The Promise Of Language Planning In Indigenous Early Childhood Education In Mexico

Aldo Anzures Tapia

University of Pennsylvania

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The Promise Of Language Planning In Indigenous Early Childhood Education In Mexico

Abstract
Early childhood education (ECE) has been branded as a social equalizer that will reverse poverty trends in Mexico. At the same time, language policies that mandate education in Indigenous languages clash with policies that promote Spanish and English as the languages of instruction in preschools, sending contrasting messages about inclusion and justice through the learning of these languages. When language is included in ECE debates in Mexico, it is often used as a proxy for "school readiness"—as in, students are prepared to attend classes in Spanish, the actual language of instruction—precluding discussions on multilingual education and overlooking the impacts of these policies in Indigenous communities. Preschools, especially Indigenous ones, are the social spaces in which these competing policies first interact, revealing implementation challenges at all levels, from professional development to textbook design. This study provides an ethnographic account of how different stakeholders in one Indigenous community in the Yucatan Peninsula respond to language policies and ECE initiatives that promise quality education under the guise of social justice, inclusive education, and economic returns. Through long-term participant observation in an Indigenous preschool and in family and community spaces, the research also reveals preschool children's dynamic language practices and active engagement as what I call "language policy-doers." Moreover, situated within a region coping with migration and mass tourism, the study also traces the impact of these processes on the compromises parents and teachers make in regard to their children's education. This study deepens our understanding of the ways in which language policies are implemented in ECE settings, but even more crucially, contributes to the design of programs that consider the complexities of ECE in Indigenous contexts.

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THE PROMISE OF LANGUAGE PLANNING IN INDIGENOUS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MEXICO

Aldo Anzures Tapia

A DISSERTATION

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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THE PROMISE OF LANGUAGE PLANNING IN INDIGENOUS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MEXICO

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Aldo Anzures Tapia
Dedication

A las familias que me dejaron entrar en sus casas y conocer las maneras en las que sus hijos e hijas juegan con las lenguas dentro y fuera de las escuelas; así como a las maestras que conocí y están enfrente de un salón día a día con el ímpetu de luchar por una mejor educación.
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rocks, and that heritage is more than language, but is caring, is economy, is potential, and it is growth. Thank you for your energy and for really setting an example of the challenges of conducting research for and with the people. Nelson, the last data Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers” is a direct inspiration of your words and how policy and languaging is done by children.

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in the current state of ECE.

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Back in 2010 I wrote for my master’s degree statement application: “Born in Mexico City, I grew up in a world of captivating stories, in which my father was the protagonist. Leaving his rural town at age nine, he migrated to Mexico City and became his family’s first member to leave an agricultural life and attend college. His tales were always fascinating, but it was not until high school that I understood that they were the by-product of the hardship and inequality in my country. Moreover, these stories helped
me recognize that opening doors to educational opportunities was important, but not enough – the quality of the education needed to be optimal.” In 2013 I wrote the same exact paragraph for my PhD application. In 2017 I wrote the same exact paragraph for the SRCD grant, and in 2018, without changes again, I wrote the same paragraph for the Spencer Foundation Dissertation grant. My motivations have not changed, and my work is still inspired by my parents’ stories. Their stories of success aside from their histories of deprivation have been a leitmotif for my work. I feel privileged to have not lived their lives and just to be inspired by them in order to do work and conduct research that could help children around the world to not live some of these deprivation stories. Mamá y papá, gracias por todo el apoyo, el cariño y el amor. Algún día esto será un libro en español y podrán entender porque tantas veces terminaba cansado, en silencio, frustrado, enojado o simplemente con ganas de solo ver y ver y ver y ver y ver y ver. Los amo. Gracias por el apoyo en todos estos años. A Franco, Eriko, Haruki y Hanna–los amo. Espero que algún día vean de que se trató tanta madre que hacía y tanto desmadre en el que me metí. Por las banquitas, surcos llenos de aguas frescas, combis, paredes rojas, quesos derretidos y caminatas en los parques– Pamela 🫖❤️.
ABSTRACT

THE PROMISE OF LANGUAGE PLANNING IN INDIGENOUS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MEXICO

Aldo Anzures Tapia
Nancy H. Hornberger

Early childhood education (ECE) has been branded as a social equalizer that will reverse poverty trends in Mexico. At the same time, language policies that mandate education in Indigenous languages clash with policies that promote Spanish and English as the languages of instruction in preschools, sending contrasting messages about inclusion and justice through the learning of these languages. When language is included in ECE debates in Mexico, it is often used as a proxy for “school readiness”—as in, students are prepared to attend classes in Spanish, the actual language of instruction—precluding discussions on multilingual education and overlooking the impacts of these policies in Indigenous communities. Preschools, especially Indigenous ones, are the social spaces in which these competing policies first interact, revealing implementation challenges at all levels, from professional development to textbook design. This study provides an ethnographic account of how different stakeholders in one Indigenous community in the Yucatan Peninsula respond to language policies and ECE initiatives that promise quality education under the guise of social justice, inclusive education, and economic returns. Through long-term participant observation in an Indigenous preschool and in family and community spaces, the research also reveals preschool children's dynamic language practices and active engagement as what I call "language policy-doers." Moreover,
situated within a region coping with migration and mass tourism, the study also traces the impact of these processes on the compromises parents and teachers make in regard to their children’s education. This study deepens our understanding of the ways in which language policies are implemented in ECE settings, but even more crucially, contributes to the design of programs that consider the complexities of ECE in Indigenous contexts.
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- Theoretical contributions on language policy and planning
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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS, DATA ANNOTATIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Transcription Conventions

IN TEXT:

a. Spanish and Maya are presented in italics in-text. Maya and Spanish are translated and footnoted in English. Maya is in italics when translated to English.

b. Names of institutions, documents, programs and policies in Spanish are in italics and between single quotation marks. These names are translated and footnoted in English.

c. English italics in-text denote emphasis in the phrasing.

d. Three dots are used to indicate a pause.

e. Brackets are used to indicate an editorial insertion, such as a word that is implied but not actually present in the transcript.

TABLES:

a. Each table indicates how the languages are translated.

b. The translation in English is given side-by-side with the Spanish and Maya.

c. Each table indicates if Maya appears in the table. Maya is in italics when translated to English.

d. Three dots are used to indicate a pause.

e. Brackets are used to indicate an editorial insertion, such as a word that is implied but not actually present in the transcript.
VIGNETTES:

a. Vignettes are written in single space and italics. Maya and Spanish are translated and footnoted in English. Maya is in italics when translated to English.

b. Three dots are used to indicate a pause.

c. Brackets are used to indicate an editorial insertion, such as a word that is implied but not actually present in the transcript.

My decision to not mark Spanish and Maya in transcriptions is guided by my concern of representing languages as they are dynamically spoken by the people in their daily interactions (see García, 2009). In the English translations I mark Maya for non-Spanish speakers, in order for them to see this language dynamism. Across transcripts, I have not modified any word in the original languages, and in my translations in English I have tried to respect and honor, as much as possible, the words that people shared. When modifications were done in the translations, these were based on semantic reasons.

Data annotations

Fieldnotes=FN

Interview= IN

Date: YYYY.MM.DD

Example: FN 2019.12.31

Acronyms and abbreviations

Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo= CONAFE

Early Childhood Education= ECE
Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Información (National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Information) = INEGI

Kinder 1 (3-4 years old) = K1
Kinder 2 (4-5 years old) = K2
Kinder 3 (5-6 years old) = K3

Language Policy and Planning = LPP

Mexican Peso = MXN

Programa de Escuelas de Tiempo Completo (Full-time School Program) = PETC

Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Education) = SEP

United States Dollar = USD
CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Entering to Palal-na—the only single teacher multigrade Indigenous preschool in Huaytsik—was easier than I thought. Little did I know during the start of my ethnographic fieldwork, that this ease was a result of the desperate attempts of Elisa to get some help as she was the teacher, principal, and janitor of the school. As I arrived at Palal-na on June 17th, 2017, prepared with a folder containing my translated IRB documents that explained my research, Elisa received me at the school door and asked me to come inside her classroom to talk. Following her voice as I crossed the patio, I noticed how there were two other classrooms closed with a lock, two women washing dishes in a third room that had been converted into a lunchroom, and children running and jumping around the patio. Some other children had taken plastic toys, throwing them around, and basically destroying them as much as they could—it seemed that this was the aim of the game. Elisa kept on calmly walking to the classroom; me following behind her. Some of the same children were running in and out from the classroom, climbing the desks, and throwing boxes from one side to the other. All this, while Elisa comfortably sat at her desk waiting for me to sit in front of her and share the intentions of my research. As I was talking, she was laughing about what the children were doing, shouting instructions about work they had to complete, sharing materials that some children had asked for and at the same time trying to listen to what I was saying. As I was speaking, I gave her the folder with my documents. She did not open the folder, but immediately said that since I was recommended by other people in town, that she trusted me and that I was welcome to conduct my research during the 2017-2018 school year. Moreover, she added that an extra hand was always great help and was more than welcomed at the school. In less than 10 minutes, I was in and out of the school with the opportunity to see how the promise of Indigenous early childhood education developed. (FN 2017.06.17)

Elisa’s permission allowed me to ethnographically follow the development of language and early childhood education (ECE) programs and policies implemented in Palal-na, designed to reduce poverty conditions and offer a quality education. Research that considers the complex relationship between bilingual education and its pedagogical appropriateness in preschools is still scarce, especially in Indigenous contexts and in schools that offer an Indigenous language (Pence, 2013). Early childhood grassroots efforts in New Zealand and the US have already laid important ground on the relationship between early years education, Indigeneity, and language revitalization (e.g., May, 2004; Warner,
1999). Nevertheless, more research is needed to understand how preschools in Indigenous contexts address language revitalization in ways that impact not only linguistic but also familial, identity, and cultural spheres (Niles, Byers, & Krueger, 2007; Romero-Little, 2010). Thus, this dissertation addresses longstanding tensions between early childhood education and Indigenous contexts, where early childhood efforts become a space that negotiates official education goals, developmental agendas, and linguistic and culture components (Harkness, Super, Mavridis, Barry, & Zeitlin, 2013), but often does so at odds with the language and cultural practices of Indigenous children and teachers (Niles, Byers & Krueger, 2007).

Furthermore, this research is important for contexts, such as the Mexican one, where despite a longstanding official recognition on the importance of delivering education from an intercultural and bilingual (Spanish and Indigenous languages) stance at all educational levels (Schmelkes, 2013), the implementation of these policies has overlooked early childhood development with unclear and ineffective institutional language instruction and a lack of a bilingual and intercultural perspective (Myers, Martínez, Delgado, Fernández, & Martínez, 2013). Against this backdrop, this dissertation tries to shed some light on why these policies are ineffective, disentangling some of the bureaucratic processes that educators have to handle and navigate, the successes and challenges at teaching Yucatec Maya\(^1\) at the preschool level, and the ways children promote or hinder

---

\(^1\) In this dissertation I use Yucatec Maya and Maya interchangeably, the latter being the most commonly used term to refer to the language in the Yucatán Peninsula. Yucatec Maya is part of the larger family of Maya languages that ranges from Central America all the way to Southern Mexico. Some of the Maya languages mentioned in this dissertation are also Tzeltal and Tzotzil (Michnowicz, 2015).
the development of Maya—all in a context where socioeconomic processes such as regional migration and mass tourism are prevalent.

A Macro Context on the Promise of Indigenous ECE in Mexico

According to the World Bank (2019), 43.6 percent of the Mexican population lives under the poverty line; and disaggregated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, 69.5 percent of the impoverished population are Indigenous rural populations (CONEVAL, 2019; UNESCO, 2010). Moreover, trying to identify some of the major factors that define these poverty conditions in Mexico, the United Nations Development Program and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2019) calculated that the lack of quality education explains 14.1 percent of the multidimensional poverty\(^2\) in the country, lack of quality services in the health area explains 67 percent of this poverty, and lack of access to basic living standards explain 18.8 percent of it. These data then, position education as a crucial element in Mexico’s poverty picture when taken into account for the development of poverty reduction policies.

Education, or in more precise words, schooling, has thus been defined as an essential element for success and economic development of children, families and countries not just in Mexico, but around the world. In this way, ECE as the initial step in schooling is posited as an educational level in which monetary and intellectual investments in terms of infrastructure and curriculum development have to be made as their long-term benefits outweigh the initial costs (Naudeau, Kataoka, Valerio, Neuman, & Elder, 2010; Raikes, Yoshikawa, Britto & Iruka, 2017). In addition to this, and recognizing the

\(^2\) The Multidimensional Poverty Index identifies deprivations in the same households in education, health and standard of living.
importance of ECE, in 2016 Mexico subscribed to the United Nations Sustainable Development goals, and committed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all children in order to also foster better learning and strengthen cultural identity (UN, 2016).

One of the aims of this dissertation is to further disentangle, texturize and contextualize these macro-level statistics and policy commitments. Ethnographically texturizing the policies through the experiences of teachers, children and families in ECE ecologies, as explained throughout the chapters in this dissertation, can hopefully allow us to see how although there are laws, such as the Mexican constitution, which recognize Mexico as a pluricultural and multilingual nation (Andrade, 2013), and there are policies that situate schools as places that should be teaching in their Indigenous languages (Schmelkes & Aguila, 2019), Spanish homogenization is still prevalent (Briceño Chel, 2008) and consequently has pushed Indigenous languages to fragile positions of language shift and a continuing exclusion of Indigenous voices in educational policies and practices (Hohepa, May & McCarty, 2006).

Yucatec Maya, with over 785,000 speakers, is the second most spoken Indigenous language in Mexico, the most spoken Indigenous language in the Yucatan Peninsula (INEGI, 2011) and at the same time, is one of the Mexican Indigenous language that is undergoing a persistent and alarming language shift (Terborg, García Landa & Moore, 2006). For instance, the Mexican National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Populations has detected 22 Indigenous languages that, independently of the number of speakers, are at risk of disappearing. Of the four major Indigenous languages in
Mexico,³ Maya is the only one undergoing language shift, in great part due to the mass tourism in the region, the migration flows provoked by the aforementioned phenomenon, and the preference for many Maya speakers to speak Spanish for economic purposes that respond to this industry (CDI, 2001; Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 2015). Tourism does not just impact the fast displacement of the language per se, but also the loss of contextual agricultural practices (Mühlhäusler, 2000), the erosion of environmental information and local systems of knowledge (Nettle & Romaine, 2000), as well as challenges in intrafamilial communication (Romero-Little et al., 2007). Preschool, which has been free and mandatory since 2009 in Mexico (Fitzpatrick, Toledo Figueroa, Golden, Crosby & Santiago, 2018), and specifically, Indigenous modality preschools, have been designed as spaces that could address these challenges through bilingual and contextualized practices. Nonetheless, exploring how these schools work at the ground level surfaces different stories. These are the stories that this dissertation highlights and tries to ponder in order to design better and more contextualized policies that could benefit the youngest children, their families, and their teachers at this educational level.

The Promise of Early Childhood Education at the Ground Level: Students as Passengers

My stomach was about to explode. Two different graduation dinners were taking a toll on my digestive system and my only thought was water. Water. However, we still had a third party to attend. It is a tradition in the Peninsula that parents who have children that graduate from preschool to organize a dinner to celebrate this educational milestone. As part of the celebration, parents invite the schools’ teachers and principals for them to enjoy the food; and teachers already know which ones will be THE parties to attend; where will they serve the best tamales, and in which ones we can even have cochinita pi’ibil (a traditional dish). For me, these were excellent moments to have relaxed conversations with the teachers and principals, most of the times, about love and

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³ 1st Nahuatl; 2nd Maya; 3rd Mixteco; and 4th Zapoteco.
education. At the third dinner of the night, as we enjoyed the food, we started to talk about the state of education in Cobá, a town divided by a lagoon, with important ancient Maya archaeological sites, and where I had conducted participant observations in the town’s Indigenous preschool a year before. Fiona, the school’s principal, leaving her tamale on the table, and as the conversation evolved said “muchos maestros son taxistas”\(^4\). Perplexed, I looked at her and she continued saying “hay muchos maestros que no les gusta su trabajo, y ven a los estudiantes como pasajeros. Es decir, ellos llegan a la escuela, se acomodan, enseñan por el tiempo que les toca enseñar y después se van. Dejan a los alumnos como pasajeros, más que como aprendices y los maestros no se comprometen”\(^5\). (Fiona in FN 2019.07.08)

Stories, such as the one above from Fiona at her school are some of the accounts that this dissertation helps to surface. Rigorous and dedicated ethnographic and participant observations allowed me to see how not just in Huaytsik, but in places like Cobá, even when there are established policies and programs that are designed to promote an inclusive and quality education, their implementation is far distant from accomplishing these goals. The promise of early childhood education, in many cases, was not fulfilled because of the lack of commitment from the teachers, who saw students as passengers and not as learners. In other cases, this promise was not fulfilled even with committed teachers. For instance, Elisa–who is one of the protagonists in this dissertation–much as she wanted to implement these programs and teach in Maya, bureaucratic barriers and processes barely allowed her to even open her school, or forced her to adapt to bureaucratic demands in order for her students to be schooled for a couple of hours and receive some of the benefits from the social programs and policies implemented at the school. In some cases, children with disabilities were hidden in their

\(^4\) many teachers are cab drivers
\(^5\) there are many teachers who do not like their job, and they see their students as passengers. In other words, they arrive to the school, accommodate themselves, teach for the time they have to teach and then they leave. They leave the students as passengers, rather than learners, and the teachers do not commit.
houses and did not attend any school—since, from the parents’ experience—the inclusiveness and quality that schools professed through their programs and policies, were actually detrimental for their own children.

At the macroeconomic level, tourism and regional migration also impeded fulfillment of this promise. The majority of parents at Huaytsik were engaged in a regional migration pattern that pushed them to abandon their children, emotionally touching both parties—the children and the parents—with serious affective scars that impacted the learning of children at the school. In other cases, these socio-economic phenomena also pushed youth to decide not to study, but rather prepare to become waiters or bartenders to work in the Riviera Maya as this was better paid than becoming a teacher. The lack of youth becoming educators has affected the region and now there is a lack of teachers to serve children in Indigenous preschools.

Thus, overall, the fulfillment of the promise is challenging. However, not everything is a pessimistic picture. This dissertation sheds light upon the ideological and implementational spaces (Hornberger, 2002, 2005; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) that are also carved out in these strained educational ecologies and how teachers, parents and children are skillful and playful as they navigate these policies and programs and become successful in their own ways. The language policy and planning (LPP) field has been oriented, for many decades now, to offer solutions to language problems (see e.g., Ferguson, 1968; Haugen, 1966; Nahir, 1984; Neustupny, 1974; also Ruiz, 1984) such as some that thread throughout this dissertation: Why, if there are preschools that are designed to teach in and through an Indigenous language, do they still not work? Why if there are materials in the schools that are designed and written in the Indigenous
language, are they not used? And moreover, why if these spaces that have assigned teachers who are advocates of the Indigenous language and speak the Indigenous language, can these teachers not teach in and through the Indigenous language? This dissertation, as an ethnography of LPP (Hornberger, Anzures Tapia, Hanks, Kvičiok Dueñas & Lee, 2018), is not just about finding solutions to these language and education policy problems, but as Lewis (2019) mentions, is also about defining the problems of language and education in a better way. Each one of the following chapters tries to add to this definition and delineation of the problems, and to help to design better solutions.

**Chapter Outlines**

In the following Chapter I describe my conceptual framework. In it I describe how my research addresses concerns of three fields of study: (1) language policy and planning, (2) language reclamation and (3) early childhood education. I understand the field of language policy and planning from an ecological perspective, where languages transform and interact with each other in dynamic, diverse and non-bounded societal, political, historical, economic, cultural and educational dimensions. To address these dynamic policy dimensions in Huaytsik, I first frame my work in the ethnography of language policy and planning, with a particular emphasis on perspectives on language policy and planning from the bottom-up, as well as the concept of *implementational and ideological spaces* for language reclamation–the second section of my conceptual framework. In this second section, I consider the relevance of language reclamation and its impact in multilingual education in regions where language change is happening. Finally, given that my dissertation is situated in ECE ecologies, in the third section I review how quality in ECE has been understood, as well as how my dissertation relates to
the research that envisions early childhood as a contested process embedded in a sociolinguistic, cultural and sociopolitical milieu. It is in this final section that I also review how agency is related to ECE and I introduce the concept that I coin as *language policy-doers*, further addressed in the last data Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers”.

Chapter 3 describes Huaytsik as the main research setting in this dissertation. I present the schools in which I mainly conducted this ethnography of language policy and planning, as well as how I was allowed to enter to these and other spaces in Huaytsik and other communities where I conducted my participant observations and interviews with children, parents, teachers and education officials. Moreover, I explain the ways my positionality evolved and transformed throughout this 21 month multiyear ethnography; and I describe the data that I collected and how I analyzed them in order to have approximate answers for my research questions—which I further explain in this chapter:

1. *How do parents, teachers, and other stakeholders describe the role of early childhood education in this Indigenous community?*
2. *How do national and global discourses about early childhood and language education intersect with and influence schooling practices, in particular, in Indigenous language education in this community?* And
3. *how are socio-economic processes, such as migration and mass tourism, transforming the conditions under which parents in this Indigenous community make educational choices?*

In the fourth Chapter “Tourism: A double-edged sword in Indigenous Early Childhood Education” I set up the picture of the dissertation in terms of the socioeconomic processes happening in the region and how they are affecting ECE. I
describe Huaytsik in the regional migration and tourism context of the Yucatan Peninsula, and some of the ways in which this has impacted Maya language use in the town. As Indigenous families within the state and from other states move for employment in the tourism industry, the increasing use of Maya in urban spaces has created new linguistic dynamics where Indigenous languages, but most importantly English, play a role in employment. Hence, there is a growing desire in Indigenous communities for the teaching of English not as an academic endeavor but as preparation for a future job and success, described in the second section. In the third section, I describe how tourism impacts schooling processes, pushing youth in the region to dedicate their professional lives to the tourism industry rather than to teaching, which has inevitably affected the number of teachers available to serve in Indigenous modality schools. Finally, the fourth section describes some of the experiences of the people who stay home in Huaytsik rather than migrate to the tourism centers, especially grandparents, and the ways they cope with taking care of their grandchildren, as well as the ways parents deal with separation and their understanding of migration as a sacrifice for a better life. The chapter concludes by highlighting how migration and mass tourism are uncovering and creating language ecologies in the region that affect not just the languages but the overall education system in the region. In particular, I emphasize that regional education has not taken into account the fact that Indigenous preschools placed exclusively in rural communities fall short of the ideal of serving all Indigenous children.

After placing Huaytsik in the regional linguistic dynamics, I focus on the schooling and linguistic processes in the town and specifically in Palal-na. In Chapter 5 “Indigenous Early Childhood Education: A Market of Opportunities” I describe how
Elisa, the only teacher, janitor, cook and administrator at Palal-na, as well as the parents, engage with the schooling market in Huaytsik. First, I explore how parents do not consider Maya, the Indigenous language spoken in the region, as a factor in their decision of registering their children at Palal-na but take into account factors such as having a caring teacher, and more importantly, the money saved by registering their children in this Indigenous school. On the second part of the chapter I explore the strategies that Elisa uses for the school to keep its doors open, such as registering the school in the ‘Programa Escuelas de Tiempo Completo’⁶. These programs have placed an important bureaucratic burden on her, which has forced her to spend more time filling out paperwork than on her teaching responsibilities. I conclude by reflecting on how Indigenous multigrade schools do not just depend on an innovative curriculum but on concrete aspects that respond to larger economic and political factors such as the need for more teachers and less administrative burden.

In Chapter 6: “The Possibilities of Maya: Presences and Absences” I focus on the ways Maya instruction was present in Palal-na, but at the same time how bureaucratic processes conspired to make it absent. I start by describing the way Elisa recognized the importance of Maya in her students’ education, but in her own impetus for improving her teaching, she became a doubter of her own abilities as a Maya teacher. Even with these doubts, she still managed to design Maya learning experiences using different types of materials. Later in the chapter I describe the only five learning experiences where Maya was purposefully taught in the school. I conclude by reflecting on the ways ideological and implementational educational spaces are interrupted and purposefully made absent by

⁶ Full-time school program.
bureaucratic processes and rituals, but also how institutions such as Indigenous schools are already a step towards the reclamation of Indigenous languages.

In the last data Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers” I first set the context for what I conceptualize as children as language policy-doers who, at various moments, consciously or unconsciously, force their teachers, parents and grandparents to shift from speaking Yucatec Maya to Spanish contributing to the diminished use of Maya in the region. In the second section, I describe who is a Maya speaker from the children’s perspective, as well as how and when Maya was spoken or censored in the school with no adult prompts. Afterwards, in the third section I show examples of the interviews I conducted with children in order to understand through their own words and images who is a Maya speaker and where Maya is heard and spoken according to them. The chapter tries to illuminate the ways children engage with the language regimes in their town, as well as how they co-participate and co-create language activities that are not determined by institutions, but by social and participative engagements.

Finally, I conclude in Chapter 8 with a discussion of the implications of this study as well as some of the contributions that this dissertation makes to the fields of early childhood education, language policy and planning, and overall comparative education. Firstly, I describe how this dissertation informs the literature on ECE multigrade schooling. In the second section, on LPP, I briefly summarize the study's empirical contribution to the concept of ideological and implementational spaces as well as my theoretical contribution of language policy doing; whilst in the third section I share my methodological contributions to the field of ethnography of LPP and beyond, and in
particular, methods I developed to elicit the words of children at a very young age.

Finally, in this chapter I also explain some of my future research directions and hopes for the continuation of this research.

**Significance**

In 1995, Fishman drew a research agenda on themes that are common concerns now, such as mobility and language shift (e.g., King & Haboud, 2011), the limited role of schools in language maintenance and reversing language shift (e.g., Hornberger, 2008), as well as the erasure of languages because of conflict (e.g., Ioratim-Uba, 2009). He invited scholars who work with and for “small languages” to not just intellectualize these phenomena, but to actually look for solutions that could create small actions that strengthen these languages. In my research methods chapter, I explain some of the actions that I, in collaboration with other researchers and people in Huaytsik, have started to take as we have noticed the limited role of schools in language reclamation.

Following Fishman’s agenda, this dissertation is also meaningful as it addresses aspects of mobility and language change provoked by mass tourism and regional migration, as well as the role of schools which are purposefully designed to revitalize the languages, a role that too often comes to naught. Moreover, this dissertation is significant as it interrogates perspectives that frame children, parents, and teachers as the agents who must bear the burden of ending social inequality and fixing the economy for generations to come. In this way, it sheds light on the ideological pressure placed upon children, teachers, and families, while investigating schooling practices that respond to and negotiate national and global ideologies in early childhood and language education.
This study takes place at a time when English is being considered the solution to injustice and inequality in a country where civil rights are regularly infringed upon, where students forcefully disappear, and where 22% of preschool-age children, most of whom are Indigenous, do not attend school (UNICEF, 2016). Moreover, the ECE initiatives that promise employment, progress, justice, and inclusion, inadvertently discourage the use of Indigenous languages and impact families’ lifestyles. This policy pressure is further exacerbated when the design, implementation, and evaluation of ECE programs for Indigenous populations are based on mainstream urban preschool education, with limited evidence from actual Indigenous experiences (Niles & Byers, 2008). Given this context, it is ever more necessary for ethnographically based qualitative research to show how policies are implemented on the ground in early childhood settings. Only then can we design programs and policies that consider the complexities of ECE in Indigenous contexts, and thereby meaningfully contribute to the educational experiences of children, and not default on the promises made to teachers, children, and their parents.
CHAPTER 2: Conceptual framework

My research primarily addresses concerns of three fields of study: (1) language policy and planning, (2) language shift and reclamation and (3) early childhood education. I understand the field of language policy and planning from an ecological perspective, where languages transform and interact with each other in dynamic, diverse and non-bounded societal, political, historical, economic, cultural and educational dimensions (Haugen, 1972; Hult, 2010; Mühlhäusler, 2000). To address these dynamic policy dimensions in Huaytsik, I first frame my work in the ethnography of language policy and planning (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007, 2011), with a particular emphasis on perspectives on language policy and planning from the bottom-up, as well as the concept of *implementational and ideological spaces* for language reclamation—the second section of my conceptual framework. In this second section, I consider the relevance of language reclamation and its impact in multilingual education in regions where language change is happening. Finally, given that my dissertation is situated in early childhood education (ECE) ecologies, in the third section I review how quality in ECE has been understood, as well as how my dissertation relates to the research that envisions early childhood as a contested process embedded in a sociolinguistic, cultural and sociopolitical milieu (e.g., Holloway, 2013; Tobin, 2005; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1991). It is in this final section that I also review how agency is related to ECE and I introduce the concept that I coin as *language policy-doers*, further addressed in the Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers”.
The Ethnography of Language Policy and Planning

Since the publication of Hymes’s (1962) ethnography of speaking, later coined as the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1964), ethnography has played a vital role in the field of sociolinguistics and language policy and planning (LPP). The ethnography of speaking focuses on the situations, patterns and functions of speaking as an activity in its own right (Hymes, 1962). This discipline placed an importance not just in the mere linguistic structures, but in the speech events and the functions of speech in those events. Hymes emphasized the importance of understanding speech as a patterned, contextual and empirically researchable phenomenon in linguistic situations, where settings, participants and codes intermingle in complex ways.

It is to this rich tradition in the use of ethnography as a discipline to see patterns invisible to the documents and the linguistic structures by themselves, that the ethnography of language policy and planning owes some of its main characteristics. Although text and historical analyses can offer an entrance to some ideological portraits of when and how language policies are created, it is through ethnographic data and understanding that one can visualize the policies in their implementation (Menken & Garcia, 2010). As such the aim of the ethnography of language policy would be to “re-conceptualize language policy as an interconnected process generated and negotiated through policy texts and discourse—as opposed to an authoritative product whose implementation is unvaried” (Johnson, 2009, p.156).

Hornberger & Johnson (2007) have referred to the ethnography of LPP as a framework that can help us understand what Ricento and Hornberger (1996) defined as the LPP onion. Ricento and Hornberger (1996) suggest that LPP is a multilayered
construct, where different agents, levels, and processes of LPP interweave and interact in complex and many times unorganized and unpredictable ways. They depict these multilayered interactions with the metaphor of an onion, which tries to capture how LPP is not solely a top-down process, but one where there are negotiations at different levels amongst different agents. The relevance of their metaphor is that it questions the rational and positivistic models that understand language planning as a process to solve language problems from a top-down perspective (e.g., Ferguson, 1968; Nahir, 1984; Neustupny, 1974), while highlighting the agentive role of local actors and how their practices impact language policies on the macro level (Huebner & Davis, 1999).

Understanding LPP as a multilevel process, the ethnography of LPP tries to address the gap from policy to practice in terms of scalar and layered interactions by exploring the connections between processes of education, language use and agency as they relate to broader economic, political, and sociological formations (Hornberger et al., 2018). By bringing local actors (e.g., teachers, education supervisors, community members, families) to the center of policy making, the LPP field reflects and recognizes the complexity of the appropriation, negotiation, contestation, resistance, challenge or responsiveness to top-down texts and other societal or political dimensions (Johnson, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Lane, 2015). Ethnography, then, becomes a counter hegemonic exercise where thick description of the context informs policy making and agency is at the center of the description (Hornberger, 2009).

According to McCarty (2011, 2015; see also Wolcott, 1999), adopting an ethnographic paradigm to explore LPP processes is a threefold enterprise: a way of seeing, where we see LPP as a human and cultural process; a way of looking, where we
address LPP processes in a systematic ethnographic way and look for the intricacies of humanness and culture; and a way of being, where ethnography is a way of doing social justice, of bringing humanness to LPP and being anti-hegemonic in our work. In this way, the relevance of the ethnography of LPP also relies on its action research component as it allows for a delineation of starting points for LPP model-building from the bottom-up (Hornberger, 1997; Hornberger & Johnson, 2011), as the development of language policies is traced from top-down, bottom-up and side by side perspectives (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2009; Menken & García, 2010; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006), and from the travelling of policy texts to the exercise of policies in communities and classrooms (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

**Language Policy and Planning from the Bottom-up**

Ethnographic approaches to LPP from a bottom-up perspective have been taking more relevance as a way to understand how top-down language and educational policies have played a significant and many times positive role in the LPP of and for minoritized languages, while concurrently they remain fraught with failure in the long run (Hornberger et al., 2018). In this context, ethnographic efforts have allowed scholars and educators to explain experiences at the community level to establish language programs and intentionally, and also unintentionally, open dialogic spaces that influence top-down policies and delineate success for these policies and programs (Hornberger, 1997). For example, the description of bottom-up efforts has helped educators to understand how language revitalization programs that address one type of literacy are more challenging to implement until the communities’ literacies are honored, or there is a common
understanding of what it means to be and become literate in specific communities (Street, 1997).

Furthermore, bottom-up LPP efforts provide evidence at the status, corpus and acquisition planning level of languages (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011). At the status level, LPP helps to combat the low prestige that minoritized languages have by allocating new functions to the languages, many times never addressed in top-down policies. For instance, when communities oversee the planning of a language, its functions may get expanded not just at the community center or school level, but to larger educational levels or even influence the creation of official bilingual institutions (e.g., Dick & McCarty, 1997; King, 1997). At the corpus and acquisition level, bottom-up experiences have shown how the creation of materials and orthographies by the community leads to the authentic use of the language and its eventual revitalization (e.g., Bernard, 1997; Salinas Pedraza, 1997). Besides this, the ethnography of LPP, has allowed practitioners and activists to see how research can become an engaged exercise with the community, opening egalitarian dialogue that promotes social justice, sound educational practice and consciousness about topics such as multilingualism, language maintenance and language change (e.g., De Korne, 2017).

These are not strange scenarios in urban non-Indigenous communities. In Menken’s and Garcia’s (2010) edited volume on educators as policy makers, authors describe how LPP from the bottom-up covers complex actions such as the appropriation, negotiation, interpretation, contestation, resistance, challenge, responsiveness and reconstruction of LPP by urban teachers. The use of all these terminologies expands the complexity of LPP by not sticking with the top-down vis à vis bottom-up continuum, but
texturize it by including a side-by-side LPP perspective, where it is not just a single policy that the teachers are adapting, modifying and implementing, but different policies acting at the same time, all permeating and affecting different levels of policy-making (see also Anzures Tapia, 2017).

The implications of understanding LPP from a bottom-up perspective are also explored in the special issue edited by Hornberger and McCarty (2012) on globalization from the bottom-up. In the issue, globalization is explored as a transnational process that is not just about macro political and economic aspects, but as an everyday process reflected in the human agency, negotiation, production, and transformation of Indigenous language education in different contexts around the world. For instance, in the issue, Joseph and Ramani (2012) challenge the concept of glocalization, as a process that brings together the global into the local. They “restate the effects of globalization on the Indigenous languages of the world...they further problematize the relation between English and Indigenous languages…challenge the new globalism….and show how the local can redefine those aspects of the global that actually promote language equity” (Joseph & Ramani, 2012, p.23). By allowing students to complete tasks in English and Sesotho sa Leboa they created an option for students, what they called the “politics of the possible” (idem, p.32), to choose how to exercise LPP in the present context, and not as a distant dream.

Another example is Lane’s (2015) study on the role of language standardization of Kven in Norway, where she reminds us to see language planning processes not just at the macro level, but to also center in the users of the language. Lane highlights how corpus planning is not ideologically sanitized and how LPP affects the social world of its users
and non-users. Through her work, it is evident how language standardization from a top-down perspective undermines the actual users of the language, who eventually are left to accept the standards defined for them, reject them, resist them or ignore them. Her study is an example of how bottom-up LPP is enacted at the local level, where decisions are many times made for communities, but the users of the language are actually the ones deciding the destiny of it.

**Ideological and Implementational Spaces**

By using a detailed ethnographic process, one can see how bottom-up LPP processes work and create *ideological and implementational spaces* even when these have been closed at top-down policy levels (Hornberger, 2005, 2002; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). *Ideological spaces* refer to the ways through which policies are understood and where discourses about their potentials and possibilities are observed (Agamben, 1998; de Sousa Santos, 2009; Flores & Schissel, 2014), while *implementational spaces* are the purposeful enactments of those discourses. These implementational spaces could be further understood as language policy windows of opportunity (Kingdon, 1984), or what Hornberger (1998) referred to also as political openings. In other words, implementational spaces arise when political will and discourses of possibility are filled with practice. For instance, while Elisa, the teacher that I describe in this dissertation, might recognize the importance of teaching Maya (an ideological space), the purposeful implementation of its instruction is shut down by excessive paperwork requirements, pushing her to fulfil other roles in the school, dedicate her time to other subjects, or even be absent for days, literally and metaphorically closing a space for learning.
Moreover, these ideological and implementational spaces not only interact, overlap, and merge, but also mutually transform and create new policy spaces. Similar to what Gutierrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda (1999) have described as Third Spaces at the classroom policy level, ideological and implementational spaces also take into account the relationship of social networks and interactions with materials and discourses in the classrooms as diverse, hybrid and sometimes conflicting spaces that reinforce, strengthen, combine or even block policies as they get implemented. Third Spaces have helped us to understand contexts of migration, such as the ways parents create hybrid, and many times contradictory upbringing strategies in fluid and contested transnational contexts (Anzures Tapia et al. 2016). Ideological and implementational spaces have also been used to understand transnational processes and contexts where migration is prevalent. Such is the case of Gallo and Hornberger (2017) who describe the need of opening transnational ideological and implementational educational spaces for families under the context of mass deportations or Hornberger and Link (2012) who argue for policy makers to open spaces—ideological, practical and physical— that incorporate and take advantage of the multilingual, transnational and transliterate repertoires that many students bring to U.S. classrooms every day.

Nonetheless, an important difference between Third Spaces and the concept of ideological and implementational spaces is the role that conflict plays in their creation. In Third Spaces conflicts are understood as catalysts for the creation of these spaces. Although tensions are recognized by the implementational and ideological spaces concept, conflict is not quintessential for the creation or closure of ideological or implementational spaces, as agreements and alignments could happen between discourses
and their implementation (an ideal situation), depending more on the role of agents, and the economic, political, social and linguistic circumstances surrounding them. Thus, ideological and implementational spaces are ecological policy spaces (Hornberger, 2002), in which policies evolve and expand in systematic ways as they interact within sociopolitical, linguistic, cultural, and economic environments. Furthermore, whether they are understood as heuristics for identifying the places, discourses or people that could open spaces that promote policies that benefit the most minoritized, or as a concept that recognizes bottom-up efforts for opening, dissolving or mutually transforming practices and ideologies in just ways, it is the advocacy posture ideological and implementational spaces stand and aspire for that surfaces as one of their most salient characteristics and a clear difference with the concept of Third Spaces (e.g., Gallo & Hornberger, 2017; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Kvietok Dueñas, 2015).

Ideological and implementational spaces are fluid; many times, just opened or sustained for short periods of time creating new spaces that initiate policy spillovers (Johnson, 2010). For Kingdon (1984), the spillover effects in policy are the chain of events that allow a political window to open for a similar issue even when this has been closed. In this dissertation, I show how Indigenous modality schools– a policy that promotes learning through Indigenous languages– do not work in their strict sense, however, this type of schools are milestones for the existence of physical spaces, such as “concrete” buildings, for the future implementation of these policies. Thus, even if the ideological aspects (e.g., the importance of teaching and learning in an Indigenous language) has not translated to its implementation, the defense and strengthening of these educational milestones needs to keep on happening. Having schools that are adopting a
so-called Indigenous modality is already a policy spillover, a new space full of potentials and possibilities.

Finally, in this dissertation I also complement the concept of ideological and implementational spaces by making visible how these spaces are many times present—full of potentials and possibilities—but are purposefully maintained for not being filled, as if they were sustained at their ideological and implementational levels as “policy fictions” (Brodkin, 2008, p.325), or absences that promote marginalization (de Sousa Santos, 2009). For instance, Hornberger (2008) has already reminded us how schools are not the best equipped ideological and implementational spaces to save Indigenous languages, although their potentiality is incommensurable. However, this scenario has to make us wonder why and how schools keep reproducing the silence of many groups and wasting the richness of their cultures and perspectives by not adapting the spaces, in this case Indigenous schools, for the purposes they have been designed for (de Sousa Santos, 2009). With this dissertation I try to describe and provide some answers.

**Language Shift as Social Change**

Indigenous languages are under threat of disappearance and displacement (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Globalization trends, as well as voluntary and forced migration, comprised mainly by Indigenous people, push men and women to arrive to spaces where their Indigenous languages are rarely spoken, placing their languages many times into oblivion (Hinton & Hale, 2001). Moreover, societal structures force Indigenous, immigrant and refugee peoples to feel that their languages are not valued, belittling their own personas (e.g., Mortimer, 2013). For example, research on language shift has pointed out that when a language is lost between family generations, interpersonal and familial
ties are weakened, and school success is undermined (Romero-Little et al., 2007). Thus, language shift does not “just happen” (King, 2001, p.22), but is a process where power dynamics and language ideologies play a crucial role (Engman & King, 2017).

As Gal (1979) has already pointed out, language shift needs to be understood with a broader framework that relates to the ways social change affects the communicative economy in a community; the prestige and redistribution of functions allocated to certain languages; and the beliefs and motivations for people to choose to speak, write or read in a language and not others (Schiffman, 1996). Moreover, language shift does not need to be perceived as a process that happens to the community as a static and homogenous entity, but to individuals that represent communities of practice and represent language contacts that need to be explored to understand language choice, displacement and change (Pratt, 1991; Lave & Wegner, 1991). Hence, language shift does not follow a linear synchronicity, but moves in divergent time scales, frequently pushing minoritized languages and its speakers to displacing positions.

Critical in how language shift has been conceptualized, Kulick (1992) does not neglect the impact and influence of macro-economic, political and social forces such as globalization, transnationalism, tourism or industrialization, but concurring with Gal (1979), extends language shift to an agential choice influenced by the ways speakers perceive each other regarding the languages with the ones they live and make life with. Hence, language shift is not an after and before phenomenon (Fishman, 1991), something that can be measured and fixed (Moore, 2017), but most of the times are conscious and unconscious efforts of belonging and membership (Hornberger, 2014; Messing, 2009; Nicholas, 2011).
In this context, Fishman (1991, 1995) highlighted the importance of caring environments as last resorts for language strengthening and eventual reversal of cultural and language shift. In his understanding, language shift is not an innocent linguistic progression, but a profound cultural change, which is cumulative, persistent and happens in a multiplicity of dimensions and spheres. Hornberger (2008) and Romaine (2007) have also reminded us about the multidimensionality of language shift and have questioned, without detracting from their significance, the role of schools, which have been conceived as the main locales for the reclamation of Indigenous languages.

**Language Reclamation: A Blanket Term**

Framing language revitalization and language maintenance as terms that address processes of language change such as language shift, revival and reversal, Hornberger and King (1997) characterize language maintenance and revitalization as deliberate collective efforts to increase the use of languages that are in language shift positions. King (2001) further texturizes what language revitalization and language shift mean by defining the former as a language planning effort that encompasses the design of linguistic codes, the allocation of functions to those codes, as well as the promotion of their usage (Cooper, 1989); and the latter as a process that implies positive change, where languages instead of dying or becoming obsolete, shift or move forward to fulfil new functions and spaces.

King (2001) also differentiates language revitalization from reversing language shift as it does not solely focus on the reestablishment of intergenerational mother tongue (Fishman, 1991), an effort that has been critiqued as it places the burden to the communities for the language survival (Romaine, 2006), but also focuses on the
promotion of new uses of the language in new domains (e.g., Cru, 2015a; Hermes, Cash
Cash, Donaghy, Erb & Penfield, 2016). Echoing what many scholars have suggested
(e.g., Amery, 2016; Hornberger, 1997), Hinton (2001) conceives language revitalization
as an ideal community effort. Nonetheless, she considers that for any revitalization
program to work, no more than one committed person is needed, since s/he can start to
document the language, learn it and develop materials. For Amery (2001), institutions,
documents and policies are all important mechanisms that can help for the revitalization
of languages, however it is the local-led and insiders’ efforts that can make the language
shift of a community to be reversed or take new courses.

McCarty and Nicholas (2014) use language reclamation as a blanket term that
includes the processes of language revival, language regeneration and language
revitalization indicating that all these are interested in the “revival of a language no
longer spoken, the revitalization of a language already in use, and the reversal of
language shift where the social supports for intergenerational mother tongue transmission
have been weakened” (p.106, emphasis in original). Nonetheless, the term, and
specifically some of its practices have been criticized by linking reclamation to the idea
of embracing “traditional”, “native” and “cultural” activities and practices that ground the
languages in the past rather than in the present.

For Leonard (2012), these essentialist views do not reflect the multiplicity of voices
in a community and perpetuate preservation ideologies where Indigenous languages are
conceived as objects of the past that could not have a usage in the future. Thus, he
proposes to reframe reclamation programs and efforts as ways where people can see their
language practices as traditional ones but can also be open to establish opportunities for
participants to claim new practices and to influence existing ones. Thus, language reclamation as a language planning effort, and specifically as a status planning one (Cobarrubias, 1983), is intimately related to the deliberate allocation of functions to an Indigenous or minoritized language amongst the community and the society at large (Amery, 2016). In this way, language reclamation follows the spirit of bringing back minoritized languages that have been reduced in their usage and moving them forward in a globalized era where languages are in constant contact with each other (Hornberger & King, 1997; Hornberger & McCarty, 2012).

**Early Childhood Education**

“Early childhood education”, “early childhood care”, “early childhood care and development”, “early childhood services”, amongst other terms have been recently clustered in the term “early childhood development” which comprises the education of children 0-8 years old (Rebello Britto, Engle, & Super, 2013a). Each one of these framings defines different and at the same time interrelated problems as attention to the youngest population is an inter sectorial effort that includes health, social welfare, education and protection (Shawar & Shiffman, 2017). In this dissertation, I purposefully use “early childhood education” since “early childhood development” is generally understood in the Mexican context as “educación de la primera infancia” (0-3 years old) and “educación inicial” (0-6 years old) as preschool education. No matter the term we use to refer to this developmental and schooling age, early childhood education (ECE) has been positioned as an educational level in need of urgent investment because, from an

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7 Education of the first childhood
8 Nursery education
economic perspective, the long-term benefits in health, employment, and poverty and crime reduction, outweigh the initial cost (Naudeau et al., 2010; UN, 2016). From this instrumental standpoint, ECE is considered an investment in human capital that will prevent the reproduction of systemic inequalities children were born into (Heckman, 2008; Irwin, Siddiqi, & Hertzman, 2007). Indeed, ECE can serve economic purposes, but it is also a forum for civil society in which social, political, and cultural ideologies are constructed and perpetuated through policies and pedagogies (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Mac Naughton, 2005).

**Quality in Early Childhood Education**

Efforts to offer high-quality ECE have noticeably increased in recent decades (UN, 2015; Yoshikawa, Wuermli, Raikes, Kim & Kabay, 2018). Governments across the globe have rallied for quality ECE strategies and programs, many times without a clear definition of what quality education means or how it is delivered (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Raikes et al., 2017). Moreover, when quality in ECE is debated, it often follows a human capital narrative, in which ECE adheres to the values of accountability and developmentally appropriate practices, rather than promoting learning experiences from a development-in-context perspective (Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina & García Coll, 2017; Yoshikawa & Nieto, 2013).

In most cases quality in ECE is reduced to other vague terminologies such as “education assessments” and “effectiveness factors”, but without operationalizing them (Rebello Britto, Engle & Super, 2013b, p.531; see also Sun, Rao & Pearson, 2015). When language is taken into account in the debates, it is often used as a proxy for school readiness in the dominant language, erasing discussions on multilingual education (Ball,
2011). Thus, this global interest in quality ECE as a societal equalizer, has inadvertently led language change to occur more rapidly within Indigenous and immigrant communities (Fillmore, 1991; Penn, 2011), evidencing how ECE policies are often at odds with the linguistic and cultural practices of Indigenous families and schools (Harkness et al., 2013).

Quality in ECE has also been described or defined by three major criteria: structure, process and outcome. Structural quality refers to aspects such as group size, professional development and curriculum content (Zaslow, Crosby & Smith, 2013). Process quality refers to what happens in the institutions in terms of the behaviors of children and the interactions between children and adults (Wolf, 2018), while outcome is defined by the results of ECE, from academic and developmental results, to the success of inserting children into future schools and eventually transforming them into the economic force (Dahlberg et al., 1999).

My dissertation frames quality education in the early years as an intersectional process, moving away from an emphasis exclusively on standards, economic outcomes, and best practices for cognitive development, and towards a focus on context and language as reflections of sociopolitical circumstances experienced by children and families (Callaghan, Andenæs & Macleod, 2015; Cannella, 1997; Pérez & Saavedra, 2017; Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). In this way, I consider quality in ECE as a cultural and contextual construct (Dahlberg et al., 1999), where language, urban planning, water facilities, nutrition, pedagogical materials, teachers’ professional development, the presence of janitors in schools, children per teacher ratio, tourism, migration, amongst any other topic that can come to our minds that affects childhood is included, always
relating it to sociopolitical, economic and affective circumstances. Education, as a
discipline, has already invested important intellectual and monetary resources on each
one of the areas that I mentioned above as examples that impact ECE; but the intersection
of these as they foster a better experience for childhood and for children, is what my
dissertation tries to disentangle by “(re)centering quality in ECE” as Souto-Manning and

For them, (re) centering quality in ECE means to recognize the experiences that
affect childhood, especially in minoritized contexts, and to understand that ECE is
“socially, historically, culturally and racially constructed…and not a single ‘best practice’
defining quality” (Souto-Manning and Rabadi-Raol, p. 204). Following the
conceptualizations of policy fictions (Brodkin, 2008) and the sociology of absences (de
Sousa Santos, 2009), where marginalization is actively produced (Dalea & Robertson,
2004), I recognize how ECE has been historically identified as a field that acknowledges
the practices of a society, the cultures of certain people and emphasizes the histories of
some as they are taught at schools (Smith, 1999; Willinsky, 1998). In this way, by (re)
centering quality in ECE, Souto-Manning and Rabadi-Raol call the ECE field to actively
recognize how:

Children’s development is social, cultural, and historical...[where]...families, and
communities have rich cultural and linguistic assets...‘at promise’...Thus, quality
early education is predicated on the commitment to recognizing, developing, and
sustaining sophisticated cultural and linguistic repertoires....This principle requires
recognizing that social categories, power structures, and relations privilege specific
racial, cultural, and linguistic identities....Quality early childhood education [then]
must center the voices, values, practices, and experiences of the global majority.
(Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018, pp. 217-218)
Nonetheless, Dahlberg and colleagues (1999) remind us that quality, overall, is accompanied by epistemologies and processes that understand education as an economic process, and as such, “the concept and the language of quality cannot accommodate issues such as diversity and multiple perspectives, contextual specificity and subjectivity” (Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 6). In the same spirit, Tobin argues that “quality in early childhood education should be a process rather than a product” (Tobin, 2005, p. 434), inviting us to drop the word “standards” as a good start to stop imposing loci of authority and knowledge of which ECE counts as quality ECE. Thus, even though quality could be centered, de-centered or (re) centered in ECE, it might be important to question to which centers, as loci of authority, these intersectional processes respond. In response to this query, and as approximate answers of how I understand and frame quality in ECE, I align with Anyon (2005) and Flores and Chaparro (2018) who invite us to recognize educational policy—and I would extend this to quality in education-- not just as a classroom practice, but also as the practices in the spaces where larger social inequities, and economic and political conditions affect the education of children, the experience of childhood and the sustainability of schooling quality. In my dissertation, I understand aspects of tourism, migration, bureaucracy and of course language practices as some of the aspects that affect children in the ways they perform in preschools, and how they experience a quality education overall.

**Agency in Early Childhood Education**

Generally speaking, ECE has positioned children as **untouched living beings** that go to school **to perceive and understand the world** or as future labor that needs to be educated (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Makihara, 2005; Oswell, 2013). Agency, on the other
hand, has been related to the capacity of people to move intentionally through structures, where people interplay with specific situations in particular language regimes (Blommaert, Collins & Slemrouck, 2005). Moss proposes to change these mindsets and see agency in ECE as “forums where children and adults meet together and which have many potential possibilities” (Moss, 2002, p. 437). Moss’s conceptualization is more than a policy proposal. It is a provocation to start to think about the ways children confront, dissent, question, discover and get amazed as they learn alongside adults and other children, as agents allowed to take risks and lead their own ways of learning (Harkness et al., 2013; Hirschfield, 2002).

Adopting children’s spaces as a conceptualization of ECE can help us understand children as agents in their own learning—a well-accepted truth, but not necessarily practiced as the “new paradigm of the sociology of childhood” has described (Prout & James, 2015). From this paradigm, childhood has been portrayed as a social construction that is always contextualized in relation to time, place and culture, intersecting with gender and race, and affected by socioeconomic and political conditions. Thus, childhood is not a universal concept, but one where children are social actors who determine their own lives and contribute to learning as agents in the construction of their own knowledge (Pence, 2013), and who are resilient and resist structures of power, including those that directly refer to the language adults want to maintain (Hirschfeld, 2002; Prout & James, 2015).

Agency has also been a buzz word in international development policy arenas. In some cases it has been transformed into an indicator that could be measured in order to design and invest in services and resources to cultivate it, promote it, and expand it
(Alkire, 2007). All these commendable efforts have been done in order to *empower* adult-centered societies in the ways they can act upon their own lives, leaving, again, their children as dependent living beings. Anthropological research has also drawn attention to the role of agency in societies, especially the role of youth. Bucholtz (2002), in her review of the anthropology of youth, highlights how research has approached agency from the perspective of adulthood, downplaying the role of youth in the creation of culture and further underrepresenting younger children on these discussions (see also Hirschfeld, 2002).

Children have been a large focus of the language socialization field, both how they are socialized to use language and how they are socialized through language (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1994). Nonetheless, children are most of the time represented as the objects of language socialization rather than its agents, or inadvertently framed in a novice and expert framework, even though they play an important role in the socialization of adults and the learning and changes in languages (Berman, 2019; Luykx, 2005; Makihara, 2005). Of course, the role adults play in the processes of language learning, socialization and in the creation of spaces where children learn is unquestionable, however, the focus on the adults as the only ones responsible for these spaces is still a major trend in research and practice (Bucholtz, 2002; Hirschfeld, 2002; Sobo, 2015).

For Berman (2019) agency is aged, and age is socially constructed in terms of activities you can do or not. In other words, it is not because you are old that you have more agency. Actually, elders in many situations have many times fewer opportunities to exercise their autonomy and independence, and in many other cases people are
considered “mature” enough to exercise their agency just because the law dictates as such, or determined cultures allow it (e.g., child gangs). Berman (idem, p. 108) defines “‘aged agency’ as modes of acting particular to children as children and adults as adults”. Age thus, is socially constructed and, as such it should not be surprising that children at young ages could become agents of their own languages in conscious ways in their own contexts and with their own means. In this way, the agency in which children participate is not the same as the agency adults have, or participate in, and should not be defined in such terms, as they are different actors in the construction of the society (Hirschfield, 2002). Agency then is not a universal concept, but one that is aged, cultured and unique to each context, and specifically, agency for children will depend in the end on when children are considered children and adults, adults–it is a matter of age and positionality (Alanen, 2019).

In this dissertation, besides considering agency as aged, positionality-dependent and contextualized, I see agency as a co-dependent action that does not just rely on humans, in this case children, but also on non-human arrangements such as school materials, playgrounds, hammocks and any other structure and infrastructure that determines and potentializes children’s agency. Agency does not start nor finish in individuals nor is possessed by them whether they are adults or children, but what is important to notice is how there are arrangements of agency (Oswell, 2013). Thus, when I talk about children’s agency, is important to understand how this is collective, relational and ecologically defined and determined constantly by the particular agents and structures in a context. In this way I follow Oswell’s (2013, p. 272) reminder that rather than asking if children are agents or not; or if they have agency or not, we should be
pondering the question of “When and where was their agency”? To which, inspired by Cooper (1989) on how language is a factor for social change, I would add *how* was agency promoted and *by whom* was it promoted and also recognized—an action that leads to my proposal of *language policy-doers*.

**Language Policy-doers**

Rogoff, Callanan, Gutiérrez, and Erickson (2016) have described how children create spaces where *underground learning* happens in parallel scripts to the ones that are formally acknowledged by the teachers in schools, or caregivers at their homes (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). Moreover, Paradise and Rogoff (2009) explain how children learn many times following their own interest, purposefully contradicting their caregivers and teachers. Centered in the children’s language practices, in the Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers” I show how children’s language practices are dynamic, and thus children cannot be considered passive linguistic recipients but engaged actors who impact their own and their caregivers’ language and educational practices. In this way I follow recent developments in the Language Policy and Planning field, where children are considered as language socializing agents (Luykx, 2005; Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Schwartz & Gorbatt, 2016; ), where language decisions are not made in decontextualized manners, but are purposefully imagined by children who contribute to the way families plan and act upon their languages (Fogle & King, 2013; Gallo and Hornberger, 2017).

Identifying when a preschooler, either intentionally or as part of an unintended part of their development, acts or reacts to structures such as the family, school or a language is a methodological challenge (Lancy, 2012; Oswell, 2013; Sobo, 2015).
Although I recognize that children are language agents, I prefer to use the term *language policy-doers* to avoid this methodological challenge of identifying when a preschooler intentionally resists or promotes certain language uses. I also use *language policy-doers* instead of *language policy makers*, a term by which educators and community members (Menken & García, 2010; Paciotto & Delany-Barmann, 2011), youth (McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol & Zepeda, 2009), families (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008; King & Haboud, 2011), and even institutions such as the mass media (Blommaert et al., 2009; Tollefson, 2015) have been identified. The act of *making* generally implies an intentionality of producing or creating something, while the act of *doing* implies a general action regardless of the intentionality behind it (“Making” and “doing” in Oxford English Dictionary, 2020; also, Hirschfield, 2002 on the *doing* of culture by children). Thus, since children as language agents, in its general sense, would suggest that children have some type of intentionality as they act upon language policies and children as language policy makers suggests that they design or produce policies premeditatedly, I prefer to use a more open-ended yet precise term to describe the language activities policies that children do through their activities.

In the end, this dissertation also addresses concepts such as school choice, bureaucracy, tourism, migration and policy streams which demonstrate how a *committed ethnography of LPP that focuses on the reclamation of languages in ECE settings where children act upon their own learnings and doings* is contextual, multidimensional, interpretative and could include different conceptual framings.
CHAPTER 3: Research Methods and Settings

Linguistic rights throughout the world and Latin America have resulted in official language policies that state the right to be formally educated in and with one’s own mother tongue. Mexico has officially recognized the importance of Indigenous languages since the 1990s, but it was not until 2001 that policies to deliver education from an intercultural and bilingual stance started to emerge (Schmelkes, 2013). Despite the goodwill of these policies, they have mainly remained at the tertiary educational level (Hamel, 2016), having little impact at the secondary, primary and preschool levels. Research that considers bilingual Indigenous education and its pedagogical appropriateness in preschools is still scarce in Mexico and all over the world (Pence, 2013). The present research is designed to address this shortage.

Research Questions

Unlike the majority of studies that frame language policy, early childhood education (ECE), and children as a trifecta that will disrupt the transmission of poverty and inequality (e.g., Vegas & Santibáñez, 2010), my 21-month multiyear ethnographic study seeks to understand how schools and families embody and interpret these policies. Pursuant to this goal, I address three research questions:

1. How do parents, teachers, and other stakeholders describe the role of early childhood education in this Indigenous community? This question documents not only the discourses, but also the moments and places in which ECE stakeholders share the challenges and aspirations of early childhood; their hopes for schools; parenting strategies; language socialization; and perspectives on the function of non-formal ECE. As ECE has become a global research field, this question seeks to amplify the voices that have been least heard
2. **How do national and global discourses about early childhood and language education intersect with and influence schooling practices, in particular, in Indigenous language education in this community?** This question examines the uptake of national and global ECE and language policy agendas at the local level in order to understand how high-level policies unintentionally contribute to the diminished use of Indigenous languages and exacerbate inequality. Because these policies impact the equitable distribution of educational resources and the resulting performance of high-need student populations, examining how global agendas are reinterpreted at the local level is crucial. This research question is addressed in the Chapter “Indigenous Early Childhood Education: A Market of Opportunities” as I describe the uptake of the Full-time school program—a school based management program (e.g., Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio & Fasih, 2009), as well as in the Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers”, where I describe the ways in which students are positioned, or not, as Maya speakers.

3. **How are socio-economic processes, such as migration and mass tourism, transforming the conditions under which parents in this Indigenous community make educational choices?** Most parents in Huaytsik work in the Riviera Maya (e.g., Cancun, Cozumel), a three-hour trip each way. Well-maintained highways allow grand resorts to pick up workers in town before dawn and return them each night. Economic remittances, housing styles, and ideologies about language, such as the importance of English, are just a few of the forms of capital transported in these daily six-hour trips. Concerns related to parenting,
such as child abandonment and schooling, leave parents emotionally as well as physically taxed. Thus, this question examines how parental decisions are shaped not only by beliefs about what ECE should be, but also by the societal, cultural, and economic factors that impact their day-to-day lives. This question is specifically addressed in the Chapter “Tourism: A double-edged sword in Indigenous Early Childhood Education”.

A road map of the data collection and the data analyses for my dissertation are presented in the following sections. Before that, I will explain how I arrived to Huaytsik, as well as the ways in which I got interested in the topic of language revitalization and early childhood education and eventually had access to Palal-na, the preschool where I mainly conducted my research.

**Huaytsik: Where it is Talked About and Respected**

Huaytsik, the site of my study, is a Maya town of approximately 5000 people in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo on the Yucatan Peninsula (INEGI, 2010), and is part of Felipe Carrillo’s municipality, which has been described by the Ministry of Indigenous and Social Development as the most Maya-monolingual municipality in the state (SEDESI, 2015). As has historically been the case in Indigenous communities in Mexico and throughout Latin America, this linguistic characteristic is closely tied to the town’s high rate of social exclusion and poverty (Hall & Patrinos, 2012). According to the National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Information (2011; see also Subsecretaria de Prospectiva, Planeación y Evaluación, 2011), 71% of the population in Huaytsik lives under the poverty line, and 24% of those live in extreme poverty, placing Huaytsik’s youth in fragile positions at social, educational and health dimensions. In 2020, unfortunately, this panorama has not changed much (Figure 1).
It is in this context that language revitalization efforts surfaced in Huaytsik, which I joined beginning in the summer of 2015. Since May 2015, I have been conducting participatory action research with the local Museum, where we have developed workshops and materials to encourage preschools and families to think and act on the ways Yucatec Maya could be strengthened. Through my collaboration with the Museum educators, together we have produced bilingual lesson plans and materials for the Museum workshops, documented bilingual rap practices in the town, recorded oral histories from the town’s elders, developed curriculum, as well as promoting a trilingual approach to the museography. This collaboration has been framed by a partnership established between the Penn Cultural Heritage Center at the University of Pennsylvania, the local town government, the ejido—a Mexican state political figure that represents certain sectors of the community in a supposedly innocuous way (Hamel, 2019), and the local Museum dedicated to inform about the Caste War—the longest running Indigenous war in the
Americas (Reed, 1964). Moreover, this partnership has been materialized through the creation of a Community Heritage Project (Leventhal, Chan, Moo & Poot, 2014) which was originally focused on archaeological research and local museum development, and now tries to highlight a Maya view of history and the past by engaging, as much as possible, in a horizontal relationship and partnership between the Penn Heritage Center and Huaytsik’s governmental institutions.

Huaytsik is the only place in this dissertation for which I decided to create a pseudonym besides the names of all the people in the dissertation. When I started my fieldwork back in 2015, I explained to the people in town that I would be honored to write about the language practices happening in their community, and how, traditionally, in my field of research we use pseudonyms in order to protect the people and places as sensitivities could be hurt by the stories I would be retelling. For many people in the town, this did not make sense as they wanted their town to be recorded and felt proud about it. In light of my insistence on this point over the years, a couple of friends in town finally suggested that since I continued to worry about it, I should just call the town “Here, where it is talked about and respected”, coming from the combination of the Maya words waye\(^9\), the different meanings of the verbs \textit{tsikbal}\(^{10}\) and the noun \textit{tsiik}\(^{11}\), and resulting in \textit{Wayetsik}, which I eventually modified to its Spanish form as Huaytsik.

However, deciding the name for Huaytsik was not my only activity with the Museum. Taking ethnography as method and stance, I conducted compressed ethnographic

\(^{9}\) Here
\(^{10}\) To narrate, to tell or to converse
\(^{11}\) Respect
action research\textsuperscript{12} with my museum colleagues during the summers of 2015 and 2016. This was followed by my long-term ethnographic research between May 2017 and August 2018, and another compressed ethnography during the summer of 2019. During these first two compressed ethnographies, action research was a fundamental component during my work with the Museum’s cultural and language promoters. This intensive action research allowed me to have a contextualized understanding of how to collaborate with the Museum in their language revitalization and maintenance efforts, as well as to understand the role early childhood education environments played in the town. Amongst the main activities that I conducted with the Museum were:

1. Bilingual comic books: In 2015 we produced the first bilingual comic book, in Maya and Spanish, which narrated the life of Jacinto Pat, a Caste War leader, and its relationship with Huaytsik. The idea behind the comic was that of public outreach, where there could be a biliterate space that shares the work that archaeologists have done in the area and communicate it to the greater community. Two more comics were published, one in the summer of 2016, and the last one in 2017.

2. Cataloging and designing educational materials: In 2015, we started to catalogue all the resources that the Museum has in order to promote what “being Maya” and “to speak Maya” means in Huaytsik, from written and locally made paintings used in the Museum’s workshops, all the way to music and oral histories audio files. The cataloguing of materials pushed the Community Heritage project to continue designing educational materials and workshops that were needed in order to promote the strengthening of Maya. During the

\textsuperscript{12} According to LeCompte and Schensul (2010) a compressed ethnography is a focused ethnographic research with a specific goal, with a duration of one to six weeks, and which uses a combination of different elicitation techniques (e.g., focus groups, interviews, etc.).
summers of 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 I helped in different capacities to design the summer workshops which aim for children between the ages of 2-18 to know the sites and monuments that are in their surroundings and in which local archaeological research is happening, while focusing on the vitality of Maya in the town and its importance as intangible heritage.

3. Sociolinguistic interviews: In 2015, the Museum educators and I interviewed 27 families in town in order to understand why parents were sending, or not, their children to the Museum’s workshops. During the interviews we addressed topics such as their sociolinguistic practices at home, and their thoughts on the role of institutions (e.g., museum, schools, ejido) in the promotion and development of Maya. In 2016 we refined our semi-structured interview protocol and interviewed children, schoolteachers, school principals and the elders in the community in order to have a better picture of the state of languages and the current sociolinguistic practices in the town.

The opportunity of collaborating with the Penn Cultural Center and developing these projects with the local Museum were fundamental in my settling in Huaytsik. As I got to know some of the main actors in the community’s schooling scene, I noticed how formal education was one of the many factors that played a role in the language change in the community and the region. Eventually, as I passed more time in the Museum, I noticed how preschool was a recurrent education level where some of the factors that I describe in this dissertation surfaced and had a major impact in the education of children and language change in the town.
The History of Gatekeeping: Sites and People Involved

As I participated in the Museum’s daily life, I noticed how preschool teachers in the town relied on the Museum’s cultural promoters as Maya experts, consulting them on questions about the use of Maya, taking classes with them whenever they needed to take a Maya certification exam, and drawing on the cultural promoters’ pedagogical expertise for the development of materials and activities. The influence of the Museum in language practices in the preschools was thus a relevant context to explore as I sought to explain how language shift is happening in Huaytsik and how schooling practices intersect with community efforts to strengthen Maya. For example, on June 6th, 2016, when I was coming back to the Museum after having lunch, I noticed that a teacher from one of the Indigenous modality preschools was taking Maya classes with one of the cultural promoters. I was surprised that she was doing this, since I assumed that as a teacher in an Indigenous school she would speak Maya, but this was far from true. As she finished taking her class, I asked her why she was taking Maya classes, if she works in an Indigenous school. She told me:

Terminé en la educación preescolar Indígena porque no tuve el puntaje ni la plaza para poder estar en plaza de modalidad general…. Mi escuela es el patito feo pues están [los] olvidados porque nunca nos invitan a nada ya que está muy alejado. No nos dan materiales, y a los que más apoyan son a los de inicial.  

(FN 2016. 06.01)

Although I have long been aware that the poorest education is offered to the poorest people in Mexico, and that this educational inequality promotes language displacement

13 I ended up in Indigenous preschool education because I did not have the score nor the placement to be in the general modality. My school is the ugly duckling because they are the forgotten ones, because no one invites us to anything because we are far away. They do not give us materials, rather they give more support to those in nursery school.
(Muñoz, 2010), this was the first time I witnessed it and I was shocked. In other words, teachers who do not speak the language were teaching in a school that should be teaching the Indigenous language and through that Indigenous language. Due to an entry exam to the teaching profession, teachers were placed in Indigenous education based on their low score rather than on their abilities, languages or place of origin (SEP, 2018a). As I listened to her, I also recalled how back in 2015, when I interviewed different mothers around town who had children at the different preschools (see Anzures Tapia, 2017), one of them shared how language has changed due to preschools:

> En parte es por la preescolar, antes no había, ahora sí, entonces ellos ya hablan en español. [Además yo] también [les] hablo más en español, aunque con [mi] esposo también en mayá. (IN with Lucia, 2015.05.08)

Thus, even though I was initially interested in understanding how schooling practices and top-down policies intersected with community efforts to strengthen Maya (i.e., the Museum’s efforts), the question of what are preschools doing, and specifically Indigenous modality preschools, in order to strengthen Maya or contribute to the language change in the town and the region, started to take on more relevance. Thus, in May 2017, with the help of the Museum cultural promoters, I decided to ask two preschools if I could conduct participant observations with them for the 2017-2018 academic year.

**Schools: Palal-na and Centro**

Huaytsik has five preschools. Four of these preschools offer what is called an Indigenous modality, while the fifth one, which I call Centro, follows a general modality.

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14 In part it is because of the preschool, before there were none, now there are, thus, my children now speak in Spanish. I also speak to them more in Spanish, although I also speak Maya with my husband.
The difference between modalities is that the *Indigenous modality* preschools adapt the curriculum to the community’s needs, while the *general modality* preschools follow the national curriculum with no cultural or linguistic adaptations. In the case of Huaytsik, the latter model means that instruction is given in Spanish and there are no specific adjustments in terms of materials or teacher assistants for children that are Maya monolingual. Moreover, the preschool educational level in Huaytsik is the only one that offers the dichotomy of Indigenous and general modalities. From primary education onwards, the only approach offered to the community is the general one. With the specific interests that this dissertation addresses, my rationale for conducting participant observations in two preschools was to understand how preschool was done in and through each modality.

From the four Indigenous modality preschools, I decided to ask for permission in the school I call Palal-na, which in Maya means the house of children. I chose Palal-na because generally people in town considered this school as the furthest away, the most abandoned school in town and *alejada de urbanización*\(^\text{15}\) (Ángela in FN 2017.06.12). Palal-na is the only single-teacher multigrade preschool in Huaytsik, where Elisa was teacher, principal and janitor. When I went to Palal-na to ask permission for me to conduct participant observations, Elisa was at her desk while 10 out of 25 students that attended classes on that day were running around, shouting, throwing papers, destroying some of the toys and only a few working at their tables. I barely sat down for 10 minutes, presented myself, said what I wanted to do, and she just responded that it would be great to have me here, as I would help her a lot, and she trusted the people at the Museum that

\(^{15}\) away from urbanization
were recommending me. However, as recorded in my field notes on June 17th, 2017, I felt her desperate situation was my best ally for her to accept me at the school, rather than interest in my research.

The story with Centro, the general modality preschool, was different. Centro is right in front of Huaytsik’s downtown plaza, straight ahead from the town hall and just meters away from the only Catholic Church in town and the town’s market. Centro has a principal, a different teacher and student-teacher per grade, a janitor, a physical education instructor, and occasional psychological services (FN 2017.08.31). When I arrived to the school on June 12th 2017, I told the school’s principal that I was an educational psychologist, an identity that was often easier to understand than educational anthropologist or educator, and that I was interested in how education is lived in Indigenous schools, as well as schools in Indigenous contexts. When I mentioned this, she told me that her school no es de educación Indígena, sino de modalidad formal16, but she recognized that Centro was in an Indigenous context. However, she also added that

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tiene sentido [tu investigación] ya que los planes que nos dan son de otros contextos y suben fotos donde todo es perfecto con 10 ó 12 niños, pero nunca pasan las escuelas con 30 niños. Si la investigación puede dar luz a los contextos indígenas, como el de la escuela, estaría muy bien. 17
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(Centro’s principal in FN 2017.06.12)

Still, the principal at Centro had many doubts about my presence and told me that in case I wanted to participate with my research, I had to be an active member of the school community. I told her that nothing would make me feel better as a teacher and researcher

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16 It is not an Indigenous education [school], but a formal modality [one].
17 [your research] makes sense since the [curriculum] plans that are given to us are from other contexts and they upload pictures where everything is perfect with 10 or 12 children, but they never show the schools with 30 children. If the research can shed light into the Indigenous contexts, like the school’s one, then it would be very good.
than if I could be responsible for anything at the school. She then said that she would ask her supervisor and let me know by the end of June 2017.

Not knowing when I would get accepted at Centro made me very nervous, however my entry, and also my exit, both turned out to be very unexpected. At the beginning of June 2017, one of my friends in town asked me to be the Godfather of her only daughter, who was graduating from Centro. I said yes, not just because she was my friend and it was a lovely gesture and I was happy to be chosen, but also because this was a strategic move on my side for Centro’s principal to see me. On June 29th, the graduation happened, and the principal saw me. Even better, my now comadre\(^{18}\), who was very close to the principal and the teachers, invited me and them to have lunch at her house after the graduation. There, we talked about everything except my research: jokes, soccer, roads, the weather, love, relationships, children, amongst many other topics. We then all moved to another house where another family was celebrating the preschool graduation and we kept on joking about love, distance and also education. At the end of these almost 5 hours, the principal told me, *por cierto, ya tienes permiso para estar en la escuela, nada mas dime con quien vas a estar*\(^{19}\). I was not sure whether it was our time together, whether she was the main gatekeeper to my access, or whether she really showed her supervisor the paperwork I gave her. Maybe all of these were true or maybe none of them. The result was that as of June 29\(^{th}\), 2017 I had access to both schools.

In August 2017, I started to engage in my ethnographic and participatory research in both schools. Initially, I participated one week in one school, and the next in the other

\(^{18}\) i.e. the mother of my godchild.
\(^{19}\) by the way, you have been granted with permission to be at the school, just let me know with whom [teacher] you are going to be.
school. However, on September 7th, 2017, after a couple of weeks doing this, Centro’s principal called me to her office as soon as I arrived to the school. Asking me to sit down, she told me *que no me fuera a desmayar*. I knew something important was going to happen, and it did. She explained that unfortunately I could not conduct my research at the school since her supervisor told her that whoever is not hired by the Ministry of Education could not enter the school grounds because on July 18th, 2017 there had been reported cases of sexual assault to some children in different preschools in Playa del Carmen and Cancún. The Ministry of Education would not be held responsible for any such case if it happened that the people involved are not part of the school. The principal insisted that this was not her decision, but she needed to protect herself, her teachers and her children. Then she asked me ¿Qué opinas? My opinion would not have mattered, and I felt that she never trusted me. I told her that I was sad, but that as a teacher and an uncle I understood her. She told me that by September 14th, she would let me know any updates as she would talk again with her supervisor. She then, dismissively, told me that *las escuelas indígenas no se preocupan por estas cosas y no sabe por qué, así que probablemente te dejen hacer tu estudio en alguna de las otras escuelas*.

Little did I know that this situation would transform into a great opportunity for a different type of comparison--within the same institution and through different community stakeholders’ points of view--a comparison by reflecting on otherness and feeling othered. This was what Hornberger (2013) describes as one of my *methodological*

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20 do not faint
21 What do you think?
22 Indigenous schools do not care about this stuff, and she does not know why, so probably they will let you conduct your study in any of the other schools.
rich points, where without my fully understanding what was happening, I nevertheless knew this would change my whole research agenda, forcing me to adapt my methods and approaches, rather than forcing the situations to adapt to my models. Being out of Centro allowed me to see how a lot people felt about this school. Issues of representation of the school and what it meant started to be salient—something that I did not know in my previous years of work in Huaytsik. In the same way, I understood what authority meant, and who authority was in the context of Huaytsik—if you are out, you are out. This situation allowed me to listen to how many parents and elders thought that Centro was a preschool para los ricos o con mejores recursos23 (Townhall worker in FN 2017.06.12), de categoria24 (IN with Nestor, 2018.06.08), de fresas25 (IN with Alonso, 2018.06.07), de hijos de ricos26 (IN with Zuzy, 2018.07.10) or one that has la idea de los ricos27 (IN with Elisa, 2019.07.10). People shared with me conspiracy stories of how Centro did not want me to see what they were really doing, and the ways in which they were spending the money. I was grateful to listen to these stories and perspectives which would have not surfaced if I was part of Centro; however, the “what if” sentiment of not knowing more about how Centro worked was latent during all my fieldwork.

Surprisingly, many of my friends in town felt at ease that I was not part of Centro, and that I was going to spend my time at Palal-na, where they needed me more. When I told Elisa what happened to me at Centro, I asked her if she was going to take a similar

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23 for the rich or with better resources
24 a category one
25 for posh people
26 for rich people’s children
27 the idea of the rich
decision. She said that she cannot allow herself to lose my help, that people know me in town and that she trusted me and them. A month later she also shared with me:

Recibí el oficio de los abusos sexuales, así como el del alumno que murió porque estaban construyendo algo en la escuela, pero no vi porque debían de restringir la entrada a todos. He recibido oficios todo el tiempo, uno de ellos es sobre no recibir a alumnos como oyentes ya que ellos no son parte de la escuela y no tienen seguro. Muchos candados burocráticos existen en las escuelas.28 (Elisa in FN 10.12.2017)

As I try to illustrate in this dissertation, if not for Elisa’s navigational skills around these bureaucratic padlocks, many of the children at Palal-na would not have had the opportunity to have a preschool education, many parents would have been forced to stay in town in order to take care of their children, and many grandparents would not have had the time or resources to help their own sons and daughters engaging in taxing migratory patterns to help their families to survive and thrive. Thus, for the 2017-2018 school year, I dedicated full time to engaging in my ethnographic participatory research with Elisa, in her single-teacher multigrade Indigenous preschool attended by 28 children (ages 2 to 6), including those with disabilities (e.g., cerebral palsy). Nine children, between the ages of 5-6 years old, were in Kinder 3 (K3); eleven children, between the ages of 4-5 years old were in Kinder 2 (K2); four children between the ages of 3-4 were in Kinder 1(K1); and four children, between the ages of 2 and 4, were de oyente29, which meant that they were not officially registered at the school, but the parents and grandparents decided to send them because they did not have time to take care of them, or because their siblings were

28 I received the document about sexual assaults, as well as the one about the student who died because they were building something at the school, but I did not understand why they should restrict the entry to all. I have received official documents all the time; one was about not accepting students who were auditing since they were not part of the school and they do not have school insurance. Many bureaucratic padlocks exist within the schools.
29 auditing
going to the school and they wanted to go. Some of the children that were now in K3 actually started as *oyentes*, which meant that they had been at Palal-na for five years before they entered primary school. For me, taking *de oyente* children into account also responded to the lack of research that exists with children in school who are younger than 3 years old, as they are not considered “official” in schools, but are nevertheless a growing population in early childhood settings (White et al., 2018).

**People Involved: Participations and Positionalities**

I participated as much as I was allowed to in the physical spaces of my research, from the schools, houses, kitchens, parties, bars, streets, baseball games, town events, to spaces where violence was exercised and I had to become a witness of it, pushing me to ask myself up to what point research and ethnography are activist? Who decides what is activism in ethnography? and who is benefitting from my writings? Ethnography is a problematic enterprise, but its cumulative, comparative, and cooperative process allowed me to understand that describing what I was living and through my own views was already doing something (Hymes, 1980), or in the words of Centro’s principal, which I cited before: *si la investigación puede dar luz a los contextos indígenas, como el de la escuela, estaría muy bien*30 (FN 2017.06.12).

The spaces and the experiences that I accumulated during all this time also helped me to reflect how I was a participant with others in my research but I was the only one who designed its methodological approach, the questions and the ways I would collect the data, as well as the ways I would analyze it. In this research I try to represent the

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30 If the research can shed light into the Indigenous contexts, like the school’s one, then it would be very good.
voices of Elisa, school principals, education supervisors, formal education representatives, the Museum cultural promoters and educators, mothers, fathers, grandmothers and children. However, none of them were directly involved in the analyses of the data nor did I consider them participants in my research (Cameron, Fraizer, Harvey, Rampton & Richardson, 1992). They gave me permission to see part of their lives and participate in those lives, but they were not active participants in the research design.

I was aware that my position in Huaytsik and Palal-na was one where structures helped me to be considered as someone moving in arrangements where power structures benefited me. I could move between schools, I was related to the gringos in the University of Pennsylvania’s team (and was many times considered a gringo), I could leave the town and the country whenever I wanted, I could pay rent for a house, and I eventually became a teacher at Palal-na—a very respected position in the region.

In each chapter I briefly introduce people as they are mentioned, relating them to the children who were my students, or to their jobs and/or responsibilities in town or the institutions they represent. In this way, I follow Berman’s (2019) approach in describing the actors as they become relevant in the story. Being such a small school and town, I fortunately had the opportunity to live in the neighborhood where the school was located, and where most of the families lived. This allowed me to spend great amounts of time with families as they invited me to have lunch or drinks with them. I also tried, whenever there was a town party, to go and be with the parents who went out to sell food. Although initially I wanted to focus on selected children, it turned out to be easier for me to be with all the families according to their own invitations and the ways we felt comfortable. Also,
although I initially wanted to focus on comparing schools, and on the children’s experiences, the families and their experiences became the, so to speak, units of analyses for this dissertation on the ways they experienced schooling, languages, education, tourism and childhood.

At Palal-na, I participated in the day-to-day aspects of schooling, took part in early childhood activities with the other four preschools in town, and in informal early childhood educational activities in the community. In this way, my ethnographic and participatory research provided a window into the complexities of ECE and, as I explain in this dissertation, helped me to bring into relief the personal stories often obscured by a field focused on school readiness, health promotion, and cost-effectiveness.

**The Anthropological Coyoteo: The History of my Positionality.**

I positioned trustworthiness at the center of my ethnographic work in Huaytsik, thus I continuously reflected on my mestizo middle class Mexican background as I carried out my research (Berryman, Soohoo & Nevin, 2013). The access I was granted to the community, as well as my continuous collaborative engagement with the Museum and other community stakeholders was a proof of the trust and relationships I had built for the years before my long-term leg of ethnographic work. I am grateful, to both gatekeepers at the University of Pennsylvania and to those in Huaytsik who believed in me, for having the opportunity to construct these relationships. I was humbled by the ways and powerful interpretations that people have structured throughout decades on why their languages have changed, why Maya is dormant, but also how there is a fear that it will eventually disappear. I respect these ideas and, as much as I could, I tried to make them salient in my own interpretations in my work. However, this did not prevent me
from falling into what Salinas Pedraza (1997) has called an anthropological *coyoteo*\(^{31}\), where even as I tried to involve Elisa in thinking with me about the processes of early childhood education in the region, or in creating spaces for parents to be more active in my research, I eventually understood that this was my research, sponsored by my own grants, where most of the benefit, in the short term, was going to be for me (see Fishman, 1994 on the criticisms on research on language policy and planning). For Centro’s principal, I was not going to be *una mosca en la pared*, sino que vas a hacer una *ayudantía*\(^{32}\) (FN 2017.06.12), and although this was my stance even when I was not at her school, the risk of *coyoteo* is a stance that I could not deny.

Still, I always placed myself in a collaborative stance as a university researcher where I tried to be an active listener, and an engaged mirror and bouncer of the ideas Elisa had about Palal-na, or the ideas that the cultural promoters at the Museum had (Hornberger, 2013; see also Monzo, 2013). Within this collaborative and participatory stance, during my years in Huaytsik I have fulfilled many roles and many personas. Arriving as a student, people in town and the Museum saw me as another *gringo* who was studying under Don Richard’s project. Afterwards, I became a *Don*, but left Huaytsik as *maestro-* k’ansaj.\(^{33}\)

*From Aldo to K’ansaj.*

Since I am not an archaeologist, it was sometimes challenging for people in Huaytsik to understand who I was and what I was doing in town, as my relationship

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31 Citing Salinas Pedraza (1997, p. 183): “*Coyote* is the famous trickster, or hustler character in Native American folklore. Besides being the familiar animal, a coyote in modern Mexican usage is a sharp dealer, someone not to be trusted.” *Coyoteo*, then, would be the act of tricking people who put their trust in you.

32 a fly on the wall, but you are going to be a helper.

33 teacher
started through and with the Penn Heritage Center, and most of the people collaborating in the project were either archaeologists, anthropologists or architects. According to some of my friends in town, for the first years they just saw me in the Museum, chatting, eating, laughing, playing with children, but it was not clear what I was doing. Many times I was not sure what I was doing either. Thus, during the first couple of years, Aldo—the student—was my persona, where people understood me as the person in the Museum interested in language preservation—a term that little by little I fought to eradicate in light of the work we were doing as a project. However, it was not until I got a ring on my finger that things changed. I became a Don and this changed how my Museum colleagues and Huaytsik in general saw me—Don Aldo was my new persona.

As a Don, my relationship to people changed from student to adult. Conversations about children, family, economic survival, respect, housing, Mexico, the role of partners and fidelity came to the table. This opened conversations that allowed me to see familial spaces where I was not invited before or which were not opened for me as I developed my work in the years before. Accompanied to my Don persona, I started to become a maestro. From all my personas, this was the most difficult to grapple with, as many of my friends, instead of calling me Aldo, started to call me maestro.

The first time that I was called k’ansaj was on May 22\(^{nd}\), 2017. Ángela, one of the Museum’s cultural promoters, was my main gatekeeper to the schools where I initially started my 2017-2018 fieldwork. Her daughter attended Centro, and as such, she knew the principal at the school. Ángela has been my best gatekeeper in town, a friend, a theoretical partner and a confidant during my time in Huaytsik. Although I have always understood that there is a power dynamic in our relationship, it was not until she
presented me as k’ansaj to Centro’s principal, that our relationship changed. During the 2017-2018 school year, I insisted to her that we were peers, and that of course she could call me as she wished in front of everyone, but not between us. She, still, decided to call me maestro all the time, which resounded on how everyone else knew me in town. I understood that Ángela called me maestro as a sign of respect, and it was difficult for me to swallow that understanding, but eventually I comprehended that this was the persona that would allow me to enter spaces and have conversations that I could not have had if I was just considered a student.

As time passed by in Palal-na, Elisa started to leave me with the group by myself to teach and in many occasions, I was in charge of opening the school, designing the morning routines, the daily writing exercises and always in charge of preparing the morning snack. Elisa and the parents trusted me as a teacher, and it was an honor that they wanted me to stay for the school cycles to come and eventually divide the school into two groups so Elisa and I could become co-teachers. However, my presence in the school also implied I had to adopt many of the activities that Eli was in charge of, especially the one of a janitor.

Elsewhere (Anzures Tapia, in press), I have explained how my entrance to Palal-na was an easy one, since my presence brought help in a school with great needs. In this way, a big part of my school day was spent cleaning the school—including the toilets. One could then say that my research was not properly an ethnographic teacher-action research, but a janitor-action research. During many times of my research, I was presented toilets full of shit. When these were full, many times the floors were full of it too (FN 2018.01.03; 2017.08.30). Little by little, I started to teach children that if the
toilet does not flush, they need to tell an adult, as well as how it is not healthy to go to an environment that smells and looks like that. Unfortunately, the teacher did not have the opportunity to teach consistently these self-management skills, not because she did not want to or thought they were not important, but because attending to children of different ages, trying to teach different curricula to them, and at the same time fulfilling her responsibilities as a principal and a janitor were all overwhelming. Thus, this became one of my personas and one of the main activities that I developed throughout my fieldwork.

On average, I spent 1.5 hours cleaning every day. If I did not do it, no one would. Supposedly, parent committees for cleaning and cooking existed, but the parents barely came or just said ahorita or mañana. In some cases, parents asked their own children not to go to the restroom at the school in order for them to not have the responsibility of helping to clean the school. This caused a lot of problems, because the school, which was surrounded by the characteristic jungle of the region, was then full of shit from the children (FN 2018.05.24; 2017.12.17). It was a mine field. Moreover, for children it was easier to shit outside the toilet, in an environment they recognized, than in a dirty and smelly toilet (FN 2017.10.13). All in all, this was an insight into what it was like for a skillful and loving teacher to teach at a poorly resourced, heavily tasked Indigenous preschool.

Victim and Perpetrator of Language Change

During my first compressed ethnography in 2015, I conducted more than 20 interviews with families in the town and participated in different activities in the Museum. Even though families were, in my view, positively responsive to my presence

34 Soon or tomorrow
and open to talk with me about how Maya was lived in the town, it was very
disappointing for me to be communicating with the families through Ángela—one of the
Museum’s cultural promoters. Many times, I noticed how the stories shared with us in
Maya were full of emotions and laughter and were definitely lengthier than the translated
oral reports I was receiving from Ángela.

This experience motivated me to look for classes where I could start to learn
Yucatec Maya. Thus, in September 2015, I started taking online biweekly classes with
Irma Pomol Chan, a professor from the Universidad de Oriente in Valladolid, Yucatan.
These classes helped me to learn basic Yucatec Maya which I put into practice in my
subsequent visit to Huaytsik in January 2016. During this visit, people were surprised that
I was speaking Maya and even making some joke attempts. This effort allowed the
people in the Museum to understand that my commitment to the town and the language
was real, consequently strengthening our relationships as colleagues and friends.

Besides my online classes, I also tried to learn the language in a structured way.
Nonetheless, the only language programs offered for learning Maya during the summers
catered to US citizen students with a cost of USD $8000. As a Mexican student I could
not get any grants to learn one of my national languages through these programs, and thus
I had to keep on learning it with my teacher and my practice in Huaytsik. These efforts
became both practically and symbolically important since many stakeholders in Huaytsik
saw my commitment to language as distancing me from the American Penn team—who
with the exception of one archaeologist, did not speak Maya—and that I really wanted to
understand the education processes in the town. Eventually, although with a lot of
suffering, misunderstandings and tiredness over the years, I could understand Maya and even passed an official language exam—which was important for some grant applications.

For parents at Palal-na, it was important that I understood some Maya. When Elisa introduced me to the parents on August 30th, 2017, she said that I spoke Maya, to which I replied that I was learning and spoke *jun p’iit*—a phrase that (amongst laughter) opened doors to me. After Elisa said this, she asked them if they accepted me in Palal-na and they, as easy as that, said yes. Not knowing how the Indigenous modality worked, I assumed that every day I was going to practice and learn Maya, and just like I learned English, I thought I was going to learn it in the best way possible for me—through children’s language and phrases. However, as I describe in this dissertation, Maya was barely taught and talked in the school, which pushed me to eventually lose my capacity to produce it, even though I improved in my understanding. Still, for many parents, I was a *jach maya* speaker.

Against this background, I understood that while I could have been an agent in the production of Maya ideological and implementational spaces (Hornberger, 2002), yet, I soon realized that every time I spoke in Maya I was going against the ways schooling was done in Palal-na. I felt many times that my interventions and interactions in Maya were artificial, and thus were not allowing me to see how languaging was done at the school.

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35 A little bit.

36 I am translating *jach maya* in this dissertation as good or correct Maya, as it was many times defined, described and translated as such by Elisa, parents and other educators in town (see Anzures Tapia, 2017; FN 2016.07.07; 07.08; 07.10). This translation differs from descriptions by other academics who define *jach maya* as pure, ancient, or legitimate Maya spoken only by the elders (Pfeiler, 1998); true Maya (Briceño Chel, 2002); real Maya (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009) or a variety of standard Maya (Guerrettaz, 2019). Overall, *jach maya* has been considered as a particular Maya register where Spanish and Maya are not mixed, thus perceived as more authentic (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2019).
Children did not speak Maya, they did not feel comfortable being spoken to in Maya, and Elisa, as I explain in further chapters, did not feel comfortable speaking to children in Maya. Moreover, when Elisa told me that she had tried to speak to the children in Maya, but desisted, I decided to follow her steps for methodological reasons and eventually became part of the language change from an incipient to almost non-existent productive use of Maya. Curiously enough, this methodological change allowed children to express more in Maya to me (FN 2017.10.31), as many times they tried to teach it to me, and we played games of who knew more Maya, which I explain in the Chapter “The possibilities of Maya: absences and presences”.

In my work, as an ethnography of language policy and planning, I have the intention to advocate for opening language implementational and ideological spaces; however, at the same time, I knew that if I was forcing these spaces for my research, I could have not seen how languages were ecologically transforming and influencing each other as they were part of socioeconomic processes such as migration and mass tourism, how languages were acting as contexts per se, and overall were indirect ways of understanding cultural change in the region (Hornberger, 2009). My presence already affected how schooling happened, which I feel had positive results. In many occasions I taught instead of the teacher, I cleaned the school, I prepared the morning snacks, took care of the children when they went to the toilet, I looked for them during recess, I took children back to their houses, and I was the one in charge of going to the parents’ houses to collect and give back documents that were needed for many bureaucratic processes. Thus, in one way or another, I was helping with something, although not necessarily in the immediate language strengthening in the region. In this way, my stance of not
speaking Maya at the school and with the families, was what I considered the closest scenario to what would have happened if I was not there.

**Data Collection**

The story and stories that I tell here and the words I reproduce come from semi-structured interviews, participant observations and archival work. Initially, when Centro was one of the schools in which I conducted participant observations, I alternated one week in Centro and another week at Palal-na. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews in both Spanish and Maya with parents from Centro and Palal-na (n=30), teachers in and outside Huaytsik (n=6), children (n=36), and community stakeholders (n=20), such as the Museum cultural promoters, adult education educators, local artists, parents from other schools in the region, besides any other person who was referred to me or was interested in talking to me about language issues, early childhood education, psychology, comic books, and even the length of my hair (Watters & Biernacki, 1989). In total, I conducted 92 audio recorded interviews plus uncountable informal conversations I had while living in the region. The interviews, with adaptations in format and content (e.g., drawings, games, and narratives for children) explored the following themes:37 (i) life history; (ii*) schooling; (iii) job history; (iv*) language use in school, family and upbringing; (v) ECE (formal and non-formal) in town and; (vi*) migration and language practices. Interviews with adults lasted between 45 minutes and 4 hours, while “interviews” with children depended on their interest and attention span, sometimes extending for days or weeks (Hatch, 2007).

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37 Themes addressed with children are indicated with *. 
The interviews with children happened in their houses and the way I collected them, as well as the challenges that made me change the format, are further described in the Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers”. Listening to the voices of children, what they think, how they draw and how they felt about their languages was a very important avenue of inquiry for me to explore as I examined the different ideological and implementational spaces that strengthen languages in the town, as well as the ways they were participating in and with the languages, and embodying these languages (Prout & James, 2015). Moreover, I did not want to consider children as aggregates in the research, as is often done in surveys, but as participants that had something to say, as people that generate, interpret and analyze information, and who co-produce spaces where languages could be strengthened or avoided (Hirschfield, 2002; Oswell, 2013). With this in mind, I was at the same time aware of the challenges that interviewing children implied as their conversation is not articulated when compared to adult standards (Lancy, 2012). However, I decided to embark on this task, which found me investing different moments of my fieldwork in talking about cartoons, my family, candies, my hair, my beard, my glasses, and sports, in order to open spaces for conversation with children in regard to language and schooling.

With adults, interviews took many forms and happened in many venues. I interviewed teachers and parents in the schools, their houses and bus stops in Huaytsik. In the Riviera Maya, I interviewed parents in their houses, restaurants, bars and supermarkets. I had the opportunity to interview the region education supervisors at their offices, as well as in events they invited me to in different towns. Cars and buses were also spaces that worked perfectly for interviews. Sometimes I travelled with people just
to talk to them and then went back to Huaytsik to pass my notes. In other cases, like when people invited me to see their schools, I accepted and went to their towns and sometimes stayed for a week in order to see how Indigenous modality schools were working in other towns in the region.

On occasions, especially with parents, the interviews became an event and we shared a meal or some snacks. With some, we shared more than a couple beer six packs, and in some cases, even though parents agreed to be interviewed and recorded, they purposefully played loud music where I placed the recorder and the audio became a very good soundtrack as I transcribed my field notes, rather than artifacts to be transcribed. During the interviews and my participant observations, I typically took quick notes and then wrote them out extensively each night. I carried my audio recorder everywhere and turned it on when interesting things were happening, when I interviewed people or when people asked me to record them because they were going to say something interesting.

My field notes worked as a complement for the audio recordings and observations, as they were reminders of aspects that needed to be modified from interview to interview, or aspects I needed to pay more attention to (Maxwell, 2012). Each field note followed a narrative approach to reality, creating a story of what I perceived in the field (Bruner, 1996). The field notes specified the (a) date, time, people involved and place of observation, (b) date of transcription (c) the narration, (d) sensory impressions, (e) specific words and phrases that caught my attention and (f) questions, concerns and comments for future investigation which I called theoretical notes, methodological notes and personal notes, respectively (based on Sunstein & Chiseri-
Strater, 2011). After I finished each field note, I wrote a summary of it in order to remember which were the main points of the story I was telling in the field note.

When appropriate, I audio and/or video recorded my interviews, public events and any conversation. Besides this, I also took photographs of books, the activities that children did, town events, and each and every moment when people asked me for a picture. In many cases, I took the pictures, especially the ones from the interviews, printed them in the Riviera Maya, and gave them back as a token of appreciation for the time people invested in my research. The pictures, audios and videos were not just data collection artifacts, but means for a multi-sensory ethnography. Even though in this dissertation I place pictures as further explanations of the texts; the smells, noises, colors, movements and temperatures that I experienced are captured better in images and sounds than written words (see Pietikäinen, 2012). Finally, since 2015, I have been collecting documents on the language policies and institutions that impact language practices at the national, state and local level, academic articles, as well as newspaper articles and textbooks from the schools, when available, that could give me an idea of how the written curriculum is planned in order to eventually teach it at the schools. Taken together, I collected a large amount of data, which I describe in the following table. The totals are approximations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collected</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with adults/youth</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview/drawings with children</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>300,000 words approximately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio Recordings</td>
<td>1000 hours approximately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Recordings</td>
<td>100 hours approximately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>5500 approximately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Data collected
Data Analysis

Although text and historical analyses can offer an entrance to some ideological portraits of when the policies were created, it was through ethnographic data that I visualized, and can now share, how policy implementation, policy texts, discourse and practices were all interconnected in early childhood settings (Johnson, 2009). The collected data was initially analyzed through research and coding memos in an ongoing fashion. I wrote six lengthy research memos for Professor Nancy Hornberger. I tried for each of these to address a month and half of my ethnographic experience. These memos did not just help me to reflect about my own work, revisit my field notes and other collected data, but were a personal means through which I could share some of my frustrations, challenges and personal musings as I conducted my field work. When Professor Richard Leventhal was in Huaytsik, I also had the opportunity to talk with him. Knowing the town, working in the area, and always helping with no judgement, his experience allowed me to also see and analyze my data and my relationships with people with fresh eyes. Thus, these two key and personal relationships mattered for my analyses to be successful within Huaytsik and once I came back to Philadelphia.

As I wrote my field notes I developed codes, but it was not until I came back from Huaytsik that I used qualitative data analysis software (Atlas.ti) to analyze the transcriptions of these interviews and formally open-coded to identify themes and ideas that arose from interviews, field notes, audio and video recordings, and photographs. After I did this, I engaged in focused coding by selecting particular topics, ideas, and concepts derived from the literature and my initial open coding (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). As I wrote each one of these chapters, I tried to triangulate my field notes,
interviews, and policy texts as elements to map out the relationships between local and global early childhood discourses, Indigenous language schooling and learning, as well as the socio-economic processes under which parents made their educational choices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). During all this process, I used reference management software Zotero to organize documents, where I also added codes whenever needed. As in most dissertations that tell stories about people and places, all the data were anonymized and encrypted to protect the identities and experiences that were shared with me. The following table summarizes my research in the region, detailing the compressed ethnographies I conducted, as well as my long-term ethnographic research between May 2017 and August 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compressed ethnographies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-Aug. 2015</td>
<td>Interviews with the museum’s cultural promoters, one preschool teacher, twelve town elders, two adult education teachers and a bilingual local rap band.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-July 2016</td>
<td>Participant observation at the Museum and an Indigenous preschool. Archival work on policies at the national, state and local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term ethnography</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-Aug. 2017</td>
<td>Coordination with the schools to plan the days I will be attending each classroom and my role in the schools during the 2017-2018 school year. Daily participant observations at the Museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2017- July 2018</td>
<td>Occasional weekend participant observations in the Museum. Participant observations in both preschools. This eventually transformed to one school (Palal-na)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 2017-Jan. 2018</td>
<td>Talk with the families about my research and the role of the interviews. Create a plan with parents about my observations, interviews and follow up. First round of interviews with teachers, principals, parents and grandparents. Drawing and narrative activities with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preliminary coding of field notes and research memos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table. 2 Research timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar.-Apr. 2018</td>
<td>Interviews with community stakeholders (e.g., artists, ejido members,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education stakeholders).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-Jun. 2018</td>
<td>Interviews with school and family stakeholders whom I have yet to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing and narrative activities with children based on preliminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-August 2018</td>
<td>Report back to the parents and teachers about initial findings and next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>steps in my research and analyses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Formal data analyses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August-Dec 2018</td>
<td>Data analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January-June 2019</td>
<td>Write dissertation chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Compressed ethnography</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-August 2019</td>
<td>Drawing and narrative activities with children based on preliminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Formal data analyses</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the process of writing these chapters, talking with my colleagues and presenting at different forums have been some of my most important analytical tools. My methodological approach, concretized in a few chapters in this dissertation, does not tell the whole story of how early childhood education is constructed in Indigenous contexts; however, it is an honest attempt to portray how, despite the truism that all languages are potentially equal, they are structured into inequality from very early stages in the education of Indigenous populations.
CHAPTER 4: Tourism: A double-edged sword in Indigenous Early Childhood Education

It was time for our midday snack and break. Jacinto, a K2 student, stayed with me in the classroom since he had to finish coloring his page in order to take his break. As he was drawing in his notebook, he shared that he had “sueños feos sobre su mamá”38. He dreamt that his mother died. I told him “es una pesadilla, no pasa nada, y ella esta viva, ¿verdad?”39. He nodded his head. Still, angsty, he asked me “¿maestro, por qué soñamos feo cuando vemos películas feas?”40 He immediately went back to his drawing, but he then stopped and told me that he is sure that his mom works at the same place where I go when I do not come to the school and that “si la encuentro donde usted se va a trabajar, le dice que tuve una pesadilla, que estoy soñando feo, que se moría”41. I told him that I will tell her that when I see her, but that she will be back at night to his house and he can personally share these concerns with her. He continued sharing that he was very worried that because he was not behaving very well, he was having nightmares or that the teacher or me could put him in jail. Troubled, he asked me if I would put him in jail because he does not behave well. I told him that this would never happen. He seemed happy with this response and finished his drawing.

Most parents in Huaytsik work in the Riviera Maya (e.g., Cancún, Playa del Carmen, Tulum), a three-hour trip one-way if one has private transportation. Well-maintained roads and proximity to the Riviera Maya have allowed large resorts to pick up workers in Huaytsik early in the morning, bring them to the hotels to serve as launderers, kitchen staff, and maintenance, and return them to Huaytsik at night. Economic remittances, housing styles, and ideologies about language such as the importance of English, are just a few of the forms of capital transported in these daily six-hour trips (Acuña & Medina, 2017; Anzures Tapia, 2017; see also Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck, 2005).

Moreover, concerns related to parenting, such as child abandonment and schooling, leave

38 “nightmares about his mother”
39 “it is a nightmare, nothing will happen, and she is alive, right?”
40 “teacher, why do we dream ugly when we watch ugly movies?”
41 If you find her where you go to work, tell her that I had a nightmare, that I am dreaming in ugly ways, that she died.”
parents and children emotionally as well as physically taxed. Jacinto and Yuri, his mother, were not exempt from this emotional and physical stress.

Even though Yuri did not work directly in the tourism industry anymore, she traveled every day to the green houses built by a German company, which were between one and two hours away from Huaytsik. Jacinto’s anxiety and fears during the school year made her stop working in order to stay at home with him and his siblings. To not bring some money to the household implied that there would be an economic burden to the extended family since now she had to find ways to bring money from town—where there were not many jobs—and her siblings had to work extra hours in their hotels, or just try to spend less money (IN with Yuri, 2018.05.23).

Since the 1990s, Maya communities have been moving from an agricultural economy to a cash-dependent one. This shift brought circular migratory waves from rural to urban areas, a phenomenon perceived by many as a “mixed blessing”: external employment in the town brings with it wage labor, but also a fear of cultural and linguistic loss (Pi-Sunyer & Thomas, 2015, p. 90). Huaytsik, like most Indigenous towns in the Yucatan Peninsula, is not exempt from this circular migratory pattern, and Maya, amongst other Indigenous languages, is now more visible along the Riviera Maya, creating new dynamics in the linguistic, educational and familial arenas.

Drawing mostly from interviews, in this chapter I highlight how migration and mass tourism are uncovering and creating language ecologies in the region that affect not just the languages but the overall education system in the region. In particular, I emphasize that regional education has not taken into account the fact that Indigenous preschools placed exclusively in rural communities fall short of the ideal of serving all Indigenous
children. The first section of the chapter describes Huaytsik in the context of regional migration and tourism in the Peninsula, and some of the ways in which this has impacted Maya language use in the town. As Indigenous families within the state and from other states move for employment in the tourism industry, the increasing use of Maya in urban spaces has created new linguistic dynamics where Indigenous languages, but most importantly, English, play a role in employment. Hence, there is a growing desire for the teaching of English not as an academic endeavor but as preparation for a future job and success, described in the second section. In the third section, I describe how tourism impacts schooling processes, pushing youth in the region to dedicate their professional lives to the tourism industry rather than to teaching, which has inevitably affected the number of teachers available to serve in Indigenous modality schools. Finally, the fourth section describes some of the experiences of the people who stay home in Huaytsik rather than migrate to the tourism centers, especially grandparents, and the ways they cope with taking care of their grandchildren, as well as the ways parents deal with separation and their understanding of migration as a sacrifice for a better life.

**Economies Move (People and) Languages**

For people in Huaytsik, knowing someone that travels back and forth between Huaytsik and the Riviera Maya is not unusual. Either a relative or a friend travels every day or in a weekly or bi-monthly fashion. Against this background, I never asked myself about the impact of migration in the education of children in Huaytsik until I discovered some materials in the local museum that were addressing the topic of temporary migration. Since May 2015, two years before I started to conduct the long-term-leg of my ethnographic study, I have been collaborating with Huaytsik’s local museum in order to
develop workshops and materials to encourage preschools and families to think and act on the ways Maya could be strengthened in the town. In July 2015, as I was helping to digitize some of the museum materials that we would be using for a Maya workshop (FN 2015.07.01), I found research done by a University of California undergraduate student, who in 2011, with the help of some local high school students, surveyed the inhabitants of Santa Ana—a Huaytsik neighborhood—in regards to temporary migration.

Her survey found that 71% of the surveyed families had at least one person engaged in this temporary migratory process. From these 71%, almost five percent migrated for education purposes, while the rest migrated for economic purposes. Eighty eight percent of the people that were migrating went to Playa del Carmen, Tulum or Cancún, generally because of “falta de trabajo”, “para mantener a la familia” and for “superación personal”⁴². According to the museum educators, her report (poster boards) was presented to the community in the museum and was surprising for the people in town as they saw a representation of how many people are actually traveling every day or staying in other places different to Huaytsik (Figure 2).

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⁴² “lack of jobs”, “to sustain the family” or for “personal growth”.
This scenario was not strange in 2019. Most of the children in Palal-na were part of this migratory process, either by being born in the Riviera and then sent to Huaytsik to be taken care by their grandparents or because one of their parents or siblings work in the Riviera for the same reasons that were shared in 2011 with the community. For example, when I asked Johnny’s parents if they at any point stayed in Huaytsik to work, his mother Luz mentioned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Luz:** Nunca porque en los pueblos no hay nada, lo máximo que puedes ganar en un pueblo son como... Una vez trabajé en Huaytsik cuando estaba chico mi hijo, no me...**

**Luz:** Never, because there is nothing in the towns, the most you can earn in a town are like ... Once I worked in Huaytsik when my child was little. I do not remember how it was,
acuerdo cómo es que fue, no quería salir a trabajar y me quedé, pero vi que no me resultaba. Iba a lavar a la casa de una maestra y creo que me daban como cien pesos al día, u ochenta, no me acuerdo, con eso no me alcanzaba para nada y dije, "mejor, ya me voy, junto mis chivas, cobro mi dinero y ya me voy", fue cuando salí otra vez; pero ya había salido a trabajar antes, mi trabajo ya lo sabía, pero todavía no me decidía, por mi hijo el mayor, tiene diez años, no lo quería dejar, igual, así, pero no había trabajo esa vez y dije, "no, voy a trabajar aquí, aunque sea poquito", y ya de ahí pasé años sin trabajar y después volví a salir y ya cuando salí me quedé fija aquí, tiene como siete años, creo, ocho años tengo que salí y no he dejado de trabajar.

Aldo: Sí, cien pesos no alcanzan para nada.

Luz: No alcanzan para nada..., sesenta o setenta, no sé, pero parece que era menos y dije, "no, yo ya me voy porque sé que afuera ganó más, ya es hora de salir otra vez de aquí y de empezar a trabajar otra vez en la hotelería y mandar dinero", y es lo que hice, sí.

I did not want to go to work and I stayed, but I saw that it was not enough for me. I was washing clothes for a teacher, and I think they gave me about one hundred pesos a day, or eighty, I don't remember. That was not enough for me at all and I said, "I'd better leave, I packed my bags, I took my money, and left". That was when I went out again. I already knew my work, but I still didn’t decide, because of my eldest son, he is ten years old now. I didn’t want to leave him, but there was no work and I said, "no, I'm going to work here, even if they pay me a little ", and from there I spent years without working and then I left again and I haven’t gone back, it's about seven years now, I think, eight years since I left and I haven't stopped working.

Luz: Not enough at all, sixty or seventy, I don't know, but it seems that it was less and I said, "no, I'm leaving because I know that outside I can earn more, it's time to get out of here and start to work again in the hotels and send money", and that is what I did, yes.

Table 3. Reasons to migrate -IN with Luz (2019.07.15)

Income influenced children’s and also the families' emotional stress levels (see also Anyon, 2005). Jacinto’s dream described in the introductory vignette, as well as Luz’s struggle to be with her children and at the same time work to provide them what they need and want was not unique to her. Luz and Rubén have tried to live with their children in the Riviera, but it is perpetually challenging. For instance, once they brought the children to Puerto Maya to try out if they could all be together, but:

Me accidenté una vez por querer ir a comprar sus tamales y al regresar tenía que hacer las cosas rápido, no tenía tiempo ni para ir a tomar un café ni nada, entonces, salí con la bici, pero estaba medio lloviendo y… estaba yendo rápido y me pegué acá [señala su ojo y pómulo], un mes de incapacidad....Por eso me dice mi mamá, "tráete el niño aquí porque no tienes tiempo para salir, tu tiempo es muy reducido, mejor deja a los niños acá y vas a trabajar tranquilamente", y le digo,
"ah, bueno", y....aquí desconfiaba porque decían que robaban niños, entonces, tenía esa desconfianza y mi mamá fue cuando me dijo, "no, ¿sabes qué?, tráetalos aquí para que no estés preocupada", y ya por eso mandé a mis hijos con ella⁴³.

(Luz in IN with Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15)

The tensions between a life with and for their children, but without them, were woven through the narratives of most of the parents that are part of these migratory processes. Besides this economic and emotional tension, there was also a tension of wanting to be part of a world that moves beyond Huaytsik. For instance, Luz and Rubén, Johnny’s parents, want to go back to Huaytsik but also like to be in the Riviera since they have access to people from around the world, can try food from different places, and have fun overall by going out to bars or just drinking on the beach. Moreover, their children like to come to the beach and go to the cinema, but whenever their children come to visit them, they also spend substantial amounts of money that limits their ability to return to Huaytsik to visit their children (Figure 3).

⁴³ One time I had an accident because I went to buy their tamales, and when I came back, I had to do things in a rushed way. I did not have time to even take a coffee or anything else. Therefore, I took my bike, but it was kind of raining and..... I was going fast and I hit here [points her eye and cheek]. A month of medical leave. That is why my mom tells me “bring the boy over here because you do not have time to go out, your time is so short, better to leave the children over here and work calmly”, and I said to her “Ok”, and...here I also did not trust the environment because they stole children, so, that is when my mom said “no, you know what? Bring them here for you not to be worried”, and that is why I sent them with her.
Figure 3. Main migration routes in Huaytsik

Lola’s father, who travels every week between Playa and Huaytsik, mentioned that for him one of the biggest challenges has been to create healthy relationships with his three children. He gets to see them once a week and he has noticed that his presence influences the way his children feel; especially Lola, who is the youngest one and according to him needs him the most, but with whom he has been the least present since he now needs to maintain three children. He tries to come every week to Huaytsik because, if he did not, then he would have never thought about having a family. Even when he is far away working, he likes to be informed about the problems that come up in his house. He has seen how many fathers abandon their families *para superarse, pero le falta cariño a los hijos, amor a los hijos. No es igual* (Ricardo in IN with Lola,

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44 To get ahead, but children are in need of love. It is not the same.
2019.07.06). In this same line, Sonia, Lola’s mother, who stays in Huaytsik taking care of their three children, feels that:

*acá en este caso si el papá no está en ello, yo digo que ellos tienen empleo, si es cierto, le están dando dinero, quizá zapatos y cosas bonitas. Yo pienso, que pues, no tiene la amistad o cariño porque los niños están creciendo lejos y los papás aparte. Ellos viven como solteros. Son muchas responsabilidades*45.

(Sonia in IN with Lola, 2019.07.06)

For Sonia, fathers are important figures, not just economically, but in terms of caring love for their children. She has seen how people abandon their families and start a new life in the Riviera.

This was the case of Elsa, the mother of Dina and Nelson, in K2 and *de oyente*46 respectively. Elsa met Dina’s father while working in the Riviera, but then he started a new family in Playa del Carmen and abandoned Elsa while she was pregnant with Dina. Dina has never met her father, and in the last couple of years, her father has been trying to be in touch with them since he wants to meet Dina, but Elsa has told him:

*“no, si la quieres mantener tienes que primero mandarme el gasto, pero si es de conocer y ya de ahí no la vas a mantener, ¿para qué?” -le digo- “es mejor que ella esté bien aquí sin tu apoyo” -le digo- está mejor ahírita que está contenta, no sabe nada*47.

(IN with Elsa, 2018.07.24)

Elsa has thought about going back to the Riviera to work, but now she prefers to stay with her children since they are too little, and she wouldn’t like to abandon them even if staying in Huaytsik means living under tremendous economic pressure. She mentioned that

45 here if the father is not on it, I say they have a job, that is true, they are giving money, even shoes and pretty things. I think, that, well, the children do not have the love or the friendship since they are growing up at a distance, and fathers are away. They live like bachelors. There are too many responsibilities.

46 auditing

47 “no, if you want to support [your children], first send me money, because if it is just for meeting her and then you won’t give us money, then, why?”–I told him– “It is better for her to be here without your support”–I tell him–it is better now, she's happy, she doesn’t know anything.
living costs are rising since more money moves through town because of the expansion of tourism; this has provoked the creation of new social hierarchies in town, leaving people who do not engage in temporary circular migrations further marginalized (see also Armstrong-Fumero 2009).

Adriana, a mother of two in Palal-na, also struggles with the idea of working for her children, but at the same time not being present in their daily life. Living in Cancún and working as a maid in a hotel an hour away from the city, Adriana barely has time to sleep and attend to her husband. Bringing her children to Cancún is unthinkable for her, so she prefers for them to be with her parents in Huaytsik. In her opinion, since Cancún has become a dangerous place to raise children, she prefers that they stay away from the city—now ranked in the top 5 most violent cities in Mexico (Calderón, Heinle, Rodríguez Ferreira & Shirk, 2019). However, her decision to leave her children with her parents has not been smoothly accepted by her husband:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Entonces tu esposo se los quiere regresar, tú quieres tal vez que se quedan ahí, pero si él se los quiere regresar ¿han platicado de que tal vez tendrías que dejar de trabajar?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> So, your husband wants to bring them back, you want them to stay there, but if he wants to bring them back, have you actually talked about the possibility of you stopping working?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adriana:</strong> Sí, dice que no porque si dejo de trabajar a él no le va a alcanzar.</td>
<td><strong>Adriana:</strong> Yes, he says no, because if I stop working, he won’t have enough money to sustain us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Sí, exacto.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Yes, exactly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adriana:</strong> Por eso igual mi papá me dijo, “si te está obligando a dejar, no, tienes que ver por tus hijos, no por lo que él te diga”.</td>
<td><strong>Adriana:</strong> That’s why my dad said to me, “if he is forcing you to leave, no, you have to look after your children, not just do whatever he tells you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Claro, tus hijos son lo primero.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Of course, your children come first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adriana:</strong> Sí porque Cancún se está volviendo más peligroso, si tienes que tener a alguien de confianza, mucha gente trae a personas de</td>
<td><strong>Adriana:</strong> Yes, because Cancun is becoming more dangerous. You have to have someone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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48 Similar sentiments were reported in my interview with another couple, Adrián and Marta (2018.06.07).
Moreover, as Elisa recognized in one of our interviews, it was not just people from the communities who were migrating, but from other states, who also bring other languages to the linguistic ecology of the Peninsula (IN 2018.02.09). For example, Adriana’s husband is from Chiapas, a southern state in Mexico, and the poorest state in the country. Like many Chiapanecos and most of the people that come from Huaytsik, he migrated to the Peninsula in search of a better life (Hernández Hernández, 2011). Adriana is his second wife. He was married in Chiapas where he left two children, to whom he sends money and whom he tries to see at least a couple of times per year. According to Adriana, this experience has motivated him to not repeat the same pattern of abandoning his children. However, even though he asks Adriana to bring their children to Cancún, they are both aware that this would affect their family economy since she would need to stop working. Actually, it is because his ex-wife has been asking for maintenance money for his children in Chiapas, that Adriana started to work in order for them to have enough money to maintain their children in Huaytsik and his children in Chiapas. No trabajaba porque mi esposo trabajaba, pero ahorita como mi esposo tiene dos hijos aparte, ya le empezaron a exigir la manutención y todo, ya no nos alcanzaba (IN with Adriana, 2019.07.17). On the flip side, even if they both miss their children a lot, they know they are better off in Huaytsik, since they are not in a small room all day long. However, they also know that their children miss them a lot because they cry every time they leave the town.
Nonetheless, it is not just Cancún but also towns like Cobá that have become satellite towns for people from Chiapas or Tabasco in order to travel to their jobs in hotels in the Riviera every day (FN 2018.03.09; 03.07). For many, Cobá has become a cheaper option than Cancún for their families to survive, and eventually school their children in the Indigenous modality schools in the communities (FN 2018.03.05; 2019.07.08).

Moreover, many of the people who come from states like Chiapas, Tabasco, Guerrero or Veracruz are marrying people from the communities in the inner Peninsula, as in Adriana’s case, and as a consequence, impacting the ways languages are lived and talked within the families (Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Main migration routes to Quintana Roo](image)

Knowing this, when I interviewed Adriana in Cancún, I asked her what was the role of Maya language in her family. For her, it is important that her children speak Maya, but
since her husband speaks Tzotzil, a Maya language spoken in Chiapas, they speak in Spanish amongst themselves and their children. They have compared their own languages, Maya and Tzotzil, and even though they have identified *palabras que sí son lo mismo y así, otras así no*, they prefer to not confuse their children and stick to Spanish, even though she believes that her children will learn some Maya as they live with their grandparents (IN with Adriana, 2019.07.17).

Against this background, instead of taking advantage of the multilingual nature of the families, there has been a process of linguistic homogenization, where Spanish becomes the home language, which is further promoted by schools as it becomes the language of instruction in both Indigenous and general modality preschools (FN 2015.05.07; 2019.06.26; 07.10). Even further, and paradoxically, instead of taking advantage of the potential linguistic repertoires and Indigenous funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), families and schools have opened their multilingual stance to English as a desired language to be taught from the early ages (FN 2018.04.19).

For Linda, who was a CONAFE* promoter at the time of my interview with her, these migratory patterns also affect the ways languages are spoken in Huaytsik and how Maya is positioned vis à vis other languages, since this process makes children

*percibir* que ellos se sienten menos, porque los niños de la ciudad traen otras ideas. Los niños [de la Riviera] cuando llegan hablan español y tienen una influencia sobre los niños de la comunidad. Lejos de que los papás hablen en maya cuando vienen, les dicen, “tú no hablas maya, tú hablas español.”

(IN with Linda, 2016.07.18)

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49 Words that are the same and also, others that are not

50 National Council of Education Promotion (CONAFE by its acronym in Spanish)

51 perceive that they feel less, because children from the city bring other ideas. When children [from the Riviera] arrive, they speak Spanish and they have an influence over the community children. Far from the [idea] that parents speak in Maya when they come, they tell their children, "do not speak Maya, speak Spanish".
During my years in Huaytsik, it was common to hear what Linda expressed in parties and even during the interviews I conducted with parents; however, at the same time, except for a principal in one of the Indigenous preschools (FN 2017.07.13), I never found a person who did not think that learning Maya was important for their children. In most cases, parents understood that Maya was an important feature of their identity and were also aware of the importance of Spanish as a language that allows them to aspire to a job (IN with Sonia, 2018.02.25; IN with Yuri, 2018.05.23; FN 2015.05.07; 2016.07.18; 2017.10.31; 2018.01.08). Still, as might be expected in one of the most touristic regions in the world, Maya and Spanish were not enough to get a better salary, and thus, for many parents, learning English was the next step to get a better job:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yuri</strong>: Este, o sea, tratan de hablar más el español y la maya se va quedando más atrás, y pues sus razones no sé, me imagino cada quien es personal porque vaya dejando la maya, o quizás porque así tratan de enseñar a los niños para que cuando se vayan a trabajar les sea más fácil. Ya sabiendo más en el español, porque ahorita cuando salen a trabajar es acá a Playa, a Cancún y es donde se habla más la maya y ahora lo que piden igual, lo que piden es algo de inglés.</td>
<td><strong>Yuri</strong>: That is, they try to speak more Spanish and the Maya is falling behind, and they have their own reasons. I imagine everyone leaves Maya for their own personal reasons, or perhaps because they try to teach children so that when they go to work it will be easier for them. Already knowing more Spanish, because right now when they go to work it is here in Playa, Cancun and that is where Maya is spoken and now what they ask for, what they ask is that they know some English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Claro.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Of course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yuri</strong>: Poco a poco se ha ido quedando atrás la maya. Pero para mí es importante que hablen los dos, tanto la maya como el español y ya más grandecitos, bueno en la secundaria se les enseña inglés.</td>
<td><strong>Yuri</strong>: Little by little, Maya has been left behind. But for me it is important that they speak both, Maya and Spanish, and as they grow up, yes, well, they teach them English in middle school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yuri, Jacinto’s mother, tries to speak as much as possible to her children in Maya, but with the experience of being engaged in the seasonal migration to the Riviera, she understands that speaking Maya and Spanish is not enough. Moreover, she recognizes the
importance of English being taught to her children for their future jobs. Many mothers around town shared her opinion, and it was common for them to ask me if I could teach their children English since

*ellos necesitan más el inglés por el trabajo en la Riviera, pero el que les enseñan en la Riviera es básico y además se los piden para obtener trabajos. Claro, las lenguas maternales también son muy importantes, todo es importante* 52. (Mother from another Indigenous school in town, 2017.10.10; also, FN 2016.05.25; 2015.05.07)

These assertions surface what Hornberger and colleagues (2018, p. 169) have defined as the “intertwining dynamic of the potential equality and actual inequality of languages”, where there are “glaring power differences among languages in society in the face of the linguistic dictum that all languages are potentially equal”. Parents understood that all languages are important, and that one language is not a substitute for another language, in this case English for Maya or Spanish for Maya (FN 2016.05.29). However, they also understand that some languages allow people to have access to certain spaces while others do not. English was always brought up as the language that would bring them access to better jobs.

“Progress in English”

The link of English to economic success and the new language regimes that English was bringing to the Peninsula were palpable for most of the people in Huaytsik (FN 2015.05.07; 2018.01.08; Kachru, 1986; Purkarthofer & De Korne, 2019). In 2015, while I was doing a linguistic landscape of the town in order to get acquainted with some of the

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52 They need English more because of the work in the Riviera, but what is taught in the Riviera is basic, and besides they ask it of them in order to get the jobs. Of course, maternal languages are also very important, everything is important.
linguistic practices at different homes, Beto, a father of two primary school children who came back to Huaytsik every two weeks from Tulum, shared that he has noticed

\[ \text{que el inglés y el maya son muy importantes en la zona. Hasta tengo un diccionario en maya- francés-inglés y un libro de la ONU de historias de animales que esta escrito en maya y español}\textsuperscript{53}. \] (Beto in FN 2015.05.08)

While conducting that same linguistic landscape, I also interviewed the director of the local museum who mentioned that

\[ \text{por mas que Huaytsik este en corazón maya...y hay unas reformas para que el maya se enseñe en las primarias... los papás quieren formar a sus niños para trabajar en la zona turística, por la necesidad de trabajo. Se necesita el inglés y otros idiomas como francés}\textsuperscript{54}. \] (FN 2015.05.07)

The importance of English was also present in traditional celebrations such as the Jéets’ méek, where 4-month-old boys and 3-month-old girls are symbolically presented with the elements of Maya cosmology and the ways they can become useful agents for their families and their community (Lizama Quijano, 2007). In this celebration, girls are presented with three stones that symbolize a stove, while boys are presented with pumpkin, bean and corn seeds as they will harvest the land and bring food to their families. However, as is the case of many communities in the Yucatan Peninsula, many parents have the longing for their children to harvest the land, but equally harbor the hope their children will be economically successful through work in the Riviera (FN 2015.05.07; 05.08; 2018.05.23).

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\textsuperscript{53} that English and Maya are very important in the area. I even have a Maya-French-English dictionary and a UN book of animal stories that is written in English and Spanish.

\textsuperscript{54} even if Huaytsik is in the Maya heart and there are reforms for Maya to be taught in the primaries, parents want to raise their children in order for them to work in the touristic area, for need of a job. English and other languages, like French, are needed.
During *Jeets’ méek*, children are presented with important tools that will help children to reproduce their culture while also becoming successful. In 2016, my neighbors invited me to the *Jeets’ méek* of their newborn son. While we were all sharing some of the food that the child also had to try to become part of the Maya community, people started to place things on the table that would be useful for the child to become successful in life. The dad put a mobile phone on the table and then quickly brought the book “Progress in English”, symbolizing that their son would go to school and become a good student (FN 2016.05.29)—a common idea that has tied the spread of English to knowledge and economic advancement (Philipson, 2009), and in which, in the case of the Peninsula, at least the economic advancement pairing to English was a truism.

For example, Luz, who now works as a waitress on the beach in Akumal, said that her hotel used to teach their employees English, but the teacher was not very good. Her own working English comes from high school in Huaytsik, where her teacher told the students *aprendan esto, eso es para que se defiendan en la vida*55 (Luz in FN 2019.07.15). She remembered that this teacher first taught them English to become waiters in restaurants and then English for bartending. It has been because she finished high school, as well as learning some basic waiting English that she has been successful at getting jobs since she started to migrate to the Riviera. However, she also thinks that coming to the Riviera with some Maya knowledge puts you in an advantageous position, as many tourists like when you speak to them in Maya or when you teach them some Maya words, and as a reward, they give you more tips. In her case, Maya has also helped her to be strategic with her colleagues and speak in Maya whenever there is a problem in

55 “learn this, this is for you to defend yourselves in life”.

86
their jobs or just when they want to point out which tourists are leaving more tips (Luz in FN 2019.07.15).

Adrián and Marta, parents of Carlos who was in K2 and Miriam, who was de oyente in Palal-na for two years, have been working in the Riviera Maya for over 10 years in the hotel industry. They left Huaytsik right after they finished high school and have been planning to come back to live with their children, who are taken care of by their grandparents. Because of their work schedules they see their children once a month and sometimes cannot talk with them since they come back to their home in Playa del Carmen too late and their children are already asleep. It is very difficult for them to be separated from their children, but they understand that these sacrifices are worth it to enable them to build their house in Huaytsik and be all reunited. Their decade of experience in hotels has allowed them to see that English is very important for having better jobs. Both of them are Maya speakers and they want their children to speak Maya, Spanish and English. Moreover, they firmly believe that si aprendes lo que es la maya, de la misma manera, igual el inglés se te facilitaría para aprenderlo (Adrián in IN with Adrián and Marta, 2018.06.07). Even though they hold to these beliefs, unfortunately, they communicate with their children in Spanish and according to them, their children understand Maya, but barely speak it.

Elisa understands that the language ecology is complex in Huaytsik in terms of the factors that influence language change, for example, the presence of other languages, such as English. According to her, since parents are constantly migrating to Playa del Carmen and Cancún, they want their children to speak English, but they do not realize

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56 auditing
that the tourism industry also wants speakers of Maya (see Heller, Pujolar & Duchène, 2014 on the commodification of minoritized languages), not just English:

Por ejemplo, aquí hay mucha gente que trabaja fuera, que los niños están con los abuelitos. Ya vió, varios están con los abuelitos, y ellos vienen, traen, vienen y hablan en español e inglés a sus hijos [ríe]. Inclusive hay más niños que les gusta más el inglés, y está bien, pero pus primero es [ríe] la lengua. Bueno, en esta zona para todos los que trabajan en Playa, pues si sabes inglés ganas muy bien, pero también maya porque hay unos que están en Xcaret y hay unos que hablan maya y les pagan por hablar la maya. Pus hay de todo, nomás que los papás no lo ven de esa manera57.

(Elisa in FN 2018.01.08)

Elisa’s judgment did not err on how English was influencing the ways language practices were changing in Huaytsik. On June 13th, 2017, the town’s high school did their first English spelling bee. This was the final English evaluation for high school students, who during the school year take three English sessions per week – one language structure class, and two practicum ones. When the spelling bee finished, the high school’s head, addressing the students, said ustedes que hablan dos idiomas siéntanse afortunados, ahora que van por un tercero también58, making a reference to how many of them are bilingual and English is a blessing or a stroke of luck they should take advantage of (FN 2017.06.13). These discourses of English were also frequent by other educational agents in town, such as Linda, who was responsible for the Adult Education coordination in town and is also a CONAFE promoter. When I interviewed her in regards to her educational role in Huaytsik, and specifically about language education in town,

57 For example, there are many people here that work out there, the children are with the grandparents. You have seen it, many are with their grandparents, and they come and speak in Spanish and English [laughs] to their children. There are even more children that like English more, and that is ok, but first is [laughs] the language. Well, in this region, all the people that work in Playa, well if you know English you earn very well, but also with Maya because there are some that are in Xcaret and they speak Maya and they are paid for speaking Maya. There are options for everyone, but parents do not see it that way.
58 You, who already speak two languages feel proud of it, now that you go for a third one, feel proud too.
she mentioned *son los muchachos y los niños los que lo hablan* [inglés], *pero no maya.*

*Desde el kinder ya se les está enseñando a los niños a hablar en inglés*\(^{59}\) (IN with Linda, 2016.07.18). Although it was not true that preschools in town are teaching English, nor Maya; English was present in different ways in the classroom\(^{60}\), but just like Maya, it was not taught.

On June 2019, as Elisa was handing out the report cards to the mothers, I asked her if she could allow me to see one of them. I noticed that in the description of the school there was a line where the teacher had to indicate the “*lengua indígena*”\(^{61}\) in which instruction was happening at the school. Besides that, there were no other lines or boxes where the development of the Indigenous language could be assessed. However, at the end of the report card there was a space dedicated to “*lengua extranjera (inglés)*”\(^{62}\), which had to be assessed every trimester. Since English was not taught at the school during this school year, Elisa did not evaluate its development (FN 2019.06.27; Figure 5).

\(^{59}\) it's the youngsters and the children who speak it [English], but not Maya. From kindergarten, children are taught to speak in English.

\(^{60}\) Explored in Chapter 5: Indigenous Early Childhood Education: A Market of Opportunities.

\(^{61}\) Indigenous language

\(^{62}\) Foreign language (English)
That same afternoon, Don Donato and Doña Margarita, parents of Nicolás, now a Palal-na alumnus, invited us to drink some beers at their house. There, I took the opportunity to ask Elisa why English was present in the report card. She told me that this was a new addendum that resulted from the new educational reform (SEP, 2017a). Moreover, she added that with this reform now she has extra money to bring an arts, physical education or English teacher to the school, but there is no money for a Maya teacher. She *sient[e], que no necesitan inglés los alumnos, necesitan aprender maya*63. Still, she has insisted to the other schools that they should organize together to bring an English teacher, since parents ask for it; however, the other schools have not responded to her queries (FN 2019.06.27).

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63 feels that students do not need English, they need to learn Maya.
Two weeks after this conversation, I had the opportunity to interview the municipality’s Education Chief, who is in charge of supervising Indigenous education at all the educational levels. During our conversation, I asked him why Indigenous modality preschools had to teach and evaluate English, but not Maya (IN with Education Chief, 2019.07.10). He told me that:

_Sí, en las escuelas generales de por sí el plan y programa maneja que se debe de enseñar inglés, sí, eso es obligatorio. Pero no en todas. Hay maestros de inglés que van a enseñar, pero aquí con nosotros, allá ese apartado [refiriéndose a la boleta] es de lengua indígena. Nosotros vemos lengua indígena, también en preescolar_.

While having this conversation with him, it was evident that he had not seen the new report card, and he was assuming that its _apartado_ was for evaluating Maya, but he also accepted that they do not evaluate it and never have. In his opinion, _la maya se está perdiendo porque mucha gente se va a la Riviera Maya. Entonces, se va perdiendo, aprenden inglés también. Y lo quieren traer muchos, yo que estoy en educación preescolar lo veo_. In the last couple of years, he has seen the pressure to include English from preschool. Although he understands the importance of this language in the region, he has also seen how it has put pressure on Maya to be lost, which adds to the lack of teachers that do not speak Maya and thus cannot teach it—a vicious circle. (IN with Education Chief, 2019.07.10; FN 2017.08.30).

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64 Yes, in the general modality schools the curriculum says that English must be taught, yes, it is obligatory. But not in all [the schools]. There are English teachers that will teach, but here with us, that section [referring to the report card] is for the Indigenous language. We see Indigenous languages, also in preschool.

65 _apartado_

66 Maya is being lost because a lot of people go to the Riviera Maya. Then, it is being lost, they learn English as well. And many want to bring it here, since I am in preschool education, I see it.
Schooling Maya in a Touristic Environment

For Elisa, one of the main impacts on the quality of education and the teaching of Maya at schools is the lack of people deciding to become teachers. For her, a lot has to do with the fact that teachers are not offered a secure placement in schools but are moved from one place to another according to the needs of the schools in the state. *Con la situación que estamos viviendo como maestros, muchos muchachos ya no quieren estudiar esto.* This situation pushes people to leave the profession and take up other occupations in the Riviera such as becoming waiters, cooks, cab drivers or gardeners (Elisa in FN 2017.08.30). In her case, she knows that people not choosing the teaching path has affected Indigenous schools, and specially the multigrade ones, since the ‘Centro Regional de Educación Normal de Felipe Carrillo Puerto’, which is the professional school in charge of preparing future teachers for the State of Quintana Roo, does not have a lot of students and they had to close some cohorts. Moreover, whenever these students need to do a practicum, they do it at general modality schools. Indigenous multigrade schools are the last ones to receive any practitioners. To her knowledge

> *en la normal hay como 20 muchachas nada mas, y son las que van a salir a hacer sus prácticas. Entonces son muy pocas para todas las escuelas que hay. No hay ¿por qué? Por la misma situación que son tiempos difíciles para nosotros y ya no hay trabajo. En muchas promociones pasa lo mismo. Entonces mejor se van a estudiar turismo y se van a la playa. Muchos de ellos ya ni nos consideran, y ganan mucho mejor que nosotros, ¿verdad? Ya lo sabe la supervisora*.  

(Elisa in FN 2017.08.30)

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67 With the situation that we are experiencing with teachers, many young people do not want to study this at the professional school there are around 20 women and that’s it. These are the ones doing their practicum. These are too few for all the schools that exist. Why? Precisely because these are difficult times for us and there is no work. The same thing happens in many cohorts. Then they go and study tourism and go to the beach. Many do not even consider us, and they earn more money than us, right? The supervisor already knows this.
Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the municipality to which Huaytsik belongs, has 72 preschools, including those that offer both Indigenous and general modalities (SEP, 2019a). Thus, 20 practitioners are not enough for all these schools, and as she mentioned, Indigenous multigrade schools are taken into account at the end. This was the reason why, at that moment in time, Elisa also decided to stop registering children at Palal-na since she cannot attend to all of them by herself with no help.

Nonetheless, the teaching profession is not the only one suffering from a shortage of professionals in the present and near future. The tourism industry, as the main economic engine in the region, pulls youth to the tourism service industry rather than to become professionals, further exacerbating the multidimensional poverty of many of these populations (Secretaria de Cultura del Gobierno del Estado De Quintana Roo, 2011). For example, during the last decade, a similar phenomenon has been happening in the health industry, where the youth are deciding to go and work in the Riviera, rather than investing time and money in becoming nurses or doctors (FN 2016.05.22). Even though these physical and professional migrations are “not brain drain of high-level labour power”, their effects are no less damaging (Dufresne & Locher, 1995, p.198). This process has already been affecting the communities in all the region, as there are less doctors that can be placed in the most marginalized communities (Dorado, 2019). For example, in Huaytsik, classes had to be cancelled because parents had to go to the doctor whenever he was in the health center. When he was there, they had to line up from early in the morning in order to get an appointment before he had to leave, or medicines ran out (FN 2015.05.07; 2016.06.15; 2018.01.23; 01.24; 05.03). This, plus the constant in-state and interstate migration, according to the ‘Diagnóstico de la situación del Sector Salud
del Estado de Quintana Roo 2018*, will keep impacting the already strained health and education sectors in the state:

*Se espera que la tendencia del crecimiento de la población del estado a expensas de la migración continúe, así por varios años lo que provocará que la parte media de la pirámide poblacional se engrose, trayendo consigo una demanda de servicios hacia esos grupos de edad y a las necesidades de estos, incluso se espera que estos nuevos migrantes lleguen a los focos ya existentes. (SESA, 2018, p.147)*

For more than a decade, the state government has been aware that these migratory patterns exert further stress to the towns where there are already many needs (Varillas, 2006). Against this background, and even though she strongly desires to go back to Huaytsik to live, Luz has decided to buy a house in Puerto Maya for her children to study careers, if so they desire. With this house, she will have access to many services, and if needed, she can maintain herself and her family by renting the house and eventually go back and live in Huaytsik:

*Cuando crezcan los niños y si ellos quieren venir a trabajar en lo mismo que nosotros, porque sé que algún día todos van a venir, mis hermanos, mis hijos, todos van a querer venir a trabajar y en lugar de pagar mucha renta, ya les cobro la renta.*

(Luz in IN with Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15)

Nonetheless, according to Elisa, it is not just the lack of practitioners in her school that has impacted her teaching, but also the lack of collaboration from parents, as many of them are absent for most of the week since they are based in the Riviera, and grandparents, who stay as the primary caregivers, cannot go to the school to help as they

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*It is expected that the trend of population growth in the state at the expense of migration will continue for several years, which will cause the middle of the population pyramid to thicken, bringing with it a demand for services towards these age groups and their needs. It is even expected that these new migrants will arrive to already existing focal points of population growth.*

*When the children are grown, and if they want to come and work in the same industry as us, because at one point everyone will come, my siblings, my children. Everyone will want to come and work, and instead of paying a lot of rent, I will ask them to pay me the rent.*
are also overwhelmed by taking care of their children's children (FN 2019.06.27).
Further, whenever these parents are in town, it is not that they purposely avoid collaborating, but in many cases, they come for a couple of hours and have no time, nor interest, to come and clean the school. They want to spend time eating, having a couple of hours with their children and enjoying some down time in their town. Therefore, they pay people in town to come to clean the school or cut back the plants on the schoolgrounds for it to be safer for children (IN with Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15; Adrián and Marta, 2018.06.07; Sonia, 2018.02.25). Yet, Elisa wants to avoid asking people for money or request that parents pay for help, since she knows it can be detrimental if parents start to think her school is one of those that asks for voluntary quotas. This could lead to her losing potential students.

Thus, she was always caught in the middle between asking parents for help but not wanting paid help as she knew this could send a message to the community that could affect the school in the long run. Her decisions were strategic and have been successful in sustaining the school throughout her tenure but have also affected the way schooling is done. Tourism, and the migration it entails, affect her duties as a teacher, as she spends her time on tasks that should have been done by the parents. Thus, the creation of spaces to promote Maya, for example, having time to read the materials for Indigenous and migrant children, is curtailed.

*Schooling Maya in an Indigenous Multilingual Environment*

As an Indigenous modality school, Palal-na has the right to receive, at the beginning of each school year, books that have been supposedly contextualized for Indigenous populations as well as for immigrant populations. During the 2017-2018
school year, Palal-na received these books only in March, four months before classes ended (FN 2018.03.07). Elisa has received these materials since 2013, but she barely uses them since the Maya language that is represented in the books, according to her, is not the Maya that she or the children speak. Therefore, she just uses a couple of activities in the books, and the rest of them are used for children to cut figures and drawings for other activities (FN 2017.09.01;09.26;10.31; 2018.07.12).

These materials, called “Juegos y materiales educativos de la niñez indígena y migrante” assume that all migrants in Mexico are Indigenous and thus has the same activities for both groups (SEP, 2014). Even though Elisa has not received professional development on how to use these materials, each one of these books is accompanied by a guide which helps teachers to use them. Although the guides do not deliberately address the relationship between Indigeneity and migration (i.e., why Indigenous people are the main people migrating), they are aids that can help teachers to reflect about the development of Indigenous languages in migratory contexts. Some questions that these materials include are:

“¿qué lenguas se hablan en casa y en la comunidad (incluso en la región)?; si son lenguas locales o han llegado con el fenómeno de la migración, de otros estados o países; ¿cuáles son las prácticas sociales de lenguaje y las prácticas sociales y culturales donde se expresa la lengua y cuáles son estas formas de expresión?; ¿cuál es el ambiente alfabetizador —en lengua indígena y español— en la comunidad, casa y escuela?”

(SEP, 2014, p. 11)

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71 “Educational games and materials for Indigenous and migrant children”
72 what languages are spoken at home and the community (even in the region)?; if these are local language or they have arrived because of migration from other states or countries; what are the linguistic social practices and the social and cultural practices where the language is expressed, and what are the forms of expression?; what is the literacy environment—in the Indigenous language and Spanish—in the community, at home and the school?
The guides invite the teachers to adapt the activities to the languages their children speak by helping them to recognize how many languages are represented in their classroom and how they can promote the multilingual nature of the environment. However, at the same time, the guide also mentions how many of the schools that serve Indigenous and immigrant populations are multigrade. Teachers can take advantage of this opportunity by using the linguistic richness in their classroom, but at the same time, the guide acknowledges it is a challenge where teachers do not have sufficient time to plan for the activities. This was probably the case for Elisa, who has not had time to read the guidelines to use these books.

The growth and diversity of languages represented in the region has been noticed by the municipality’s Education Chief too. For him, as tourism is growing, Maya usage is decreasing. He believes that the reason for this is that people from Chiapas are coming to the schools con sus propios dialectos y esto afecta los perfiles de egreso. No hablan ni español, ni Maya y eso impacta mucho el perfil de los alumnos en el estado73 (Education Chief in FN 2019.06.26). He knows that schools are not prepared to receive these students, as they work as spaces where Spanish becomes the lingua franca and the language of instruction. Children come from

Chiapas, de Veracruz, hay de Tabasco, y son diferentes lenguas, entonces, los niños van a la escuela, pero hablan español, pero también se comunican en su lengua, cada niño va aprendiendo algo él solo de la otra cultura, no de todo, pero también aprenden74. (IN with Education Chief, 2019.07.10)

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73 with their own dialects and these affect the students’ exit profiles. They do not speak Spanish nor Maya and this impacts a lot the student profile in the state.
74 Chiapas, from Veracruz, from Tabasco, and they are different languages, so then, children go to school, but they speak Spanish, and also, they communicate in their language, each child is learning something from the other culture, not everything, but they also learn.
He understands that children are learning something, but the target Indigenous language is definitely not part of it. For him

todos los niños indígenas son inteligentes, aprenden. Ná mas falta que tengan una buena enseñanza. En todo México no se pueden reprobar a niños de primero y segundo grado, grave grave ¿por qué? Este niño va a estar arrastrando toda la primaria. Tal vez lo ven también por la parte de otros países que exigen, ¿no? En México se dice, “a mí me vas a entregar un porcentaje bueno de educación para que yo te de dinero para el fin de año”. Nos condicionan. ¿Qué tienen que hacer? Maquillar e inventar. Las estadísticas, dicen los japoneses, son engañosas. Como decía un cronista, “se parecen a los bikinis, muestran todo, casi todo, pero no muestran lo principal.”

Since there is lack of resources, people lie about how well Indigenous schools are doing which perpetuates the deficiencies many of these schools embark on, such as saying that they are teaching Maya, when they are not. However, he knows that even if they want to teach Maya, the migratory situation in the region is unique and complex when compared to the rest of the country. In his last meeting with the State Minister of Education, the Minister mentioned to him that

en Cancún llegan como cuatro mil niños cada año, nuevos, de diferentes etnias y eso también complica porque ya se integran en grupos y ya no hablamos Maya. [Por eso] nosotros estamos exigiendo que haya escuelas de educación indígena en las ciudades porque hay mucha gente que habla, muchos niños hablan maya. No lo aceptan, todavía no hay esa cultura. En algunos estados, por ejemplo, Yucatán sí tiene escuelas donde hay, pero aquí en Quintana Roo no. Hay como un pequeño choque también con el otro sistema, son celosos de que entremos aquí [los de modalidad Indígena].

75 all the Indigenous children are intelligent, they learn. They just need good teaching. In all Mexico you cannot fail children in first and second grade, this is a serious serious matter, why? This child will be dragging his whole primary education. Maybe they do it because other countries ask for things to be done like this, no? In Mexico it’s said “you are going to deliver a good educational percentage in order for me to give you money at the end of the school year”. They condition us. What needs to be done? Make up and invent data. Statistics, the Japanese say, are deceiving. As a chronicler said, “they are like bikinis, they show everything, almost everything, but they do not show the main part”.

76 in Cancún approximately 4000 children arrive every year, new, from different ethnicities, and that also complicates things since they become integrated into the classrooms and thus, we do not speak Maya. [That is why] we are asking for Indigenous schools to be in the cities because there are a lot of people that speak, many children that speak Maya. They do not accept it, that culture does not yet exist. In some states, for example, Yucatán, they do have these schools, but not here in Quintana Roo no. There is small opposition with the other system, they are very jealous about us [Indigenous modality schools] entering there.
The idea of having Indigenous schools in urban communities was also shared by Elisa a year before, when she told me that

antes se decia que en las ciudades no, por ejemplo, Cancún, Playa, claro, porque es turístico, pero también hay gente de comunidad... hay muchos de otros estados, pero no entiendo por qué no... En Tulum si hay, hasta en Lázaro Cárdenas y Morelos. Es importante que abarquemos todo, no solo los pueblos, sino las ciudades. Es como si todos estuvieran en las comunidades, es así, y eso es mentira. Todas las colonias, todas las retiradas, todos son de comunidades, todos hablan maya77.

(Elisa in FN 2018.02.09)

Elisa describes the reality of current migratory patterns where many of the people that migrate to the Riviera and who stay there, settle in the periphery of the touristic centers. These people do not enjoy the fancy touristic life, but actually, for the most part, live under conditions that are worse than those in their towns (FN 2017.07.15; Acuña, & Medina, 2017; Hernández Hernández, 2011; Llanes Salazar, 2011). In all the interviews that I conducted with parents that had to live in the Riviera, one of the main reasons for them to not have their children with them was the physical environment their children would live in, which were basically concrete rooms with gates in their patios—a very different experience to their open spaces in Huaytsik (e.g., IN with Adriana, 2019.07.17; Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15; Adrián and Marta, 2018.06.07).

Both the Education Chief and Elisa attributed the lack of Indigenous schools in urban centers to political disagreements between the general modality representatives and the Indigenous modality representatives; no han dejado fundar una escuela de educación

77 it used to be said that they should not be in the cities, for example, Cancún, Playa, of course [not], because they are touristic, but there are also community people…. there are people from many states, but I do not understand why not. In Tulum there are Indigenous schools, even in Lázaro Cárdenas and Morelos. It is important that our coverage reaches every area, not only the towns, but also the cities. It is as if everyone was in the communities and that is a lie. All the neighborhoods, all the ones that are far away, they are all community people, they all speak Maya.
indígena; no hay preescolar ni primaria de educación indígena por la secretaria\(^{78}\) (Elisa in FN 2018.02.09). According to them, the general modality representatives do not understand that many of these children need an Indigenous modality school in the urban centers, and especially Elisa believes that this is where Indigenous modality schools would be more beneficial since it is where the language change originates, and from there it travels back to the towns (IN with Education Chief, 2019.07.10; FN 2018.02.09). Still, Elisa recognizes that it would be a challenge to teach children from other states who speak other Indigenous languages since aquí, nosotros somos maya y si vienen de otro dialecto nosotros no sabemos, tienen que aprender el español\(^{79}\) (IN with Elisa, 2019.07.10). Moreover, according to the school’s supervisor, even if schools have professional development, with all the paperwork they need to fill out, it would almost be impossible to cumplir con las funciones pedagógicas y de asesoría lo cual es lo que más importa\(^{80}\) (IN with supervisor, 2019.07.10). In the end, no matter whether the Indigenous modality schools are in the rural or urban spaces, professional development in multilingual education and a reduction in bureaucratic paperwork would still be needed in order for the schools and teachers to take advantage of the multilingual nature of the region and the linguistic funds of knowledge that many of these children bring to the schools.

**Migration: The Perspectives of Those Who Stay**

At Palal-na, most students have at least one member of their families commuting for work in the Riviera, and in many cases both parents are absent for weeks, leaving older

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\(^{78}\) they have not allowed establishment of an Indigenous Education school; there are no Indigenous education preschools nor primary schools, because of the Ministry.

\(^{79}\) here, we offer Maya and if they come from another dialect we do not know, they have to learn Spanish.

\(^{80}\) fulfill the pedagogical and advisory functions, which are what matter.
siblings and grandparents in charge of the preschoolers. Some parents get to see their children once every month (FN 2017.11.13; 2019.07.17), others once every two weeks (FN 2017.11.13; 2019.07.15), once every week (FN 2018.05.24; 06.14) or every day. The frequency of their visits depends a lot on the debts they have. In the case of Luz and Rubén, who tried to be back every week, teníamos mucha deuda y estuvimos pagando y me fui muy muy abajo, como dicen, y ya casi cada quince días viajaba\(^81\) (Luz in IN with Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15). They preferred to send money every week, spend less money in the Riviera and save money until they were in a better economic situation in order to go to Huaytsik and spend money with their children with no restriction in case they asked them for things (FN 2019.07.15). Oftentimes, parents also take their children to the Riviera Maya, where they have no opportunity to go to school for weeks at a time. Meanwhile, for those left in Huaytsik, parental absence leaves the daily caregivers, such as grandparents, uncles or siblings, as the only “adults” in charge of children, but perhaps without the same level of commitment to the child’s education a parent would have. They often ignore homework assignments, even when this has been, literally, stapled to the students’ clothes. Moreover, when siblings are left in charge of their younger brothers or sisters, they forget to take them to school, arrive later than usual, or prefer them to stay and help them with household chores (FN 2017.11.13).

Moreover, to be a grandparent with these responsibilities means that you will always fail some of the children. Johnny’s grandmother, Luz’s mother, has to take care of not just Johnny and his sister Carla, but also her other children's children. For her, it is very

\(^{81}\) we had a lot of debt and we were paying and felt pretty down, as they said, and I was barely travelling every two weeks.
difficult because a veces se me complica ir a las juntas porque en unas ocasiones es la junta el mismo día en todas las escuelas y pues se me hace muy difícil ir a ellas\textsuperscript{82} (Johnny’s grandmother in FN 2018.07.11). She prioritizes in terms of the urgency of things. For example, hotels need to know if any of their workers have children in order for them to support them with some school materials for the upcoming school year. For Johnny’s grandmother this is an urgent matter, so even though there are meetings that she needs to attend to, she prefers to go to each school where her grandchildren go and ask for the report card and any necessary paperwork in order for her to send them to their grandchildren’s parents and therefore receive the support from the hotels (FN 2018.06.18).

However, it is not just Luz’s mother who is doing them a favor. Ruben’s mother, who lives in San Francisco, a town that is one hour away from Huaytsik, helps take care of their oldest daughter who is disabled. His mother is the one that is in charge of taking her to bi-weekly therapies in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the municipal seat, as well as to the school. Thus, whenever they go to Huaytsik, they just spend a couple of hours there with Johnny and Carla, and then go to San Francisco to see their other daughter. Their oldest daughter’s psychologist has already told them that they need to spend more time with her, but they cannot, even as this is one of the things that they desire the most. As they engage with this routine every time they go to see their children, Luz mentions that all this sacrifice is worthy since de hecho llego a trabajar al hotel cansada, pero ya vi a mis hijos, ya están felices ellos y yo estoy feliz\textsuperscript{83} (Luz in IN with Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15).

\textsuperscript{82} sometimes it is very complicated to go to the meetings because in some occasions the meetings are at the same time in all the schools, and it is difficult to attend all of them.

\textsuperscript{83} in fact I arrive tired to my job at the hotel, but at least I saw my children, they are happy and I am happy
Doña Nicandra, who is in charge of eight grandchildren, two of them students at Palal-na, believes that children need to be with their parents and not to be abandoned, because children feel sad and it is the responsibility of parents to take care of them. Even though all her children send her money to buy food for her grandchildren, she thinks that many of her grandchildren would be better if they were with their parents (FN 2019.06.29).

Mario and Reina, in K3 and K1 respectively, also live with their grandparents. Their grandmother, Doña Elia, is in charge of them while also being in charge of her own children, making a total of seven in her household. Some of her own children are the same age as Mario, five years old, and some are younger than Reina, two years old. For Doña Elia, it is very challenging to be in charge of Mario and Reina, since she has to attend to all her children, work and also clean the house.

At the beginning of 2018, Mario and Reina did not go to school for almost three months. Thus, Elisa and I went to their house to see what was happening since we saw Mario selling homemade donuts around town, and when we asked him why he did not go to school, he did not tell us. Doña Elia said that she has not sent them to school since they need to help her to wash clothes and clean the house:

*Es que se me amontona el lavado, voy a reuniones, ahorita ya empezó las pláticas [de PROSPERA], llevar a pesar [a los niños para recibir la transferencia condicional], que no se que, solamente vueltas. Y al fin de semana voy a tener que lavar. Así lo hago ahorita. Por eso no la mandé hoy. Le estoy diciendo, ándale na'mas con un shortcito cortito, “no, me da vergüenza”dice.*

(Doña Elia in FN 2018.02.09)

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84 All my washing builds up, I go to meetings. Now the [PROSPERA] meetings already started, take them to be weighted [to receive the conditional cash transfer], I do not know what else, going round and round. During the weekend I will need to wash. That is how I do it now. That is why I did not send them today. I am telling [Mario] “come on just go in your shorts”, “no, I am ashamed” he says.

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Even though she encouraged Mario to go to school with his dirty clothes, he did not want to because he felt ashamed and preferred not to go. However, she also did not send her own children to nursery school since she did not have enough time and preferred for them to stay at home until they grow up and can go to the school by themselves. Moreover, it is also a challenge for her because many times all her children and grandchildren were sick, and she could barely attend all of them and ended up feeling desperate (FN 2018.02.09).

A week after this visit, Doña Elia told us she could not register Mario in any primary school for the upcoming year since she did not have time to do all the paperwork. This is the reason why from now on, she won’t take care of Mario nor Reina, but just of her own children since her daughter needs to be responsible for her own children and come back to Huaytsik and fight for her own children in order for them to be schooled (FN 2018.02.19). During the 2018-2019 school year, Reina was still registered at Palal-na, Mario flunked 1st grade, and was not registered to continue in the primary school for the 2019-2020 school year (FN 2019.06.28).

Migration and tourism affected not only Palal-na, but also Centro, the only general modality school in town. Teachers at Centro thought that children should be with their parents in the Riviera, especially when they have a disability. One day, as I was conducting one of my observations at Centro, I noticed that there was one child following a line in the patio, going round and round in a compulsive way. I asked a teacher at Centro if she knew what was happening to this child. She told me that the child does not speak but he understands everything. At that time, she thought that this K2 child had
some type of autism and was challenging her most of the times on purpose. Since he arrived at the school, she warned all her group how this boy behaves, and even though most of the children understood that he has some challenges at staying calm, many of the children still tried to follow him.

This child was looked after by his grandparents, since his mother is working in Cancún and she could not have him there, as there was nobody who could take care of him. The teacher believed that there are better services that could help this child to do better, since the school could not do much for him, and the grandparents did not know how to control him. She already asked the Ministry of Education for help, but the most they offered was to interview the parents, who are never in town. Thus, the only solution that the teacher came up with was to tell the grandparents to bring him to the school just three times a week, because he affected the way the rest of the group behaves (FN 2017.08.31). They acceded to this. Nonetheless, whenever he came to school, she did not include him in the classroom, but left him outside going round and round the patio.

The fear that children are not treated well at school was a thought that crossed Luz’s and Rubén’s minds all the time. For them, the most difficult part is pues de que crezcan los niños, yo pienso que es muy difícil porque no los veo crecer, no están con nosotros, eso es lo más difícil85 (Luz in IN with Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15). They felt that their children did not feel the abandonment since they talk to them every day. In their case, Carla, who is their youngest daughter, does not know any other way, since they left her

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85 for children to grow, I think that it is very difficult to not see them grow, they are not with us, that is the most difficult.
with her grandparents as soon as she was one year old, but Johnny still feels the abandonment. He sometimes even tells Luz

"mami, no vas a regresar nunca más a trabajar", y le digo, "no puedo, me gustaría, pero no se puede porque si dejo ahí, ahorita necesitamos hacer una casa aquí y así ya dejo de trabajar", y me dice, "ah, está bien, ya se pueden ir".

They always need to explain to Johnny that

"tenemos que trabajar por esto y por esto, si dejamos de trabajar ya no vas a tener lo que quieres. Si dejo de trabajar ya no va a ser lo mismo, no vas a tener los mismos privilegios, no vas a tener esto, no vas a tener lo otro."

(Luz in IN with Luz and Rubén, 2019.07.15)

Luz and Rubén know that their children are treated well at their grandparents’ houses and that the school is a safe place, but they still live with the fear that something bad could happen to their children while they are away.

The emotional burden and stress are of course felt by the children, which makes parents feel even worse. During December 2017, Elisa and I were walking around the town and saw Zara’s aunt. We asked her why Zara had not come to school for the last couple of weeks. She told us that Zara had been very sad, crying everyday asking for her mom. Therefore, her mom took her to Playa del Carmen and would be back in January (FN 2017.12.18). Zara was often absent from school, and even though she was graduating from preschool during the 2017-2018 school year, she was academically way below when compared to the other students, including those in K1 and K2. She could barely write her name, recognize the numbers from 1-5, and did not know many of the

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86 "mummy, you will never go back to work” and I tell him” I cannot, I would like to, but I cannot because if I left my job, we now need to build a house here, but then I will leave my job” and he tells me “ok, that is fine, you can go”.

87 we need to work for this and that, if we leave our job you won’t have what you want. If I leave my job, it won’t be the same, you won’t have the same privileges, you won’t have this or that.
colors. Her mother has noticed how whenever she is around town, Zara is very happy and talks about the school, but once she leaves everything falls apart for Zara.

When Zara’s father died, Zuzy—Zara’s mother—was invited to live with her parents-in-law in Tepich, a town 15 minutes away from Huaytsik. Both Zara and Zuzy went to Tepich to live, and during this time Zuzy was working as launderer in a hotel in the Riviera where she commuted daily. However, as time passed, she started to see how her father-in-law was trying to sexually abuse her and was telling Zara that “tú no eres mi mamá, que nada más, sólo eres mi tía” (IN with Zuzy, 2018.07.10). Zuzy knew this was not right and decided to go back to Huaytsik with her mother. As she went back to Huaytsik, her parents-in-law filed a suit against her saying she was abandoning Zara in order to see men in the Riviera. Since this was during the middle of the school year, she decided to ask Elisa if she could transfer Zara to Palal-na. Elisa understood Zuzy’s situation and accepted Zara in the school. However, it has always been difficult to leave Zara in the school because

el tiempo que no la traje, parece que un mes no la traje, la llevé porque cuando yo venía, lloraba ella y me perseguía y a mí me hacía llorar mucho. Y entonces, dije, “ah, la voy a abrazar y me voy”, no me importa que pierda un año más y que vuelva a estudiar en el kinder, decidí, pero ya me dice mi papá, dice, “llévala para que salga de su kinder, yo no creo que no te la reciba la maestra”, y la traje, lo bueno que, pues, no me dijo nada la maestra y continua estudiando, no me la volví a llevar.

(IN with Zuzy, 2018.07.10)

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88 you are not my mother, only my aunt.
89 the time that I did not bring her, I think it was a month, I took her with me because whenever I came, she cried and she ran after me and she made me cry a lot. So, I said, “ah, I will hug her and leave together with her”, I do not mind if she misses another year and that she starts kindergarten again, I decided. But my dad told me, “take her back for her to finish her kindergarten, I do not think the teacher won’t receive her for you”, so I took her, the good thing is, well, the teacher did not say anything, and she continues studying. I did not take her back with me.
However, even if Zara is with her family in Huaytsik, it is very difficult for Zara since many times Zuzy does not have the money to come back to see her but

hay veces intento yo mandarle $ 1,000.00, pero ya cuando veo que no me alcanza, digo, “ah, nada más le voy a mandar $ 800.00”, y en lugar de irme y gastarlo, digo, “mejor lo mando”...[pero] hubo un tiempo, ella me decía, “mami, ¿por qué eres muy mentirosa?, no me vienes a ver”, entonces, a mí me duele, pero hay veces le procuro decirle a ella que yo no puedo venir porque yo estoy trabajando. Sí y, pues, sólo así, pero a veces me dice, “mentirosa, no vienes a verme”, le digo, “mira, no es porque no quiera venir a verte, sino que no me alcanza.” (IN with Zuzy, 2018.07.10)

Just like Jacinto in the opening vignette, Zara also imagined where her mother was working or what types of jobs she was doing. On one occasion, Elisa was teaching the topic of “oficios y profesiones”, where she wanted children to talk about the jobs they know and if they were an oficio or a profesión. Elisa’s distinction between these two categories was that for a profession you go to school, and for an oficio you do not. Children were not paying a lot of attention, and rather than identifying the different jobs or thinking if you need to go to school for a job or not, they started to talk about the jobs their parents have in Playa del Carmen and Cancún. Elisa then gave up on her explanation and told them to take their books and cut out pictures of all the jobs that they found and then they were going to explain to her and me what they were.

Many of the children recognized vendors and seamstresses and also cut out random images that they later described as policemen or firefighters. When I asked Zara to explain me what she cut out and pasted, she told me that in her pictures la gente esta

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90 sometimes I try to send her $ 1,000.00 (aprox. USD $50), but when I see I can barely make it, I say, “ah, I will just send her $ 800.00 (approx. USD $40)” and instead of seeing her, I say “it is better if I send it”...[but] there was a time, that she told me “mummy, why are you such a liar? You do not come to see me.” It hurts, but sometimes I try to tell her that I do not come because I am working. Yes, and well, just like that, but she sometimes tells me “liar, you do not come to see me”, and I tell her “look, it is not because I do not want to see you, but I can’t afford it”.

91 occupations and professions
yendo a Playa del Carmen a trabajar en el hotel y poner güano [para los techos]. She later added that they also go para hacer magia y rezos. Besides this, she described two other drawings as niños que trabajan poniendo güano and una costurera (Zara in FN 2018.02.20; Figure 6).

Figure 6. Oficios y profesiones

Zara was one of the children who felt her parent’s absence the most and was always asking me if I was going to Playa del Carmen or if I had left my children too. I shared with Zuzy some of these concerns and also told her that both Elisa and I felt that Zara was not doing well academically, and a lot had to do with her absence. We did not know if this was beneficial or not, but Zuzy recognized this and told us that she felt a lot of pain every time she leaves and does not want for Zara to think that she is a liar or that she does not love her. Therefore, after Zara graduated from Palal-na in 2018, Zuzy decided to take her to Playa del Carmen, register her at a primary school over there and figure out how they can both survive. She preferred for both of them to be together even if the adaptation to Playa del Carmen could be a challenge by itself.

\[92\] the people are going to Playa del Carmen to work in the hotel and place palm fronds [for the ceilings].

\[93\] to make magic and prayers.

\[94\] Children that work putting palm fronds and a seamstress.
Conclusion: "Honoring Your Freedom"

Tourism is one of the largest industries around the world, and in México is no exception. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, in 2019 tourism contributed 17.2% of Mexico’s GDP, and according to data from 2018, Cancún itself contributed 7.1% of Mexico’s GDP (CGR, 2018). In this context, the Riviera Maya has become one of the regions where people from all around the country have come to take advantage of this economic boom. People in Huaytsik are users and builders of this economic force, which besides bringing money to the community, has also opened spaces for cultural and linguistic homogenization and hybridity (Daltabuit Godás, Cisneros Reyes & Valenzuela Valdivieso, 2013). In many cases, these spaces have allowed families to survive, even as they sacrifice their languages and familial relationships while striving for their dreams. As a researcher, I could never stay calm with the idea of being separated from one’s children at such a young age. How big must the need be for you to leave what you love the most?

Listening to the stories from the parents and grandparents, Maya language always became one of the last priorities in my agenda. Parents understood that I was interested in preschool education and Maya language, but I soon realized that migration was the utmost factor that affected the way education was lived inside and outside the school, and thus how Maya was eventually transmitted. As I have shown, Maya is helpful for tourism, but mainly as a curiosity, as an object—a commodity (Medina, 2003). Maya is seen as a communicative tool, but also as an economic driver. Tourism responds to the experience of authenticity, and for many people in Huaytsik, Maya fulfilled this quest for authenticity on behalf of the tourists. Of course, parents in Huaytsik wanted their children
to learn Maya for familial and cultural reasons, but they also knew that if tapped in the right way, it could also bring money (Heller, Pujolar & Duchêne, 2014). Nevertheless, Maya did not have the economic prowess that English had proven to have in the region, and thus many of them wanted formal education to concentrate efforts in teaching English.

Huaytsik’s high school has already introduced English as one of the languages that will allow students to get a job, while Maya has been set aside by the teachers and just used to design cultural experiences such as Janal Pixan\footnote{The month of the Death.} where, if students participate they can be allowed to avoid exams from other subjects, such as Mathematics or Spanish (FN 2017.10.31). Moreover, parents at the preschool level have been asking for English, and not Maya, to be taught from that level. If government policies should respond to the needs of the population, then, one of the most contested educational policies in recent Mexican history—the “National English Strategy” has been the answer they have been waiting for.

The Strategy heralds English as the purveyor of justice and inclusion for all children at every educational level. According to the former minister of education, this policy is not an ideological posture, but “a policy of inclusion, since, if all our inhabitants, including Indigenous ones, speak English, Mexico will insert itself into the global market and become an agent that will bring benefits, not just to Mexico, but to the world, …breaking a barrier of inequality amongst regions and social classes in Mexico” (SEP, 2017a). This policy has provoked vigorous opposition, not only because of its simplistic economic rationale (Pennycook, 1994), but also because of the lack of
consideration given to broader historical, sociological, and political ramifications (Márquez, 2017).

The proposal and implementation of this language policy is torn between top-down national and supranational interests to become a global partner (Philipson, 2006), and the Mexican state’s plethora of language policies promoting justice and inclusion through the use of Indigenous languages in schools (Schmelkes, 2009; Villanueva Barriga & Martín Butragueño, 2014). Indeed, schools, especially Indigenous ones, are the social spaces in which these competing language policies come into contact, revealing implementation challenges at all levels. Even if in theory schools now have the money to implement this policy, the inclusion of English in Indigenous preschools has posed additional challenges to already strained early childhood language settings, as there are no teachers that could teach the language; nor have communities, such as Huaytsik, organized the schools to bring English teachers.

Thus, even if English has been understood by the government and the parents as a silver bullet that could solve poverty in the region, tourism has already undermined the development of teachers who could teach English, and preschool overall. Elisa and the parents were aware of this too. They understood that even if you finished high school, or even if they had a career, the tourism industry would always pay more, inevitably affecting the way schools are perceived and function as they try to accomplish their missions; in the case of Indigenous schools, to have enough teachers who could educate children in a linguistically contextualized fashion.

According to Ruiz (1984), languages respond to complex dispositions, what he called orientations, towards their role in society. These dispositions may be largely
unconscious, or purposefully and deliberately shown, but what is certain, is that they create specific attitudes towards how languages can be used–their instrumental function. As shown in this chapter, parents see the importance of their languages, Maya or other Indigenous languages, as well as the functions that Spanish and English have in the region. Tourism, and the migratory movements it has provoked, have nurtured a particular linguistic ecology in the Peninsula where Maya lives side by side with English, Spanish and other Indigenous languages that are arriving to the region. Although Indigenous schools’ focus is to teach children in a Maya environment, it is also true that for many of these children Spanish is also their language, and there is a strong push at the top-down and bottom-up policy levels to introduce English as it responds to the current social and economic structures of the Peninsula.

Nonetheless, Ruiz (2010) also reminds us that understanding languages as resources that respond to economic interests, does not mean that we should forget about the opportunities that these interests open for people to reflect about their own languages and what could be lost as new languages are introduced in schools. It was evident for Elisa that English was necessary for better jobs in the Peninsula, and she now even had the money to introduce it if she ever got organized with the other preschools in Huaytsik. At the same time, this economic opportunity of having money to pay for an English teacher, has also helped her to see how Maya should be learned and promoted by the parents, as well as how Indigenous modality schools fall short of the ideal of serving all Indigenous children by being placed exclusively in rural communities. For her, Indigenous education is most needed in the urban centers where Indigenous families are moving. Thus, the function of Indigenous schools is of utter importance as they could
become the bastions for many parents to, ideally, transmit their own languages and understand that Maya is not just a social-mobility instrument, but a resource for eating, loving and relating. However, what this chapter tries to highlight is not just how Maya is the language in the line of fire, but also how other Indigenous languages arriving to the Peninsula are experiencing this linguistic change.

As tourism and forced migration bring Indigenous children from all over Mexico who speak languages other than Maya to the Peninsula, an important question remains: What becomes the function of Indigenous modality schools to a multilingual population when they can barely provide services to their own community’s languages? Tourism has placed migration in Quintana Roo as a structural matter that needs to receive special attention. Quintana Roo is one of the five states within Mexico that receive more migrants from other states (Secretaria de Cultura del Gobierno del Estado De Quintana Roo, 2011). This migratory characteristic is then both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a structural challenge as there are no quality services, such as schools and hospitals, that attend to all the people that arrive to the state, and an opportunity as a diversity of people, from different states, and with different languages, are arriving and pushing for the development of these services.

At different policy levels, people are struggling with these challenges and opportunities (see also Calamullo Sanga, 2006). For instance, at the family language policy level (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008) Adriana and her husband, an interstate and inter-Indigenous marriage, have confronted the challenge of not having a school that could teach both of their languages or at least celebrate the cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge they have at home, and as a result, made the decision of educating their
children in Spanish. Moreover, at the municipality level, the Education Chief, the supervisor, and Elisa are all aware of this challenge and are fighting at the Ministry level to open spaces and opportunities for Maya and the languages from other families to be recognized not just in the rural communities, but also in the urban ones, where most migrants are arriving.

For many of the parents, the sacrifice of their linguistic backgrounds is also accompanied by family fragmentation and sacrifice in the upbringing of their children. The sentiments and experiences of the people who stay in this migration processes have been largely unexamined at the transnational level, and more so in processes of massive internal migration such as the one occurring in the Yucatan Peninsula (Pissin, 2013; Wells, 2013). With the growing population in the Peninsula, the myth of Indigenous people staying in the rural areas, or of Mayas as the only Indigenous group working in the Peninsula has been debunked (see also Rebolledo Recendiz, 2008). Aware of this, King and Haboud (2011, p. 139) unmask the question “how is migration experienced and understood not by migrants, but by those left in its wake–and how does this experience impact linguistic practices and language learning in those sending communities?” In this chapter I show how this question is a valid one for the processes that are occurring in the Peninsula where the extended families that stay or are left-behind, are carrying the burden of taking care of children.

This burden is also expressed by the children’s anxiety of not wanting to be left behind or abandoned by their parents, accompanied by a romantic idea of what that private taxi or hotel bus means in the everyday life of their parents (Figure 7). For all the children that I interviewed and played with, Playa del Carmen and Cancún means beach,
cinema or the place where their parents bring them candies and toys. Children understand that their parents leave because they have to, because if not, they won’t have what they want, but at the same time the attachment that is in play in every departure is a sentiment that is hard for them to swallow.

Figure 7. Honoring your freedom

This romantic idea contrasts sharply with the anxiety and pain that many of the parents experienced and confided me. It was even more poignant as many of them were picked up by buses that bore the hotel slogan “honoring your freedom.” A couple of times I asked people who took these buses if they knew what the slogan meant, but they did not. When I translated it, they just laughed, knowing that their freedom was a routine job from 4am to 7pm (see also Sierra Sosa & Ballesteros Pérez, 2014). The freedom honored by the hotels was definitely not experienced by the parents, but they helped to
create it for the tourists. Parents engaging in the daily migratory patterns are fundamental to create the paradisal Maya experience where turquoise oceans and Maya ruins come together, while they are consistently excluded from them, either because they are working for it to be enjoyed by the tourists, or because they live in the peripheries of the cities with no right to enjoy the paradise that they help to create and sustain.

Llanes Salazar (2011) has described this phenomenon as a paradox for the Maya, where they have been described as *los elegidos de Dios*96 (Villa Rojas, 1945), but they are actually the ones that have been *expulsados del paraíso*97 – expelled from their communities, which many remember with nostalgia, and also expelled from the new paradise created by the tourism industry, which they work for but do not have access to. However, it is important to mention that this nostalgia does not mean that the people who migrate do not want to become part of the idyllic place they are helping to maintain. Luz and Rubén, for example, have bought a house in Puerto Morelos and enjoy the bars and the multicultural life offered to them and to their children. Even though they want to go back and live in Huaytsik, they also want to become part of the perks that tourism has brought to the region.

Families in the region, but especially children, are raised in a permanent state of migration from the moment they are born. Hope exists for them to get a profession and to speak Maya, but the economic reality and the modeling from their siblings and parents pushes them to see circular or permanent migration as the expected way of life. Tourism is in the Peninsula to stay, and more so with new touristic projects such as the Maya

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96 selected by God
97 expelled from paradise
Train, the development of Chetumal’s airport, and new touristic hubs like Bacalar and Mahahual in the southern part of the state. Heeding Hornberger and colleagues’ (2018, p.178) call for attention to “Why is it that so many promising and well-intended policies lead to naught?,” it is important to consider how even though promising language policies and programs like Indigenous modality schools in Quintana Roo might lead to nothing in terms of the teaching and learning of a language, they nevertheless establish milestones for the future implementation of these policies, and because of that they should be extended to urban spaces that are receiving migrants from all around the country. Once established, the defense and strengthening of these educational milestones will depend on the support of parents, and the astuteness and preparedness of teachers, supervisors and Education chiefs, as they keenly navigate the politics of tourism, migration and education for the Indigenous and immigrants. The workings of these schools is described in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5: Indigenous Early Childhood Education: A Market of Opportunities

Talking about how to navigate the preschool market in Huaytsik inevitably led parents to compare Centro, the only non-Indigenous modality school in town, with the rest of the preschools. For many, choosing Centro, and not Palal-na, was a question of which social category you wanted your child, and you as a family, to be part of:

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| Ernesta: A veces me molesta y digo, ¿qué le buscan cuando lo llevan al preescolar [del centro]? Por ejemplo, la señora que está aquí en la esquina, nada más a diez pasos está la escuela y mira... | Ernesta: Sometimes it bothers me, and I say, what do you look for when you take it to the preschool [in downtown]? For example, the lady who lives here in the corner, she has the school only ten steps away, and look...


Ernesta: ...lleva a sus hijos en la..., no sé si se sienten [mucho] porque piensan que los que están estudiando en [ese] preescolar son los que tienen más. | Ernesta: ... she takes her children to the ..., I do not know if they think of themselves [superior] because they think that those who are studying in [that] preschool are the ones who have more.

Aldo: Puede ser. | Aldo: It could be.

Nestor: Hasta donde yo sé, está identificada esa escuela como de gran categoría. | Nestor: As far as I know, that school is identified as one with great category.


Aldo: ¿De donde? | Aldo: The one from ...?

Ernesta: La del centro. | Ernesta: The one downtown.

Nestor: Los de alrededores pues, van por un segundo lugar. Hasta donde yo sé, así está la categoría. | Nestor: The surrounding areas like here, then, go for a second place. As far as I know, this is [how] category [is].

Aldo: Pero ¿por qué?, ¿qué hace especial a esa escuela a diferencia de ésta? | Aldo: But why? What makes that school special, unlike this one?

Nestor: No sé, la limpieza, quizá, no sé, la imagen, no sé qué es lo que los hace notarse y verse. | Nestor: I don’t know, it’s clean, maybe, I don’t know, the image, I don’t know what makes people to notice them.

Ernesta: Creo que es lo que les llama la atención ahí. Igual de eventos, que de primavera, que de verano, que de otoño, todos van a participar, todos. Tienes que comprar los útiles y materiales y todo. Yo lo que le digo a él, no sé qué prefieren allá, no sé qué le ven allá. | Ernesta: I think that's what catches their attention there. Also, the events in spring, summer, fall; everyone participates. You have to buy supplies and materials and everything. What I say to him, I do not know why they prefer it there, I do not know what they see there.

Nestor: De hecho, nosotros nos inclinamos acá [Palal-na] para que no cerrara. De hecho, yo opté, más que nada, aunque fuéramos de esta categoría, digamos, por aumentar el número de alumnos. M granito ayuda, ¿no? Para que no se pueda cancelar esta escuelita. | Nestor: In fact, we chose this [Palal-na], so that it would not close. In fact, I opted, more than anything, although we would become this category, let’s say, but we would increase the number of students. My grain of sand helps, right? In that way they cannot close this school.

Table 6. Choosing a social class-IN with Ernesta and Nestor (2018.06.08)
This was not the only time that parents at Palal-na commented about the differences between their school and other schools, especially Centro—the only General modality preschool in town. For many parents, Palal-na was left out and abandoned (Angela in FN 2017.06.12), discriminated when compared to the rest of the schools (Sasil in FN 2017.09.15), or a school for the poor (IN with Donato & Margarita, 2018.07.02; Zuzy, 2018.07.10). Parents realized that other schools have more privileges, which independently to the quality of schooling, were related to the idea that parents associated the schools with: if you pay it is better. In Quintana Roo, formal education is free and compulsory from preschool to the tertiary level, and generally speaking, schools can work under the Indigenous modality or the general modality (Ley de Educación del Estado de Quintana Roo, 2014). The Indigenous modality schools purposefully adapt the national curriculum to the cultural and linguistic practices of the Indigenous communities, while the general modality schools follow the state and national polices with no cultural or linguistic accommodations (DGEI, 2010). Amongst the most prevalent challenges within the Indigenous modality are: (a) the multigrade organization of the classrooms; (b) the shortage of pedagogically trained teachers; (c) the inadequacy of books and pedagogical methodologies; (d) the poor condition of the schools’ infrastructure; and in the case of the Yucatan Peninsula, (e) the scarcity of teachers who speak Maya (Flores Farfán, 2010; INEE, 2019; Lizama Quijano, 2008; Rockwell & Garay Molina, 2014).

In this chapter, I describe how Elisa, the only teacher and administrator at Palal-na, as well as the parents at the school, engage with the schooling market in Huaytsik. In the first part of the chapter, I explore how parents do not consider Maya as a factor in their decision of registering their children at Palal-na, but take into account factors such as
having a flexible and caring teacher, and more importantly, the money saved by registering their children to the school, without considering if the school follows an Indigenous or general modality. On the second part of the chapter I explore the strategies that Elisa uses for the school to keep its doors open, such as registering the school in the ‘Programa Escuelas de Tiempo Completo’\textsuperscript{98} and registering children that she can barely attend to (e.g., children with cerebral palsy). These programs and strategies have placed an important bureaucratic burden, which has forced her to spend more time filling out paperwork than on her teaching responsibilities. These bureaucratic processes, especially the ones that have made Maya instruction absent at the school, are described in the third section. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on how Indigenous multigrade schools, such as Pala-na struggle to foster a quality multigrade schooling, let alone the promotion of a bilingual education. These schools do not just depend on an innovative curriculum or dynamic strategies for teachers but on concrete aspects that respond to larger economic, social and political factors such as the need for school materials, more teachers and less administrative burden. At the end, the chapter is an example of how even as Elisa faces all these challenges in her school, her resilience opens opportunities for the children, their parents, and herself to improve Indigenous early childhood education in the town and the region overall.

**Choosing Schools in Indigenous Contexts**

Currently, Huaytsik has five preschools: four offering the state mandated Indigenous modality, and one preschool that follows the general modality; two elementary schools under the general modality; one vocational secondary school and one high school (SEP, 

\textsuperscript{98} Full-time School Program
Thus, the preschool educational level in Huaytsik is the only one that offers the option to parents and students between Indigenous and general modalities. From primary education onwards the only approach offered to the community is the general one, where instruction is given in Spanish without specific adjustments in materials or teacher assistants for children that are Maya monolingual (Figure 8).

![Figure 8. Palal-na’s location](image)

However, even if preschools offer the opportunity for children to practice Maya, and for parents to strengthen it, a concern for many (e.g., IN with Sonia, 2018.02.25; Jonasa, 2018.05.08; Gladys, 2018.05.17; Ernesta & Nestor, 2018.06.08; Florinda, 2018.06.12; Luz & Rubén, 2018.07.22), the Indigenous nature of the school’s organization was rarely a factor in their decision for choosing Palal-na over Centro, the only general modality school in Huaytsik.
**Choosing schools in Indigenous contexts: Language is rarely a factor**

For most parents, the different modalities offered by the state and established in Huaytsik are unknown. This has unintentionally allowed the Indigenous preschool teachers to use Spanish rather than Maya in much of their instruction and basically follow the same written curriculum as Centro (IN with Ernesta & Nestor, 2018.06.08; Palal-na school’s supervisor, 2019.07.10), not an uncommon pedagogical scenario in the Yucatan Peninsula (see also Guerrettaz, 2015). Even if school parents value Maya as a vehicle for strengthening their identity (IN with Florinda, 2018.06.12), see Maya as a precursor of learning English (IN with Jonasa, 2018.05.08; Alonso & Martha, 2018.06.07) and understand the importance of having a Maya speaker teacher (IN with Tomasa, 2018.07.03), to my own surprise, none of the 20 families that were part of the 2017-2018 school year at Palal-na knew much about the obligations from the school, as an Indigenous modality school, to teach and promote Maya.

For many, it was not the school, but the families’ responsibility to teach children Maya. This was Sonia’s case, who throughout ten years has registered three of her children at the school, Lola being her youngest daughter, and in the 2017-2018 school year, in her final preschool year at Palal-na:
Aldo: Se supone que la escuela es bilingüe, en maya y en español, pero ¿eso para ti fue un factor para meterlos ahí o ni sabías?

Sonia: Pues la verdad no. No, yo los puse ahí para que aprendan ahí en la escuela. No es porque yo vea que porque tienen dos lenguas. Porque la primera, el maya, pues, nosotros como papás, desde un bebé, si tú le quieres enseñar el maya, desde bebé le puedes hablar en maya, pero si quieres darle o enseñarle en español, pues, le vas a hablar español, y la maya no lo va a aprender porque, o sea, no se lo quieres enseñar. Mi papá así quiso que aprendiéramos español y no maya, porque sí hablamos maya nos regaña, no le gusta.

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<td>Aldo: Se supone que la escuela es bilingüe, en maya y en español, pero ¿eso para ti fue un factor para meterlos ahí o ni sabías?</td>
<td>Aldo: The school is supposedly bilingual, in Maya and in Spanish, but was that for you a factor to put them there or did you not even know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia: Pues la verdad no. No, yo los puse ahí para que aprendan ahí en la escuela. No es porque yo vea que porque tienen dos lenguas. Porque la primera, el maya, pues, nosotros como papás, desde un bebé, si tú le quieres enseñar el maya, desde bebé le puedes hablar en maya, pero si quieres darle o enseñarle en español, pues, le vas a hablar español, y la maya no lo va a aprender porque, o sea, no se lo quieres enseñar. Mi papá así quiso que aprendiéramos español y no maya, porque sí hablamos maya nos regaña, no le gusta.</td>
<td>Sonia: Well, the truth is not. No, I put them there for them to learn at the school. It's not because I see that they have two languages. Because the first, the Maya, well, we as parents, from when they are babies, if you want to teach them the Maya, from when they are babies, you can speak in Maya, but if you want to give or teach them in Spanish, then, you will speak Spanish, and the Maya will not be learned by them because you do not want to teach it to them. My father wanted us to learn Spanish and not Maya, because if we speak Maya, he scolds us, he does not like it.</td>
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Sonia has been considered by the teacher as one of the most participative mothers and has been part of different school committees; however, she did not know about the school’s Indigenous modality. Similarly, Ernesta and Nestor, who have had two children in the school, Alma being their youngest daughter and also in her final preschool year, heard for the first time that the school had the responsibility of teaching their children in Maya and Spanish during our interview:

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<td>Aldo: Y para ustedes, porque una de las diferencias entre Centro y ésta, es que se supone que aquí se enseña maya, ¿ustedes sabían eso o no tanto?</td>
<td>Aldo: And for you, because one of the differences between Centro and this is that, supposedly Maya is taught here, did you know that or not so much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo: Sí, porque esta es una escuela bilingüe, bueno, más que bilingüe, o sea, la maestra de repente sí hace clases en maya de los animales, las verduras, cosas que también usan en casa, ¿no? Nestor: Sí...Los primeros maestros que llegaron a impartir las clases acá, los que estuvieron, no hay español, pura maya. Los alumnos igual así aprendieron todo maya.</td>
<td>Aldo: Because this is a bilingual school, well, more than bilingual, the teacher may teach in Maya about the animals, vegetables, things that are also used at home, right? Nestor: Yes ... The first teachers who came to teach the classes here, those who were here, there is no Spanish, just Maya. The students just like that learned everything in Maya.</td>
</tr>
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Table 8. Palal-na as an Indigenous modality school-IN with Ernesta and Nestor (2018.06.08)

Nestor’s view on the role of schools, especially preschools, as places that unintentionally promote the shift from Maya to Spanish was something that I heard the first time that I arrived to Huaytsik back in 2015 (see Anzures Tapia, 2017). At that time, I did not know about the textures of the general modality and Indigenous modality schools, but it was evident that parents had an opinion about the role that preschools played in the language displacement from Maya to Spanish:


(IN with Lucia, 2015.05.08)

As I mentioned in the research methods chapter, Huaytsik is situated in the most Maya-monolingual municipality in Quintana Roo (SEDESI, 2015)–a historically linguistic characteristic that is closely tied to the town’s high rate of social exclusion and poverty (Hall & Patrinos, 2012). In light of this, one of the government’s efforts to reverse this poverty trend was the introduction of Early Childhood Education (ECE), a global policy that has been branded as a societal equalizer through the promotion of school readiness and promises of economic development (Penn, 2011). However, as evidenced by my

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99 In part it is because of the preschool, before there were none, now there are, thus, my children now speak in Spanish. I also speak to them more in Spanish, although I also speak Maya with my husband.
observations and conversations with parents, ECE policies have inadvertently diminished the knowledge and use of Indigenous languages, as these languages are rarely used in Indigenous modality preschools as the languages of instruction in favor of Spanish.

**Choosing schools in Indigenous contexts: Money is often a factor**

The burden for Indigenous modality schools is intense, since they are not only responsible for adapting their curriculum and language practices to practices in the communities, most of the time with no guidance or supervision, but they need to do so with the help of the school parents, who, organized in different committees, need to help the school to be a functional and safe space for learning (IN with Elisa, 2019.07.10; Palal-na school’s supervisor, 2019.07.10). Parents’ ideal assistance in the school poses a conundrum, since, even though their involvement is a desired trait in any Indigenous school (SEP, 2018b), this requirement also ends up putting a heavy burden on teachers as parents do not follow through on their involvement, especially in schools where there is just one teacher who is responsible for all administrative tasks, including planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum.

In Huaytsik, there is a stark contrast between Centro and Palal-na. Centro has a principal, a different teacher and student-teacher per grade, a janitor, a physical education instructor, and occasional psychological services (FN 2017.08.31). Of the four Indigenous modality preschools in town, Palal-na is the only multigrade, single-teacher school, with children from ages two-and-a-half to six years old. For Elisa it was fundamental that

*todos participen para que se pueda hacer todo en la escuela. Soy una, no hay*
Elisa has been teaching in the school since the 2010-2011 cycle. Her experience has not been limited to administrative and teaching tasks, but also includes literally chasing parents in order for them to understand that, without their help, they cannot receive any financial support from the state, and thus the school’s operations could be jeopardized. For instance, the ‘Apoyo a la Gestión Escolar’\textsuperscript{101} gives the school between 60 and 90 thousand pesos ($3,000-4,500 USD) per year, with which she can buy school materials and cleaning products. If parents do not organize to fill out the paperwork and see who can come to clean the school, they cannot receive the resources, a situation that could eventually push the teacher to ask for what is known as \textit{cuotas escolares voluntarias}\textsuperscript{102} (Cisneros, 2016), where parents need to voluntarily pay in order for the school to open, be clean, or have water.

As I mentioned before, in Quintana Roo and all Mexico, formal education is free and compulsory in all its educational levels. However, the General Education Law, in its sixth article mentions that:

\textit{Las donaciones o cuotas voluntarias destinadas a dicha educación en ningún caso se entenderán como contraprestaciones del servicio educativo. Las autoridades educativas en el ámbito de su competencia, establecerán los mecanismos para la regulación, destino, aplicación, transparencia y vigilancia de las donaciones o cuotas voluntarias. Se prohíbe el pago de cualquier contraprestación que impida o condicione la prestación del servicio educativo a los educandos. En ningún caso se podrá condicionar la inscripción, el acceso a la escuela, la aplicación de evaluaciones o exámenes, la entrega de documentación

\textsuperscript{100} all participate so that everything can be done at the school. I am one, there is no time to clean up, do the administration, so then I finish very busy. [That's why] it's very important that the committees be formed, and that's why everyone should make a plan to maintain the school.
\textsuperscript{101} Support for School Management
\textsuperscript{102} school voluntary fees/quotas
a los educandos o afectar en cualquier sentido la igualdad en el trato a los alumnos, al pago de contraprestación alguna\textsuperscript{103}.

(Ley General de Educación, 1993-ratified on 2018.01.19)

So even if the education is free, the laws allow schools to ask for money if needed. These volunteer quotas do not have to be regulated, and as long as they are not used for any aspect that should be covered by the state, teachers, principals and even the parent associations can ask for them. In 2018, Martínez found that these volunteer quotas had an impact on children’s in preschool and primary school attendance in Mexico, especially in rural and Indigenous contexts, since preschool is not seen as an important educational level, and thus the expenditure in preschool could be saved by parents for later years by not sending them to the school. Of course, Elisa did not read this study, but her experience helped her to understand that she had to ask parents for as little money as possible if she wanted parents to bring their children to the school:

Son gente muy humilde. Los que salen un poquito tienen más acceso a alguna información. De ahí vienen un poquito los conocimientos. Pero mi grupo es complicado porque no hay mucho de donde partir por parte de los papás, no hay ni en las casas, no tienen libros, no tienen materiales, no tienen nada que les permita, no sé, conocer. No tienen muchas cosas\textsuperscript{104}. (Elisa in FN 2018.02.19)

\textsuperscript{103} The donations or voluntary contributions destined to such education in no case will be understood as payment of the educational service. The educational authorities in the area of their competence, will establish the mechanisms for the regulation, destiny, application, transparency and monitoring of the donations or voluntary quotas. The payment of any consideration that prevents or conditions the provision of educational services to students is prohibited. In no case may registration, access to the school, the application of evaluations or examinations, the delivery of documentation to students affect in any sense the equality in the treatment of students, nor be conditioned on the payment of any donation or voluntary contribution.

\textsuperscript{104} They are very humble people. Those who leave for a while have more access to some information. That's where a little bit of knowledge comes from. But my group is complicated because there is not much [knowledge] where to start in regards to their parents, there is not even much in the houses, they do not have books, they do not have materials, they do not have anything that allows them to know. They do not have many things.
It was evident that parents at Palal-na appreciated the amount of money they were saving when they compared it to the amount of money they were asked for from other preschools in town or from the primary, secondary and high schools that their older children were attending (Yuri in FN 2019.06.27; Sasil in FN 2019.07.06). This reason, and not language of instruction, was also a reason why parents changed to or registered their children in Palal-na. Sasil, a K3 mother, even though she understood how quotas had its benefits, such as helping children participate in the community’s events, she decided to register Bruno in Palal-na since the costs were less, it was closer to her house, and she saw the curriculum as the same:

_Sí, ahí por cada fecha ellos solicitan, claro que es una manera de inculcarles a los niños para que piensen...para que se les grabe, ¿no? Que tal fecha es esto, y tal fecha, pero en su día hacen un pequeño evento. Y todo el tiempo que la primavera, que las niñas de maripositas. Hay que comprar todo el material, todo, a los varones también. Incluso a veces piden la participación de las mamás y todo, pero, pues, aquí no. La maestra no nos ha dicho hasta ahorita. Claro que yo a veces le digo a la maestra, “si se va a hacer, a mí avísenme, yo viajo mucho a Valladolid.”_105  

(IN with Sasil, 2018.05.04)

Elisa shared Sasil’s enthusiasm for the importance of children participating in community events, but on some occasions, she has committed to these events and parents do not bring their children to school to practice (FN 2017.09.13). On other occasions, she has seen how these types of events prevent families from bringing their children to the school since they would need to invest in costumes, food, and many times they would need to sacrifice a day at their jobs to stay in town and see their children. For many, not

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105 Yes, there for each date they request, of course it is a way to inculcate the children to think ... for them to remember, right? That this date is this, and such date is that, but [also] in the [celebration] day they do a small event. And all the time that spring, that girls dress like butterflies. You have to buy all the material, everything, for the boys too. Sometimes they even ask for the participation of mothers and everything, but, well, not here. The teacher has not told us until now. Of course, I sometimes tell the teacher, "if it's going to be done, let me know, I travel a lot to Valladolid."
staying caused some significant guilt (IN with Alonso & Martha, 2018.06.07; Luz & Ruben, 2018.07.22). Therefore, Elisa has preferred not to participate in order to not **quedar mal con el pueblo** (FN 2017.30.08).

For Bertha, a K2 mother, people register their children to Centro *porque es una escuela de calidad, se supone* but she knows that in Centro, although the school provides food and has a janitor, parents still need to pay, on a weekly basis, for many of the services that should supposedly be covered by the school (SEP, 2015). Since she has friends and family that have their children at Centro, she knew that for the 2017-2018 school year, the teachers were asking for a one-time-quota of 80 pesos ($4 USD) to each family in order for the school director to buy school materials and cleaning products. Parents at Centro did not like the quotas, but according to her, *los niños salen muy preparados*, which, as Sasil mentioned, justifies the quota (FN 2017.12.18).

In my own observations at Centro, I did not notice how as each school day started, two out of the four teachers sat down in the entrance of the school and asked parents if their children were going to eat at the school. If so, they had to pay 10 pesos (¢ .50 USD), but if not, then, parents were responsible for bringing food to their children during recess time (FN 2017.09.04). Moreover, in some conversations I had with parents from Centro, they told me that they also had to give 100 pesos ($5 USD) as well as bring materials such as building blocks, and come to help, in order to remodel the school, even if this was an obligation from the government. This type of modus operandi raised some suspicions

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106 in order to not fail the town.
107 because it is a quality school, supposedly
108 children leave the school very well prepared
amongst the parents regarding the ways the school director at Centro was managing the federal and state resources (FN 2018.04.20).

Donato and Margarita, who live in front of Palal-na, negotiated over sending their children to the school. For Margarita, just as Bertha explained, there was a status attached to Centro as a school where children *salen muy preparados* since *es una escuela de calidad*\(^{109}\). For Donato, the money they save by sending their children to Palal-na helps the family’s economy and will have a longer impact in the family’s development. During the interview I conducted with Donato and Margarita, they both shared their view that children’s learning does not depend on schools’ labels as *de calidad* or *para pobres*\(^{110}\), but on the children’s motivations to learn:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> ¿Los metieron a Palal-na porque estaba cerca, era enfrente, o habían pensado en meterlos a otra escuela?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Did you register them in Palal-na because it was close, because it is in front of your house, or did you think about placing them into another school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> No, doña Margarita pensaba meterlos en la otra escuela. Le digo “¿para qué vas a llevar a los niños en otra escuela?”, “no, es que los quiero llevar en el Centro”. “¿qué vas a hacer en el Centro? Si el niño quiere aprender, sea donde sea, donde tú lo quieras llevar el niño va a aprender. No es porque es una escuela de calidad y todo. De mi parte, si entiendo que es una escuela de calidad, pero tan siquiera que me ayuden con el sustento familiar”, le digo. Si voy a andar trabajando no tan grande que yo diga, pero, pues, con lo poco que me están aportando, es una ayuda, si tu vas a llevar al niño en el Centro y vas a estar pagando diez, veinte pesos diarios, más si vas a ir en taxi y todo; es grande el costo. Entonces, mejor lleva al niño aquí enfrente de su casa, el niño se va solo, no hay necesidad de llevarlo.</td>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> No, Doña Margarita thought about putting them in the other school. I say, “why are you going to take the children to another school?”, “No, it's that I want to take them to Centro” [Voicing Margarita] ”what are you going to do at Centro? If the child wants to learn, no matter where, wherever you want to take the child, he’ll learn. It's not because it's a quality school and everything. I understand it is a quality school, but they at least need to help me with my family’s economy” I said. I do not work for that much, but with the little they are giving me; it’s a help, but if you're going to take the child to Centro then you'll be paying ten, twenty pesos a day, more if you are going to go by taxi and everything; the cost is huge. So, better to take the child here in front of his house, the child goes by himself, there is no need to take him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{109}\)children leave the school well prepared since it is a quality school.  
\(^{110}\)quality or for the poor
Table 9. Learning depends on children, not schools-IN with Donato and Margarita (2018.07.02)

The discourse of Indigenous modality schools as *escuelas rurales, escuelas Indígenas* and *escuelas abandonadas*\(^{111}\) was prevalent throughout town (FN 2017.06.30). It was very common that whenever I talked about how I was a teacher in Palal-na, people often asked me why I chose that school over Centro or any of the other non-multigrade Indigenous schools. Palal-na was certainly the farthest from downtown, and it was the biggest and definitely most abandoned school. Donato’s voicing of *escuela para pobres* by *todos los padres de familia*\(^{112}\) was not uncommon around town, but it also gave some of the parents, especially Margarita who at first refused to register her children at Palal-na, a sense of pride in the ways the teacher was working with the different grades and how the food they served, herself being the main school cook, was nutritious (and delicious) rather than canned or boxed.

For instance, on one occasion, as the teacher was discussing with some Mexico City bureaucrats where to put some water fountains in the school, Margarita mentioned how the government could be using that money to bring an extra teacher and not a water fountain that would rust, since, in Palal-na *aunque los niños se vean pobres y sucios, toman su agua purificada*\(^{113}\) (FN 2017.11.08). In fact, the only quota that the teacher asked the parents for,

\(^{111}\) rural schools, Indigenous schools and abandoned schools  
\(^{112}\) School for the poor by all the parents  
\(^{113}\) even if children look poor and dirty, they drink their purified water.
was for purified water. This was a 5 pesos per month quota (¢ .25 USD). However, they were not forced to pay it, which for many parents was a free pass to never pay it, thus forcing the teacher to pay 10 pesos (¢ .50 USD) from her own money, on a bi-weekly basis, for a 20-liter water jug.

By February 2018, Elisa was going to even stop to ask for this quota, however bureaucracy worked its own ways for this not to happen. After the visit from the representatives of the Ministry of Education on November 11\textsuperscript{th} 2017, Elisa received all the materials for the water fountain to be built on January 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2018. Most of the materials were left outside the school, with the exception of some metals. The teacher and the parents were surprised at how quickly this was happening. They had just waited two months and things were rolling. It was expected then that the school would have water fountains in maybe two or three weeks (FN 2017.11.08; 2018.01.22). By May 2018, the school still did not have water fountains, the teacher was still asking parents for money for water, and many of them stopped giving it as a way to protest since they thought they would be having free water soon (FN 2018.05.22).

Between January and May, the materials that were left outside the school disappeared, either because the rain dissolved all the sand and gravel, or because people other than school parents took the blocks for their houses. After Elisa and I saw some of the Ministry people in a deli drinking beers, and told them that it was not fair that they did not build our water fountains, they reacted and started to build the water fountains by the end of June, justifying themselves with the excuse that they had to do the work at other preschools before Palal-na since the other schools had more children (FN 2018.06.21; Figure 9).
On July 13\textsuperscript{th} 2018, after the school was already closed for the school year, the Ministry of Education asked Elisa to go to the school since they needed to take a picture of her with a plaque saying that the water fountains were handed over to the school. On that day, the Ministry placed the plaque above the water fountains, took a picture, removed the plaque, and then went to another school to repeat the same performance. By the end of the 2018-2019 school year, the water fountain was still not working, but now it had a new plaque that said that the water fountains were built in 2016 (FN 2019.06.24).
The water fountain program was part of a national strategy to combat the raising rates of obesity amongst children in preschool ages, where at least, three out of ten are overweight or obese (Acosta et al., 2016). However, from the 2015-2018 plan to install 27 thousand water fountains; just 16, 344 were installed in preschools in all Mexico. The justification for not installing the rest was that prices raised up. But in reality, what happened is that these were never installed, the materials were stolen because of the lack of commitment for its construction, or many were installed, but the water was not safe for drinking (Velázquez, 2019).

Elisa, though not always as successful as she would like, has at least overcome some of the challenges in these environments, many times using humor as a great escape. A good laugh after the water fountain episode was a must after the Ministry left the school, and laughter was never absent every time the topic surfaced in the school, just as I showed before when Doña Margarita mentioned, with a smile on her face, *aunque los niños se vean pobres y sucios, toman su agua purificada*¹¹⁴ (FN 2017.11.08). Humor and patience as

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¹¹⁴ even if children look poor and dirty, they drink their purified water.
strategies to explain and survive some of the minoritization, bureaucratic and discrimination processes that Palal-na experienced were common, and for many parents, these were assets that influenced their decision for leaving their children at the school.

Choosing schools in Indigenous contexts: Patience and care often factor

When Bertha mentioned that Centro was, supposedly, a quality school, I wondered what she meant by that, and thus followed up this topic in an interview I conducted with her and her husband later on during the school year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> No, es que aquí en Centro, dicen que, “son de calidad”.</td>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> No, it is that here in Centro, they say that, &quot;they are quality&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Pero ¿qué quiere decir eso, “de calidad”?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> But what does that mean, &quot;quality&quot;?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> Ni siquiera saben lo que significa que sean de calidad.</td>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> They do not even know what it means to be quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Porque es igual, ¿no?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Because it's the same, right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Justino:</em> El director de allá empezó a decir, “aquí si quieren traigan a sus sobrinos o a algún familiar, acá es familiar y de calidad”, y cuando escuchamos sólo esa palabra, dijeron, “ah, sí, creo que es bueno”. Sí, si ni siquiera se dice nada de calidad ahí...</td>
<td><em>Justino:</em> The director there started to say, &quot;bring your nephews or any relatives over here, here is familiar and and quality&quot;, and when people hear only that word, people said, &quot;Oh, yes, I think it's good.&quot; Yes, if they do not even say anything about quality there ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> Ahi, ahi en el centro...</td>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> There, there in Centro ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Justino:</em> Sólo porque está en el centro que se.... [Makes a dismissive face]</td>
<td><em>Justino:</em> Just because it's in the town’s downtown they .... [Makes a dismissive face]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> ...dicen que es cuota voluntaria, pero no, a fuerzas tienes que pagar ochenta pesos cada padre de familia y luego dicen “ah, es cuota voluntaria, lo que uno pueda dar”, pero no, “¿es de cuota voluntaria?, ochenta pesos tienes que dar a la fuerza”</td>
<td><em>Bertha:</em> ... they say that it is a voluntary quota, but no, you have to pay eighty pesos per family and then they say “ah, it is a voluntary quota, whatever one can give”, but no, &quot; is it a voluntary quota? You are forced to give eighty pesos.&quot;</td>
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Table 10. What does quality mean-IN with Bertha and Justino (2018.05.16)

Bertha and Justino live in a midpoint between Palal-na and Centro. They considered sending Roberto to Centro, but were never convinced by the lack of clarity on what quality meant in Centro; since, as they were comparing preschools, they did not find any major difference, except the location, when compared to Palal-na, even if Bertha at one
point mentioned that *los niños salen muy preparados*\(^{115}\) at Centro (FN 2017.12.18).

Moreover, they found out that Palal-na was offering them food for free, did not ask money for school materials, and they knew that Elisa was flexible in terms of the children’s arrival times to school, since in Centro *si no llegas te cierran la reja, [y] los dejan* [a los niños] *en la alcaldía*\(^{116}\) (FN 2017.08.30). At the time of the interview, Justino had been unemployed for a couple of months. His last job was as a cab driver in Carrillo Puerto, a town that is an hour away from Huaytsik, while Bertha worked every day at 5:20 am cleaning chickens for Justino’s uncle. Thus, she appreciated that she could take Roberto late to school every day, since she had to come back from her job, prepare her older daughters for school, and then take Roberto by 9 am to school, instead of 8 am, the supposed time when school started every day.

Florinda, a K2 mother, also appreciated the patience Elisa had not just with children but with the mothers who had to work. For Florinda, it was not just the shorter distance from her house to Palal-na nor the minimum amount of money she spent when compared to Centro, but how Elisa treated her daughter and the ways she learned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florinda: <em>Pues, lo que pasa es que mi hermana me dijo, “mira, puedes meterla allá en Centro</em> -me dijo- *en esa escuela tienen varios lugares en el turno de la mañana, ya ves que la otra escuela, pues...”. <em>Entonces, le dije, “si -le digo- la voy a meter ahí”, y la empecé a llevar allí desde entonces, pero a veces ella se enfermaba, se enfermaba, le daba mucha calentura y tos y a veces hasta un mes no la llevaba y cuando regresé a hablar con la maestra, me dijo, “no señora, no la estoy dando de baja, aunque no viene unos días, tú puedes seguir trayéndola”. Pero, este, creo que</em></td>
<td>Florinda: Well, what happens is that my sister said to me, &quot;Look, you can put her there in Centro,&quot; she said. &quot;In that school they have several places in the morning shift, you see that the other school, well...&quot; So I said, &quot;Yes,&quot; I tell her, &quot;I'm going to put her there,&quot; and I started taking her there ever since, but sometimes she got sick, got sick, she had a lot of fever and cough and sometimes I did not even take her for month, and when I went back to talk with the teacher, she said, &quot;No, ma'am, I'm not dropping her registration, even if she does not come for a few days, you can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{115}\) children leave the school very well prepared

\(^{116}\) if you do not arrive, they close the gate, [and] they leave [children] at the mayor’s office.
en que empecé lo del trabajo y todo eso también, en lo que ya vi que empezó a faltar mucho, entonces, le digo a mi mamá, “como que me queda más cerca llevarla acá”. Hablé con su mamá de ¿cómo se llama?

Aldo: ¿Jacinto?
Florinda: Ajá.
Aldo: Yuri.
Florinda: Ajá, sí, le dije, “¿será que puedo cambiar a mi hija allá?”, y me dice, “si se puede, yo le comento a la maestra”. Habló con la maestra y así fue como la llevé y cuando la pasé allá, pues, me gustó más cómo le enseñan y todo eso. La verdad cuando empecé a llevarla allá; supuestamente está más limpia, pero yo veo que..., no sé, le empezó a dar piojos.

Aldo: ¿En Centro?
Florinda: Sí, entonces, sí, le tuve que quitar los piojos y ahorita a donde está yendo allá, pues, no, a lo mejor tiene, pero, pues, no, no veo que mucho, entonces, la dejé allá porque vi que le enseñan bien, más o menos, por ejemplo, veo que escribe su nombre.

Table 11. Patience matters-IN with Florinda (2018.06.12)

In Centro, whenever Florinda arrived a couple of minutes late with her daughter Jimena, Jimena could not enter school, which meant paying for an extra taxi to take Jimena back home. Also, even if Centro had a janitor and different teachers for each grade, Florinda described it as dirtier and believed it made her daughter sick many times. Florinda, who works as a multigrade primary teacher in San Ramón, understood that Palal-na was not just a safe, caring and clean space but also an environment where she was seeing some improvements in Jimena’s learning. This understanding could have been a result of Elisa’s teaching style as well as Jimena’s enthusiasm for learning, but most certainly, it was also in part because she was allowed, basically, to go to school, even when she arrived late. Thus, we can see that not only the cost savings for parents was an option that attracted them to the school, but also the reputation Elisa built within the
community, where she was seen as a caring teacher who received all children, no matter the time of the year nor the learning barriers they might have (FN 2018.02.08; 2019.06.29). Her caring characteristic was, I would argue, further enhanced by her experience as a multigrade Indigenous preschool teacher, which allowed her to accept any child who wanted to learn (FN 2018.05.24).

This was the case of José, who arrived at Palal-na in the middle of the school year. He was a charismatic 4-year-old boy who has cerebral palsy. This was the first time the teacher accepted someone in these conditions, and as it could be assumed, she had never received any type of training on special needs. The school’s furniture was not in the best conditions, and we were always trying to find the best chairs and tables to put in the classroom. However, the teacher never foresaw that she would be teaching a child that could not walk nor easily use his hands, thus the school had no ramps, tables, chairs or pencils that he could use. Nonetheless, she believed that she could offer something to him and his mother if she accepted them at Palal-na. When I interviewed Karina, José’s mother, on why she decided to move him from his previous Indigenous preschool, which is next to her house and has all the services, to Palal-na, she told me:

Allí lo quité porque siempre cuando lo llevé empezaba a llorar...Llegó allá, ni lo atienden bien hasta que yo llegué.... No lo atienden, así bien. Y un día lo quería llevar y me dice, “no quiero ir, mamá”, “¿por qué no quieres ir?” “Maestra pegar”, dice. “¿Cómo que te pegó la maestra?, a ver, enséñame”, yo así le digo; “enséñame a ver cómo te hace”, y “así, ¡pal!, así me hizo la maestra” [Karina hace el gesto de que le pegan en la cabeza]. “Ah, ¿por eso está manchado tu cabello?”, le digo; “sí”. Porque todo de aquí [apuntando a su nuca] estaba manchado, y ya me empezó a decir que es la maestra, que por eso no quiere ir. “¿Te llevo?” “No, niños malos, niño malo”, me dice. Los niños son malos, sí, porque yo una vez vi que los niños estaban encima de él, lo tenían como su caballito, ahí como va, y la maestra allí, y la maestra nada más los está viendo atrás de la puerta, veo que esta ahí. ¿Quién sabe por que no lo atienden? Si no a
Jose had stopped going to his previous preschool from the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. Karina, his mother, after witnessing the way his classmates used him as a hobbyhorse, and the negligence shown by the teacher, decided to better invest her efforts in taking him to his physical therapy in Carrillo Puerto. It was not until February 2018, when Karina’s sister told Elisa that she had a nephew that could go to Palal-na, that Elisa met Karina and told her that José could definitely come to school, as long as Karina committed to bring and pick him up on time (FN 2018.02.08). José started to go to Palal-na almost every day beginning in March. Although, there were challenges in accommodating him in terms of the activities that he could do, how the spaces were designed, and how to even find a place for him to sit while we ate, it was thanks to other 4- and 5-year-old children who took care of him, that the teacher had some time to concentrate on other activities with the older children. According to Karina, José was now

\[17\] I took him out from there because he always started crying... When I arrived there, they did not take care until I arrive...They do not take good care of him. So, one day I wanted to take him, and he says, "I do not want to go, mom," "why do not you want to go?" "Teacher hits," he says. "How did the teacher hit you? Let me see", I say "Show me how she does it ", and "well, Pa! That's how the teacher hit me" [Karina makes a motion of a slap in the head]. "Ah, is that why your hair is stained?" I say; "yes". Because everything here [pointing at the back of her head] was stained, and he started to tell me that it is because of the teacher, that's why he does not want to go. "Should I take you?" "No, bad children, bad boy," he tells me. The children are bad, yes, because I once saw that the children were on top of him, they had him as their little horse, there he went, and the teacher there, and the teacher is just watching them behind the door, I see that she is there. Who knows why they do not take care of him? If not sometimes, he's sitting down and they do not attend him, and like that and in the mornings like that, "no, I do not want to go. Go grandma, "he just wants to go with his grandmother, not to school. So, I stopped taking him, I instead took him to his therapies and so on. You see, I did not take him to school because I had to take him twice a week to Carrillo and that's why I did not take him, like the days ...so then we stayed like that almost without going like this and I stopped taking him, and until now I have not taken him.
always singing songs in the house, and it was evident for her that these were learned at the
school (FN 2018.06.16).

In spite of Elisa’s openness to receiving children at her school, when some parents
registered and committed to bring their children to school, but did not follow through, she
was always surprised how, for many parents, their children’s physical, personal and social
growth seemed not to be important. According to her, they did not aspire to it. As she
mentioned in one of the last social participation committee meetings, where issues related
to the improvement of the school are discussed, muchos padres de familia no ven la escuela
como algo importante, como un lugar en donde deben de mandar a sus hijos\textsuperscript{118}. During
this meeting, the social participation committee was trying to figure out why, out of a class
of 27 children, an average of only 15 students regularly attended school. Moreover, when
Elisa began to explain that there would be new state laws to punish parents who did not
take their children to school, several of the parents present at the meeting began a
conversation on why preschool is relevant to their children’s development:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish/Maya</th>
<th>English (Maya in italics)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donato</strong>: Porque, mayormente, ahorita, todos los padres de familia piensan que la educación preescolar no es una obligación.</td>
<td><strong>Donato</strong>: Because, mostly, right now, all the parents think that preschool education is not an obligation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa</strong>: Sí, muchos lo piensan.</td>
<td><strong>Elisa</strong>: Yes, many think that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donato</strong>: Así lo piensan, por eso no se hacen responsables de traer a los niños puntual o así esa es cosa que les están pasando.</td>
<td><strong>Donato</strong>: That's what they think, that's why they do not take the responsibility for bringing children on time or that's what they're going through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa</strong>: Muchos lo, muchos todavía lo piensan.</td>
<td><strong>Elisa</strong>: Many, many still think that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sonia</strong>: Es que pa’ muchos el bebé está pequeño, los niños. Mi tía lo lleva en tercer año y...</td>
<td><strong>Sonia</strong>: For many the baby is small, the children. My aunt takes him to third year and...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Margarita</strong>: ¿De inicial?</td>
<td><strong>Margarita</strong>: Nursery?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sonia</strong>: Del kinder. Primer, primer [corrige]</td>
<td><strong>Sonia</strong>: Kindergarten. First, first [corrects herself].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{118} many parents do not see the school as something important, as a place where they should send their children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margarita: ¿Yaan u jookol?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sonia: Que, porque es un bebé, y le da pecho todavía.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margarita: ¡Ahhhhh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia: Y está grande. Mmm [asienta con la cabeza].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margarita: ¿Maxi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: Pero esos son costumbres de las familias, ¿no?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donato: Eso le da [fortaleza] también igual al niño.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia: Letie chichan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: ¿Pero como avanzan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia: Conssseeeentiido.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: Tenemos claros ejemplos de niños que han venido chiquitos, que ya no son niños. Ahí esta Miriam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margarita: Me acuerdo muy bien de Miriam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: Esta chiquitita, apenas está cumpliendo tres años. Ella es, a ver cómo les puedo decir, ella es, autónoma, ella solita hace todo. Ella no no necesita...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margarita: Me acuerdo muy bien cuando empezó a venir, no hablaba. Pero ahorita bien que habla.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: Eso, aprenden, y con la convivencia también. Todo lo que esta...Todos los niños también. Ahí están esas Vania y Jessy, ¿imaginarte el otro año? Esas niñas van a estar súper despiertas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Margarita: She already took him out? |
| Sonia: Because he is a baby, and still breastfeeds him. |
| Margarita: Ahhhhh! |
| Sonia: And he is old. Hhhmm [nods her head]. |
| Margarita: Who? |
| Elisa: But those are the customs of families, right? |
| Donato: But that gives [strength] to the child. |
| Sonia: They are small/young. |
| Elisa: But how can they progress? |
| Sonia: Paaaaaaaaaaaaampered. |
| Elisa: We have examples of children who arrive young, that are no longer children. See Miriam. |
| Margarita: I remember Miriam very well. |
| Elisa: This little girl is barely three years old. She is, how I can tell you, she is, autonomous, she alone does everything. She does not need ... |
| Margarita: I remember very well when she started coming, she did not speak. Right now she speaks a lot. |
| Elisa: That, they learn, and from the others too. Everything is ... All the children too. We now have Vania and Jessy, imagine next year? Those girls are going to be super awake. |

**Table 12. Social participation committee-Elisa and parents in FN 2018.06.08**

The conversation evidenced Elisa’s beliefs on preschool education as an educational level where social and executive functions are developed. Elisa even put as an example the case of Vania and Jessy, who started to come to school at the end of April after she visited their mother and grandmother, respectively. Both of them were under 3 years old, but Elisa decided to have them in the school for the fear of their caregivers choosing another school over Palal-na in the upcoming year (FN 2018.02.19; 04.19). She
understood that for these children, just as with Miriam, who has been *de oyente*\(^{119}\) at Palal-na since she was a year and a half old (2016-2017) but became an official student only in the 2018-2019 school cycle, coming to the school brought them academic and social benefits. In this same way, it was not unusual for Elisa to accept some of these new students with their older siblings or sometimes to even accept children that were from other towns, but who were visiting their cousins or relatives. For her, more children lead to a more productive classroom since they could help her to clean the school, and at the same time it would make the younger students feel more comfortable (FN 2018.05.04; 06.07; 06.27).

However, even if she had all these children in the school, Elisa was always stressed about the subsistence of the school since there were rumors in town that she was going to retire soon, which pushed parents not to enroll children at Palal-na. Many mothers who lived nearby the school expressed that they knew that she was a patient and caring teacher, but her retirement was a reason why they did not change their children to Palal-na, even if they knew that in the current school where they send their children (the same one where José used to go), the teachers *son muy pesadas, y la directora tampoco los trata tan bien*\(^{120}\) (FN 2018.02.15). Anxieties rooted in questions of attendance and enrollment, such as who will show up to school every day, how many students Elisa will have for the next academic year, whether she would have the minimum number of students needed for the supervisor to assign her an extra teacher, or whether or not she will at least have the number of students needed to keep the school opened were ever

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\(^{119}\) auditing

\(^{120}\) they are difficult to deal with, and the principal does not treat them well.
present concerns within the school community. In order to soothe some of these anxieties, Elisa decided to register the school in the ‘Programa Escuelas de Tiempo Completo’\textsuperscript{121}. Some of the benefits, but also, the bureaucratic burden that this program implied are explained in the following section.

**Enrollment Anxieties**

Preschool student enrollment is critical in Huaytsik since a school could be shut down if it does not register at least 15 students per year, and the competition for students is fierce. For example, many teachers offer a kind of shuttle service, using their own cars to drive students to-and-from school. But Elisa does not own a car, so despite being located in a neighborhood full of children, Palal-na loses potential students to other teachers. The first two weeks of February 2017 were dedicated to student registration for the following school year. We ended classes at noon, and even canceled classes for at least three days, in order to visit students and their parents around town.

Elisa knew that if she could register 35 students, the Ministry of Education could send another teacher to support her (FN 2017.09.01; 2018.02.09). Yet, after exceeding this number, the Ministry of Education denied Elisa another teacher arguing that the town already had four other preschools. At this point Elisa had already accepted José, who has cerebral palsy; Adan, a child who is partially deaf; and several children who were regularly denied entrance into their previous schools due to lateness (FN 2018.02.07; 03.01). Palal-na is considered a school for *los olvidados*\textsuperscript{122}, as are many of the other Indigenous schools (FN 2016.01.06). In this case, it is Elisa who is the agent that gives

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\textsuperscript{121} Full-time School Program  
\textsuperscript{122} the forgotten
them the opportunity to socialize with other children, learn basic literacy strategies, and for many, have some food in their belly.

However, the intention for our home visits was not just about inviting parents to register their children at the school, but also to go to the houses of registered students who had not attended school, in some cases, for the whole school year. One day, as we were inviting new parents to the school, Elisa saw Alma walking down the street with her parents. Elisa, from one side of the road to the other one started shouting *Alma! Alma!* The three of them, probably coming back from their *milpa*—their crop field—were carrying corns, pumpkins, beans and their machetes; they passed us, unfazed, and kept on walking to their house in the top of the hill (FN 2018.02.08). The teacher just laughed and then kept on with our visiting schedule. Surprisingly, the week after, on February 15th, Alma arrived to school at 10:35 am. This was the first time she attended school during the whole school year.

When I asked Ernesta why she had not brought her daughter Alma to school, she told me *no viene porque no se despierta*\(^{123}\), which at this point in my field work was not surprising since it was an excuse that many parents shared whenever they did not bring their children to school, or whenever they arrived late (FN 2018.02.15; 03.01;11.29). Many parents mentioned that their children wake up at 8:30 am, and that by time they get ready it is already 9:30 am, and since sometimes the teacher ends the school day by noon, they prefer not to take them to school. Many parents feel that children need to rest well (IN with Tomasa & Alonso, 2018.07.03); in other cases they feel children are tired (IN

\(^{123}\) she’s not coming because she’s not waking up
with Elsa, 2018.07.24); and in some others, even if they insist their 5 year old children go to school, the children respond by saying *que no han terminado sus sueños*¹²⁴ (IN with Ernesta & Nestor, 2018.06.08). For other mothers, they did not send them to school because they would not have anything else to do at their house and they would feel lonely (FN 2018.04.20), and in other cases, they did not send them because their husbands said that their children cannot be in school for such a long time, and that is why it would be better to send them to a school that did not follow the ‘Programa Escuelas de Tiempo Completo’¹²⁵ (PETC; FN 2018.02.07).

**Full-time School Program: A Strategy for School Survival**

In the 2013-2014 school cycle, Elisa enrolled the school in the PETC, where students ostensibly attend classes from 8 am to 2 pm, learn in a bilingual fashion, and parents are involved in cleaning the school and preparing breakfast and lunch for the children (SEP, 2019b; FN 2018.07.10). The PETC is an optional program that schools can choose in order for them to extend their school day from three to six hours per day, and as a consequence reduce students’ dropout and impact children’s learning in a positive way (Acuerdo 475, Diario Oficial de la Nación, 12/31/2008; SEP 2019b). The commitment from the government to these schools is that as long as they become part of this program, their schools will have better infrastructure, they will receive a food stipend and will also have access to the pedagogical resource ‘Líneas de Trabajo Educativas’¹²⁶, which aims to guide teachers on how they can help children in the extended school day. The Educational Work Lines are: “Express and create through art”, “Live healthy”, “Learn to get along”,

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¹²⁴ that they have not finished their dreams  
¹²⁵ Full-time School Program  
¹²⁶ Educational Work Lines
“Learn with ICT”, “Play with numbers and something else”, “Write and read”, and when relevant, “Write and read in an Indigenous language” (SEP, 2016). During my time in the school, Elisa never followed the activities suggested by the Educational Working Lines, since in many cases they asked for parents’ participation, took for granted that schools had digital cameras and computers, and overall did not consider the school multigrade nature of the school.

However, even though she did not follow the Educational Working Lines, Elisa believed that the program was of great help for her to have a better school, and also, it was a motivation for parents to register their children to the school or at least bring them when they were already registered in it. Still, every time Elisa listened to the reasons behind why parents did not want to register their children at preschool or why they registered them but did not bring them to school, she remained calm, and started to explain some of the benefits of preschool education, the advantages of registering them to Palal-na in comparison to the other schools (e.g., the PETC), as well as how mothers needed to do what is the best for their children, and not follow the orders of their husbands, when they were not even living in the town and sharing the everyday of their children’s education (FN 2018.02.15; 02.16; 02.19; 06.27). In spite of sharing all these reasons with the parents, in many cases, she also used her authoritative position as a teacher in town, and asked the parents for the papers (e.g., child’s birth certificate, personal identification) that she needed in order to submit them to the Ministry of Education to register their children at the school, ending up telling parents that it would be their decision if they wanted to send their children in August to the school (FN
2018.02.07; 02.09; 02.15; 02.16; 02.19). With this bureaucratic move she was basically fighting for the survival of the only school that followed the PTEC in the community.

After a week and a half of listening to all these stories, as we were walking to take the bus to Carrillo Puerto, I asked Elisa how she controlled her temper in the face of the parents’ excuses for not registering their children or bringing their children to Palal-nà, which I knew were not limited to these, but to the sun’s eclipse, the hurricanes, the rain, the cold, the heat, the lack of children’s shoes, amongst many others (FN 2017.30.08; 2018.06.27). She then stopped in the middle of the road and replied:

> los primeros dos años sí me enojaba, y el tercer año, cuando empecé a perder a los alumnos, porque por culpa de ellos [las otras escuelas] cerré [un salón]. Y se empezaron a llevar [a alumnos] y dije, ¿qué paso? Y al final, ya dije, va. Yo no me voy a ir; la otra maestra se va. Y si, al final, yo ya les empecé a explicar a las mamás: “Si al final quieren que la escuela se utilice para otra cosa, dejen de traer a sus hijos, son de ustedes, no míos. Yo pierdo grupo, yo pierdo alumnos, yo me voy, a mí me dan cambio, yo no pierdo mi trabajo. Yo me voy para otro lugar. Ustedes pierden”, les digo, “porque es su escuela, es de su colonia, ustedes no la valoran, no la utilizan, pierden. Porque no van a poner otro tipo de escuela ahí y pierden su preescolar. Van a tener todo más lejos. ¿Así lo quieren? ¡Porque lo tienen cerca y no lo valoran!!”

(FN 2018.02.08)

When Palal-nà was founded in 1990, it had three teachers, one per grade. By the time Elisa arrived midway through the 2010–2011 school year to replace a retiring teacher, the preschool had been reduced to two teachers, including her. Despite having no training in
school administration, Elisa was given the dual-appointment of teacher and school
_responsible_ (i.e., same responsibilities as a principal, but without being one) simply
because she had a permanent appointment with the Ministry of Education, with $180
pesos ( $ 9 USD) extra payment per month ( FN 2018.02.08; 02.09). After two years,
only one classroom remained, the other teacher, who had no permanent appointment with
the Ministry of Education, was assigned to another community, and Elisa was left to
manage what was now a multigrade single-teacher school. According to her supervisor,
Elisa is an active teacher who has fostered a sense of community and revitalized the
school by increasing the number of students in the school from eight, when she arrived,
to officially twenty-four students in the 2017-2018 school year (FN 2017.16.07).

Elisa has learned that in order for the neighborhood to have a school, she must make
concessions that other teachers do not: children will arrive late, others will be absent for
weeks, and she will invite and register children with significant learning barriers. Not
accepting them would result in fewer children on paper, and thus, a real possibility of
closing the school.

The anxiety about enrollment was ever present during my experience with her and
Elisa was always thinking about strategies that could convince parents to bring their
children to school. For instance, on one occasion, with the help of her school’s
supervisor, Huaytsik’s mayor and one of her friends, who was a nurse at the health center,
she frightened parents by telling them that if they did not bring their children to school,
the government would take away their ‘Prospera’, a governmental conditional cash
transfer (CCT). She told them that she would pass the attendance list to the mayor, who
would eventually have to sign a release form for their ‘Prospera’, since, in order to
receive this CCT, children need to attend school regularly (SEDESOL, 2018). This strategy worked for a couple of years, but then the town’s mayor changed, and her friend was transferred to another community; thus, when parents realized that their children’s preschool attendance was not officially needed for them to receive their CCT, they went back to the on-off attendance mode of children to the school (FN 2018.03.13; IN with Elisa, 2019.07.10).

**Full-time School Program: A Closer Look**

The lack of consideration from the PETC in regards to multigrade schooling has been recently confirmed by Schmelkes & Aguila (2019), who describe in their report on the state of multigrade education in Mexico, how even if multigrade schools are not explicitly taken into account in the design and revision of the PETC, the criteria\(^\text{128}\) for any school, at any educational level, to become part of the program have allowed 10,800 multigrade schools to be ideal candidates for the PETC. Put differently, 43% of the 25,000 schools that are part of PETC are multigrade. On the one hand, this raises the question on why is the PETC not adapting to the realities of multigrade schooling, whilst, on the other hand, suggests that even if the PETC is not adapting to these realities, the needs of many of these schools are such, that no matter if the curriculum adapts to them, the inputs of food, and of course, an extended schedule, are huge factors for children to stay in school.

Such is the case of Elisa, for whom the benefits are not so much reflected in the promises of a better educational attainment, but more so in school retention, as well as the marketable advantages that the PETC gives the school when compared to the other schools.

\(^{128}\) (a) serve vulnerable populations or be in a social risk context and (b) present low educational attainment or high school dropout rates.
in terms of receiving infrastructure upgrades and free food (FN 2018.04.23). Along these lines, the Education Chief of the municipality, who is in charge of overseeing Indigenous modality education from nursery to high school, affirmed how the multigrade nature of these schools does not allow them as supervisors to push for a teaching-learning accountability that aligns to their own programs:

Entendemos que un maestro que atiende tres grados es complicado, no podemos dar un cien por ciento en cuanto al proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, los resultados no llegan hasta el 70% digamos, por la misma complejidad de atender los grados. Muchos de los maestros de hecho me dicen “no me exijas que yo trabaje con el plan y programa porque los niños no saben leer ni escribir, yo voy a hacer lo que me corresponde hacer y luego puedo trabajar con el plan y programa, pero ahorita los niños están en cero.”

(IN with the Education Chief, 2019.07.10)

In a school market, such as the one in Huaytsik, where school is supposedly free and the competition for preschool students is fierce, the PETC positions Palal-na as an interesting and economically viable option for parents, since Elisa does not ask for any type of voluntary fees to buy school materials or food (IN with Gladys, 2018.05.17). These fees, especially in rural and Indigenous contexts, have an impact on children’s school attendance, since preschool is not often seen as an important educational level by parents in the region. Thus, the money spent in preschool by parents could be saved for later years by not sending their children to the school (Camarillo Martínez, 2018). However, many parents in town do not know what Palal-na is offering, seeing it as just one of the five preschools in town that asks for voluntary fees (FN 2018.04.20), with an addenda of negative labels that are heard around town: far, big, dirty, asks parents to work, and staffed by just one teacher (FN 2017.09.01; 2018.02.07).

A closer look at the school’s reality allows us to see how the PETC is working on a daily basis. In practice, most students arrive between 9 am and 10 am, classes on average

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129 See Distrito Centro (n.d.) for the case of another Indigenous modality school in town where parents stopped sending their children as a way to protest on the poor state of their infrastructure.

130 We understand that it is complicated for a teacher that attends to three grades, we cannot account for 100% of the teaching-learning process, the results do not even get to a 70%, because of the complexity of attending to these grades. In fact, many teachers tell me “do not ask that I work with the [official] program because children do not even know how to read or write. I am going to do what I have to and then follow the program, but right now, the children are at zero”.

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end by noon, and parents rarely come to clean the school (FN 2018.04.23). Parents, even though they know is their obligation to come to school, prefer, as Don Donato mentioned, evitar la fatiga\textsuperscript{131} and do not bring children to school in order to avoid the work (FN 2017.09.01). In terms of the food, two mothers, who receive an economic stimulus from the PETC, are in charge of preparing and bringing homemade lunch to the children, but I was in charge of preparing breakfast during the 2017-2018 school cycle. According to the teacher, if it would have not been for me, in previous school cycles she would sometimes forget to give children breakfast, or if she did not forget, she just did not have time to give it to them (IN with Elisa, 2019.07.10).

During the school year, in different instances she insisted to parents that they had to bring their children to school, and every time a child arrived late, she told the different caregivers (e.g., mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, siblings) to remember to bring them on time and every day. She also insisted about this topic at one of the social participation committee meetings, where she told the parents that for the 2018-2019 school year, the laws would change, allowing schools to punish parents who did not take their children to school (FN 2018.06.06). Parents could not prove at that moment if this was true or not, but also, they did not ask any questions, so she invited them to organize themselves, be active, and tell everyone that they need to come to school.

\textsuperscript{131} avoid the fatigue
This was further expressed in her end of year speech where she told parents that it was a co-responsibility to educate their children, but that she could not fulfill her part if children were not in school:

_Agradezco a los padres al traer a los alumnos y poner la escuela. Nosotros como institución pondremos nuestro esfuerzo para que se logre una educación de calidad que continue creciendo, pero también dependerá de las familias que realmente se comprometan de inscribir y atender la asistencia de los niños durante el ciclo escolar. Antes de concluir quiero hacer un llamado a todos los padres de familia que van a continuar en el próximo ciclo escolar para que de manera activa sigan brindándonos su apoyo, que exista la corresponsabilidad con la escuela, ya que tienen la responsabilidad de brindar una educación a sus hijos. Aunando a eso, se les otorga uniformes, se les otorga alimentos, se les otorgan materiales didácticos, pero también se requiere su gran apoyo para el cuidado y la limpieza de la escuela [para] que siempre tenga una buena imagen, proporcionando seguridad y se cubran las necesidades de los alumnos._

(Elisa in FN 2018.07.10)

Embodying the educational institution, the teacher asked parents to not just bring their children to school, but to become responsible for the school, since it is theirs and not hers—an idea which she has been struggling with for them to understand, as was not the case at her other teaching posts (FN 2018.02.09). Moreover, in order for parents to understand the importance of the school and the PETC in relation to their family economy, the teacher added:

_Esta escuela cuenta con el programa escuelas completas desde hace 5 años, con lo que he podido contar con recursos para tener rehabilitación y equipamiento en el centro educativo. Asimismo, para la compra de materiales que se requieren para el trabajo pedagógico con los alumnos, y con esto también hemos podido apoyar a los_
padres de familia, la economía familiar, el desarrollo de habilidades para las competencias, así como el desarrollo de proyectos, deportes, pero también los aprendizajes en cuanto a pensamiento matemático, la lengua oral y escrita, tanto en español como en lengua maya, ya que estas son las líneas de trabajo del programa de tiempo completo. Además, desde hace cuatro años se ofrece una alimentación saludable, todos los días, sin ningún costo para los padres de familia.

(Elisa in FN 2018.07.10)

Throughout all these years Elisa has tried to position Palal-na as an Indigenous school that can offer a quality education to their children by registering the school in the PETC and trying to highlight some of its benefits, such as the improvement in infrastructure, the purchase of pedagogical material, and of course free food for children. All these efforts are recognized by the parents (IN with Donato & Margarita, 2018.07.02) and by the school’s supervisor (FN 2017.07.16; 2018.02.06), however, an aspect that seems to be forgotten by parents, and I would say, by the teacher throughout the school year, was the relationship between being an Indigenous school and its obligation of teaching in and through the Maya language.

The Bureaucratic Process for the Absence of Maya Instruction

During the end of year celebration of the 2016-2017 school cycle, Elisa’s supervisor talked about the success of teaching Maya at the school and how this was a characteristic of the instructional quality provided at Palal-na. During her 2017-2018 end of the year speech, Elisa touched upon the role of the PETC’s Educational Guidelines at the school, especially the ones concerning Maya (FN 2017.07.13; 2019.06.26). Curiously enough,

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133 This school has had the full-time schools’ program for 5 years, with which I have been able to count on resources to rehabilitate the school and obtain equipment in the educational center. Likewise, for the purchase of materials that are required for the pedagogical work with the students, and with this we have also been able to support the parents, the family economy, the development of skills for the competences, as well as the development of projects, sports, but also learning in terms of mathematical thinking, oral and written language, both in Spanish and in the Maya language, since these are the lines of work of the full-time program. In addition, healthy eating has been offered every day for four years, at no cost to parents.
she engaged in this same institutional rite at the end of the following school year celebration. The recursive nature of these speeches spoke to the *co-construction of school safe time* (Hornberger & Chick, 2001), where the teacher, parents and the supervisor were all acting as expected as they spoke and heard about what is learned in the school—especially about Maya. However, in reality, formal instruction in Maya ever actually happened.

Although Maya was not present in the regular discourse nor curriculum of the school, during bureaucratic events, it manifested either as a feature that identified the uniqueness of the school (Loyola-Hernández, 2018), as an action that appealed to the people’s emotions (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009), as the language of the institution (Bourdieu, 1991) or as a bureaucratic trait that the school had to comply with (SEP, 2019c). When the supervisor spoke in 2017, my only experience at the school had been as an honorary guest in the end of the school celebration, as well as in my couple of visits to ask Elisa’s permission to work with her during the 2017-2018 school year. I was excited and inspired by the supervisor, who seemed to recognize Elisa’s efforts to bring the language of the community to the forefront. However, as I witnessed how the school year unfolded, saw how intentional Maya teaching happened only a few times, as well as how parents were not aware that the school was bilingual by design, I started to understand to what or whom the school and the teacher were accountable to and which mechanisms cover this accountability.

Furthermore, because including Maya in her own assessments was optional, Elisa decided not to include it, and the parents, in many ways, because of their particular way of understanding how Maya is learned, held to the ideas that Maya needs to be taught at the
house or that the teacher would know how to promote it when needed. These rituals and mechanisms did not go unnoticed. When I interviewed the Education Chief for the municipality, who is also Elisa’s supervisor boss, and who was an honorary guest in the 2018-2019 end of school celebration, he emphasized that:

Nosotros como maestros, no hablamos maya, entonces se va perdiendo. Todo es en español. El maya se practica de una forma más administrativa, nada mas, como un folclor, y no se adentra como en otras culturas.\(^{134}\)

(IN with Education Chief, 2019.06.26)

The Education Chief shared this reflection with me as I was telling him about my research and some of my findings from the time I co-taught with Elisa during the 2017-2018 school year. What was clear for me was that these rituals and mechanisms do not go unnoticed, and after all, administrative tasks and bureaucracy were behind the absence of Maya instruction.

**The Accountability of Maya Instruction: A Bureaucratic Balancing Act**

During our walks around town to invite parents to register their children to the school, Elisa and I had many opportunities to talk about the challenges of Indigenous schooling in the Yucatan Peninsula, the similarities she sees among the schools she has worked in, as well as the differences between the Indigenous and general modalities. The accountability of Palal-na to the school district was a common topic in our conversations. The accountability measures that exist are focused on spending and place a significant burden on the teacher. This results in a paradox: The accountability measures are there to foster learning and curb corruption, but the burden they place on the teacher actually hinders

\(^{134}\) As teachers, we do not speak Maya, thus it is getting lost. Everything is in Spanish. Maya is practiced in an administrative way, nothing more, it is like folklore, not like in other cultures.
learning and, as I observed, fostered discontent among the parents. They were asked to spend time at the school to cover administrative tasks, but not to see how their children are learning.

For example, at the beginning of the school year, Elisa applied for an economic stimulus of 30 thousand pesos ($1,560 USD), a grant available only to escuelas completas. To prove the money was spent on the children, she needed to show receipts, which is understandable, but also to take pictures of the materials with the children, with the parents, and by herself (FN 2017.10.25). This process took an entire day, so classes were cancelled. The following day, classes were cancelled again, since Elisa was required to present this proof, a folder thick with receipts, photos and official paperwork, in person, at the Ministry of Education in Chetumal, the state capital—four hours away from Huaytsik (Figure 10).

![Figure 11. Bureaucratic accountability](image)

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135 “complete schools”
This form of accountability is coupled with so much bureaucratic paperwork that, according to Elisa, many schools do not apply for the PETC (see also Schmelkes & Aguila, 2019). Activities such as these took most of her time, leaving little for actual teaching. During the 2017-2018 school year, she decided not to apply for any stimuli, since a new program called ‘Escuelas al 100%’\textsuperscript{136}, would automatically come to repaint the school and make any needed repairs (FN 2018.03.01). She later regretted this decision. By the end of the school year ‘Escuelas al 100%’ never arrived, leaving Elisa with a school in need of repair and without any money to do so. Furthermore, without a guarantee of monetary compensation, parents do not want to help, calling into question the ideal of a school by and for the community that the PETC wants to promote (see also, Mendieta Melgar, Castro, Priego Vázquez & Perales Franco, 2019).

This view was expressed not just by Elisa, who in other schools had been able to convince the town’s mayor to give her some money for her to pay parents to work in the school (FN 2018. 05.24), but also shared by Donato and Margarita, who had have two children at the school and have seen how parents rarely collaborate with the teacher:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> Desde que..., entonces, este año le estaba yo diciendo a doña Margarita que era de cerrarlo [la reja], pero como ves, no participa nadie, les hablas y...</td>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> This year I was telling Doña Margarita that it was about closing it [a fence], but as you see, no one participates, you talk to them and...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Margarita:</strong> De hecho, se los comenté.</td>
<td><strong>Margarita:</strong> Actually, I told them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> ¿Pero hay material? ¿No hay material o sí? O sea, lo tiene que comprar la maestra.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> But is there material? There is no material, or yes? The teacher has to buy it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Margarita:</strong> No, no hay material, pero la maestra dice que no lo puede comprar.</td>
<td><strong>Margarita:</strong> No, there is no material, but the teacher says that she cannot buy it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> ¿Por?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Margarita:</strong> Que porque no hay donde dan, cómo...</td>
<td><strong>Margarita:</strong> Because they do not give, like...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> ...facturación.</td>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> ... receipts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{136} Schools at a 100%
Aldo: Como ¿no hay un espacio? Ah, facturación.

Margarita: Y para la obra de mano tienen que participar los papás, entonces, le dije, “pues, si no se puede comprar nada y eso, pues, que cada papá que traiga unos quince palitos, así no tan gordos, como de éstos [señala unos palos], pues, lo acomodamos, luego lo pintamos de colores”, le digo.

Aldo: Claro, así se vería más bonito, además.

Margarita: Pero, pues, ninguno quiso, dice, “ah, déjalo así”; ninguno papá quiso porque yo le comenté a las mamás, pero nadie quiso. Le dije a Doña Jonasa, me dice, “bueno, cuando puedan ahí avisan”, pero veo que nadie quiso participar en eso, es lo que yo le digo, “lástima que no podemos, si no lo hacemos”, le digo, “pero no se apure”, me dijo la maestra, “espérate porque me dijeron que iban a acomodar a la escuela, que va a ver ‘Escuelas al 100%’”.

Aldo: Se supone desde principios de año.

Margarita: Entonces, van a quitar toda la malla, pues, “la malla la podemos utilizar,” me dice, “espérate,” me dice, pero como ves ya pasó este año y nada.

Aldo: No y ya se está cayendo la malla, aquí abajo ya se está cayendo.

Donato: Ya, ahórita que ya cambiaron los dirigentes. Ahora que ya se cambiaron todos, pues, no creo que lo sigan porque el apoyo ya lo están dando.

Aldo: There is no space? Ah, receipts.

Margarita: And for the labor, parents have to participate, then, I said, "well, if you cannot buy anything, then, every dad can bring about fifteen sticks, not so fat, like those [points to some wooden logs], then, we arrange them, then we paint them with colors", I say.

Aldo: Sure, that would look nicer too.

Margarita: But, then, nobody wanted to; they say, "ah, leave it like that", not a single dad wanted because I told moms, but nobody wanted to. I said to Doña Jonasa, she says, "well, when you can, let me know", but I see that nobody wanted to participate in that, that is what I say, " a pity that we cannot, if not we would do it," I tell her, "but do not hurry" the teacher told me and continued, "they told me they were going to accommodate the school and give it ‘Escuelas al 100%’.

Aldo: Supposedly since the beginning of the year.

Margarita: Then, they will remove all the mesh, then, “we can use the mesh,” she tells me, “wait,” she tells me, but as you see, this year nothing has happened.

Aldo: No, and now the mesh is falling, it is already falling down here.

Donato: The political leaders have changed. Now that everyone has changed, I do not think they will follow through because the support has been given already.

Table 13. Parent’s participation- IN with Donato & Margarita (2018.07.02)

For Donato and Margarita, the lack of parents’ collaboration has been affecting the way children are learning since the teacher at some moments had to start late or end school before 2 pm, and on many days cancel classes in order to deal with infrastructure issues in the school, such as changing chairs, cleaning the toilets or painting the school (FN 2018.01.11; 07.05). Sometimes, when the teacher asked children to help her, they
were happy to do so, but for some parents, if their children were going to help in some
tasks, such as painting, they had to be paid (Justino in FN 2018.07.08; Figure 11).

Figure 2. Children helping to clean

Cancelling classes also gave the parents an excuse to not take their children to school,
which started a vicious never-ending cycle of persuading parents to bring their children,
and proving to them that the school would be open, but then, because of some paperwork
that had to be done, the card with the one she bought food was not working (FN 2018.05.04),
or the teacher needing to cancel classes for political or personal reasons, the efforts that
were done to convince parents went back to square one.

Thus, bureaucracy played a big role in the absence of Maya instruction, and
instruction in general. Even the local bureaucrats such as the school’s supervisor did not
even know the workings of multigrade schools, what they could accomplish and what they
could be effectively accountable for. In October 2017, the supervisor went to visit the
school and asked the teacher for her contents’ scope and sequences. Elisa did not have them
and explained to me that actually this is one of the greatest challenges since one day she
needs to attend K1, other days K2 and others K3 (FN 2017.10.12; IN with Elisa,
2019.07.10). She explained to the supervisor that she got confused and instead of bringing her scope and sequences, she brought her Maya planning books. Two things are worth mentioning here. When I asked the teacher if she ever followed a scope and sequence, she told me that she did not, and that this is one of the greatest challenges of multigrade schooling since no hay un programa normal para los tres grados.\(^{137}\) Thus she is not even accountable to a program that takes into account the nature of multigrade schooling (Mendieta Melgar et al., 2019). Moreover, she also did not have Maya planning books, but her own notes on a Maya course she was taking, which at the end work as an excuse for the supervisor.

By the end of the supervisor’s visit, which more often than not came as surprise, Elisa shared with me how the supervisor told her that ella no sabía que todos los días eran así, pensaba que era una tarea mucho más sencilla de hacer, y que de verdad entendía que todo esto era un reto\(^{138}\) (IN with Elisa, 2019.07.10). Elisa told me that this was the first time in all her years at the school that the supervisor recognized the challenge she, as a teacher, confronted every day and that she hoped the supervisor understood why she needed more help in the school. The school’s supervisor did not know the workings of multigrade schools, what they could or could not accomplish, and what they should be effectively accountable for. Still, after knowing Palal-na’s multigrade situation and at the same time not knowing what it could and should be accountable for, the supervisor asked Elisa to create her own contextualized materials and scope and sequences for each one of the age groups, which Elisa agreed she should develop while also stating, siempre lo

\(^{137}\) there is no normal program for the three grades  
\(^{138}\) she did not know that every day was like this, she thought that these tasks were way simpler, and she really understood that all this was a challenge.
administrativo me quita tiempo\textsuperscript{139}. Elisa thus asked the supervisor to free her from some of her administrative tasks, like organizing the parents’ committees, completing checklists of learning tasks that she did not have time to teach, or reviewing the state of the school’s infrastructure. The supervisor told her that what she should do is organize the parents in order for them to help her to create the school materials. Informed by her prior experiences, Elisa knew this was a dead-end recommendation and solution.

When she actually received help from the Ministry of Education, it was because of a bureaucratic confusion. During the 2016-2017 school year, she had two student-teachers helping her, but they soon left because they only arrived due to a paperwork error made by the supervisor, who had forgotten that Palal-na was a single-teacher multigrade school, and the student-teachers needed their practicum in an escuela regular\textsuperscript{140} (FN 2017.06.17). The supervisor thus hid a reality that these future teachers would confront in the region and, at the same time missed an opportunity for these student-teachers to help children to hopefully learn some Maya by alleviating Elisa’s administrative burden.

In a study on the situation of Indigenous and rural multigrade schooling in Mexico, Weiss (2000) found how teachers in different Mexican states adopted three different approaches to the ways they organized their classroom times. They could organize different activities for each grade, they could organize the same activities for all the grades, or they could have a combination of both. In other words, sometimes children from all grades collaborated in the same activities, and then teachers differentiated according to the difficulty of the activities. Even though Elisa did not have a multigrade program to follow,

\textsuperscript{139} The administrative tasks always take my time.
\textsuperscript{140} regular school
Elisa adopted these three approaches within the school year with a daily planning that was characterized by happening quickly and during the class.

Elisa had never attended a multigrade specific professional development, but understood that each grade needed its own attention, especially the third graders who were going to pass to primary, a benchmark definitely understood by her as an assessment of her own practices (FN 2018.03.05; 05.04; 05.09; IN with Elisa, 2019.07.10). However, for other preschool teachers in the region, the performance of their children at their new primary schools was a measure of academic success. For example, when I had a conversation with a primary school teacher in Huaytsik, who teaches 5th grade, but used to be a 1st and 2nd grade teacher, she shared with me how as primary teachers they notice when preschools are not teaching children how to read, write or learn mathematics. For her, it is the preschools’ responsibility to promote literacy and numeracy skills, because if not, children arrive to primary school with no energy for learning (FN 2018.07.10). Also, when I had the opportunity to visit the only Indigenous multigrade modality preschool in Cobá, a town closer to the Riviera Maya, the teacher, who was born and raised in Huaytsik but placed in Cobá as a preschool teacher, told me how even though her school had to teach Maya, and she tried as much as possible to create spaces for Maya to be practiced in the school, Maya had to be sacrificed as she planned her lessons based on the learner profile expected by the only primary school in town, which, as in the case of Huaytsik, was a general modality school. In both towns, the first-grade primary teacher has an influence on the students’ preschool exit profile—and this is not a unique demand on Indigenous multigrade schools (FN 2018.03.05).
Parents did not see the lack of planning as a challenge, and actually praised the
teacher for teaching every day without help. Moreover, parents were proud of Palal-na
since every year, as the two primary schools in town celebrated their own end of school
cycles, they always noticed how some Palal-na alumni got prizes for achievement, which
spoke to them that Elisa was doing something right (FN 2018.07.10). Nonetheless, it was
evident that bureaucracy affected not just the regular classroom practices, the instruction
and learning that happened inside of the school, but also the supervisory activities which
in turn seemed to be overwhelming as this supervisor had to visit schools all around the
municipality, fill out paper work and try to also be accountable to her own superiors (IN
with Palal-na school’s supervisor, 2019.07.10). At the end, education at this level was a
balancing game of papers, signatures, official events, and school presence that would
hopefully lead to learning.

Concluding Remarks: The Continuum of Hope and Hopelessness

While the expansion of preschool education in Mexico has led to more opportunities
for children and families in advancing their educational aspirations, the quality of
education offered at this level is largely suboptimal (Yoshikawa et al., 2007; 2018). ECE
in Quintana Roo is not an exception. In this chapter, I identified ways in which policy
from top-down and bottom-up levels obstruct not just Indigenous language instruction
but learning overall.

I include top-down and bottom-up levels because the brokenness of the Indigenous
ECE in Quintana Roo, and I would say, all Mexico, arises from complicit acts from all
the levels that have an impact in learning. This complicity of acts (or inaction) is not
attributable to a single stakeholder on whom to place the blame, but to the complicated
relations and the ecology of ECE in Huaytsik, where social mechanisms (institutions, learning processes, evaluations, speeches) work in systematic ways and help to reproduce and perpetuate—not necessarily intentionally— the brokenness of the educational system at this level, with the result that the poorest people continue receiving the poorest education (Estrada Rebull, 2015; Muñoz, 2010).

For example, during the end of year celebration of the 2016-2017 school cycle, Elisa’s supervisor, talked about the success of teaching Maya at the school and how this was a characteristic of the instructional quality provided at the school. The teacher engaged in this institutional rite the year after, and parents heard these speeches, but were still surprised that Maya could be taught at the school when I interviewed them. As these performances are repeated from year to year, the supervisor still does not hold the teacher or the school accountable for teaching Maya. Elisa, having the option to include Maya in her own assessments, decided not to include it (FN 2018.07.12); and the parents, in many ways, because of their particular way of understanding the teacher’s role as an authority—thinking they do not have the right to tell the teacher what to do (FN 2018.06.08), but at the same time not following what the teacher tells them to do—held to the ideas that Maya needs to be taught at the house, or that the teacher would know how to promote it when needed.

Elisa tries to balance and negotiate all her bureaucratic duties with her own beliefs about preschool education as a step for autonomy and success for all the children even as she is confronted with the different interruptions that exist in the school, the lack of collaboration on behalf of the parents, and the anxiety that exists for Palal-na to survive as an institution. Elisa still hopes and works towards what she understands as quality
education, such as a functional PETC, also offering opportunities for the “forgotten” children in town, or the ones that because of familiar circumstances could not adapt to the current school system. In the end, the benefit of embodying the institution allows her to mold the institution–herself– in ways that benefit the families and the children.

In the case of José, the K1 boy with cerebral palsy, the proximity to others and caring love he received from other children was not just valuable for him, but for his mother and for all the children. However, his presence was also difficult for Elisa to handle. As I have tried to express throughout the chapter, what creates this scenario is more the poverty than the Indigeneity of the school population and environment, although, in cases, such as the Mexican, poverty and Indigeneity are almost invariably linked (Cisneros, 2016; Robles Vásquez & Pérez Miranda, 2018; Salmerón Castro & Porras Delgado, 2010). In an ideal world his disability should not be an excuse for not providing a space for children to be taught in Maya at the school. Children, such as José, are so visible, uncomfortable and non-controllable that the system has made them absent. In other words, we know they exist, but are purposefully made absent (Cisneros, 2016, p.29), a phenomenon that Elisa is trying to counterpose. Nonetheless, a dilemma arises in her own practices in a multigrade single-serviced Indigenous school: what should take a greater priority, provide access to a child that could be inevitably invisibilized if not offered a space at a school, but as a consequence change the dynamics of an already full of obstructions school system, or try to reduce one of these obstructions, by ignoring it, and help a larger number of children by addressing instruction overall, while also facing the eventual closure of the school for not having enough registered children?
For Elisa, managing a diverse range of ages, cleaning the school, fulfilling her paperwork, and pushing parents to buy into the idea that this is a community school, are already difficult tasks to balance. Teaching Maya becomes a low priority, especially when she is not held accountable for it on a regular basis and given the lack of resources and support for her own teaching. If schools are framed as places where minoritized languages will be revitalized, we are doomed, not because revitalization itself is so challenging, but because even when addressed, it is many times purposefully avoided and thus absent for the sake of keeping these spaces open to a possibility, which is not limited to the possibility of learning Maya, but learning overall (Hornberger, 2008). According to Elisa, the lack of community commitment to the school has not changed in her seven years as a teacher at Palal-na. However, what does placing blame on the community, the teacher, and/or the educational system really do for us? Even though Elisa many times pointed the blame to the lack of collaboration of parents on the condition of the school, it is not productive to point the blame to any one individual or institution, but yet, to the ways in which various factors at these levels come together to produce the absence of instruction, supervision, accountability, collaboration, and of course Maya.

Elisa was always in a continuum of hope and hopelessness, negotiating contradictory feelings and at the same time trying to keep her cool. She was always uncertain about what would happen next. The messages she received from the Ministry of Education were often hopeful, but then, these promises would just disappear into thin air. For example, the supervisor told her that if she got 35 students for the 2018-2019 school year, she would get another teacher. This promise was on our minds during our February home visits. Elisa knew that cancelling classes for three days in a row or finishing classes
earlier would bring a big reward for her, for the children and for all the families. She was
determined to fight the fierce competition for students in town and even entering the
battle of stealing students by going to the houses of families who had registered their
children in other preschools to make her pitch, and eventually getting them to switch
schools (Figure 12).

Figure 13. Elisa on the move

Unfortunately, by the end of the school year, Elisa shared with me that the supervisor
could not open another classroom, which was devastating news for all of us and led her to
say that se arrepentía porque ahora tiene muchos niños y no sabe que va a hacer con
tantos niños\footnote{\textsuperscript{\ref{fn:10}}} (FN 2018.06.13). Her enthusiasm for receiving children and giving them

\footnote{\textsuperscript{\ref{fn:10}}} she regretted [her previous decisions] because now she has too many children and she does not know what she will do with so many children.
an opportunity for learning was many times overshadowed by the bureaucratic modus operandi of the educational system. Would having a second teacher and split class groups impacted instruction and learning? We do not know. However, what was a fact was that hopes for improvement were reduced to the minimum at that point in time. Something similar happened when she decided to not apply to any economic stimuli during the 2017-2018 school year because ‘Escuelas al 100%’ would be arriving to her school, but at the end of the school year, it never did (FN 2018.03.01).

Another negotiation Elisa was constantly dealing with was to maintain flexibility in response to the children’s and parents’ needs while at the same time not sacrificing learning. In other words, she knew that registering children allowed Palal-na to exist, but what is the function of the school if children don’t come? Elisa many times questioned her own flexibility of allowing children to arrive as late as 9 or 10 am (sometimes even 11 am), when classes supposedly started at 8 am. She did not know how fair it was for the parents that did follow the rules, how fair it was for the children who spent time in the school without her teaching them, nor if it was fair overall for her. She wanted children to have an opportunity to get a formal education which, for various reasons, was denied in other spaces. However, in many other ways, she felt that people were taking advantage of her flexibility, and she did not want schooling to be a bureaucratic rite of passage, where you will be given the official paper to go to primary school as long as you present your body to the school a couple of times.

For example, even though preschool does not have any official assessments, she was worried about the literacy level of some children and lengthen the schedule in order for them to receive more instructional time. The weather was harsh in its heat and, to be
honest, I wished many times for the school days to end, but she insisted to parents that she needed the children, that they had to learn and that they needed to come. For her, children could not make the decision of attending school. It was not an excuse for her if children did not wake up, or if the weather was not appropriate for children. She had to teach them, and she was proud, based on what people reported about her performance, including her supervisor, that she was the person who had rescued the school from being almost abandoned to now over capacity, an aspect that was a challenge as she was serving children she did not even have the professional development for teaching.

Her classroom and school were chaotic for visitors. It was for me the first time I visited it; however, Elisa was savvy in the ways she navigated her administrative tasks and the children’s schooling experience. To be and become a teacher in these multigrade schools means to be structured by bureaucratic incentives and recognize that these factors are not going to go away. It is a creative, but also a complicit process that responds to the rise of a culture of bureaucratic accountability in education, rather than to a culture of learning accountability (Anzures Tapia, 2020; Biesta, 2015). At the end, Elisa responds to a system where everyone is under tremendous pressure. The teacher needs to be savvy on how to get kids to register, to ask parents to come and clean; parents are under pressure to send their children to school and, if they send them, they need to go to the school to help and clean; and lastly, the supervisor is under the pressure of accepting whatever is done in the school since she has other 10 schools to assess. Asking to a teacher to change the status quo of their school, at the end, would imply more work for her and the Education Chief (IN with Palal-na school’s supervisor, 2019.07.10). All in all,
this balance produces a system moved by inertia rather than by intentions (Anzures Tapia, 2015).

Even with these successes in hand and knowing what her impact in the community had been, Elisa told me as we were preparing for the end of the 2018 school year celebration how the 2019-2020 school year will probably be her last year at the school. She had tried to talk with other preschools around town in order for them to think about merging their schools to offer the community a complete Indigenous school with three separate grades, a janitor and a principal (FN 2018.06.18). However, even if all the Indigenous schools in Huaytsik agree to this plan, the supervisor said this was not possible since merging schools would mean that they would have to eliminate a preschool in town and thus receive less state and federal funding for preschool education. For Elisa, this does not make sense, since preschool teachers could serve the town in a better way with a complete school, and even the funding that was promised to them by the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year (i.e., ‘Escuelas al 100%’) has not even been distributed because, amongst other reasons, according to Elisa, the state government thinks that some schools are well set to function throughout the year due to the federal PETC (FN 2018.05.09).

Thus, as can be seen, quality multigrade schooling, let alone the promotion of a bilingual education that seeks to strengthen a minoritized language such as Maya, does not just depend on an innovative curriculum or dynamic strategies for teachers. It is about concrete aspects that respond to larger economic, social and political factors such as the need for school materials, professional development that adapts to the school needs, effective supervision, flexible schedules, more teachers for multigrade schools, janitors
and less administrative burden (Mendieta Melgar et al., 2019; Weiss, 2000). These conditions are the building blocks that impede or sustain the quality of schooling (Anyon, 2005; Flores & Chaparro, 2018). In short, the creation of top-down policies that promote a quality early childhood education or that are designed for the reclamation of Indigenous languages without tackling socio-economic conditions and bureaucratic burdens will keep on being ineffective without serious and consistent interventions, as well as with an organization that makes sense to the communities in charge of these schools (Cru, 2015a; INEE, 2019; Mendieta Melgar et al., 2019; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014).

Even if programs such as PETC or ‘Prospera’ exist, there are systemic barriers that need to be taken into account in order for these programs to accomplish their mission of improving the quality of education. Although government stakeholders appear to understand that food, water and a full-time school are fundamental for children’s development, however, more must be done to act on this recognition. These conditions could be improved, but the government, through different agents and bureaucrats (e.g., regional supervisors, teachers) actively produces them as non-existent by normalizing discourses such as the existence and practice of Maya in schools, when this is not actually happening, or by not reporting or providing feedback on malpractices, either because this would provoke more work—not always remunerated—or could actually place a new barrier to the schools’ status quo, which is at the end the result of the careful balance of the hope-hoplessness continuum that the Palal-na community lives every day.

Elisa’s narration of the school’s name origin sums up this continuum and the systemic violence that the school is victim and agent of. As we were organizing some materials in her office, I asked Elisa why the real name of the school, not the pseudonym
(Palal-na), was chosen. She stopped organizing her materials, sat down and explained to me that a couple of years ago, she had the opportunity to interview the school founders and almost all the teachers that have taught at Palal-na. She went to a drawer and took out a document where she wrote the history of the school. She shared that the first principal decided to name the school “white path” in Maya, making reference to the characteristic white limestone paths that are all around the Yucatan Peninsula, and which were surrounding the school. As she was explaining this to me, she burst into laughter and said that this is the reason why the school will never have paved roads, sidewalks nor the services that a paved road could bring—the state of the school was the consequence of the curse in its name (FN 2017.10.11).
CHAPTER 6: The Possibilities of Maya: Presences and Absences

Quorum to start classes is a flexible concept at Palal-na. Today, quorum was reached at 9:20 am with 7 students, even though classes officially start by 8 am. At this time, Elisa asked children to sit down in the patio in order for them to introduce themselves in Maya and Spanish. As she was explaining this, Roberto’s mother, Bertha, arrived to the school and asked Elisa if she knew anyone who would be traveling to Carrillo. Elisa stopped the activity and told Bertha that she should go to the other preschool and ask the teacher over there. Elisa came back to the school patio and started to regroup students again. As soon as they all sat down, Elisa repeated, in Maya, the instructions for the activity. Lola, a K3 student, started to laugh in a nervous way as soon as she heard the teacher speaking in Maya. Elisa then told Lola to say “in k’aaba’” (my name is) and “uts tin wich” (I like). As the teacher was finishing her explanation, Bruno and Jacinto arrived to school, with the latter one crying inconsolably. The teacher stopped the activity, told Bruno to sit beside her and sat Jacinto on her lap. After a couple of minutes of calming him down, she restarted the activity, but in less than two minutes, Jonas—a mom who took every opportunity to chat—arrived with Yoel, and told Elisa how she really likes that children are practicing Maya since her older son is failing Maya in middle school (the only level, other than preschool, where Maya is officially taught). Elisa tried to avoid the conversation, but she had no choice than to engage with it. By this point, children were running around the patio and she was struggling to regroup the 10 students. One by one, students were coming back to the circle, but little did we know that a representative from the Ministry of Education was going to arrive looking for the school director. This last interruption, plus having children running around made her stop the activity. The activity lasted approximately 20 minutes, but, from those, 8 minutes were on task, while the rest of them were invested in all these interruptions. (FN 2017.09.01)

Convoluted sequences such as these were common throughout the day, every day. In fact, these interrupted practices are common in multigrade schools, where, according to the Ministry of Education, schools barely cover 50% of the mandated curriculum during a school year as students spend most of the school time off-task (SEP 2005 in Estrada Rebull, 2015; Schmelkes & Aguila, 2019). Since Elisa is the only teacher in the school, she needs to attend to parents and children that arrive late, help people in town that come and ask for her advice for job applications (FN 2018.06.06), sign papers for the Ministry of Education, as well as for parents (FN 2017.10.25; 12.14; 2018.02.08; 07.04), or just see anyone who comes to the school and asks or offers something (FN 2017.10.31).
These tangled schedules are not failures of the teacher nor do they arise from a lack of understanding from the families and the town on the roles of schools. On the contrary, Elisa is doing her best to try to teach, do a social service to some people in town, and at the same time try to cover the position of school director—when she never even wanted it. Still, within these interruptions in Palal-na, instruction happened, although not always in Maya, which was an ever-present worry for Elisa.

In this chapter, I describe the ways Maya instruction was present in the school, but, following the previous chapter, how bureaucratic processes made it absent. I will start by describing the way Elisa, who was trained as a primary teacher, recognized the importance of Maya in her students’ education, but in her own impetus for improving her teaching, she became a doubter of her own abilities as a Maya writer, and thus, as a teacher. Within these doubts, she still managed to design Maya learning experiences using different types of materials. The second part of the chapter explores the English and Spanish language varieties in these materials and how they worked as obstacles and distractors in the teaching and learning processes happening in the classroom. Palal-na followed a 200-day calendar school year, which meant approximately 1200 hours of instruction. On the third section I describe the only five learning experiences—including the introductory vignette—where Maya was purposefully taught in the school. These five learning experiences account for approximately 7 hours of the whole school year. Finally, at the end of the chapter I conclude by reflecting on the ways ideological and implementational educational spaces are interrupted and purposefully made absent by bureaucratic processes and rituals, but also how institutions, such as Indigenous schools are already a step towards the reclamation of Indigenous languages, and more so in a
town where people have been reimagining how languages, and education, can be moved forward.

**Elisa: From Maya Teacher to Maya Doubter**

Elisa was born in Tepich, a town locally known for maintaining its traditions, both Indigenous and Mestizo (FN 2018.01.08; 03.14) as well as being perceived as a place where Maya is *maya maya* (FN 2017.10.31) and *maya clarito*¹⁴² (IN with Bertha & Justino, 2018.05.16). Elisa lived in Tepich, which is 15 minutes away from Huaytsik, until her parents got separated. When this happened, Elisa moved with her mother to Felipe Carrillo Puerto—the municipality’s head— at the age of 15. She recognizes this moment in her life as the one where her own language practices started to change. Even though she continues to speak with her mother and her father in Maya, it was when she moved to Carrillo that she started to speak more in Spanish (FN 2017.09.26). However, moving to Carrillo was not just a place where she faced her own language change, but one where she experienced how people were ashamed of being Maya and speaking Maya:

> *Me hizo mal quitarme de ahí, por lo de la maya, me hizo mal. Pues ya ahorita en otros lados, por ejemplo, llego a Carrillo, y en la escuela en la que yo estaba, este, nadie hablababa maya, nadie nadie, y no, según ellos no le entendían y según esto. Inclusiv ya había mucha discriminación, se reían de mis compañeros que hablaban maya, pero creo que eso fue que pasó, pues había compañeros que eran de por acá y con ellos hablábamos maya, y con ellos, pues la relación se fue cambiando.*¹⁴³

(Elisa in FN 2018.01.08)

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¹⁴² Clear Maya.

¹⁴³ It did not help me to leave, because of the Maya, it did me wrong. Now, already in other places, for example, when I arrived at Carrillo, in the school where I was, nobody spoke Maya, nobody, and according to them, they did not understand it. There was already a lot of discrimination; they laughed at my comrades who spoke Maya. I think that was what happened, because there were comrades who were from around here and with them, we spoke Maya, and with them, the relationship started to change.
It was in Carrillo that she started to see herself as a Maya speaker when compared to the Spanish practices that many of her classmates presumed, but more importantly, it was through her experience in high school that she understood how people got discriminated against or felt they could be discriminated against for the only reason of speaking Maya. She was surprised how her own classmates were shy to be recognized as Maya speakers and said that they did not understand Maya, even though she knew them from her own town or nearby towns where Maya was the lingua franca, or when she actually saw them speaking Maya in other circumstances (FN 2018.01.08).

For her, it was surprising that even though there is more recognition and visibility of Maya speakers around the Peninsula, many Maya speakers keep on neglecting their own Maya language practices and identity. These types of attitudes have, in some occasions, pushed her to be ironic with the people that deny their Maya abilities and Maya identity. For instance, as we were waiting for children to arrive to school, she shared how she reacted when parents said they do not speak Maya, when she knew they did:

“¡Cómo va a ser posible, mira como te apellidos! ¡¿Qué no sepas maya?! ” Yo les decía y así me burlaba de ellos. “¿Qué no sepas maya?” Les digo, “¡Ve tus apellidos! Todos somos mayas, todos crecimos acá, no puede ser que no hablen maya”, yo les decía. Y sí es cierto, los papás saben maya. Está raro, somos nosotros.\(^\text{144}\) (Elisa in FN 2018. 01.08)

Elisa’s ironic look towards being and speaking Maya just because of your surname, provides a glimpse of her own model of Mayanness and how she frames the

\(^{144}\) "How is it going to be possible, look at your surnames! That you do not know Maya?!” I would tell them, and in that way, I would make fun of them. “That you do not know maya?” I tell them, "See your surnames! We are all Maya, we all grew up here, it cannot be possible that you do not speak Maya”, I told them. And yes, it is true, parents know Maya. It is weird, it's us.
ways language is accompanied by geographical region, communicative practices, and even embodiment within family ties (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2019). In our conversations, it was evident how she placed the burden of the language change phenomena on the Maya people, as if the attitude towards language taken by parents, coworkers or children was “weird”, rather than blaming or recognizing the educational and social fabric that has consistently discriminated against and racialized Indigenous people in the Peninsula and Mexico overall (Navarrete, 2017). The intricacies of her language ideology, where people and not the system are responsible for language change; her personal experience as a Maya speaker; as well as a fortuitous series of educational events, have positioned her as a Maya advocate without her seeking it, but also as someone who harbors doubts about her own Maya abilities.

When she was studying in Carrillo to become a primary teacher, she applied for a grant at the ‘Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo’ (CONAFE) in order for her to finish her studies. Elisa became a community promoter in CONAFE, where she had to orient pregnant women, parents and caregivers who were in charge of children younger than 4 years old in their upbringing practices. Her job involved going to communities where there were no preschools or nurseries; thus, she had to get to know the people in the different communities, create impromptu classrooms in houses, plazas or under trees, and speak in Maya to teach the lessons that she planned for parents (CONAFE, 2014; FN 2018.06.22). She loved this job, and even became CONAFE’s coordinator for the municipality, but the job called for a lot of traveling and her goal has always been to have a teaching post at a school in Carrillo (FN 2019.06.27).

145 National Council for the Promotion of Education
When she got her first placement at an Indigenous preschool, she experienced a similar positive situation in regard to the use of Maya. In all the schools where she taught before Palal-na, Maya was the main language of instruction, which did not push her to think about the way she was speaking and teaching Maya, since it was the lingua franca in her educational contexts (FN 2018.02.09; 2019.06.27). It was not until she arrived to Huaytsik that she started to question herself on (1) why children at Palal-na do not speak Maya; (2) the ways in which she could teach Maya to children who say that they do not understand it; (3) how to catch the attention of children who got distracted every time she speaks in Maya; and even (4) question her own Maya proficiency (FN 2017.10.13; 2018.01.08; 01.24). On June 2019, as we were having our end-of-the-school-year lunch with Don Donato’s and Doña Margarita’s family, Don Donato’s niece asked Elisa how she manages to teach all her students in Maya, to which Elisa answered:

*Mis alumnos no saben maya. Yo les cuento un cuento y se quedan con los ojos cuadrados* (risas). *Les digo una cosa, no contestan. Me desesperan ¿Sí o no profe? [refiriéndose a mí]...No hablan. Y digo, se está perdiendo [la maya]. *Nosotros estamos en educación Indígena, supuestamente que para enseñarle a los niños que no saben hablar español, para darles clases en maya, y resulta que me topo con que yo sé maya, pero mis alumnos no; al contrario.*

(Elisa in FN 2019.06.27)

When she arrived to Palal-na she noticed that even if she tried to speak in Maya, as she did in her previous schools, children *no quieren contestar o les da pena* (FN 2017.09.26). Since children did not answer in Maya, and children got easily distracted

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146 My students do not know Maya. I tell them a story and they are left with their eyes crossed (laughs). I tell them something; they do not answer. They exasperate me. True prof.? [referring to me] …They do not speak. And I say, it is getting lost [the maya]. We are in Indigenous education, supposedly to teach children who do not know how to speak Spanish, to teach them in Maya, and it happens that I know Maya, but my students do not. On the contrary.

147 do not want to answer, or are shy to answer
when she did, she stopped using Maya in her own instruction. Nonetheless, she has been constantly interested in improving her own Maya and teaching skills, which did not always result beneficial for her own self-esteem.

In September 2017, as we were starting the school year, she attended a 10-session Saturday course at the ‘Universidad de Quintana Roo’. These Saturday classes started at 8 am and finished at 2 pm, were paid by the Ministry of Education, and were also attended by her supervisor. Her supervisor registered at the basic level, while Elisa registered herself at the advanced level. Her supervisor *lo entiende poco*\(^{148}\); so when she found out that Elisa wanted to take this course, she was surprised. As Elisa was sharing this with me, she voiced what the supervisor told her, as well as the answer she gave to her:

> “*Pero lo sabes*, me dice. “El problema es que no lo sé; no lo hablo, porque... el maya yucateco, ellos mezclan más, pero los de Quintana Roo, lo mezclamos mucho, mezclamos mucho más”, le dije\(^{149}\).” (Elisa in FN 2017.09.26)

Even before taking the course, she already felt that she did not know Maya as well as the people in the neighboring state of Yucatan, where most of her classmates were from. These discourses of correctness and authenticity of Maya are pervasive throughout the Peninsula and Huaytsik is not an exception (e.g., Cesario, 2014).

Through my fieldwork during the last five years in Huaytsik and the region, I have heard how when Maya is mixed with Spanish, it is not considered pure Maya or Maya at all. For example, after the convoluted learning experience described in the introductory vignette, Don Donato and Jonasa kept on talking about the importance of Maya. Donato

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\(^{148}\) understands a little bit

\(^{149}\) “But you know it,” she tells me. “The problem is that I do not know; I do not speak it, because... Yucatec Maya, they mix a lot more, but in Quintana Roo, we mix it a lot, we mix much more,” I said.
mentioned that these introduction activities are good but *lo que yo quiero es que hablen\ lo que, lo que es. Ahorita no, lo que está, es, este, mezclado*\(^{150}\) (FN 2017.09.01).

Moreover, in 2015, as I was interviewing caregivers around town in regards to their language practices at their homes (see Anzures Tapia, 2017), many of them mentioned that they do not speak *maya puro* or *jach maya*\(^{151}\), but only *maya mestizo*, and in some cases their children *no hablan ni bien, ni mal, maya ni español*\(^{152}\), since as parents, they are mixing the languages, and sometimes they do not know all the words in both languages (FN 05.07.2015; see also Rosa, 2016 on the ideologies of languagelessness).

These reactions from parents are not far off from Elisa’s language ideology on the responsibility of individuals in language change rather than the economic, educational, and racial circumstances that have pushed parents to not speak in Maya. It was in this linguistic environment that Elisa was working now, and that influenced her own perception as a non-proficient Maya speaker.

When I asked her why she was taking the course if she was a Maya speaker and her supervisor was actually surprised she was taking it, she told me that she wanted to *hablar la lengua correctamente para podérsela enseñar a los niños*\(^{153}\) since she was very worried that she did not know all the words in Maya (FN 2017.09.26). She constantly worried about *¿cómo le voy a hacer con los niños, como les voy a enseñar? Si yo les voy a enseñar, también tengo que hablarlo correctamente*\(^{154}\). Even though her course

\(^{150}\) what I want is for them to talk about what, what is. Right now, what is, is, this, mixed

\(^{151}\) pure maya or good maya

\(^{152}\) neither speak well, nor poorly, neither Maya nor Spanish.

\(^{153}\) to speak the language correctly so that I can teach it to the children

\(^{154}\) How will I do it with the children, how will I teach them? If I'm going to teach them, I also have to speak it correctly
professors encouraged her by saying that by the end of the ten sessions she would have enough tools to speak solely in Maya in her classroom with children, when she compared herself with her classmates, she noticed how the way she spoke was *muy castellanizada*\(^{155}\), since all her classmates *lo dicen muy bien en maya, [y ella sabe] como decirlo, pero a veces, nos acostumbramos a mezclar*\(^{156}\) (FN 2017.09.26). At the end, the course did help her to see how she could teach in Maya, but also made her doubt about her own capacity as a Maya speaker when she compared herself to others.

Against this background, she still preferred to continue teaching in Spanish, since she believed that she should not mix the languages or that using Spanish words when using Maya was actually not real Maya, even though she mixed both of her languages whenever she spoke to parents and grandparents or in some of the few occasions when she spoke in Maya to the children (FN 2018.05.24; 06.06). Even as we had frequent conversations on how mixing languages is a practice bilingual people do while speaking, her monoglossic ideology of valuing only monolingual ways of languaging was evident; further, that same ideology was contributing, without her probably realizing, to the language change she criticized in other people who did not speak Maya in the town (FN 2017.09.01; García, 2014). However, she did not just take the Maya course to speak it and write it correctly. She wanted to send a message to the supervisor about the importance of Maya in early childhood education’s instruction and was doing it too for the fear of losing her salary position in the Mexican educational system.

\(^{155}\) Very Castilianized

\(^{156}\) say it very well in Maya, and she knows how to say it, but sometimes, we get used to mix it.
Accountability of Maya instruction is a requirement that is addressed by teacher attendance at professional development opportunities in or about Maya and even by teachers’ abilities to speak Maya, rather than by the observation of their performance in the classrooms. Many factors influence the lack of these observations, especially in multigrade Indigenous schools (INEE, 2014; Pedroza Zuñiga, 2013). On one hand, the ratio of schools each supervisor has to attend to is overwhelming and schools are far away from each other (see also Wolf, 2018); and on the other hand, as in Elisa’s supervisor’s case, people do not feel confident in their Maya abilities and how they could advise on the ways Maya teaching could be improved (FN 2017.09.26).

Talking about accountability measures, on one occasion, as we were sitting on the highway waiting for a local bus to take Elisa back to her town, we started talking about the moments where Maya instruction is present at the official level. She told me that the only moment where she is accountable for Maya instruction is in the teacher promotion evaluations where she is evaluated on her knowledge about Maya—a requirement to which supervisors and school principals are not held accountable (FN 2018.02.09). For her, this lack of accountability has downplayed the importance she gives to Maya in her own teaching practices (FN 2018.07.13). However, at the same time, she has tried to improve her instruction about Maya and through Maya by attending courses that have empowered her to include Maya in her teaching (FN 2017.09.29). Moreover, she was also aware that if she had not a good result in her Maya evaluations, she could be positioned in a lower tier in the educational system, so she preferred to also prepare herself in case she did not perform well, since she felt her Maya writing abilities were not good—a skill that has been considered as an asset for any authentic Maya speaker (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009;
Guerrettaz, 2019). Thus, the course was of utter importance for her since it was a window where she could re-position herself as a Maya speaker, something that she knew she was, but not as good as needed in order to teach children the correct ways of the language.

Within her own doubts as a Maya speaker, she still managed to design Maya learning experiences using different types of materials, which either she received on behalf the Ministry of Education, or looked for them independently in YouTube, Google, her local office supply store, or got through her own networks. However, many times, the languages in these materials, or the varieties of them were not the ones spoken by her or her children, and as a consequence became obstacles and distractors in the teaching and learning processes happening in the classroom.

**Learning Materials: Hablar maya, como que se nos cuatrapeó**\(^{157}\)

One of the most effective ways of bringing children to the classroom, no matter the time of the day, was to turn on the computer and play some previously downloaded videos from YouTube. Today, as Elisa was trying to bring children into the classroom, she realized that calling them was not going to be enough. Thus, à la Piper of Hamelin style, she turned on the computer and started to play some welcoming videos, with which children started to enter the classroom, sat down, and watched the videos. The first video was on, children were paying attention, but Carlos started chanting “calaveras, calaveras, calaveras” (skulls, skulls, skulls) since Janal Pixan (the Mayan month of the death celebration) was happening around town and the teacher has been playing a very funny video about numbers and skulls. Everyone followed his chant, but the teacher told them that she will play the calaveras video after they all watch a new video where they will all shake their hands and give hugs to each other. This new video described how the school is a safe space, full of love and friendship, as well as how:

Aquí puedes cantar y bailar,
aprender, y crecer muy feliz,
hablar inglés y ser un artista,
o realizarte como un deportista.\(^{158}\)

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\(^{157}\) Speaking Maya, we kind of forgot it.

\(^{158}\) Here you can sing and dance, learn, and grow up very happy, speak English and be an artist, or become an athlete.
As soon as the song mentioned that the school is a space for learning English, Elisa looked at me, with a smile on her face, and said “¡Ay, hablar maya, como que se nos cuatrapeó!” She kept on going, asked children to keep on hugging each other, and as soon as the song finished, she played the acclaimed calaveras hit. (FN 2017.11.15)

Elisa knew that one of my research objectives was to see how and when Maya was taught in the school, even though, by the point when Elisa presented this song in the classroom, I was much more interested in understanding which aspects in this specific early childhood education environment were not allowing for her to teach, overall, as she intended. The song, like the calaveras one, became part of the morning repertoires for the rest of the school year. Sometimes, whenever she played the welcome song, she tried to overlap the English part by saying y maya también (FN 2018.02.20; 06.26), and with the exception of one time, followed it up with a reflection on how we should treat each other in the school, but nothing related to the language mentioned in the video (FN 2018.04.24). Eventually, as the school year progressed, children learned the melodies and repeated the lyrics of the song, which worked more as a morning routine, rather than as a moment for reflection (FN 2017.11.13). In this section I describe how the morning song chosen by Elisa was just one of the many learning materials that did not take into account Maya as the language of instruction, and as a consequence many times hindered learning and distracted children, rather than encouraged them to engage with what Elisa considered Palal-na’s multigrade curriculum.

159 Oops, speaking Maya, we kind of forgot it!
160 and Maya too
Languages within the Learning Materials: Obstacles and Distractors

During the school year, one of Elisa’s main objectives was for children to recognize the vowels, as well as all the letters that are included in their names in Spanish. For instance, on one occasion, children watched first a video that presented the 5 vowels (a,e,i,o,u), and then, as a follow up activity, reviewed with the teacher the vowels in a poster that was pasted on the wall. The poster showed an “A” besides an apple. When she asked the children which letter it was, they recognized the letter and said “A”, to which she followed with ¿ “A”, para?\(^{161}\) and they replied manzana. We quickly replied that they were right, since manzana had three “A” in it. However, we did not have the same luck when we had to explain how cocodrilo\(^{162}\) was related to the “A” sound in Spanish, since the letter was not in its name. Our luck did not accompany us either with “U” for umbrella, which they called sombrilla. “E” was an easy one since escalator and elephant are cognates in Spanish with escalera and elefante. However, as soon as we wrapped up this activity, the teacher told me to roll up the poster and that she would bring one in Spanish for the next day (FN 2017.10.11; Figure 13).

\(^{161}\) A, for?
\(^{162}\) Alligator

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The Spanish version materials to teach the vowels were not far from this lack of context either. By the end of the school year, Elisa brought a couple of worksheets in Spanish to teach the vowels. By this time of the school year, we had been teaching the vowels constantly, but still many children, especially the K3 ones, who have not been attending school regularly, were struggling with their identification. The worksheets asked children to fill in the blanks with the vowels that the words in the worksheet were missing. Each word had an image beside it to help children to fill in the blank\textsuperscript{163}. Most of the images were common for all the children, although many of them were not compatible with the words they learned for those images, or were unrecognizable, even for the teacher. For instance, the image of a \textit{pino}\textsuperscript{164} was interpreted as \textit{árbol}\textsuperscript{165} by the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure14.png}
\caption{English and Spanish learning materials}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{163} For explanatory purposes for the reader, in an English language version, the image of a fish would accompany the word-exercise F\_SH.
\textsuperscript{164} Pine tree
\textsuperscript{165} Tree
children, which made it difficult for them to fill in the $P\_N\_P_N_\$ exercise, since they have probably not seen a pine tree or did not make the connection that pine tree is a type of tree, something that was not taught at the school. The same thing happened with the image of a pineapple which had as its fill-in-the-blank pair $N\_N\_S$. The word that had to be filled was ANANAS, which is how pineapples are commonly known in some parts of South America, but not in Mexico, where they are called piña. Elisa did not know this word and did not know how to explain it to them. The same happened with the image of a loaf of bread which was accompanied by the fill-in-the-blank pair $H\_G\_Z\_\$ (hogaza), a word that Elisa did not know either, and which is rarely used in Mexico (FN 2018.06.19).

Even as these worksheets were not contextualized, children were resourceful and imaginative enough to interpret them according to their own worldview. For example, the week after, when the teacher gave them a new worksheet to identify healthy and not healthy foods, I asked them if the French fries drawing corresponded to the healthy or the not healthy column, to which Nicolás, a K2 student, answered ¡No! Son jicamas\textsuperscript{166}, and thus he placed them in the healthy food column (FN 2018.06.28).

The combination of English and a Spanish variety that was different from the one children speak was also seen in other instructional materials (FN 2017.10.17; 2018.01.08). As we were reviewing what a healthy diet entails, the teacher started to use some posters that showed some fruits and vegetables. Many of these materials provoked some distractions in the children since (1) some of these foods were new for them when compared to the type of vegetables and fruits they know (e.g., lychees, blueberries, cherries); (2) the Spanish variety used on them was the one from Spain (e.g., melocotón

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\textsuperscript{166} No, they are jicamas!
instead of *durazno*\textsuperscript{167}; *olivo* instead of *aceituna*\textsuperscript{168}); and (3) the names of these foods were translated to English, but not Maya. Both Elisa and the children, trying to decipher what each one of these foods resembled, got tired, and after 10 minutes, Elisa decided to stop the activity and let the children draw what a healthy meal is for them (FN 2018.01.10; Figure 14).

This was not the first time Elisa realized how these fruits and vegetables were not related to what she, or the children, knew in regard to how to call food in Maya or Spanish. While we were having lunch during the first week of the 2017-2018 school year,
she realized that the only print materials, which she actually created, that corresponded to
the foods of the region and in Maya, were there in the lunch room. At that moment, she
said that she was going to take those posters down from the lunch room walls, and hang
them on her classroom walls. Don Donato was in this conversation and thought it was a
great idea and added that he did not know many of the translations of some fruits, such as
strawberry, and he was sure some children do not even know them. At that moment, I
intervened and told him that many of these fruits have a name just in Spanish or English,
and that it is fine to use that name, but he mentioned that it is this type of words that
pushes Maya to become castellanizado\textsuperscript{169} (FN 2017.09.01).

Besides the vowels and healthy habits, learning and recognizing the numbers from
1-10 was one of the objectives during the school year. Each grade had different
objectives. While K1 had to at least recognize what a number is and what a letter is, and
K2 had to learn the numbers from 1-5; K3 students had to know the difference between
letters and numbers, as well as at least know the first ten numbers. Even though there was
a differentiated instruction, in terms of grades and not individuals, many times Elisa
decided to design the same learning activity for everyone (FN 2019.06.27; Weiss, 2000
for a description of multigrade teaching strategies in Mexico).

Games were always popular with children, and more when they had to interact with
the computer. On one occasion, Elisa gave each one of the students a lotto card with
numbers. By this point of the year, mid-October, children had not learned to count above
10, and many struggled to even recognize from one to five. Still, the lotto card had
numbers such as 34 and 47. The aim of the game was that they had to listen and

\textsuperscript{169} Castilianized
recognize the number that was going to be shown in the computer’s screen and then mark it in their lotto card. The task was full of instructions that were already hard to follow, but besides that, the numbers that started to show in the computer were said in English, such as *thirty-three* or *nine*. After a couple of numbers, Elisa noticed this and asked me to change it to Spanish. However, since most of the children did not know the numbers, they could not concentrate even if the video was in Spanish, and on top of that, it was a very difficult task since they had to watch the video, listen to it, have their card and mark it with a color or pencil whenever a number appeared on it. Trying to handle all this while they were barely learning how to grasp a pencil was definitely a challenging learning experience. After ten minutes of doing this, Carlos (K2) was already bored, Jacinto (K2) and Miriam (*de oyente*) were cutting books, Dina (K2) was scribbling on my notebook, Zara (K3) was painting on a piece of paper, Johnny (K2) wanted to go to the restroom and Mimi (K1) was arriving to the school. It was 9:50 am (FN 2017.10.17).

Of course, school went beyond vowels, numbers and a healthy diet. A recurrent topic was the body and the five senses. As occurred in most of the other topics, Elisa downloaded videos from YouTube and used some print materials to introduce and explain the topics and the follow-up activities. In order to learn about the five senses, Elisa used the video ‘*La cara de Juan*’\(^{171}\), which asked children to locate the different parts of Juan’s face as well as the senses related to it. For example, the video showed the *nariz*\(^{172}\) and then showed the sense related to it—*olfato*\(^{173}\). As soon as the video presented the face part

\(^{170}\) Auditing—not registered at the school.
\(^{171}\) “Juan’s face”
\(^{172}\) Nose
\(^{173}\) Smell
and its related sense, it asked ¿y como se dice olfato en inglés?\textsuperscript{174} The video kept on playing repeating the sense in English and encouraging children to repeat each one of the senses in English. Children did not repeat it, because they were not even engaged with the video, and every time the video restarted with a new sense, the children said ¡no, otra vez no maestra!\textsuperscript{175} (FN 2018.04.16).

However, it was not just English or a different Spanish variety that distracted children and became obstacles in the learning of some of these topics. According to Elisa, the books that she has received as an Indigenous school are not contextualized for her reality since they talk about immigrants, they do not always use Yucatec Maya, she has not received professional development on how to use them, and many of the activities in the books do not make any sense for her. Unfortunately, Elisa’s experience is not new, since it has been reported in different research that shows how Indigenous textbooks and materials in Mexico are designed to teach the language based on Spanish learning models and are not contextually adapted to the Indigenous populations (e.g., García & Velasco, 2012; Hamel, 2008; Pineda, Alcocer, & Xool, 2008).

As she kept on sharing her opinions about the books and professional development she receives, I asked her if she ever has any type of professional development that is contextualized to her needs. She told me that the only opportunities that she has in terms of contextualized professional development is what she gets from her supervisor, but most of the times their meetings are addressing bureaucratic processes rather than pedagogical ones. Moreover, if she wants the school to participate in any type of events

\textsuperscript{174} And how do you say smell in English?
\textsuperscript{175} No, not again teacher!
related to Maya culture or if she wants to attend any type of professional development related to Maya language, she cannot decide on her own, but rather this needs to be decided by the supervisor. She can suggest professional developments, but cannot decide on those, unless she pays for them (FN 2018.07.12). The abovementioned 10 Saturday sessions professional development was one of the ones that she suggested and got accepted by the supervisor.

Elisa’s ability to create or reinterpret all these materials is already a success. As McCarty and Nicholas (2014) have pointed out, this type of Indigenous schools, beyond struggling with the declining number of students registered or the lack of quality professional development, also have to open with a reduced number in the pool of teachers prepared to teach in this type of schools. Moreover, the lack curricula and materials push teachers to develop new materials while on the job, with ideologies, mistakes, successes and shortcomings as they are planned and instructed.

All in all, we always had a laugh and the non-contextualized materials did not stop us. For instance, Elisa took Valentine’s Day as an excuse to show the function of different literacy media such as letters, posters, checks, holiday cards and books. As she was presenting each one of these media, she asked them if they knew what it was and what was its purpose. She insisted on the holiday card, since she wanted them to write one to their loved ones. As she was asking them about these media, they tried to guess what they were about, but were just able to identify the book. Elisa told them that they did not know what they were because they do not know how to read yet, and that was why they needed to come to school and learn how to read.
Children were very entertained with this activity, since they got to manipulate the materials, and were specially curious about the holiday card—a Valentine’s Day one—since it had a mini-roulette that you could turn and pointed to activities that you could do with your loved one on that day. The children asked her to turn the mini-roulette and read what it said. When she did so, it ended up in *cosas especiales en el cuarto*\(^{176}\). We immediately laughed and Elisa said *claro, como comer dulces*\(^{177}\), an answer that satisfied the children (FN 2018.02.14). No matter if it was English, a different variety of Spanish or a non-contextualized Indigenous language in the materials, the language of love, for sure, was always in the room, either through laughter, the caring love that Elisa demonstrated to her students, or by the candies, sweat breads, cookies and boiled corn that she often brought to our room.

**The Presence of Maya: Learning Experiences**

During our February student registration home visits, Elisa always listened to the reasons behind why parents did not want to register their children for preschool as well as why they registered them but did not bring them to school. As parents developed their excuses on why children did not attend school, she explained to them some of the benefits of preschool education, as well as the advantages of registering them for Palal-na in comparison to the other schools in town (FN 2018.02.15; 02.16; 02.19; 06.27). The bilingual nature of Palal-na, and thus, Maya language as part of the curriculum, was absent from all conversations. This was no surprise, since Elisa, during class time, rarely intentionally spoke Maya, taught Maya, or taught about Maya (c.f., Halliday, 1980).

\(^{176}\) special things in the room.

\(^{177}\) of course, like eating candies
Even though the school is an official bilingual institution, Maya instruction happened at only five moments during the 2017-2018 school year. First, when Elisa tried to help children introduce themselves on the first days of school, as depicted in the chapter’s introductory vignette (FN 2017.09.01); the second, when Elisa read a story in Maya and asked the children questions in Maya (FN 2017.10.26). The third was during Janal Pixan\(^{178}\) when Elisa took the children to the local museum to learn about this celebration, and then invited a town elder to talk about it (FN 2017.10.26; 10.31). The fourth moment came when Elisa brought pictures of animals with their corresponding Maya names; and finally, the fifth, when the children were asked to color a worksheet with the numbers 1-5. Although these learning experiences account for less than 7 hours of total class time during the whole school year (approximately 1200 hours), and the children said they did not understand much during these activities, they all opened spaces for children to express who is a Maya speaker/listener and who is not, and also showed Elisa’s intentions to promote Maya in the school (Guerrettaz, 2015; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Moreover, they allowed Elisa to present the school as a place of Maya instruction during her monthly teacher meetings with her supervisor and other Indigenous modality preschool teachers in the municipality. The following are four of the five moments, when this intentional instruction happened, the first one having been described in the introductory vignette.

\(^{178}\) The month of the dead
¡Uye! ¡Uye!179

The classroom had a corner bookshelf where games and books, given as donations or by the Ministry of Education, were accommodated for children to use when they arrived early to school or whenever Elisa allowed them to grab them. Many of these books were in Indigenous languages different from Maya, and others were related to Indigenous cultures within Mexico. Elisa barely used them because she had no time to read them, or because she did not read other Indigenous languages (FN 2017.12.14). Most of the time, whenever she wanted to show a tale to the children, she resorted to playing it on the computer.

On October 26th, 2017, after our classic morning routine, Elisa started playing a tale on the computer. The tale was in Maya, which immediately provoked laughter in the children. However, after a couple of minutes, they settled down and Miriam said ¡está en maya!180 The tale, which was about the legend of a bird singing competition, said ¡Uye! ¡Uye!, referring to the ways the protagonist had to listen to the birds singing. Dora recognized the calling and started to repeat ¡Uye! ¡Uye! a word she knew in Maya. The tale was not very enticing and as a consequence did not help them to focus either. Except for a few students, most of them were distracted. Carlos (K2) and Johnny (K2) were hitting each other; Dora (K1), Lola (K3), Zara (K3) and Nicolás (K2) were singing and dancing while the tale was played; and some children entered into the shushing game, imitating Elisa every time she shushed. In spite of this, Elisa played the tale twice. The

179 Listen! Listen!
180 it’s in Maya!
following excerpts are part of the conversation she had with them in order to see what they understood:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish/Maya</th>
<th>English (Maya in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> ¿Escucharon?</td>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> Did you listen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumnos:</strong> ¡Sí!</td>
<td><strong>Students:</strong> Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> ¿De qué es? ¿Ba’ax tuni’? ¿Qué era?</td>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> What is it about? **What is it’? What was it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> ¡Canción, canción!</td>
<td><strong>Zara:</strong> Song, song!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yolanda:</strong> ¡Y pájaros!</td>
<td><strong>Yolanda:</strong> And birds!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> Pájaros ¿Y qué estaban haciendo los pájaros?</td>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> Birds, and what were the birds doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumnos:</strong> Cantando.</td>
<td><strong>Students:</strong> Singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miriam:</strong> Jugando.</td>
<td><strong>Miriam:</strong> Playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> ¿Qué más, que pájaros eran?</td>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> What else, which birds were these ones?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miriam:</strong> ¡Monita!</td>
<td><strong>Miriam:</strong> ¡Monita!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zayuri:</strong> ¡Monita!</td>
<td><strong>Zayuri:</strong> ¡Monita!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alumnos:</strong> ¡Monita!</td>
<td><strong>Students:</strong> ¡Monita!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> ¿Qué es monita?</td>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> What is monita?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> ¿Ba’ax, ba’ax ch’iich’iló’ob?</td>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> What, which birds?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ Los alumnos se empiezan a reír cuando Elisa empieza a hablar en maya.]</td>
<td>[The students start to laugh as Elisa starts to speak in Maya.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> ¿Ba’ax ch’iich’il? ¿Jáan?</td>
<td><strong>Elisa:</strong> Which birds? <strong>Mmm?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jump’él kweento maaya. ¿Máax yoojel maaya?</td>
<td>The tale is in Maya. <strong>Who knows Maya?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿A yoojel maaya? ¿Ba’ax tun ta u’uyaj te’ kweento?</td>
<td>Do you know Maya? <strong>What did you hear in the tale?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.14. Uye! Uye! (FN 2017.10.26)

By this point, the students were playing with different books, hitting each other, and some were just distracted or seeing the teacher but not answering either because they did not want to or did not understand her. The teacher kept on asking them if they understood anything or if they even knew that the tale was in Maya. As Elisa was trying to manage the classroom and get any type of response, she directed her attention to Carlos, who was playing with Johnny, and asked him if he understood anything:
When Elisa asked him if he understood anything, Carlos kept on insisting that his grandmother was the one who speaks and knows everything in Maya, which was a common idea amongst some students, especially the ones whose parents migrated to the Riviera Maya, and who saw their grandparents as the people who spoke Maya in their households (FN 2017.09.10). Elisa did not fixate in this moment, since she wanted to see how much they understood, and was also pressured by time since we were taking children for a field trip to the local museum. Thus, she kept on asking in Maya, and less in Spanish:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish/Maya</th>
<th>English (Maya in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: ¿Que entendieron entonces? ¿Ba'axi'? ¿Ba'ax te'elo'? ¿Ba'axe tek u'uyo'?</td>
<td>Elisa: What did you understand then? What was it? What did we listen to? What was what we...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: ¿Qué pájaro era? ¿Ba'ax ch'íich'íl k'ayik? ¿Ba'ax ch'íich'il le ku k'ayay?</td>
<td>Elisa: Which bird was it? Which birds sings it? Which bird is the one that sings? Mmmhh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Jáan? ¿Ku ya'alu k'aaba' te'elo'? ¿ta wu'uyex? Zara ¿ta wila? ¿Ta wu'uyaan bix u k'aaba' le mejen ch'íich'o'ob k'aaynaajo'obo'?</td>
<td>It says its name over there; did you listen to it? Zara, did you see it? Did you listen what is the name of the birds that sang?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.16. The bird. (FN 2017.10.26)
that they were singing. However, Elisa was not completely satisfied with their responses and decided to play the tale for a second time. When the second iteration of the tale finished, she asked in Spanish and Maya, what was the tale about, which birds were the ones in the tale, as well as which activities they were doing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish/Maya</th>
<th>English (Maya in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Elisa: ¿Qué es? ¿Qué escucharon?</td>
<td>Elisa: What is it? What did you listen to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Alumnos: ¡Pájaros!</td>
<td>Students: Birds!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Elisa: ¡Pájaros! ¿y qué estaban haciendo?</td>
<td>Elisa: Birds! And what were the birds doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Elisa: ¿Y porqué cantaron?</td>
<td>Elisa: And why did they sing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Los alumnos empiezan a platicar sobre como acaban de bailar y cantar en el patio.]</td>
<td>[Children start to talk about how they just danced and sang in the school patio.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Elisa: Ah no, pero en el cuento. ¿Ba’ax tu 8 ya’alaj? ¿Ba’axten leti’ob, k’aañaj le mejen</td>
<td>Elisa: No, but in the tale. *What does it say? Why did the birds sing? Which birds sang?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 ch’íich’o’bo? ¿Ba’ax ch’íich’il k’aañajo’?</td>
<td>Nicolás: Bird.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Nicolás: Pájaro.</td>
<td>Elisa: Yes, but which ones? They mentioned the name of the ones that sang. Which ones sang? Didn’t you understand it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Elisa: Sí, pero ¿cuáles? Ahí dijeron el nombre de los que cantaron. ¿Cuáles</td>
<td>Nicolás: Yeeeees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 cantaron ahi? ¿No le entendieron?</td>
<td>Elisa: *Did you understand it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Elisa: ¿Ma’ ta na’atexi’?</td>
<td>Johnny: Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Johnny: Sí.</td>
<td>Elisa: Why did the birds sing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Nicolás: No.</td>
<td>[Children start, again, to talk about how they just danced and sang in the school patio.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Elisa: ¿Porqué cantaron los pájaros?</td>
<td>Elisa: No one danced, so, why were they singing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Los alumnos empiezan otra vez a platicar sobre como acaban de bailar y cantar en el patio.]</td>
<td>Nicolás: There was no one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Elisa: No bailó nadie ¿porqué estaban 21 cantando?</td>
<td>Elisa: *Didn’t you understand it? Zara, you did understand it. Why did the birds sing? Which birds sang? Which ones were they? Which birds sang?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Nicolás: No había nadie.</td>
<td>Volyanda: I want to go to the toilet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Elisa: ¿Mix ta na’ate’exi’? Zara teche’ ta 24 na’ataj. ¿Ba’axten k’aañaj le mejen</td>
<td>Elisa: *Which, which…? Which birds?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 ch’íich’o’bo’? ¿Máax ch’íich’il o’bo 26 k’aañajo’? ¿Máakalmáako’ob’i’?</td>
<td>Nicolás: Birds!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 ¿Máakalmáak ch’íich’il o’bo k’aañajo’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17. ¡chi’iich’, chi’iich’, chi’iich’! (FN 2017.10.26)

By the end of the activity, while most of the children were trying to grab their stuff to go to the museum, Johnny kept on shouting ¡chi’iich’, chi’iich’, chi’iich’! (lines 52-54). Johnny is one of the few children who responds to the teacher whenever she speaks in Maya, and while the teacher was asking them if they understood anything, he was the only student who said he did. His intervention was the translation of what Nicolás, Yolanda and many of the other students have been saying before, but he was the
only one who said it in Maya (lines 2, 10, 30 & 37. In Maya-41, 44 & 45). By this time, children were already up, Elisa was trying to ask things about the tale, and at the same time telling children what to take to the museum, which made it very difficult for her to listen to Johnny and thus elicit his intervention. However, during all this conversation, Elisa was insisting Zara to answer her questions since she is one of the girls (lines 23 & 38-40), just like Johnny, who accepts that she understands and speaks Maya, but did not want to speak it on this day.

Intentionally, Elisa built these translinguaging bridges and spaces where there was a multilingual engagement and purposeful use of both languages, Maya and Spanish, in order to see what children understood about the tale (lines 11-19, 31, 33-36, 38-40; Flores & Schissel, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Wei, 2011). However, even as she was trying to value the linguistic repertoires of the children, she did not recognize that children were listening in Maya and producing their understandings in Spanish, the latter being a cue for her to keep on talking about the tale, instead of assuming they did not understand it (lines 2, 10, 30 & 37. In Maya-41, 44 & 45). In the end, the pedagogical situation fixated on the children’s skill in reproducing the names of specific birds, rather than on their comprehension of why the birds were singing or how many birds were in the tale.

On her side, the conversation flowed between Maya and Spanish, translating whenever she felt she needed to do it (lines 11-12, 20, 31, 35-40, 42-43); but her insistence on children producing in Maya made the conversation go into a circle and pushed children to get even more distracted. During this time of the year she was attending her Maya course, a space that made her see herself as a mixer of languages,
something that she did not like, as she felt this was not the most appropriate approach to teach the language and through the language, even as it was evident that she and her students speak in these ways (FN 2017.09.01; 09.26; 2018.05.24; 06.06). In the end, the conversation stayed at a basic level: birds are singing, and the tale was narrated in Maya.

*Aprendimos maya*\(^{181}\)

The third moment when Maya instruction happened, in this case not intentionally planned, extended for a couple of days, starting with a field trip to the local museum (FN 2017.10.27) and ending with an elder delivering a talk about *Janal Pixan*\(^{182}\) (FN 2017.10.31). These learning experiences were planned by Elisa, but the languages of instruction were decided not by her, but by the museum’s educators as well as by the elder. Throughout the years, the museum educators have purposefully designed their learning experiences in Maya and Spanish, strategically using both languages, as they have noticed that many children do not speak Maya or say that they do not speak Maya. According to them, instead of creating an immersion space where children feel uncomfortable with the languages, they want to create spaces where children feel successful in their use and cared as they use them (IN with Ángela, 2018.01.21).

The museum’s activities were especially fun for children as they learned how to make candles, saw how cotton was spun and learned about some of the main elements that compose the *Janal Pixan*’s altars. Although learning Maya was not the main goal of the visit, it was evident that the languages used in the different activities was something that caused an impression in children. For instance, as we were coming back from the

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\(^{181}\) We learned Maya.

\(^{182}\) *Month of the death, when the souls come to eat.*
museum, Dora’s mother was already waiting for us at the school. When we arrived, she saw Dora and asked her where we went and what we did. Dora, who was very excited about the field trip, replied *fuimos al museo y aprendimos maya*\(^{183}\) (FN 2017.10.26), which was not a response that either Elisa nor I expected (Figure 15).

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 16. Aprendimos maya*

Although the main purpose of the museum is to inform about the Caste War—the longest-running Indigenous war in the Americas (Joseph, 2008); the museum is also a recreational and educational space for children and youth, a resource center for teachers and students, and a critical space for international, domestic and local researchers that are...

\(^{183}\) we went to the museum and learned Maya.
interested in issues that range across community development, the Caste War, sustainable tourism and of course, language revitalization (Anzures Tapia, 2018). According to the museum’s former and founding director, since its foundation, one of the aims of the museum is to have a “language preservation project” where Maya in the town could be promoted amongst children (FN 2016.06.01), and where, according to the museum’s educators

...se promueva la oralidad y escritura en la lengua maya, se fortalezca el autoestima de los niños al hablar la maya y se concientice sobre la importancia de la identidad cultural y lingüística en nuestra comunidad.184

(Ángela in FN 2015.05.11)

It was not a surprise then, that Dora had an experience where she learned Maya as she was also learning about her own traditions while she ate some oranges. Fun, strategic translations, and food were a combo for language learning in her case. This same combo was repeated 5 days later, when Doña Hilaria, one of the most respected elders and rezadoras185 in town, came to deliver a talk about Janal Pixan (FN 2017.10.31).

Doña Hilaria is not just a rezadora, but part of a family that is known for its advocacy towards the use of Maya, and the preservation of traditions. One of her sons is a professor on Maya culture in the ‘Universidad de Quintana Roo’, and another one has been dedicated to Maya revitalization projects through the use of technologies. One of her grandsons is a youth advocate in regard to the use of Maya in the town and has even been recognized by the state for his Maya poetry declamations (FN 2017.10.31). Elisa did

184 ... orality and writing in the Maya language is promoted, the self-esteem of children is strengthened by speaking Maya and there is an awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic identity in our community

185 Prayer elder.
not know all this background, but when Doña Hilaria arrived at the school, many of the parents recognized her and it was evident that she was a well-respected figure.

Doña Hilaria’s talk was about the importance of Janal Pixan in the community and it was evident that she had done this before or had some experience talking with children. As soon as she started her explanation in Spanish, she stopped and asked Elisa if she should do it in Maya or Spanish. Elisa told her that either was good, so Doña Hilaria said that she will explain it first in Maya and then in Spanish. However, when the children sat down around the school’s altar, she started her explanation in Spanish. Right after she finished her explanation in Spanish, she asked the children if they understood. Most of them said they did, and then, right after they answered, she said that she would now start to explain it in Maya, probably responding to the signals she picked up from her audience, which did not just include the children, but also some parents and grandparents who were invited to the presentation and were mainly Maya speakers (Figure 16).
While Doña Hilaria was delivering her presentation in Maya, children were paying attention, which was very surprising for Elisa and me, especially when we saw how Nicolás responded, in Spanish, to Doña Hilaria’s questions. To end her talk, Doña Hilaria asked Roberto ¿Ba’ax ta nate’ex? He did not reply, and the rest of the children did not say anything. By this time, Doña Hilaria had been talking for almost an hour, and in a joking way she mentioned that she was sure that the only question they all had was when will they start eating all the food in the altar, which provoked lots of laughter amongst the parents, and marked the end of the learning experience. Before children and parents shared the food in the altar, as well as the tamales, fruits, and breads that the parents brought to school, Doña Hilaria thanked Elisa for opening a space in her school for Maya traditions and language to be promoted, which, according to her, was something that not all schools did in the town. Doña Hilaria’s explanation captivated the students as she, just like the museum educators, did short explanations, used a language that related to physical things in the altar and did not go into long monologues as Elisa did in the Maya tale. Food and strategic translations, again, were a winning combo in this learning experience (FN 2017.10.31).

Los sabe Mario

Talking about animals was always an entertaining topic and a recurrent theme around the school year. During November 2017, Elisa introduced the topic of mammals by talking about how humans need to eat and have babies. After a long explanation of how humans are mammals; Miriam, who at the time was 2 years old, mentioned that

---

186 What did you understand?
187 Mario knows them
humans *comen leche de su chuchu* (FN 2017.11.15). Eventually, after a digression on how people have children and how they need to be together to have any children, Elisa told Miriam that she was right, and that just like humans, there were other animals that have babies and drink milk and that during that day they were going to learn the names of these mammals in Maya.

In order to do this, Elisa showed them a poster with animals and started to ask them if they knew any of their names in Maya. Mario, who is recognized by his fellow classmates as one of the Maya speakers, said that pig was *keken*, bull *wakax* and cat was *miis*. Carlos, who was eager to participate, asked me how he could say some of the animals in Maya. I told him that *báalam* is jaguar, and he immediately turned to the teacher and repeated this (Figure 17).

![Figure 17. Learning the animals in Maya](image)

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188 they eat their milk from their nipples.
During this activity, Elisa did not focus just on the animals’ names, but also on what they eat and where they live. Nicolás, whom the teacher recognized as someone who understood Maya, and was very entertained with the activity, said that antes tenía un lorito que comía masa [pausó y añadió en maya]. sakan. Elisa did not pay much attention to this, so Nicolás kept on participating saying the names of animals, most of them invented, like when he said that cow was waken, the combination of wakax and keken. Whenever he came up with the name of an animal, Elisa and I laughed, since we noticed that he actually knew the names of the animals and was playing with the words and sounds that resembled Maya (see also Makihara, 2005).

The invention of animal names was common in this type of activities. For example, in January 2018, Elisa asked children to recognize the name, in Spanish and Maya, of an animal assigned by her. Yoel mentioned that his snail was tuuch (instead of juux), which everyone understood as bellybutton and made all of them laugh (FN 2018.01.23). However, when she insisted the rest of them to say the names of their assigned animals, all of them, with the exception of Dina, said they did not know the names of their animal (FN 2018.02.07). On this day, Mario and Johnny, the latter also recognized as one of the Maya speakers in the school, were not in the classroom, but still, Carlos looked around and said that he did not know the names but los sabe Mario.

From my experience in Palal-na, it was clear that Elisa, as much as she could, tried to take advantage of the cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills that children developed in their households or within the community (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005;

\[\text{189} \text{ before I had a parakeet that ate dough [paused and added in Maya], dough.}\]

\[\text{190} \text{ Mario knows them.}\]
Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). Her efforts to bring their Maya knowledge and skills to the classroom were always transparent in the activities that revolved around animals, either because she knew they had the ability to respond about this topic to her in Maya or simply because these were part of their day-to-day words.

The same day that she introduced the mammals, she also showed them a PowerPoint presentation that she personally designed (FN 2017.11.15). In the presentation she had animal pictures accompanied by their Maya names. The instructions, which were given both in Maya and Spanish, were simple. Children had to watch the screen, say the names of the animals in Maya and identify if it is a mammal or not. With this activity, Elisa also started to introduce superlative and diminutive adjectives, such as \textit{chan keken}\textsuperscript{191} or \textit{chichan keken}\textsuperscript{192}. Every time she presented a new slide, she asked \textit{¿bix u k’aba’?}\textsuperscript{193} and asked them to repeat the names in Maya. Although the activity was entertaining and made sense the way she planned it; it felt very chaotic as the level of noise was high, students were distracted, and she was trying to address too many things at the same time. At the content level, she wanted children to learn the names of animals, the recognition of adjectives, and help them understand which animals are mammals. Moreover, she also wanted them to sit down, watch the screen and not play. A simple activity, such as this one, in a multigrade school such as Palal-na, was particularly cumbersome and ended many times in frustration or lack of control.

\textsuperscript{191} Big pig
\textsuperscript{192} Small pig
\textsuperscript{193} What is its name?
En Maya se dice$^{194}$

Learning to name the vowels, to recognize the numbers, and count from one to ten, were some of the main learning objectives during the 2017-2018 school year (FN 2017.09.13; 10.09; 11.21; 2018.02.22; 03.09; 04.25; 05.08; 06.26; 07.03). However, the only time when numbers were introduced in Maya, and the last time Elisa explicitly taught content through Maya happened in March 2018 (FN 2018.03.13). During this activity, Elisa wanted them to learn the numbers from one to ten in Maya. In order to do this, she drew the numbers on the board, and then, using examples from the children’s daily life, Elisa helped them to recognize the numbers in Spanish, afterwards in Maya, and at the same time practice or learn some words in Maya:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish/Maya</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Elisa: ¿Cómo se dice? [Enseña el numero 2 uno en el pizarrón.]</td>
<td>Elisa: How do you say? [Shows number one on the board.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Elisa: No, eso es español. ¡Uno! ¿No lo han escuchado que lo dice, que lo dice 5 mamá, lo dice abuelita? Junp’eel. ¿Cuántos 7 libros hay aquí? [Enseñando un libro en su mano]</td>
<td>Elisa: No, that’s in Spanish. One! Haven’t you heard that your mother and your granny say it? One. How many books are here? [Showing a book in her hand]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Yolanda: Uno.</td>
<td>Yolanda: One.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Elisa: Uno. En maya se dice...</td>
<td>Elisa: One. In Maya is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Alumno: Uno.</td>
<td>Student: One.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Elisa: Junp’eel. Dicen, dicen, 13 las mamás, yaan junp’eel e’el. ¿Qué es 14 e’el?</td>
<td>Elisa: One. One. Mothers say, there is one egg. What is egg?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Mario and Nicolás: ¡Huevo!</td>
<td>Mario and Nicolás: Egg!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Elisa: Yaan junp’eel e’el te so’oyo. ¿qué 17 dice?$^{195}$</td>
<td>Elisa: There’s one egg at the hen house. What does it say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Elisa: ¿Ja?</td>
<td>Elisa: Really?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Elisa: No. Yaan junp’eel e’el te so’oyo.</td>
<td>Elisa: No. There is one egg at the hen house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Yolanda: Que lo vayan a buscar.</td>
<td>Yolanda: That they need to look for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Elisa: ¿Qué lo vayan a buscar?</td>
<td>Elisa: That they need to look for it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{194}$ In Maya it’s called $^{195}$
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alumnos:</th>
<th>Siii.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elisa:</td>
<td>Que hay un huevo en el gallinero.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que hay uno. Y si dice, yaan k’a p’eel peek.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolanda:</td>
<td>Dos perritos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Sigue contando y dando ejemplos con animales]

| Elisa: | Y si yo digo, yaan kaam p’eel. |
| ¿Kaam p’eel k’ab? |

[Enseñando sus dedos.]

| Yolanda: | Cinco, cinco. |
| Elisa: | K’ab quiere decir mis dedos. |
| ¿Jayp’eeli, jayp’eeli k’ab Dora? |
| Yolanda: | Cinco. |
| Elisa: | Cinco. Kaam, quiere decir, Kaam es cinco, entonces así son los números. |
| Jo’o p’eel, así, jo’o p’eel cinco. |

[La maestra continúa contando hasta el número siete con distintos ejemplos.]

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Table.18. En maya se dice (FN 2018.03.13)

After she did this, she gave a worksheet which had the numbers’ names in Maya.

They were supposed to color them, and whenever we could, we sat with the children, asked them if they recognized the number in Spanish and Maya and high-fived them whenever they recognized them. Children loved to be recognized and were very proud of knowing the numbers and their work. However, this learning experience was not further developed and the numbers in Maya were never brought back during the school year (Figure 18).
During this teaching event, there were many opportunities for language development that were missed. For instance, when Elisa asked what *yaaŋ junp’eel e’el te so’yoo* means, Yolanda guessed that it was a turtle, which does not make a lot of sense in the conversation, but still Elisa, in this interaction, tried to clarify with all of the children whether Yolanda was right (lines 19-23). Thus, Elisa replies *¿Ja?*, which is a homonym that could mean yes? Right? Really? (line 19). As the activity had a component of answering questions with translations, Mario answered *agua*197, a response that could have made sense in relation to the immediate question, since water’s pronunciation in

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196 *There is one egg at the hen house.*
197 *water*
Maya is very similar to *ja*. The only, but important difference between *ja* and water is a glottal end--*ja’re*. One explanation could be then that Mario may not have heard the teacher or realized that these words are different. (line 19-20). However, another language development opportunity was missed here, since even though *ja* and *ja’re* are indeed quite similar, Elisa, instead of clarifying Mario’s contributions, considered that he was not right; and she repeated *yaan junp’eel e’el te so’oyo* (line 21).

At this point, Yolanda, who had already failed with her guess of a turtle, gave it another chance and probably connected it to what happens in her house, which is *que lo vayan a buscar*198 (lines 22-24). Using the pronoun *lo* as a substitute for egg and understanding that the eggs had to be picked up somewhere, such as a hen house, Yolanda was not far from the pragmatic meaning of the phrase. It was obvious for me, and it seems for the students too (they all supported Yolanda with a solid *yeeees*) that she understood that there was one egg and that she had to get it from the hen house; but still, Elisa was not satisfied (lines 21-26).

Elisa wanted the literal translation, which made her miss an opportunity to recognize children as people who understand the language but cannot produce it as she wanted or articulate the translations as she planned them. The paradox in this learning experience, is that while Elisa tried to open spaces where she wanted children to learn content through Maya, and was even using contextualized examples in order for children to construct meaningful learnings; at the same time, she was closing spaces and opportunities where Maya teaching could be furthered extended. Moreover, this paradox could also be seen as her explicit decision to not center on children’s understanding of phrases, but rather

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198 That they need to look for it.
wanting children to solely recognize the numbers. Even if Yolanda’s *lo* substituted “one egg”, the concept of number one, what Elisa wanted is not the pronoun, nor the understanding of the concept, but the mathematical content-based string of “one egg”.

This short and quick learning experience is also a sample of how Elisa was learning the numbers on the job. It has been reported in different investigations that Maya speakers, when counting, usually switch from Maya to Spanish after number four, and many times, knowing the Maya numeral system until ten is a sign of expertise and speaking good Maya (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009). While Elisa was teaching the numbers, she was reading them and learning them too, and as can be seen when she is explaining number five, she was also confused between numbers four and five (lines 36-39). She said *kaam es cinco*<sup>199</sup> and then corrected herself and said *kaam p’eel es cuatro, no cinco. Jo’o p’eel, así, jo’o p’eel cinco*<sup>200</sup> (lines 37-39). In this way, we could see how these instructional Maya spaces were not just beneficial for the children, but even for herself as she was practicing Maya and learning as she was teaching.

**Concluding Remarks: Interrupted ideological and implementational language spaces**

Elisa recognized the importance of carving out implementational Maya spaces in her practice (Hornberger, 2005; 2002; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Her daily practices showed how her teaching had the potential and possibility of opening spaces for multilingualism to exist and she purposefully enacted her teaching by opening these spaces, but at some point, these carvings felt rocky, rather than smooth, and in others, led

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<sup>199</sup> *Kaam* is five

<sup>200</sup> *kaam p’eel* is four, not five. *Jo’o p’eel*, like this, *jo’o p’eel* is five.
to paths with no outlet rather than to new avenues for the growth of children’s Maya skills. Some of these implementation spaces happened occasionally and were not as carefully designed as the ones I described in this chapter. For example, whenever Elisa played the State anthem and the only reference to Maya came in the tune (e.g. “de las hondas raíces del maya”\(^{201}\)), she directed children to that phrase and quickly mentioned that those were their roots (FN 2017.10.09); or on some other occasions, when Elisa played Maya songs while we were cleaning the school in the morning, she sometimes asked the children if they understood anything (FN 2017.11.13; 11.15; 12.14).

Sometimes she also played songs about the body parts, and just like with the animals, many of the children knew some of the words, such as armpits or arms, which the children could sing along with the teacher, but even when this happened, the teacher was surprised and many times laughed about how they spoke in Maya (FN 2017.11.17). With this in mind, I am not downplaying the informal instances where Maya was heard in the school, such as when the grandparents came to school, or whenever the teacher played the songs. I recognize these instances as moments that had the possibility and potential for children to learn (e.g., Paradise & Rogoff, 2009), practice and get acquainted with Maya, however, even if these minutes were considered as instruction, they would not count for less than ten hours for the whole school year.

Also, as was shown in the introductory vignette, all the other learning experiences presented in this chapter were full of interruptions, such as children going out to the toilet, children arriving late to school, parents asking for signatures or at what time they should pick up their children, or even some interruptions provoked by the materials, like

\(^{201}\) Form the deep Maya roots.
when the computer did not work, when the videos were configured in English, or when the materials were in a Spanish variety that children did not understand. However, these interrupted learning practices are not common only in multigrade schools in Mexico, but also across Latin America and the US (see Chaparro, 2019). For example, in her study on class time and learning in rural Peru, Hornberger (1987) reminds us that the interruptions that exist in these types of schools speak to larger economic, social, political, and cultural factors that need to be understood in terms not only of why people do not go to school or do not send their children to school, but also of how many times these interruptions are based on the distance between the schools and the places where teachers live, and/or political agendas they need to follow.

For example, Elisa has no car and lives one hour and a half away from Palal-na, assuming there are not problems with public transportation. On some occasions, she needed to *apoyar al jefe*202 and cancelled school for two days in order to go on strike (FN 2018.04.19). On other occasions she finished classes by noon, instead of 2 pm, to protest that the Ministry of Education was not paying *escuelas completas*203 what they were promised (FN 2018.01.22). Sometimes, classes were interrupted because parent meetings had to take place and she held them either at the end of the school day or before she started to teach. Children, during these meetings, were left by themselves outside the classroom from 40 to 60 minutes in a terrain that was not strange for them, but still had hazards such as snakes, scorpions, honeycombs, rusted metals, and holes in the ground (FN 2017.10.10; 2019.06.27).

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202 support the boss
203 Full-time schools.
This interrupted education, in most cases, was not provoked by the children, the parents, or the teacher, but by the nature of the bureaucratic educational system, which allowed the absence of not just Maya instruction but any type of instruction at the school, a reality for which neither the parents nor the government held the teacher accountable. Bureaucratic processes also allowed Maya instruction to be present in Palal-na as emblematic displays (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Loyola-Hernández, 2018; Schwartz, 2018), if only to allow for its absence or invisibility. For example, as Elisa prepared for supervisory visits to the school, she pasted a time-table on the classroom door indicating Wednesdays were “Maya workshop” days (FN 2017.23.10). We never followed that schedule, but the timetable was sufficient for her supervisor to see that Maya was present in the school, and for Elisa to follow the rules (Figure 19).

![HORARIO DE CLASES ESCUELA PREESCOLAR]

Figure 20. Maya presences and absences in the timetable
De Sousa Santos (2001, p.257), has framed this modus operandi as part of the epistemology of blindness, where naive and simple activities such as a timetable disguise the intentions of some policies, and easily create a blindness that is “both recurrent and easy to establish”. For him, as we try to identify how blindness is established, it is important to understand that what we are observing and not observing. For example, the ways timetables are used to erase a Maya class and even the bilingual nature of a school are scaled phenomena, smaller, layered pieces of the larger phenomenon of language change in the Peninsula and the ways educational institutions are trying to address it but at the same time, and based on my experience in preschools in the region, further the displacement.

Another instance where bureaucracy has allowed for the absence or invisibility of Maya instruction is the case of teachers that do not even speak Maya but are responsible for teaching or leading Indigenous modality preschools. According to teachers in nearby communities, there are teachers currently working in Indigenous preschools that do not even know how to speak Maya (FN 2018.05.03). For instance, as I described in the research methods chapter, in a conversation with a teacher from one of the other four Indigenous modality preschools in Huaytsik, she told me that she wanted to take Maya lessons in order to pass the exam given by the Ministry of Education for tenure status. She had no intention of actually teaching Maya, she explained, since she had never been required to do so in all of her years working at that school, and even though she was born and raised in Huaytsik, and could speak Maya with her family, she did not feel pedagogically capable of teaching it to her own students (FN 2016.06.02).
An additional example of this Maya instruction-invisibility enabled by what Lipsky (2010) calls street level bureaucrats, Hornberger (1997) considers bottom-up language policy makers, and Johnson (2010; Johnson & Johnson 2015) terms language policy arbiters, happened during the 2016-2017 preschool graduation at Palal-na. For this event, the school principal of another Indigenous preschool in town was invited, just like me, as a guest of honor for this event. I took advantage of this opportunity and shared with her my research agenda for the 2017-2018 school year. She was surprised that I was captivated by the reclamation of spaces for Maya teaching and learning at the preschool level, since she thought this was not an important issue to pay attention to in education.

As we waited for the event to start, she told me about her own story as a teacher and principal in the community, and although she considered herself a Maya speaker, she emphatically, but also somewhat ashamed to say it, shared that she has never liked the Mayan culture nor language, but at the same time, she has never invested time in thinking why she thinks and feels like this (FN 2017.07.16). At that point in time, she had 36 years in service and 33 years with a tenured job as a principal at different Indigenous modality preschools in the region. Her school is the main school that “steals” children from Palal-na, and according to some parents that had their children at her school, and now are part of Palal-na, Maya was never present in the school instruction (FN 2018.02.08; IN with Karina, 2018.06.14).

Bureaucracy circumscribed Elisa’s instruction and most of the interruptions had something to do with it. However, as she dealt with these interruptions and bureaucratic tasks, she managed to be an advocate, as much as she could, for the instruction of Maya. The aim of this chapter is to show the paths that she followed in order for her to become
such an advocate, the learning experiences she designed in order to teach as much Maya as she could, as well as how her unintentional advocacy efforts have at some moments made her doubt her own abilities as a Maya speaker. Nonetheless, as these insecurities in her own Maya speakerhood surfaced, she has been able to promote Maya with the children as it was shown in the five instances of this chapter: (1) presentation in Maya; (2) Maya tales; (3) Janal Pixan; (4) learning about animals; and (5) recognizing the numbers in Maya. These learning experiences give evidence of children as Maya speakers who are capable of interpreting Maya, as well as of Elisa’s beliefs in intentionally creating spaces for Maya to be taught. Still, a question remains, why did formal Maya instruction happen only in such a few moments during the whole school year?

Some answers come in Elisa’s own language ideologies, where mixing languages is lived as the least effective way of promoting language learning, even though, at the same time, she mixes languages in her own practices. Her idea that in Quintana Roo people mix more than in the neighboring state of Yucatan is a pervasive language ideology in the town and the region (Cru, 2016), even though there are evidences that since colonial times Maya speakers have been fluidly using languages in the Peninsula (Hanks, 2010). Moreover, Elisa was born in Tepich and currently lives in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, both considered places where legitimate Maya is still spoken (Pfeiler, 1996; 1998). These geographical and code-switching-as-a-threat language ideologies add up to one where elders are positioned as the ones that speak jach maya\textsuperscript{204}, even though at the same time many of these elders feel they do not speak good Maya (FN 2016.07.07; 07.08; 07.10),

\textsuperscript{204}good Maya
thus repeating, reifying and perpetuating the romantic language ideology about who is an authentic Maya speaker (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009, Briceño Chel, 2002; Pomol Cahum & Chan Dzul, 2015).

Hornberger (2008) has already exposed the limits and possibilities of schools to promote an intentional multilingual education, especially in minoritized language contexts. In fact, as can be seen in the data that I present in this chapter, behind Elisa’s intentions to improve her Maya to better her own teaching, comes an unintentional self-censorship provoked by the courses she took with Maya language experts. On a similar note, on many occasions, the Maya implementational spaces opened in her practices did not recognize how students are Maya speakers and moved children away from other opportunities to speak Maya. In this way, as Wyman, McCarty and Nicholas (2014) point out, schools are some of the main sites for language displacement, but at the same time can become the institutions where schooling can be reimagined as the children’s and teachers fluid language practices and strengths are recognized and built upon.

In the end, in the case of Huaytsik, if you want to know the state of the Maya language in the community, the Indigenous preschools are definitely not the only settings where you want to place your attention, since Maya is active and used by a lot of members in the community and other institutions such as the museum, the juntas ejidales205, the Catholic church, the hospital and is heard on the street in music and conversations (FN 2019.07.05; 07.06; 07.07). But still, even if we already know that schools are not the only places where language reclamation could be done (Fishman, 1991); it is important to see schools as places where minoritized languages, such as

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205 communal land meetings
Maya, could be designed to be present or absent. In this way, the fact that there are
Indigenous schools that have as their stated mission to develop a bilingual education and
yet this is not happening, speaks to the obsoleteness of top-down language policies that
see languages as divided entities and where professional development is framed in a non-
contextualized way and is not followed up in practice. Beyond this, it speaks also to the
obsoleteness of this type of educational institutions as designed right now at all levels.

Indeed, as I showed in the previous chapter, even the direct beneficiaries of the
services offered by the school, for example, the parents, were often not even aware that
the school had the responsibility to teach Maya. However, at the same time I am not
saying this to create a panic or pessimistic story, but rather to highlight how there are
already other ideological and implementational spaces for Indigenous languages
development in a town where agents and institutions, such as the museum, families such
as Doña Hilaria’s, and a vital youth of musicians and cultural advocates interested in the
reclamation of Maya spaces in town are paving paths for Maya to be more visible. In the
words of Ángela, one of the museum’s educators:

_Pensamos que es como limpiar el camino de la milpa: primero se hace la brecha,
después se deshierba bien para que sea amplio. Si se enhierba, se deshierba de
ewno. Es un trabajo diario. Así es también enseñar a hablar Maya. Hoy estamos
sembrando, pero no sabemos cuando veremos los frutos. También sabemos que los
niños de hoy no quieren darle la importancia, pero pronto verán que lo aprendido en
el museo es importante._

(IN with Ángela, 2017.07.02)

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206 We think that it is like cleaning the path for the crop: first, the gap is made, then we weed well so that it
is wide. If it is again full of weeds, it is weeded again. It is daily work. Teaching children to speak Maya is
like this. Today we are sowing, but we do not know when we will see the fruits. We also know that today's
children do not want to give it importance, but they will soon see that what is learned in the museum is
important.
The school also has already paved some of these spaces in the most unexpected places. For instance, a month before classes ended, I accompanied Reina to the toilet, one of my main activities with the first graders every day. While I was waiting for her outside the toilet, she called me and said ¡Maestro, no wíixe en el piso! The use of the verb wíixe by Reina is a mixture of the Maya root wíix, which means to pee in Maya, and the Spanish 1st person present perfect verb suffix -e. Although some academics have considered wíixar as Yucatec Spanish—understanding it as a variety of Spanish resulting from contact with Maya (Barrera Vasquez, 1937)—I subscribe to a translanguaging perspective where I try not to draw artificial boundaries between languages, and actually see how they blend together in order to construct meaning (García, 2011). Moreover, in my analyses, I play with the position of Spanish as the language that is subject to the Indigenous language and not vice versa, since I also understand wíixar as an addendum to the Maya language. Either way, considering wíixar as a Yucatec Spanish instance, or as the influence and presence of Maya in a Spanish utterance, I guess that among the few uses of Maya that could be heard in the classroom and the school, and the few intentional spaces created during the whole year, this was definitely an important one to record, where, Reina, with whom I struggled the whole year for her to pee inside the potty, told me that she, finally, did not pee on the floor. As her teacher this was a double success. Some Maya and no pee and poo to clean! (FN 2018.06.05).

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207 Teacher, I did not pee on the floor!
CHAPTER 7: Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers

Ofelia García (2014), in her commentary on Wyman, McCarty and Nicholas’ edited book on Indigenous Youth and Multilingualism argues that youth’s language practices “are much more dynamic than those of children under the purview of parents and teachers, or of adults who are often restricted by jobs in their language practice” (p.207). Her commentary is geared towards the developmental age between adulthood and childhood. In this chapter, I focus on the developmental stage where children are constantly under the purview of parents, teachers, cousins, siblings, friends or uncles, yet still play with language and are dynamic in their choices of when and with whom to use it or not. I suggest that no matter whether they are under adults’ supervision, these children will make decisions about their language use in both unintentional and purposeful ways.

Barbara Rogoff (1990), working in Maya contexts such as Huaytsik, has already described how even as children are under the purview of what could be considered a caregiver, they are dynamic in their language practices. Moreover, Rogoff, Callanan, Gutiérrez, and Erickson (2016) have described how children create spaces where underground learning happens in parallel scripts to the ones that are formally acknowledged by the teachers in school, or caregivers at home (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). In this chapter I show how children’s language practices are dynamic, and thus children cannot be considered passive linguistic recipients but engaged actors who impact their own and their caregivers’ language and educational practices. I further conceptualize children as language policy-doers who, at various moments, exasperate and resist their teachers and grandparents, forcing a shift from Maya to Spanish—not as a
tantrum, but as a deliberate act of resistance (Nicandra in FN 2018.06.06; also Blum, 2019; Hirschfield, 2002), where children are not victims of the language regimes that travel and settle throughout Huaytsik but are agents who enforce language practices at even the earliest ages. On many occasions, children play with languages in fun and practical ways, showing off their Maya language skills; and in others, they hide their abilities to understand and speak Maya, deceiving people as to their capacity to learn the language, thus impacting how teachers deliver curriculum or how parents speak to their own children.

Moreover, this chapter follows recent developments in the Language Policy and Planning field, where children are considered as language agents (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Fogle & King, 2013). Agency has been related to the capacity of people to move intentionally through structures, where they interplay with specific situations in particular language regimes (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck, 2005). However, this could become problematic as it is methodologically challenging to identify when a preschooler, either intentionally or as part of an unintended part of their development, acts or reacts to structures such as the family, school or a language (Oswell, 2013). Although I recognize that children are language agents, I prefer to use the term language policy-doers to avoid the methodological challenge of identifying when a preschooler intentionally resists or promotes certain language uses. I also use language policy-doers instead of language policy makers, a term by which educators and community members (Menken & Garcia, 2010; Paciotto & Delany-Barmann, 2011), youth (McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol & Zepeda, 2009), families (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008; King & Haboud, 2011), and even institutions such as the mass media (Blommaert et al., 2009; Tollefson, 2015) have
been identified. The act of making generally implies an intentionality of producing or creating something, while the act of doing implies a general action regardless of the intentionality behind it (“making” and “doing” in Oxford English Dictionary, 2020). Thus, since children as language agents, in the general sense, would suggest that children have some type of intentionality as they act upon language policies and children as language policy makers suggests that they design or produce policies premeditatedly, I prefer to use a more open-ended yet precise term to describe the language policies that children do through their activities.

In this chapter, I first set the context for what I describe as children engaging in language policy-doing activities by briefly bringing back the discussion on how Elisa’s own self-censorship and language ideologies on who is a Maya speaker and how a Maya speaker must speak, has made her see some of her students as non-speakers of Maya. In the second section, I describe who is a Maya speaker from the children’s perspective, as well as how and when Maya was spoken or censored in the school with no adult prompts. Afterwards, in the third section I show examples of the interviews I conducted with children in order to understand through their own words and images who is a Maya speaker and where Maya is heard and spoken according to them. These examples are shown through drawings and their explanations of their drawings. Additionally, in this section I further explore the way people represented in their drawings functioned as an indexical around which language regimes are represented and constructed. In this way, the chapter tries to illuminate the ways children engage with the language regimes in their town, as well as how they co-participate and co-create language activities that are not determined by institutions, but by social and participative engagements.
From Self-censorship to Non-speakerhood

Limits on the possibilities for Palal-na to promote an intentional multilingual education were not primarily the bureaucratic ones but instead Elisa’s language ideologies in that she refused to mix languages to promote Maya learning and self-censored her own speech whenever she realized she was doing this in the classroom. This self-censorship and her own language ideologies meant that she did not perceive children as producers of this language, or even worse, she saw them as incapable of learning to produce it. Nonetheless, one of the most interesting roles that children had in Palal-na, was that of policing language or, alternatively, playing with it whenever they wanted to, in intentional and non-intentional ways.

Elisa constantly talked about how children at her other schools were Maya speakers, but children in Huaytsik were not. For instance, during the first week of the 2017-2018 school year, Don Donato, Elisa and I talked about why children were not coming to school, as well as why the government was not sending her another teacher nor opening a new classroom. While we were talking about this, Don Donato shared that his daughter, who was a former student at Palal-na during the 2016-2017 school year, was enjoying first grade, and was even learning how to speak English. Both Elisa and I celebrated this in the discussion, but when Elisa asked Don Donato if his daughter was speaking Maya, she was surprised when Don Donato stated that not just his daughter, but also his son Nicolás, a K2 student, understood and spoke Maya:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Spanish/Maya</strong></th>
<th><strong>English (Maya in italics)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> El inglés veo que así de volada [Chasquea sus dedos]. No, ya cuando llega, “hello, my name is” “¿Qué es?” le digo</td>
<td><strong>Donato:</strong> She is learning English really fast [Clicks his fingers]. When she arrives home, &quot;hello, my name is&quot; “What is it?” I say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“¿Cómo te llamas papi? ¿Cómo te llamas papi? ¡Dimelo en inglés!” [Ríe]

Aldo: ¡Wow, qué bueno!

Elisa: El inglés le gusta.

Aldo: Sí, pues es nuevo para ella, también por eso.

Donato: Sí, todo lo que le enseñan cuando llega lo está diciendo.

Elisa: ¿Pero la maya no lo dice?

Donato: Sííííí, sí lo dice, pero...

Elisa: ¿Si lo dice?

Donato: Ya lo está diciendo ahora.

Elisa: ¿Maya?

Donato: Maya.

Elisa: ¡Sí no hablan!

Aldo: ¿Tú le hablas puro en maya?

Elisa: No le habla en maya.

Donato: Noooo, en español.

Aldo: Ahhh, ¿sí?

Donato: En español, pero está escuchando que hablamos en maya todo el tiempo.

Elisa: Pero no lo hablan, sólo, los papás, la mayoría de los papás no les hablan maya.

Donato: Nicolás, sí platicas en maya, lo entiende.

Elisa: ¡Sí lo entiende!

Donato: Sí lo entiende.

Elisa: Pero no todos.

Donato: Ahorita lo está tratando de decir, varias cosas que dice, se lo vuelvo a repetir; pero no lo dice perfecto; en cambio mi hija sí.

Aldo: Sí, pues poco a poco lo van a ir produciendo...

Donato: Ja...

Aldo: ...mientras lo estén escuchando.

Donato: Pero lo que yo quiero es que hablen lo que, lo que es el anterior.

Aldo: Sí.

Donato: Ahorita no, está mezclado.

Elisa: Esta castellanizado.

Donato: Lo que yo quiero es que aprenda maya maya.

Elisa: Está castellanizado.

Aldo: Sí, pero pues poco a poco, mientras que aprendan el que hablan ahora, y después...

Elisa: Claro.

“¿Cómo te llamas papi? ¿Cómo te llamas papi? ¡Dimelo en inglés!” [laughs]

Aldo: Wow, how good!

Elisa: She likes English.

Aldo: Yes, it is new for her, I guess because of that.

Donato: Yes, everything they teach her, when she gets home, she is saying it.

Elisa: But she does not speak Maya?

Donato: Yes, yes, but ...

Elisa: She speaks it?

Donato: She is speaking it right now.

Elisa: Maya?

Donato: Maya.

Elisa: They do not speak it!

Aldo: Do you speak solely in Maya?

Elisa: You do not speak in Maya to her.

Donato: Noooo, in Spanish.

Aldo: Ahhh, yes?

Donato: In Spanish, but she hears that we speak in Maya all the time.

Elisa: But you do not speak it; most parents do not speak in Maya to them.

Donato: Nicolás, if you talk in Maya, he gets it.

Elisa: Yes, he understands!

Donato: Yes, he understands.

Elisa: But not all of them.

Donato: Right now, he is trying to say it, several things he says, I repeat it for him, but he does not say it perfectly. Instead, my daughter does.

Aldo: Yes, because little by little they will produce it ...

Donato: Yes

Aldo: ... as long as they listen to it.

Donato: But what I want is for them to speak what, what is the previous one [language].

Aldo: Yes.

Donato: Not now, it's mixed.

Elisa: It's Castilianized.

Donato: What I want is for him to learn Maya Maya.

Elisa: It's Castilianized.

Aldo: Yes, but little by little, if they can learn what they are talking right now, and then ...

Elisa: Exactly.

Table 19. Maya in the house, Maya in the school–Donato, Elisa and Aldo in FN 2017.09.01
For Elisa, Nicolás and his sister speaking Maya was new information, since she knew that they understood some words, but she was also aware that neither Don Donato nor Doña Margarita spoke to them in Maya. This information surprised her, since she has barely heard any student speaking in Maya at the school, with most if not all children shying away when she spoke to them in Maya, and she had observed mothers only using Spanish when speaking to the children whenever she made home visits (FN 2017.09.26; 2019.06.27). Elisa was convinced that her students do not speak Maya, and she has repeatedly mentioned how they do not understand nor speak it. With this in mind, she oriented her own language practices with children by establishing Spanish as the lingua franca of the school, and even as she tried to teach children in Maya, she easily became exasperated and preferred to stop and change the language of instruction from Maya to Spanish. Elisa’s language ideology demonstrates that she preferred to not teach Maya even when provided with evidence that the children knew and understood it, as if the children’s language practices of Spanish with some Maya words, or them not producing long strings or shying away, meant that their knowledge of Maya was not existent and thus they could not learn it (see also Kulick, 1992; Weinberg, 2018). In a way, she held children to the same proficiency standard that she held herself, where mixing was not Maya, and thus, as I thoroughly discussed before, she hindered herself and the students to learn and overall, practice Maya in a school that was designed for that.

However, as Don Donato expressed to her, he knows that his children speak in Maya, but in his view, los niños ocultan la maya\footnote{children hide the maya.} and speak it just when adults do not see them, since they know that parents and teachers will laugh (Donato in FN 2019.06.27).
This type of attitude on behalf of the children is not a language concealment per se, but most of the time, they were the ones that decided when and with whom to use Maya, bringing to the forefront their role as language policy-doers who act upon how Maya and Spanish are enacted in the classroom.

**Language Policy Doers: Who is a Maya Speaker?**

As Shohamy (2006) has pointed out “Children make decisions, conscious or not as to the language(s) they want to use at home, with their peers and in the public domain, depending on a variety of considerations” (p. 48). In the case of Palal-na, many grandparents shared how their grandchildren force them to speak in Spanish in order for them to be understood (FN 2017.10.26; cf. Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Romero-Little et al., 2007). In this way, children become language policy-doers at an early age at home and also at school, in that when spoken to in Maya, they become anxious, exasperated, and eventually stop paying attention, forcing the teacher, parents or grandparents to shift to Spanish (see also Schwartz & Gorbatt, 2016).

Below, I show the opposite scenario. I describe four moments where children, without any prompts initiated by adults, showed their Maya language practices, their interest in learning the language, as well as their pride in knowing it. These moments were not planned by the teacher nor me, but in many cases were taken as opportunities for us to open implementational spaces where Maya could be visible and for children not to be shy and instead to play with their languages. In this way, it can be seen how, whenever one of the students spoke in Maya or found that there was fun involved in speaking Maya, they opened spaces for the language to be spoken, to ask about words and eventually show off
their own abilities as Maya speakers, recognizing who was a Maya speaker, and even challenging the people who they considered were not Maya speakers.

_Mi mamá es señora_

Three years before I started to work in Palal-na, I collaborated with the local museum at Huaytsik. In our work there, we intended to bring Maya to the forefront through different activities in order for children to see the museum as a Maya space and understand themselves as Maya speakers (Anzures Tapia, 2016; 2018). At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, when I started to work in Palal-na, I always greeted children in Maya with a ¿bix a beel?209 as soon as they arrived to the school, understanding that Palal-na was an official Maya space, unlike the museum. To my surprise, when I used to do this, I received some laughter from the children, the parents, grandparents and the teacher (FN 2017.10.11). After a couple of attempts to establish my own ways of greeting children, the teacher told me that she had tried to do the same when she arrived but that it did not work since parents do not speak to their children in Maya with the grandparents eventually switching to Spanish when talking with the children.

Parents are aware of these behaviors. For example, Doña Margarita and Don Donato on several occasions told me that Nicolás, their son, understands everything in Maya and everyone speaks to him in Maya. However, they have noticed how he has become the factor that has influenced his grandparents’ decision to speak in Spanish. According to them, Nicolás has been a fundamental actor in the language change of his grandparents from Maya to Spanish since they feel that he won’t behave, or they won’t have a good relationship if they do not speak to him in Spanish. In Don Donato’s words, _entienden a_

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209 _How are you?_
Depending on the context, Nicolás has sometimes acknowledged that he understands and speaks Maya, and in other contexts he does not, especially when he is with some of his classmates (FN 2018.05.07; IN with Nicolás, 2019.07.04). For example, when the teacher asked children if they knew how to say dog in Maya, a word that they certainly knew, Nicolás and Carlos told her that they do not, but that their grandparents did (FN 2017.10.09; IN with Nicolás, 2019.07.04). Nicolás’s parents live right in front of the school, both are Maya speakers, but communicate with the teacher and their children in Spanish. Carlos’s parents live in Playa del Carmen and they get to see Carlos, who is in K2, and Miriam, not even an officially registered student, every month for a couple of hours, when they come back to Huaytsik (FN 2017.11.13). Therefore, the children’s caregivers are their grandparents, who speak as much Maya as they can with Carlos and Miriam. However, on several occasions, Nicandra, their grandmother, as well as other grandparents, mentioned to me that they needed to speak in Spanish since their grandchildren do not want to be spoken to in Maya (FN 2017.09.26). According to Nicandra, all her grandchildren resist and do not obey her if they are spoken to in Maya, although she believes they understand everything, especially Miriam, who is very close to her and follows her in most of her daily activities such as making tortillas and washing clothes (FN 2019.06.27).

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210 they understand their grandmother, but when they speak to her, they speak to her in Spanish, which has forced her to learn Spanish.
Still, Nicolás and Carlos were not the only students with the idea that elders were the only ones who spoke Maya. During December 2017, we went out from the school for several days to sing *la rama*\(^{211}\) around the community (FN 2017.12.05; 12.06; 12.15; 12.16; 12.19; 12.20). *La rama* is a tradition in the Yucatan Peninsula, where children carrying a tree branch go out through their neighborhood and sing in each house for money to organize their own *posada*—a Mexican Christmas party (Figure 20).

![La rama](image)

*Figure 2.1. La rama*

We went out almost every day for two weeks, which was very exciting for the children, but at the same time tiring for all of us since we had to carry a tree branch and sing at every house until someone opened the door and gave us some money or fruits. As we were coming back from one of the houses where there was an elder speaking in Maya, Bruno, a student in K3, mentioned:

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\(^{211}\) the tree branch
Bruno: Mi mamá es señora.
Aldo: Sí, claro.
Bruno: ¿Sabes por qué? Porque habla de maya.
Aldo: Claro.
Bruno: Dice, por qué...
Aldo [Interrumpiendo]: ¿Habla maya?
Bruno: Sí.
Aldo: ¿A poco?
Bruno: ¿Y tú?
Bruno: No, yo no porque mi mamá es señora porque, se van a kubitir.
Aldo: ¿A kubitik?
Bruno: ¡A kubitir! Al de viejitas.
Aldo: Aaah, entonces tú, entonces tu mamá ¿es señora porque habla maya?
Bruno: Aja.
Aldo: ¿Ah, las señoras hablan maya?
Bruno: Es que, es que ella, es que ella era niña.
Aldo: Aja.
Bruno: Y después, y por eso, y por eso, y por eso MA le enseño a hablar en maya cuando ya creció.
Aldo: Aahhh, ¿y a ti ya, y a ti te enseño?
Bruno: No, no sé...Cuando me lo enseñe, cuando yo estoy creciendo.
Aldo: ¿Vas a aprender a hablar en maya?
Bruno: Aja.

Bruno: My mom is a lady.
Aldo: Yes, of course.
Bruno: Do you know why? Because she speaks Maya.
Aldo: Sure.
Bruno: She says, because ...
Aldo [Interrupting]: She speaks Maya?
Bruno: Yes.
Aldo: Really?
Bruno: Yes.
Aldo: And you?
Bruno: No, I don't because my mother is a lady because, they go to kubitir212. 
Aldo: To kubitik?
Bruno: Kubitir! To the old ladies one.
Aldo: Aaah, then you, then your mom is a lady because she speaks Maya?
Bruno: Yup.
Aldo: Oh, ladies speak Maya?
Bruno: Is that, is that she, is that she was a girl.
Aldo: Yup.
Bruno: And then, and for that, and that's why MA taught her to speak in Maya when she grew up.
Aldo: Aahh, and did she already teach you?
Bruno: No, I don't know ...When she teaches it to me, when I'm growing up.
Aldo: Are you going to learn to speak in Maya?
Bruno: Yup.

Table 20. Mi mamá es señora- Bruno in the rama walkabout in FN 2017.12.18

Bruno’s attitude showed how children are cognizant of Maya spaces, since they recognize Maya practices and Maya speakers in their day-to-day. It was seeing the elder speaking to them in Maya that sparked Bruno’s sudden interest in sharing how people also speak Maya in his house and that he will eventually learn it once he becomes an

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212 During all my fieldwork I could not interpret this word. I had the opportunity to show this to several Maya speakers and for them to listen to the recording but no one knew to what was Bruno referring to.
adult. When I interviewed Sasil, Bruno’s mother, I shared with her the recording of my conversation with her son, telling her that I thought it was very interesting to listen to how Bruno will learn Maya once he grows up, as he is one of the children who vehemently rejects being spoken to in Maya and denies even understanding Maya (IN with Sasil, 2018.05.04; FN 2018.05.25). As she listened to the recording, I told her that it was very cute how he is so sure he will become a Maya speaker like her. However, as Sasil was listening to the recording, she burst into laughter and corrected my interpretation, since Bruno was not referring to her, someone who did not speak Maya, but to his grandmother. Although Sasil stated that she understands a little bit of Maya, she asserted that she does not speak it. Her mother is Maya, from the state of Yucatan, but her father is from Hidalgo—a state in Central Mexico. Because her father did not speak Maya, she was educated in Spanish, and she speaks to her children in Spanish.

After this interview, I realized that whenever some children referred to their mothers, this was often in fact a reference to their grandmothers. This was especially common for children whose parents were absent because they needed to live in the Riviera Maya because of work. In this case, their grandmothers became their primary caregivers. In other cases, children lived with their parents and grandparents under the same roof.

The determination expressed by Bruno to learn Maya once he starts to grow up, rooted in his knowledge that his grandmother was once a girl who did not speak it, but now does, speaks to the language phenomenon reported by Calamullo Sanga (2006) in an intercultural bilingual school in an Aymara community in Perú. In his case, he noticed how children even as they reject or deny their knowledge of Aymara at an early age,
expressed that they will learn it once they reach adulthood, just as Bruno expressed in our chat as we were walking with the rama.

However, rather than a hopeful story, what Calamullo Sanga helps us reflect on is that this language ideology of *bilingüismo tardío* (2006, p.99) exercised by children, should not be seen as a guarantee that children will learn the minoritized language in their adulthood, but rather a warning that language displacement is happening from the early ages, in his case with primary school children, and in the case of Huaytsik, in early childhood. The maintenance and reclamation of Maya spaces in the case of Huaytsik depends on how useful children see the language to be in their present lives with their families and friends (Fishman, 1991), which resembles what Calamullo Sanga describes as the situation of Aymara, where children did not see any function of it during their daily lives. In the end, language learning, in the case of Bruno; language reclamation in the case of Palal-na; and language maintenance, in the case of Huaytsik, could likely best be achieved by the constant use and meaning that children see from using Maya within their families, schools, friends and community in a linguistic ecology where Spanish is the language in which they play, watch cartoons, and overall communicate.

¿Ba’ax a beyo’?

Before May, neither parents, children, nor I, knew at what time school finished (FN 2018.04.23). Sometimes it was by 11:30 am, sometimes noon, other days by 2 pm, and at some point, anywhere between 11 am and 2:30 pm. However, as the August deadline for sending children to primary, where they would need to at least identify the vowels and count to ten, became more pressing, Elisa decided that beginning on May 1\textsuperscript{st} K3 grade

\footnote{late bilingualism}
children would stay until 2 pm while K1 and K2 graders would stay until 12:30 pm.

Having these differentiated schedules allowed us as teachers to have focused conversations with children and also for them to experience consistency in terms of the classmates with whom they worked.

Nicolás, Marina and Yolanda, all from K2, always stayed after 12:30 pm, since Doña Margarita, Nicolás’ mother, and Doña Hortensia, Marina’s and Yolanda’s mother, were part of the food committee and were in charge of providing lunch to all the children, as well as washing the dishes and cleaning what was used during lunch. On one of these days, while Elisa was working with the K3 students, I worked with Nicolás, Yolanda, Marina, and Dora (K1), who were waiting to be picked up to leave. As I explained a worksheet on healthy habits to them, Zara, a K3 student, came to our table and asked me:

¿Ba’ax a beyo’?214 I looked at her, stunned to hear Maya, and repeated her question, but she kept on repeating the question and raising her voice until she gave up, without giving me an opportunity to answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish/Maya</th>
<th>English (Maya in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zara: ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo: ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? [Enfatizo la pregunta y empiezo a reírme de manera nerviosa.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara: ¡¿Ba’ax a beyo’?! [Se rie en cuanto Aldo empieza a hablar en Maya] ¿No me entiendes, verdad maestro? [Zara se rinde y va con Elisa.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara: Maestra, ¿ba’ax a beyo’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa: ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? ¿Ba’axi? [Elisa laughs as she also emphasizes the question to Zara to clarify what she is saying.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo: ¿Ba’ax a beyo’? Si entiendo lo que significa, pero...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

214 What is it?
| Elisa: B’aax e beyo’, creo que quiso decir. | Elisa: B’aax e beyo’, I think that is what she meant. |
| Aldo: B’aax e beyo’. | Aldo: B’aax e beyo’. |
| Elisa: B’aax e beyo’, ¿qué es eso? | Elisa: B’aax e beyo’, what is that? |
| Zara: Te estoy diciendo qué es la plastilina. | Zara: I am asking you what is the play-doh. |
| [Hablándole a Aldo] Elisa: Ah por eso, pero no lo decía bien, eso. | [Talking to Aldo] Elisa: It is because of that, she was not saying it right, that was it. |

**Table 21. Ba’ax a beyo’- Zara in FN 2018.05.24**

Zara is one of the students who navigates between her identity of Maya speaker and not. On many occasions, when the teacher purposefully designed Maya language activities (e.g., FN 2017.10.27), Zara ignored Elisa as if she did not understand her even though Elisa insistently asked her and told her she knew that Zara speaks and understands Maya. However, on other occasions, when children were working independently, for example reading a story, she showed me the images in a story and told me their names in Maya (FN 2018.06.08). Also, on one of the many occasions where I had to take students back to their houses because parents forgot to pick them up (FN 2018.02.18), one of the mothers thanked me for taking her daughter back home. When she thanked me, and I replied with a classic *mix baal*, Zara, who was one of the students left at the school, told me that you do not have to say anything when people thank you. Positioned in my teacher role, I told her that you should since it shows respects to the person and that actually you can do it in Spanish or Maya. When I said this, she replied *no sabo maya* (FN 2017.10.17). Yet it was evident that Zara understood Maya since she was very attentive whenever the teacher spoke with other people in Maya and she showed her knowledge in different activities. Indeed, her mother mentioned in an interview with me

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215 It’s nothing–you are welcome
216 I do not know Maya. In “standard” Spanish this phrase would be *No sé maya*. 238
that Zara entiende los dos, pero ella no sabe hablar maya, entiende la maya\textsuperscript{217}, since her grandmother only speaks in Maya to her and tries to speak as much Maya as possible with Zara (IN with Zuzy, 2018.07.10).

From these experiences, it seems that Zara could fit the description of what Kvietok Dueñas (p.361, 2019) calls language deniers “who ha[ve] proficiency in the language but d[o] not want to, or d[o] not care, to show it”. However, it was not until the abovementioned classroom interaction that Zara displayed her identity as a Maya speaker by eliciting Elisa as someone who also understood Maya and positioning me as someone who did not. Elisa understood that I was not as quick in my Maya reactions, but at the same time, she also justified my slowness by stating that I did not understand it because Zara did not pronounce it correctly as rationalization for why I did not respond to her. Nonetheless, I was shocked to hear a child speak to me in Maya in a school where Maya is barely heard. Fortunately, Zara did not care about the correctness of her language. Instead, she said that she already knew what she was asking me for, but in a way was testing me to see if I understood and knew the answer. After this happened, Zara went back to her table but continued to repeat the question to herself until she finished some of her work. She then came back to my table and asked me ¿Ba’ax a lelo’?\textsuperscript{218} using the subtle change from beyo’ to lelo\textsuperscript{219} to look for a specific answer. I thus responded plaastiiliina\textsuperscript{220} with a “Maya intonation” since there is no word for play-doh in Maya.

\textsuperscript{217} Understands both, but she does not know how to speak in Maya, she understands Maya
\textsuperscript{218} What is this?
\textsuperscript{219} Ba’ax a beyo’ means “what is it”, while ba’ax a lelo’ means “what is this”.
\textsuperscript{220} plaaaay doooooh
As soon as this happened, she laughed, gave me a look of approval, and went back to her table to work.

During this time, Fabiola, a K3 student who was always the first one to finish her assigned classwork, was attentive to this interaction, and like Zara, joined the conversation by asking me if I knew how to translate the words book and soul in Maya, trying to see if I knew Maya like Zara did. Then, reversing direction, from Maya to Spanish, in the translations, she asked me if I knew what miis meant. Dubious, I told her yes (knowing that the word could mean three things: broom, to sweep, or cat). Like Zara, she then offered no time for me to further guess and said ¡Es escoba!221 (FN 2018.05.24). As this was happening, Zara started to eat the play-doh, so I asked her ¿Cómo se dice que no es comida en maya?222 She saw me, laughed, kept on eating it, and continued repeating ba’ax a beyo’.

Although it was exciting to hear Zara speaking in Maya in the classroom, and actually opening spaces for Maya to be heard and used by other students, an hour of listening to the same question was enough for Elisa, so she told Zara to stop and asked her who taught her that question. Zara mentioned that her mother had taught her that phrase, but that she knew no more. Elisa, knowing that Zara understood some Maya, insisted on asking in Maya what else she could say, but Zara said that it was just that phrase, laughed, then kept on repeating her favorite phrase ba’ax a beyo’. As this was happening, Bruno, also a K3 student, either tired of listening to the same question or just showing his attitude towards Maya, started to mock Zara every time she spoke in Maya

221 It’s a broom!
222 How do you say in Maya that it is not food?
with a loud *bla bla bla bla bla* and making funny faces that prompted some children to laugh. As soon as Elisa and Zara finished their conversation, Bruno asked me ¿qué dijo? since he did not understand what they were talking about, so I translated the conversation in Spanish to him.

When participating in the few occasions when learning activities were designed by Elisa to be conducted in Maya, Bruno was one of the students who passionately did not want to hear Maya spoken to him (FN 2018.04.16). This response happened both at school and at home, as Sasil expressed to me when I interviewed her:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> ¿Te importa que Bruno entienda maya?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Do you mind that Bruno understands Maya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sasil:</strong> Yo digo que el niño, así como que se cohibe cuando escucha la maya, ¿sabe por qué?, porque cuando alguien en la casa habla maya se voltea, “mami, me están diciendo cosas”, es que el piensa que el hablar en maya lo están ofendiendo o algo así, pienso. Dice mi mamá, “¿yes?, debes hablarle en maya al niño para que vaya dándose cuenta y no esté pensando, no esté...” Pero, pues, yo no, no estoy acostumbrada ni nada. Otra mentalidad que tiene mi hijo que piensa que sólo las viejitas hablan maya cuando oye que mi mamá lo habla.</td>
<td><strong>Sasil:</strong> I say that the boy, he shies away when he hears Maya, do you know why? Because when someone in the house speaks Maya, he turns around, &quot;Mommy, they are saying things about me&quot;, he thinks that when Maya is spoken, they are insulting him or something like that, I think. My mother says, &quot;see, you must speak in Maya to the child so that he becomes aware and is not thinking ...&quot; But, I don’t, I am not used to. Another mentality that my son has, is that he thinks that only old ladies speak Maya when he hears my mother speaking it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Sí, claro.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Yes, of course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sasil:</strong> Entonces, cuando él escucha que mi mamá está hablando en maya y sí en un principio iba, “mami, no hables en maya”, “¿por qué?”, le dice mi mamá, “porque no estás viejita”, se queda mi mamá, “no, hijo es que la maya no es sólo para viejitas -le dice-yo también hablo maya”, “pero no me gusta mami”, entonces, cuando oye que habla, “ah, es que mami es una viejita, es una señora”, algo así dice como que...</td>
<td><strong>Sasil:</strong> So, when he hears that my mom is speaking in Maya and yes, at first, he was going, &quot;Mommy, don't speak in Maya&quot;, &quot;why?&quot; My mother told him, &quot;because you're not an old lady&quot;, my mom stunned tells him, &quot;no, son, Maya is not just for old ladies–she says–I also speak Maya,&quot; &quot;but I don't like it Mommy,&quot; so when she hears her talk in Maya, &quot;Oh, Mommy is an old lady, she is an old woman&quot;, something like that he says...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Sí, sí, sí.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Yes, yes, yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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223 What did she say?
Sasil: Él da a entender que es una señora mayor.
Aldo: Exacto, pero yo pensé que hablaba de ti, pero ahora que lo estoy...
Sasil: Sí. No le gusta. Sí, no, él eso tiene en mente y no le gusta, de verdad, que oigan que hablan en maya porque según él, algo le están diciendo...

He is implying that she is an older lady.
Aldo: Exactly, but I thought he was talking about you, but now that I am ...
Sasil: Yes. He doesn't like it. Yes, he has that in mind and does not like it, really, that he hears that they speak in Maya because according to him, they are saying something about him.

Table 22. Maya for old ladies and non-existent offenses- IN with Sasil in 2018.05.04

With this interview in mind, we can see how interactions such as the one that Zara started can elicit some of the Maya practices happening at the children’s homes, such as Zara speaking more Maya than what she shows in the classroom, and confirming that Bruno’s attitudes towards Maya are related to feeling excluded or attacked as Maya conversations happen. A simple phrase like *b’aax a beyo’* offered opportunities for children like Fabiola to also position herself as a speaker and authority in Maya, for Zara to determine who is and who is not a Maya speaker, and for Bruno to show his discontent with a register that does not include him. The knowledge of a word or phrase and actions to prove that knowledge to an adult were some of the key entry points for many children to recognize themselves as Maya speakers and feel comfortable playing with the language, as it is shown in the next example.

**Word Games**

Palal-na is a very big school, with its own patch of jungle inside its grounds. To the adult eye, this jungle looks big, and for sure, it must look massive to children. Usually, right before lunch time, I called for children to come to me from the different spots in the patio and playground (jungle), for them to take some soap and wash their hands in a water bucket outside of the classroom that we used for eating lunch (Figure 22).
During one of these preludes to lunch, as children were coming to me ready to be handed some soap, Alma, a K3 student who joined the school year in February 2017, started to ask me if I knew what some words in Maya meant in Spanish. This sparked a two-minute-guessing game while we all washed our hands, and in which many children, especially those who were usually the quietest during the school year (e.g., Dina), started to participate and share the words that they know:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish/Maya</th>
<th>English (Maya in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: ¿A ver qué es pek’?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: What is \textit{pek’}?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dina</strong>: Perro.</td>
<td><strong>Dina</strong>: Dog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Perro, ¡Bien Dina! ¿A ver quién sabe qué es...?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Dog, great Dina! Who knows ....?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara</strong>: ¡Bu’ul! ¡Bu’ul! ¡Bu’ul! ¡Yo lo sé! ¡Bu’ul! ¡Bu’ul!</td>
<td><strong>Zara</strong>: ¡Bu’ul! ¡Bu’ul! ¡Bu’ul! I know it! ¡Bu’ul! ¡Bu’ul!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: ¿A ver qué es bu’ul? Eso es frijol.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: What is \textit{bu’ul}? That means bean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zara</strong>: ¡Frijol!</td>
<td><strong>Zara</strong>: Bean!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: ¿Qué es Ja’?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: What is \textit{Ja’}?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Johnny</strong>: Agua.</td>
<td><strong>Johnny</strong>: Water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: ¿A ver qué es miis?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Right, what is \textit{miis}?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dina</strong>: Gato.</td>
<td><strong>Dina</strong>: Cat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: ¡Gato! Dina lo adivinó. ¡Eso! ¿A ver qué es...?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Cat! Dina guessed it. Great! What is...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alma</strong>: Kot.</td>
<td><strong>Alma</strong>: Kot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: ¿Cuál?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Which one?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alma</strong>: Kot.</td>
<td><strong>Alma</strong>: Kot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Esa yo no me la sé. ¿A ver?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: I do not know that one, let’s see?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adrián</strong> [Gritando mientras él estaba jugando en el patio]: ¡Barda!</td>
<td><strong>Adrián</strong> [Shouting while he was playing in the patio]: Wall!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Ay miren, ya vieron.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo</strong>: Hey look, did you see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa:</td>
<td>¿Qué es?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Kot, barba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa:</td>
<td>Kot, sí, albarrada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>¡Me ganaste en esa!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos:</td>
<td>¿Cuál ganó?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>¿Qué es lu’um?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumnos:</td>
<td>¿Lu’um?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina:</td>
<td>¡Tierra!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Tierra, ¡Eso, Dina si se sabe bastantes! ¿A ver qué es lool? ¿Lool? ¿Te la sabes Dina?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>Flor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Eso, Dina ¿te sabes la que dice...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>Na’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>¿Cuál?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>Na’, casa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Ah, esa claro, sí es cierto, se me olvidó.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>¿Boox?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny:</td>
<td>Negro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Negro, exacto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>¿Y sac...sac?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Silencio]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Blanco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>¿Y ya’ax?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>¡Amarillo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>¿Y kaan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina:</td>
<td>Hamaca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Hamaca, muy bien.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa:</td>
<td>What is it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Kot, wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa:</td>
<td>Kot, yes, stoned wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>You got me on that one!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos:</td>
<td>Who got it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>What is lu’um?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>¿Lu’um?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina:</td>
<td>Soil!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Soil, great, Dina knows a lot of words! What is lool? ¿Lool? Do you know it Dina?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>Flower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Right, Dina, do you know the one that is...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>Na’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Which one?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>Na’, house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Right, that one, I forgot that one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Boox?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny:</td>
<td>Black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Black, right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>And sac...sac?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Silence]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>White.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>And ya’ax?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma:</td>
<td>Yellow!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>And kaan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina:</td>
<td>Hammock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldo:</td>
<td>Hammock, great.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23. Word games– Playing before lunch in FN 2018.05.07

Dina is a K2 student who rarely came to school because, according to her mother, she does not wake up early, she is always tired, and her mother prefers for her to stay at home since the school schedule is erratic in terms of when the school day will end (IN with Elsa, 2018.07.24). However, as soon as Alma, who also did not come to school because no terminaba sus sueños (IN with Ernesta & Nestor, 2018.06.08), started the game, Dina became the most engaged with it, as did Adrián, who was playing in the patio

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224 she did not finish her dreams
but eavesdropping during the game, and Zara, who participated to prove that she knew how to say bean in Maya and its translation in Spanish.

It was at moments like this that children were the ones bringing Maya to the school. As I have mentioned before, I did not speak Maya with the children nor promote it since I understood from the beginning of the school year that the teacher did not speak Maya to them. Nonetheless, in opportunities like this or with Zara and her *ba’ax a beyo’*, children showed off their linguistic profiles without a prompt from adults and were proud of speaking and challenging me and each other. Moreover, it was this type of interactions and improvisations that showed how children felt safe to play with the language and where they intentionally modified spaces for testing their own language abilities/knowledge with no pressure for a right or wrong answer (Blommaert et al., 2005), but just for the sake of having fun (de León, 2019), showing off, and I would say, demonstrating their multilingual nature.

After this quick game, children had lunch, but Alma remained interested in playing the game and asked me to join her guessing game. She started asking me if I knew what chicken was in Maya, and we engaged in the game using four more words *wakax, kay, mis*, and *che’*\(^{225}\). Like many other children, Alma did not speak Maya at home, and her parents both said that, whenever they spoke to Alma in Maya, she responded “*no, no puedo*”\(^{226}\) (IN with Ernesta & Nestor, 2018.06.08). Both her parents understood that Maya was very complicated for Alma, but they hoped that as she grew up, she could get

\(^{225}\) bull, fish, broom and wood/stick.
\(^{226}\) “no, I cannot”
used to speaking it, even if the lingua franca of their household, and her grandparents’
household, is Spanish (Nestor in FN 2019.07.06).

Mario sí sabe

Mario, a K3 student, was without a doubt the student most recurrently recognized
as a Maya speaker by his peers and Elisa (FN 2017.09.01; 09.26; 2018.02.23; 02.07;
06.20). For example, when the teacher purposefully designed a learning activity where
children had to recognize the names of mammals in a PowerPoint presentation, Mario
was identified by his fellow students as the person who knew the names and who knew
how to speak Maya whenever they did not know the words (FN 2017.11.15). This was
also evident at moments when Maya was brought up in conversation by the children, and
they saw words or phrases that they did not understand.

One morning in early January 2018, we started classes late, around 9:55 am, since
children were not arriving due to the cold weather (between 60º-80º F) with parents not
wanting them to get sick (FN 2017.08.30; 2018.06.27). As soon as we had nine students,
the teacher asked me if I could read them a story. I chose the book “Iba caminando”227 by
Sue Machin and Julie Vivas. The story is about a boy who is walking and discovering
different animals along his way. As I was reading the story, I took this opportunity to
work on inferences in the story, also asking them if they could say some of the words in
Maya, creating an opportunity for them to show the words that they knew in Maya (FN
2018.01.23). When I checked with Elisa about one of the words, her follow-up comment
provoked a quick conversation on who was a Maya speaker (and who was not):

227 “I was walking”
Aldo: “Iba caminando, ¿y entonces qué vi?” ¿Qué creen que haya visto?
Nicolás: Cochino.
Yoel: Cochino.
Aldo: Un cochino ¿y eso como se dice en maya? ¿Alguien sí sabe aquí?
Johnny: Yo no.
Yoel: Yo no.
Carlos: Cerdo.
Aldo: ¿No saben cómo se dice en maya?
Yoel: Mario.
Elisa: ¿Ah?
Aldo: ¿Keken? [Elisa afirma.]
Elisa: Mario sí sabe eso.
Aldo: Mario sí sabe eso.
Elisa: Nicolás también sabe.
Aldo: Nicolás también.

Table. 24. Mario knows–Group reading in FN 2018.01.23

Aldo: Hey, todos en la escuela dicen que tú sí hablas maya ¿sí es cierto?
Mario: Sí.
Aldo: En serio, ¿qué sabes, te sabes todos los animales en maya?
Mario: No, pero el cochino sí.
Aldo: ¿Cómo se dice cochino?

Aldo: "I was walking, and then, what did I see?" What do you think he saw?
Nicolás: Pig.
Yoel: Pig.
Aldo: A pig, and how do you say it in Maya? Does anyone know?
Johnny: I do not.
Yoel: I do not.
Carlos: Pork.
Aldo: You do not know how to say it in Maya?
Yoel: Mario.
Aldo: Mario knows? When Mario comes, we can ask him. Keken right? Keken? [Looking at Elisa.]
Elisa: Huh?
Aldo: Keken? [Elisa nods.]
Elisa: Mario knows.
Aldo: Mario does know that.
Elisa: Nicolás also knows.
Aldo: Nicolás too.

I tried to keep on reading the book, but the students continued talking about pigs, how many they had in their houses, and how their grandparents cook them. Mario did not come to school on this day; however, even though Nicolás and Johnny were there, both of them in K2 and also recognized as Maya speakers, it was Mario that Yoel and Elisa mentioned as the one who knew Maya. After two weeks, when Mario came back to the school, I told him that everyone says he speaks Maya and knows how to say the names of all the animals in Maya:
| Mario: Keken.   | Mario: Keken.                       |
| Aldo: ¿Cómo se dice vaca o toro? | Aldo: How do you say cow or bull? |
| Aldo: ¿Y cómo se dice perro? | Aldo: And how do you say dog? |
| Mario: Pek’. | Mario: Pek’. |
| Aldo: ¿Gato? | Aldo: Cat? |
| Mario: Miis. | Mario: Miis. |
| Aldo: ¿Cómo se dice gallo? | Aldo: How do you say rooster? |
| Mateo: Tso’. | Mateo: Tso’. |
| Aldo: ¿Y gallina? | Aldo: And chicken? |
| Mario: Pollo | Mario: Chick. |
| Aldo: ¿Qué es kaax? ¿Kaax es gallina o pollo? | Aldo: What is kaax? Kaax is chicken or chick? |
| Mario: Gallina. | Mario: Chicken. |
| Aldo: Ahhhhh ¿Y cómo se dice comida? | Aldo: Ahhhh, and how do you say food? |
| Mateo: ¿cómo? | Mateo: I eat? |
| Aldo: ¿...o comer? ¿Janal? | Aldo: … or to eat? Janal? |
| Mario: Ja. [Mario nods] | Mario: Yes. [Mario nods] |
| Aldo: ¿Y tortilla? | Aldo: And tortilla? |
| Mario: Este, waaj. | Mario: Waaj. |
| Aldo: Waaj, pues sí tienen razón. | Aldo: Waaaj, well they are right. |
| Aldo: Es que le estaba diciendo que todos dicen que él sí habla maya. Y me estaba diciendo que él sí se sabe todos los animales. | Aldo: I was telling him that everyone says that he speaks Maya. He was telling me that he does know all the animals. |
| Elisa: ¿Sí? | Elisa: Really? |
| Aldo: Sí es cierto. Ahorita me los dijo. | Aldo: It is true. He just told them to me. |

Table. 25. Mario, the Maya speaker– Mario in FN 2018.02.07

Mario was always confident about his Maya abilities. Even though there were a couple of words that were not the exact translations, for example he mixed rooster with turkey (Tso’), he never second guessed or was shy about showing that he knew Maya. When I interviewed him and his siblings during the summer of 2019, they were all proud that they spoke Maya and identified where Maya was spoken in the town, as well as which people most often speak in Maya in town and in nearby towns, since many of them travel to sell food in plazas around the region (FN 2019.07.05). Elisa also knew through the reported speech of the other students that Mario did speak Maya, but never heard him in the school, since he was absent most of the time. As Duranti and Goodwin (1992)
broadly mention, a speaker of a language needs a hearer of the language, someone or
something that acknowledges the existence of the language and of the person who
articulates it. In the case of Palal-na, it was not Elisa who confirmed his Maya
speakerhood, but Mario’s peers, and most importantly, Mario himself, admitting that he is
a Maya speaker at the age of 5, and not just that he will become one when he grows old,
as Bruno believed or what Nestor and Ernesta hoped for Alma to become once she grew
up (FN 2017.12.18; 2019.07.06; IN with Ernesta & Nestor, 2018.06.08).

Neither Elisa nor I had heard Mario speaking Maya before in the classroom or the
school in general, however, it was evident that his peers knew that he spoke it, either
because they heard him speaking with his siblings, or probably he said some words while
they were playing–a space to which adults do not have an easy access unless it is reported
by them (FN 2017.10.23). With Mario’s example, new questions in my own research
started to surface, such as: if some of the children also speak Maya, why is Mario one of
the few that accepts he understands and speaks it? Where are students getting their ideas
about Mario being a Maya speaker, while they are not? Where is Maya spoken in their
houses and by whom? Who is a Maya speaker at these early ages? And, overall, why does
someone deny their Maya speakerhood at such a young age? While aware of the possible
methodological challenges of very young children’s concentration spans, I nevertheless
decided to interview the children I was working with about these issues, knowing that
some of their language displays could be attributed to “scale-sensitive situations and
practices” (p.210, Blommaert et al., 2005), but also without assuming that the space
where their language practices were and are displayed is the only factor that influences
the ways they understand who is a Maya speaker and what is a Maya space. The next
section is a sample of their answers to some of the abovementioned and long-standing queries in the realm of language reclamation which, to my knowledge, have not been frequently addressed with children at preschool ages (for a review of these studies see Meek, 2019).

**Representing Language Regimes: Children Inhabiting Linguistic Spaces**

Even before I started my work in Palal-na during the 2017-2018 school year, I knew that understanding the children’s journeys with the languages with their own words would be an important asset in order to see how language displacement is experienced by them, as well as the ways institutions that they live with purport to support Maya (see also de León, 2019). Based on Busch’s (2006) experience with language biographies, and visual ethnographic techniques used by Pietikäinen (2012) with Sámi children, I initially intended to ask children to draw the answers to questions such as “How do you feel when you speak Maya and Spanish?” “Where do you speak Maya and Spanish?” “With whom do you speak Maya and Spanish?” “Who is a Maya speaker?” “Who is a Spanish speaker?” and “Who is an English speaker?” I understood that all of these were going to be challenging questions to answer, but little did I know that the multigrade nature of the classroom, as well as the absenteeism in the school was going to impede my conducting these interviews.

In February 2018, I started to interview the students when they arrived early to the school, but it was always complicated since many of them arrived at the same time and I was in charge of taking care of them while the teacher was trying to organize her materials for the day, or at other times I needed to wait for the teacher to arrive to the school (FN 2017.09.26; 10.26; 2018.02.14; 04.26; 06.26). When I interviewed Lola, she
shared with me that she does not speak Maya, but that her sister did. She also shared that sometimes she listens to Maya in the park and sometimes at her house, but overall it was very challenging to talk with her since other students were listening and she also wanted to go and play with her friends (FN 2018.02.22). As children were arriving to the school and saw me talking with one of them, they eventually wanted to partake in the interview, which motivated the child I was talking with to get easily distracted, already easy for a three to six-year-old. For instance, when I asked Lola (K2) if she spoke Maya, Fabiola (K3) interrupted her, and shared how she knew many words in Maya because they spoke Maya in her house, but she actually did not speak Maya. Two days before I interviewed Lola, I had the same conversation with Fabiola, where she said that she did not speak Maya, and did not know any words in Maya but knew that in faraway places, such as San Ramón, where her mother lives, people speak Maya (FN 2018.02.20). In Fabiola’s interview, Nicolas also partook in the conversation and shared information that he did not share with me during our own conversation a day before, such as that he and his parents do speak Maya.

Lola’s and Fabiola’s interviews showed me that children as eavesdroppers in the interviews seem to have more freedom to share their knowledge about their Maya abilities, and that I needed to offer a different frame for these drawing-interviews. At this point, all the interviews that I was conducting with children were in the school and with a very schooled format (tables, chairs, classroom). Moreover, questions such as “How do you feel when you speak Maya and Spanish?” were nonsensical for the age and very difficult to answer and draw by all the children that I got to interview (Figure 22).
Based on this, I decided to change the format of my interviews, go to their houses and let them do drawings based on two questions: “Where do you listen to Maya?” “Who speaks Maya?” Being in their houses changed the whole dynamic of the conversations, where siblings and parents became co-interviewers by rephrasing the questions and telling children what needed to be expressed in the drawings. The framing of the activity allowed them to take as much time as they wanted to, to not feel assessed or in the need of giving me the right answer, and in most cases, it became a family activity (see also Pietikäinen, 2012; Figure 23).
In this way, as Purkarthofer and De Korne (2019) have described in their work on the representation of language regimes in the social spaces children inhabit, the drawings and their accompanying narratives showed the different spaces and contact zones where children see and hear Maya, Spanish and even English (Pratt, 1991), but that are not always perceived by the educators or parents. These drawing-based interviews occurred more than a year after my initial school-based interviews and it is possible that the children’s greater familiarity with me by that time also facilitated the ease of the process and richness of their answers. The following are some examples of the representations of these spaces.

*En el radio*²²⁸

Indigenous radios have an important presence in the Yucatan Peninsula, and even though they are not financially strong in terms of the budget that they receive from the

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²²⁸ On the radio
government, they have largely helped to open spaces for Maya to be heard in the region through Maya broadcasting and Maya music (FN 2015.05.07; Castells-Talens, 2009; Cru, 2015b). Walking through Huaytsik it is very common to hear people listening to the radio, while they are working, weaving their hammocks, repairing their bicycles or just resting and hanging out. When I arrived at Jacinto’s house, who also lives with his cousin Bruno, the TV, not the radio, was on; however, as I started to have a conversation with him, the radio surfaced as a primordial character in his drawing.

Figure 25. “On the radio” by Jacinto.
Jacinto and I had a very good relationship. Jacinto was a very cheeky 5 year old boy, very vocal on which one of the gemelitas\(^{229}\) (Yolanda or Marina) was going to be his girlfriend when they grew up (FN 2018.06.07; IN with Yuri, 2018.05.23); and he always shared phrases such as *cuando sabes chiflar ya puedes tener novia*\(^{230}\), amusing for his age but also somewhat problematic in a country characterized by violence towards women and by seeing how this is learnt from such young ages (FN 2018.01.22). When I arrived at his house, Bruno had already told him that we were going to be drawing since he had done this activity a couple of weeks before (IN with Bruno, 2019.07.06). Also, Jacinto’s sister was very excited for me to be there, and Yuri, Jacinto’s mom, came also to see what he was going to draw. I, then, sat down and started the conversation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Spanish/Maya</strong></th>
<th><strong>English (Maya in italics)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Bueno Jacinto, quiero que me dibujes todos los lugares en donde tú escuchas maya.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Well Jacinto, I want you to draw me all the places where you listen to Maya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> En ninguna parte.</td>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> Nowhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> En ninguna parte, pero cuando lo escuchas, ¿dónde lo escuchas?</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Nowhere, but when you listen to it, where do you hear it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> Mi mamá aprende maya.</td>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> My mom learns Maya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Tu mamá habla maya entonces.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Your mom speaks Maya then.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> Ya tenemos un radio, y alguna vez lo he entendido.</td>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> We already have a radio, and I have once understood it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> ¿En el radio? Bueno, si quieres puedes dibujar al radio y a tu mamá.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> On the radio? Well, if you want, you can draw the radio and your mom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bruno:</strong> Jacinto ¿y a mami? También podría dibujar la casa y la carretera, ¿verdad, maestro?</td>
<td><strong>Bruno:</strong> Jacinto, and mommy? He could also draw the house and the road, right, teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> También, pero a él se le ocurrió la radio.</td>
<td><strong>Aldo:</strong> Also, but he came up with the radio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bruno:</strong> Jacinto, las crayolas se te quedan.</td>
<td><strong>Bruno:</strong> Jacinto, you can keep the crayons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> Aquí es donde lo van a conectar.</td>
<td><strong>Jacinto:</strong> This is where they will connect it. [Pointing to his drawing.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Señalando el dibujo.]</td>
<td><strong>Jacinto continúa dibujando mientras yo sigo platicando con Yuri</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Jacinto keeps on drawing while I am chatting with Yuri]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aldo: Muy bien, entonces tú has escuchado maya en la radio, y ¿como qué cosas escuchas en la radio?
Jacinto: Escucho muchos chistes.
Aldo: ¿En maya?
Jacinto: No.
Hermana: Sí, también hay cosas en maya.

[Jacinto continúa dibujando mientras yo sigo platicando con su hermana]

Aldo: ¿Esta persona quién es Jacinto?
Jacinto: Es mi abuelita.
Hermana: ¿Y su cabello? [Todos ríen.]
Yuri: ¡Déjalo!
Bruno: Como él quiera. ¿Y su ropa?

[Su hermana le da instrucciones sobre como dibujar las nubes, mientras yo sigo platicando con Yuri sobre mi investigación.]

Aldo: Entonces tu abuelita habla maya, y también en la radio escuchas de repente maya, y ¿dónde más, o nada más en esos lugares?
Jacinto: Na’ mas en mi casa.
Yuri: En la reunión.
Jacinto: En la reunión escucho maya cuando están hablando maya. Hasta mi mamá a veces le toca su curso.
Hermana: Aquí mi mamá nos habla en maya para que aprenda.
Jacinto: Los números los aprendo. Yo ya aprendo un poquito de maya, como malob tun.

Aldo: Alright, so you've heard Maya on the radio, and what do you hear on the radio?
Jacinto: I hear a lot of jokes.
Aldo: In Maya?
Jacinto: No.
Sister: Yes, there are also things in Maya.

[Jacinto keeps on drawing while I am chatting with his sister]

Aldo: Who is this person Jacinto?
Jacinto: She is my grandmother.
Sister: And her hair? [Everyone laughs.]
Yuri: Leave him alone!
Bruno: As he wishes. And her clothes?

[His sister is giving him instructions on how to draw clouds, while I keep on talking with Yuri about my research.]

Aldo: Then your grandma speaks Maya, and also on the radio you sometimes hear Maya, and where else, or just in those places?
Jacinto: Only in my house.
Yuri: At the meeting.
Jacinto: At the meeting I listen to Maya when they are speaking Maya. Even my mother sometimes has her course.
Sister: Here my mother speaks to us in Maya so we can learn it.
Jacinto: I learn the numbers. I already learn a little bit of Maya, like malob tun.

Table. 26. On the radio– IN with Jacinto (2019.07.27)

During our conversation, Jacinto was very occupied how to draw the clouds, as well as how the radio was connected to a plug. However, in terms of the spaces where Maya was heard, he firstly said that he does not listen to Maya anywhere, and then, after my intervention, he rectified and mentioned that the radio is where he listened to some jokes, though these were in Spanish. Indigenous radios in the region mainly broadcast in Maya, so probably Jacinto’s mention of the jokes could refer to some jokes shared in

256
another radio station. Also, even though he did not draw his mother, he recognized her as someone who speaks Maya with them in the house, as well as whenever she goes to her ‘Prospera’ workshops. The drawing served as an excuse to also see the other places, outside his house and the radio, where he heard Maya, and also served as a window to see some official spaces, such as the government workshops, where Maya is the lingua franca. His sister, complementing this information also mentions how their mom tries to teach them Maya and how Jacinto has learned some of the numbers and even phrases like malob tun. The person that he does draw is his grandmother, who is the recognized Maya speaker in the household and is always advocating for all of them to speak Maya, however, it is mainly Yuri and her family, and not Sasil’s (Bruno’s mother) that have made the effort to speak more Maya and practice it whenever possible (IN with Sasil, 2018.05.04).

Even though my interest is to make visible the places where children listen to and speak Maya, as well as to see who they recognize as Maya speakers, the conversations most of the times led the families to share some of their stories about Maya learning. In Jacinto’s case, his sister shared how at her primary school, once she had a substitute teacher who forced them to speak in Maya. Although at the beginning she did not want to speak it, the teacher motivated all of them to speak it without fear for their Maya production to be right or wrong. The teacher just wanted them to speak it and for them to see that they knew Maya. Now, even though she does not speak a lot, she said that it was

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231 A conditional cash transfer program.
232 All good
that experience at the school that helped her to like Maya more and be a risk taker in her own linguistic practices at her house whenever her grandmother speaks to her in Maya.

*En la carretera*\(^{233}\)

Almost a month before I interviewed Jacinto, I had the opportunity to visit Bruno and talk with him about the people that speak Maya, and the places where he hears Maya (FN 2019.07.06). Bruno was considered the artist at Palal-na and liked to draw with great detail. During our conversation, Sasil was accompanying him and making sure he understood everything I asked, and in many cases seeding some of the answers that Bruno shared with me:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> ¿Cómo en qué lugares escuchas maya, que la gente habla en maya?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Where do you listen to Maya, where people speak in Maya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> ¿Dónde lo escuchas?</td>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> Where do you hear it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> ¿Dónde escuchas que hablan maya?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> On the street. In what other places?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> ¿Dónde escuchas que hablan maya?</td>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> Where do you hear that they speak Maya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> ¿Quién que tu conoces habla maya?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Or who do you know speaks Maya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> Por ejemplo, algunas vecinas, piensa rápido.</td>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> For example, some neighbors, think fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Tus vecinas hablan maya ¿Y alguien en tu familia habla maya?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Your neighbors speak Maya. Does anyone in your family speak Maya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Tu tía, ¿quién más?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Your aunt, who else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> Tu abuelita dile.</td>
<td><em>Sasil:</em> Your grandmother, tell him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> Si quieres, puedes hacer lo que me dijiste y le puedes poner todos los colores que tú quieras.</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> If you want, you can do what you told me, and you can use all the colors you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bruno:</em> ¿Entonces dibujo la carretera?</td>
<td><em>Bruno:</em> So, should I draw the road?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> ¿Ahi es donde tú escuchas que hablan maya?</td>
<td><em>Aldo:</em> That's where you hear that they speak Maya?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{233}\) On the road
**Bruno:** ¿Y las casas?
**Aldo:** ¿Ah en qué casas tú escuchas que hablan maya? Cualquier persona que veas qué habla maya, la dibujas.
**Bruno:** Ahh.

[Sasil y yo seguimos hablando del rol del Prospera y otros programas asistencialistas.]

**Bruno:** ¿Hago la carretera...y hago a los...?
**Aldo:** ¿A los personajes? Todos los que hablen maya.
**Bruno:** Ah bueno, sólo que mi papá no sabe hablar en maya.
**Sasil:** Como mi papá no es yucateco tampoco, mi mamá sí. Pues nosotros crecimos en medio de español, y no tiene aquí mi mamá familiares. De pronto sale a la calle y se topa alguien y empiezan a platicar maya, pero a nosotros no nos crecieron maya, ya además cuando íbamos con nuestros abuelitos, uhhhhh, no íbamos seguido. Pero casi no éramos, sí lo escuchamos y sí sabemos algo, pero pues ellos menos. [Refiriéndose a sus hijos.]

**Bruno:** And the houses?
**Aldo:** Oh, in which houses do you hear that they speak Maya? Anyone who you know that speaks, then you draw them.
**Bruno:** Ahh.

[Sasil and I kept on talking on the role of Prospera and other conditional cash transfer programs.]

**Bruno:** I make the road ... and I do the ...?
**Aldo:** The characters? Everyone who speaks Maya.
**Bruno:** Ah well, only that my dad does not speak in Maya.
**Sasil:** My dad is not Yucatecan either, my mom is. We grew up in the middle of Spanish, and my mother has no family here. Sometimes she goes out to the street and starts to talk in Maya with someone, but we didn't grow up Maya, and also when we went with our grandparents, uhhhhh, we did not go that often. But we almost weren't, we did hear it and we do know something, but because of this they even know less. [Referring to her children.]

### Table 27. On the road– Bruno in FN 2019.07.06

Sasil was a very protective mother, who was constantly visiting the school, interrupting the teacher in the middle of the school day, coming to check if Bruno ate, and overall keeping the image that Bruno never did anything wrong or protecting him in case he was bothered by other children (FN 2017.09.27;12.06; 2018.02.22; 04.20; 04.23;06.08). During our conversation she shared that she knew that she was overprotective but that she preferred to be like that rather than to abandon Bruno. This overprotection was also evident during this interview, since she wanted him to answer in the right way. As I have mentioned previously in this Chapter, Bruno did not like to be spoken in Maya, and Sasil re-confirmed this during this conversation. However, he did recognize the spaces where he listened to Maya, and the people who spoke Maya. He
mentioned that the road is the space where he listens to Maya, which makes sense as Sasil mentions how her mother speaks Maya on the road whenever she leaves her house. Taking the road as the main space, he also painted two persons, which he identified first as his grandmother and his aunt, but also as his grandmother and a neighbor.

Bruno was not the only student that saw the road, or spaces and elements outside their houses as Maya spaces. Fabiola also mentioned that she listened to Maya at her house with her aunts, but also on the street (IN with Fabiola, 2019.07.04). Walking through Huaytsik it is very common to see children playing outside with their neighbors. During all my years visiting and living in Huaytsik, I have never heard children speaking amongst themselves in Maya on the street; however, it was very common to be walking by and hearing Maya. Thus, the road as a space “is not a passive ‘décor’ but an active,
agentive aspect of communication [that] does something to people when it comes to communicating” (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 203; see also Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017). For Fabiola, the people who spoke in Maya on the street were elders, who, with the exception of the priest, were always women (IN with Adrián, 2019.07.11; Mario, 2019.07.05).

![Figure 27. “On the road” by Fabiola](image)

**En el parque**

When I arrived at Mimi’s house, she was accompanied by her 22-year-old sister and her mother. Her mother sells candies and fruits in the park, and she was about to leave as I arrived. She asked me if I did not mind her leaving me alone with both of them.

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234 In the park
I told her I did not mind and that I would be with Mimi for an hour or so depending on how much Mimi wanted to tell me about her drawing. At the time of the drawing, Mimi was 5 years old and now in K2. During the time when I had taught her, when she was 4 years old and in K1, she used to be a very quiet and shy girl, but now she was very open to talk to me. She was always curious about me not having a family in the town, as well as the types of toys I had in my house. During the interview, as I asked her to draw the places where she hears Maya, she asked me the same things about my family and toys, which motivated her sister to ask me about my love life and if I had el vicio\textsuperscript{235}. I told her sister that I did not smoke pot but did drink. As she told me about her pot addiction and how it has been a great effort to stop smoking since she is nursing her 5 months baby, Mimi was drawing without interrupting us unless she added something new to her drawing. When Mimi finished her drawing, she said:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: Ya llegué a mi casa.</td>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: I arrived at my house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Aldo}: Ya llegaste a tu casa. Ah muy bien;</td>
<td>\textit{Aldo}: You have already arrived at your house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entonces fuiste y saludaste a tu mamá y estaban hablando maya. La señora</td>
<td>entonces fuiste y saludaste a tu mamá y estaban hablando maya. La señora después se fue y ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>después se fue y ya llegaste a tu casa.</td>
<td>llegaste a tu casa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: Mi mamá está abriendo la puerta para que entre.</td>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: My mom is opening the door for me to enter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Aldo}: Ah tu mamá está abriendo la puerta para que entres. ¿Y</td>
<td>\textit{Aldo}: Your mom is opening the door for you to enter. And does she tell you this in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te lo dice en maya o en español?</td>
<td>Maya or in Spanish?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: En español.</td>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: In Spanish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Aldo}: Y si te lo quiere decir en maya ¿cómo te diría?</td>
<td>\textit{Aldo}: And if she wants to tell you this in Maya, how would she tell you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: Dice, que “voy a abrir su puerta”.</td>
<td>\textit{Mimi}: She says, &quot;I'm going to open this door.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Table. 28. Ya llegué a mi casa– Mimi in FN 2019.07.12}

\textsuperscript{235} the vice
Mimi’s drawing was a description of one of her days with her mother. Most of the time, when she does not go to school, she goes with her mother to the park, where she plays with *el gusanito*\(^{236}\), a structure made of colored rings which children hang from or cross through. While her mom is selling candies and fruits, and speaking in Maya with other women, she plays in the park. In the drawing, Mimi is firstly depicted in brown playing in the park with the *gusanito*. In the second part of the narrative, depicted at the top of the drawing, she explained to me how she, in blue, and her mom, to her left in the drawing, leave the park and say goodbye in Maya to the other women, at the far left in the drawing. When they arrive home, her mom opens the door and tells her to come in. Mimi’s story was told to me in bits during a whole hour and she was very interested in my knowing that she was using a lot of colors, that she drew a door, a window, as well as herself with hair since she combs her own hair to go to school.

\(^{236}\) little worm
Just like the road, the park is a polycentric space, where Maya and Spanish are in constant contact through the music, vendors, the church, the schools around the park and just by the people passing by. The centers around language are defined by each person through their own experiences (Blommaert et al., 2005). Even though Maya is spoken in the park, Mimi’s perception is influenced mainly by her mother, who does speak to her in Maya most of the time and whose working space, where she takes Mimi all the time, is the park. It is her mother’s use of Maya that serves as an indexical for Mimi, and it is through her mother that she understands Maya spaces, such as the park or her house. In the more than 30 drawings that I did with children, it was always the people who defined the spaces, most of the times being these their houses, although in a few cases, students also identified other spaces such as the church, which was an important Maya space for
Mario, since the new priest in town is a Maya speaker (see Figure 27), the museum for Yoel since he went there to play (Figure 28), and the *dome*\(^{237}\) for Alma (Figure 29), where her brother goes to play soccer and she hears when people shout in Maya (IN with Alma, 2019.07.06 ; IN with Mario, 2019.07.05 ; IN with Yoel, 2019.07.05).

\(^{237}\) Dome-multipurpose public space.
These spaces exist through and by people who, in the end, bring to light, hide or just put in contact registers such as Maya and Spanish that children hear, but also interact with. At no point I am suggesting these are the only places where children heard Maya, or that these are the only people that speak to them in Maya, but what is interesting to notice is that most of the time, the spaces represented in their drawings are related or constructed around people, especially women, and most of the time their grandmothers, who many times are the most vocal in speaking Maya, but at the same time, are the ones that get drawn to learn and speak Spanish in order for them to communicate with their grandchildren. An example of the importance of the family, and especially women, in
children’s perception of who speaks Maya, was represented by Jimena, who took an hour to draw all the members in her family who speak Maya.

La familia

When I interviewed Jimena, she was in her grandparents’ house, since they are the ones that regularly take care of her. Jimena’s father is a cabdriver who starts his day at 6 am and finishes late in the afternoons, and her mother is a teacher who travels two hours, each way, to go to her school to work. Jimena’s grandmother is a very caring adult and is also the only person who never spoke to me in Spanish, since she understood that I spoke some Maya, but also, she was very clear that she barely understood Spanish (FN 2017.10.26; 2018.02.19; 04.24). Since these were summer holidays, Jimena’s mother was in the house, and while Jimena was drawing, we talked about the challenges of multigrade schooling, since she also teaches in a multigrade school; Jimena’s curiosity; her fear for Jimena to get bored once she passes to primary school; as well as how her mother helps her to take care of her daughter. Jimena was always very detailed in all the work she did, and this drawing was no exception. When I asked her if she could tell me who were all the people that she was drawing, she told me that she did not know yet pero hasta que termine el dibujo238 she will tell me (IN with Jimena, 2019.07.28).

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238 when she finishes the drawing
When Jimena finished, she whispered to me the description of her drawings, since she did not want her mother to listen to it. Starting from left to right, first she drew her mom, grandmother, her grandfather with blue hair, her father in green, her aunt Ana dressed in red, then Ana’s uncle with a blue neck, and finally Ana’s children. At the center of all, with a yellow cape, she drew herself. For Jimena, all these people speak Maya at her house and play with her in Maya too. After she finished her drawing, she put her name on the back and then started to eat a lollipop I brought for her. Jimena was one of the few who drew her whole extended family; however, she was not the only one who mentioned that her family and her house were the only places and people with whom she spoke Maya. For Nicolás, also the main people that spoke Maya were his family members, Elisa
(represented at the top of his house in Figure 31), and also his dog, to whom he spoke in Maya (IN with Nicolás, 2019.07.04).

Figure 32. “The teacher and the dog” by Nicolás

Elisa did not appear in any other drawing, although the school, as a place, was also drawn by Yolanda. For Yolanda, it was the school and her house that were the places where she speaks in Maya. Inside the school, she drew herself teaching Marina, her twin sister, and as a representation of her house, she drew her dog who, according to her, speaks Maya since she always calls him as *pek’* (IN with Yolanda, 2019.07.06; Figure 32).
Figure 34. “The school and the dog” by Yolanda

The samples of the children’s drawings show how they organize space and people in response to the ways they engage with the language regimes in Huaytsik. Moreover, they show how context is dependent on people, activities and media, whether this is the radio, the park, neighbors, old ladies or even dogs. It is through their representations that we can see the engagement children have with the languages and how they depict moments in time where they co-participate in language activities. In the end, these drawings show how language practice is a social engagement, where language is not limited to self-contained institutions, but a social and participative arrangement, where there is no language teaching per se, but there is language learning, identification and construction. The engagement and spaces that children identify, as Lave and Wenger (p.93, 1991) have
mentioned, “may well be the condition for the effectiveness for learning”, and I would add, for the reclamation of minoritized language spaces.

**Concluding Remarks: The Politics of Doing Language Policy**

During this chapter I introduced the concept of *language policy-doers* as a more open-ended yet precise term to describe the language activities that children do. Scholars have already shown how children’s language activities and communicative practices play a fundamental role in the ways languages are spoken, reclaimed, strengthened and shifted, especially in contact zones where language shift is prevalent and vigorous (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; de León, 2019; Kulick, 1992; Weinberg, 2018). Moreover, some of these scholars have been interested in defining the particular activities that children do as they explore the language, their capacities with it and their metalinguistic-awareness as they decide how, what and with whom to speak or show their linguistic repertoires (for a review of these studies see Meek, 2019). For de León (2019, p. 93) “children ‘[play] at [being] bilingual’ since [they] do not show stable bilingualism in their everyday lives…[by] staging bilingual performances”. Although I agree with her that children play at being bilingual, I dissent on any type of stable bilingualism. Children in Palal-na showed how they can stage bilingual performances and decide on where and with whom to show them, like when Don Donato mentioned that *no es que no sepan, sino que los niños ocultan la maya*\(^{239}\) (Donato in FN 2019.06.27) or when Doña Nicandra assured me that all her grandchildren resist being spoken to in Maya, although she believes they understand everything, especially the girls (FN 2019.06.27).

\(^{239}\) is not that they do not know, children hide the maya.
I focus on children as an example of the intentional and non-intentional ways language policy is done. Nonetheless, I am neither assuming nor discounting that youth and other adults are also language policy-doers. However, the elusiveness of intentionality and the awareness of it, is what makes children a unique stakeholder to whom attention needs to be paid in order to design better learning experiences that open ideological spaces for them to feel comfortable to show their linguistic repertoire and contribute in the reclamation of spaces for minoritized languages, especially at the preschool level (Blum, 2019; Fishman, 1991; Hirschfield, 2002; Hornberger, 2005; Luykx, 2005; Makihara, 2005). For children who live at the crossroads of languages such as Spanish, English and Maya, the spaces to be designed do not need to be just fun and meaningful, but safe and comfortable in order for minoritized languages to regain terrain and reclaim spaces and functionalities (Lagunas, 2019).

Although it is theoretically desirable, it is a methodological challenge to see the intentional and non-intentional policy actions of all stakeholders. Hult (2010) reminds us that “studying a social system ecologically, though, does not necessarily imply that one must examine every nook and cranny” (p. 20), but to understand that Language Policy and Planning (LPP) is a social, ergo dynamic and not bounded, process. In this sense, the very useful LPP onion metaphor put forward by Ricento and Hornberger (1996), ethnographically sliced by Hornberger and Johnson (2007), and stirred by Menken and García (2010) could be, as I have argued in other places (Anzures Tapia, 2017) subtly pluralized, and understood as fractal onions with connected layers that are sliced, stirred and cooked, where language policy makers and doers co-exist and affect languages and each other, embodying sometimes the making, other times the doing and vice versa.
Overall, *policy-doing* highlights the unintentionality of language acts that affect how languages are lived.

Children in this chapter show the policy windows that exist as they use their languages and share the spaces where Maya is heard, such as the radio, the church, their houses, the street and the local museum. Each one of these spaces had specific actors in common such as mothers and grandmothers, or the women that chat on the street or work in the museum. Women overall play a predominant role in these scenarios, which speaks to the people the children are more related to, but also to the paternal absence of the fathers provoked by the migration to the Riviera Maya (see also Rindstedt & Aronsson, 2002).

In this way, children offer a glimpse to some of the spaces that could be used to keep on strengthening Maya. However, in order to do this, there must be an ideological change as to who is a speaker of Maya and what it means to be a speaker of Maya. As I have discussed before, Elisa’s language ideologies of Maya speakerhood prevent her from believing she can create and promote spaces for children to practice Maya, and moreover, her own language ideologies get in the way of her recognizing how most of the children, even the ones who vehemently say they do not like Maya, understand some of it. For Don Donato, what Elisa needs is a *mano dura*240 (Don Donato in FN 2019.06.27) to just enforce her own language, behavior and schedule policies. However, even to enforce this and transform Palal-na into a place where the children’s linguistic repertoires are recognized and promoted, Elisa has to first believe she is a Maya speaker, and that so are her students, not falling into a type of self-erosure (Irvine & Gal, 2000), where her model

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240 firm hand
of Maya speakerhood does not honor jach maya\textsuperscript{241} since she, and her students, as Maya speakers, do in actuality mix Maya with Spanish.

However, this is not just Elisa’s fault, but a prevalent ideology in the town where children are seen as potential Maya speakers who, eventually, will speak “a Maya”, but it will not be el anterior\textsuperscript{242}, maya maya, (Donato in FN 2017.09.01), maya clarito\textsuperscript{243} (IN with Bertha & Justino, 2018.05.16), el más vivo\textsuperscript{244} (IN with the municipality’s Indigenous education supervisor, 2019.07.10), maya puro or jach maya\textsuperscript{245}(see Anzures Tapia, 2017). If they learn it, it will be a mixed variety, and they will do so once they become older. Except for one person in town, who ironically happened to be the principal of one of the other Indigenous preschools in Huaytsik (FN 2017.07.13), I always heard people expressing pride in speaking Maya and fear it would be lost, mirroring the \textit{ethnic revitalization paradox} described by Rindstedt and Aronsson (2002) with Quichua in Ecuador, where adults were concerned about language loss, but did not speak with their children in Quichua nor enforce the schools to actually promote it, while at the same time understanding that Quichua meant more than the language.

Palal-na’ parents and Elisa were aware that Maya needed to be promoted. However, for many, it seemed that they were satisfied with the idea that it was not necessarily at school that the language should be spoken nor promoted (IN with Sonia, 2018.02.25), and that children, as they become old, will learn the language (see also Virginia’s case in Hornberger, 1988, p.76). Sadly, this has been also the case in other endangered language

\textsuperscript{241} good maya
\textsuperscript{242} the old one
\textsuperscript{243} clear Maya
\textsuperscript{244} the most alive
\textsuperscript{245} pure maya or good maya
studies where children have not regularly been seen as language users or language policy-doers, as if they were not in contact with the languages because they do not produce it (Meek, 2019), reifying the ideology of user/learner of the language as you get older.

Along this same line, Calamullo Sanga (2006) reminds us, this should be a call for all of us who work with children and hear ideologies of using/learning the language as you get older (what he calls late bilingualism), to recognize this as a serious sign, a diagnostic, of how language displacement is happening in fast and voracious ways. Thus, the examples in this chapter show how “children are not solely socialized into a language and into a language policy by adults; rather, they shape this process through their own communicative actions” (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017, p. 377), designing activities, changing them, continuing them, challenging them and navigating them, many times intentionally either as agents or eavesdroppers, and many times unintentionally in the form of possible language tantrums or games.

In the end, children are continuously engaging with language regimes in many ways. Although the presence of Maya is consistent around the town, and children recognize the spaces where they can listen to it, as well as the people who speak it, they decide on their own terms how to engage with it or not. Children, as they are understood in the school—as embodied by Elisa— are not Maya speakers, so they have no possibility of engaging with Maya unless it is a bureaucratic activity that Elisa has to comply with, or alternatively through their own language policy-doing activities. In the former, their Maya strengths are mostly hindered, while in the latter, their capabilities are highlighted and playful, which brings me to my final point.
In an environment where Maya is in a constant crisis of being lost, identifying the children’s language activities and how they do language policy is a call for all of us interested in language reclamation to see children as fundamental stakeholders in any language strengthening effort, where languages are dynamic, but where children also show us the dynamics of the languages. Children are not necessarily influenced by the discourses of language loss and language nostalgia as adults and elders are, but instead are busy living the languages in the making and the doing. Reframing the question not as “What is there to lose?” … but instead ‘What is there to gain (acquire)?’” (Meek, 2019, p.108) opens up ideological and implementational spaces to not just focus on the last speakers but on the vitalities of the new speakers by learning from the ways they do language and language policy. It is then our responsibility as educators to see these dynamics, and take advantage of the linguistic knowledges and linguistic realigning practices children portray and adapt them in language reclamation efforts in and outside the schools, especially in contact zones such as Huaytsik where languages follow politics and economics in very transparent ways (Kroskrity, 2000). In this way, inspired by Hornberger and King (1997), it is perhaps about looking backwards at what the context has looked like and what language socialization has taught us, in order to move the languages forward.
CHAPTER 8: Conclusions, Contributions and Future Directions

Early childhood education (ECE) research addressing the evaluation, design and implementation of programs for Indigenous populations is based on mainstream preschool education and has limited evidence from Indigenous experiences (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Schwartz & Palviainen, 2016). The findings in this dissertation fill part of this gap through a 21-month multiyear ethnography of language policy and planning (LPP) that sought to understand how Indigenous schools, schools in Indigenous contexts, and families who attend these schools embody and interpret language and ECE policies. Moreover, one of the intentions of this dissertation was to uncover how linguistic problems, such as the displacement of Indigenous languages [and/with people], and the changes in and with Indigenous languages, are reflections of larger social problems such as migration and mass tourism (Spolsky, 2007). Although it could be read as a hopelessness dissertation—THIS IS NOT MY GOAL. The aim of each and every chapter is to shed light on the potentials and possibilities of different implementational and ideological spaces that are opened for Indigenous languages to surface (Hornberger, 2005), and the skillful and expert ways in which teachers and caregivers, in such strained educational and economic ecologies, allowed their languages to surface and were cognizant of their changes. In this way, in an environment where Maya, like most Indigenous languages in the world, is in a constant crisis discourse of being lost (e.g., Duchêne & Heller, 2007; Hinton & Hale, 2001), this dissertation shines some light on how children do language policy and how those of us interested in designing Indigenous language reclamation spaces, should be taking into account children in preschool ages as
important stakeholders that can show us what there is to gain from their language and educational practices.

In the following sections I will address some of the contributions that this dissertation is making to the fields of Early Childhood Education, Language Policy and Planning, and overall Comparative Education. Firstly, I will describe how this dissertation informs the literature on ECE multigrade schooling. In the second section I briefly summarize the theoretical contribution of language policy doing in the LPP field; whilst in the third section I share my methodological contributions to the field of ethnography of LPP and beyond, and in particular, methods I developed to elicit the words of children at a very young age. Finally, I will explain some of my future research directions and hopes for the continuation of this research.

**Contributions: Literature, Theory and Method**

My research draws upon literature that frames quality education in the early years as an intersectional process, moving away from an emphasis exclusively on standards, economic outcomes, and best practices for cognitive development, and towards a focus on context and language as reflections of sociopolitical circumstances experienced by children and families (e.g., Callaghan et al., 2015; Pérez & Saavedra, 2017). Yoshikawa and colleagues (2007) found that while the expansion of preschool education in Mexico has led to opportunities for children and families to advance their educational aspirations, the quality offered at this level is far from optimal, especially among Indigenous populations. These scholars argue for the development of quantitative and qualitative assessments of a number of key elements of ECE, including: the relationships between schools and families, improvement in teaching, professional development attuned to Indigenous realities, and
strengthening the support networks underpinning schools. This ethnography of LPP disentangled some of these elements, which are tightly interwoven within practices at the school and in the community as well as at national and global levels. In this sense, my research provides one of the first ethnographic accounts of how policies built upon the ideas of quality education and inclusion are actually deployed by stakeholders in early childhood settings in Indigenous contexts.

My research also responds to gaps in literature on ECE initiatives in low and middle-income countries. Literature grounded in a human capital perspective has shown that early childhood education interventions in the United States have important long-term economic benefits; however, there is less evidence of this for low and middle-income countries (Gertler et al., 2014; Pence, 2013). Furthermore, ethnographies that follow the interactional pathways between schools, parents, teachers, policy, and language and educational ideologies in early childhood settings are almost non-existent, especially in Indigenous communities (Adair, 2011; Schwartz & Palviainen, 2016). Thus, my study fills critical gaps in literature on multilingual education in middle-income countries through an investigation of how policies and programs open up, or foreclose upon, opportunities for participants in ECE in marginalized contexts to negotiate educational and linguistic practices in a globalized era that finds languages in constant contact.

**Literature Contributions on Multigrade Schooling**

Multigrade schooling started to be recognized as an international educational challenge after the 1960s when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published their ‘Recommendations of the Ministries of Education Concerning the Organization of One-Teacher Primary Schools’ (UNESCO, 1961). Even
though this recommendation stated the social and community benefits of having a school
where children from all ages could participate, it was already pinpointed in that report that
the success of these schools depended on the investment parents—in terms of time and
money—could make in order to maintain these schools; a challenge and finding that this
dissertation confirms and highlights too. While it is commendable to recognize parents as
a fundamental part of the learning communities and see multigrade schools as spaces that
bring social and community benefits, the challenges that these schools face have not
changed much in the last 60 years.

Based on the challenges that multigrade schools face, UNESCO (1961, p.5)
recommended countries to design the most “homogenous” schools possible, where
children could have a teacher per grade and could be attended according to their ages—a
model followed by most urban primary schools in the world. Even though Mexico tried to
follow this recommendation, the educational efforts in Mexico remained as an endeavor in
access-to-education; schools were built in rural areas, most in need of schools, but without
addressing the pedagogical challenges inherent in multigrade schools and thus maintaining
this type of schools (Rockwell & Garay Molina, 2014). Unfortunately, access to education—
put differently, access to schooling—produced a paradox: whilst more access to schools
existed, new social and educational inequalities surfaced (Plá, 2015). In other words, the
structural quality (e.g., group size, professional development and curriculum content),
the process quality (e.g., teaching and learning interactions) and the outcomes quality
(i.e., academic and developmental results) did not translate as the same educational
experience for children who attended unitary vis à vis multigrade schools in Mexico, the
latter ones mainly in rural areas attending Indigenous children.
Multigrade schooling shows us how children become participants and socializers in learning with their peers no matter the chronological ages (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009; Rogoff, 1990), as well as how children are cognizant about their language and learning practices. Although not fully described in this dissertation—since it was not its focus— I had the opportunity to see how K1 children taught K3 children about numbers or colors, as well as how K2 children scaffolded the learning of some K3 children in regards to writing and counting, amongst many other activities such as teaching each other how to throw stones, how to say words in Maya, use toys or how to tell girls that you like them (FN 2017.10.23; 10.26;11.13;11.29; 2018.02.21; 03.01; 05.04). However, inequality in terms of the curriculum that is actually delivered in multigrade schools and classrooms is still palpable (Schmelkes & Aguila, 2019).

The ideology of homogenizing schooling has prevailed in Mexico, and I would argue the world, even before the UNESCO recommendations were published. As I have shown in this dissertation, the challenge of multigrade schooling is recognized in Mexico, but its pedagogical and technical challenges have not been addressed (INEE, 2019). Moreover, the model and ideology of a homogenous school, is the model that these schools have to follow without a recognition of the populations that attend and work in them, nor a recognition of the ways learning has and could be addressed and assessed in these contexts (Anzures Tapia, 2015). Throughout the dissertation I describe how the needs and challenges of Indigenous multigrade schools are heightened by the same bureaucratic processes any other general modality and unitary school has to comply with but with the high-stake consequences of closing the school if these processes are not completed.
Moreover, the inequalities that surface in these multigrade schools are not just in terms of the schooling processes per se, but the promises that are never fulfilled by schooling overall. Parents and the youth in Huaytsik see education as a credential for them to have better jobs in the tourism industry. Blatantly, ECE is needed for children to enter primary school, primary school is needed for children to enter middle school and the latter is needed for them to enter high school and become waiters, gardeners or bar tenders in the Riviera Maya. As I describe in the Chapter “Tourism: A double-edged sword in Indigenous Early Childhood Education,” ECE has failed to fulfill its economic promise in the region (see also Shawar & Shiffman, 2017), leading professionalized youth to dedicate themselves to the tourism industry, forsaking crucial service fields such as education and medicine and thus, for example, creating a scarcity of nurses and doctors in the region. In the case of education, the lack of teachers at any level, but especially preschool, and specifically the ones working in the Indigenous modality, affect the ways official Indigenous language spaces function. Hence, my findings are in dialogue with Blum’s (2019) provocations on why anthropologists should care about learning, education and schools as these processes and spaces need to be rethought and redesigned as formal education does not happen in the same way and for the same reasons around the world, but learning is still occurring—a process we should be aware and care of as we think of why schooling is important.

Also, as I show in the Chapter “Indigenous Early Childhood Education: A Market of Opportunities,” quality multigrade schooling, let alone the promotion of a bilingual education that seeks to strengthen minoritized languages has to take into account aspects resulting from larger economic, social and political factors—aspects such as the need for school materials, professional development, effective supervision and less administrative
burden (Mendieta Melgar et al., 2019; Weiss, 2000). Hence, the creation of top-down policies that promote a quality early childhood education or that are designed for the reclamation of Indigenous languages without tackling socio-economic conditions and bureaucratic burdens will keep on being ineffective without serious and consistent interventions (INEE, 2019). In other words, the challenge for these multigrade schools to become successful or to become quality schools does not reside in the different languages offered at these spaces, but in the bureaucratic requirements to which these schools, and their languages, are forced to respond, in a vicious cycle that eventually marginalizes them (see also Pérez & Saavedra, 2017).

In the case of Palal-na, even if Elisa has the intention to promote Maya, and to help students to learn and understand Palal-na as a space where Maya is spoken; the parents, the community and even the Ministry of Education, contribute to the lack of opportunities when and where Maya is intended to be taught. Besides this, Ministry bureaucrats, such as the supervisor, and even Elisa, contribute to the absence of Maya by tricking their own Maya instruction accountability system for the sake of offering what they think is a better preparation for children, mainly based on Spanish language and mathematics. Promoting Spanish and mathematics as the main exit or evaluation measure of children at Palal-na was not unique to this preschool, but was true of all preschools in Huaytsik, and many in the Peninsula. As I discussed in the Chapter “Indigenous Early Childhood Education: A Market of Opportunities,” teachers see preschools’ as the main locales responsible to promote literacy and numeracy skills, most of the times sacrificing Maya as the learner profile expected by the primary schools in the region in Spanish and mathematics is a demand for both Indigenous and general modality schools (FN 2018.03.02; 07.10).
Finally, through the Chapter “The Possibilities of Maya: Presences and Absences,” my intention of showing Elisa’s professional history, the types of resources used in the school, and the learning experiences designed by her, was not just about how Maya is made present or absent in a multigrade Indigenous school, nor was it just a reflection on language reclamation spaces per se, but it was also about the reclamation of education overall (see also McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). My aim was to show how in order to offer quality services for children, families and teachers, we do not just need to focus on the language practices interrupted by bureaucracy or the nature of multigrade schooling, but to reflect upon how the educational system is pushing many of these children and families to experience an interrupted education, which delivers and accepts, the absence of Maya language development and schooled learning.

**Theoretical Contributions on Language Policy and Planning**

My dissertation draws upon the literature of language planning studies and, in particular, ethnographic studies that explore connections between the processes of education, language use, and agency, as they relate to broader economic, political, and sociological formations (e.g., Pérez-Milans, 2015; Valdiviezo, 2009). Such work argues that language planning is a multilayered construct in which different agents and processes are interwoven in highly complex and often unorganized and unpredictable ways (e.g., Hult, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Lane, 2015; Shohamy, 2006). My study builds upon this work by revealing how agents in early childhood settings, particularly teachers, children, and families, appropriate or try to contest educational agendas according to their expectations and aspirations for ECE. Moreover, my work positions linguistically, racially, and socioeconomically marginalized children as agents in their own learning, who
negotiate with each other as they navigate ECE and institutional language policies (Adair, 2014; Corsaro, 2005).

Children were not just helpers and cleaners in the school, but many times were my amateur co-researchers as they gave me different perspectives on schooling and language, such as when they took my recorder and played with it, or when they asked for my camera to take pictures about the things that were interesting for them at the school. My interpretations of children’s perspectives on language as well as how they language in Maya was what the Chapter “Engaging with language regimes: Children as language policy-doers” highlighted. In settings such as Palal-na, it was not just the adults who contributed to the absence and presence of Maya in the classroom, but the children played an important part in making it (in)visible. Considering young children’s language practices as instrumental in the language socialization of adults and language change overall, has received no serious attention, and thus it is a contribution of this dissertation.

In other words, this dissertation shows how children have influenced their parents and, especially, grandparents’ Spanish language development as children resist speaking in Maya or say that they do not understand it. Moreover, it sheds light on the romantic idea of elders as the guardian of the languages, when actually, many times they are the ones adapting to the children’s language practices and enforcing this language change based on the economic function and possibilities that languages, such as Spanish and English, might bring to their grandchildren (Hirschfield, 2002; see also Sichra, 2016). Paradoxically, it is also the children’s language practices which have made the community, and the government, become more aware of the language change in the region and think about ways to stop this drastic shift (see also Makihara, 2005).
Furthermore, children have influenced the languages spoken at the school, forcing the teacher to change the language of instruction from Maya to Spanish. However, the children’s language practices did not just affect the way Elisa taught in and through Maya and Spanish but were also a reflection of the regional migration in which they are engaged through their parents, and the mass tourism that the region is victim of. Against this context and following Sobo’s (2015) and Oswell’s (2013) understandings of childhood, this dissertation reflected how studying childhood environments is a path for understanding change as children are products and actors of socioeconomic processes such as migration, globalization, tourism and even human rights (McLoyd, Mistry & Hardaway, 2013). The agendas to which childhood environments and children are exposed (for example the right to be educated in your own language, but at the same time to learn an “economic” language) allowed us to see and understand some of the logics behind processes such as language change and how language or ECE policies fail or succeed.

In this way, this dissertation addresses, at its own scale, some of the questions that Luykx (2005) poses as a future agenda in order to understand children as language socializers and not just as language socializees: “What role do children’s language ideologies play in situations of large-scale language shift away from the parental generation’s first language and toward the language preferred by children (or imposed upon them by the school)? How does the family’s own language policy adapt or respond to externally-motivated changes in children’s developing language ideologies? What impact does this dynamic have on the language ecology of the surrounding community, and beyond?” (Luykx 2005, p. 1412).
Against this context, I find as an important contribution to the language policy and planning field the concept of children as *language policy-doers* as a more open-ended yet precise term to describe the intentional and non-intentional language activities that children do. The elusiveness of intentionality is what makes children unique stakeholders to whom attention needs to be paid in order to design better learning experiences that open ideological and implementational spaces for them to feel comfortable to show their linguistic repertoire and contribute in the reclamation of spaces for minoritized languages (Fishman, 1991; Hornberger, 2005; Luykx, 2005; Makihara, 2005).

**Methodological Contributions on Research with Children**

First, language change is common and does not follow time patterns, but social patterns, thus it happens at the community and individual level (Gal, 1979; Kulick, 1992). As individuals, and as part of communities, children are part of this linguistic change and it is important to find the ways in which their experiences are listened to, represented and amplified in order to understand how languages change and how languages can also be reclaimed. It is through the spaces that children recognize as language spaces that we could create, design or modify policies in order for minoritized languages to be supported and strengthened. Validating the voices of preschool children through listening to their talk and perhaps especially through their visual representations, though seemingly a simple tool, is nevertheless a methodological contribution of this dissertation offering ways to uncover children's representations of language regimes in the social spaces they inhabit (see also Busch, 2006; Pietikäinen, 2012; Purkarthofer & De Korne, 2019).

Second, my intention with the visual interviews was grounded in the emergences rather than the absences of languages (de Sousa Santos, 2009). Language maintenance is
a conscious effort and not a taken-for-granted process (Hornberger, 1988). Children at young ages are also conscious about this maintenance and about how language changes. They do [family and school] language policy and are aware of how languages change. Following the ways children do language, how they think through it and about it, by having long and well-spaced interviews over time is fundamental. Waiting for the developmental moments to have a conversation as well as recognizing the best spaces, such as homes instead of schools, is not a unique nor new contribution of this dissertation, but one to highlight for other studies.

Third, language reclamation, especially when working with children at preschool age, is a slow, patience-driven, conscious-awareness and hope-oriented effort. Grandiose funding proposals can obscure the importance of sustainability in reclaiming languages (Berryman, Soohoo & Nevin, 2013; Fishman, 1991; Reyhner, 1998). The empirical findings from ethnographies of LPP prove an essential part of our understanding of policy processes and provide a theoretical and conceptual orientation that combines the macro and the micro balance between policy power and interpretative agency, a crucial balance given the commitment to issues of social justice, particularly pertaining to the rights of Indigenous and minoritized language speakers (Hornberger et al., 2018).

Moreover, even if the ethnography of LPP has been criticized for not explicitly showing what LPP processes should be (Canagarajah, 2011), I believe that by taking into account the children’s voices, as well as uncovering how bureaucracy impeded Maya’s presence in the school, or how professional development promotes language purism ideologies, this dissertation informs us on how to design spaces and policies to enable LPP processes directed toward the reclamation of languages (see also Harkness et al., 2018).
I agree with Fishman (1994) that we should not sanctify ethnography as the only anti-hegemonic method to explore or advocate for the minoritized, belittling other relevant methods. However, ethnographies of LPP reveal the intrigacies of LPP, and although they do not always offer quick and efficient ways to stir macro policies (Hornberger, 2013; Street, 1997), they offer us opportunities to question how quick fixes do not always work and how many times just responding to immediate political and economic pressures might cost more in the long term (Huston, 2014).

**Future Directions**

A key contribution of my study is that it connects the literatures on multilingual education and ECE as they converge around internal migratory processes (Sierra Sosa, 2007; Sierra Sosa & Ballesteros Pérez, 2014). While scholars in the fields of language planning, cultural psychology, and comparative education have explored the role of transnationalism in bilingual education in the context of migration from low and middle-income to high-income countries (e.g., Gallo & Hornberger, 2019; Suárez-Orozco, Abo-Zena & Marks, 2015), the impact of internal migration in children’s learning, the value of schooling, and family ecologies remains largely unexamined (Bartlett, 2012; Marsico, 2018). The Yucatan Peninsula is not exempt from the global processes of migration, as Indigenous families move to the Riviera Maya for employment in the tourism industry. As a result, the increasing use of Maya in these urban spaces has created new linguistic and educational dynamics. In these contexts, Indigenous preschools fall short of the ideal of attending to Indigenous children when placed exclusively in rural communities. Moreover, as migration to the Peninsula brings children from across Mexico who speak languages other than Maya, an important question remains about the function of
traditional Indigenous preschools for an emergent urban multilingual population, when they can barely provide services in their own community’s language.

As I point to in the Chapter “Tourism: A double-edged sword in Indigenous Early Childhood Education,” a first future direction of this dissertation would be to explore the ways urban schools in Indigenous contexts, such as the Yucatan Peninsula are servicing not just Indigenous Maya children, but other Indigenous children that are accompanying their families from other places in Mexico. Tourism, and the migratory movements it has provoked, have nurtured a particular linguistic ecology in the Peninsula where Maya lives side by side with English, Spanish and other Indigenous languages that are arriving to the region. Although Indigenous schools’ focus is to teach children in a Maya environment, it is also true that for many of these children Spanish is also their language, and there is a strong push at the top-down and bottom-up policy levels to introduce English as it responds to the current social and economic structures of the Peninsula. Thus, exploring these novel linguistic, social and educational ecologies is relevant for Mexico and for other geographies where similar phenomena are happening (see also Super, Britto & Engle, 2013 on the role of globalization and ECE).

A second future direction this dissertation points to is the exploration of ECE, migration and parents’ emotions. Although it has been argued that preschool participation can lead to increased maternal employment (Berlinski & Galiani, 2007), little is known about the experiences and sentiments of abandonment mothers and fathers feel when they leave their children for work; causing them to question the value ECE adds to their own parenting practices (McLoyd et al., 2013; Shucksmith, Shucksmith & Watt, 2006). Again, in the Chapter “Tourism: A double-edged sword in Indigenous Early Childhood
Education,” it was evident how parents and children suffer from the separation regional migration is provoking in the Peninsula. Even though I asked parents how they felt when they were separated from their children, I did not fully explore this topic in this dissertation as I would have wanted. Emotions impact language learning and schooling, as it is not so much the physical distance that exists between parents and children that affect these processes, but the affective distance which starts to grow and impact the language learning and schooling processes (see also Sichra, 2016). Hence, it is a relevant topic to keep on exploring in the Yucatán and in other Indigenous and minoritized communities impacted by this type of migration.

As I described in the “Research Methods and Setting” Chapter, I collected vast amounts of data in terms of interviews, field notes, audio and video recordings, classroom work and photographs. As much as I could, I tried to include most of my interests in this dissertation. Learning was always in my mind, and I always took to heart how children could learn in the safest and most engaging ways possible. I have field notes of everyday routines, the uses of technology, the role of Sesame Street in learning, the roles of children as helpers and peer scaffolders, amongst many other topics. I will revisit and explore these field notes in the future, but, as I was developing this dissertation, I also knew that learning is impacted by social, economic and political factors which impede or interrupt the interactions in the classroom. Thus, even though my ethnography of LPP was deep and textured, and it described major social issues, I did not represent in this dissertation many of the micro interactions in the classroom which many times the ECE field (especially developmental psychology) is focused on.
Finally, a present and future direction is the continuation of my work in ECE from a perspective where culture and context are understood to be of utter importance for the improvement of education—both schooled and out of school. Almost 20 years ago, Peter Moss (2002) warned us of the ways ECE, and I would argue most schooled education, has been coopted by disciplines such as economics, and in the specific case of ECE, developmental psychology. Although these disciplinary perspectives are fundamental as they have allowed us to see the ways in which ECE can be a human capital investment, and how pedagogies need to be adapted according to certain cognitive developments; culture and context have been generally left out. In this way, disciplines such as educational linguistics can allow us to see how it is that policies and programs targeting poverty reduction, inequality, learning, school design, curriculum design, and professional development are successful or not, by noticing the textures of the implementation of grandiose policies. Even though throughout this dissertation I have tried to celebrate the ways children, parents and teachers have navigated the preschool system and have been successful at many levels, I am not content to stay at that celebratory and romantic stage. I expect this dissertation and my work to be an important light on how policies need to frame context and culture and be framed by context and culture in order to help all the stakeholders in accessing the best education possible and eventually assist the most in need. Probably this is a naive desire and conclusion, but one which I hope never ceases in my work and my insistence on different ways of doing and understanding educational policy.
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