguistics ich maaya is negotiated in the classroom. In Chapter 8, I discuss the sole linguistics text published in the Maya language, which is used in one course at YXU. I find that many of the effects described in this chapter are present in the formation of new terminology used to talk about linguistics in Maya both in the classroom and in this published text. The language of the classroom and the language of published texts vary greatly, suggesting that linguistic purism has strong effects on the creation of linguistics ich maaya, even when those creating this new knowledge do not ascribe to linguistic purist ideologies.
CHAPTER 7: Making linguistics ich maaya in the classroom

Introduction

In this chapter and the one that follows, I discuss the people, processes, products, and influences involved in the creation of linguistics in the Maya language. Building off of my discussion in Chapter 5 about how notions of Maya personhood are constructed and brought into question and my discussion in Chapter 6 about the role that the undifferentiated register purist jach maaya plays in social identification processes for Intellectual Maya, in this and the subsequent chapter, I use the creation of disciplinary linguistics ich maaya ‘in the Maya language’ as a case study to examine the production of Mayaness and Maya knowledge in closer detail. In this chapter, I look at the creation of linguistics ich maaya in the classroom at YXU. In the subsequent chapter, Chapter 8, I look at the one published text that exists in Maya on a linguistics topic. Across these two chapters, I document what linguistics looks like in the Maya language and who is involved in creating it. These chapters set up my discussion in Chapter 9 about why linguistics is being created ich maaya.

In this chapter and Chapter 8, I address the following research questions: Does using Maya as a metalanguage for doing linguistics change what can be known about the linguistics of the Maya language? If so, how? For instance, are new grammatical or analytic categories created that “cut Maya up” differently than does the linguistics of Maya that uses Spanish or English as a metalanguage? To address this, what grammatical and analytic categories are preserved in Maya linguistics, what new categories are created, if any, and what counts as members of those categories, and why? To answer
these questions, I attended linguistics courses in the MLC program for over a year, covering four quarters with three generations of students in this program. I also attended meetings of a group of students and faculty who are trying to create an introduction to linguistics text in the Maya language, and I studied the only existing disciplinary linguistics text published in Maya to date, a text on phonetics and phonology (covered in Chapter 8). I also attended the course on phonetics and phonology in which this text was used. In this chapter, I explore the creation of linguistics ich maaya in the classroom, paying attention to the terminology used to discuss linguistics in the Maya language and the types of questions students and faculty asked one another as they worked through linguistics content in Maya.

The data I present in this chapter and Chapter 8 also allow me to address another research question I posed: What implications do findings to the above questions have for who can do linguistics in Maya? That is, who can participate in producing this new scientific knowledge about linguistics in Maya? I address the answer to this question at the end of Chapter 8. In short, I find that the new Maya linguistics is opening up this disciplinary field to a new generation of linguists, but at the same time, doing linguistics in Maya has political undertones and implications for processes of social identification and models of personhood, ones that affect what this disciplinary knowledge will look like and that may limit who is able to participate in the practice of disciplinary linguistics. I explore this point at greater length in Chapter 9.

In this chapter, I begin with a brief discussion of disciplinary linguistics and an overview of the concept of indigenous grammar. Review of these literatures allows me to
situate using Maya as a metalanguage for doing linguistics within the broader disciplinary practice of linguistics. I then turn my focus to the teaching and practice of linguistics in the classroom at *Yáax Xook University*. I explore how students and faculty talk about, name, and define linguistics concepts in the Maya language, showing the opportunities, challenges, and tensions these processes present.

**Brief Overview of Disciplinary Linguistics**

Linguistics is “the scientific study of human natural language,” and “[f]undamentally, the field is concerned with the nature of language and (linguistic) communication” (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer & Harnish 2001, 5). There are three general areas of research in linguistics: language form, language meaning, and language in context. “The field as a whole represents an attempt to break down the broad questions about the nature of language and communication into smaller, more manageable questions that we can hope to answer, and in so doing establish reasonable results that we can build on in moving closer to answers to the larger questions” (Akmajian et al. 2001, 5-6).

Disciplinary linguistics deals with a range of topics including the structural components of language, such as morphology (i.e. “the properties of words and word-building rules”), phonetics and phonemics (i.e. “the physiology involved in the production of speech sounds as well as phonemic and phonetic transcription systems that are used to represent the sounds”), phonology (i.e. “the organizational principles that determine the patterns the speech sounds are subject to”), syntax (i.e. “the structure of sentences and phrases”), semantics (i.e. “the properties of linguistic meaning”), language variation (i.e. the ways speakers and groups of speakers can differ from each other in
terms of the various forms of language that they use”), language change (i.e. “how languages change over time and how languages can be historically related”); and the functional properties of language, such as pragmatics (i.e. which studies “the issues involved in describing human communication and proposes certain communication strategies that people use when they talk to each other”), psychology of language (or psycholinguistics) (i.e. which “examines how language is produced and understood”), language acquisition (i.e. which “studies the stages involved in language acquisition by humans with normal brain function; this also explores arguments and evidence “for positing a genetically endow ed ‘Language Acquisition Device’”), and language and the brain (or neurolinguistics) (i.e. which “deals with how language is stored and processed in the brain”) (Akmajian et al. 2001, 5-6). Linguistics also considers historical, cultural, and political aspects of language; the field of sociolinguistics, for example, looks at language variation and social structures, while historical and evolutionary linguistics look at how languages change over time.

Other realms of linguistic investigation include corpus linguistics, language documentation, lexicography, lexicology, computational linguistics, and educational linguistics. In corpus linguistics, linguists study linguistic features of languages across a corpus of texts (spoken or written) (Matthews 2007). In language documentation, linguists document the structures of languages that often have not previously been documented; this can involve both descriptive (which seek to “describe’ actual usage”) and prescriptive (which seek to “prescribe’ what is judged to be correct”) linguistic projects (Matthews 2007, 316). Lexicography is concerned with the creation of
dictionaries while lexicology is concerned with “the semantic structure of the lexicon: semantic fields and sense relations” (Matthews 2007, 226). Computational linguistics uses computers to apply linguistic principles to the processing of data. Educational linguistics studies a range of topics including language acquisition, teaching and learning non-native languages, and looking at policies related to language education. Linguists also conduct translation and interpretation work and produce theoretical work about these practices.

Linguists operate from a series of assumptions, “...that human language at all levels is rule- (or principle-) governed...[;] ...the way in which meanings are associated with phrases of a language is characterized by regular rules[; and]...the use of language to communicate is governed by important generalizations that can be expressed in rules” (Akmajian et al. 2001, 6). Here, the terms “rule” and “rule-governed” are used in a technical sense; linguists understand these terms as referring to “descriptive rules...[or] rules that express generalizations and regularities about various aspects of language[,]” and not “rules that describe...some hypothetical language that speakers ‘should’ use” (i.e. prescriptive rules) (Akmajian et al. 2001, 7). Thus, linguistics is concerned with “reveal[ing] numerous generalizations about the regularities in the structure and function of language” (Akmajian et al. 2001, 7), which are often described via lexical, grammatical, syntactic, or semantic categories, amongst others. However, linguists also recognized that language users, while their languages adhere to rule-governed principles, are infinitely creative when they produce language; they are “…unbounded in scope, which is to say that there is no limit to the kinds of things that can be talked about”
Furthermore, linguists believe “that various human languages constitute a *unified phenomenon*; linguists assume that it is possible to study human language in general and that the study of particular languages will reveal features of language that are universal[;]” that is, anything that can be expressed in one language can be expressed in another; all languages are complex and detailed and any human experience can be expressed in any human language (Akmajian et al. 2001, 7). This similarity is also extended to the formal structures of language (e.g., syntactic, phonemic, phonetic, etc.). However, scholars who study language and cognition have shown that, the formal structure of a language may influence how individuals express themselves in that language, which, in turn, may influence both the experiences they have in the world and how they understand those experiences (Whorf 1940[1956]).

**Indigenous Grammar: Situating linguistics ich maaya within the discipline**

While linguistics as a discipline is considered to be a Western scientific practice, this is not the only framework in which linguistics can be conducted. Furthermore, the term linguistics can be variously defined. There exists within or alongside of—depending upon one’s perspective—a field of research that studies *indigenous grammar*. Indigenous grammar studies seek to uncover the “cultural embeddedness of grammatical description” or “what various people in different cultures and from different traditions of learning might call ‘grammatical description’, or label with similar expressions” (Kniffka 2001, 1). Indigenous grammar (IG), Kniffka (2001, 1) tells us, is not limited to “grammar” per se; it can just as easily cover or be called “indigenous linguistics” or “autochthonous
scientific reflection on language matters.” Key to IGs, Kniffka (2001, 1) suggests, are the following assumptions:

(1) Science, including linguistics, is strongly culturally bound.
(2) It is worthwhile to describe the culturally bound differences in systematic fashion.
(3) The continua of various shades and degrees of ‘linguistic scientific activity’ can be topicalized as such.
(4) To do this, a rather broad anthropological perspective is needed, leaving the ends of the continua somewhat open and varying in shape.

These assumptions point to modernist tendencies within academic disciplines to identify certain epistemological frameworks as valid and others as not scientific. The idea behind IGs is that all “schools” of linguistic thought and “all phenomena in all cultures analyzed” be given “equivalent treatment” (Kniffka 2001, 2). Thus, IG projects attempt to shed light on the cultural specificity of Western scientific thought qua linguistics (or grammar) and challenge some of the modernist dichotomies assumed in this disciplinary form of knowledge.

Kniffka (2001) advances a notion of “IGs across cultures;” to do so, he presents a set of heuristic devices to operationalize this notion. I summarize these as follows:

1. Definitions of “grammar,” “indigenous,” “indigenous grammar”, “grammar across cultures,” and “comparison of IG across cultures” are needed.
2. “...[E]very indigenous grammar is an equally valid, valuable and necessary object of linguistic description in its own terms, no matter how far away and different from Western grammatical theory it may be.”
3. An “indigenous’ component of a grammar” should be determined from the data in question, addressing this before making “theoretical and terminological [claims]” about it. A set of heuristic features is proposed via a matrix of binaries for determining the concept of “Indigenous Grammar;” it is noted that, IGs will “tend towards a ‘-’ entry for each feature in the matrix…but yet would not be sufficiently characterized, unless there was a positive entry in the feature in addition [+ indigenous grammatical tradition independent of the West]...:

- +/- ingredient of mainstream linguistic school/tradition
- +/- grammar of classical descent (and/or “classical” language)
4. “…[A]ny grammatical theory, linguistic school, indigenous tradition of ‘doing grammar’ and/or doing linguistics needs to be taken into consideration and to be analyzed in structurally equivalent fashion…. The data of cultural dependency are not trivial and cannot be left out of consideration, empirically and theoretically, in any given case, if one wants to describe and explain why grammars (for different languages) from different cultures look the way they do…. The most salient common denominator of [this] observation is that, as a rule, cultural embeddedness implies that in no two different cultures what we would call the same grammatical notion is exactly identical, or, that two corresponding grammatical notions are exactly alike.” A heuristic set of features of cultural embeddedness is proposed for “defining the concept ‘indigenous grammar’ in general and a specific ‘indigenous grammar’ in particular…:

- culture-specific definition of what is “science”
- “what is language science/linguistics”
- “where in the system of sciences linguistics is located”
- “which items and linguistic facts should be included in an IG”
- “which varieties of a language should (not) be dealt with in an IG”
- “which norms of the continua from “good” to “not-(so)-good” forms are treated in IG”
- “which inter-cultural and inter-language (non-)correspondences exist for items and concepts of an IG”
- “same or different “views” of and approaches to the “same” grammatical phenomena in own and other IG”
- “so-called “universal” postulates and standards of the theory of science (as reflected) in an IG”
- “‘grammaticocentrism’ as a dimension of (every) IG, including one’s own”
- “folk-taxonomies of linguistic matters of everyday life, such as proverbs, sayings, “wisdoms”, language ridicules, in the native language”
- “folk-taxonomies of linguistic matters of (one’s own language vs.) other languages, properties, structures, usages of languages.”

5. “The…probably most thought-provoking observation is that in one and the same culture, even the same speech community and locale, a large variation of ‘grammar(s)’ and of central notions of a grammar may occur…. In fact, it tends to be the unmarked, normal case that a set of competing theories of grammar coexist in any given culture or cultural community, academic community, religious community…. Given this variation of notions of ‘grammar’/‘grammatical theory’ in one and the same culture, or smaller entities thereof, it should not be surprising
at all, that (entirely) different cultures and/or historical traditions show a large variation of concepts and operationalizations of what we may want to call a ‘grammar’.” (7-10)

Finally, Kniffka (2001) argues that, in addition to the aforementioned heuristics, “in order to describe and explain ‘IG across cultures’,” multiple, “different continua” are needed. He suggests ten of these, but emphasizes that these are merely examples and that these can both overlap and be expanded (Kniffka 2001, 12-13):

1. Distribution of a particular IG in relation to culture (from widespread across cultures to restricted to one culture of sections of one culture).
2. Degree of how established and well-known an IG is in a culture.
3. Intensity and spread of knowledge of an IG with people in/of a cultural community (which percentage of an “educated” population has a substantial knowledge of an IG?).
4. Degree of “descriptivity vs. normativity” of an IG in a culture (from an intellectually well-developed and theoretically well-founded coherent systematic descriptive grammar to a rather ad hoc and little systematically reflected statement/list of normative maxims of various denominations; may include other continua).
5. Degree of “proficiency” of an IG: From an IG representing a specific science/branch of knowledge (“established academic field”) developed in a long-term research tradition by people with a special training to a specific non-systematic “interest by lay people” without or outside any research traditions in the culture.
6. Degree of development and availability of an abstract metalanguage for formulating a grammar (from a clear distinction of a metalanguage stated in concise algorithms and the everyday authentic object language as spoken by the natives of a culture to lack of a clear distinction between object and metalanguage, or “vernacular” used as “metalanguage”).
7. Orientation at and compliance with postulates of the (culture-specific representation of) theory of science.
8. Degree of institutionalization of folk attitudes towards language in a culture (from highly institutionalized to very low institutionalized folk attitudes, or lack thereof…).
9. Degree of “popularity” of grammar/grammatical issues/linguistic matters with the general population in a cultural community, other than as a school subject (from high interest, amusement, entertainment value to low or zero entertainment, amusement value).
10. Degree of installment of formal (school) training in grammar/linguistic matters in the educational system of/in a culture (from well-established core subjects to marginal, ephemeral compulsory subjects students have to take to pass an exam).
Finally, Kniffka (2001) identifies a series of postulates that underlie his work on IGs and his work on bringing comparative studies of IGs together:

1. The comparative cross-cultural study of various ancient and modern IG is a field of study worthy to be explored in depth by general comparative linguistics.
2. An adequate account of IG will need a broader perspective of research, including ingredients of the cultural background.
3. The original version of an Indigenous Grammar should be the prime object of linguistic study. It should be read in the language in which it is written.
4. Original examples and quotations should be given as evidence from the original IG whenever possible, rather than secondary ‘interpretations’ and secondary remarks from one’s own ethnocentric (grammarians’) perspective.
5. Translations of single words should not be dealt with in an atomistic and eclectic way. Rather, texts as a whole, at least longer coherent text passages, should be translated that cover the total system of a theory of an IG or, at least, part of it.
6. All this implies, in ‘real (linguistic) life’, a necessity, to make the study of IG more attractive by making it more accessible to the student of general linguistics. This is a task yet to be solved by linguists and philological experts. What is needed is, in more general terms, a programme of ‘de-ethnocentralisation’ in grammatical research. The overall device is: Back to nature, back to the original texts, back to Indigenous Grammars around the world. (6-7)

In what follows, I discuss the creation and teaching of linguistics using Maya as a metalanguage. In so doing, I draw upon the framework Kniffka lays forth in my analysis of this new knowledge system. However, I resist calling linguistics ich maaya ‘in the Maya language’ an IG for two reasons: 1) many of my interlocutors reject the term indigenous as a self-identifier and 2) the work my interlocutors are doing goes beyond grammar. Thus, I refer to the work they are doing as linguistics ich maaya. Calling it Maya linguistics does not suffice for it does not specify what metalanguage is being used to do this work, and, as I discuss below, conducting linguistics in the Maya language is key to the new linguistics knowledge I describe. In what follows, I describe what linguistics ich maaya looks like. Throughout my discussion, I address some key questions Kniffka poses in his cultural-contrastive study of IGs.
Linguistics at *Yáax Xook University*

The Maya Linguistics and Culture Curriculum

In some ways, linguistics at YXU looks much like linguistics elsewhere in the world. Linguistics *ich maaya* is located within a tradition of disciplinary linguistics. The curricular content covers many of the same topics that linguistics students in the US or other parts of Mexico (especially in a program that includes general education courses) might study. For instance, at *Yáax Xook University*, the *Maya Linguistics and Culture* (MLC) curriculum includes both disciplinary linguistics courses and courses in history, anthropology, sociology, education pedagogy and theory, and the English and Maya languages. Structural linguistics courses include: Phonetics and Phonology, Introduction to Linguistics Seminar, Morphology and Syntax, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Language Acquisition, Semantics and Metaphor, Language Structure, Political Linguistics, Linguistic Documentation and the Creation of Descriptive Grammars.

Additional courses related to linguistics include courses on Maya Language and Writing; Regional Linguistics and Sociolinguistics; Communication Theories; Text Production; Translation; (Oral) Interpretation; Writing Systems and Theories; Theories of Bilingual, Intercultural Education; Locution; Toponyms and Maya Last Names; and Literary Translation.

In other ways, the MLC *licenciatura* program differs from linguistics programs in other parts of the world or even Mexico. First, I call the program *Maya Linguistics and Culture*, because its object language of study is the Maya language. While course examples often use comparative data, the students and faculty are focused on analyzing
the Maya language (and not Mayan languages more broadly or other languages). The Maya is both the object language and the metalanguage, although Spanish is also used as a metalanguage. In other linguistics programs, linguists often study an object language (frequently not their own) that is different from the metalanguage they use to conduct their studies. Often spoken mastery of the object language(s) is not required. At YXU, being a Maya speaker is key to the study of linguistics and to participation in the program. The stakes are different, too, because YXU students’ linguistics findings have political consequences for the Maya language and people. It is not just about learning the linguistic analytic tools; it is also about uncovering and describing how Maya works and what its future will look like.

Of the roughly sixty-eight courses that students take in the MLC curriculum, approximately 60% are taught in Spanish. Another approximately 22% of the courses are taught primarily in Maya (with the exception of one or two, all of which are linguistics courses), 13% in a combination of Spanish and Maya, and 4% in a combination of Spanish and English (i.e. the English language learning courses). The courses taught almost exclusively in Maya (approximately 22%) still rely on Spanish for portions of classroom organization and course content. The courses that are most frequently taught almost exclusively in Maya are linguistics courses. Many of the faculty members trained in other disciplines are not Maya speakers, while most of the linguistics faculty members are native Maya speakers. It is theoretically a requirement of the MLC program that students be Maya speakers (not necessarily native speakers, but they have to be able to do
When this requirement has not been met and students who are not Maya speakers have been admitted, they typically drop out of the program within the first year because they cannot keep up with the Maya-language coursework.

In light of the use of Maya as the primary metalanguage in the linguistics courses, all of the standing linguistics faculty members are native Maya speakers. When I conducted my fieldwork, the faculty at in the MLC program was comprised of approximately eleven visiting and standing faculty who held a PhD, a Master’s degree, or a licenciatura in MLC from YXU. (Now there are nine faculty members.) The PhD faculty members (at the time, three people, and now only two) hold degrees in history and anthropology (Cultural and Archaeology specializations). There is one person with the Master’s degree in Education, and two others who are completing their Master’s degrees in ethnography at Yáax Xook presently; both are graduates of the MLC licenciatura program. All remaining faculty hold only the licenciatura degree in MLC from Yáax Xook. None of the linguistics faculty holds PhDs. Occasionally, a visiting faculty member with a PhD or Master’s degree in linguistics or a related discipline (e.g.,

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116 In fact, it is an official requirement that students be Maya speakers to enroll in this degree program, but the staff who recruit for the program frequently misrepresent it to potential students. They tell prospective students that they can learn Maya along the way in the program, when this is not what the program is designed to do. Faculty repeatedly told me that the recruitment staff, administrators, and, in fact, other staff in the MLC program did not actually understand what the linguistics portion of the program entailed. They think it is a language learning program and do not understand that it is a linguistics program that will be taught in Spanish and Maya. In 2015, for instance, nine new students who did not speak Maya entered the MLC program. Of the nine teachers who teach in the program, six teach in Maya.

117 Linguistics faculty explained to me that there is not expert or PhD professor in the Maya Linguistics and Culture Program because the administration justifies the program’s “completeness” with its program that certifies individuals as Maya speakers. (Indigenous education schools are now required to “certify” that their teachers are Maya speakers. YXU, thus, offers a program in which it tests and certifies teachers’ Maya language skills in spoken and written Maya.) The language certification program, however, has nothing to do with the undergraduate program in Maya Linguistics and Culture (and its faculty has no hand in designing or administering the certification program), but linguistics instructors in the program argued that the administration does not know that. They told me that the administration and the other faculty in the MLC program do not really understand what linguistics is.
Languages and Literature) will teach a linguistics course. For example, during my fieldwork, a visiting professor with a Master’s degree in Hispanic linguistics taught the course on *Toponyms and Maya Last Names* as an intensive, weeklong seminar because he lived in another state and could not stay for the duration of the quarter.

The program also differs slightly from other programs in terms of structure. It is three years long—slightly shorter than most undergraduate programs in Mexico or abroad—and students take between six and nine courses a quarter across three quarters for each of the three years. The students average approximately 26 contact hours of classroom time a week each quarter. The lightest quarter in terms of coursework and contact hours is the ninth quarter in which students are typically preparing their theses or conducting service work in preparation for graduation. Students come in with a cohort (typically somewhere between 20 and 30 students) and all courses are taken with that cohort across the nine quarters. This structure creates a sense of community within a cohort.

Finally, perhaps the biggest difference between the linguistics program at YXU and linguistics programs elsewhere is that the content of the program is simultaneously being developed as students are studying it. This poses unique challenges and opportunities for linguistics students and faculty. It has resulted in the invention of new words in the Maya language, the expansion of the meaning of existing words, and the adoption of Spanish-language loanwords. It also involves organizing the Maya language into the categories that the new Maya-language linguistic lexicon describes—sometimes this results in a reorganization of existing accounts of the language. Because only one
publication exists in Maya on a linguistics topic—the text on phonetics and phonology—the remaining linguistics courses that are taught in Maya use materials developed by each individual instructor. Often this involves faculty and students in the program co-generating the language with which to talk about linguistics in Maya. Faculty also draws upon existing accounts of the Maya language published in other languages (primarily English and Spanish and to a lesser degree German or French). Since most students only read Spanish and Maya, the vast majority of literature used to support the courses is written in Spanish. However, much of the work published on Maya (even in Spanish), is not readily accessible to an undergraduate student population and, often, these texts are difficult to obtain. Creators of linguistics *ich maaya* are aware of other non-indigenous grammars of the Maya language, but the one published text in Maya does not acknowledge them. All of the existing grammars of Maya have been published in English (Andrade 1955; Blair 1964; Blair & Vermont Salas 1965; Bolles & Bolles 1996; Bricker et al. 1998 (“Grammatical introduction”); Kaufman 1986 (a comparative account); Tozzer 1921), with the exception of one that is a general account of Mayan grammars (England 1988). There are two publications in Spanish that discuss Maya verbs—*Los verbos del maya yucateco actual: Investigación, clasificación y sistemas conjugacionales* (Briceño Chel 2006) and *Diccionario de la conjugación de verbos en el maya yucateco actual* (Yoshida 2009)\(^\text{118}\) that students and faculty discussed in class.

To date, there is no complete published account of Maya grammar in Maya. The one, monolingual Maya publication covers the phonetics and phonology of Maya.

\(^\text{118}\) ‘Contemporary Yucatec Maya Verbs: Research, Classification and Conjugational Systems’ (Briceño Chel 2006) and ‘Dictionary of the conjugation of verbs in contemporary Yucatec Maya’ (Yoshida 2009).
Another Maya-Spanish bilingual text covers the newly proposed norms for writing the Maya language (Briceño Chel & Can Tec 2014). Among its areas of focus are the letters and their rules of use; orthographic signs, particles and their rules of use; and word delimitation. While this text is titled Normas de escritura para la lengua maya ‘Norms for writing the Maya language’, its Maya-language title is U nu’ukbesajil u ts’iibta’al maayat’aan ‘an explanation of how to write in the Maya language’, thus the text does not propose a term for norm in Maya. Key discussions among individuals who conduct linguistics ich maaya include language standardization, orthography, linguistic purism, linguistic variation, and language ideologies. These issues do produce controversies, which I discuss to some extent in this chapter and in Chapter 8. Typically, however, these controversies have not been clearly articulated in a systemic way such that the larger influences of power and politics can be seen in their instantiation in practice. Instead, they circulate as underlying ideologies based on stereotypic notions of Maya people, their language, and their cultural practices.

In what follows, I describe how some of these trends play out in the creation of linguistics ich maaya at YXU. I begin with a discussion of strategies used for talking about linguistics in Maya in courses that did not have published material in Maya to rely upon, followed by some of the identity work that goes on in the classroom related to linguistics ich maaya, and finally talk about ideologies of linguistic purism and

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119 In U Nu’ukbesajil u ts’iibta’al maayat’aan / Normas de escritura para la lengua maya (Briceño Chel & Can Tec 2014): “woojoob yéetel u jets’t’aanil u k’a’abetkuns’a’al” / “letras y sus reglas de uso;” “u ch’ikulil yéetel u nu’ukbesajil u ts’iibta’al maayat’aan” / “signos ortográficos, partículas y sus reglas de uso;” “t’aano’ob yéetel u tsoolil u ts’iibta’al” / “delimitación de la palabra” (n.p.). This text has two parts—the first is monolingual Maya and the second is a translation of the Maya and is monolingual Spanish.
institutionalized knowledge how these affect the production of knowledge about linguistics in the Maya language.

**Classroom strategies for talking about linguistics in Maya**

Depending upon who was teaching, there were large differences in how linguistics was talked about in the classroom. There was at least one faculty member who avoided Spanish-language loanwords and instead exclusively employed Maya-language neologisms or archaisms when talking about linguistics terminology. At least three other Maya-speaking linguistics faculty members that I observed preferred to use loanwords, even when they taught almost exclusively in Maya. They, and their students, readily “Mayanized” these loanwords in terms of pronunciation, syntax, grammar, and orthography. By Mayanization here, I mean the adaptation of Spanish-language-origin loanwords using Maya-language phonology, morphology, syntax and/or orthography when these are used in Maya. These processes do not reflect code switching (Hickey 2001; Pool Balam & Le Guen 2015). Although, linguistics students at YXU often expressed the ideology (one that circulates beyond the university) that, “…any word can be borrowed from Spanish by just giving it ‘a little Maya tone’” (“…cualquier palabra puede ser prestada del español con solo darle el ‘tonito del maya’”), Pool Balam and Le Guen (2015) show that “Mayanizing” a Spanish-language word involves more than tone.120

120 Montgomery (2004), too, refers to how Spanish-language loanwords are “Mayanized;” however he only describes some of the phonetic adaptations they undergo: “lengthening the vowels, changing the location of accents, adding the characteristic Maya sing-song tonality and pitch, and substituting Maya sounds for Spanish ones not found in Maya” (7). He goes on to argue that, “…Maya speakers retain traditional Spanish pronunciation for technical terms,” which I have not found to be the case with respect to linguistics technical terms (Montgomery 2004, 8).
The differences in how faculty approach using the Maya language to teach linguistics are telling about a given faculty member’s commitment to linguistic purism—a topic that was not only illustrated in practice in the classroom, telling a great deal about a given faculty member’s language ideologies, but also frequently discussed in YXU linguistics classrooms. Linguistic purism is defined in different ways and its projects vary from efforts to rid any type of undesirable language from a linguistic code to those that simply try to eliminate words with their origins in other linguistic codes (i.e. “foreign” words) (Langer & Nesse 2012). In the case of Maya, linguistic purism refers to efforts to eliminate Spanish-language-origin words from Maya.¹²¹

Because faculty members are seen as authorities on course content (at least to some degree), the practices they use in class carry weight in students’ eyes. The fact that there are contrasting practices across different faculty’s classrooms poses a challenge for students and may undermine faculty authority to some degree. For, if the experts do not agree, then what is right? This concerned students and complicated things for them when they were completing assignments—how could they know what would be the “appropriate” way to complete their work in a given course? And, it meant that students had to exert extra effort toward modifying their work products for different faculty. On the other hand, the differences in linguistic practice and conceptions of correct forms also

¹²¹ Interestingly, there are a number of other languages from which Maya borrows (e.g., English, Mixe-Zoque, Nahuatl, Sayula-Popoloca, Totonac, and Zapotec) (Bricker et al. 1998). These words often go unnoticed, however, thus making linguistic purism a partial project focused strictly on the purging of Spanish. This likely has to do with the large socio-political context within which Maya and Spanish co-exist on the Yucatan peninsula and in which Spanish is the socially, economically, and politically powerful language. This is evidenced by the preponderance of Spanish loans in Maya, while words borrowed from the other languages listed above are few (totally perhaps 21 or so between them, see Bricker et al. 1998). For instance, Bricker et al. (1998) note that, “virtually any Spanish noun or infinitive can be incorporated into Maya” (XI).
helped to show students that the Maya language is undergoing an active process of normalization, one that is far from complete, and it helped them to understand that they could play an important role in that process. Thus, these differences were, at the same time, empowering, challenging, frustrating, and inspiring for students.

One of the most frequent strategies faculty members used when presenting linguistics content to students in Maya was to ask students to read the content in Spanish and then talk about it in Maya. This typically entailed the use of loanwords to talk about linguistics concepts, both because linguistics terminology has not yet been standardized in this language and because this was an easy way to refer back to the Spanish-language texts. Alternatively, some faculty who typically taught their courses in Maya would first present basic concepts in Spanish, illustrating how these worked with Spanish-language examples, and then present the same material in Maya, then showing how the concepts worked in the Maya language. And, one faculty member who typically taught his courses in Maya even went a step further, explaining to me that, because there is no written grammar of the Maya language in Maya he teaches introduction to linguistics to the first year students in Spanish because the students do not have the concepts in Maya, so they have to be explained in Spanish first. Finally, at least one faculty member

122 Interestingly, the phonetics and phonology instructor who uses the only published Maya-language linguistic text in his course, a text on phonetics and phonology, also first presented the course content in Spanish, then in Maya. For instance, he first taught the phonetic vowel structure in Spanish, using the Spanish language vowels as the examples, then he taught it in Maya, using the terms from the phonetics and phonology book (a combination of neologism and archaisms, and almost no Spanish-language loanwords) and the Maya vowel sounds. This faculty member has much stronger purist tendencies than do the two aforementioned faculty members, but even he found it necessary to first present course content in Spanish.

123 Original: “Porque son conceptos que los alumnos no tienen en maya entonces se tienen que explicar en español desde un principio” (FN130910).
taught almost exclusively in Maya and almost exclusively using neologisms, which he
drew from the one existing published text in this language (the topic of Chapter 8).

Thus, the task of the faculty in the linguistics program at YXU is a tall order—to
teach disciplinary linguistics using Maya as a metalanguage when the terminology has
not yet been standardized in this language. To illustrate the complexity of the task of
teaching linguistics in Maya, I offer two examples: first, one faculty member’s approach
to handling even the assumedly simplest of terms—word—in the linguistics classroom
and, second, how he and his students talk about specific linguistics terminology using the
example of the concept preposition. Next, I discuss the important identity work that
studying Maya linguistics ich maaya does for students at YXU. I follow with a discussion
of the issue of linguistic purism.

How do you say ‘word’ in Maya?

Words for language (more specifically, Saussurean ‘langage’, ‘langue’, and ‘parole’) or
even a word for word have not been standardized in the Maya language. Terms do exist
for expressing word in Maya, but these are polysemous and can create confusion in
specialized contexts. In an introductory course on morphology and syntax\textsuperscript{124}, students in
the MLC program struggled with how to talk about word in Maya. Lacking a
standardized word for this term in Maya, the instructor tried to engage students in
conversation about what that term should be.

\textsuperscript{124} I also observed the advanced version of this course, Morphology and Syntax II, in which the same
faculty member asked students Ba’ax dialeekto? ‘What is dialect [in Maya]?’ A tāanik? ‘Do you talk?/How
you talk?’ T’āan xook ‘ Schooled/learned/studied talk/speech/reading/writing/discourse’. These questions
illustrate both how t’āan is polysemous and how the semantic field of t’āan is bigger than this introductory
discussion illustrates—it includes concepts such as dialect, among others.
One day, students were giving presentations on course content—a common pedagogical strategy in the Mexican educational system, not just at this university. The presenting group was discussing the notion of word—attempting to define it and think about how it could be represented in Maya. The student who was presenting on behalf of his group did not speak Maya (despite the fact that it is supposed to be an entry requirement for this program). He was struggling to read the slides he had made with his group members. They were poorly written and poorly delivered and the other students did not understand what he or the slides were saying. Eventually, the instructor interrupted the student and the class began discussing whether they should continue with the student presentations of class content (exposiciones). The students said that it is hard to understand this stuff at all, and that it is even harder to invent it in Maya. They eventually decided to continue with the presentations but, when the presenting student continued to struggle the instructor pulled up a PowerPoint presentation he had ready on the topic to support the presenting group.

The topic of the presentation was word (palabra in Spanish) and the example the presenting student had offered was from Taiwanese. The students were not only trying to come up with a way to say word in Maya, but they were also trying to define it. The example from Taiwanese served to address the issue of orthography. For instance, in Taiwanese, there are no spaces between characters, so the instructor asked if in orthography we can take spacing as part of the definition of what a word is? So, in Maya, should it be ma’ táan or ma’táan? Separate or together? Ka’a p’éel páalabras wá junp’éel páalabra? ‘Two words or one word?’ Bix k wóojel? ‘How do we know?’ He
then explained that it depends on the linguistic perspective one uses to analyze the concept *palabra* ‘word’. In phonology, the issue is unity, in orthography it is spaces, in semantics it is meaning, and in syntax it is order. ¿Qué es una palabra? Escriban una definición abarcando estas perspectivas. He then asks again, what is a word? And instructs the students to write a definition of *word* that encompasses each of the aforementioned perspectives (i.e. phonology, orthography, semantics, and syntax) as a homework assignment.

Later in the term, the topic of *palabra* ‘word’ resurfaced in this class. What is it?, the instructor again asked. Students offered a variety of definitions, each one slightly different from the others. The characteristics advanced by the students included:

- the minimal phonetic unit that has meaning, which can be a phoneme or a group of phonemes;
- something that the majority of the speakers of a language recognize as a word; and
- things that are separated by white spaces in written language.

This led to a discussion of the differences between orthographic and morphological words, which then led to a discussion of compound words and the question of syntactic unity—can something be inserted between the two elements or not? Contractions were the next topic of conversation. Finally, the teacher concluded that the definition for *word* depends upon the point of view that one takes when analyzing the concept—is it a phonological, semantic, syntactic, or morphological approach? In Spanish, the instructor pointed out, the evidence from these different approaches tends to point in the same direction. He asked, *is the same the case in Maya?*
Next, the teacher again asked the class *ba’ax páalabra ich maaya* ‘what is word in Maya’? This time students offered a variety of suggestions: *xóoxot t’aan, xot’ woon, woon, xo’ot ts’íib, xot’ t’aan, woj’tan,* and *t’aan.* Interestingly, no one said *páalabra,* which is a Mayanization of the Spanish loanword *palabra* ‘word’. The instructor said that none of the suggestions the students offered was bad, but what word is conventional? *Woon,* he explained, means glyph in colonial Maya, and redefining this concept could prove difficult.125 Today, some authors are using *woon* to mean *letra* ‘letter’ in Maya.126 So, for instance, *chichan woon* ‘small letter’ would mean lowercase (*minúscula* in Spanish) and *nojoch woon* ‘large letter’ would mean uppercase (*mayúscula* in Spanish). This, however, is not transparent or conventional, he noted, since *chichan woon* and *nojoch woon* could both also refer to the size of a letter, as in font size. For the suggestions *xot’ ts’íib* and *xot’ t’aan,* the teacher noted that these can specify whether the element is written (*ts’íib*) or spoken (*t’aan*), which is useful. *Xot’* (and its variations) can be a verb or noun and typically refers to a ‘cut’ or ‘slice’ (Bricker et al. 1998, 262), in this case, of language.

The instructor continued to explain that the most utilized terms for *word* in Maya are *woon, t’aan,* and *páalabra,* but that each of these present different problems.127

*Páalabra* is a loanword from Spanish, *palabra,* and some people are opposed to the use of loanwords in Maya. *T’aan* means things other than word, such as the Saussurean

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125 In fact, this same faculty member remarked that, “*woon* is an old word (an *uuchben páalabra*) that means glyph. Those who made the glyphs were *sabios* ‘knowledgeable’, *educados* ‘educated’. [He is referring to educated in the English-language sense here.] Maybe *woonel* ‘to know’ comes from this word and it got generalized.”

126 In fact, it is used in the *Poneetika* text, which I discuss further below in this chapter, in this way.

127 Later in the term, the faculty member told me that his students submitted work assignments and each one of them had used *woon* somewhere in their work, but each one used it in his/her own way. However, no one explained how s/he was using it. (FN140218)
tripartite distinction for the English term *language* (*lenguaje* ‘langage’, *lengua* ‘langue’) and speech (*habla* ‘parole’), speak, speech (both everyday and oratory), talk, and discourse, and perhaps even dialect, among other things. Thus, the meaning of *t’aan* is often left to context.

Each year in this teacher’s course, students come up with proposals for the terms in Maya; thus, the teacher presented the terms students had agreed upon in previous years: *t’aanil* ‘lenguaje’ ‘language qua langage’, *t’aan* ‘lengua’ ‘language qua langue’, and *tse’ek* ‘habla’ ‘speech’.\(^\text{128}\) There was no consensus for how to represent the term *palabra* ‘word’ in Maya. Of the eight suggested terms, the one the students preferred was *t’aan*. The instructor asked his current students to answer the following question for homework: What is *palabra* ‘word’ in Maya (“*ba’ax pálabra ich maaya*”). When the group discussed the students’ responses to this assignment in class, the students advocated for the following definition (English translation follows Spanish original below):

Example 7.1. Definition of word in Maya

*Depinisyón le t’áano’: le much t’aano’ob wa jummilo’ ku ye’esko junp’él ba’al wa junp’él tukul.*

*T’áano’—unidad minima yéetel u siknipikaado.*

*T’áan—u k’aat u ya’alal lenguaje, lengua, habla, palabra.*

**English translation:** Definition of word (*t’áano’*): the grouping of minimal units of meaning or sounds that indicate a thought or an idea.

\(^{128}\) In fact, this instructor kept track of students’ suggestions across his years of teaching this course with the goal of using this information to help write an introduction to linguistics text, which he began drafting collaboratively with his students during my time at YXU.
Following the class discussion of the definition of word, the faculty member offered a few closing remarks on the topic. In so doing, he alluded to another common strategy in dealing with concepts for which there are no words in Maya—a strategy that linguistic purists often ascribe to when they cannot agree upon a suitable neologism or archaism to replace a loanword in this language—omission. The instructor recounted, I had a professor who said that, “word isn’t a linguistic term,” so he rid himself of the problem.¹²⁹

This discussion illustrates how conducting disciplinary linguistics using Maya as a metalanguage is difficult in light of the lack of standardization of everyday terms needed to talk about language (such as word, talk, language, speech, etc.) and the polysematic nature of these terms. Coming up with specialized terminology to discuss disciplinary content is still necessary, however. In what follows, I discuss how students in the introductory Morphology and Syntax course handled the use of linguistic terminology in the Maya language. I offer the example of prepositions. Following this discussion, I analyze the sole linguistics text published in Maya and illustrate how the same issues faculty face in discussing linguistics in Maya in the classroom—the lack of standardization of everyday and specialized concepts—poses difficulties for writing about linguistics in this language.

What is a preposition in Maya?

In the same course, an introductory course on *Morphology and Syntax*, the instructor asked students to present in class on the following concepts: noun, verb, pronoun, determiner, adverb, conjunction, preposition, open class, free morpheme, allomorph, and adverb. Students were to consult the literature (in Spanish) to understand each concept, present those definitions (either in Spanish or Maya), and offer examples in Maya of the concepts. These resultant presentations typically produced a composite gloss of the Spanish-language definitions in Maya. A key function of these activities was to see how students thought the terms should be represented in Maya—from the actual words used to represent the terms (i.e. neologisms, archaisms, expansion of the meaning of an existing term in Maya, or loanwords) to the orthography. This process was a way of involving students in producing this new knowledge about linguistics in Maya.

For the activity that the faculty member assigned (mentioned above), students relied primarily on Spanish-language texts to prepare their presentations. They gathered their notes from class and any relevant texts they could find (typically only those provided in PDF format by the instructor) to prepare the content for their presentations. Then they generated examples on their own, from everyday speech. The presentations allowed the students and this faculty member to see how students were representing the concepts conceptually and graphically in Maya—that is, how were they defining these terms in Maya and what orthography they were using to represent them. It also provided insight into how the students thought the language should be categorized. What students
placed in a category shed light on how they perceived certain terms in the Maya language to function.

The following is an example of a student PowerPoint presentation on prepositions. The students titled the presentation preposisyoneso’ob in Maya—this is a Mayanization of the Spanish-language word preposiciones ‘prepositions’, adapted using Maya orthography and Maya pluralization (–o’ob ‘third person plural’). The students’ presentation began with some definitions of prepositions in Spanish:

Example 7.2. Student presentation on prepositions

- Prepositions are words that serve to relate other words within a sentence. Examples: rice with milk; easy to do.
- Preposition, a word that relates a noun or a pronoun with another word of which it is a complement, as is indicated by its Latin-origin etymology prae ‘in front of’, position ‘position’. Prepositions are words that connect any syntactic element, preposiciones son palabras que sirven para relacionar otras palabras dentro de la oración (Gómez Torrego 2007, 225). Ejemplos: arroz con leche; fácil de hacer.”

130 In the Spanish-language version of this word the letter ‘c’ (functioning in conjunction with the following particle ‘ion’) represents the phoneme /s/ but in the colonial Maya alphabet ‘c’ corresponds to the phoneme /k/; to avoid confusion, the phoneme /s/ is written as ‘s’ in Maya. Furthermore, the ‘i’ in ‘ion’, following the Spanish-language ‘c’ is changed to ‘y’ in Maya because Maya does not place different vowels side-by-side. It is a CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) language and the letters ‘y’ and ‘w’ are used as glides between vowels of different kinds. (E.g., óok ‘foot/leg’, but in wóok ‘my foot/leg’ and u yóok ‘his/her foot/leg’.) Thus, here the glide is applied to separate the ‘i’ from the ‘o’ following the second ‘s’.
131 Interestingly, more often than not, I saw the Maya pluralization applied on top of the Spanish-language pluralization when Spanish-language loanwords were Mayanized. In this case, the Spanish-language pluralization is –es.
132 Original: “Las preposiciones son palabras que sirven para relacionar otras palabras dentro de la oración (Gómez Torrego 2007, 225). Ejemplos: arroz con leche; fácil de hacer.”
133 Original: “Clase de palabra invariable que relaciona un elemento de una frase u oración y su complemento. Las preposiciones españolas son: a, ante, bajo, cabe, con, contra, de, desde, en, entre, hacía, hasta, para, por, según, sin, so, sobre, tras (cabe y so están en desuso) (Luna Traill, Viguera Ávila, Baez Pinal 2005, 1147, 182).”
typically a noun or equivalent, with one that forms a complement for another noun. \(^{134}\)

Then, the students offered a definition of their own in Maya:

> Prepositions are words that relate a noun or pronoun with its spatial position (or location) within a phrase or sentence. \(^{135}\)

The students’ Maya-language definition of *preposition* adds information that is not included in the other definitions they provide—they acknowledge that prepositions do relational work between nouns/pronouns and other words in a sentence or phrase, but they proffer that a preposition defines this relationship in terms of “spatial position (or location).” This explanation, while not included in the published definitions in Spanish that the students cite, is included in the additional observations they offer about prepositions on the subsequent slide, taken from an existing reference text on the Maya language:

- There are very few prepositions in Mayan languages, generally between none and two.
- Those that exist have a very general locational meaning and sometimes grammatical case. (England 2001) \(^{136}\)

England’s (2001) explanation of prepositions in Mayan languages is likely the source of the students’ ideas about prepositions’ function of providing locational meaning.

However, a review of other definitions of prepositions also shows that most do take into

\(^{134}\) Original: “Preposición, palabra que relaciona un nombre o un pronombre con otra palabra de la que es complemento, como indica su etimología de origen latino *prae* ‘delante’, *positio* ‘posición’. Las preposiciones son palabras que enlanzan un elemento sintáctico cualquiera, principalmente, un sustantivo o equivalente, con el que forma un complemento de otro sustantivo. (Microsoft Encarta 2009)” Note: here the students use *nombre* ‘name’ to indicated ‘noun’. The word in Spanish for *noun* is *sustantivo* (e.g., seen as a Mayanized loanword in the original text in the subsequent footnote). I discuss the use of *nombre* as ‘noun’ in Chapter 7.

\(^{135}\) Original: “Le preposiysoneso’obo’ t’aano’ob ku relasionaartik jumpéél sustaantuibo wa pronoombre yéetel u posisyon espasyal (wa lookasion) ichiil jumpéél fraase wa orasoon.”

\(^{136}\) Original: “Hay muy pocas preposiciones en los idiomas mayas, generalmente entre ninguna o dos. Las que existen tienen un significado muy general de locación y a veces de caso gramatical (England 2001).”
consideration the spatial elements the students identified. For example, the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics* states that a preposition is “[a] word or other syntactic element of a class whose members typically come before a noun phrase and which is characterized by ones which basically indicated spatial relations…” (Matthews 1997, 315). The question here, then, would be, do prepositions fulfill this function in Maya?

While the students do not pursue this line of questioning, the answer is that, at least according to England (2001), Mayan languages typically use relational nouns instead of prepositions to express spatial relations. The difference, she argues, between a preposition and a relational noun is that the relational noun carries flexion (A set) pronoun markers] in accordance with the person and the number of its complement (England 2001, 89). Furthermore, information about positionality or location is also often contained within positional roots in Maya.

Next, the students provided a slide entitled “Bix le preposisyoneso ’obo” ‘What prepositions are like’:

- ‘They have no number, they have no gender, they have no grammatical person. Maria has gone (walking) *ta* (her) house."
- ‘They do not work on their own.’
- ‘They are a closed class.’

The students then list the prepositions in Maya, referencing a published text:

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137 Original: “La diferencia entre una preposición y un sustantivo relacional es que el sustantivo relacional lleva flexión (Juego A) de acuerdo con la persona y el número de su complemento” (England, 2001, 89). England goes on to explain that in a number of Mayan languages some relational nouns are losing the A set pronoun markers, at least in the third person. Thus, they are becoming prepositions as well.

138 In Maya, it is not specified that Maria has gone (walking) to *her* house/home. The sentence more accurately reads Maria has gone (walking) to home, but in English, it is not possible to use a preposition with *home* in this sentence if it is not specified to whose home she is walking.

139 Original: “Mina’an u número, mina’an u jéenero, mina’an u persona grammatical. X maria’ bija’an man *ti*’ najil. Mix tun meyajo’ob chen tu júuno’ob. Letio’obe’ klasse serrada. (Hualde et al. 2010, 165)”
• The prepositions in Maya are the following: *yéetel* (and, with), *utia’al* (is from, for) when possession is expressed, *tumen* (for) (Dr. Hideyo Noguchi).
  ✔ Tomorrow I will go to Izamal *with* my older sister.
  ✔ That meat is *for* to eat (it).
  ✔ The boy is just going around, [and] came to the square and ate quickly, [and when] he finishes he goes again to run and play *with* his schoolmates.

The students then ask if there are prepositions in Maya: ¿*Yaana’ preeposisyones ich maaya’*? They provide examples for discussion in Maya using the words *ti’* and *táanil*. They then explain the concept of prepositional phrases, citing Halliday (1985): They consist of a preposition plus a nominal group. They provide some examples in Spanish—*sobre el escritorio* ‘on (top of) the desk’; *bajo los arboles* ‘under the trees’— and explain further that these are combinations of two or more words that do the work of a simple preposition. In Maya, they offer examples using the words *yáanal* and *tumen* to illustrate prepositional phrases. Next, they provide a list of examples using the following words, which they argue function as prepositions according to the definitions they provided: *paach* ‘behind’, *yéetel* ‘with’, *ichil* ‘inside of’, *yok’ol* ‘on (top of)’. Finally, they provide a paragraph written in Maya and ask the class to identify the prepositions in it as a group.

Because there are no texts published on or in Maya that explain prepositions in this language, the students have to start somewhere, thus they begin with definitions in Spanish and then translate those concepts into Maya. While the students explain their understandings of the concepts in Maya, they used (Mayanized) loan words instead of

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140 Original: “Las preposiciones en maya son las siguientes: *yéetel* (y, con), *utia’al* (es de, para) cuando se expresa posesión, *tumen* (por) (Dr. Hideyo Noguchi).
> Sáamale yáan in bin Istmal yéetel in kìik.
> Le bak’o utia’al u jante.
> Le páalo’ chéen máan ku bèetik, táal k’iìwike’ háan háanih, ts’o’okole’ ka’ bin yáalkab báaxal yéetel u yéet xòokilo’ob.” The reader should note that the forms given in these examples are not naturally occurring forms in Maya and, as such, are difficult to render into English.
neologisms to name the different linguistics concepts. The following loan words are found in the students’ presentation on prepositions:

Table 7.1. Mayanized Spanish-language-origin loanwords used in students’ presentation on prepositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mayanized Spanish-language-origin loanwords</th>
<th>Spanish original ‘English gloss’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>preposisyon (singular, with variant spelling; perhaps a typo)</td>
<td>preposición ‘preposition’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposisyoneso ’ob (plural)</td>
<td>preposiciones ‘prepositions’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposisyoneso ’obo’ (plural with distal determiner suffix o’)</td>
<td>estas preposiciones ‘those prepositions’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relasionaartik</td>
<td>relacionar ‘connect; relate’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustaabito</td>
<td>sustantivo ‘noun’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronooombre</td>
<td>pronombre ‘pronoun’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posisyon</td>
<td>posición ‘position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>espasyal</td>
<td>espacial ‘spatial’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lookasion</td>
<td>loacación ‘location’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraase</td>
<td>frase ‘phrase’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orasioon</td>
<td>oración ‘sentence’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>núumero</td>
<td>número ‘number’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jéenero</td>
<td>género ‘gender’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peersona</td>
<td>persona ‘person’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graamatical</td>
<td>gramatical ‘grammatical’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>klaase</td>
<td>clase ‘class’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serrada</td>
<td>cerrada ‘closed’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the loanwords used for linguistics terms, the students also included a few loanwords in their examples of everyday: libro Sp. libro ‘book’, mesao’ (includes distal determiner suffix o’) Sp. mesa ‘table’, gremio ’ob Sp. gremios ‘guild; professional association’, and charanga Sp. charanga ‘brass or steel band’.

With respect to the linguistics terms used in the students’ presentation, all of them were borrowed from Spanish. Thus, while the students understood and talked about the linguistics concepts in Maya, they borrowed the words to name them from Spanish.
did not seem to pose a problem for the students’ abilities to conduct linguistic analyses in the Maya language, and they were able to engage in critical discussion about what belonged in what grammatical categories in Maya using the Mayanized loanwords.

The students then asked, *what prepositions are there in Maya?*, and provided the following list as a response: *ti’, ichil, tanil, yanal, tumen, paach, ti’ + …, u láak?* They list six prepositions, one of which they suggest can be combined with something else (*ti’ + …*), and they ask if there are others (*u láak?*). In what follows, I provide glosses for the contemporary dictionaries that provide information about grammatical category in their entries.\(^{141}\) (If the cited dictionary uses an alternative spelling, I also provide this.)

Table 7.2. Maya-language prepositions identified by student group and dictionary definitions of these

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *ti’*       | 1: particular: a, en, con, *etc*.; 2: *preposición* a, con, por instrument, adentro; 3: en, *preposición* de lugar, en donde, de, denotando de donde o para quien, en él o en ella, relative, por, en cierta manera, con el instrument, contra, … (Barrera Vásquez 1980, 788)  
|             | pt. to, at, in, from, for  
|             | (Bricker et al. 1998, 274)  
|             | *prep*. A, en, con, por, de ‘at, in, with, for, from’  
|             | (Gómez Navarrete 2009, 172)  
|             | *prep*. in, on, with, to  
|             | (Montgomery 2004, 77)  |
| *ichil*     | dentro, entre (Barrera Vásquez 1980, 262)  
|             | pt. within  
|             | (Bricker et al. 1998, 11)  
|             | *adv de l*. Adentro; *prep*. Dentro; Entre ‘adverb of location. within; inside; between’  
|             | (Gómez Navarrete 2009, 129)  
|             | *prep*. in, inside, within  
|             | (Montgomery 2004, 59)  |
| *tanil*     | la parte delantera e preferencia, prioridad, anchura, *etc*., y las [demás]  

\(^{141}\) I consulted a variety of contemporary dictionaries to research how these words are defined and categorized. However, many of the dictionaries do not specify grammatical category (part of speech), such as Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Yucatán (ALMY) (2003); Bastarrachea Manzano et al. (1992); Maglah Canul (2002); and Martínez Huchim (2008).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>acepciones de tan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Barrera Vásquez 1980, 769)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>táan(l) N. front, face. t u táanil in front of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Bricker et al. 1998, 270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>táanil.-adv. de t. Antes ‘adverb of time. before’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gómez Navarrete 2009, 170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>táanil. prep. in front of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Montgomery 2004, 76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tumen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>under men. tumenel: porque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Barrera Vásquez 1980, 520)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>under mèen N. t u mèen, nphr(pt &amp; n1). by, because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Bricker et al. 1998, 183-184)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tuméen.-prep. Por eso ‘for this (reason)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gómez Navarrete 2009, 173)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conj. because; by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Montgomery 2004, 77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>paach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pach: espalda de cualquier animal y del hombre; envés o revés de cualquier cosa, contrario de la haz, que es la cara; parte trasera; espaldar; detrás; dorso, reverse; la parte posterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Barrera Vásquez 1980, 615)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n1. Back, rear side…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t u pàač. behind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Bricker et al. 1998, 204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adv. de l. Atrás ‘adverb of location. behind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gómez Navarrete 2009, 159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n. back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Montgomery 2004, 70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ti’ + …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tin tan: ante mi o a mi presencia l: ta tan, tu tan, etc: ante ti, ante él, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(769)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tu) pach 2: con; xen tu pach Juan: vete con Juan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Barrera Vásquez 1980, 616)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under ti’:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t, pt(contr of ti’). to, at, in, from. t uy otoč. In his house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use the ti’ + … construction in their example of paach: “t u pàač. behind.” In this example, pàač is classified as a noun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Bricker et al. 1998, 275)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Gómez Navarrete 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Montgomery 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>u láak…?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘any other…?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table shows that there is not consensus as to 1) what counts as a preposition in Maya and 2) how the words the students identify as prepositions should be classified. The broader literature (including the dictionaries cited in this table) has the following take on prepositions in Maya. Bevington (1995), Bricker et al. (1998), and England (2001) argue that there is really one preposition in Maya—ti’, even though Bevington explains that there are many prepositional phrases in Maya (despite there being only one preposition). These are formed in a variety of ways, one being to add ti’ to a noun or pronoun (as the students suggest can be done in the table above).

Bevington (1995) explains this process as follows, arguing that in fact the nominal forms do not constitute prepositions in Maya; instead he argues that the majority of the time these forms function as prepositions that can be followed by an object, but that in some cases they do not. He uses the example of et:

Other things that are equivalent to English or Spanish prepositional phrases are constructed around nouns, some of which are seldom or never used in isolation. Let’s look at an example. The noun et probably means something like ‘accompaniment’ or ‘instrumentality’…, but hooked up with a possessor name or noun phrase it sprouts a u followed by a y attached to et…and a –VI suffix, yielding a theoretical *u yetel. Remember, however, that the y prefixed to the noun makes the u redundant. Usually dropping the u is optional, but here it must go, yielding yetel. With a possessor name or noun phrase after it, we get yetel Hwan ‘the accompaniment of Juan’ or simply ‘with John’. In 95 percent of the cases you could just say yetel is the preposition ‘with’, and you put the object after it. However, with the first- and second-person pronoun forms, the truth that we ultimately have a possessed noun is seen in the forms: tin wetel, ta wetel, ta wetele’ex, tek etelo’on or tin wetelo’on. Note that these forms also begin with ti’, appropriately contracted with the following pronoun. Other forms equivalent to prepositions work the same way: ti’al ‘for’, yok’ol ‘over, above’ [the nominal root is *ok’], yaanal ‘under’ (root *aan). (Bevington, 1995, 43)

Bevington (1995), thus, claims that “[t]here is only one all-purpose preposition, ti’, in Maya, which indicates general direction or location, i.e. ‘to, from, in, on, at’, etc.,” but
that there are “other things that are equivalent to English or Spanish prepositional phrases [that] are constructed around nouns” (42-43). These include: yetel or wetel ‘with’ or ‘the accompaniment of,’ ti’al ‘for’, yok’ol ‘over, above’, yaanal ‘under’, tu tsel ‘beside’ (‘at its side’), tu chumuk ‘in/to the middle of’, and ichi(il) ‘in(side)’ (Bevington, 1995, p. 43-44).

Bricker et al. (1998), also argue that there is only one preposition in Maya, but they do not explicitly name this preposition. They write, “[u]nder particles we have subsumed several kinds of function words: adverbs, interrogatives, pronouns, and a preposition” (382). In their lexicon, both ti’ and ñičil are listed as particles, but elsewhere in their text, they call ñičil a preposition (354). Thus, one could deduce that ñičil is the one preposition they have included under the category particles, although I cannot be certain as I have not combed all 410 pages of their text to see if any other passing references are made to words as prepositions.

Bolles and Bolles (2014, 20) in their A Grammar and Anthology of the Yucatecan Mayan Language, list the following prepositions:
Table 7.3. Prepositions listed for Yucatec Maya in Bolles and Bolles (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maya</th>
<th>English gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ti</td>
<td>to, at, from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desde</td>
<td>from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yetel</td>
<td>with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xma</td>
<td>without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ich, ichil</td>
<td>in, inside of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tancab</td>
<td>outside (referring to a building)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu tzel</td>
<td>beside, next to, outside of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yok, yokol</td>
<td>on, on top of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yanal, yanil</td>
<td>under, beneath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actan, tu tan, tanil</td>
<td>in front of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pachil, tu pach</td>
<td>behind, in back of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tumen, tuolal, tiolal</td>
<td>because, because of, by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utial</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tac</td>
<td>even, including, until</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bolles and Bolles (2014) also list etel – yetel as a term that can be used as a preposition to mean ‘with’ (21). They also write that, “The particles uay (here) and te (there) are used as prepositions to adverbial clauses” (Bolles & Bolles 2014, 61).

Tozzer (1921), in his *A Maya Grammar*, differentiates between prepositions and postpositions but notes that, “when used with nouns all are prefixed” (107). However, when they are used with pronouns, some are “prefixed to… the verbal pronoun [i.e. what Andrade (1941) and Bolles & Bolles (2014) call Set B] and [others]…to the nominal pronoun [i.e. what Andrade (1941) and Bolles & Bolles (2014) call Set A]” (Tozzer 1921, 107). He lists the following pre- and post-positions in his grammar, arguing that these “…are used in place of the oblique cases in Maya:”:

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142 In fact, this point is confusing and inaccurate. Tozzer (1921) suggests that both ti’ and in are prepositions. But in is not a preposition in Maya; it is a pronoun (what Tozzer calls a nominal pronoun and
”Ti’ is the only preposition Yoshida (2011) names in Maya, and he subsumes this
preposition under the category of particles (9). Andrade (1955) argues that prepositions in
Maya include ti or ti’ (the latter preceding vowels), which “corresponds to a general
suffix -(a)l,” which “have prepositional uses:” ichil, yanal, yok’ol, and yetel (2.29143).
Montgomery (2004) writes about prepositions and prepositional phrases, similarly to
Bevington. He calls these “locatives,” which “include the all-purpose preposition in
Maya, ti’, and indicate general direction or location: to, from, in, on, at” (42). He goes on
to explain that, “when the article le or pronominal affixes in, a, or u follow ti’, typically
in their possessive function, the two contract: te, tin, ta, and tu” (42). He notes that “Set C
pronouns resemble contractions of ti’ with Set B pronouns, as in teen ‘to me’, tzech ‘to
you’, te’ex ‘to you’ (plural), to’on ‘to us’, leeti’ ‘to him/her’, and leeti’o’ob ‘to them’…”
and that “to express ‘to him /her/it’ you use ti’ by itself, marked with clause-final –e’
tacked on: ti’e’ = ‘to him/her”; ti’o’ob(e)’ = ‘to them’” (42). Finally, Montgomery (2004,
42) lists the following other prepositional forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yeetel</td>
<td>‘with’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uti’a’al</td>
<td>‘for’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yóok’ol</td>
<td>‘over, above’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yaanal</td>
<td>‘under’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu</td>
<td>‘beside’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chuumuk</td>
<td>‘in the middle’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

what other authors call a Set A pronoun). The example Tozzer (1921, 107) offers is: “ti, in, from, and to,
tin bin t-in na, I am going to my house. tin tal t-in na, I am coming from my house.” He suggests that ti
(from which he omits the glottal) and in both mean ‘from’ and ‘to’. However, in the examples he provides,
all of the prepositional work is done by the word ti; in remains a pronoun communicating the meaning ‘my’
in both examples—‘to’ and ‘from’ is expressed by ti exclusively in the examples provided.
143 The Andrade manuscript does not contain page numbers, thus I have included the section number where
the quoted material appears in the text.
McQuown (1967b) writes that, “[t]he only prepositional particle is ti. It has multiple meanings: …to…on…in…by…de [‘from’]…según [‘according to’]…estando…siendo [‘being’]…habiendo [‘having’]…por entre [‘between’]…. Other prepositional expressions are derived from nouns or verbs, although they may be used analogously as particles: …into…over…with” (242). McQuown (1967b) defines particles as “not inflected as verbs and nouns are[,] they may be conjugated (with an intervening zero copula), and they may be compounded, often multiply” (242). Hanks (1990), identifies ti’ as “a relational particle…the only root preposition in Maya, used for ‘to, for, at, from, on, …’ (468). (A root is “a form from which words or parts of words are derived and which is not itself derivable from any smaller or simpler form” (Matthews 2007, 350).) The focus of Hanks’ (1990) work is not prepositions (it is deixis), thus these are not called out explicitly in his work and a comprehensive list of them is not offered. However, in his grammatical glosses of examples he provides, in addition to ti’, ich (ic) is also marked as a preposition (17). I did not find any other forms marked in this way in his text, which is not to say that he would not classify other forms in this way (e.g., see p. 400). Finally, Gómez Navarrete (2009) includes the classification preposición ‘preposition’ because he adopts Barrera Vásquez’s (1980) grammatical categories. 

Situating prepositions ich maaya within linguistic theory

The summary of different authors’ takes on the existence of prepositions in Maya, and what these may be, must be understood within the larger field of disciplinary linguistics and within the practice linguistics within a Western, Indo-European frame. To understand
precisely how, I discuss how *preposition* is defined within Western, disciplinary
linguistics and I offer a brief overview of the historical development of the concept
within linguistics as well as of the discipline of linguistics more broadly.

Oxford’s *Concise Dictionary of Linguistics* (Matthews 2007, 315) defines *preposition* as
a word or other syntactic element of a class whose members typically come
before a noun phrase and which is characterized by ones which basically indicate
spatial relations: e.g. *on* in *on the mat, behind in behind the sofa, throughout in
throughout Asia*. Also *on* in e.g. *on Saturday, on receipt, or on my honour*, where
the temporal and other senses are secondary. Also e.g. *during in during August,*
although the temporal sense is basic.

One of the *144* parts of speech, traditionally defined by its position. Hence
*postposition*, of elements which are similar except that they come after a noun or
noun phrase; also ‘adposition’, as a term which covers both.

Thus, Oxford identifies the key function of prepositions as communicating information
about “spatial relations,” and it gives them secondary functions of communicating
information about “temporal and other senses.”

The same text defines *parts of speech* as
a system of word classes, developed first for Ancient Greek and for Latin; thence
extended, with modifications, to many other languages. The parts of speech
canonical in Latin grammars were (in the order e.g. of *Donatus* *145*) *nouns,
system canonical in Greek grammars included the *article.

The ancient term (Lat. *partes orationis*) means, more precisely, ‘parts of
the sentence’. A ‘part’ was thus an element of syntax necessarily or potentially
related to other ‘parts’ (noun to verb, adverb to verb, preposition to noun, and so
on). (Matthews 2007, 289)

In fact, Koerner and Ascher (1995) in their *Concise History of the Language Sciences*,
tell us that *preposition* is a category first proffered by Plato (although they argue that his

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144 The asterisk indicates terms that are defined elsewhere in the text.
145 *Donatus* (4th century AD) Roman grammarian, author in particular of a compendium of Latin grammar
(the *Ars maior* or ‘larger *ars*’) and a catechism on the *parts of speech and their *accidents (the *Ars minor*
or ‘smaller *ars*’), which were to have an immense influence, directly and through their role as a model for
other grammars, throughout the medieval and into the modern period” (Matthews 2007, 111).
ideas were from conversations with Socrates and his friends): “…possibly ‘arthron’ and ‘sundesmos’ (later meaning ‘article’ and ‘conjunction,’ but at first including prepositions and some other function words)” (Koerner & Ascher 1995, 92). Koerner and Ascher (1995) next mention prepositions in their discussion of the Stoics (early 3c. BCE), who used a new term that meant particle, under which they subsumed prepositions:

a new term morion (‘particle’) does come into use without being defined, entailing not a new part of speech, but a new classification of words, roughly into full words and empty words, to use modern terms…. Nouns and verbs are only rarely called morion, most of the examples being pronouns, small adverbs, interrogatives, indefinites, conjunctions, and prepositions....” (96)

Thus, we can see the origin of the contemporary tradition of calling prepositions particles. This is evident in definition of particle in Oxford’s Concise Dictionary of Linguistics (Matthews 2007):

Used of divers classes of uninflected words in divers languages. Usually of words that are short, sometimes though not always *clitic [“any grammatical unit that is not straightforwardly either an affix or a word on its own” (59)], and generally not falling easily under any of the traditional *parts of speech. A typical example is the enclitic ge in Ancient Greek, basically a marker of emphasis: keinós ge… ‘THAT (man)…’ or ‘THAT (man) at least…’.

Used by e.g. C.F. Hockett in the 1950s of all forms that do not take inflections. Also by Jespersen of all the elements, e.g. in English, traditionally called adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Thence, specifically in English, of the second element of a *phrasal verb: e.g. in I picked it up.

In Matthews’ definition of particles, we find the deictic that (from the Ancient Greek ge—something Koerner and Ascher (1995) also note under their historical explanation of particle (see p. 96)), and the explanation that particles have been considered “forms that do not take inflections.” Inflection is “any form or change of form which distinguishes different grammatical forms of the same lexical unit” (Matthews 2007, 194). While my focus here is on prepositions as a grammatical category and the intellectual history of this
term, I digress into a discussion of another type of, what the aforementioned authors call, particle—the deictic—to illustrate that the definitions of these concepts (particle, deictic, preposition, etc.) taken from Ancient Greek or Latin do not necessarily hold for languages that do not proceed from this line (i.e. those outside of the Indo-European family). This is made clear in that the “the enclitic ge in Ancient Greek, basically a marker of emphasis,” in Maya is equivalent to the lela’/lelo’ constructions. These are deictic markers; they take inflection and they are not clitics since they can function as a word on their own. Thus, grammatical elements in Indo-European languages that would fall into the category of particles as defined within the Western linguistic tradition, including prepositions, do not necessarily fit into this category in Maya.

To take the question of ti’ the only word that many scholars and the YXU, native-Maya-speaking students agree might be a preposition in Maya, this term is both a word on its own (although it can be contracted with other word) and it can be inflected, two pieces of evidence that counter its classification as a particle. However, these processes do not necessarily disqualify it as a preposition, given the disciplinary definitions of the term. Determining the grammatical domain of ti’ and the other prepositions or particles proposed by the students and authors above is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, what this discussion illustrates is that the analyses that have been conducted thus far proceed from a Western tradition of linguistics rooted in Ancient Greek and Latin conceptions of languages, ones that are not necessarily suitable for description of the Maya language.

Indo-European (IE) is the best-studied language family in the world…. We know more about the history and relationships of the IE languages than about any other group of languages…. The reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European (PIE) and the historical developments of the IE languages have consequently provided the framework for much research on other language families and on historical linguistics in general. Some of the leading figures in modern linguistics, including Saussure, Bloomfield, Trubetzkoy and Jakobson, were Indo-Europeanists by training, as were many of those who taught in newly founded university departments of linguistics in the second half of the twentieth century. (1)

Thus the history of linguistics is grounded in analysis of Indo-European (IE) languages (see also Koerner & Ascher 1995), and, furthermore, the tradition of comparative linguistics—one way for determining a language’s place within a language family—grew out of the study of IE languages, which typically meant using IE categories to study non-IE languages. Indeed, as Lyons (1968) emphasizes in his *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, “…many recent works on linguistics, in describing the great advances made in the scientific investigation of language in the last few decades, have neglected to emphasize the continuity of Western linguistic theory from earliest times to the present day” (3). He continues,

…we tend to attribute the scholastic view of the universality of grammar to the unique position occupied by Latin throughout the Middle Ages and the low status of the vernacular languages, many of which were in any case derived from, or strongly influenced by, Latin. The privileged position of Latin was doubtless an important factor in the development of universal grammar….. …the whole classical conception was extended to the modern languages of Europe…. It is true that a more satisfactory academic approach to literature has developed nowadays, and authors are no longer classified by the normative canons of Alexandria and the Renaissance. Yet the study of grammar in the language departments of our schools and universities still tends to be classical in spirit. (16-17)
And, finally, “…many of the insights into the structure of language obtained by the classical grammarians were valuable and revealing, but demand reformulation in more general and more empirical terms” (Lyons 1968, 18). While Lyons’ suggestion assuredly applies to insights into the structure of language within the IE tradition, it holds even more so for the structure of non-IE languages, especially since “…commonly held views about language derive not so much from philosophical speculations as from the subordination of grammar to the task of interpreting written texts, and especially to that of interpreting works written in Greek and Latin by the classical authors” (Lyons 1968, 3).

Lyons (1968) describes linguistics as “…the scientific study of language,” by which “…is meant its investigation by means of controlled and empirically verifiable observations and with reference to some general theory of language-structure” (1). However, even within IE linguistics, the methods used are often far from “scientific.” Clackson (2007), for instance, tells us that to determine whether a language’s belongs within the IE family, “there is no absolute set of criteria beyond the general rule that the evidence must convince both the individual linguist and the majority of the scholarly community” (3). And, furthermore, that “[m]ost Indo-Europeanists would place greater confidence in the reconstructed phonemic system than in many of the reconstructions of individual lexemes or morphological or syntactic phenomena” (34). Thus, even within IE, there is a great deal that is unknown, even with regard to the grammatical categories that have served as the foundation for Western, disciplinary linguistics and as the interpretive basis for those of languages outside of this family.
McQuown (1967a), too, notes this influence, as he remarks when referring to the studies contained within the *Handbook of Middle American Indians, Vol. 5: Linguistics* for which he served as general editor and contributor (on the Yucatec Maya language), yet he notes that the tide has shifted and that analyses of non-IE languages have become less prescriptive and more descriptive:

All these presentations make passing reference to general theoretical problems involving the problems of Middle American languages and in some instances even more general linguistic problems. The techniques of linguistic analysis in Middle America have shifted from description of terms of a single model language (Latin) to description of each language in its own terms. These latter descriptions, deprived of a single model for presentation of the resultant analytic data, have become ever more diverse in pattern. This diversity in presentation reflects in part increasing diversity in descriptive models, a result which, although it may be salutary in the development of a young science, must present a source of difficulty to the nonspecialist who attempts by comparison of two or more linguistic descriptions to gain some contrastive insight into the structures of the languages described. It behooves the linguists of the next decade to devote some time to the problem of interconvertibility of linguistic descriptive statements, if they hope to make their efforts more generally intelligible (6)

While a step in the right direction, he points out that descriptive linguistic analyses present a new problem: commensurability. While this new, descriptivist tide in analyzing non-IE languages appears to be a way to circumvent the prescriptivist (i.e. “[g]rammar, rule) which aims to ‘prescribe’ what is judged to be correct rather than to ‘describe’ actual usage” (Matthews 2007, 316) practice of using a disciplinary linguistics grounded in Indo-European theory of language, it still seems to have pervaded the analyses of the above authors who proffer definitions for and extensions of *preposition* in Maya. Indeed, while the YXU students’ definition of prepositions is clearly rooted in others’ (particularly England’s (2001)) Western conception of the preposition, their suggested extensions of the term suggest a more expansive notion of preposition (in particular their
inclusion of what others have called prepositional phrases—$ti’$ + something else—and their suggestion that there may be others, $u$ lāak...?) that needs to be further evaluated.

The YXU students are limited by the resources at their disposal for understanding the concepts set forth within disciplinary linguistics—which are resources generally published in Spanish, using Spanish as both the meta- and object-languages, and that is based in the IE tradition. Yet their intuitions are to challenge these concepts and the existing categorizations of their language into them. Descriptive projects will be needed to turn this intuition into new scientific (i.e. “controlled and empirically verifiable observations and with reference to some general theory of language-structure”) knowledge about the Maya language. Doing so will also require reorienting the “general theory of language-structure” they are using. I discuss the implications of such a project at further length below in my analysis of the only linguistics text published in Maya to date: *Poneetika: U yöol maaya taan*. However, first I turn my attention to two additional issues in the creation of linguistics *ich maaya*—the identity work it allows participants to do and the role of linguistic purism in this work.

An author named Pool

The prior discussion of prepositions and their classification in the Maya language illustrates that there exist discord about what falls into this category. Such discord in the published literature left faculty at YXU in a complicated position when they had to offer definitive answers to students in the classroom. As I have suggested above, this discord stems in part from the epistemological tradition within which analysis of Maya has been conducted thus far—trying to apply IE prescriptivist categories to a non-IE language, and
simultaneously from a lack of descriptivist investigations of the language, using the language as a source for determining the categories one should use to describe it. And, in fact, this thinking is in line with how faculty usually handled discussion about discord on the language in the classroom. Instead of focusing on the lack of agreement, they typically responded to students by telling them that they were being trained as the new experts, and that it was they who were in a position to shed light on the various points of contention about the Maya language.

Such an approach led linguistics instructors to embrace differences of opinion in their classes and pose challenging questions to their students. In fact, as the instructors taught the students the introductory linguistic concepts via courses including Intro to Linguistics, Morphology and Syntax I, and Sociolinguistics, they explained when consensus had not yet been reached in Maya on a name for a certain term or for an understanding of a certain concept. This also meant that faculty asked students a lot of yet unanswered questions about the Maya language, such as:

**Example 7.3. Questions faculty asked students about the Maya language**

- Are *in, a*, and *u* pronouns or determinants?
- What is the function of *lela’, lelo’* and *lele’*? Are they strictly demonstratives or can they also function as prepositions? (E.g., *le naaja’* and *lela’ naaj*)
- Are *ke’et, ti’,* and *más* conjunctions?
- What should the orthographic conventions be? Should words be written together or with white space between them?
- How should transcriptions be handled and what should the transcription norms be?
- Is there grammatical gender in Maya (e.g., *x tuurich, x ka’ansaj, xpeek’, xnaaj, xMaruch*)?
- Are there prefixes in Maya? (E.g., *k’ak’alchi’ibij’,* with *k’ak’al* being a derived morpheme, i.e. a prefix, or does it function as an adverb?)
- Are there circumfixes in Maya? (E.g., *ma’….i’, le’….a’/o’, ka jaanale’ex, bin…ak, taant….e’, layli…e’*)
• Are there aspectual syntagmas in Maya? (E.g., ts’o’oki’, je’ele’, nikaj)
• What is kexie’?
• How should the in/completive be characterized in Maya— as a semantic or morphological quality? (E.g., ts’o’ok in jaantik wáaj (completive) and kin jaantik wáaj (incompletive)—so –ik as incompletive and –aj as completive is not a good rule) Does this have more to do with voice?
• Is /a/ a back or mid-central vowel sound in Maya?
• Do /d/, /g/, /f/ and /rr/ exist in Maya? What about the letters d, g, f, and rr?

To answer at least some of these questions, a particular faculty member argued, we need more data. In addition, the faculty frequently told the students that native Maya speaking linguists were also needed to help answer these and other questions, for most of what has been published on Maya has not been published by native speaking linguists. In fact, the instructor of the introductory course on morphology and syntax told the students that, there is nothing definitive or official in Maya (with respect to linguistics), so this is for reflection. If I ask you questions, it is for you to figure them out. You all could write a grammar of Maya. Wouldn’t it be nice if, instead of Yoshida, a Pool were to write the grammar book?146

Yoshida is in reference to Shigeto Yoshida (2011), a Japanese author of a text entitled Guía gramatical de la lengua maya yucateca para hispanohablantes. Pool is a common Maya surname, much like Smith in English. In fact, this faculty member, along with another linguistics instructor, invited those students who wanted to participate in writing an introductory linguistics text in Maya. They proposed to model the text on the Oxford A Short Intro to X series. The faculty met with students regularly during an entire semester

146 Original: “No hay nada definitivo o oficial en maya, así que esto es para que reflexionen. Si les hago preguntas, es para que las averigüen. Uds. pueden escribir una gramática de la maya. No sería bonito que, si en vez de un Shigeto, un Pool escribiera el libro de gramática?” (FN130924)
on this project, but worked progressed slowly as students could not find the time to do the work and struggled with how to do it as well.

Despite the faculty members’ encouragement of them, the students had a lot of concerns about the feasibility of studying linguistics in Maya. They voiced concerns such as there are not technical terms in Maya;\textsuperscript{147} you can’t say things in two ways in Maya;\textsuperscript{148} there isn’t a more formal way of saying things in Maya;\textsuperscript{149} and one is not accustomed to doing an essay in Maya, since words in Spanish are very theoretical, so it is hard [to do it—i.e. write an essay] in Maya.\textsuperscript{150} Faculty tried to dispel these concerns. For example, one faculty member argued that they organized a roundtable on folklorization,

\begin{quote}
...to talk about things that are traditionally not talked about in our language. It is nice to talk about poetry, etc., in Maya, but we need to talk about other things—the social reality of this language.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

And, another faculty member reminded the students that,

\begin{quote}
it’s not that there isn’t a way of saying it in Maya; it is that this is how it is said in Maya (with a loanword). But, it has already been Mayanized. It’s important to be careful with saying that there is no way to say it in Maya.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

Despite faculty members’ efforts at shaping and shifting students’ linguistic ideologies about the Maya language, they were aware that their work was embedded within a larger sociopolitical surround that worked hard to favor linguistic purism and prescriptivist

\begin{footnotes}
\item[147] Original: “No hay términos técnicos en maya” (FN140214)  
\item[148] Original: “No se puede decir las cosas de dos formas en maya” (FN140214)  
\item[149] Original: “No hay una manera más formal de decir las cosas [en maya]” (FN140214).  
\item[150] Original: “Tumen ma’ suka’an u meeyta’al ich maaya junp’éel ensayo, tumen ich español jach téorico u palabraso’ob, tumen talam ich maaya” (FN140220).  
\item[151] Original: “…para hablar de cosas que tradicionalmente no se hablan en nuestra lengua. Es bonito hablar de la poesia, etc. en maya, pero hay que hablar de otras cosas—de la realidad social en esta lengua” (FN140306).  
\item[152] Original: “No es que no hay una forma de decirlo en maya; es que así se dice en maya (con un préstamo). Pero esto ya se mayanizó. Hay que tener cuidado con esto de decir que no hay como decirlo ich maaya” (FN140307).
\end{footnotes}
analyses of the Maya language, ones that frequently efface and devalue the linguistic practices of everyday Maya speakers. This is all too evident in students’ own ideologies about how to talk about linguistics in Maya within and outside of YXU.

For instance, while students were concerned with developing technical terms in Maya (i.e. not Mayanized, Spanish-language loanwords) to talk about linguistics, they readily used loanwords outside of school to communicate what they were studying to their families. That is, they seemed to have constructed two separate spaces and ideologies about how one should talk about linguistics—at school, technical Maya-language terms (i.e. not loans) were preferred, but outside of school, loans were necessary for talking with a broader audience about their studies. The students called these sinónimos ‘synonyms’, a name that suggests that they see both sets of terms as holding value (English translation follows the Spanish original below):

Example 7.4. Students talk about using synonyms to explain specialized Maya-language linguistics terminology to their families

Cate: ¿Y les pláticas todo eso en español o en maya o en ambos?

Isidro: Pues en ambos, el primer idioma que se atraviese, pues en ese hablamos, porque mi familia como estamos hablando se mete maya español y así, es una mescolanza pero de las dos formas, de las dos formas, pero como mayormente hablamos en maya cuando estamos con mis abuelos ahí sí pura maya, pura maya, ahí sí, cuando estamos con mis padres pues, en lo que se atraviese primero español o maya

Cate: Pero ¿hay temas que te complican explicarlos en maya?

Isidro: En maya.

Cate: Sí, ¿Cómo cuáles?

Isidro: Pues eh, en el primer cuatrimestre como te dije fonética y fonología, para decir las articulaciones que bilabial y no sé que cosa, es difícil explicarlo en maya, pues sí.
Cate: Sí, ¿y por qué?

Pancho: Por las palabras técnicas.

Isidro: Ajan por las palabras técnicas que tiene más que nada, la verdad.

Cate: Porque no se la saben o porque...

Isidro: Sí nos dijeron como se dice, pero...

Cate: Pero sus familiares no las conocen....

Isidro: Ajan ese es el problema.

Pancho: Sólo sinónimos nada más, como el ejemplo que nos dan acá en la escuela, nosotros sabemos que aquí en la escuela áanalysis es libro, pero si vas en una comunidad y dices, como se llama, ts'áa ti' ten jump'éel áanalysis', y ¿qué es eso? dicen t'aa ti' ten jump’éel liibro, así ya lo saben, como nosotros estamos enfocados en la licenciatura ya sabemos las palabras más que nada que empleamos en cambio vas en una comunidad, te dicen mmm...

Cate: ¿Y podrían explicar la fonética por ejemplo, pero sin usar esas palabras técnicas, nada más como que platicarlo, generalmente?

Pancho: Utilizamos sinónimos.

Isidro: Sí.

Pancho: Como nos lo enseño el profesor [nombre], buscaba el sinónimo de la palabra.

Cate: ¿En maya?

Pancho: En maya.

Isidro: Como bilabiales, bóoxel chi'.

Cate: Pero si le van a explicar, por ejemplo no sé, a sus hermanos a sus familiares, ah estuvimos aprendiendo sobre eso de bilabial y todo el bóoxel chi' y si no conocen esa palabra, tal vez no entiendan ¿verdad?

Pancho: No, se les va a ser difícil.

Cate: ¿Cómo lo dirían o como lo explicarían o cambiarían al español?

Pancho: Sería un préstamo que le haríamos al español.

Isidro: Sí sería un préstamo al español más que nada, para que lo entiendan más que nada.
English translation:

Cate: And do you talk to them [i.e. your families] about all of this in Spanish or in Maya or in both?

Isidro: Well, in both, the first language you run across, well, we would talk in that one, because my family, since when we talk we use Maya, Spanish and like that, it’s a mixture but of the two forms [i.e. languages], of the two forms, but since we primarily talk in Maya when we are with my grandparents, yeah, yes pure Maya, pure Maya, so then yes, when we are with my parents, well, in which ever we come across first, Spanish or Maya.

Cate: But are there topics that are complicated for you to explain in Maya?

Isidro: In Maya.

Cate: Yes, like which ones?

Isidro: Well, um, in the first semester [of our program] as I told you [in] Phonetics and Phonology [class], to say the articulations like bilabial and I don’t know what else, it’s difficult to explain it in Maya, well yes.

Cate: Yes, and why [is that]?

Pancho: Because of the technical terms.

Isidro: Yes, because of the technical terms that it has more than anything, truthfully.

Cate: Because you don’t know them or because…

Isidro: Yes they told us how to say them, but…

Cate: But your family members don’t know them…

Isidro: Yes, that’s the problem.

Pancho: Only synonyms nothing more, like the example they give us here in school, we know that here in school áanalte is book, but if you go to a community and you say, what’s it called, give me an áanalte’, and, what’s that?, they say give me a liibro, that’s how they know it, since we are focused on the undergraduate degree we already know the words more than anything that we use but in contrast you go to a community and they say mmm...

Cate: And could you explain phonetics, for example, but without using these technical words, just talking about it, generally?

Pancho: We use synonyms.
Isidro: Yes.

Pancho: Just like professor [name] told us, look for the synonym of the word.

Cate: In Maya?

Pancho: In Maya.

Isidro: Like bilabials, bóoxel chi’.

Cate: But if you are going to explain, for example, I don’t know, to your siblings or your family members, ah we were learning in school about this thing bilabials and everything and bóoxel chi’ and if they don’t know that word, they might not understand, right?

Pancho: No, it would be difficult for them.

Cate: How would you say it or how would you explain it or would you switch to Spanish?

Pancho: It would be a loanword that we would use in Spanish.

Isidro: Yes, it would be a Spanish loanword more than anything, so that they could understand more than anything.

The students explain that there are two worlds—that of school and that of home, their homes and their communities. At school, they all understand that they use certain words, but at home and in Maya-speaking communities or villages, their Maya-speaking interlocutors would not readily understand those words. Thus, to explain themselves in Maya, they have to use “synonyms.” They indicate that is a strategy that their phonetics and phonology teacher gave them—the same one that teaches from the Poneetika text I describe in Chapter 8, one that uses Maya language specialized terminology. Thus, it is interesting that this faculty member who teaches the specialized terminology in Maya still understands that outside of the classroom, its use is limited. When I probed the students further, they explained that the synonyms they use when speaking Maya are Spanish-language loanwords, suggesting that the students readily recognized these as part of the
linguistic repertoires of Maya speakers (both those of linguistics specialists and non-specialists). However, the students also carefully constructed two separate spaces in which the language they have at their disposal should be used—school is the place for specialized linguistics terminology in Maya and home and everyday life is a place for Spanish-language loanwords.

It was interesting that the students talked about the terminology they used to conduct linguistics ich maaya in these ways because in the classroom they readily used Mayanized, Spanish-language loanwords to conduct linguistic analyses, as the following example illustrates. That is, students voiced an explicit ideology that favored purified forms\textsuperscript{153} for they saw these as more official and authoritative, and perhaps as an indication of their own specialized training, gained only through their participation in an institutionalized educational setting. However, as Maya speakers who incorporated Spanish-language loanwords on a regular basis into their everyday speech, when they did linguistic analyses in the classroom, they had no problem relying upon Mayanzied loanwords, nor did these encumber their analyses in any way.

For instance, in the classroom of one faculty member who favored the use of (Mayanized) Spanish-language loanwords for communicating linguistics concepts, which he felt made the process of learning about and practicing linguistics more accessible and transparent and less ambiguous, he gave students the following prompt and set of samples sentences to diagram.

\textsuperscript{153} I borrow this expression from Chris Bloechl, who wisely suggested it as a way of describing neologisms and archaisms together. When it is appropriate, I use this term throughout the dissertation to refer to terms that have been created in Maya to replace Spanish-language loanwords. However, as I indicate here, I find that sometimes creating terms in Maya is not motivated by linguistic purism, thus calling these new terms purified forms seems inappropriate.
Example 7.5. Students create syntagmatic diagrams in Maya

Beete’ex u dyagraama sintagmaatiko le fraaseob ku ts’áabal te’exa:
‘Make a syntagmatic diagram for [each of] the phrases given here:’

1. Jump’éel nojoch naaj  1. ‘A large house’
2. U bak’el weech  2. ‘Armadillo bones’
3. Le naaja’ nojoch  3. ‘This large house’
4. Táan in weenel  4. ‘I am sleeping’
5. Le che’o’ yaan u nojochtal  5. ‘That tree will get bigger’
6. Tene’ táan in meetik in ts’íib  6. ‘As for me, I am doing my writing’

While the sample sentences the students were supposed to analyze used no Spanish-language loanwords, the prompt did, and the abbreviations in the syntagmatic diagram were also drawn from Spanish. The prompt includes the following loan words:

- dyagraama ‘diagrama’ ‘diagram’,
- sintagmaatiko ‘sintagmática’ ‘syntagmatic’, and
- fraaseob ‘frases’ ‘phrases’.

All of these words have been Mayanized phonologically and one has been adapted morphologically using Maya pluralization. The abbreviations in the syntagmatic diagram are also borrowed from Spanish:

- SN sintaagma noominal ‘sintagma nominal’ ‘noun phrase’,
- DET determinatiibo ‘determinante’ ‘determiner’,
- SAdj sintaagma adjetibal ‘sintagma adjetival’, ‘adjectival phrase’,
- N154 noombre ‘nombre’ ‘noun’, and
- Adj adjetiibo, ‘adjetivo’ ‘adjective’.

Furthermore, the instructor explains that,

154 In Spanish, noun is sustantivo, but often times in linguistics classes, students would refer to nouns as nombres. This is likely due to the fact that pronoun in English is pronombre in Spanish, leading students to sometimes refer to noun as nombre. Nombre actually means ‘name’ in English and Spanish. Interestingly, when discussion arose about what the Maya language abbreviations would be if the students were to use them, they suggested changing N to K’, which would stand for k’aaba, which means ‘name’ in Maya k’aaba being a proposed neologism for noun in Maya. (It is possible that the N was a holdover from English, N for noun. This could actually be the case, since Adj and DET are frequently abbreviated the same way in English as they were in this diagram. However, had the students understood noun as sustantivo, the abbreviation would likely have been ‘Sus’ instead of N. S was also already in use for sintagma ‘phrase’.)
[In Spanish,] there is no convention for the abbreviations for morphosyntactic glosses, so each person makes up his/her own “key” (e.g., MAM, marker of aspect, mood; CPLT, completive mood; TZR, transitivizer, etc.)—and this is in Spanish, so imagine [what it’s like] in Maya!\textsuperscript{155}

Despite the fact that three of the nine words in the prompt are loanwords and that the abbreviations used in the syntagmatic diagrams are borrowed from Spanish, the students were perfectly capable of completing the exercise and of entering into critical discussion over how to create syntax trees of the Maya language.

For instance, since this was an introductory course (taken in the students’ second quarter in the program), some of the students diagramed example 3 from the list above as follows:

\begin{verbatim}
SN
DET N SAdj
le naaja’ nojoch
‘this house big’
\end{verbatim}

However, one student asked if it should not be like this instead:

\begin{verbatim}
SN
DET N(+DET) SAdj
le naaja’ nojoch
‘this house big’
\end{verbatim}

In Maya, the determiner lela’ is used like bookends around a noun or noun phrase (le...(l)a’), rendering naaj ‘house’ le naaja’ ‘the house’\textsuperscript{156} in the example, thus the student noted this and asked if the suffix –a’ should be represented as part of the determiner in the diagram. The faculty member responded that indeed, it would ideally be

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{155} Original: “[en español,] no hay convenio para las abreviaturas para los desgloses morfosintácticos, así que cada quien hace su “llave” (ej. MAM, marca de aspecto, modo; CPLT, modo completivo; TZR, transitivizador; etc.)—y esto es en español, así que imagínate en maya!” (FN131112)

\textsuperscript{156} While the meaning varies depending upon context, the meaning here conveys more than the equivalent of English the. Le...a’ is a proximal deictic marker and, thus conveys information about the location of the house to the speaker.
\end{footnotesize}
represented in this way. He had not pressed the other students who had left this out of their diagram because it was an introductory course and they were beginning to diagram the language for the first time; however, at least some of the students caught on quickly and pushed the analyses further. Thus, despite the borrowing from other languages, the students and faculty member had no problem engaging in analytic debate about the syntagmatic structure of noun phrases of the Maya language while using Maya as a metalanguage.

The practices in this faculty member’s classroom were not uncommon on YXU’s campus. However, off campus, they were not the norm. While a number of YXU linguistics instructors did not favor linguistic purism, most other linguists who were working on creating linguistics in Maya off campus did prefer to rid their analyses of Spanish-language influences. And, any institutionally authorized analyses—such as publications—tended to be free of or severely limit Spanish-language loanwords, and they typically did not Mayanize these. Limiting the presence of Spanish-language loanwords in linguistics ich maaya also limits who can talk about linguistics in Maya. That is, people need to not only have access to and understanding of the analytic concepts of linguistics, but they also need to be familiar with the purified linguistic forms used to talk about these concepts in the Maya language. And, access to these purified linguistic forms is institutionally sanctioned by and large.

The above example shows that, despite students’ ability to use Spanish-language loanwords to conduct their analyses and despite their functional use in allowing students to communicate what they are learning on campus to non-specialists off campus, the
pervading ideologies of linguistic purism still influenced how the students thought about preferred forms. That is, they readily used loans in their own work, but when they talked explicitly about the specialized knowledge they were learning, avoiding Mayanized loanwords and using Maya-language neologisms (and some archaisms) instead seemed more official, more expert. This is part of making linguistics ich maaya recognizable as authentically Maya, a key ideological step in constructing new knowledge in this language.

YXU does not have an explicit linguistic purism policy in place and its faculty is very open to the use of Mayanized, Spanish-language loanwords and critical of linguistic purist projects, yet the university is still constructed, at least in some linguistic students’ minds, as a space in which Maya-language neologisms, not Spanish-language loanwords, are seen as specialized, expert knowledge that has been institutionally authorized. The force of linguistic purism in institutionalized settings is not limited to YXU, of course, as my discussion in the next section indicates. And, in fact, I would argue that ideologies of linguistic purism found at YXU have primarily found their way in from outside—that is, they are already widely circulating in Yucatecan society and institutional settings and have been for a long time.

How to say five dogs in Maya

A number of faculty at YXU published and presented at academic conferences. At one particular presentation, a pair of faculty members focused on the topic of linguistic purism.157 Their stance, much like that of Pool Balam and Le Guen (2014), is that

157 I omit the citation to their work herein to protect their anonymity.
Loanwords used in Maya are Maya. They have become Maya in pronunciation, syntax, grammar, and orthography. For instance, at a recent workshop/seminar on the Maya language sponsored by the International Festival of Maya Culture (FICMAYA 2015), two faculty members offered a mock language learning class in which they taught the Maya classifiers—a word or affix used to “classify” a noun depending on the type of its referent (e.g., see Bricker et al. 1998; Montgomery 2004). To teach the classifiers, they had to use numbers. Following are the numbers they used in their presentation—numbers that these faculty members claimed are used by everyday Maya speakers:

Example 7.6. Teaching the classifiers in Maya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeral</th>
<th>Classifier-</th>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 jun (uuno)</td>
<td>6 seeys</td>
<td>11 oonse</td>
<td>16 dyesiseys</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ka’a (doos)</td>
<td>7 syeete</td>
<td>12 doose</td>
<td>17 dyesisyete</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 óox (trees)</td>
<td>8 oocho</td>
<td>13 treese</td>
<td>18 dyesioocho</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 kan (kwaatro)</td>
<td>9 nweebe</td>
<td>14 katoorse</td>
<td>19 dyesinweebe</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 siinuko</td>
<td>10 dyees</td>
<td>15 kiinse</td>
<td>20 beente</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Dogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After presenting the numbers, the faculty members explained how these numbers work with the classifiers:

Numeral + classifier-noun
Siinuko + túulul pee’ ‘five [classifier for living things] dogs’

This is different than how the classifiers work with numbers that are not loans from Spanish. With numbers that have not been borrowed from Spanish (such as 1 jun, 2 ka’a, or 3 óox), the following system is used:

Numeral + classifier noun
Jo’o + túul pee’ ‘five dogs’

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158 U is a third person singular pronoun in Maya and Vl refers to a vowel+1. The vowel used here would be the same vowel that is dominant in the classifier—for túul it would be u, thus yielding –ul.
Many of the audience members—comprised of local and foreign academics and local Maya language teachers from public schools—were shocked. Hands went up, people snickered, and heads were shaken. They could not wait to respond to the faculty members’ presentation, for they were not happy with what they were seeing. Audience members responded that, those are not the numbers in Maya—why are you not using the real Maya numbers? By this, the audience members were referring to archaisms that are frequently used in publications and language learning classes to replace Spanish-language loanwords. This choice, the authors explain elsewhere, is justified under the name of saving original Maya forms—forms that should be divulged and learned by Maya speakers. These forms are rarely heard outside of the classroom or Maya-language publications designed for a school environment. Everyday speakers are not familiar with them and they are not useful for everyday interactions in Maya-speaking communities. However, many audience members insisted that they were the forms that should be taught.

Interestingly, the audience members who most took issue with the faculty members’ presentation were local Maya speakers—individuals who had gained some advanced schooling and were now seen as authorities on the Maya language. One in particular had even worked with the famed Barrera Vásquez on the creation of the Cordemex Maya-language dictionary (1980)—the most comprehensive and respected dictionary compilation to date in this language. The presenting faculty knew that this was a controversial approach, and they chose it for that very reason—they wanted to push the

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159 The archaisms are: 1 jun, 2 ka’a, 3 óox, 4 kan, 5 jo’o, 6 wak, 7 uuk, 8 waxak, 9 bolon, 10 lajun, 11 buluk, 12 ka’alajun, 13 óoxlajun, 14 kanlajun, 15 jo’lajun, 16 waklajun, 17 uuklajun, 18 waxaklajun, 19 bolonlajun, 20 jiunk’ lan.
envelop and open up debate about what Maya really is and how it should be taught. The faculty members were using data drawn from student work that had been submitted in their courses. Their students, they explained, thought that they needed to use the archaisms for the Maya numbers, and that using the loanwords was inappropriate—there was also concern about how exactly to spell the loanwords in Maya, which is another issue I take up later on in this chapter. Their point with this presentation was that, what we publish in books in the Maya language and what we teach when we teach this language has lasting effects. Students talk using the Spanish-loanword-numbers on a daily basis, but they believe that they must use the archaisms at school. What message, the faculty asked, is this sending about the students’ everyday speech? How can we teach them to believe that they can become authorities on their own language when we are teaching them that they do not speak correctly, despite that fact that their everyday interactions directly contradict this? And, furthermore, if we teach foreigners the archaic terms for the numbers, they will not be able to buy a half-dozen Coca-Colas in a village.

I include this discussion of the faculty members’ conference presentation precisely because it illustrates the standing debates and stakes at play in the standardizing, teaching, and use of Maya in academic contexts. Even though these two faculty members are making an effort to teach linguistics in the Maya language, using the Maya language in the ways that everyday speakers use it, they are confronted by strong linguistic purist language ideologies—from other academics, language teachers, and even some of their own students. These language ideologies are widely circulating—something I cover in greater detail in my discussion of the registers of *jach maaya* in
Chapter 6. Maya speakers (and even some Spanish speakers) outside of the academic context, including those with low levels of formal education (i.e. primary school at most), are aware of *jach maaya*—what is often glossed as the pure, real, authentic Maya that is not “mixed” with Spanish. Awareness of this “pure” form of speech abounds and even some monolingual Maya speakers will claim that they do not speak Maya well because they use Spanish-language loanwords in their talk.

**Conclusions on classroom strategies for talking about Linguistics in Maya**

Based on this research, I found that the new Maya linguistics does differ from existing linguistic accounts of the Maya language. On paper, the *Maya Language and Culture* program at YXU looks much like linguistics programs elsewhere in the world. Where it differs is in the classroom conversations that are had about what linguistics is and how it should be conducted in Maya. Students learn about semantics, phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, and other linguistics concepts, and as they do they try to develop ways of talking about these concepts in Maya. How these concepts are applied to the Maya language and how they are discussed and defined and even named in Maya is a work in progress.

The linguistics portion of the MLC program relies primarily on faculty-member-generated content and work produced by students through their coursework due to the lack of existing materials published on disciplinary linguistics in the Maya language. This poses both difficulties and opportunities for faculty and students in the program. It is challenging to generate content as one is learning it, but it also engages students in
defining linguistics *ich maaya*, and it provides the opportunity for engaging critically with how Maya is defined and categorized in this disciplinary context. For instance, while students understood the concepts they were learning about (and those nested within them), they questioned their application to the Maya language—much as was illustrated with the prepositions example above. Often, students and faculty ask more questions than they answer.

In the classroom at YXU, Mayanized, Spanish-language loanwords reigned as the primary means of communicating about linguistics concepts in the Maya language. However, despite the flexibility of faculty in this program and their open-mindedness when it comes to the use of Spanish-language loanwords in describing linguistics *ich maaya*, the broader sociolinguistic context in which the YXU linguistics program exists has a strong influence on how students think about the Maya and Spanish languages and the appropriateness of their use in different settings. This means that, while students readily use Mayanized, Spanish-language loanwords in the practice of linguistics, when they talked about the specialized terminology for doing linguistics in the Maya language, they imagined this as being comprised of Maya forms, namely neologisms and some archaisms, but not Spanish-language loans. They see these purified forms as more authentic and institutionally authorized, even though they were not official forms authorized by YXU. The contradictions and tensions students experienced in the representation of linguistics *ich maaya* had much to do with making this new knowledge recognizable beyond the classroom as both specialized knowledge and the knowledge of disciplinary linguistics.
Classroom teaching of linguistics *ich maaya* was the main site in which I saw this new knowledge form being created. The analyses conducted in classrooms at YXU have yet to be published and are generally not yet highly systematized. But, I anticipate that YXU faculty and students will continue to question the Maya language and further systematize their findings, soon producing new ways of understanding the language that can be shared beyond the YXU classroom. Without a doubt, the program is preparing students to think critically about language in its many instantiations (i.e. *langage, langue*, and *parole*) and to feel equipped to define and conduct the study of their own language in Maya. As I show in this chapter, this often entailed generating content in real time and involving students in the negotiation and production of this new knowledge. In one course in particular, however, the practice of linguistics in the classroom was somewhat different for it used a published text in Maya to teach the curricular content. This is the only published text in Maya on a linguistics topic. I turn my attention to this text in the subsequent chapter.
CHAPTER 8: Making linguistics ich maaya in print

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the only existing published text in the Maya language on a linguistics topic. The creation of this text was a great feat, and it is the first step in creating an established linguistics ich maaya that can be disseminated beyond the YXU classroom. In fact, students and faculty at YXU are already in the process of creating other published linguistics texts in the Maya language, such as an introduction to linguistics. In what follows, I discuss the benefits and challenges of this published work, including the new scientific knowledge it makes possible in the Maya language.

Poneetika: U yóol maaya t’aan

The only existing text published in Maya on a linguistics topic is Poneetika: U yóol maaya t’aan (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013). This text covers primarily covers phonetics topics and it was created by seven members of the first cohort (2006-2009) of the MLC program at Yáax Xook University. Two students were primary authors and five others were collaborators; they completed the work under the coordination of the American linguist who created the curriculum for the MLC program. Because the text was published in 2013, at least two cohorts of students graduated from the MLC program before this text was finalized.

The title of this text, Poneetika: U yóol maaya t’aan ‘Phonetics: The heart/will/energy/spirit/mind of the Maya Language’, is glossed in Spanish as Fonética y fonología en Lengua Maya ‘Phonetics and Phonology in the Maya Language’. Thus, in
the Maya-language version of the title *phonology* is dropped entirely. In the text, the only other reference to ‘phonology’ is the gloss for *procesos fonológicos* ‘phonological processes’, which is represented by the neologism *juumilo’ob*. I discuss the use of this term at length below. In fact, one of the authors confirmed for me that the text was indeed really designed as an introduction to phonetics and that it only treats phonology in a passing fashion—although it does include a phonemic inventory that specifies place of articulation and mode of phonation. Because the text is primarily about phonetics, this is why the authors titled it in this way. In fact, they had even thought of calling it an introduction to phonetics, but this is how it ended up.160

The text is written in Maya, but the table of contents is bilingual (Maya-Spanish), and the document contains footnotes that gloss the Maya language linguistic terms used in the text—a total of 110 footnotes are found across the 92-pages of text. The text also contains a glossary that provides the Spanish-language equivalents for the Maya linguistic terms used throughout the text and a bilingual (Maya-Spanish) table of contents. The table of contents includes the following phonetics and phonology topics: the vocal tract and its parts; consonantal parameters; places or points of articulation; phonological modes; the vocal chords; vowel articulation; sounds in Maya, Spanish and loanwords; phonetic symbols; phonetic transcription; phonemes, minimal pairs, phones, allophones, complementary and distributive distribution; and simple phonological

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160 The content of the text was in the author’s hands, but the entity that published the text made the final editorial decisions. While the author did not state so explicitly, it is possible that the publishing entity had something to do with the final Spanish-language title. In fact, I suspect that the publishing entity sought to include phonology in the title because it thought that it made the text a more significant contribution to linguistics if it included both phonetics and phonology. However, the authors of the text seemed to make it clear that the text primarily treated phonetics topics and was a first step of many in producing linguistics knowledge in and on this language.
processes in Maya (including assimilation, dissimilation, neutralization, elision, contraction, metathesis). Each of these topics is included in the table of contents in Maya with a Spanish language gloss, for example: “Bixo’ob u jóok’ol juum / modos de fonación” ‘modes of phonation’ (Canul Yah y Dzib Uitzil 2013, 4). While, at first glance, this text appears to be highly purist in nature, it was in fact a substantial undertaking that sought to interpret phonetic theory from a Maya worldview perspective. That is, the authors tried to use Maya to talk about phonetics, not because they wanted to rid Maya of Spanish, but instead because they wanted to rid an analysis of the Maya language of Eurocentrist thought, which they thought might be implicit in the use of Spanish-language phonetics terminology and categories. Furthermore, while the authors do propose a large number of neologisms in their text, they still use some loanwords, such as poneetika ‘fonética’ ‘phonetics’. I discuss their use of terminology further below.

The authors explain that this is the first text of its kind in the Maya language. Many texts have been published, they state, in English, and perhaps fewer in Spanish. However, the report, because no texts like this exist in Maya, it made creating this text is a difficult task. They also note that in linguistics, many words have been borrowed into Maya (i.e. from Spanish, but they do not specify the language of origin). Thus, they propose the creation of new words (neologisms) to replace these loanwords. Some of these new words are also taken from old Maya (archaisms). The authors state that the idea is that eventually all of the things one can do with Spanish, one will also be able to do with Maya. The text is intended for all linguistics students, including those of Yáax
This text creates new knowledge in the Maya language. It also creates new words in Maya and it creates new knowledge within the discipline of linguistics in that it categorizes Maya phonology differently than do existing accounts of this language. In what follows, I first discuss the strategies used for forming new terminology in this text: linguistic approximation through substitution, calquing, and circumlocution are used to create neologisms; and archaisms and loanwords are adopted. These are all established strategies for forming new terminology in non-majority (sometimes called *indigenous*) languages (Hickey 2001). Next, I engage with this text’s new analysis of the phonemic structure of Maya consonants. I compare it to two existing phonemic analyses conducted in English by U.S.-based scholars and discuss the potential significance of the analysis conducted *ich maaya*. Finally, I discuss the relationship of the *Poneetika* text to the only other published text in Maya on the Maya language: the new norms for writing the Maya language, which I refer to as the *Normas*.

**Linguistics terminology used in Poneetika**

Creating a monolingual Maya-language specialist text in linguistics is a challenging undertaking, not only because the concepts have only recently begun to be discussed in the Maya language, but also because the vocabulary with which to talk about these topics does not already exist in Maya. Maya speakers can use and have been using Spanish-language loanwords to talk about linguistics concepts in Maya (Mayanizing these terms in their speech, as I describe above in this chapter), but some scholars believe that it is
important to generate these terms in Maya. The reasons behind this are at least two-fold, but both have their origins in purism. One group of individuals holds linguistic purist ideologies, which are the institutionally sanctioned way of doing Maya linguistics (a point I discuss further below in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 6). They seek to rid the Maya language of Spanish-language loanwords. The other group is interested in a different kind of “purism;” they seek to interrogate the Maya language using the Maya language in order to attempt to do so from a Maya worldview. That is, they seek to rid the practice of using Maya to do X (in this case linguistics) of non-Maya ways of thinking. In what follows, I discuss the new, Maya-language linguistics terminology used in Poneetika and its relationship to purism. First, I discuss neologisms and archaisms, followed by loanwords.

**Neologisms or archaisms, not purified forms**

There are a total of 80 new linguistic terms—78 neologisms and 2 archaisms—signaled in the Poneetika text. Most of neologisms are formed through linguistic approximation through substitution, calquing, or circumlocution, although these can also be combined, as the example of circumlocution below shows. An example of linguistic approximation through substitution from the Poneetika text is *iich’o’ob ‘pares mínimos’* ‘minimal pairs’. *Iich* in Maya means ‘twin’ (identical or fraternal), and *–o’ob* is a (third-person) plural marker in this case; thus, the term for *twins* in Maya is given the new meaning of minimal pairs (i.e. words or phrases that differ in only one phonological element and have distinct meanings). To arrive at this meaning, the authors use the

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161 I define and discuss these processes at length in Chapter 7.
metaphoric sense of twins—in that human twins are alike in many ways and vary only in some. They may look and sound alike, but they are not the same people (i.e. they do not mean the same thing). An example of calquing is found in the term totjuum ‘voiceless’, which is comprised of tot ‘mute’ and juum ‘sound, phone, noise’—literally no voice or voiceless. It is explained in the Poneetika text as: With this sound, the vocal chords do not vibrate.\(^{162}\) Finally, an example of circumlocution is the term éets’ilo’ob ‘sonorants; resonants’ (i.e. a continuous, non-turbulent airflow in the vocal tract). It is formed from the Maya words éets’ ‘echo’, -il an inherency marker, and –o’ob a plural marker. Thus, éets’ilo’ob means literally ‘having the inherent quality of an echo’.

In addition to creating neologisms, the authors include two archaisms in their text. Both are taken from Barrera Vázquez’s Maya Cordemex (1980\(^{163}\) dictionary: t’unsabak ‘accent, tilde’ and amayte’ ‘square, frame’ (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 33 & 55).

Using neologisms and archaisms is a standard practice within projects of linguistic purism. And, as I illustrate at length in Chapter 6, using both is associated with the practice of speaking jach maaya—a register of Maya associated with the past—the way they talked long ago—which is widely believed to be the authentic way of speaking.

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\(^{162}\) Original: “Lela’ kéen meenta’ak le juumo’ ma’atáan u tiitbal le jumkaalo’obo’” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 25).

\(^{163}\) The authors of Poneetika indicated the date in-text as 2001, but in their bibliography as 1980. The correct date for this publication is 1980. Furthermore, not all of the sources upon which Barrera Vázquez’s dictionary is based are colonial texts, but the sources cited for these two words are: the San Francisco dictionary (attributed to Pío Pérez), Pío Pérez’s dictionary, and Solís Alcalá’s dictionary (which uses as its sources the Motul and Pío Pérez dictionaries).

\(^{164}\) The original lists this term as “U T’UNUL SABAK...tilde en escritura” (Barrera Vázquez 1980, 845). Here Barrera Vázquez includes the suffix –ul, which serves to derive participles from root transitives, intransitives, and positionals. This happens by “lengthening and/or lowering the pitch of the vowel in the stem and suffixing –VI” (V=vowel), using the same vowel found in the stem (Bricker et al. 1998, 373). This is from t’un’ ‘points; point in writing’, becoming t’unul’ ‘point [made]’ (made being the participle here), which makes sense when one glosses sabak ‘ink; black ink from the smoke of a certain tree’ (707). Thus rendering u t’unul sabak ‘a point made from ink’.
Maya, despite the fact that only the archaisms are actually uuchben t’aano’ob’o ‘old words’. However, while, initially, the neologisms and archaisms the authors use to describe phonetics and phonology ich maaya may appear to be purified forms, the authors’ intention was not to purify this text of Spanish-language loans. Instead, the goal was to think about phonetics concepts from a Maya-language perspective, from a Maya worldview. This was explained to me in two ways but individuals who worked on the text:

Example 8.1. Explanations of the theory that informed the creation of the Poneetika text

**Contributor 1:** Spanish language linguistics terms are pretty much loans (or re-latinizing) of English [linguistic] terms, and that all of the subfield of phonetics (all the rest of it, as well, but we were only into the phonetics) is Euro-centric in orientation, much as it purports and strives not to be. The very categorization of which consonants are “basic” and which aren’t is as much Euro-centrism as it is strict articulatory physiology. Well, anyway, we wanted to explain the language from the basic logic and sense of the language/worldview and not just cobble together a hand-me-down system. Dunno if that makes any sense. But language purity, as it is ordinarily preached and practiced, wasn’t part of the picture at all, not a bit. I wanna make that very clear and explicit. We were trying to recenter the entire conceptual frame.

**Contributor 2:** We were really trying to do work based on ideas and concepts that would facilitate understanding of those ideas and concepts and for that reason we simplified explanations that were given to us, but we also have to be realistic, one cannot set aside the theory from Spanish, since there is no work in Maya (of this kind). For this reason we based the theory in Spanish and we focused on grounding and adjusting that information through Maya concepts.

The first individual quoted above claims that the goal was to “recenter… the conceptual frame of the text using Maya instead of Western, Euro-centric epistemology. The second individual suggests that, while this was a goal, it did not happen entirely in practice. The text, as the second individual explains it, proceeds from Spanish-language accounts of Maya. Where they were able to influence the uptake of this information, however, was in
how they expressed these concepts. In what follows I explore a set of neologisms found in the Poneetika text that are based on the word juum in an attempt to shed light on the processes the above-quoted individuals describe.\(^{165}\) In so doing, I discuss the opportunities and difficulties these neologisms present.

A survey of contemporary Maya language dictionaries\(^{166}\) define juum as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dictionary</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Original definition</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bastarrachea, Manzano et al. (1992)</td>
<td>JUUM</td>
<td>Vocerío, gritería, alboroto, bullicio</td>
<td>Clamor, shouting, commotion/uproar, racket/ruckus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrera Vásquez (1980)(^{167})</td>
<td>HUM</td>
<td>Eruendo y ruido de muchos</td>
<td>Bang and sound of/from many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricker et al. (1998)</td>
<td>hùum (n.)*</td>
<td>sound, noise</td>
<td>Noise, racket/ruckus, sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gómez Navarrete (2009)</td>
<td>JUUM</td>
<td>Ruido, bullicio, sonido</td>
<td>Noise, racket/ruckus, sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery (2004)</td>
<td>huum (n.)</td>
<td>noise, sound; ruido, sonido</td>
<td>Noise, racket/ruckus, sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(n.) = noun

In the Poneetika text, juum is defined in a variety of ways, some of which concord with the above (vernacular) definitions and some of which assign new meanings to this term. Furthermore, the term is defined differentially both on its own and as it is combined with other terms to form compound neologisms. Following are the uses of juum in the Poneetika text; note that I have only provided examples of the meaning of juum for instances when the term has been glossed in Spanish. Providing meanings when the term

\(^{165}\) I chose this term and the other terms that incorporate it because one of the two authors signaled six neologisms for me that he thought exemplified the process he was talking about (sak óol ‘lung’, beel iik’ ‘larynx’, juumil xiich’ o’ob ‘vocal chords’, taak’îl xiich’ o’ob ‘organs of articulation’, múuch’meeent juum ‘vocal tract’, and bix ú jök’ol juum ‘modes of phonation’. Three of these six terms incorporate the term juum.

\(^{166}\) The reader is reminded that no monolingual Maya-language dictionaries exist, thus these definitions have been taken from bilingual dictionaries, Maya-English and Maya-Spanish.

\(^{167}\) Barrera Vásquez cites the following reference texts as sources for this entry: Sources cited are 1. Motul I, Maya-Español (siglo XVI, impresaj en 1929) Martínez Hernández, J. and 3. Diccionario de Viena, Español-Maya (c. 1570s).
has not been glossed is difficult, as I show, due to the variety of potential meanings given the term, many of which could be applied at various points throughout the text. That is, context alone is not enough to always allow the reader to discern the meaning of *juum* (as a stand-alone or compound term).
Table 8.2. Maya-language phonetics neologisms based on the Maya word *juum* found in the *Poneetika* text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetics neologisms</th>
<th>English gloss</th>
<th>Grammatical gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Juum</em>&lt;sup&gt;168&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>‘sound, phone’</td>
<td>[juum]N.sg ‘sound, phone’&lt;sup&gt;169&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Juumo’ob</strong></td>
<td>‘sounds, phones’</td>
<td>[juum]N.sg ‘sound, phone’;[o’ob]3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;pl.suff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Juumilo’ob</strong>&lt;sup&gt;170&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>phonological</td>
<td>[juum]N.sg ‘sound, phone’;[il]ihm&lt;sup&gt;171&lt;/sup&gt;;[o’ob]3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;pl.suff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E’esaj juumo’ob</strong> (4, 8)</td>
<td>phonetic symbols</td>
<td>[e’es]Vstem ‘demonstrate, show, exhibit’;[aj]comp.;[juum]N.sg. ‘sound, phone’;[o’ob]3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;pl.suff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jummilxiich’o’ob</strong></td>
<td>vocal organs; glottal cavities</td>
<td>[juum]N.sg ‘sound, phone’;[il]ihm;[xiich’]N.sg ‘tendon’, ‘muscle’;[o’ob]3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;pl.suff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>168</sup> I note that there is also a third acception to *juum*, one proffered in the advanced morphology class I observed: vibration (*vibración*). However, this meaning was not found in the *Poneetika* text.

<sup>169</sup> Abbreviations used in this table: sg=singular; pl=plural; N=noun; nomz=nominalizer; ihm=inherency marker; pos=positional; pt=particle; perf=perfect; rdp=reduplication; suff=suffix; adjz=adjectivizer; tv=transitive; V=verb

<sup>170</sup> This term also occurs in singular form in two places in the text—*juumil*—but no Spanish-language gloss is provided and its intended meaning is not entirely clear from context. In the first instance, it appears to mean ‘sounds’ and in the second ‘sound’. First instance: “Le meyaja’ ku t’aan yo’olal2 u jejeláas juumil u maaya t’aanil u petenil Yucatán. Ku tsolik bix u yúuchul t’aan.” (7). Second instance: “Táanile’ k’a’abéet u yojéelta’ale’, le múuch’meent juumo’, leti’ le xiich’o’ob ku múuch’ meyajo’ob yo’olal u béeytal u jóok’ol u juumil u t’aan máako’.” (9)

<sup>171</sup> Here, –il is functioning as an inherency marker. *Juum* takes the meaning of ‘phone’ and the inherency marker gives it the inherent quality of a phone (what, in English, we gloss as ‘phonological’). The full example is: “*k’exo’ob ku taal u yúuchul tu juumilo’ob maaya t’aan/procesos fonológicos sencillos en maya*” (5) ‘simple phonological processes in Maya’. ‘Processes’ is implicit within ‘phonological’ in this example. Thus, the term is not phonologicals (plural), as the grammatical gloss might suggest.
As is clear from the above table, the meaning of *juum* changes given its context and context (including when it is used in a compound word or expression). In its singular form, *juum* is glossed as ‘phone’ or ‘sound’. In its plural form, *juumo’ob*, as ‘phones’ or ‘sounds’. But, when it is accompanied by the word *e’esaj* ‘example’, it takes on a new meaning—phonetic: *e’esaj juumo’ob* ‘phonetic symbols’. Thus the reader must

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172 The following variants also exist for this term, but analysis of these is identical, so they are not listed here: *juumo’ob ich maaya/sonidos en maya* ‘sounds in Maya’; *juumo’ob ich kastelan/sonidos en español* ‘sounds in Spanish’; *jumo’ob jach maaya’ob, jach kastelano’ob yéetel le ku meyaj tì’ tu ka’ap’élélat’obo/sonidos maya, español y préstamos*—here the Spanish-language gloss differs greatly from the Maya language original, so I provide literal English-language glosses of both: Maya—‘sounds that are very Maya, very Spanish and those that exist in both’; Spanish—‘sounds Maya, Spanish and loanwords’. (See Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 4.)

173 Another example with variant spelling of *meent* is *u jaatsilo’ob múuch’meet juum/partes del aparato fonador* ‘parts of the vocal tract’ (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 4, 10).

174 What appears to be happening here is a process typically used with adjectives. Reduplication of (typically) the first syllable of an adjective indicates an intensification, e.g., *chak* ‘red’ becomes *chachak* ‘very red’ (literally red-red). I believe this same processes is happening here, rendering the verb *p’el* ‘assure, establish, determine’ both an intensified version of itself and making it an adjective *p’ep’el* ‘very sure, established, determined’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Juumo’ob ich maaya-kastelan t’aan</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English gloss</td>
<td>sounds in Maya and Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical gloss</td>
<td>*[juum]*N.sg ‘sound, phone’; *[o’ob]*3rd.pl.suff; *[ich]*prep. ‘in’; *[maaya]*ADJ ‘Maya’; *[kastelan]*ADJ ‘Spanish’; *[t’aan]*N ‘language’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Múuch’meent juum</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English gloss</td>
<td>vocal tract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical gloss</td>
<td>*[múuch]*Vstem.pos.tv. ‘group’; *[meent]*Vstem.tv. ‘do, make’; *[juum]*N.sg ‘sound, phone’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>P’ep’eljuum</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English gloss</td>
<td>consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical gloss</td>
<td>*[p’e]*rdp.adjz; *[p’el]*Vstem.tv. ‘assure, establish, determine’; *[juum]*N.sg ‘sound, phone’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>P’is p’ep’eluumo’ob</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English gloss</td>
<td>consonantal parameters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical gloss</td>
<td>*[p’is]*Vstem.tv. ‘measure, weigh’; *[p’e]*rdp.adjz; *[p’el]*Vstem.tv. ‘assure, establish, determine’; *[juum]*N.sg ‘sound, phone’; *[o’ob]*3rd.pl.suff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
understand that when *juum* is combined with other words, particles, or suffixes, it does
not necessarily mean ‘phone’ or ‘sound’.

Another use of *juum* involves what Lucy (1992a) calls and inherency marker: –*il*. When this suffix is used, Lucy argues that it makes the term to which it is applied into an inherent quality. For example, in *estadosunidosilen*, –*il* means that I (en) have the inherent quality of being from the United States (*estadosunidos*). Another example is the use of the suffix to describe the land of Yucatan: *u luumil yucatan*, the land has the inherent quality of pertaining to the Yucatan. Bricker et al. (1998) define –*il* as having the following functions: ownership possession, associative possession, abstractive, transitive completive, partitive, gentilic (407). They also note that –*il* can be used to derive adjectives from nouns by adding this suffix to the noun stem. Barrera Vásquez’s (1980) text confirms the functions Bricker et al. (1998) describe, identifying –*il* as being used to possess a quality, to describe where something is (i.e. in where, to where, in what), and as an abstractive suffix (268).

In the *Poneetika* text, –*il* is used in the first of these two ways—as an inherency marker. The suffix -*il* is applied to *juum* in the term *jummilxiich’o’ob* ‘vocal organs; glottal cavities’, or literally the ‘tendons or muscles that have the inherent quality of sound’, rendering a noun.

While the adjectivizer function of –*il* is not found in these terms, there is an example amongst these neologisms that involves the adjectivization of nouns. In *p’ep’eljuum* ‘consonant’ and *p’is p’ep’eljuum* ‘consonantal parameters’ a process that typically occurs with adjectives happens with the verb *p’el* ‘assure, establish, determine’.
In adjectives, the first syllable can be reduplication to indicate an intensification, for example *chak* ‘red’ becomes *chachak* ‘very red’ (literally red-red). I believe this same processes is happening here, rendering the verb *p’el* ‘assure, establish, determine’ 1) an intensified version of itself and 2) an adjective *p’ep’el* ‘very sure, established, determined’. In linguistics, consonants are defined as sounds with audible noise produced by a constriction (Matthews 2007, 74). Thus, the neologism for consonant, *p’ep’eljuumo’ob*, is a ‘certain (or assured) puff of sound’ makes sense. This process has not been documented elsewhere in the literature for verbs, but, just as neologisms are new words I believe that this adjectival process is being applied in a new, creative way to verbs. It will be worthwhile to continue to observe the formation of neologisms to see if this process becomes more widely established.

Another new grammatical process found in the formation of neologisms that incorporate the word *juum* is a process of nominalization. The neologism *bixo’ob u jóok’ol juum* ‘modes of phonation’ (literally ‘the modes/ways the air comes out’) uses *bixo’ob* as a noun even though its use in this way has not been documented in the existing literature. *Bix* ‘how’ functions in Maya much like *how* functions in English—describing manners or ways of doing things, typically as an adverb and sometimes as an adjective, and it is used to form questions, such as *bix a bèel*? ‘How are you?’ (lit. ‘how (is) your road/way’). *Bix* can also be used to talk about the manner in which one might travel (*Bix ku bin Jo’? ‘How does s/he travel to Merida?’); to suggest that whatever the speaker intended is fine (*Bix a k’aat teech. ‘Whatever you want.’); to express certitude (*bix ma’ij ‘why not?/certainly!’); and it can mean something akin to the English *like* (*bixij*). These
examples show *bix* functioning as an adverb. In linguistics, an adverb is defined as a word that typically modifies a verb or verb phrase but can (in English) modify anything other than a noun (Matthews 2007). Other more colloquial definitions of adverbs typically indicate that they provide information about time, manner, place, or degree (e.g., Merriam-Webster n.d.). A survey of reference texts on Maya list *bix* as a comparative conjunction (Gómez Navarrete 2009), an adverb of mood (Barrera Vásquez 1980), an interrogative (Montgomery 2004), or a particle (Bricker et al. 1998). And, while there are other texts that offer Spanish-language definitions of the term, these do not specify information about its grammatical category/ies (e.g., ALMY 2009; Maglah Canul 2002; Martínez Huchím 2008)\(^{175}\), none of the reference texts that include this term describe it as a noun. While *bix* is described in most of the entries as being used to ask the question *how* (*¿cómo?* in Spanish), I also could not see how *bix* could function as a comparative conjunction. Neither could a number of linguistics faculty at Yáax Xook University or my Maya language teachers whom I consulted about this. Furthermore, my interlocutors and I discussed how *bix*, as an adverb or adjective, can take the plural suffix –*o’ob*. However, because *bix* is not typically used as a noun, it would not take the plural suffix –*o’ob*. In the neologism *bixo’ob u jóok’ol juum*, the authors use *bix* like a noun, which is evident in their gloss of this term: *modo* ‘mode, way’. They then pluralize this term as a noun. While in colloquial Maya, *bix* can be used to talk about the way in which someone does something, it is never pluralized when it is used in this way. And, frequently, a Spanish-language loanword—*modo*—is used instead. Thus, in this example,

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\(^{175}\) In contrast, there are other reference texts that do not even include the term *bix* (e.g., Bastarrachea Manzano et al. 1992).
the authors’ have expanded both the syntactic function and semantic field of *bix* making it possible to use this term as *bixo’ob* ‘modes, ways’. This process of nominalization is another grammatical process that will be worth observing as more neologisms are created in linguistics *ich maaya* as well as in other realms in which Maya is newly being used for activities.

*Juum* takes on yet other meanings in compound words. For instance, in the neologism *jumkaalo’ob* ‘vocal chords’ *juum* takes on the meaning ‘vocal’, thus further expanding its semantic field (now to include ‘sound’, ‘phone’, ‘phonetic’176 and ‘vocal’, in addition to its established meanings outside of linguistics.

What these examples suggest is that the meaning of the neologisms in the *Poneetika* text are not initially transparent in light of the fact that words they employ are 1) polysemous, 2) expand the existing semantic field of the everyday uses of these terms, and 3) undergo new grammatical processes with which the reader may not be readily familiar. In light of this, the reader cannot readily understand the neologisms without the Spanish-language glosses (which is likely precisely why the authors included them). That being said, once they are glossed, their meanings readily make sense within the structure of the Maya language. For instance, the adjectivization process of verbs that I describe above, while not an established grammatical process in Maya, is easily understood because it relies upon morphological processes already familiar to Maya speakers and

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176 While the plural of the other forms of *juum* ‘sound, phone’ are expressed as *juumo’ob, juum* qua ‘phonetic’ when pluralized with –*o’ob* does not render ‘phonetics’ since this is expressed using the Spanish-language loanword *poneetika* (Sp. *fonética*) in the text. Furthermore, with respect to *juum* as ‘vocal’, it is not clear if the plural of this would render ‘vocals’, since the pluralization suffix –*o’ob* in the example given applies to *kaal* and not to *juum*. 
simply expands the syntactic domain of these processes (i.e. from their use with adjectives to verbs). This is a useful strategy in the creation of neologisms.

Another issues of intelligibility is that all of the Maya language Linguistics neologisms found in the *Poneetika* text, with the exception of perhaps *juum* ‘sound’ and *kastelan t’aan* ‘Spanish language’, are new words for everyday speakers, and this is not solely because the terms represent specialized linguistics vocabulary—such as the terms for *alveolar, palatal, occlusive, or affricative*. Many of the neologisms are terms that would normally be found in an everyday-English-speaker’s vernacular—such as *brackets, note, breathing, vocal chords, nasal, or chapter two*—however these terms are not a part of most everyday Maya speakers’ linguistic repertoire.

Thus, the Spanish-language glosses are sort of a necessary evil—without them readers would not readily know what the neologism mean, yet their use opaques the intention behind the Maya-language neologisms, especially for a bilingual audience. Perhaps as this new terminology becomes more widely recognized, the Spanish-language glosses will prove unnecessary. In its current state, I find that three elements working together make it possible for the reader to ascertain the meaning of the Maya neologisms—the Spanish-language glosses, a strong working knowledge of the Maya language, and an understanding of the context (in this case, a working knowledge of disciplinary linguistics). This, of course, has implications for who can do linguistics *ich maaya*. 
The adoption of loanwords

Another strategy that the *Poneetika* authors use to describe linguistics terminology in the Maya language is the adoption of loanwords. The authors’ inclusion of loanwords is further evidence that this text was not written using an explicit theory of linguistic purism, and it may be a nod to or recognition of how Maya speakers today—even educated ones—readily incorporate (Mayanized) Spanish-language loanwords into their speech and writing. While this practice may not proceed from a Maya “worldview” in an obvious way, I suggest that there is little that could be more in line with a Maya “worldview” (or way of seeing the world) than describing the Maya language as native Maya speakers actually use it, with loanwords and all.

The text uses eighteen loanwords—which is not many in the grand scheme of the text or compared to the total neologisms it uses. These words are not glossed in the text. This, coupled with the Spanish-language glosses of the neologisms/archaisms suggests that, while a monolingual Maya text, the text is intended for a bilingual Maya-Spanish (reading) audience.

Of the eighteen loanwords I found in the *Poneetika* text, only four did not undergo some type of phonetic or morphosyntactic adaptation to “Mayanize” them in some way. These four, unmodified words are neologismo ‘neologism’, americanistas ‘Americanist’, *Latin* ‘Latin’, and audio ‘audio’. All of these are italicized in the original text, with the exception of audio, which may be because the authors may not consider it to be part of the formal text, since it is the title of a track on a CD. Interestingly, *Latin* is

177 Note, two of these are expressions that contain more than one loanword (*adbeerbyo tyeempo* ‘time adverb’ and *Alfabeto Fonético Internacional* ‘International Phonetic Alphabet’, but I have counted these as one loanword each.
written not as Latin, as it would be written in Spanish—with an accent on the i and without capitalization, but instead as Latin, as it would be written in English. It is not clear why this word has been treated in this way.

The remaining loanwords undergo three main types of adaptation in their processes of Mayanization: phonological, morphological, and morphosyntactic. The phonological adaptation is expressed via three processes: vowel lengthening, change in location of vowel stress, and adaptation of spelling to use only letters found in the Maya alphabet. The morphological adaptation involves applying Maya pluralization to the Spanish-origin loanwords (which only happens with one of the loanwords—bokaal ‘vowel’), and the morphosyntactic adaptation incorporates the loans into Maya deictic structure. The morphological adaptation expressed via pluralization is discussed along with the other morphosyntactic adaptations. I list the loanwords in Table 6.3, below, along with the original Spanish term upon which the loan is based, and an English-language gloss. In the opposite column, I list the processes that these words have undergone; I discuss these in detail following the table. For each word, I provide the original context of use untranslated in footnotes (with the loanword in bold, my addition). Finally, in the Spanish-language words from which the loanwords are derived, I have underlined the stressed vowel if it is not already marked via a written diacritic (i.e. an accent mark such as in inglés).
Table 8.3. Loanwords used in *Poneetika* text with explanation of relevant Mayanization process(es)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loanword (L)</th>
<th>Spanish gloss (SG)</th>
<th>English gloss (EG)</th>
<th>Explanation of Mayanization process(es)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No adaptation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: neologismo&lt;sup&gt;178&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SG: ‘neologismo’</td>
<td>EG: ‘neologism’</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: americanistas&lt;sup&gt;179&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SG: ‘americanistas’</td>
<td>EG: ‘Americanist’</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: Latin&lt;sup&gt;180&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SG: ‘latin’</td>
<td>EG: ‘Latin’</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: audio&lt;sup&gt;181&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SG: ‘audio’</td>
<td>EG: ‘audio’</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonological adaptation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: íingles&lt;sup&gt;182&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SG: ‘íngles’</td>
<td>EG: ‘English’</td>
<td>Stressed vowel looses stress; initial vowel takes stress, becomes long, high tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: punto&lt;sup&gt;183&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SG: ‘punto’</td>
<td>EG: ‘period’</td>
<td>Stressed vowel becomes long, low tone vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: poneetika&lt;sup&gt;184&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SG: ‘fonética’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stressed vowel becomes long low tone vowel; use of Maya alphabet: p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>178</sup> Original context of use: “Ti’ túun le majant’aan’ob je’ela’, kaxta’ab ti’ jump’éeel túumben wooj; lela’ leti’e’ ich kastelan t’aan k’aj dolta’an je’elbix ‘neologismo’” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 7).

<sup>179</sup> Original context of use: “é’esaj juumo’ob *americanistas* and “Le je’ela’ beeta’an yéetel u ye’esaj jumilo’ob *Americanistas*; ba’ale’ tsola’an xan le wa jayp’éeel ku ye’esik jela’anil le *Alfabeto Fonético Internacional*o’ (IPA)” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 23 & 32).

<sup>180</sup> Original context of use: “Le je’ela’ je’el u yila’al yéetel le é’esajo’oba’, yáaxile’ ku ye’esal’al wa jayp’éeel ichil *Latin* yéetel kastelan; kén t’s’okoke’ ku táakpajal xan u ye’esajil le maaya t’aano’”” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 7).

<sup>181</sup> Original context of use: “Le Diisco ku taasik le meyaja’, te’ yáax jump’éeel táabsajil ku k’aaba’atik “audio”’, jach u’uy tu beel ya’ab juntéenal ku ts’o’okole’ ka éets’ ts’íibtik yéetel u ye’esaj jumilo’ob maaya” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 85).


<sup>183</sup> Original context of use: “Utia’al ka ja’atsak u p’ep’élxookil le woojo’ k’a’abëet u meyaja’al yéetel jump’éeel puunto (.)” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 33).

<sup>184</sup> Original context of use: “Beyxane’, yéetel le meyaj ku tásan o’ol’ta’ala’ ku jets’ik u k’a’abëtkuñsa’al u xookil *poneetika* tukulta’an tumeen maayawiñiño’ob wey tu lu’umil Yucatan’, ba’ale’, seten k’a’abëet u xo’okol úti’al u pat jo’o’ta’al yéetel u na’ata’al le ba’ax ku ya’alikö’” and “*Poneetika: U yóol maaya t’aan*” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 6 & all pages).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EG: ‘phonetics’</td>
<td>becomes f and k becomes c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: ‘maas’</td>
<td>Stressed vowel becomes long, low tone vowel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG: ‘más’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG: ‘more’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Morphosyntactic adaptation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L: ‘le Alfabeto Fonético Internacional’</td>
<td>Incorporation into Maya deictic structure: le ____ o’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG: ‘el Alfabeto Fonético Internacional’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG: ‘the International Phonetic Alphabet’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: ‘la neutralización’</td>
<td>Incorporation into Maya deictic structure: le ____ o’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG: ‘los verbos’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG: ‘the verbs’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: ‘Transitivo’</td>
<td>Incorporation into Maya deictic structure: le ____ …o’; [note here the stressed vowel in Spanish is not replaced with a long low tone in Maya; the v is not replaced with the b, as it is in bokaal below; and the term is inexplicably capitalized.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG: ‘transitivo’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG: ‘transitive’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phonological and morphosyntactic adaptation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L: ‘lingüiistiká’</td>
<td>Stressed vowel becomes long, low tone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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185 Original context of use: “Tu yo’olal u k’aj óolta’al bix u meyaj yéetel bix u xak’alta’al jump’éel iiche’, maas táanile’ yaan u chikpajal u tsoololil ku t’aan chéen tu yo’olalo’ob” and “Tsolnu’uko’ob: - Wa u k’aat máak u xok jump’it maas yo’olal u jo’olts’íibil le xóot’woojo’, je’el u béeytal u yilik ujeel ánaltel’ob je’elbix: …” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 45).

186 Original context of use: “Le je’ela’ beeta’an yéetel u ye’esaj juumilo’ob Americanistas65, ba’ale’ tsola’an xan le wa jayp’éel ku ye’esik jela’anil le Alfabeto Fonético Internacionalo’ (IPA) (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 32).

187 Original context of use: “…ku yúuchul jump’éel ba’al k’aj óolta’an ich kastelan bey neutralización87, and …87, Tí’ le jaatsa’ le neutralizacíon ma’atáan u tso’olol ba’axi’ yéetel bix u yúuchul, le je’ela’ ti’ kun tso’obil te’ kanjaats ku taalo’” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 50). [Note, in the second example of neutralizacion given here, the accent was missing in the original.]

188 Original context of use: “…tu’ux yaan súutuke’ le verbos yaan u mootso’ob yéetel jump’éel bokaal k’abaxo’ ku súutulo’ob chowakil…” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 86).

189 Original context of use: “Tí’ tuláakal le k’eexo’ ob ts’o’ok u tso’ololo’oba’ yaan xan jump’éel k’éex ku yúuchul ichil le bokaalo’obo’, le je’ela’ yaan ba’al u yíl yéetel u súutukil le Transitivo’…” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 86).

190 Original context of use: “Ichil u xookil Lingüistikaike’” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 51). Also, there is one variation on this spelling in the text. The prologue, which was written by a different author who is a faculty member in the Maya Linguistics and Culture program at Yáax Xo’ok University, uses a final long high tone: lingüistikáa (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 6). This is evidence of the limited circulation of this new specialized linguistics terminology in Maya and the fact that the terms have not yet been normalized for Maya-speaking linguists or Maya speakers generally (since the author of the prologue is not a linguist.)
Before discussing the phonological adaptations of the Spanish-origin loanwords as they are incorporated in Maya, I first provide a brief overview of tone and stress in Maya vowels. In Maya, vowels can either be short (e.g., *k’an* ‘yellow’) or long (e.g., *k’aan* ‘agrarian measure, 400m\(^2\) or 20m lineal’). Short vowels do not carry tone, but long

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\(^{191}\) Original context of use: “Je’elbix u yila’ala’, ti’ le ka’ajaats e’esajo’ob ts’o’ok u ts’àabal k’aj óoltbila’ meyajta’ab le **bokaal** yéetel le p’ep’eljumoo’obo’,” “Ichi’il maayae’ yaan xan ujeel **bokaalo’ob** je’elbix le je’elo’oba’: …” and “Le je’ela’ ku tsolik bix u péek le aak’ ichil u jbonol chi’ kéen a’ala’ak jump’éel **bokaalo’ob** . Ti’ u beetch’italo’obre’ ma’atech u yúuchul k’alik’ je’elbix u yúuchul ti’ le p’ep’eljumoo’ob yéetel k’as **bokaalo’obo’”” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 18 & 37). It is interesting to note that, while the authors create a neologisms for ‘consonant’, they use a loanword for ‘vowel’, **bokaal** from the Spanish vocal. Consonant, they interpret as ‘a very sure puff of air’, thus making it possible to contrast vowel with this as ‘a sound with no air’ or ‘an airless sound’ or something to this effect, since, in phonetics, vowels are considered to be sounds with no audible noise produced by constriction in the vocal tract (Matthews 2007).

\(^{192}\) Original context of use: “Kitak: lela’ u **adbeerbyoi’ tyeempo** , u k’áat u ya’ale’ ‘antes de’” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 49).

\(^{193}\) Original context of use: “Le **Diisco** ku taasik le meyaja’, te’ ýaax jump’éel tábasajil ku k’aaba’atik “audio_1””, jach u’uy tu beel ya’ab junteenal ku ts’o’okole’ ka éets’ ts’íibik yéetel u ye’esaj juumilo’ob maaya” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 85).

\(^{194}\) Original context of use: “Chukulk’alab: **corchete**. Bey xano’, k a’alike’, le yaabeo’ je’el u k’aaba’atik le je’ela’: jeep’; le **parentesis**o’: koots’ilk’alab” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 33).
vowels can take either high (e.g., k’áan ‘hammock’) or low (e.g., k’aan ‘agrarian measure, 400m² or 20m lineal’) tone. The low tone is typically not marked by a written diacritic in Maya, and the authors of Poneetika follow this practice.

While a greater number of studies have explored the adoption of Maya language loanwords in Spanish (e.g., Barrera Vázquez 1980; Pfeiler & Hofling 2006; Pfeiler 1996, 1999), few studies have been conducted of the adaptation of Spanish-origin loanwords into Maya. In fact, to my knowledge only two exist: Frazier (2012) and Pool Balam and Le Guen (2015). Pool Balam and Le Guen (2015) look at a wide range of processes that loanwords undergo when they are adapted into Maya, such as phonological, morphophonological, and syntactic and pragmatic integration, semantic change, and code switching. They argue that, generally speaking, Spanish-origin loanwords do not remain Spanish-language words once they are incorporated into Maya; instead, they become Maya through the various processes listed above (that is, they are Mayanized). Frazier (2012) provides a closer look at the phonological processes that Spanish-origin loanwords undergo when they are incorporated into Maya, specifically how stress and tone are treated and, thus is most relevant to the phonological processes I describe in the Poneetika corpus. Frazier’s (2012) main finding is that Spanish-language “[s]tress tends to be replaced with low tone” in Maya (e.g., from my example: dísco → diísco) (Frazier 2012, 3). Hanks (1984) and Pool Balam and Le Guen (2015) support this finding. While

195 Vowels can also be glottalized or rearticulated: k’a’am (also sometimes written or spoken as k’a’an) ‘robust, strong, vigorous’.
196 Hanks (1984) discuss loanwords to a lesser extent and Hanks (2009) discusses the commensuration of the Spanish and Maya languages and argues that “…it is impossible to detect the presence of European elements in Maya language by looking only for borrowed terms. The missionary is present in the Maya itself” (15) meaning that the post-colonial Maya language is shot through with influences from Spanish.
my corpus, taken from the *Poneetika* text, is much smaller, I found this to be the case overwhelming in my data (in that nine out of ten loanwords followed this pattern).

With respect to vowel stress, Frazier describes nine different ways in which it is treated in words ranging from one to four syllables. Only four of these were present in my data. For three of these, my data supported Frazier’s findings. She found that for both two and three syllable words that have penultimate stress in Spanish, these would take a low tone in Maya; this was true in my data (e.g., two syllables: *punto* → *puunto*, *disco* → *diisco*, *tiempo* → *tyeem poo*; three syllables: *adverbio* → *adbeerbyo*). For a third finding, Frazier (2012) finds that in one-syllable Spanish-language words with final stress will produce a low tone in Maya. This was also true in my data: *más* → *maas*. Frazier’s (2012) final finding with respect to stress that is relevant to my data is the treatment of stress in a two syllable loanword with final stress. She argues that this should take no tone in Maya. However, the one word of this type in my data produces a contradictory result. Instead, the two examples of two-syllable, stress-final loans in the *Poneetika* text both produced a tone in Maya. One produced an initial high tone—*inglés* → *ingles*—and the other produced a final low tone—*vocal* → *bokaal*. Thus, while Frazier (2012) finds that “two syllable words with final stress [are] the only exception” to the “most loanwords have at least one toned syllable” rule (6), my data suggest that the two-syllable rule may need to be revised. One other finding from Frazier’s data that is contradicted in my own data is the finding that a two-syllable loan word with final stress will produce two short vowels (i.e. no tone) in the Maya adaptation of that loanword. She provides the Spanish-language names *José* and *David* as examples, which, she argues, take no tone in
Maya. I found that the two-syllable, final stress words *inglés* and *vocal* do not produce this result in Maya. Instead they are adapted as *ingles* and *bokaal* respectively, each with one vowel taking tone. The majority of the loanwords in Frazier’s (2012) corpus were proper names. It is possible that the trends she has found in her data need to be specified for proper names and that other, non-proper name loanwords behave differently, as these few examples from my data suggest.

With respect to the changes in the spelling of the loanwords, the authors of the *Poneetika* text replaced letters in the Spanish-origin loanwords that were missing from the Maya-language alphabet they used in their text (i.e. the 1984 alphabet discussed in Chapter 5):


Thus, letters that occur in Spanish but that do not exist in this alphabet are replaced in the loanwords adapted into Maya in the text: the Spanish v is replaced with b, the c with k, and the f with the p. It is interesting to note, however, that the authors applied these changes to some loanwords but not to all: *Transitivo* is written as it would be in Spanish (with the exception of the capitalization of the T)—the stressed vowel is not elongated and given a low tone (i → ii) and the v is not changed to b, as, in contrast, it is for *vocal* ‘vowel’ which becomes *bokaal*. It is not clear why this is the case. In fact, one of the authors told me that their use of *poneetika* in the Maya-language title was a way of showing flexibility in terms of how they wrote Maya, that is, using a process of
Mayanization. However, he noted that they used the ‘p’ instead of the ‘f’ because ‘f’ does not exist in the Maya alphabet.\textsuperscript{197}

With respect to morphological adaptations, I found only one in the \textit{Poneetika} text—the pluralization of loanwords using the Maya pluralization suffix –\textit{o’ob}. This suffix is applied to the loanword \textit{bokaal} ‘vowel’ to form \textit{bokaalo’ob} ‘vowels’. This is a standard means of pluralizing the third person in Maya. It is interesting that, in light of this, the authors felt the need to specify that \textit{chiikul} ‘nota’ ‘note’ would become \textit{chiikulo’ob} ‘notas’ when pluralized.\textsuperscript{198}

The morphosyntactic changes I found in the \textit{Poneetika} text all relate to adapting the Spanish-origin loanwords into the Maya deictic structure. The Maya deictic structure communicates a variety of information, but mainly information about location or topicality. That is, deictics in Maya can communicate how proximal or distal a person or object is to the speaker, what information is being highlighted (or topicalized) in a phrase or sentence, and information about time. The constructions \textit{lela’} and \textit{lelo’} express proximal and distal information about the person or object in question, for instance (deictic markers are bolded):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ma’ax le k’aana’}.
‘Whose hammock is this one?’
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{In ti’a’al le k’aana’}. \textit{Le k’aano’ u ti’a’al in wíitsin}.
‘This hammock is mine. That hammock is my younger brother/sister’s.’
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{197} Original: “En el caso de ‘Poneetika’ es como una manera de mostrar flexibilidad ante las nuevas formas de escritura, hablo es específico de la mayanización...pero en si, si nos damos cuenta, en el alfabeto maya, no existía la grafía ‘F’ por eso se usaba la ‘P’” (email communication with author).

\textsuperscript{198} Original: “Chiikul: \textit{Nota}; Chiikulo’ob: \textit{Notas}” (26).
Le ___a’ communicates that the object is closer to the speaker, while le ___o’ communicates that it is more distant from the speaker. The form le ___o’ is also the unmarked form used as a general article—e.g., le k’aano’ ‘the hammock’—with no specification of distance from speaker.

In the Poneetika text, all uses of this Maya deictic form are in the unmarked le ___o’ form.\textsuperscript{199} I should also note that, the le ___o’/a’ forms can also be applied to noun phrases, such as le paal saak u nooka’ ‘the boy (nearest to me) with the white clothing’. This is different from le paala’ saak u nook ‘the boy (nearest to me) has/is wearing white clothing’. In the first example, the emphasis is on the location of the boy, and the speaker would likely be distinguishing between a nearby boy with white clothes and a boy who is further away and is also wearing white clothing. In the second example, the speaker is specifying the color of the clothes of the boy who is nearby. In the Poneetika text, le ___o’ is applied to both nouns and noun phrases. Examples of this in the text are present in the following excerpt:

Example 8.2. Deictic marker usage with Spanish-language loanwords in Poneetika

“Ti’ tuláakal le k’eexo’ob ts’o’ok u tso’ololo’oba’ yaan xan jump’éeel k’éex ku yùuchul ichil le bokaalo’obo’, le je’ela’ yaan ba’al u yil yéetel u súutukil le Transitivoo’, tu’ux yaan súutuke’ le verbos yaan u mootso’ob yéetel jump’éeel bokaal k’abaxo’ ku súutulo’ob chowakil…” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 86)

With all of the changes we have just explained there is also a change that takes place in the vowels, these take place in the transitive, in which the verbs that have roots with a simple [i.e. short] vowel become long…

\textsuperscript{199} I should note, however, that in the Poneetika text the authors italicize the terminal deictic suffix –o’ but they do not italicize the preceding deictic marker le. It is not clear why the authors have done this, but it is suggestive of how they understand the incorporation of the deictic marker into the word to which it is applied.
In the first loanword, *Transitivo* ‘transitive’, the *le __o’* deictic frame is applied solely to the noun, rendering the gloss ‘the transitive’. For the second loanword in this passage, *verbos* ‘verbs’, the *le __o’* deictic frame is applied to a noun phrase: ‘the verbs that have roots with a simple [i.e. short] vowel’. Closing the deictic frame after *k’abax* instead of after *verbos*, indicates to the reader that the verbs under discussion are specifically those that have a short vowel in their roots. There is one incomplete form of the *le __o’* deictic applied in the text. This may simply have been an oversight on the authors’ part.

The deictic particle –*e’* functions as a topicalizer and as a framing particle. In the example in *Poneetika* (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013), the –*e’* suffix is applied to the loanword *lingüiistika*, where it functions as a topicalizer (also called a topical enclitic (Bricker et al. 1998), that is it makes the item to which it is applied the topic of the sentence (bold added):

Example 6.3. Deictic marker usage with Spanish-language loanwords in *Poneetika*

> “Ichil u xookil *Lingüiistikae*’ ku ya’alal u chuukanil t’oox ti’ le bix u bisikuba wa u na’atikuba ka’ap’êel juumo’ob ku jôok’ol ti’ jump’êel xôot’woojo’.” (51)

‘In the study of Linguistics, complementary distribution is when two different sounds can be understood from one phoneme.’

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200 Here, the authors use linguistic approximation through substitution to generate the linguistic term *root* for referring to verb roots. The word in Maya, *moots* ‘root’ refers to a tree or plant root (Gómez Navarrete 2009, 153). *K’abax* refers to food that is bland or that lack seasoning in Maya (Barrera Vásquez 1980, 360). Here, the term is used to refer to a “simple” vowel—that is one that does not carry tone and is not rearticulated. This examples indicates that the neologisms in the *Poneetika* text are not limited to those I have outlined above. It is possible that this neologism was not glossed in Spanish in the text because *moots* ‘root’ (‘*raíz*’ in Spanish) is a commonly known term in both Maya and Spanish.

201 When the authors describe a CD that contains audio tracks that accompany the book, the write the following: “*Le Diisco ku taasik le meyaja’, ...*” (Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil 2013, 85). Here, the deictic frame is opened with “*Le...*” but it is not closed following “*Diisco*” (if it were, the text would read *Le Diiscoo’*). The authors apply the deictic suffix –*o’* to other loanwords that end in *o* (e.g., *Transitivoo’*), thus this omission is not likely due to the terminal ‘*o*’ in *Diisco*. There is a subsequent deictic frame later in the noun phrase, “...le meyaja’, ...” but the initial deictic frame opened before *Diisco* is not closed.
While this sentence is about complementary distribution, by using the –e’, the authors have placed the topical focus of the sentence on the fact that this is a practice in the discipline of linguistics, and that the explanation in the remainder of the sentence should be understood within the context of disciplinary linguistics. Finally, the scoping enclitic (Bricker et al. 1998) or locative particle (Lucy n.d.) –i’ is used to refer to kitak, denoting that it is an adverb of time. Using –i’ as a final particle points back to the word in question kitak as if to state, “that word there (i.e. kitak) is an adverb of time.”

This discussion of loanwords used in Poneetika indicates at least two things. First, it shows that the authors are not committed to linguistic purism in their text. Instead, they recognized and practice the Mayanization of loanwords in their text. While these words are far from a majority in their text, their inclusion is a powerful statement about the place of these words in academic, scientific discourse. Second, it suggests that the practice of incorporating Spanish language loanwords, and especially Mayanized ones, is far from standard. There is variation in the loanwords used in the Poneetika text, particularly orthographic—and the terms used in this text vary as well with other forms I saw faculty and students use in classes and homework at YXU—which is likely due to the lack of acceptance and use of Mayanized loanwords in academic texts. If Mayanized loanwords are acknowledged as part of native-Maya speakers’ speech, including highly

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202 While I do not cover this in this dissertation, it is interesting to note that in this example the authors capitalize Linguistics when they are referring to it as a discipline. They have chosen to adopt the Spanish-language standard for capitalization of scientific disciplines here. There are a number of interesting style choices made in the Poneetika text that both align with and differ from those set forth in the posthumously published Norma de escritura en lengua maya ‘Norms for writing the Maya language’ that merit further discussion.
educated native-Maya speakers’ speech, and incorporated into their academic work products, perhaps there will be a move to standardize their incorporation in Maya.

*Other considerations in Poneetika*

Before moving on to a discussion of how *Poneetika* analyzes Maya phonology in a new way, I briefly want to acknowledge the text’s treatment of linguistic variation and contractions.

An important topic in discussions about the Maya language is the treatment of linguistic variation amongst speakers and writers of this language. While Maya remains mutually intelligible across the geographic areas in which it is spoken (the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatan, Quintana Roo, and Tabasco as well as in Northern Belize), it exhibits regional variation (i.e. lexical differences, such as different names for the same thing, and grammatical differences, such as different ways of expressing the first person plural). This variation is very important to everyday speakers of the language and is of great interest to *Yáax Xook* linguistics students, who readily compare ways of saying things in their different communities of origin. Variation is not always recognized in institutionally-sponsored publications; however, *Poneetika*, does acknowledge linguistic variation and makes an effort to identify variants in the text. Table 8.4 displays a list of the variations found in this text.
Table 8.4. Examples of linguistic variation highlighted by the authors of *Poneetika*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term used in <em>Poneetika</em></th>
<th>Variations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yo’olal</td>
<td>yóok’lal, yo’osal, yóok’sal, yo’olal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kastelan t’aan</td>
<td>kastelan t’aan, kastla’an t’aan y kastellano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bika’aj</td>
<td>nika’ajech, nuka’ajech, binka’ajech, ka’ajech, bika’ajech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paak’i</td>
<td>Glosses the term in Spanish <em>necesario</em> ‘necessary’. Explains that this term is a regionalism used in the Eastern part of Yucatan state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popol t’aan</td>
<td>Glosses the term in Spanish <em>cuento</em> ‘story’. Explains that this term is a regionalism used in the Southern part of Yucatan state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there are only five terms highlighted as variants, the text at least attempts to acknowledge that linguistic variation exists in Maya. The first three variants that the authors highlight are terms for which alternative spellings/pronunciations are available. However, they do not specify where one variant or another might be used or why. The last two terms the authors highlight are regional variations. For these, they provide glosses in Spanish of the terms, but they do not state what the terms might be in other regions where Maya is spoken.

The authors also make note of long forms they used that are typically contracted in everyday speech. Examples include *páak’tajilo’ob* ‘objectives’ (long form) and its contracted form from everyday speech *páa’tajilo’ob* (20), and *suutulanpaach* ‘metathesis’ and its contracted form *suutlanpaach* (80). Finally, as I mention above, there are also some variations in orthography. These may be due to a limited editorial process.
Concluding thoughts on linguistics

terminology used in Poneetika

The Poneetika text is noteworthy for various reasons, and not only because it is the only existing linguistics text published exclusively in the Maya language. The text acknowledges and makes an attempt to address and represent linguistic variation. It highlights contractions and explains what these would be for the long forms it uses in the text. Although the text relies heavily on neologisms to replace Spanish-language linguistics terminology, the text remains readily understandable to a reader of academic Maya. However, because the neologisms used are context-dependent and (at least for some) polysematic the Spanish-language glosses of these new terms are needed for comprehension. The authors also attempted to write the Poneetika text using a Maya worldview—letting the text ‘come out of’ the Maya. Many of their neologisms achieve this—in large part as circumlocutions (since calques and linguistic approximation through substitution are premised upon meanings in the source language)—however, as I state above, the Spanish-language glosses are often essential in helping the reader to understand their intended meaning. Furthermore, the authors engage in creative use of Maya grammatical processes to create neologisms—the nominalization of a word that has not been used as a noun and adjectivization of a verb, using an analogous process used previously only with adjectives. These strategies follow existing Maya morphosyntactic strategies but expand them. Only time will tell if the new words developed to describe phonology ich maaya are accepted and taken up for use more widely and if the strategies the Canul Yah & Dzib Uitzil (2013) have used will be replicated in the formation of
further new terminology in Maya. I now turn my attention to the creation of new
categorization of Maya consonantal phonetics *ich maaya*.

**The phonetic structure of Maya *ich maaya***

**Overview**

In order to assess the content of the *Poneetika* text and to attempt to identify any changes
that may have been made to the linguistics of Maya by using Maya as a metalanguage to
conduct linguistic analyses, I compare Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil’s (2013) classification
of Maya consonantal phonemes with those of two previous classifications conducted by
foreign scholars trained in a Western tradition of scientific linguistics in the U.S.:
Tozzer’s (1921) *A Maya Grammar*, and Blair’s (1964) PhD thesis, entitled *Yucatec Maya
Noun and Verb Morpho-syntax.*\(^{203}\) While this analysis focuses on Maya phonemes, it is
limited to point of articulation and mode of phonation, topics of phonetics.

Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil identify 21 consonantal phonemes in Maya, Blair
identifies 26 (comprised of 24 consonants and 2 semi-vowels), and Tozzer identifies 16
(although he mentions an additional 4, one of which he omits). Tozzer identifies /H/ as a
phoneme while the other authors do not (they find only /h/), and Blair identifies /b’, /d/, /f/, /g/, and /r/ while the other authors do not. Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil do not identify
phonemes that are absent from the other authors’ lists. One could say that Blair’s (1964)
phonemic analysis of Maya consonants is the most inclusive when it comes to the

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\(^{203}\) McQuown (1967) is also recognized as producing a highly-authoritative account of Maya linguistics,
which includes a phonemic inventory, but I have not included his analysis here as a point of comparison
because it covers “classical” (i.e. Colonial) Maya and not modern Maya, as the other authors cited in this
comparison do. The interested reader is also pointed to Barrera Vásquez’s (1980, 41a) brief description of
Maya phonemes.
recognition of phonemes borrowed from Spanish (and hence results in the greatest number of phonemes of the three authors).

Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil (2013) identify seven modes of phonation for Maya consonants, Blair identifies eight, and Tozzer identifies six. The following modes of phonation are unique to the respective author’s lists: affricates and a voiced alveolar tap (Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil); sonant, fortis\(^{204}\) (Tozzer); vocoid, trill, and flap (Blair). For places of articulation, Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil and Tozzer each identify five places and Blair identifies eight. Those that are unique are: glottals (Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil) and labiodentals, alveopalatals, and pharyngals (Blair). See Tables 8.5 and 8.6. I have also included images of Canul Yah and Dzib Uitzil, Blair, and Tozzer’s original analysis in Appendix A.

\(^{204}\) Although Blair does use fortis as a descriptor, he does not categorize phonemes under it as a mode of phonation. I have grouped the phonemes he categorizes as fortis under stops. It appears, as I discuss below, that he uses *fortis* to refer to glottalization, but I cannot be entirely certain of this.