Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 13 Issue 2

2019

AMAE Special Issue

Critical Latinx Indigeneities and Education

Guest Editors

Luis Urrieta, Jr.
University of Texas at Austin

Melissa Mesinas
Stanford University

Ramón Antonio Martínez
Stanford University

Editors

Patricia Sánchez
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek
The University of Texas at San Antonio

http://amaejournal.utsa.edu

ISSN: 2377-9187

Multilingual Mexican-Origin Students' Perspectives on Their Indigenous Heritage Language

P. Zitlali Morales
University of Illinois at Chicago

Lydia A. Saravia
DePaul University

María Fernanda Pérez-Iribe
University of Illinois at Chicago

Abstract

This article focuses on the reported experiences of three focal students who participated in a Spanish/English dual language program in their southern California school district throughout their elementary and middle school years. All three students identify as Mexican-origin and speak Spanish, English, and the Indigenous language of Zapoteco and have different relationships with their languages. The framework of Critical Latinx Indigeneities (Blackwell, Boj Lopez & Urrieta, 2017) is used to explore the practices engaged in by the students, including language use and transnationalism (Sánchez, 2007), as well as the investment to learn and use a language as part of their identity (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Even though dual language programs provide much needed linguistic supports for language maintenance, perhaps more importantly, they provide support for ideological shifts towards language maintenance rather than transition to English-only instruction. However, the three students experienced a segmented and limited focus on Spanish language development in middle school compared to their elementary school experience. The authors discuss implications for outside school spaces that can support authentic language use, in addition to school-sanctioned language programs promoting multilingualism.

Key Words: Transnationalism, Zapoteco, Critical Latinx Indigeneity, Dual language education, Investment

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.24974/amae.13.2.430

Introduction

Rosa's mamá: *Porque les digo a ellos- un día vamos a regresar a nuestro pueblo, ¿no? Y pues regresamos y pues puro inglés, ahora si que ni español. Y pues, no. Ahí tenemos tíos, parientes, abuelos, y pues ¿como no te van a entender? No, no ponle que aprender pues. Aprender para comunicarse. Es lo que, lo que yo pienso, que es lo mejor para mi*.

[Because I tell them- one day we'll return to our town, no? And well, we'll go back and only English, not even Spanish. And well, no. There we have aunts/uncles, relatives, grandparents, and well. They won't even understand you? No, no get to learning then. Learn in order to communicate. It's what I think, what I think is best.]

The above quote is from a mother describing how important it was for her children to continue being able to speak Zapoteco, in addition to Spanish, while also becoming fluent English speakers. This paper looks at the educational experiences, linguistic use, and perspectives of three multilingual Mexican-origin students with either one or two parents of Zapotec heritage around their language use and schooling experience. The students participated in a dual language program in their southern California school district throughout their elementary and middle school years and are fluent Spanish and English speakers. Additionally, they all have different relationships and fluency with the Indigenous Mexican language of Zapoteco. This study considers what each language provides the youth access to and how their heritage languages connect them to others who speak the same languages – in México and in the Los Angeles area.

We use the framework of Critical Latinx Indigeneities (Blackwell, Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017) to explore the idea of Indigeneity within the context of the lives of students who speak Zapoteco as a heritage language but receive schooling in the US in English and Spanish. We also explore the idea of language use, development, and maintenance from the lens of investment (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000), which is a poststructuralist approach to language learning. Of relevance to this exploration is the context of the schooling of these students: a dual language program within a school district providing this additive language option from kindergarten through twelfth grade. While dual language programs provide much needed linguistic supports for language maintenance, perhaps more importantly, they represent an ideological shift, as compared to other bilingual programs, towards language maintenance rather than transitioning students to English-only instruction. We discuss implications for outside

school spaces for incentivizing language use for authentic purposes, in addition to school-sanctioned language programs promoting multilingualism.

Critical Latinx Indigeneities and Language Use

Indigeneity and Transnationalism

In a contemporary re-thinking of the idea of Indigeneity, scholars describe the concept as not static, but rather dynamic, similar to the idea of identity itself (Alberto, 2017; Blackwell, 2017; Boj Lopez, 2017; Saldaña-Portillo, 2017; Sánchez-López, 2017; Urrieta, 2017). Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta (2017) identified the need to "examine how Indigenous migrants from Latin America are transforming notions of Latinidad and indigeneity in the US" (p. 126). They named a framework of Critical Latinx Indigeneities (CLI), which addresses the questions about transnational meanings of race, place, and Indigeneity raised by the presence of an Indigenous diaspora from Latin America across multiple countries and overlapping colonialities.

The focus on transnationalism in CLI overlaps with other literature around transnationalism as a lens for understanding the experiences of many children of (im)migrants[1]. Education researchers such as Sánchez (2007a&b) have discussed the phenomenon of more children raised in families maintaining their connections to their countries of origin. Additionally, researchers have urged educators to consider more deeply the experiences of transnational children and youth and note the learning experiences of students outside of schools (Sánchez, 2007b), such as the international perspectives they develop (Sánchez, 2001). Morales (2016) discussed the worldliness and breadth of experience demonstrated by the children in her study, having traversed diverse spaces in different geographic locations. Sánchez and Kasun (2012) pointed out the invisibility of these transnational experiences to the teachers of these (im)migrant students.

Similarly, Ruiz and Barajas (2012) noted that Mexican Indigenous students have been overlooked by educators until very recently. Sánchez and Machado-Casas (2009) identified that a growing number of Latinx households are composed of Latinxs from an Indigenous background. In Mexico, "more than one in ten Mexicans come from a family in which an indigenous language is spoken" (Fox, 2006, p. 39). Ruiz and Barajas (2012) explain that in the

[1] Please see Pacheco (2009) for a discussion of the word (im)migrant and a critique of the problematic nature of the term 'Latin American immigrants' which refers to these populations as immigrants in their own land of origin and fails to consider long-time migration patterns before the political Mexico-US border separated families.

process of incorporation into new communities in the US, racial hierarchies that were experienced in Mexico are also present in the US and often affect the treatment of Indigenous *Mexicanos*, including discrimination against *lo indio* (Indigenous forms) by other Mexican (im)migrants. However, "far from being passive recipients of racist beliefs and behaviors, indigenous transnational communities bring with them cultural wealth…" (Ruiz & Barajas, 2012, p. 127). As part of this cultural wealth, an identified aspect of Indigeneity is *comunalidad*, or a cultural pattern of collectivity (Martinez Luna, 2010; Urrieta, 2017). For example, Sánchez-López (2017) discussed his own experience growing up in the Los Angeles area after having been born in Oaxaca and identifying as Zapoteco. He described the political unity and solidarity with Latino-identified youth. Other scholars have examined the traditional responsibilities that Mexican Indigenous community members have for collective participation in their home cities requiring them to return periodically to Mexico to carry out those duties (Stephen, 2007). Ruiz and Barajas (2012) identified multiple themes coming from ten interviews conducted with Indigenous families and US school personnel, three of which are particularly relevant to this study: 1) The need for Spanish instruction; 2) The importance of teaching Indigenous languages; and 3) Affirmation of Mexican Indigenous children's identities.

Mexican Indigenous Languages in the US and Invisibility

A prominent theme when exploring Mexican Indigeneity in the US is that Mexican Indigenous students seem to blend in with the general Latinx population and remain "*ocultos* (hidden), omitted, or ignored…" (Machado-Casas, 2009, p. 84). Many of these students' families are Spanish-speaking, in addition to speaking an Indigenous language. In contrast to the high school students in Barillas-Chón's (2010) study, who were recent arrivals to the US, the students in the present study have experienced their entire schooling in the US, so are more "invisible" as Indigenous students. In the context of the US, the marginalized language of Spanish becomes the focus of language maintenance if there is an opportunity for students to participate in bilingual programs. Indigenous languages, such as Zapoteco, Mixteco, or Purepecha, are unnoticed or devalued, particularly in the school context (Barillas-Chon, 2010; Morales, 2016; Munro, 2003; Perez, Vasquez, & Buriel, 2016).

Macedo (2000) argued that in the US, the bilingualism of students of color is constantly under assault, and that racist colonial linguistic and cultural practices often found in schools contribute to the marginalization of Latinx students. Macedo's colonial bilingualism framework

helps situate the larger social and political context that students must continuously navigate, as well as the various colonialities of linguistic/cultural minorities in the US. The linguistic and cultural violence that Indigenous Latinx students and other youth of color continuously experience often contributes to their educational alienation (Barillas-Chon, 2010).

Most emergent bilingual students (or English learners as they are still more commonly called) in this country are identified as Spanish-speakers. Among the English learner student population, almost 80 percent are Latinx native Spanish-speakers (Kohler & Lazarín, 2007). But even within this number, it is not clear for how many students Spanish may not be the only language other than English that they speak. Students identified as speakers of languages other than English are rarely provided more than three to four years of primary language instruction, if provided bilingual education at all. In fact, bilingual education still most often supports movement toward monolingualism (García & Kleifgen, 2018).

Fifteen years ago, López and Runsten (2004) noted that there were approximately 350,000 Indigenous Oaxacans established in California, and around 180,000 living within the southern area of the state. In Los Angeles, Zapotecs are the most representative Indigenous community that migrated from the Valles Centrales and Sierra Norte regions in Oaxaca (López & Runsten, 2004). Blackwell (2017) puts the number of Indigenous Oaxacans in Los Angeles at approximately 120,000. Munro (2003) suggests that many Zapoteco speakers are undocumented. Therefore, it is not evident how many Zapoteco speakers are in the US. Zapoteco is a language found largely in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, but also Guerrero and Puebla. There are approximately 58 Zapotec languages or dialects, each of which may be difficult for speakers of the others to understand. There are over 400,000 speakers of Zapotec languages in Mexico today (Simons & Fennig, 2018).

For many Indigenous communities, developing multilingualism is vital, especially because speaking Spanish connects them to a broader Mexican community, both within Mexico and in the US (Machado-Casas, 2009). Multilingualism allows one to retain the values, beliefs, and characteristics of more than one culture (Sánchez, 2007a, 2008). Trueba (2004) also emphasized that for (im)migrants maintaining one's own language(s), as well as learning English, is not a luxury but a need. Other researchers have agreed that language is important for providing cultural and identity validation as well as to help maintain connection with families back in Mexico (Besserer, 2000, 2004; Machado-Casas, 2006; Rivera-Salgado, 1999; Stephen,

2007). In the US context, if there is opportunity for language maintenance and development, it is for Spanish, particularly through the growing number of dual immersion programs.

Dual Immersion Schools and Investment in Language Use

Dual immersion is a type of bilingual education model that promotes bilingualism and biliteracy development along with high academic achievement and multicultural understanding (Howard, 2005). Unlike other bilingual education models which only serve English learners, dual immersion programs bring together students of a target language, in this case Spanish, and speakers of the majority language (English), so that all students are learning both languages together. Typically by the final year of elementary school (often fifth grade), 50% of instructional time is devoted to each language. Even in a location such as California, which essentially banned primary language instruction through the passage of Proposition 227, the allowance of annual waivers signed by parents provided the possibility for students to continue receiving a bilingual education. While dual immersion programs have increased in popularity across the country, they remain less typical than the more normative transitional model of bilingual education. They also often do not extend beyond the elementary school level.

Dual immersion models structurally emphasize the goal of multilingualism for emergent bilingual students and the maintenance of the heritage language, rather than transition into English. Many language scholars and researchers have more recently taken a poststructuralist approach to language learning, recognizing that learners must feel "invested" in becoming speakers of a target language, rather than feel motivated, which is based in a more cognitive perspective (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). The idea of investment (Norton, 2000) relates to a speaker's notion of the self and the role that speaking a particular language plays in one's self-identity. 'Investment' takes a more sociocultural approach that language learning is context-dependent and situation-based, always taking into account power relations, learning opportunities, and ultimately, how speaking the language aligns with who the person wants to be. For those speakers of languages other than the two languages taught in the program, there must be other opportunities to increase the potential for investment in being a speaker of an additional language, such as Zapoteco.

Method

This is a longitudinal case study, similar to Ek (2009), following a small number of focal students participating in a dual immersion program in a small school district in southern

California. Interviews were conducted in 2010 (5th grade) and 2013 (8th grade) with the students and their mothers. Through a narrative analysis of the interview transcripts, we examine the participants' constant or changing perspectives regarding their languages and how their schooling (or other influences) has affected their relationships with Spanish, English, and Zapoteco.

Initial Study – Fifth Graders in Dual Immersion School (2010)

Zitlali Morales examined the learning ecology of a Spanish-English dual immersion elementary school (Carver Language School, a pseudonym) in southern California focusing on the language ideologies embodied in practices within the school and by different participants including the principal, teachers, students, and parents (Morales, 2010). The fifth grade was chosen as the focus in order to ask participants about their experience at the school since kindergarten. Observations of both fifth-grade classrooms took place over the course of the academic year (2009-2010), and ten focal students and their parents were chosen to be interviewed. Focal students were chosen who practiced a variety of linguistic practices at home but who all came from Latin American heritage. (All of the students identified as Mexican-heritage except one student whose parents came from El Salvador).

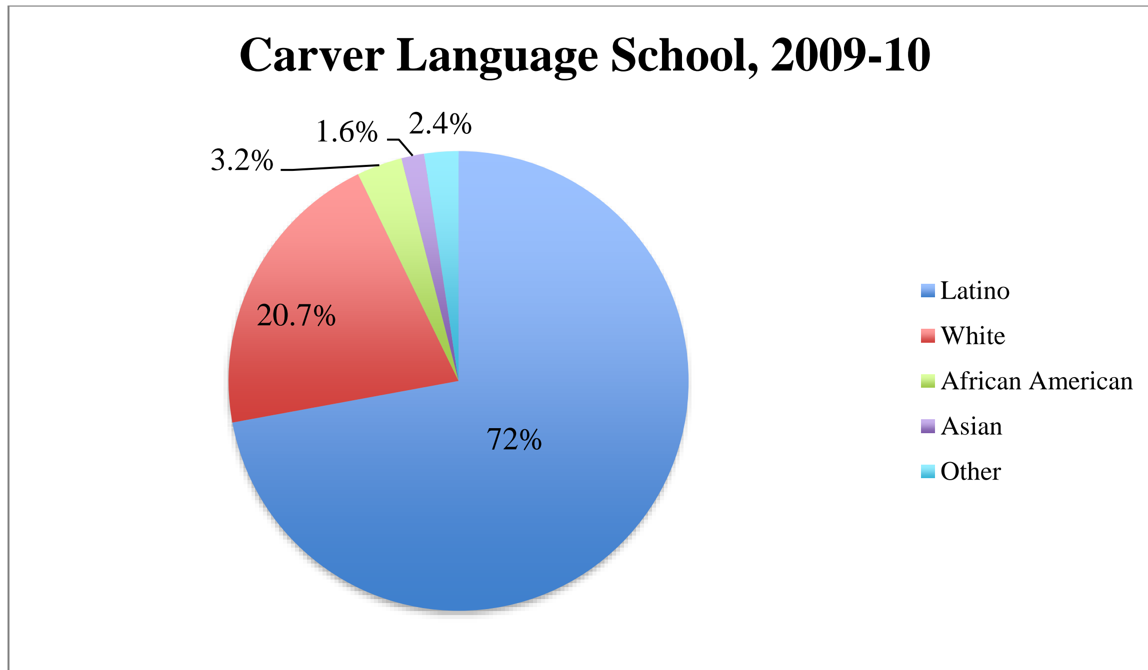

Figure 1. Student Racial Demographics of Carver Language School, 2009-10

Almost half of the school's K-5 student population were designated English learners (49%), and the majority of students were identified as Latino. Forty percent of the students in the school were classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. The neighborhood in which the school site is situated had historically been a Latinx immigrant population with Spanish-language signage, for example. However, there was no data on the linguistic diversity of these English learner students at the school, and it was evident that this population was actually very heterogeneous – linguistically, socioeconomically, etc., with a large percentage of students whose families hailed from Oaxaca and spoke Zapoteco as a heritage language. Table 1 presents some brief information about each of the focal students. Many of them had traveled to and experienced their parents' country of origin.

Table 1

Focal students from 5th grade to 8th grade

Name	Parental Origin	Travel to Mexico	Languages
Rosa	Both parents from Oaxaca	Born in Oaxaca, visits regularly	Zapoteco Spanish English
Jesús	Both parents from Oaxaca	Travel to Oaxaca, visits regularly	Zapoteco Spanish English
Jeannie	Both parents from El Salvador	Not been to El Salvador	Spanish English
Lilia	Father's family from Jalisco, Mother's family from Mexico City	Travel to Jalisco and Mexico City once	Spanish English
Enrique	Mother's family from Jalisco	Travel to Jalisco once	Spanish English
Lourdes	Both parents from Oaxaca	Travel to Oaxaca a few times	Spanish English

Kevin	Mother from Oaxaca, Father from Puebla	Not been to Mexico	Spanish English
Jessica	Both parents from Puebla	Travel to Puebla, visits regularly	Spanish English
Ricardo	Mother's family from Durango, Father's family from Jalisco	Travel to Durango once	English Spanish
Edwin	Both parents from Oaxaca	Travel to Oaxaca, visits regularly	Zapoteco Spanish English

Note. Student names who are underlined were interviewed as 8th graders, and those names in bold are the focus of this analysis.

Following Focal Students to 8th Grade and Data Analysis Using CLI Framework

Morales interviewed five girls and five boys from the two fifth grade classrooms in the original study, as well as one parent of each student. Following-up with participants during their eighth-grade year, Morales reached out to the ten original participants, but was only able to secure interviews with seven, as well as the parents originally interviewed. Interviews for the first study were conducted at the school site, since the focus of the original study was the dual immersion program and the school itself. Interviews as eighth graders were not conducted at the middle school, but rather at a location of their choosing. Participants chose sites at various cafes in the area of the school after the conclusion of the school year.

All of these students attended a K-5 dual immersion school together, and then went on to a dual language program option in their middle school (James Madison Middle School, or JMMS). Since the JMMS student population was made up from different elementary feeder schools, the students who had attended Carver went to middle school with students who had not experienced a dual immersion program. Additionally, because the middle school schedule was made up of different periods for different subjects with different teachers, the experience of the students in the dual language option was much less cohesive than their elementary school's program. The Spanish instruction they were receiving was in the form of two courses offered in Spanish: Spanish language arts and social studies.

This analysis uses a Critical Latinx Indigeneities (CLI) framework focusing on the three students interviewed as eighth graders who identified Zapoteco as a language they spoke. In dual immersion schools, there is a purposeful effort to recruit students who begin elementary school as predominantly speakers of the heritage language, in this case Spanish, and other students who are monolingual English speakers. As fifth graders, students had been instructed in both Spanish and English for five years, so they were fluent in both languages. Yet, students had varied preferences for the two languages, in addition to Zapoteco. Because the focus of the study was on the languages of the students rather than ethnic identity or Indigenous affiliation, the students were not asked if they identified as Indigenous. In fact, students' Zapoteco-speaking abilities had come as a surprise to the researcher focused on the experiences of the students in the Spanish-English dual language program. However, this important aspect of these students' lives and abilities became central to explore and to document its invisibility in their school curriculum, as discussed in Morales (2016). Certainly, from an etic perspective, speaking Zapoteco and participating in cultural practices or important events in their communities – both in California and in México – could mark these students as Indigenous. However, the students themselves did not necessarily identify this way.

The follow-up interviews focused on movement: across geographic spaces, contexts and purposes for language use, and changes over time. Questions included similar topics to what was asked during the first study, with some additional questions asking about students' experience with the middle school and their plans for high school. All of the students planned to attend the district high school and continue the dual immersion option, even though this just meant taking additional classes in Spanish. Morales conducted the follow-up interviews, speaking primarily in Spanish, in order to converse with students in the target language of the dual immersion program. But the researcher explained to the students and their parents that they could respond in either Spanish or English. The second set of interviews were transcribed by a research team which includes the two co-authors. After the interviews were transcribed, the authors analyzed each transcript for emerging themes. The fifth-grade interviews were consulted first, a codebook was created, and the eighth-grade interviews were then analyzed for similar themes. Through a narrative analysis of the interview transcripts, we examine the participants' constant or changing perspectives regarding their languages and how their schooling (or other influences) has affected their relationships with Spanish, English, and

Zapoteco. The interview excerpts included in this manuscript are reported in the original language spoken. Interviewee responses have been translated from Spanish. None of the interviews were conducted in Zapoteco.

Researcher Positionality

Zitlali, Lydia, and María Fernanda are Spanish/English bilinguals. Zitlali was born and raised in the Midwest by immigrant parents from the state of Jalisco, México. She is the oldest of four daughters and spoke Spanish as her first language. She does not speak the Zapoteco language and interviewed the students and their mothers in Spanish and English. Lydia was born and raised in Chicago and attended one of its first dual immersion (Spanish and English) elementary schools. She is the daughter of Guatemalan immigrant parents and conducted her dissertation work in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, focused on a secondary school with a bilingual and intercultural curriculum in an Indigenous Mayan language-speaking community. María Fernanda was born in Sinaloa, Mexico, but immigrated with her family to the southwest side of Chicago when she was ten months old. She is the oldest of three daughters. Her first language is Spanish, and she often took on the role of translator for her parents. She is currently a pre-service bilingual teacher. While the lack of familiarity with the Zapoteco language is a limitation of the analysis, the three authors strongly believe in bilingual education, heritage language maintenance, and the increased visibility of Indigenous students among students from Latin American descent in our schools.

Findings

Zitlali met Rosa, Edwin, and Kevin as fifth graders participating in a dual immersion school; they were all focal students in the study where she observed them in their Spanish and English language arts classes. However, the one-on-one interviews focused on their linguistic backgrounds and practices outside of school, and she learned that Rosa and Edwin's families were from Oaxaca and had various levels of fluency in the Zapoteco language(s). These two students were each the youngest children, and all of their older siblings had been born in Oaxaca, in Zapoteco-speaking communities. Both had visited their towns of origin in Oaxaca with their families to participate in community events and had these comparative experiences of life in large, urban Los Angeles. Kevin's family background was distinct; he was the older of two boys. He did not identify Zapoteco as a language he was familiar with as a fifth grader, and he had never been to Mexico, having been born and raised in the Los Angeles area. In fact, his

mother also spoke only Spanish and English. However, as an eighth grader, Kevin shared that he played in a band of traditional Zapotec music, which his mother encouraged. Kevin's mother divulged that this language – which she called *dialecto*[2] ("dialect") – is a language that her own father speaks, but that she never learned.

As fifth graders, all three students spoke, read, and wrote in Spanish and English as part of their school curriculum. Zapoteco was not a language they used in school; opportunities for Rosa and Edwin to learn and speak Zapoteco came in familial contexts and their trips to Oaxaca, as elaborated in Morales (2016). A fourth student (Jesús) also had Zapoteco as a heritage language but was unable to be interviewed as an eighth-grade student. Rosa, Edwin, and Kevin all continued in the dual language program through middle school. This was a very rare schooling opportunity that this district provided, particularly in a post-227 California context. In the sections that follow, excerpts from the 5th grade interviews are presented first, followed by the 8th grade interviews.

Table 2

Focal 8th grade students for this analysis

Rosa	Zapoteco, Spanish, English	Born in Oaxaca, youngest of 8 children, started school in Mexico
Edwin	Zapoteco, Spanish, English	Youngest of 4 children, only child born in the US (others born in Oaxaca)
Kevin	Spanish, English	Older of 2 siblings, born in the US, never traveled to Mexico

Rosa: Language for Economic Utility as well as Beauty

Rosa attended preschool in Mexico and then continued in kindergarten in the US. She had moved to California with her mother and seven older siblings to join her father who had been working in the US for twenty years, mainly in the restaurant industry. Rosa's parents, grandparents, and older siblings are all speakers of Zapoteco. When interviewing Rosa's mother, she explained that she had learned Spanish at a later age, 19, when she went to work in the capital city of Mexico. Rosa's family still had a house and land in Oaxaca and regularly

[2] Perez et al. (2016) explained that the term *dialect* continues to be used to refer to Indigenous languages, even by Indigenous people themselves – with the implication that they are not legitimate languages.

travelled back to their hometown to visit. In fact, one of her older brothers had studied computer engineering in the US, but then decided to return to Oaxaca where he opened a computer cafe.

In both the fifth- and eighth-grade interviews, Rosa chose to respond to the interviewer in Spanish. Rosa's fifth-grade teacher considered her to be one of the students most proficient in Spanish, perhaps in part because she had begun her education in Mexico. It initially came as a surprise to the interviewer when Rosa shared that she spoke Zapoteco.

Zitlali: *¿Entonces, cuál es tu primer idioma?* [So, what is your first language?]

Rosa: *Español, no, sí, español, y luego otro idioma, que casi no... Primero es español, luego segundo es un idioma que es, que usamos en el pueblo, se llama Zapoteco… Mi tercer, um, mi tercer idioma es inglés.* [Spanish, no, yes, Spanish, and then another language, that I don't really... First, it's Spanish, then second is a language that is, that we use in the town, it is called Zapoteco... My third, um, my third language is English.]

Rosa went on to identify other Zapoteco-speaking students in the fifth grade, including her best friend, Marisol, and Edwin in the other class. Since Rosa was attending a dual immersion school where she was learning to read and write both Spanish and English, the interviewer asked her about the place of this other language.

Zitlali: *Wow. Entonces, ¿como ves, es como un idioma secreto, o?* [Wow. So, like, it's like a secret language, or?]

Rosa: *Un idioma, así normal, pero casi no, no no, casi muchas personas no lo hablan. Y más aquí.* [A language, just normal, but hardly, no, no no, hardly many people speak it. Especially here.]

Rosa claimed Zapoteco as an *idioma* or language, rather than a *dialecto,* as some other interviewees did. She recognized that not many people spoke it in the US. Indeed, the researcher had not identified Rosa as a Zapoteco-speaker in advance of the interview. Rosa was then asked if she spoke Zapoteco with family or others.

Rosa: *Otras personas no.* [Not with other people.]

Zitlali: *¿No? ¿Nunca? Okay.* [No? Never? Okay.]

Rosa: *A veces saben, a veces no. Y este. Ah. Pero con mi familia, con mis primos, con mis tios, sí saben zapoteco.* [Sometimes they know, sometimes they don't. And um. Oh, but with my family, with my cousins, with my uncles/aunts, they know Zapoteco.]

Having such a large family allowed Rosa many opportunities to speak Zapoteco at family gatherings in the US. However, as a fifth grader, Rosa did not seem to use the language in a larger community context, with people outside of her family.

When asked about whether she thought it important to continue to attend a dual language program, Rosa's answer was job-related. She stated that in the future, any job would require both English and Spanish. The interviewer asked next if Rosa thought it important to speak Zapoteco.

> Rosa: *Para mi sí. Si un día vuelvo a México o vivo allá, trabajo cuando sea grande. Puedo este, como se llama, a los turistas que vienen allá. Cuando te preguntan cosas. Nomás les respondes o les dices que hablamos en zapoteco y ellos te entrevistan y todo. Hay veo mucho en México.* [For me it is, if one day I return to Mexico or live over there, work when I'm older. I can uh, how do you call it, to the tourists that come over there. When they ask you things. You can just respond or you say that we speak in Zapoteco and they interview you and everything. I see that a lot in Mexico.]

Similar to Spanish, in this response Rosa connected speaking Zapoteco to financial opportunities. However, she described making money from tourists who would pay to hear Zapoteco spoken, the implication being that Zapoteco was anachronistic, or an oddity (Urrieta, 2017). Additionally, her answer to the question of why she should continue to speak this language was dependent on whether she and her family moved back Mexico, even though Rosa spoke Zapoteco with her family in the US, too. At that time, Rosa had just visited Mexico the previous year. Zapoteco seemed to be connected geographically to her parents' hometown.

In the interview three years later, Rosa was asked whether she spoke Spanish better than when she was a fifth grader and if her Spanish use had increased or decreased.

> Rosa: *Yo creo que sí. Hay más palabras que conozco mejor*, so, yeah, ha-ha. [I believe so, yes. There are more words that I know better, so, yeah, ha-ha.]
>
> Zitlali: *¿Y hablas más español ahora, menos español o igual?* [And do you speak more Spanish now, less Spanish, or the same?]

Rosa: Uh, *yo digiera*[3] *que menos español, pero, lo conozco más, pero no lo hablo tanto.* [Uh, I would say less Spanish, but, I know it better, but I don't speak it as much.]

This answer aligned with the idea that as Rosa kept taking Spanish as a subject area, she continued to develop her formal Spanish language skills, including writing and expanded vocabulary, since she was reading grade-level texts. But her response demonstrated the effect of continuing to learn Spanish in school in a segmented way. In elementary school, the whole school community, including teachers and staff, spoke Spanish in addition to English. But in the middle school, only students that opted into the dual language program took classes that were taught in Spanish. Spanish usage was not the norm for most students or teachers. When probed, Rosa shared that she liked Spanish language arts but not the class itself because it was long, and they received too much homework.

When asked why it was important for Rosa to continue speaking Spanish, she stated a similar reason as in fifth grade – for financial or job-related opportunities in the future.

Rosa: Well, *a veces en el futuro cuando tú apliques a un trabajo es bueno porque hay muchos trabajos en que hay muchos* like *güeros y no saben español entonces necesitan a gente que hable español.* [Sometimes in the future when you apply for a job it's good because there are a lot of jobs where there are a lot of white people and they don't know Spanish so they need people who speak Spanish.]

During interviews with Rosa, she was willing to speak about race and observations she made about her classmates, including how she perceived race impacting their willingness to be friends with her. In this instance, however, Rosa suggests that there are jobs where Spanish-speaking is needed that could not be obtained by white people (*güeros*). This comment is made despite the fact that Rosa had been attending school with students of different racial backgrounds who have all been learning and speaking Spanish for many years. Yet, she still associated Spanish-speakers with non-white people, or framed white people as non-Spanish speakers. The researcher also asked about whether it was important to keep speaking her language, Zapoteco.

Rosa: *Sí, para el futuro también, sería yo creo que es bonito. So, yo lo seguiría hablando.* [Yes, for the future, too. It would be, I think it's beautiful. So, I would continue speaking.]

[3] "Digiera" is not a grammatically correct word in Spanish; many young speakers of Spanish or Spanish learners do not always say the tenses in the grammatically correct way. In this case, the interviewer understood Rosa to mean "*diría*" or "I would say," as it has been translated.

Rather than attaching financial opportunities to speaking Zapoteco, Rosa cited its beauty and its place in her future. However, English had become a language she also spoke in Oaxaca.

> Zitlali: *¿Hablas zapoteco o español o los dos cuando vas a viajar a Oaxaca?* [Do you speak Zapoteco or Spanish or both when you travel to Oaxaca?]
>
> Rosa: *Ah, los dos y también inglés.* [Uh, both and also English.]
>
> Zitlali: *¿También inglés?* [English too?]
>
> Rosa: *Sí. Ah, porque también tengo a mi hermano allá así es de que él habla ingles también, so, yo-yo enseño ingles a- como tengo amigos allá*. So *también les enseño inglés.* [Yes. Uh, because I also have my brother over there, and he speaks English as well. So, I- I teach English to, see I have friends over there. So I also teach them English.]

While Zapoteco had been most connected to her family and to her parents' hometown, the context was changing. Now that a person with whom she primarily spoke in English lived in Oaxaca, she associated this location with English as well. This aspect of transnationalism underscores the portability of cultural practices (Moll, 2011). Even though Rosa's mother had been quite explicit about the need for her children to retain Zapoteco in case they returned to live in Oaxaca (opening quote), Rosa had become invested in speaking English in addition to Spanish even in Mexico. Speaking and teaching English to her friends perhaps gave her status or social capital, just as her trilingualism served her needs as well.

Edwin: Embarrassment, Comfort, and the Necessity of Different Languages

Edwin was the youngest of four siblings and the only child born in the US. His sisters and brother were much older than him and were born in Oaxaca, Mexico. They all spoke Zapoteco, Spanish, and English. Edwin's family had lived only blocks away from his elementary school but then moved about fifteen miles away (to the "Valley" area of Los Angeles) because his parents were able to afford to purchase a house out there. This had increased Edwin's travel time to school, and Edwin explained that he often ate breakfast in the car and was extremely tired at the end of his long days. However, it was that important to his parents for Edwin to continue attending Carver. One of his older sisters—the one closest to him in age—had also gone to Carver and was at the time of the fifth-grade interview, about to enter into UCLA as a freshman.

Opting to speak in English, Edwin recounted some of his experiences in Oaxaca (Morales, 2016). He had talked about these experiences very animatedly but spoke with more

hesitancy about his ability to speak Zapoteco. He explained that he was embarrassed to speak Zapoteco fearing the words would come out wrong. In fact, Edwin engaged in non-reciprocal code-switching practices (as described in Zentella, 1997) when visiting Oaxaca – often responding to his relatives in Spanish when they would speak to him in Zapoteco. Edwin's mother had explained that both she and her husband came from a town where the dominant language was Zapoteco, but schooling was provided solely in Spanish. When Zitlali spoke to Edwin's mother, she spoke in Spanish. However, Edwin's mother explained that it was not until she immigrated to the US that she learned to speak Spanish fluently.

Zitlali: *¿Usted aprendió en la escuela?* [You learned it in school?]

Edwin's mamá: *Hasta cuando llegué aquí.* [Not until I arrived here.]

Zitlali: *¡De veras! Güau, porque lo habla muy bien.* [Really! Wow, because you speak it very well.]

Edwin's mamá: *Gracias. Apenas estoy aprendiendo también*. [Thank you. I'm barely learning it as well.]

Zitlali: *¿Cuándo vino aquí fue a la escuela para aprender español y el inglés?* [When you came here, you went to school to learn Spanish and English?]

Edwin's mamá: *Según inglés pero no aprendí nada de inglés. Solo aprendí el español.* [Supposedly English but I didn't learn any English. I only learned Spanish.]

Having lived in a town where Zapoteco was primarily spoken, Edwin's mother had not been invested in becoming a Spanish-speaker in Mexico. It was not until she took English classes in the US that Edwin's mother learned to speak Spanish, for the purpose of communicating with other Mexican (im)migrants (as participants in Machado-Casas, 2009). The US context necessitated knowledge of both of these dominant languages. Rosa's mother had been urged to learn Spanish due to economic necessity. For Edwin's mother, the necessity of learning Spanish came from a need for *apoyo* – which, as Barillas-Chon (2010) argues, is a communal support and information-sharing that comes from social connections with fellow (im)migrants from Mexico. This reality was another advantage to both women having their children enrolled in a dual language program, focused on the development and maintenance of both English and Spanish.

At the time of the eighth-grade interview, the researcher made sure to inquire about recent trips to Mexico. However, Edwin lamented that he had not been to Mexico in a long time. While his parents continued to travel to Oaxaca for two weeks on an annual basis in

October, Edwin could not go with them due to a strict attendance policy at JMMS. While his parents were in Mexico, Edwin stayed home with his older siblings. He reminisced about his last trip to Oaxaca for his sister's wedding.

> Edwin: Oh we usu- …when I was little, we usually go for October to celebrate over there. And there would be like festivals over there, there would be like a mini carnival over there, and we would see bullriders and like mini-rides and there would be fireworks. And like, I would go, there would be like mini carnival games. And, and it's really fun. It's just that I haven't been there in a while, so I don't know how it is right now. But before yeah, and we would go to, to like the little town over there. Spend ti- spend quality time with family. It's very fun. I miss it…

Edwin spoke with much nostalgia and expressed feelings of missing out, due to having a traditional school schedule in the US. The researcher continued asking him about JMMS.

> Edwin: Challenging because in sixth grade- I learned math in Spanish and throughout fifth grade, and then once I entered sixth grade it was all in English. So I- it took me a while to like translate all the words into what it was. And I had more teachers, more classes, more homework and... it was kind of hard for me. And in seventh grade I got used to it but like I made some like bad decisions, I wouldn't study for tests and it really it did affect me a lot, especially in math. But, eighth grade was- it was easy. I-I-I went through it, it was easy. I got better test scores than before... I just learned from my mistakes.

Although Edwin explains his difficulty with school as due to his own decisions, he also described the segmentation of his schooling experience, and the lack of support moving instruction in Spanish to English for particular school subjects. Since remaining in the dual language program was optional, the researcher asked why he had chosen to continue in it.

> Edwin: I want to stay in it because I heard that it help me, it'll help me a lot later in life, and that la-later in high school because there's a higher chance I might get into like a- it can help me in my resume to like college and all that. It's, it's very helpful. And it's, it's I just like learning two languages, knowing two languages and um... it helps you a lot. It gives you more support, I feel.

As Edwin explained how remaining in the dual language program would help him in the future, the examples he gave were very utilitarian in nature, such as helping him get into college.

Additionally, while Edwin recognized his own bilingualism, he failed to acknowledge that he was actually trilingual.

> The researcher then probed specifically about his knowledge of the Zapoteco language.
>
> Edwin: Yeah, I have like the accent so I don't really talk, but I understand every single word.

This response was similar to the one Edwin provided in fifth grade. He alluded to the challenges in speaking the language, but expressed confidence in his receptive abilities. Similar to what Lee (2013) noted about students' hesitation to use indigenous languages, Edwin seemed reticent to speak Zapoteco due to the embarrassment of having accented speech. The researcher continued by asking if his siblings also still understood Zapoteco.

> Edwin: Yeah, yeah, they all know, but I'm the only one that doesn't know it. I do, but like sometimes I want to say but it doesn't come out the way I want it, and like my words just get scrambled up in my mouth and nothing comes out in the end.

Edwin's description of his trilingualism was not self-assured; he seemed to experience frustration at his "scrambled" words or inability to express himself the way he desired. However, the opportunities and incentives for Edwin to speak Zapoteco to monolingual Zapoteco speakers were limited, particularly due to the challenge that missing school in October posed for him. The researcher also asked about his Spanish language development since fifth grade.

> Edwin: No, I think it went, I think I kind of forgot to speak Spanish. It's the fact that everything I learn, there's only two- well in yeah, there's only one class each year that I had to speak Spanish in, and that was in Social Studies, other than Spanish class, but that was mostly reading. And like, I kind of just stopped speaking Spanish. I only spoke it at home but that was just like simple. And then once I got to eighth grade, that's when I learned more. And then I kind of caught up. But then at the same time, I didn't. So yeah, my Spanish went little, like "eee".

Edwin made this last pronunciation while putting his index finger and thumb together, demonstrating this language decreasing in size. Similar to Rosa, the shift to learning Spanish in school for only two periods out of eight created a significant structural difference in how his Spanish language development was being supported. There was no incentive to speak Spanish informally throughout the day with classmates who were not enrolled in the dual language

option. Thus, even in the best of circumstances – enrollment in a dual language option in middle school – there was inadequate support to prevent Edwin's Spanish from becoming "little". The amount of mediation that the dual immersion elementary school (including structural context and teacher pedagogies) provided against the hegemonic language ideologies favoring English (Morales, 2010) were not being recreated in the middle school. But Edwin did appreciate his schooling and the rare opportunity he realized he was receiving:

> Zitlali: *¿Qué piensas de la educación bilingüe?* [What do you think about bilingual education?]
>
> Edwin: It's, it's very nice. It's challenging but it-it helps, it helps. And it's just fun that I get to learn different subjects in different languages. And now when I get to high school, it'll probably be the same thing and it's, it's helpful. It just helped me throughout the years. I didn't realize I was in an immersion program until fifth grade, I thought I was just going to school like, just like that. I didn't realize that some other schools just had English and some other schools just have Spanish. So, I'm very lucky to be in it.

Edwin articulated how fortunate he was to have this rare educational opportunity, to study in two languages but did not similarly express a desire for learning Zapoteco in a school setting.

Kevin: Authentic Language Learning and Investment in Zapoteco

Kevin followed a different trajectory than the first two students in terms of his language use, particularly Zapoteco. He was the older of two sons, both born in the US. His mother hailed from Oaxaca and his father from Puebla. When asked for his preference of language to use during his fifth-grade interview, Kevin answered "Spanglish," and the researcher accommodated his request, asking questions in both languages.

> Zitlali: *Sí, ¿y este cuál idioma hablas con tu familia?* [Yes and uh, what language do you speak with your family?]
>
> Kevin: *Yo, yo les hablo en inglés, pero ellos me contestan en,* wait*, me contestan en, en* Spanish. [I, I speak to them in English, but they respond in, wait, they respond in, in Spanish.]
>
> Zitlali: *¿Tus papás?* [Your parents?]
>
> Kevin: Yeah.
>
> Zitlali: *Y tu hermanito, ¿en que idioma hablas con él?* [And your little brother, what language do you speak with him?]

Kevin: Spanglish.

Zitlali: ¿Spanglish? *¿Y que idioma hablas mejor?* [And what language do you speak better?]

Kevin: English!

Zitlali: *¿Cuál idioma prefieres?* [What language do you prefer?]

Kevin: Spanish.

Zitlali: *¿Y con quien más hablas español? O sea, donde en tu vida hablas español? Con el futbol?* [And with who else do you speak Spanish? Or rather, where in your life do you speak Spanish? With soccer?]

Kevin: *En todos los lados,* [Everywhere.]

Zitlali: *¿En todos lados? Y tambien en todos lados hablas inglés?* [Everywhere? And you also speak English everywhere?]

Kevin: *Tambien sí.* [Also, yes.]

Kevin explained that he used both languages regularly throughout different areas of his life with different people. He was the only student who claimed to purposefully mix his languages. Despite having never traveled to Mexico, he had authentic uses for Spanish in his life, including communication with his father's parents and other family members who lived nearby.

Zitlali: *¿Es importante para ti hablar español* e *inglés?* [Is it important to speak both Spanish and English?]

Kevin: *Sí.* [Yes.]

Zitlali: How come?

Kevin: 'Cuz *mi mamá todavía no sabe mucho inglés y tampoco mi papá. Entonces tengo que hablarles en español.* Like most of the time. ['Cuz my mom still doesn't know much English. Or my dad. So I have to speak to them in Spanish. Like most of the time.]

Kevin explained the importance of maintaining his Spanish language skills, due to his parents' Spanish monolingualism. As the oldest child, Kevin had taken on some translating responsibilities in his household (please see Orellana, 2009 regarding common characteristics of child translators or paraphrasers).

Kevin: *Le ayudo con el papeleo con mi papa porque dice, "¿Qué es esa palabra? ¿Qué es esa palabra?" Me gustaba algunas veces* sometimes. *Yo era como su diccionario* or something like that. *Pero ahora que ya, pero ya que ganamos la computadora, me dice, ya no me tienes que ayudar.* [I help with the paperwork with my dad because he says, "what is this word?

What is this word?" I liked it sometimes sometimes. I was like his dictionary or something like that. But now that, but now that we won the computer, he tells me, you don't have to help me anymore.]

In addition to playing clarinet in the school band, Kevin described playing for a band outside of school that played Mexican music. However, the researcher did not delve further, to ascertain what type of Mexican music the band played. Instead, the conversation shifted to where Kevin's grandparents lived and whether he had ever been to his parents' places of birth. Kevin explained that his paternal grandmother lived in the Los Angeles area, but since he had never traveled to Mexico, he had never met his maternal grandmother, who continued to live in Oaxaca.

When interviewing him as an eighth grader, Kevin chose to respond in Spanish; Kevin had developed more investment in his identity as a Spanish-speaker. Zitlali asked Kevin about his Spanish use and development, including if there were people in his life with whom he *only* spoke in Spanish, peers in particular.

> Kevin: *Solamente los de la banda, y, um, solamente los de la banda.* [Um, just the ones in the band, and, um, just the ones in the band.]
>
> Zitlali: *¿Qué piensas de cómo tu español se ha desarrollado? ¿O sea, crees que hablas mejor español ahora que cuando estabas en quinto año de Carver?* [What do you think about how your Spanish has developed? I mean, do you think you speak better Spanish now than when you were in fifth grade at Carver?]
>
> Kevin: *Creo que sí porque ya se unas más palabras en español. Y, eh, yo me estoy comunicando más con las personas. Cuando estaba en quinto grado no estaba en la banda y no habla mucho español, solamente en la casa o con mi abuelita que vive aquí en* (inaudible) *Island. Y, um, pero ya cuando me metí en la banda, ya, ya, empecé a hacer más amigos. Y ya se como hacer mas amigos donde sea porque antes estaba muy callado y no, y no me gustaba hacer amigos, y,* um (laughs). [I think so, yes, because I know some more words in Spanish. And uh, I'm communicating more with people. When I was in fifth grade I wasn't in the band, and I didn't speak much Spanish. Just at home or with my grandma who lives here in (inaudible) Island. And um, but when I got involved with the band, I, I started making more friends. And I know now how to make friends anywhere because before I was pretty quiet and I didn't, I didn't like to make friends and um (laughs).]

Kevin attributed his increase in Spanish-speaking to his involvement with his band, despite the fact that he was attending a dual immersion school in fifth grade where fifty percent of instructional activities were conducted in Spanish. He also reported speaking more Spanish with peers, rather than just with family members, such as his grandma. Participating in the band then provided Kevin a context for him to use Spanish for the authentic purpose of making friends.

Significantly, Kevin had been the only student of the three who had not identified Zapoteco as one of the languages that he spoke as a fifth grader. However, as an eighth grader, he surprised the interviewer by sharing that through his engagement in the band, he was learning a language in addition to Spanish and English, although he could not name the language at first.

> Kevin: *Bueno allá en la banda también tocan, este toca, este hablan, ay no se como se llama el idioma este. Mmm, pero lo hablan mucho y luego a veces les entiendo cómo si dicen algo, una palabra en el idioma.* [Well, there in the band they also play, they play, they speak- geez, I don't know what this language is called. Um, but they speak it a lot and then sometimes I understand them. Like if they say something, a word in the language.]

Zitlali tried to guess what language was spoken by members of Kevin's band.

> Zitlali: *¿Portugués? ¿Italiano? ¿Francés?* [Portuguese? Italian? French?]
>
> Kevin: *No, no es. ¿Zapoteco?* [No, it's not that. Zapoteco?]
>
> Zitlali: *Oh! Zapoteco.* [Oh! Zapotec.].
>
> Kevin: *No sé. Lo que hablaba mi abuelita. No recuerdo lo que dijo mi mamá.* [I don't know. What my grandma spoke. I don't remember what my mom said.]

Even Kevin was unsure of the name of the language spoken by his band members. He explained that it was the language that his own grandmother spoke, and the interviewer inquired further.

> Zitlali: *Entonces estás aprendiendo un poquito.* [So, you're learning a little bit.]
>
> Kevin: *Un poquito. Muy poquito. Yo no hablan mucho. Hay solamente, hay una señora siempre anda hablando así. Y los niños, "en español por favor, no te entendemos," y, um, eso es todo.* [A little bit. Very little. I don't spoke it much. There's only, there's a lady she's always talking that way and the kids, "in Spanish please, we don't understand you," and um, that's it.]
>
> Zitlali: *¿Tu abuela habla zapoteco?* [Your grandmother speaks Zapoteco?]

Kevin: *No, mi abuelita que está aquí no.* [No, not the grandma that is here.]

Zitlali: *¿Ella no?* [Not her?]

Kevin: *No. Solamente la otra, pero ella sigue en México.* [No, only the other one. But she remains in Mexico.]

Kevin explained that a particular lady in the band spoke Zapoteco, and some of the young people requested that she speak in Spanish because they did not understand her. Zapoteco was indeed spoken in Kevin's family, but not by family members who lived in the US. Kevin was one of the few focal students who had never been to Mexico, and the researcher asked whether he would like to some day. Kevin explained that he did not have money to get his passport, let alone the flight there. Compared to the other two students, Kevin's family was not in a position (financial or otherwise) to travel to Mexico. Yet, Kevin had become invested in a Zapoteco-speaking identity via his participation in the transnational practice of playing Oaxacan music, similar to what Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009) note that "some students may live a life of transnationalism… [though] they may actually never set foot in [the] origin community" (p. 6-7). Moreover, Kevin's participation was a clear example of *comunalismo,* as the band brought together individuals of diverse ages, from different Mexican towns, in order to engage in this particular cultural practice.

When interviewing Kevin's mother, Zitlali inquired about her desire for Kevin to learn a language in addition to Spanish and English.

Kevin's mamá: *¡Claro que sí me gustaría! Dicho este mis padres hablan otro dialecto. Es dialecto. Y esto, ahorita esta involucrándose un poquito con la gente que es de ahí de donde es mi papá y entonces le digo que trate de aprender un poquito ese dialecto y también otro idioma si se puede. Entre mas idiomas hable yo creo que es mejor para él …también para el futuro, ¿verdad?* [Yes, of course I would like it! Actually, my parents speak another dialect. It's a dialect. And right now, he is getting a little bit involved with the people that are from where my dad is from, and so I tell him to try to learn a little bit of that dialect and also another language if possible. The more languages he speaks, I think it's better for him… also for the future, right?]

Zitlali: *Sí. ¿Y de donde es su papá?* [Yes. And where is your dad from?]

Kevin's mamá: *Mi papá es del estado de Oaxaca. Nosotros también, pero donde nosotros crecimos no se habla ese dialecto. Entonces, mi papá tuvo que salir, de ese, de su, su lugar*

> *donde vive, de pueblo de donde él nació y se tuvo que ir para donde nosotros vivimos. Y ahí no, nadie lo habla entonces se perdió…esa lengua verdad. Pero es muy bonita. Y aquí se reúnen muchas personas que hablan ese dialecto. Y entonces estamos tratando de ir más con ellos. Involúcrarlos más para esa cultura también de ellos.* [My dad is from the state of Oaxaca. We are too, but where we grew up, that dialect is not spoken. So, my dad had to leave from that, from his, his place where he lived, from the town where he was born. And he had to go to where we live. And there no, nobody speaks it. So it was lost… that language, right? But it is very pretty. And here many people get together who speak that dialect. And so we are trying to go more with them. Involve them more for that culture that's also theirs.]

Not only did Kevin's mother identify her heritage language as a dialect but narrated the language loss that had occurred in their family due to their movement from one place in Mexico where Zapoteco was spoken to another where Spanish was dominant, as described by Munro (2003) is a common occurrence. However, she articulated a strong desire to reclaim it by spending time with people *in the US* who spoke her father's language. And perhaps more important than the language, Kevin's mother expressed a desire to involve Kevin in a culture that is "also theirs". Her narration is an example of how speaking Zapoteco can index membership in this Indigenous community but is not the only cultural practice that is an expression of Indigeneity, as argued by Muehlmann (2008).

Discussion & Implications

Using a Critical Latinx Indigeneities framework, we examined Rosa, Edwin, and Kevin's narratives for expressions of investment in their various languages, aspects of transnationalism, and examples of *comunalismo*. We found that despite some changes in their linguistic practices or preferences over time, Zapoteco and Spanish were useful to the students in different contexts, in addition to English; they demonstrated investment in these identities of Spanish speaker, Zapoteco speaker, and English speaker to various extents. Zapoteco often remained a hidden language for these students, and there was great variability in their proficiency (Perez et al., 2016), with some of the students having more access to the language in their immediate families. Edwin specifically expressed embarrassment or inadequacy about his mixed language practices.

Even though the three students continued in the school district which supported their retention and development of Spanish, their schooling did not explicitly support their Indigenous identity (Ruiz & Barajas, 2012). Additionally, the actual Spanish language arts class was experienced by the students as challenging. Conversely, the fact that Kevin had developed some awareness (and speaking ability) in Zapoteco from fifth to eighth grade via his participation in a Oaxacan music community demonstrates the importance of outside-school contexts that support investment as Zapoteco speakers as part of a larger set of cultural practices in this Indigenous community in urban Los Angeles supporting Indigenous identity and belonging (Perez et al., 2016). Latinxs in the US are primarily associated with two dominant (European) languages – English and Spanish – which serves to marginalize Indigenous languages, which also takes place in Mexico (Muehlmann, 2008). The multilingual and diverse linguistic background of some Latinx students is not acknowledged and often not even known in school settings (Barillas-Chon, 2010; Munro, 2003).

Sánchez-Lopez (2017) suggested that Oaxacan youth want their history and culture taught in school, similar to other scholars who encourage Indigenous communities' cultural and linguistic knowledge to be recognized and valued in schools, rather than silenced and stigmatized (Casanova, O'Connor & Anthony-Stevens, 2016). In the words of Perez and colleagues (2016), "The school is a cultural institution that can support, ignore, or denigrate its students' heritages and sociocultural backgrounds" (p. 268). We envision possibilities for connection via language to all the spaces that students may want to maintain and develop – in the US, in Mexico, and especially in the communities where they or their parents are from. But real learning and practice of languages takes place when there is investment (Norton, 2000). Thus, there need to be opportunities outside of school to learn, develop, and maintain languages in community settings. Similar to other scholars' recommendations, we suggest that educators and the education system in general need better ways of recognizing the linguistic abilities of youth as assets (Barillas-Chon, 2010; Casanova, O'Connor & Anthony-Stevens, 2016; Ruiz & Barajas, 2012) and drawing on or leveraging the languages of culturally and linguistically diverse youth (Martínez, Morales, & Aldana, 2017). Instead, the US school system constrains students when it prioritizes not only the English language but the particular variety that is standard or mainstream American English. In this "best case" situation, where the students were structurally encouraged through this dual immersion setting to maintain one of their

minoritized languages, it was only the Spanish language that was assumed as the sole language needed for these Latinx students to retain and promote their cultural identity.

While dual immersion programs have helped to shift expectations of language maintenance of emergent bilingual students by using their linguistic backgrounds as assets in the classroom, dual immersion programs largely treat Latinx students as Spanish language speakers. All three students revealed a desire to learn or maintain Zapoteco. However, their academic environment has not nourished this desire. Rather, their academic environment has helped cultivate the importance of *only* two languages. Ruiz and Barajas (2012) also noted some initial findings from a small study in California about the language education of Mexican Indigenous students in a similar context where students were enrolled in bilingual programs. The parents were supportive of their children learning and maintaining both Spanish and English. When provided the option, parents often choose multilingualism for their children and maintenance options, despite schools not often offering opportunities for Indigenous language supports. This speaks to the legitimate criticism of equating language with a culture or taking it as a marker of authenticity or proof of Indigeneity (Muehlmann, 2008). In the neocolonial context of California, Kevin's participation in the band playing Oaxacan music led to interest in the Zapoteco language and investment in a Zapoteco-speaking identity, in addition to his claim of improvement in his Spanish-speaking abilities. Within this particular context, Spanish related to a broader sense of Indigeneity and Indigenous community as an authentic means of communication in this group.

Although there has been an increase in research about Indigenous populations from Oaxaca moving to the US (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2013; Escala Rabadán & Rivera-Salgado, 2018; Klaver, 1997; Stephen, 2007), the literature remains slight about these youths' educational experiences (Ruiz & Barajas, 2012). Sánchez and Machado-Casas (2009) identified that "many children and families who actually lead a transnational lifestyle, engag[e] in a wide transnational social space that includes continued contact and interaction with their countries of origin, a non-linear back and forth between different worlds, sometimes across physical borders and sometimes within spaces that only include difficult social borders" (p. 10). For these students, language helped them maintain ties across time and space with family members and their ethnolinguistic communities in both Mexico and Los Angeles. Language does not equal identity, but it is a valuable marker particularly because it supports engagement with specific communities, *as Spanish does*. Language shifts and language loss happen over time, which speaks

to the need to encourage investment in identities as speakers of diverse languages, especially in politically stratified spaces. Schools are vital spaces for this work, but they are not the only spaces for language investment work; transnational cultural practices in community are equally vital for the promotion of Indigenous language retention.

References

Alberto, L. (2017). Coming out as Indian: On being an indigenous Latina in the US. *Latino Studies, 15*, 247-253.

Barillas-Chón, D. W. (2010). Oaxaqueño/a students' (un)welcoming high school experiences. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 9*(4), 303-320.

Besserer, J. F. (2000). Política cuántica: El uso de la radio por comunidades transnacionales. *Nueva Antropología, 25*(57), 11-21.

Besserer, F. (2004). *Topografías transnacionales: Hacia una geografía de la vida transnacional*. Mexico, DF: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa.

Blackwell, M. (2017). Geographies of indigeneity: Indigenous migrant women's organizing and translocal politics of place. *Latino Studies, 15*, 156-181.

Blackwell, M., Lopez, F. B., & Urrieta Jr., L. (2017). Special issue: Critical Latinx indigeneities. *Latino Studies, 15*, 126-137.

Casanova, S., O'Connor, B. H., & Anthony-Stevens, V. (2016). Ecologies of adaptation for Mexican Indigenous im/migrant children and families in the United States: Implications f or Latino studies. *Latino Studies, 14*(2), 192-213.

Cruz-Manjarrez, A. (2013). *Zapotecs on the move: Cultural, social, and political processes in transnational perspective*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Escala Rabadán, L., & Rivera-Salgado, G. (2018). Festivals, Oaxacan immigrant communities and cultural spaces between Mexico and the United States: The Guelaguetzas in California. *Migraciones Internacionales, 9*(3), 37-63.

Ek, L. D. (2009). Allá en Guatemala: Transnationalism, language, and identity of a Pentecostal Guatemalan-American young woman. *The High School Journal, 92*(4), 67-81.

Fox, J. (2006). Reframing Mexican migration as a multi-ethnic process. *Latino Studies, 4*, 39-61.

García, O., & Kleifgen, J. A. (2018). *Educating emergent bilinguals: Policies, programs, and practices for English learners* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Howard, E. R. (2005). Two-way immersion education: An integrated approach to bilingual education in the United States. In X. P. Rodríguez-Yáñez, A. M. Lorenzo Suárez, & F. Ramallo (Eds.), *Bilingualism and education: From the family to the school* (pp. 229-236). Munich: Lincom Europa.

Klaver, J. (1997). *From the land of the sun to the city of angels: The migration process of Zapotec Indians from Oaxaca, Mexico to Los Angeles, California*. Utrecht: Dutch Geographical Society.

Kohler, A.D. & Lazarín, M. (2007). Hispanic education in the United States. National Council of La Raza. Statistical Brief No. 8.

Lee, T. S. (2013). Critical language awareness among native youth in New Mexico. In L. T. Wyman, T. L. McCarty, & S. E. Nicholas (Eds.), *Indigenous youth and multilingualism: Language identity, ideology, and practice in dynamic cultural worlds* (pp. 130-148). New York: Routledge.

Lopez, F. H., & Munro, P. (1999). Zapotec immigration: The San Lucas Quiaviní experience. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies, 24*(1), 129-149.

López, F., & Runsten, D. (2004). Mixtecs and Zapotecs working in California: Rural and urban experiences. In J. Fox & G. Rivera-Salgado (Eds.), *Indigenous migration to the United States* (pp. 249=278). La Jolla: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies-UCSD.

Macedo, D. (2000). The colonialism of the English only movement. *Educational Researcher, 29*(3), 15-24.

Machado-Casas, M. (2009). The politics of organic phylogeny: The art of parenting and surviving as transnational multilingual Latino indigenous immigrants in the U.S. *The High School Journal, 92*(4), 82-99.

Martinez, D. C., Morales, P. Z., & Aldana, U. S. (2017). Leveraging students' communicative repertoires as a tool for equitable learning. *Review of Research in Education, 41*, 477-499.

Martínez Luna, J. (2010). The fourth principle. In L. Meyer & B. Maldonado Alvarado (Eds.), *New world of indigenous resistance* (pp. 85–99). San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books.

Moll, L. C. (2011). Only life educates: Immigrant families, the cultivation of biliteracy, and the mobility of knowledge. In P. R. Portes & S. Salas (Eds.), *Vygotsky in 21st century society: Advances in cultural historical theory and praxis with non-dominant communities* (pp. 151-161). New York: Peter Lang.

Morales, P. Z. (2010). *Examining the role of a dual language immersion Programs language ideologies in scaffolding positive learner identities in dual language learners*. Unpublished dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles.

Morales, P. Z. (2016). Transnational practices and language maintenance: Spanish and Zapoteco in California. *Children's Geographies, 14*(4), 375–389.

Muehlmann, S. (2008). "Spread your ass cheeks": And other things that should not be said in indigenous languages. *American Ethnologist, 35*(1), 34-48.

Munro, P. (2003). *Preserving the language of the valley Zapotecs: The orthography question*. Paper presented at the Language and Immigration in France and the United States: Sociolinguistic Perspectives, University of Texas.

Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1), 9-31.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. London: Longman/Pearson Education.

Orellana, M. F. (2009). *Translating childhoods: Immigrant youth, language, and culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Pacheco, M. (2009). Expansive learning and Chicana/o and Latina/o students' political–historical knowledge. *Language Arts, 87*(1), 18–29.

Perez, W., Vasquez, R., & Buriel, R. (2016). Zapotec, Mixtec, and Purepecha youth: Multilingualism and the marginalization of indigenous immigrants in the United States. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 255-272). New York: Oxford University Press.

Rivera-Salgado, G. (1999). Migration and political activism: Mexican transnational indigenous communities in a comparative perspective. Unpublished dissertation. University of California, Santa Cruz.

Ruiz, N. T., & Barajas, M. (2012). Multiple perspectives on the schooling of Mexican indigenous students in the U.S.: Issues for future research. *Bilingual Research Journal, 35*(2), 125-144.

Saldaña-Portillo, M. J. (2017). Critical Latinx indigeneities: A paradigm drift. *Latino Studies, 15*(2), 138-155.

Sánchez, P. (2001). Adopting transnationalism theory and discourse: Making space for transnational Chicana. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 22*(3), 375-381.

Sánchez, P. (2007a). Cultural authenticity and transnational Latina youth: Constructing a meta-narrative across borders. *Linguistics and Education, 18*, 258-282.

Sánchez, P. (2007b). Urban immigrant students: How transnationalism shapes their world learning. *The Urban Review, 39*(5), 489-517.

Sánchez, P. (2008). Coming of age across borders: Family, gender, and place in the lives of second-generation transnational mexicanas. In R. Márquez & H. Romo (Eds.), *Transformations of la familia on the U.S.-México border* (pp. 185-208). Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press.

Sánchez, P., & Kasun, G. S. (2012). Connecting transnationalism to the classroom and to theories of immigrant student adaptation. *Berkeley Review of Education, 3*(1), 71-93.

Sánchez, P., & Machado-Casas, M. (2009). At the intersection of transnationalism, Latina/o immigrants, and education. *The High School Journal, 92*(4), 3-15.

Sánchez-López, L. (2017). Learning from the *paisanos*: Coming to consciousness in Zaptec LA. *Latino Studies, 15*(2), 242-246.

Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.) (2018). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world, 21st ed.* Dallas, TX: SIL International. http://www.ethnologue.com

Stephen, L. (2007). *Transborder lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Trueba, E. H. T. (2004). *The new Americans: Immigrants and transnationals at work*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Urrieta Jr., L. (2017). Identity, violence, and authenticity: Challenging static conceptions of indigeneity. *Latino Studies, 15*(2), 254-261.

Zentella, A. C. (1997). *Growing up bilingual: Puerto Rican children in New York*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.