

**BRIDGING LANGUAGE(S): UNDERGRADUATE MAYA STUDENTS'
LANGUAGE(S) USE(S)**

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to understand how Indigenous Maya current and former students of Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate programs in the Yucatan Peninsula conceptualize their lived experiences with their formal academic and informal community/family-based language(s) use(s). Specifically, I wanted to see if the concept of plurilingualism for the purposes of language learning and use could be applied to and resonate in the context of the study. Plurilingualism considers speakers as social agents who interact using their dynamic, non-linear, unbalanced, interdependent plurilingual and pluricultural skills to function in their environments (Piccardo, 2018). In turn, it requires investigating how language practices are negotiated in specific contexts (Ollerhead, Choi & French, 2018; Despaigne & Grossi, 2011). Drawing from an empirical phenomenological approach (Aspers, 2009; Mortari et al., 2023; Moustakas, 1994), I took a bottom-up qualitative approach to centre the voices of the participants. A virtual survey and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather my research data. I used Hycner's (1985) and Mortari et al.'s (2023) guidelines to organize the interview data and in turn created narrative vignettes to illustrate my participants' lived experiences (Ammann, 2018). The findings indicate that, at a macro level, participants are located in a liberal multicultural context (May & Sleeter, 2010) that fosters a monolingual disposition (Piccardo, 2014). At the micro level, individual language practices as embedded in networks of family and community linguistic interactions that are related to academic and professional language dynamics, which simultaneously reflect and challenge macro level language policies. In terms of a meso level analysis, the Language/Linguistic and Culture undergraduate programs contributed to strengthening, acknowledging, or including of Yucatec Maya in the participants' linguistic repertoire, triggering a dynamic essence (Piccardo, 2014)

where participants became motivated to learn, speak, and transmit culture with families. The research suggests that implementing a plurilingual approach could create heteroglossic opportunities for students to share experiences and integrate their professional goals with language revitalization efforts. In addition, it could further support existing educational and familial Indigenous language transmission processes at individual, collective and political levels.

Keywords: Maya undergraduate students, plurilingual repertoire, multiple language use, Indigenous languages

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When I was 6 years old, I used to think that English was like Spanish but with the letters placed in an inverted fashion. Then I traveled to San Diego, California; and, as I listened to my English-speaking friend, I understood that it wasn't the case. Since then, the existence of multiple languages has been a constant reminder of the fact that there is not just one perspective, just one way of seeing things or just one way of experiencing the world.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the pertinence of the concept of plurilingualism in relation to the lived experiences of Indigenous Maya students enrolled in a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico. More specifically, this study explored the usefulness (or lack thereof) of plurilingualism in light of the linguistic and cultural relationships that these students have regarding both the formal academic settings in which they find themselves and those related to informal community/family-based language use. As I elaborate on below, the linguistic and cultural milieux in which these students find themselves include those that pertain to dominant forms of Spanish, and to a lesser extent, English.

Plurilingualism is an emerging philosophical and political disposition within Second Language Education. It has been defined as the recognition of “the existence of a complex or even composite competence [in language usage] on which the social actor may draw” (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009, 11). As I describe in detail below, there is little known about whether this concept has value within Indigenous contexts.

Problem Statement

As a starting point for the construction of this project, I interviewed an Indigenous Maya full-time university professor with whom I have had a long-standing friendship. This scholar is often referred to within her community as an Elder who in turn made comments that were informed by many years of teaching Indigenous and non-Indigenous undergraduate students in the Yucatan peninsula.

I felt it was important to discuss things with someone whose knowledge and identity were more central to my research goals than those of my own lived experiences. Although my family has a long history of living in the Yucatan, I do not claim to be Indigenous to these territories. The specific purpose of interviewing this scholar was to develop a clearer understanding of how my study could be framed in such a way as to help identify and address concrete problems and thus be useful for my eventual participants.

Most educational programs in the Indigenous areas on the peninsula contain some instruction in the Yucatec Maya language. However, my friend emphasized during our discussions (M. Uitz, personal communication, August 19, 2020), that being bilingual Yucatec Maya-Spanish is generally valued culturally but not economically. As a result, there are separate contexts related to the two languages. Spanish is regarded as useful in one context and Yucatec Maya in another. These contexts and languages rarely mix.

My friend also emphasized that there is a pressing need to work with students in order to develop employment, leadership and entrepreneurship skills that make use of Yucatec Maya language and culture as assets in relationship to a concrete set of problems. This involves finding value for both Yucatec Maya and Spanish in all contexts and removing the perception that these languages must remain separate.

Research Questions

An empirical phenomenological research approach (Aspers, 2009; Mortari et al., 2023; Moustakas, 1994) served as inspiration to work *with* Indigenous participants (Smith, 1999) and to have their pre-theoretical (Zahavi, 2018) language(s) usage descriptions, interpretations and reflections as the guide to a individual and collective meanings of the experience in question,

which also allowed for an analysis of their experiences and a reflection under the light of a plurilingual theoretical approach towards language learning and use.

The phenomenological inspiration of this study served the purpose of gathering data without prior interference of the theoretical framework that was used for the analysis of the collected data. To use Aspens' (2009) words, "empirical phenomenology proceeds from the assumption that a scientific explanation must be grounded in the meaning structure of those studied" (Aspens, 2009, p. 1).

The following overarching research question served as the basis for this study:
How do Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula conceptualize their lived experiences in relation to the formal (academic) and informal (community/family-based) use of their languages?

The secondary research questions that arose from the study were:

1. What languages do current and former undergraduate Maya students use with various members of their academic and professional communities and for what purposes?
2. What languages do current and former undergraduate Maya students use with various members of their family and home communities and for what purposes?
3. What language use occurs in various formal and informal domains and for what purposes?
4. What is the perceived relationship between their life and academic /career goals and their language use?
5. What is the perceived relationship between their Indigenous identities and their language use?

Significance of the Study

This study began with the intention to see if the concept of plurilingualism for the purposes of language learning and use could be applied to and resonate in the context of Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program (Piccardo, 2014, 2018).

Why use a plurilingual theoretical perspective? As I further develop in the next chapter, multiple language use is a reality in the lives of the participants of the study. In Mexico, there is a long tradition of anthropologically based research done with different Indigenous groups, indigenous languages, and education for Indigenous students. Multiple language use in Mexico can be approached from a macro level, political point of view that analyzes official and/or institutional narratives. It can also be viewed from a micro level practical perspective related to communities and individuals' language practices. In the context of this study, Rhodes and Bloechl (2020) identified a division between research being done on the Yucatec Maya language as an institutional resource, and inquiries related to Yucatec Maya speakers and their language ideologies.

A plurilingual perspective considers the different social layers (micro, meso and macro) and their correlation in daily language(s) practice(s): individual practices at the micro level; implementation of educational and language policies at the meso level; and official or institutional societal policies at the macro level (Piccardo, 2018).

How can we go around exploring the feasibility and potential of implementing a plurilingual perspective? A second aspect to this research was the consideration of a plurilingual approach in the context of an Indigenous language, which have been historically underrepresented in language/educational policy, and where a monolingual disposition (Piccardo,

2014) with Spanish as the *de facto* language (Terborg et al., 2006) prevails. In addition to having the micro level accounts of participants' language(s) learning and use, I wanted to obtain a deeper understanding of the narratives being negotiated in their family settings, in their university settings, and then see if they reflected or challenged the official discourse. I found that a plurilingual perspective would allow me to go back and forth between the personal, collective and social narratives behind language(s) use, to better understand individual language practices. This inquiry explored the linguistic and cultural milieu of Yucatec Maya speaking students enrolled or formerly enrolled in a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program. My goal was to understand the place(s) that Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English have in terms of their lived experiences, everyday lives and within the contexts of their educational and professional journeys. Investigating the lived experiences of the participants' language(s) use(s) has provided insights into the contextual, collective, and individual meanings of their language(s) practices in relation to their academic, familial and home communities. It has also shed light on how such experiences relate more specifically to their academic/career goals and to their Indigenous identities and helps us understand how the contextual narratives and embedded power relations manifest in the participants' languages usage.

Theoretically, this study explored the pertinence (or lack thereof) of a plurilingual lens in the Mexican Indigenous context. In turn, it promises to contribute to the understanding of the usefulness of an heteroglossic, plurilingual lens in relation to Indigenous language maintenance and revitalization in light of past and existing intergenerational settler colonial policies, while showing alternative paths toward challenging and disrupting hegemonic and purist curricular and pedagogical conceptions of language transmission, normative usages, and teaching.

This aligns with Coronel-Molina and McCarty's (2016) view of education in relation to Indigenous language use:

Education must contribute to peoples' social emancipation and to a parallel process of national interculturalism, leading to the negotiation and reconciliation of these divergent epistemologies and ideologies. Indigenous language transmission, use, and revitalization must be seen as part of this political-pedagogical project. Education in general must then subscribe to the construction of an intercultural view of citizenship leading to mental decolonization and to a more equitable distribution of power. (p. 119)

The findings of this study are useful on several levels. To begin with, my respondents have found participation to be valuable as a tool for reflection. In addition, the academic/school communities in question have found it useful in gaining a greater understanding of its student populations in ways that can contribute to the enhancement of Indigenous language ways of teaching and learning.

Subject Position of the Researcher

I have thought it important to clarify my own subject position from the outset. My goal here is to describe the value of clarifying the links between my participants, the purpose of study and myself as researcher. As Sarkar (2017) notes in their own reflection about being non-Indigenous doing research with Indigenous participants, laying bare one's own positionality is a way of clarifying potential bias, being humble about own's efforts and surrendering power to a study's participants. I offer a reflection below on my connection to the topic of multiple language(s) learning and use, when the language that represents you is not present in daily life. In my case, as a newcomer to Canada, that's the case of Spanish. In the case of the participants of this study, that's the case of Yucatec Maya.

In addition to my family's long-standing close ties to the Yucatan, my interest in how Indigenous university students use their languages has been nourished by over a decade of participating in different projects related to Yucatec Maya language teaching or use.

The written account of the participants of this study has been created from a non-Indigenous perspective. As an outsider, I have recorded the lived experiences of participants to the best of my non-Indigenous abilities while trying to make them accessible to a non-Indigenous reader who might profit from a better sense of what it is like to juggle Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English in daily life.

As someone from the Yucatan, Mayan languages have been present throughout my life. At present, I share close relationships with Indigenous university students from both the institutional sites for this study, some of whom I met as early as 2010. Some of these students, like me, have now finished their undergraduate studies, found careers, and raised children among three languages.

The following personal anecdote/reflection explains why I now self-identify as a Spanish-English-French plurilingual speaker.

Tonight I stop being officially monolingual. But, I just don't know it yet. My son is three days old and he is being transferred from the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Ottawa's General Hospital to the equivalent at the Gatineau Hospital. They need to make space for unstable premature cases and because we live on the Quebec side. Quebec... Ontario... everything feels like a new planet to me. I'm not allowed with him in the ambulance. A nurse will go to make sure all the tubes in the spaceship—incubator, as well as the baby, stay in place during the transition. The whole move is supposed to happen around 5pm but things fall behind. We are

supposed to drive there and meet the baby when he arrives. My husband drives me and my mom to the Gatineau hospital. Due to Friday traffic, we arrive around 7pm. It is the Summer but inside it is very dark. It looks like an empty building and it's cold. The ceiling of the third floor, where the NICU is located, feels so low it's oppressing. My mom and I get a little lost: Where are we supposed to go? Why aren't there any signs? Why isn't there any light like at the other place?

We spot something that looks like a reception desk. There is someone. A girl. She doesn't have a uniform. Yes, she works there. I can see a tattoo on her arm, her regular clothes, and maybe something pinned to her top to identify herself. She is an employee of the hospital. But why isn't she wearing a uniform! This ceiling is very low. The light is very dim. I start talking. It has to be in French, of course. We are on the Quebec side. As we are talking a door opens somewhere and someone informs us the baby has already arrived. I am now being instructed the hand-washing procedure I have to follow each time I enter the NICU. Samuel is at the end of the room. The nurse doesn't speak English. She is telling me how to ROT? my baby. I have no clue what that means. I'm feeling nauseous about this whole episode. She looks athletic; she is friendly and approachable, but she is all in French...

As the following hours and days develop I learn that only a couple of them speak English, and they are kind enough to address me in that language. I also learn that my baby has the HOQUET? and I manage to communicate in my own version of French during the remaining of our time there... (June 30, 2017)

My perspective on language use changed after this experience because I realized there was no need to aim for perfect French or to be shy about the French that I knew: I just had to use it and make sure it served its purpose.

I was born surrounded by Spanish. My mother and father spoke Spanish to me, and all my extended family spoke Spanish to me:

When I was a baby, my mother hired a woman “from a village,” as it is commonly referred to in my Mexican hometown, to take care of me while she went to work. My mother asked the woman to speak (Yucatec) Maya to me. The woman refused.

Furthermore, she denied being a speaker of the language, despite the fact that my mother knew the woman spoke Maya, like most people in her village. (...) I was raised in Yucatan speaking Spanish and when I was eight years old, I began to learn English. I loved my English classes and since I have “a good ear,” listening and speaking were never that hard. I remember fondly the characters of some English textbooks, the vocabulary notebook I created, and the field trip to the hardware store to record new words. I complemented in-class content with watching American television and reading books, which immersed me in different types of realities where English made sense.

(Domínguez, 2020, p. 157)

My experiences fit into Gott’s (2007) description of Latin American countries as white settler states because of the continued disputes over land, water, oil, and natural gas, but also because of the persistence of the prejudice against and mistreatment of their Indigenous populations. The official narrative of the encounters between Spaniards or Portuguese and the Indigenous populations of the different Latin American countries is based on the idea of coloniality leading to race-based power hierarchies. Castellanos (2017) states that the problem with coloniality is

that it “does not fully capture the racial entanglements and the strategies of elimination and dispossession that began under colonialism and have continued under neoliberal regimes and global capital” (p. 778). This is the reason why she proposes to use settler colonial theory as a framework to understand the social dynamics of Latin America.

I self-identify as a racialized white Yucatecan settler colonial Mexican citizen (Castellanos, 2017; Gott, 2007).

I initially followed Battiste’s (2013) example of choosing a familiar topic for the doctoral project and thought I had it all figured out when I applied to the [doctoral] program with the intention of working with Maya youth from my region. After coming in contact with the literature about Indigenous language revitalization and knowledge(s), I realized that these past years have been more about observing myself and acknowledging that although I come from the same territory as the young Maya people I want to work with, I needed a deeper understanding of the issues or situations that surround their lives. Most importantly, I was faced with the significance, the “so what?” aspect of my research.

Linda T. Smith’s (1999) words resonated with me: “Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?” (p. 10). In this personal and professional search, the work of North American and Latin American scholars, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, has contributed to the exploration and evolution of my ideas and deepened my understanding of the cultural, educational, and linguistic environment of Maya undergraduate students.

(Domínguez, 2020, p. 161)

I am particularly interested in Yucatec Maya because it is the main Indigenous language from my region and it has had an impact on Yucatec Spanish. I grew up listening to and using some of its words and phrases that are embedded in my regional Spanish. However, I only became aware of how such language represented a knowledge system when I met students from the two undergraduate programs that the participants of this study are or were part of.

In 2010, after finishing my Master's degree in Applied Linguistics in central Mexico, I went back to my region and worked for the state's Department of Culture. I co-created and coordinated a series of radio production workshops for Indigenous Maya youth. Most of the participants were students from the two undergraduate programs that officially promoted Yucatec Maya literacy skills. I remember particularly a team of students who created a 5-spot series on traditional medicine: they described the symptoms, the causes, and the remedies of different conditions one would never contemplate in a doctor's office. Furthermore, they explained how to prepare the cure for each one of them using popular plants from the area.

Fast forward to 2019 when I delivered a talk entitled "Saberes indígenas y saberes occidentales: An epistemological reflection," to students of the above-mentioned programs. Part of the content of the lecture was also shared through a radio interview that the students and their program coordinator recorded to be transmitted through their internal radio station. During the students' participation in the questions and comments session, students expressed how they had experienced, firsthand, a contrast between the knowledge they grew up with and the knowledge and ways of knowing they had been encountering in their schooling process, which fed back to the need raised in my doctoral project.

Given my outline above, this study zooms into the lived experiences of Indigenous Maya current and former students of the Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate programs

from the region because their schooling includes the regional Yucatec Maya Indigenous language from the community/family-based domain and enables its usage in a formal academic setting.

Additionally, as I summarize below in my review of the literature, there are significant concrete problems facing the Yucatec Maya linguistic population. The facts and factors I review reflect that the language is under threat and that there are gaps in the knowledge regarding how the languages in the region are being transmitted/learned and used by people with potential access to a plurilingual repertoire.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction. This presents the purpose of the study and my subject position. Although not always expected in a thesis of this sort, in the interests of clarity I have included my research questions in this opening chapter. Of course, these questions are reiterated in my discussions of methodology.

Chapter Two is the literature review. It is divided into two parts. I have decided to introduce the context of the study in this chapter for those not familiar with the linguistic and cultural diversity found in Mexico and in the Yucatan Peninsula or those aspects of the Mexican education policy that are pertinent to the study. This provided context contains a brief historic overview of the region. Then it focuses on a review of the available literature regarding Indigenous university student experiences, both generally and in the Yucatan in particular. This review is for the purpose of identifying gaps in the literature that this study is meant to fill in reference to the problem statement provided above. The second part of this chapter focuses on the current literature regarding plurilingualism (Fleming et. al., 2023).

Chapter Three summarizes the main concepts of my conceptual framework and in turn puts forth theoretical foundations of this study which served as the starting point for the creation of the research questions, the data collection process, and the analysis of the findings.

Chapter Four provides an overview of the research methodology chosen for this study. I start with an overview of the philosophical concept that led to my decisions regarding methodology, namely empirical phenomenological approach (Aspers, 2009; Mortari et al., 2023; Moustakas, 1994). I then go into detail regarding how this inquiry came to be and the steps I took regarding data collection and analysis. Although this is not always usual in a thesis of this sort, I have chosen to define the case for this study and a description of my participants in the findings chapter that follows in the interest of clarity.

In Chapter Five I present the study's findings. Following the practical work of Aspers (2009) and Mortari et al. (2023), the findings are first presented in descriptive detail. I provide answers to the research questions, and I make use of narrative vignettes that serve as back up to illustrate the experiences shared by the participants.

In Chapter Six I then discuss the findings. I provide an analysis of the findings in relation to the overarching and secondary research questions. To do so, I use the emerging data and the theoretical and methodological framing of the study.

Finally in the concluding Chapter Seven, I discuss the practical and theoretical implications of the study, while also suggesting topics for further research. I also outline the study's limitations and provide some personal reflections.

Chapter 2: Contextual and Theoretical Foundations of the Study

This second chapter is divided into two parts. The first section begins with an overview of the current Mexican intercultural bilingual education model, which reflects the official, macro level approach towards the multiple languages that have been in the Mexican territory since the before the time of colonial contact. Next, it summarizes existing literature related to the experience of Mexican Indigenous students at the university undergraduate level. Then, it presents pertinent research done with different Indigenous language speakers and the language ideologies that support their language transmission and usage. Afterwards, it provides an overview of research done in the Yucatan peninsula in relation to Yucatec Maya, both from an official perspective and from a practical one. The second part of this chapter provides a description of plurilingualism as a theoretical approach to language learning and use. The elements of a plurilingual approach to language learning and use are central for the conceptual framework found in the following chapter, and to discuss the findings of the study. Additionally, it must be noted that I have chosen to place the discussion of the theories that frame my methodology at the beginning of the methodology chapter, rather than in this chapter.

Contextual Properties

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Mexico

One of the ways in which diversity manifests itself in Mexico is through the presence of Mexican Indigenous peoples and Mexican Indigenous languages. According to official statistics from the 2020 national census, in Mexico there are 126,014,024 million people; 6.1% of the Mexican population 3 years and older is a speaker of an Indigenous language. Mexican Indigenous languages have been national languages since 2003 (Terborg et al., 2006). However,

currently all these languages are considered at risk of disappearing (Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas [INALI], 2019).

As Terborg et al. (2006) stressed, “in Mexico, Spanish is the *de facto* official language of the government and the first language of 90% per cent of the population. It is the national language because of its historic and legislative functions and because it acts as a lingua franca for indigenous language speakers” (p. 122). These authors conclude that speaking Spanish is also perceived as providing social and economic advantages.

Interculturality in Mexico and the Mexican Intercultural Bilingual Model

Hamel (2013) points out that “two different types of linguistic communities in Latin America have created their own domains of bilingual communication, including bilingual education: indigenous and immigrant communities. Both communities exist as bilingual enclaves in socio-historic formations of nation-state building processes. These processes are oriented by European models of linguistic and cultural homogeneity that seek to assimilate those who are different” (p. 610).

Generally speaking, in Mexico there are two types of official bilingual education. On the one hand, Mexican bilingual education can refer to the Indigenous education that teaches Spanish and an Indigenous language; on the other hand, it can refer to the education which includes a foreign language, predominantly English, along with Spanish (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019).

Despaigne (2021) explains that “the maintenance, revitalization, learning, and teaching of (and in) Indigenous languages, and the education of Indigenous people in particular, can be associated with the search for identity. By contrast, the teaching and learning of ‘international’ languages, mainly English, on the other side, can be associated with progress and modernity.

Thus, two systems of bilingual education – folk and elite bilingualism – have evolved based on different paradigms and worldviews” (p. 134).

In their analysis about the historical evolution of English language policy and planning in Mexico, Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil (2019) explained that language learning has been part of the Mexican public high school curriculum since 1867, with English being taught after French. In 1923, the so-called foreign language learning was included in the secondary school curriculum. The curriculum offered the option to choose between French and English. In 2009, English was included in the primary school national curriculum as a second language. Both the English teaching and learning agenda and implementation are mainly conducted at an intermediate or meso level through Government staff, who create strategies and manage funding; foreign embassies; book publishers; and national and foreign education institutions and companies (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019).

Mexican Intercultural Bilingual Education

The Mexican bilingual education that includes Spanish and an Indigenous language is currently referred to as intercultural bilingual education. This model is the latest version in the evolution in language and education policies in the country, explicitly aimed towards Indigenous peoples (Dietz, 2024).

Throughout the 20th century, Mexican *indigenismo* prevailed as a cultural and educational movement emphasizing the greatness of a pre-Hispanic past while seeing the contemporary Indigenous peoples as in some sort of civilization decline.

During the second part of the 20th century, the presence of ethnic conflicts around the world emphasized the cultural background of the diverse groups in the country. However, internally, the project was still to modernize the population, focusing on a *mestizaje*: an alleged

new national “race” formed by the mix of Indian and Spanish blood, and on the superiority of urban lifestyles. The Indigenous populations were considered rural, distant from the Indigenous-Spanish blend that led to the creation of the so-called *Mexican race*, carriers of great millennial cultures now in decline, incapable of self-reflection, and with linguistic systems destined to disappear. Castellanos (2017) pointed out that “conceived as a nationalist whitening project rooted in hierarchical colonial race relations, mestizaje erases indigeneity by absorbing it into the body politic” (p. 778).

In the early 90s, a new official educational approach emerged, with biculturalism as its main component. The proposal included respect for the differences and freedom to include traditional knowledge along with universal ones in the curriculum. Nonetheless, Spanish was still considered a *lingua franca*, and the content of the curriculum remained the same.

The Indigenous movements in Latin America and, specifically, in Mexico, at the end of the 20th century, led to modifications in the Mexican jurisdiction to protect and promote Mexican Indigenous languages and cultures. In the first decade of the 21st century, the *Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe* (CGEIB, General Coordination of Intercultural and Bilingual Education), the *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* (LGDLPI, General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples), and the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* (INALI, National Institute of Indigenous Languages) were created to comply with these purposes (de León, 2017).

Hamel (2008) summarizes that the “legislation of linguistic rights and indigenous education in Mexico went through significant changes in the time span of little more than a decade, from a first reference to the existence of indigenous people in the 1991 revision of the

constitution to a specific body of linguistic rights and the creation of a National Institute of Indigenous Languages in 2005” (p. 309).

In 1996, the educational model adopted an intercultural bilingual approach to fight segregation and discrimination. This new curriculum aimed at maintaining the Indigenous culture while attaining an effective bilingualism Indigenous language-Spanish, but, as Ramírez (2006) noted, it has been criticized for simply translating curriculum content, lacking any type of reflection about the value of cultural diversity, and having an integrationist approach towards new technologies.

Dietz (2024) contrasts how interculturality has been applied in European and North American contexts, focusing on groups of immigrants or workers who are dissimilar from a nation-state’s hegemonic population. Alternatively, in Latin America and in Mexico, interculturality is conceived as the recognition of the different minority groups, with the addition of initiatives to promote exchanges between dominant and minoritized populations. Consequently, the school is assigned the role of being the place where such bidirectional exchanges can happen.

Interculturality in Mexico is thus used to officially address a multicultural context with asymmetrical power relations between the dominant culture and the Indigenous groups which have led to multiple inequalities (Schmelkes, 2004). Contrary to acknowledging cultural and linguistic diversity but conceiving them as a problem and as a threat for national unity, under the notion of unity in diversity, the Mexican conception of interculturality acknowledges diversity and sees it as a potential source of enrichment for the nation (Dietz, 2024; Hamel, 2013).

As de León (2017) notes, “this approach is radically different from previous language policies, given that the Native language is placed as a central educational resource for culture,

cognition, and historical memory and not as a transitive means toward Castilianization. In the same way, the CGEIB (General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education) proposes the incorporation of bilingualism as a resource for the maintenance, revitalization, and development of Indigenous languages, highlighting the promotion of oral and written skills in both their mother tongue and a second language” (p. 423). As Hamel (2008) points out, from this perspective, Mexican language policy is inevitably linked to Indigenous education.

The Mexican intercultural, bilingual education model that was adopted officially at the beginning of the 21st century aimed at maintaining Indigenous cultures while attaining a so-called effective bilingualism between the regional Indigenous language(s) and Spanish. In turn, Mexican intercultural universities were created with the goal of promoting local development and preserving local knowledge and languages. Their student profile is that of underprivileged Indigenous or rural youth.

In a critical balance made after a decade of the initial creation of intercultural universities in Mexico, Mateos Cortés and Dietz (2016), citing Dietz (2011), recalled that the original purpose of these institutions was to professionalize young people in such a way that they can contribute to the promotion of socio-cultural, associational, micro-entrepreneurial, and environmental initiatives from their own communities and regions, without imposing outside-in or top-down welfare solutions, but rather through a continuous back-and-forth between community knowledge and academic knowledge (p. 685).

Mexican intercultural bilingual education has been criticized, however, as being the top-down, expert-based evolution of the assimilationist policies that prevailed throughout the 20th century in the country (Despaigne, 2013; Llanes Ortiz, 2008). Under the light of interculturality, Mexican linguistic and cultural diversity is celebrated for promoting respect for cultural

differences without questioning the power structures that have maintained the subjugation of Indigenous peoples by the dominant segment of the population (Despaigne, 2013). In other words, intercultural bilingual educational initiatives do not deal with social and linguistic preconceptions that are left intact at the core of the educational system (Llanes Ortiz, 2008). De Korne (2017) observes that interculturalism is “an example of superficial neoliberal multiculturalism” (p. 29) directly linked to the current international “politics of recognition” (p. 28).

Although valuable, such efforts focus on what Flores Farfán (2015) called a unidirectional intercultural education; in other words, the consequences of colonialism’s cultural repression are addressed only by Indigenous students, leaving the non-Indigenous sector untouched by this concern.

Mexican Indigenous Student University Experiences

Among the current research regarding the university experiences of Mexican Indigenous students, some qualitative studies focus on the lived experiences in intercultural universities and *escuelas normales* [pre-service teacher education schools]. In her edited book about Indigenous students in a university located in Central Mexico, Czarny (2012) pointed at the resilience shown by the participants, who, despite facing multiple obstacles, find empowerment and strength in their self-assigned Indigenous university student identity. Morales Silva (2013) analyzed the presence of different actors, such as family, in postsecondary academic life. She highlights the importance of diversity in the school system to understand how individuals interpret reality and the actions that result from such interpretation leading to their identity construction. There are also ethnographic studies focused on academic, identity, and life journeys of Indigenous students. González Apodaca's (2014) study about Indigenous Mixe students identified the

important role of ethnic networks with linguistic and cultural diversity narratives in the lives of students' constant updating of their ethnic construction.

In her work about the schooling experiences of Indigenous Tenek and Nahuatl students, Chávez González (2014) identified a close link between family and school, which sometimes is harmonious and other times presents ruptures, along with a permanent component of educational exclusion for Indigenous families embedded in the hegemonic narrative.

As for the design of studies related to the post-secondary education experiences of Mexican Indigenous students, Bermúdez-Urbina (2017) highlighted a frequent lack of an explanation of the origins and intentions of the studies, as well as of the researcher positionality. This author claimed that the motivation seemed to be a generalized intention to better understand the issue in question, without explicit mention of searching to transform reality and without specifying how the participants, research collaborators, and institutions are to benefit from the studies. Furthermore, she continued, attention must be drawn towards the risk of the cultural essentializing found in some of the studies, which leads to conceiving Indigenous students as unidimensional beings without links to their family and other collective memberships that structure them. Studies focusing merely on schooling experiences may center the attention on academic and institutional processes only (Bermúdez-Urbina, 2017). She therefore identified the need to transform autobiographical narratives about students' academic experiences into methodological and theoretically based texts that could become shared knowledge. She concluded that when looking at the higher education processes of Mexican Indigenous students, economic differences, family composition, access to services (health and education mainly), gender condition, ethnic group position, and social and political environment, were usually

central elements in the construction of their journeys and in the sense they gave to their university experience (Bermúdez-Urbina, 2017, p. 132).

A few generations have graduated from the intercultural universities' undergraduate programs and are entering the job market. However, in Mexico, there are high rates of unemployment for students who finish their bachelor's degree, whether they come from public mainstream universities or from intercultural ones (Mateos Cortés, 2017).

For Indigenous students graduating from the latter, the following factors worsen the situation:

Their low-quality pre-university schooling, their stigmatized use of an indigenous language, their lack of "urban" work experience and related job skills, but also an often-found lack of awareness and knowledge among the wider public of the degree courses taught at this new kind of intercultural university. (Mateos Cortés, 2017, p. 160)

Despite the situation, in her study of post-university employment opportunities for Indigenous students, Mateos Cortés (2017) found that an intercultural university curriculum has the potential of developing an awareness about a Western assimilationist education that discredits Indigenous ways of knowing, while promoting ethnic re-empowerment in the process of training new generations of Indigenous professionals. These findings aligned with the objectives of self-determination found in the current Indigenous knowledge movement (Grande, 2008).

Multiple language use in practice in Mexico

Multiple language use in Mexico can be approached from a macro level, political point of view that analyzes official and/or institutional narratives, as has been the intention of a previous section. It can also be viewed from a micro level practical perspective related to communities and individuals' language practices. From this second perspective, and to understand the

community language changes and choices in the Mexican context of Spanish and Indigenous languages, scholars have focused on language ideologies which, as Lam (2020) explains, “take into account not only what speakers think about language, but also how they understand the social context in which they live, where they position themselves within this context, and what their aspirations are” (p. 162).

From this perspective, language ideologies can be defined as the "beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation-states" (Kroskity, 2010, as cited in Kroskity 2015, p.95). Hence, an individual's language beliefs are the result of their personal experiences regarding languages, in combination with societal narratives and situations (Lam, 2020).

This conception of the decision-making behind personal, family and collective language use considers individual's capacity to make choices about their life. In other words, their agency reflects their language choices (Kroskity, 2015; Lam, 2020). Consequently, as Rhodes and Bloechl state, “adhering to monoglossic or heteroglossic language ideologies could hold great significance for processes of social identification. Further, when these ideologies are institutionalized, they can carry increased political power and social significance” (p. 865).

When looking at the correlation between official policies and language ideologies, the discourse of progress (Lam, 2020) or of improving one's socioeconomic position (Messing, 2007b) is usually related to the knowledge and use of Spanish and to the possibilities that come from a formal education journey.

In her work in central Mexico with Mexicano (also known as Nahuatl), Messing (2007a) found that the public sphere of government offices and schools was a domain for Spanish usage,

which is considered the power language and the language for potential socioeconomic progress. The private sphere, represented by family and community interactions, was a domain for Mexicano usage, which stands for the language of trust, of intimacy and of solidarity. Messing (2007a) concludes that schools represent official policies and curriculum, and that including an Indigenous language in them may violate local language ideologies that have clearly defined the domains of use for each language; furthermore, the gaps in vocabulary needed in a school context may result in linguistic insecurity in new speakers.

De León (2017) states that the Mexican Indigenous language transmission decrease, and consequent displacement or loss “only points to the success of the dominant ideology of promoting Spanish as the language of education, prestige, and social mobility – all of which comes from state policies, but also, in part, from Indigenous teachers and the parents themselves” (p. 428). Besides and/or beyond present-day institutional narratives about the value of diversity, “the nationalist values of a common nation-state that promises upward mobility through a school system of cultural and linguistic assimilation” (Hamel, 2017, p. 400) are still present.

The official recognition of Indigenous cultural and linguistic diversity in Mexico has led to the creation of standard versions of many Indigenous languages for the purposes of official Indigenous language revitalization initiatives that include orality and writing. The intercultural bilingual curriculum teaches the regional Indigenous language in its spoken and written standard form, which aim to not have any Spanish words or borrowings.

On this issue, Cru (2016) observes that “the need to strengthen the oral use of indigenous languages on the ground, therefore, contrasts sharply with the language policies of some institutions, such as INALI, which put the emphasis on language standardisation and the

development of literacy as a central strategy for the promotion of Mexican indigenous languages (INALI 2009)” (p. 115).

The contrast between standard and vernacular forms in Mexican Indigenous languages represents an additional element of tension for speakers or potential speakers of an Indigenous language because the standard forms are considered the pure and correct versions, while the vernacular forms may be considered corrupted and less valuable. The ideological foundation for the value of the standard, pure version of each language is different in each Indigenous group and often, in different communities of speakers.

Having said this, in addition to the tension and the decisions that result from having to juggle Spanish and the regional Indigenous language, the risk of purist or prescriptivist attitudes towards the Indigenous language may have an impact in the decision to use (or not) the language one knows with any given competence level; and in the decision to transmit (or not) the language to the new generations. For instance, Messing (2007a) found purist language attitudes among speakers of Mexicano (or Nahuatl) because users believe that the proper or legitimate Mexicano is the one that does not have any Spanish words or borrowings; consequently, they have negative attitudes towards speaking their mixed version of the language, while also hesitating in its transmission to their children due to its historical power imbalance with Spanish. For the purposes of this study, I elaborate below on the presence and risk of Yucatec Maya purist ideologies.

Hamel (2008, 2017) explains that over five centuries of domination have led parents and teachers to resist or reject intergenerational Indigenous language transmission “which leaves no room for their languages as the vehicle for the development of academic skills such as literacy or, in a broader context, for the development of their communities” (p. 310).

From a family perspective, Lam (2020) found that Totonac parents were worried that their children would get confused if they learned multiple languages. Hence, they opted for Spanish transmission because of the perceived tangible benefits of such language. Another discourse found in parents and elders regarding the language acquisition of the new generations was a perceived lack of interest in learning or speaking their Indigenous language (Lam, 2020).

Interestingly, when working with the new generations of Isthmus Zapotec speakers, de Korne (2017) found that despite the fact that their parents did not transmit the Indigenous language to their children, their current interest in learning Isthmus Zapotec responded to either a) the individual mobility opportunities given to Indigenous students and professionals in the region, or to b) the reinforcement of a collective ethnic identity that would benefit from meaningful communicative and social interactions. This author is optimistic about the potential of having new generations of Isthmus Zapotec speakers, would align with the discourse that advocates for Indigenous identity development (Messing, 2007a). Nonetheless, de Korne (2017) suggests caution towards present-day neoliberal narratives are turning Indigenous languages and cultures into commodities.

Official narratives on multiple languages use in the Yucatan Peninsula

In this study, I focus on the presence and use of Yucatec Maya, a Mexican Indigenous language from southern Mexico. The Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) (2020) describes Yucatec Maya as a Mexican Indigenous language spoken by 774,755 people, located mostly in the Yucatan peninsula, which includes the southern states of Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Yucatan. Mainly spoken by the Maya people, it is one of the three most widely spoken Indigenous languages in the country. Yucatec Maya, along with Nahuatl, are the two major minority languages in Mexico (Terborg et al., 2006).

Yucatec Maya has now been included as part of the official narrative of interculturality to designate a specific Indigenous group, attaching it to a territory and a culture, with the implicit risk of essentializing it and fixing it in time. With this, Yucatec Maya aligns with the monoglossic tradition of designating a language as a) being spoken by a specific ethnic group and b) being a communication tool with clear limits.

From an official intercultural perspective the “Maya language is thus conceptualized, in this and related projects, not only as a vehicle for the culture and worldview of a particular sort of person – i.e., an Indigenous citizen of a certain cultural group – but also as a national resource in need of formal administration” (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2020, p. 863). The focus on the language, set apart from its speakers and contexts of use, served as background for the creation of its norm but contributes also to a fixed preconception of who and how a Yucatec Maya speaker should use the language. These authors add that “while standardization is a means to official recognition of Maya ethnolinguistic identity at national and broader scales, it also produces important social differentiations of language within Maya speech communities” (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2020, p. 864).

The ethnic construct to associate the Indigenous population who speaks Yucatec Maya as belonging to the Maya ethnic group is based on what Rhodes and Bloechl (2020) refer to as “institutional mediation” (p. 864). The concept of using the Yucatec Maya language as a variable that designates an Indigenous citizen of a certain ethnic group comes with its share of challenges because this assignation comes from the macro levels of social life and it does not consider the nuances of speaking Yucatec Maya.

It is true that, from a macro social level, one of the goals of Yucatec Maya revitalization efforts is to leverage the language in a context where Spanish and English already benefit from

historical and economic status: acknowledgment, visibility and formal uses. As Cru (2016) points out, “the issue of legitimacy and authenticity is fundamental not only in language revitalisation efforts but also in wider cultural and political struggles for recognition among indigenous peoples” (p. 116). From this perspective, the standardization of Yucatec Maya, and the creation of its linguistic norm, adhere to the same processes that Spanish and English have gone through. These are structural, monoglossic linguistic traditions in which languages are objectified and conceived as separate from the context of their speakers (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2020).

The creation of the Yucatec Maya norm creates, on the one hand, a division in the study of the Yucatec Maya language and the Indigenous Maya people (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2020). This division between the Maya people and the Yucatec Maya language comes from a macro social assigned perspective used for educational and language policy creation and implementation. On the other hand, in the case of official Yucatec Maya language revitalization efforts that are institutionally based initiatives promoting the learning of the language in its standard form, it creates a contrast with the version of the language that people speak, the vernacular, questioning the Yucatec Maya used in community and family settings.

Purist ideologies regarding the use of Yucatec Maya. In the context of the Yucatan Peninsula, “the current process of valorising the Maya language is taking place within the context of a standard language culture, which is deeply ingrained in Mexico and other multilingual Latin American countries” (Cru, 2016, p. 120). This author notes that there is not a specific institution in charge of Yucatec Maya language planning. Instead, he mentions that it is a group of Maya scholars who function as experts on the language and whose initiatives align with the national agenda.

When referring to linguistic purism in standardized Yucatec Maya, Rhodes & Bloechl (2020) add that “users of the register typically employ neologisms or archaisms in order to avoid Spanish loans commonly incorporated in Maya speech. It is largely Maya-Spanish bilinguals with formal education who control this purified register" (p. 864).

Current purist ideologies of Yucatec Maya draw from the idea of a pure or legitimate version of the Yucatec Maya, the *jach*, that goes back to the idea of an ancient form spoken by the elders. The Yucatec Maya vernacular, a mixed version referred to as the *xe'ek*, includes words in Spanish and is therefore considered a corrupted, less valuable form even when it is the register that most Yucatec Maya speakers use (Cru, 2016; Hernández Méndez, 2020).

The purist ideologies embodied by Maya experts, scholars, and linguists regarding the appropriate use of the Yucatec Maya norm may be counterproductive in the efforts to have more generations of Yucatec Maya speakers because of the linguistic insecurity caused in speakers who are not familiar with its standard version, which many associate with the ancient register of their ancestors and not with explicit current day official efforts; this belief may discourage them to use their vernacular form of Yucatec Maya (Cru, 2016). In addition, the new generations of Indigenous professionals interested in learning the language may focus only on the standard, decontextualized version, which may limit their communication in many domains where the vernacular Yucatec Maya is a meaningful communication tool. From this, Cru (2016) concludes that some degree of Yucatec Maya purism is healthy for the purposes of legitimation of the Indigenous language, combined with a conscious actions to remove the stigma of its vernacular registers to foster new generations of speakers.

Reflecting on the contrasting realities of current post-secondary programs oriented towards training new generations of Yucatec Maya language professionals, Rhodes and Bloechl (2020) observe that

experience with authoritative institutionalizations of the Maya language and practice, specifically the experience of studying Maya in a higher education setting that can provide exposure to and the impetus for a shift toward more heteroglossic language ideologies. However, it is important to note that not all higher education programs focused on sociolinguistics or Maya linguistics necessarily provide an ideological frame that challenges popular ideological accounts of the language. (p. 871-872)

Multiple language use in practice in the Yucatan Peninsula

Yucatec Maya is a language traditionally transmitted through Maya institutions: family members pass on the language to younger generations, and the community validates such linguistic knowledge through its political, religious, and community dynamics. In a Maya cultural environment, school is part of a secondary socialization process that usually goes hand-in-hand with the use of Spanish and hegemonic ways of knowing and doing that contrast with traditional Maya teaching and learning practices (R. May, 2016; Lizama, 2008).

According to Güemes (1994), the modernizing processes of rural areas in the Yucatan Maya population and the Yucatec Maya language in the 20th century resulted in changes in the social and cultural organization of Maya communities, impacting their social cohesion mechanisms and the transmission of Yucatec Maya. Güemes (1994) further identified formal schooling, religious institutions, mass media, a market economy, and internal migration as the main factors that caused the language shift from Yucatec Maya to Spanish. Both the Eurocentric curriculum found in the education system, as well as migration from rural to urban areas

increased the prestige of Spanish, maintaining Maya lifestyle and Yucatec Maya in a historically oppressed and discriminated position.

Scholars who have done work in the Yucatan peninsula observe that investigating Yucatec Maya language practices directly often differs from looking into macro social narratives towards Indigenous languages (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2020; Armstrong-Fumero, 2009; Cru, 2016) in the sense that the former take not only the language but also the individuals and contexts of language use into consideration for their inquiries.

For instance, in their work with language ideologies of monolingual Spanish speakers in the capital of the Yucatan state, Sima and Perales (2015) observed that youth value Yucatec Maya because they consider it a language linked to the history of the land; and they value English because it is a requirement for school and work purposes. When given the choice of which of the two languages to learn, English was selected more because of its potential contribution to their lives. In other words, Yucatec Maya is linked to the past, and English is linked to the future.

For people who come from a foreign country or who self-identify as non-Indigenous, valuing and learning Yucatec Maya may be perceived as a bonus, “without having their social-ethnic positionalities called into question. This is not the case for everyone on the peninsula. Speaking Maya lends prestige to some, while it “Mayanizes” others” (Rhodes & Bloechl, 2020, p. 869). This last expression aligns with “an unfavorable view of indigenous identity” (Lam, 2020, p. 163): the discourse of *menosprecio* or denigration (Messing, 2007b).

Armstrong-Fumero (2009) points at the diversity among speakers of Yucatec Maya, which dates to classifications of speakers created two centuries ago, that have continued to exist despite changes in the official state narratives regarding Indigenous peoples and languages.

Establishing a parallelism with the seminal work done by Hill & Hill (1986 as cited in Armstrong-Fumero, 2009) in central Mexico with Nahuatl, Armstrong-Fumero (2009) observes that “how someone speaks Maya, and the metalinguistic discourses through which they justify their everyday linguistic choices, can be as dense an index of class, ethnic, and regional identities as the simple choice between Spanish and Maya” (p. 361).

In other words, why someone decides to self-identify as Maya may respond to circumstantial factors from the tourism industry or the educational sector, for example. In addition, how someone speaks Yucatec Maya may be a combination of language competence and social strategies to define local cultural understanding and/or membership (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009).

Pertinent to this study is the observation made by Rhodes and Bloechl (2020) when they ask us to

Note the growing trend among university-educated Maya speakers who work on and with the Maya language in professional capacities. Among some of these individuals, there is a tendency to (re-)valorize Maya language use and to affirm its association with Maya-ness. However, this is typically an active project among individuals whose professional efforts relate to and depend upon Maya language and other cultural practices and whose Maya-ness has been brought into question through associations with practices stereotypically recognized as non-Maya. In these cases, strengthening claims to Maya-ness can contribute to professional expertise (p. 869).

Looking at the Yucatec Maya language practices of Maya university students, Canche Teh (2014) found that these youth can be classified into three groups: Yucatec Maya speakers; passive bilingual, and Spanish speakers (p. 131) due to the evident differences in their

language(s) competences. This author suggests considering organizing different groups for the Yucatec Maya language courses, according to prior knowledge. In addition, Canche Teh (2014) notes that the intercultural focus on Yucatec Maya literacy is detrimental to the promotion of oral skills which are foundational to the use of the language and to its revitalization goals.

Finally, in the regional educational context, studies done with Maya youth and university students have found post-secondary school settings to be an important place to identify, reconsider and adjust language ideologies (Canche Teh, 2014; Cru, 2016).

Theoretical Foundations

Plurilingualism

The present project frames the linguistic repertoire of Maya current and former undergraduate students from a plurilingual angle. Plurilingualism contrasts with a multilingual approach to language development, which considers languages as isolated systems that may co-exist at a personal or at a societal level. El Euch (2011) points to the work of the European Council of Language Policies, which states that multilingualism is the presence of several languages within a geographical area, while plurilingualism refers to the linguistic repertoire used by an individual, regardless of the official status of such languages or her competence level in each of them.

In the European Union, the emergence of a plurilingual angle resulted from an acknowledgement of multiple languages in the territory, due to migration and globalization. In Canada, a plurilingual lens is being used to deal with the preconceptions behind the teaching and learning of the two official languages: French and English. In addition, Plurilingualism is being used with the existence of immigrant minority languages. Furthermore, a plurilingual approach to language teaching and learning in Canada may be used in the realities of Indigenous languages

users but must “be accompanied by recognition of the colonial subtexts influencing First Nations/Inuit/Metis language learning and revitalization” (Arnott et. al, 2017, p. 42).

A plurilingual angle links individual language practices with larger societal language policies in the following way: individual language practices are described as the micro level, societal language policies are part of the macro level, and the implementation or planning of such policies is found in an intermediate, meso level (Piccardo, 2018). All of these levels are interconnected. In their introduction to the edited book about teaching and learning under a plurilingual perspective, Ollerhead, Choi & French (2018) pose that “key to the successful adoption of a plurilingual stance is understanding the complex socio-historical context in which students’ language practices are formed and practiced” (p. 8). Taking into consideration the sociocultural characteristics of a territory is a crucial step towards understanding how speakers negotiate their linguistic repertoire (Despaigne & Grossi, 2011). The use of a plurilingual approach in language development, as well as to any other formal or informal educational initiatives, requires nation states to promote language and education policies that allow the developing of individual plurilingual competences (Grommes & Hu, 2014).

Regarding educational settings, Fleming et al. (2023) argue that “plurilingual methods can result in significant and efficient gains in linguistic abilities, strengthen student self-confidence, and help address issues related to social justice” (p. 9). These authors also emphasize the importance of support at different societal and institutional levels.

Macro Level. From a plurilingual perspective of language learning and use, the macro level is where society’s hegemonic narratives translate into specific language policy. In this study, the formal and informal language practices of participants take place in a current neo-colonial hegemony (Kubota, 2014), where there is presence of historically dominant Spanish

(Terborg et al., 2006); highly promoted, foreign English (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019); and dominated, traditionally transmitted Yucatec Maya (May, R. 2016; Lizama, 2008).

Among the obstacles to adopting a plurilingual approach to language usage at the macro level, I will focus on two identified by Piccardo (2018, 2014). On the one hand, she points at the nationalistic ideology, which conceived the usage of one language as the collective and individual parameter for language development; on the other hand, Piccardo points at the development of the scientific vision and its focus on separating, labeling, and categorizing, which led to the conception of languages as isolated, fixed entities which functioned separated from speakers and their meaning-giving contexts. From a linguistics perspective, the idea of discrete languages was reinforced by the dualistic ideas of Saussure and Chomsky. Consequently, a monolingual disposition expanded and led to the notion of an ideal native speaker.

These factors led, in turn, to the notion of standard language(s) and to purist ideologies, which can be seen in Mexico for Spanish and for Indigenous languages as well. For example, the fact that Spanish-speaking Mexicans see the usage of such language as reflecting membership to the Mexican nation-state is a result of the one nation-one language political myth, which is based on the idea that using one language would unify, consolidate, and stabilize a territory (Terborg et al., 2006). Similarly, having Spanish as a *de facto* national language today reflects the historical and political implementation of the abovementioned nationalistic ideology.

In the case of Yucatec Maya, apart from the five dialectical regions and/or five Yucatec Maya variants identified by scholars in the field, Yucatec Maya speakers make a division between the *jach maya*, the pure, ancient Maya, spoken by elders only, and the *xe'ek*, a modern mix, corrupted by Spanish and spoken by the new generations and by most people today (Hernández Méndez, 2020).

Piccardo (2014) warns about the risks not only of assimilationist, monolingual policies but also of multilingual ones that conceive the co-existence of several languages as isolated cultural and linguistic systems and, consequently, of speaker communities. This points to a liberal multiculturalism perspective, which emphasizes the existence of different cultures and languages in a territory, advocating for respect and tolerance towards dissimilar others. A plurilingual lens conceives languages and cultures as open, interconnected systems in permanent internal and external change. Similarly, a person's language profile is characterized by its dynamic essence conceiving it as a "plurilingual and pluricultural competence" (CEFR, 2001, p.135). Piccardo (2014) elaborates by including "multiplicity and recurrence at all levels, seemingly as a fractal, where the whole contains every part and every part contains the image of the whole object" (p. 189).

In order to approach linguistic diversity from a plurilingual lens, cultural and linguistic diversity must be approached from a critical multiculturalism perspective which enables the acknowledgement of cultural and linguistic rights of dominated segments of society (Kubota, 2004, as cited in Despaigne, 2013). Under a critical multiculturalism angle, culture and identity are understood here as multilayered, fluid, complex, and compassing multiple social categories and, at the same time, as being continually reconstructed through participation in social situations. "In other words," as May & Sleeter (2010) reminds us, "the recognition of our cultural and historical situatedness should not set the limits of ethnicity and culture, nor act to undermine the legitimacy of other, equally valid forms of identity" (p. 11).

Meso Level. The meso level refers to the school or educational institution level where language policies are implemented (Piccardo, 2018). Formal educational settings such as post-secondary institutions can be seen as a symbolic field in which current Indigenous autonomy

claims are being negotiated with the official interest to maintain Indigenous peoples under an objectified state control (Llanes Ortíz, 2008).

In the case of Mexico, a self-proclaimed multilingual country since 1992, there is a postcolonial reality of monolingualism, referred to as the monolingual disposition (Piccardo, 2014). Furthermore, not all languages are perceived as equal: Indigenous languages are perceived as inferior to mainstream Spanish or international languages like English and French. Despaigne & Grossi (2011) identified the need for “pedagogies that seek social transformation towards the acceptance of both mainstream and native languages” (p. 66) as well as “the need of developing a framework for language learning that promotes ... the socio-cultural transformation of plurilinguistic language users” (p. 72).

On the one hand, despite the fact that many university-level students are surrounded by Indigenous languages, these are frequently absent in educational language programs. On the other hand, Mexican post-secondary institutions have shown a strong interest in adopting the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages in order to improve the teaching and learning processes of international languages such as English (Despaigne & Grossi, 2011).

From a plurilingual lens, nonetheless, “through language and intercultural awareness, learners seek meaning as embedded in, and dependent on, the context” (Piccardo, 2014, p. 201). The idea is to acknowledge speakers' interactions as situated practices that require individuals to consider and to develop context-sensitive linguistic and cultural awareness and strategies.

Micro Level. At the individual micro level conceptualization, plurilingualism emphasizes the fact that, on the one hand, there are no clear-cut boundaries between the languages that an individual develops through her lifetime and on the other hand, that such continuous process may

be and is actually modified through time according to her life needs and/or circumstances (Piccardo, 2018). Consequently, an individual's language knowledge becomes a “composite competence” (Grommes & Hu, 2014, p. 2). Thus, the linguistic repertoire of the Mexican, Maya, undergraduate students in this study is conceived as “a single, inter-related, repertoire that they combine with their general competences and various strategies in order to accomplish tasks” (COE, 2017, p. 28).

These speakers are social agents who interact using their dynamic, non-linear, unbalanced, interdependent plurilingual and pluricultural skills to function in their environments (Piccardo, 2018). In line with this, Coste (2014) explains that “the plurilingualism sought is not that of an exceptional polyglot but rather of ordinary individuals with a varied linguistic capital in which partial competences have their place. What is expected is not maximum proficiency but a range of language skills and receptiveness to cultural diversity” (p. 22).

In the following chapter, the main concepts from the theoretical foundations of this study are presented in the conceptual framework that served as the starting point for the creation of the research questions, the data collection process, and the analysis of the findings.

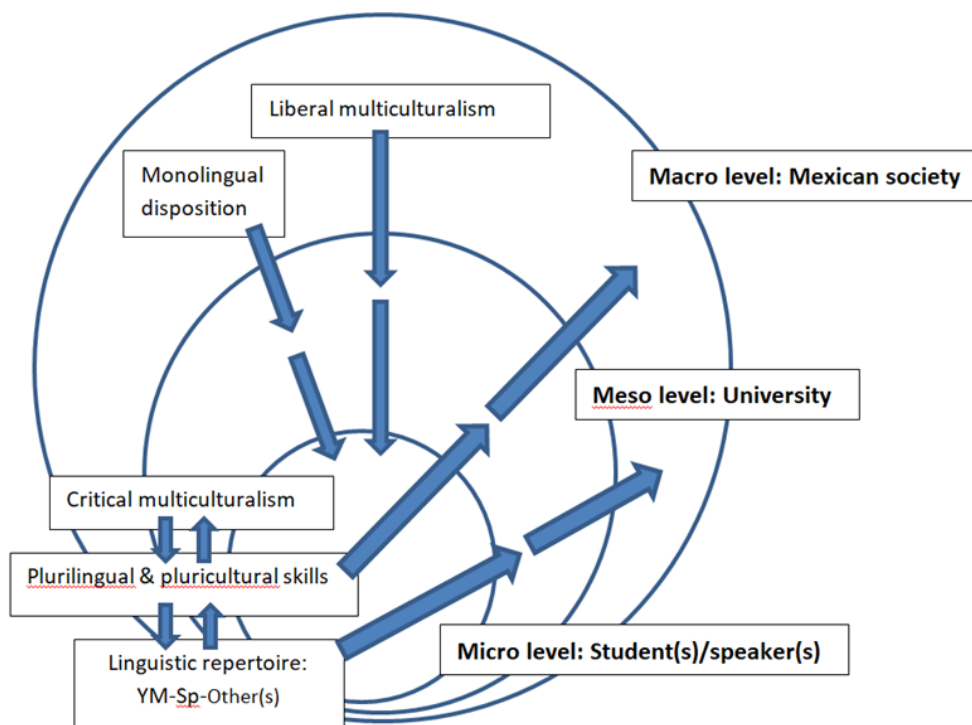
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I present the conceptual framework that summarizes the main theoretical foundations of the present study. First, I offer an illustration of the concepts that inform this research. Then, I describe how each element included in the conceptual framework played a role in the creation of the research questions of the present investigation and in its data collection procedures and processes. Finally, I summarize how the above-mentioned terms were used as the lens to analyze the findings obtained.

The following illustrations show how the different concepts from the literature inform the present inquiry.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



An individual linguistic repertoire is used and negotiated (plurilingual and pluricultural skills) in her daily context-based interactions (critical multiculturalism), which may happen a) at a family/community level with people with potentially similar repertoires who go through potentially similar negotiations, or b) at a formal educational setting, like that of a university, which is considered a plurilingual meso level where language(s) practices respond to the language policies that have been implemented in a given territory. The university's meso level is directly related with plurilingualism's macro level, which is where society's hegemonic narratives (liberal multiculturalism, monolingual disposition) translate into specific language policy (bilingual, intercultural education).

Creation of the Research Questions for Data Collection

My overarching research question is how do Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula conceptualize their lived experiences in relation to the formal (academic) and informal (community/family-based) use of their languages? The secondary research questions aimed to gather and analyze information that can help us understand the links among the language(s) practices located at the different societal levels. These questions cover language(s) use in formal and informal domains; language(s) use with members of their family and home communities and the purposes for such language(s) choices; and language(s) use with various members of their academic and professional communities and the purposes for such language(s) choices.

Two more goals for the data collection design were gathering information about the perceived relationship between participants' life and her academic/career goals in relation to her language(s) use; and the perceived relationship between participants' Indigenous identities and their language(s) use.

Analysis of the Collected Data with the Conceptual Framework

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a participant speaker's language(s) practices are located at plurilingualism's micro level. Taking the micro level as a starting point of this inquiry, the research questions aim to understand how the language(s) that a person makes use of is related to her family dynamics and to her community dynamics. These are considered bidirectional interactions, in the sense that they may determine or have an impact on each other given the meaningfulness of the actors that are part of them. Nonetheless, they are not static or fixed, as an individual may renegotiate her language(s) use(s) based on different experiences during her life.

The relationship between individual language choices and meso level institutions is also explored. The meso level settings in this study are the different levels of schooling that each participant has gone through: Elementary school, secondary and university. In the context of this inquiry, school settings link Indigenous communities, their knowledge(s) and their knowledge transmission processes with non-Indigenous knowledges and knowledge transmission processes. Hence, all levels of schooling, including those who use an intercultural model, are representative of non-Indigenous, official organizations. The important thing to remember about the meso level is that the knowledge and practices that are found in it represent validated forms. This applies to any domain, including that of language(s) use.

In the following chapter, I describe the research design of this study. I provide an overview of the philosophical concept that led to my decisions regarding methodology, namely phenomenology. I then describe the data collection and the data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the philosophical and practical orientation that led to my decisions regarding methodology, namely empirical phenomenology (Aspers, 2009; Mortari et al., 2023; Moustakas, 1994), and to go into detail regarding how this inquiry came to be and the steps I took regarding data collection and data analysis. In the interests of clarity, I have chosen to define the case for this study here and place the descriptions of my participants in the findings chapter that follows

First, I describe how the research design of this study draws from an empirical phenomenological framework (Aspers, 2009; Mortari et al. 2023) to develop and write an investigation that shares the interpretation of what participants experienced.

It must be mentioned that this is not a phenomenological study in the purest sense. Of course, there are many definitions of what constitutes a study based on this tradition. Rather, have I adopted elements from the phenomenological approach that aligned well with my goal of sharing how the participants that I worked with reflected and shared their lived experiences while still being able to analyze the situations that inform individual and collective meanings through the lens of a theoretical framework. I have chosen to provide background detail below regarding these elements in this chapter since they relate specifically to my methodology.

In the section that follows, I describe the setting and the participants as well as the recruitment procedures used. Afterward this, I illustrate the data collection process by providing a description of each instrument and how it was used.

Finally, in this chapter I elaborate on my analytic procedure. First, I describe how I organized my interview data following Hycner (1985) explicit recommendations on how to

conduct phenomenological studies, particularly in terms of data obtained in interviews. Then, I show how I used the organized data to create narrative vignettes (Ammann, 2018) that would illustrate my participants' lived experiences on the topic of language(s) learning and use.

Research design

In order to answer the research question proposed in this study, I used a qualitative approach to research. Such a choice responds to the intention of approaching the topic from the participants' perspective, acknowledging their interpretation and approach to the topic in question and trying to reduce the power issues that normally arise between researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013).

Research has traditionally *worked on* Indigenous communities or peoples as opposed to *working with* them (Smith, 1999). As a result of the development of an Indigenous perspective on research, a shift of such approach proposes the use of decolonizing methodologies that work with Indigenous groups. For Smith (1999), "social research at community level is often referred to as community action research or emancipatory research" which, in turn, "assume[s] that people know and can reflect on their own lives, have questions and priorities of their own, have skills and sensitivities which can enhance (or undermine) any community-based projects" (p. 127). Consequently, this research project tried to work with the experiences of the participants in an effort and collaboration to understand how they describe and understand their language(s) use. This entailed an exploration of the possibilities of the co-construction of knowledge and between Indigenous ways of knowing pertinent to the Indigenous Maya context in the Yucatan peninsula and the selected plurilingual theoretical approach to language learning and use.

It is also important to note, as I proceed to explain the methodological framing and design of my project, that this inquiry comes from a non-philosophical area of study (Stolz, 2023) and

that the work presented here intends to be a reflective piece of research in which the participants' voices guide the inductive and deductive analysis (Creswell, 2013).

The project design drew from phenomenology, where “the pretheoretical world of experience” (Zahavi, 2018, p. 51), is the starting point of the inquiry. Phenomenology “is at once a philosophy, a perspective, and an approach to research” (Farrell, 2020, p. 1).

From a practical standpoint, phenomenology can be considered “a family of methodologies” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1296). As Stolz (2023) reminds us, “phenomenological research is concerned with the correlation or interrelation between the mind and the world, neither of which can be understood as either the mind or the world, but only as both” (p. 827).

Phenomenology originated with Husserl's (1939/1989) descriptive phenomenology, which questioned the positivist conception of reality as an objective and separate entity and proposed to focus on how objects or situations are experienced by the people who interact with them (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Husserl's method contained three components: 1) The description (bracketing out everything that is not empirically there/what exactly is the person doing or thinking); 2) the phenomenon (what does the thing do/how the mind regards its experiences); 3) and the intentionality (what is the thing about/ how does the mind regard this entire process of reflection on experiences).

In ways that align with Heidegger's orientation, Husserl's late work took into greater account the historical and cultural contexts of the phenomenon in question. This later work emphasised the need to go into detailed descriptions of the data and engage in interpretation that identifies themes linked to the key essences of the phenomenon in question. In view of taking into account the larger contexts involved, the researcher is conceptualised as being a significant part of the reality being observed (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). When Schütz introduced

phenomenology to the social sciences, he emphasized that their starting point had to be the ordinary life of people and the meanings they associated to it, individually and collectively (Aspers, 2009)

As mentioned earlier, given the fact that this inquiry was developed in a non-philosophical context, I followed a pragmatic approach to phenomenology so that I could use a pertinent research methodology to obtain new understandings in the context of my study and without worrying about whether I was following the philosophical foundations of phenomenology (Stolz, 2023).

The phenomenological inspiration of this study can be understood following Moustakas (1994) description of the empirical phenomenological approach, which first collects an account of a specific human experience which is afterwards used for an analysis that will provide its key features or essence. This author explains that the goal of this is to understand what such experience means to the people that live it, and to move from individual meanings to a collective or general meaning of the experience which refers to the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). As Aspers (2009) notes, “meanings, in other words, come in structures and attain meaning in relation to other meanings. This process of meaning constitution, at the level of the individual, and meaning construction, at the social level, can be studied empirically by the researcher” (Aspers, 2009, p. 3). Moustakas (1994) also emphasizes the importance of considering the contextual connections found in the specific experience observed in order come up with a collective or general meaning.

Empirical phenomenology is thus an approach to social life: it centers on the participants’ perspective, considering that the world is socially constructed, and it assigns a place to theory in the research process (Aspers, 2009). The role of having a theory that frames a social science

inquiry is explained by Aspers (2009) when he states that “we must produce explanations that are grounded in the subjective experiences of real people. At the same time, we must not simply deliver descriptions of states of minds; social science must understand why and how things happen, and this must refer to the way people understand and relate to these phenomena” (Aspers, 2009, p. 4)

The participants of this project are subjects who interact with the languages they use on a daily basis. Hence, in this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the daily formal and informal usage of Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and English by Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture programming the Yucatan Peninsula.

Lived experiences can be conceived as “(...) the prereflective (prepredicative or prelinguistic) dimensions of the experience as lived” (Adams & van Manen, 2017, p. 782) or as “our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life: a reflective or self-given awareness which is, as awareness, unaware of itself” (van Manen, 2016, p.35). Phenomenology aims to have descriptions of the lived experiences being researched while keeping from using a specific framework to validate them (Finlay, 2012). As Zahavi (2018) explained, “our world of experience has its own criteria of validity and truth and does not have to await the approval of science” (p. 52). This position is important when working with underrepresented groups such as Indigenous Maya students from southeastern Mexico because it aligns with the claims that Indigenous ways of knowing are alive and valid, regardless of them being accepted (or not) by the scientific or academic community.

Since the investigator is not neutral, her reflexivity is crucial through the entire research process to recollect her lived experience of the phenomenon (Finlay, 2012). Originally, it was expected for the researcher's conceptions to be brought to the forefront into what is known *as*

bracketing the researcher (Hycner, 1985) or *hermeneutic reduction* (Finlay, 2012). In line with recent debates and efforts to make phenomenological research pertinent for fields of knowledge(s) like education, Stolz (2023) mentions that the phenomenological procedures of epoché and reduction are “irrelevant and unnecessary outside of philosophical contexts where the intent is to apply phenomenology in non-philosophical contexts (p. 830). Nonetheless, he emphasizes that any qualitative research must provide a clear description of the method used to investigate a phenomenon, as well as the validation procedure to ensure that the account of the phenomena represents the lived experiences of people who have first-hand knowledge of it. Keeping this in mind, I used participant feedback (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010) procedure to ensure I was representing my participants’ voices accurately.

Setting/Sites

The participants of this study are current or former students from two different post-secondary institutions in the Yucatan peninsula with a high percentage of Indigenous Maya student population. One is a publicly funded, mainstream university located in the state of Yucatan; the other is a publicly funded, intercultural university located in the state of Quintana Roo.

Both institutions and their respective Language/Linguistics and Culture program are described to provide the academic background of the participants in the project since their specific undergraduate program student profile serves as one of the two participant inclusion criteria.

University A

University A began to operate in 2007 with eight undergraduate programs: Agroecology, Alternative Tourism, Language and Culture, Community Health, Municipal Governance, Arts,

Information and Communication technology, and Business. University A is part of the Mexican network of intercultural universities, which are post-secondary institutions co-funded by the state and federation. Their program and curriculum design follows state needs that aim at increasing higher education coverage for Indigenous and rural youth, while promoting a linguistically and culturally pertinent education.

Some of the participants of this study are either current or former students of the Language and culture undergraduate program.

Language and Culture Undergraduate Program. The official program description, aimed at potential future students, states that the program prepares students to be language teachers, translators, and cultural promoters. Potential occupations for students with an undergraduate degree in Language and Culture include language teaching and translation and interpretation in the public or private sector.

In its institutional website, the Language and Culture undergraduate program does not require its future students to be speakers of Yucatec Maya or English before entering the program. However, it does specify that, apart from having a high school diploma, potential students should have a positive attitude toward language learning; show the ability to study Yucatec Maya in order to perform meaningfully in regional and community environments; show commitment towards their regional and community surroundings, fostering the development of interculturality; and have a positive attitude towards one's ethnic group while showing interest in its current problems. Throughout the length of their program, students take both Yucatec Maya and English language courses.

University B

University B was created in 2005 and began to operate in the Fall of 2006, with three undergraduate programs: Gastronomy, Touristic Development, and Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture. The first two programs responded to the provincial government's interest in forming professionals for the touristic projections for the region. However, the Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program was a response to the political and social forces pressing to include an intercultural element at the new university, given the fact that most students attending would have an Indigenous Maya ethnic background.

Some of the participants of this study are former students of the Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program. While the curriculum of such a program aligns with the official intercultural perspective, the educational institution in which it operates is considered a mainstream public university.

Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program. The official goal of this program is to give students the knowledge and skills in Yucatec Maya linguistics to engage in language revitalization, educational, and/or cultural promotion initiatives. Potential occupations for students with an undergraduate degree in Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture include work in education, advertising or publishing, translation and interpretation, research, and consulting in the public or private sector.

In its institutional website, the Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program considers an advantage for future students to understand, speak and, optimally, to read and write Yucatec Maya. Throughout the length of their program, students take diverse Yucatec Maya language courses. English language courses are not part of their plan of studies.

Participants

Participant Inclusion Criteria

The participants of this project are Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula. The first inclusion criteria for current and former students in the participants' ethnic membership to the Indigenous Maya group, which draws from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática's parameter of Indigenous as being a person over 3 years old who is known to speak an Indigenous language or who has an Indigenous family name.

In Mexico, the three indicators of being Indigenous or having Indigenous status are speaking an Indigenous language, having an Indigenous family name, and/or self-identifying as Indigenous. The Mexican *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* (General Law on Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples) defines Indigenous languages as those belonging to the peoples who inhabited the land before the creation of the Mexican nation-state, as well as those from other Indo American groups who had established themselves in the above-mentioned territory.

For this study, the participants are considered Indigenous Maya because they self-identified as belonging to the Maya Indigenous ethnic group in the first instrument distributed, titled "Online Participant Survey."

A second inclusion criteria for current student and former student participants is to be or to have been enrolled in a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico.

Ethical Considerations

In regard to the ethical requirements of a project whose participants are members of the Mexican Maya Indigenous group or self-identify as being Maya, I consulted Dr. Miguel Güemes Pineda, a Mexican scholar who has been the Coordinator of the *Unidad de Ciencias Sociales* (Social Sciences Unit) from the *Centro de Investigaciones Regionales Dr. Hideyo Noguchi* (Dr. Hideyo Noguchi Regional Research Centre) from the *Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán* (Autonomous University of Yucatan). His line of work deals with reproductive health among the regional Maya population. In a written exchange of communication, I asked him about the requirements to obtain authorization to work with Indigenous population in Yucatan, taking into consideration as well that I do not self-identify as Indigenous or Maya. He stated that ethics committees do not exist in the Social Sciences field in Yucatan (Güemes, personal communication, November 12, 2020). In addition, he shared that what we have done with thesis students—especially with those that come from abroad—is an institutional letter of introduction, in which we ask the community’s authorities—local mayor, health authority, etc.—to provide suitable conditions for the project to be carried out, while specifying that the research only has academic purposes, thesis purposes, etc. In case the interviews were to be recorded or if photographs were to be included in the final work, then written authorization for such purposes must be obtained from the community as well (Güemes, personal communication, November 12, 2020).

Since my research did not include the population of one specific community, but rather dealt with individuals from different places of origin and who were willing to participate and share their personal experiences, the project description in the invitation to participate

(recruitment text) and the information contained in the consent form were deemed sufficient to proceed with the data collection with the participants.

Recruitment

The recruitment of participants for this study was criterion-based through snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013) among the Indigenous Maya students who were either currently enrolled in or recently graduated from the Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program at this site.

The recruitment of Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and culture undergraduate program required institutional authorization first. The procedure is described chronologically below.

After receiving the certificate of ethics approval from the University of Ottawa in June 2022, I contacted the Mexican public university I was planning to work with. More specifically, I wrote to the *Indigenous Linguistics and Culture* undergraduate program coordinator, with whom I had been in contact since the early stages of my doctoral program. I sent her the package of documents containing the certificate of ethics approval, a letter to the university president describing my project, a letter for the undergraduate program coordinator describing the project and the recruitment process, and the invitation letter for the students to participate (see Appendix A), which the coordinator would distribute to her students. I tried following up with my potential site in July without success. In August, I contacted a colleague from the region and asked him for recommendations on what to do. He suggested considering another public university that offers a similar undergraduate program, and so I went over the information from that institution.

In early September, I sent my second potential site the documents that describe my research project, namely, the certificate of ethics approval, a letter to the university President

describing my project, and a letter to the undergraduate program coordinator describing the project and the recruitment process.

Towards the end of October, I received the official letter of approval from University A, granting me authorization to do my doctoral research work in their university. Following the instructions provided in the authorization letter, I then contacted the Language and Culture undergraduate program coordinator as well as another professor who had been appointed as liaison, and I sent them the project description, the recruitment procedure, and the invitation letter (recruitment text) to distribute among the program students. In mid-November, I was notified by the Language and Culture undergraduate program Coordinator that the invitation letter has been sent to the students. I then received emails from three potential participant students who showed interest in my project, and I replied to each of them providing the description of the project and asking them to go over the project information in order to see if they agree to participate. Only one student replied confirming her interest in participating, and I began my data collection process with my first participant. Nonetheless, nobody else reached out showing interest in my study.

In February of 2023, and due to the lack of participants, I discussed with my supervisor the possibility of expanding my participant sample. I created and submitted a modification to the Review of Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Ottawa, expanding the participant sample to also include former students of the two undergraduate programs. The participant recruitment process was modified to include snowball sampling and asking the program Coordinators to send a reminder to their students with the project information. In mid-April, I received approval from REB to carry out my research project data collection with the modifications submitted.

The recruitment of Indigenous Maya former students of a Language/Linguistics and culture undergraduate program followed a direct contact between the researcher and some former students with whom the researcher had a colleague-to-colleague relationship a few years ago. This responded to the fact that the researcher had a professional relationship with former students of the above-mentioned programs and could send them the invitation to participate (see Appendix B) in the study. It is important to mention that the researcher informed the person that they were free to participate in the study, and that their decision would not put at risk the relationship with the researcher. The invitation to participate specified the undergraduate program that the potential participants had been part of when it was sent directly to their email. The email also included the consent form with the link to the Online Participant Survey.

In late April, I started working (data gathering) with a former student of one of the undergraduate programs. Since the participant recruitment and data gathering process were still ongoing, I asked for a renewal of the certificate of ethics approval from the University of Ottawa. During June and July, I began working with four former students.

Data collection

Research instruments

Several instruments were used in the present study in order to collect the information that would help answer the research questions. Each instrument serves a specific purpose in the research process and has a concrete format of usage for either the researcher or for the participants.

The instruments were initially created in English in order to be sent and approved by the Review of Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa. Once the certificate of ethics approval was

obtained, I translated them to Spanish because all the communication with the institutions and with the potential participants in Mexico was in Spanish.

For the English-Spanish translation of all the letters, forms, and instruments of the study I used the online, free version of the DeepL translator and my own knowledge as a Spanish speaker. I double-checked the accuracy of the translations to align my text to Mexican Spanish and to specific terminology that was part of the project.

Next is a description of each instrument with its specific purpose or function and its implementation during the research project.

Online Participant Survey for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program. The Online Participant Survey for current students (see Appendix C) served as a tool to obtain socio-demographic information from participants, to refine my interview protocols, and to invite participants of the first stage of the study to its second stage. I created it using Google Forms and distributed it virtually among current students in the first stage of the study. I also used it to ask about potential topics to enquire further during the interview stage, in order to cover the areas that are important to my participants.

The Online Participant Survey contained closed questions and open-ended ones. The closed questions gathered socio-demographic data, information related to their linguistic and educational background, as well as to their language(s) use in formal and informal contexts of social interaction. The open-ended questions gathered information about what participants perceived to be the benefits and the challenges in the usage of each of their languages.

This instrument took respondents approximately 45 minutes to answer. Although the instrument is presented here in English, I used its Spanish translated version during the research because my communication with the participants was in Spanish. During the online participant

survey, each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym in order to keep confidentiality and anonymity for the data analysis and for the writing of the research.

At the beginning of the survey, after describing the project, the current student read that, by filling out and submitting the questionnaire to the researcher, they would be providing consent for their information to be used as part of the study. In addition, the Online Participant Survey invited students to participate in the second stage of the project, which consisted of a set of three semi-structured interviews to have a series of conversations about their language(s) use experiences, as well as of two activities that each participant will had to do on their own: a linguistic autobiography and a language portrait silhouette (LPS). Survey respondents also read that the survey information from the students who do not participate in the second stage of the project will not be used in any way to inform the study but it will be securely stored, in a separate file, for ten years and that any identifiers will be destroyed. At the end of the survey, students interested in participating in the second stage of the project were asked to check the box indicating their decision.

In the recruitment chronology found farther down in this text, I explain that I only received confirmation of her interest to participate from one current student and therefore did not have to choose among a large number of survey respondents to decide who would be invited to the second stage of the project based on specific parameters such as similarity of backgrounds, for example. I included the above-mentioned current student as a participant, invited her to participate in the second stage of the study, and then moved on to expand my participant sample by inviting former students to the study.

Online Participant Survey for Former Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program. The Online Participant Survey for former student

participants (see Appendix E) contained the same closed and open-ended questions as the Online Participant Survey for current students. The only difference was that at the end of the survey, former students were not invited to participate in a second stage of the research project. This was because former student participation consisted of answering the online survey and participating in one interview and was not programmed as two different stages. When former students agreed to be part of the study, they consented to answer the online survey and then participate in the interview. Current students, in their end, agreed to the online survey first, and then had to agree to participate in the second stage of the study, which included three interviews and two independent activities. Aside from the division of the project in two stages for current students and in one stage for former students, the function of both Online Participant Surveys and the type of information gathered by them was the same.

The first and second sections of the online participant survey asked demographic and language-usage questions to the participant: How old are you? Where are you from? Do you self-identify as Indigenous? What languages do you speak? These questions gathered information that was expanded or complemented during the interview conversations, and they were used to create an initial profile of each participant.

The demographic and language-usage questions used in the Online Participant Survey were the conversation starters during the interviews, providing the possibility of getting contextual details of who the participant is by expanding what had been shared in the survey responses. For example, most of the students in Vane's cohort (15 in a group of 20 people), including her, are not Yucatec Maya speakers; they are learning Maya—and English—as part of their undergraduate program. In Vane's case, she was raised speaking Spanish at home, although her father speaks Yucatec Maya and Spanish. When I ask how her father learned Maya, Vane

shares that her father spoke Maya but only to his own parents (now deceased). With his siblings and his nuclear family her father uses Spanish. She explains that her father is bilingual because he was the first child and therefore got the chance to spend more time (than the rest of the children) with his parents. As a result, he learned Yucatec Maya.

Some of the participant's demographic information resulted in questions for my interview protocols or during the participant feedback. For example, following the languages that her classmates speak or use before entering their undergraduate program, I prepared to ask Vane during our second conversation, are there any of your classmates that began the program already speaking English? Another example relates to the fact that Vane has Maya speaking grandparents. I wanted to know, what do the Maya speaking people in your family (grandparents) think about the fact that you and your brother are learning Yucatec Maya?

The second section explored the languages used in present-day daily interactions with family and community members in the different levels of schooling (elementary, junior high school, high school), and with different people from their current or former university: professors, administrators, and classmates. With the information provided by the participants, I created tables to have an overview of their family linguistic interactions, their past schooling language use, and their post-secondary language use.

The third section of the survey asked open-ended questions related to the perceived challenges and benefits of the participant's language(s) usage. Some of those answers triggered reflections for me (the researcher), which I wrote in my journal.

For example, Vane says that speaking Maya contributes to her education and to her language and culture. Speaking Spanish allows her to communicate on a daily basis and with people from other Spanish-speaking countries. Speaking English would enable her to interact

with people nationally or internationally. I make the observation in my journal that the Maya language connects her inwards, taking her to her community of origin; Spanish is useful daily in her current location and with the people in her present, but has the possibility of taking her outwards; and English links her outwards, with foreign people.

Some comments to the survey's open-ended questions also led me to ask the participant a follow up question. For example, in the survey, Vane expressed that speaking Yucatec Maya would help her community because she would like to teach the language to non-Yucatec Maya speakers. After reading this comment, I came up with two follow-up questions for her: to which non-Maya speakers (i.e. people from her village, people elsewhere in the region, foreigners) would you like to teach Maya? And how do you see yourself, professionally, after finishing your undergraduate program? I asked these follow up questions during our second conversation.

The answers to the open-ended questions about their perceived challenges and benefits of the participant's language(s) usage were added to the analysis of the information shared by the participants during the interviews.

Online Participant Interviews. I conducted one-on-one, semi-structured audio-recorded interviews with the participants. The goal was to have 3 interviews with each current student participant and 1 interview with each former student participant and with each university officer. The number of interviews for the former students and for the university officers responded to their limited availability due to their work schedule and additional commitments.

All interviews were held online using Zoom. The scheduling of the interview dates was done through WhatsApp and the researcher made proper arrangements for the activity and sent a reminder to the participant in order to confirm attendance or potential rescheduling of the activity. Whenever Zoom or the researcher's computer was not functioning properly, a free audio

recording app called Easy Voice Recorder was used. This app was located in the researcher's cellular phone.

Each interview had an average duration of 60 minutes. Two Zoom meetings were required for each interview because I was using the free version of such a platform. The time and date of each interview was scheduled following participants' and researcher's availability, following the participant's time zone (CST). The interviews were recorded with the participant camera turned off, and notes were taken during the conversation.

The interviews were held in Spanish and the intended mood for each interview was for researcher and participant to engage in an informal conversation that invited the participant to share different moments, people, places, and situations where she uses the languages that make up her linguistic repertoire.

During the interviewing and transcribing, each participant was assigned the pseudonym of their choosing (refer to Online Participant Survey) in order to keep confidentiality and anonymity. When a participant stated that they felt comfortable using their own name, the researcher encouraged them to come up with a pseudonym for the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity. The comments gathered during the interviews are the main source of information for this study.

For the current student participant, the participant's linguistic autobiography and the participant language portrait were created during the interview stage of the study, and they were meant to provide meaningful complementary information and discussion topics during the interviews. Due to the fact that I only had one current student participant, these instruments were not used in the overall analysis and the discussion of the data. Nonetheless, the information that was provided in such activities was also mentioned in depth during the interview conversations.

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview 1 Protocol for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program. The first semi-structured interview (see Appendix G) first gathered socio-demographic data about the participant, along with information related to her linguistic and educational background and to her language(s) use in formal and informal contexts of social interaction. The second part of the interview followed a protocol with prompt questions that covered different aspects pertaining to the research questions. I began the interview asking the participant about her use of Spanish, since it was the language used for the interviews, and it was therefore evident that she was a speaker of it. After talking about Spanish, I invited the participant to talk about the other languages she is a user of, namely Yucatec Maya and English. If the participant mentions using additional languages, those will also be talked about.

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview 2 Protocol for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program. The period between the first and second interview (see Appendix H) was used to transcribe the first interview and go through the analysis of the first interview in order to identify themes for the participant and write an initial summary for the purposes of participant feedback (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010).

I began by asking a follow up question: is there anything that stayed on your mind or that you thought of after our first conversation? Then I presented the summary of themes found by the researcher and did the participant feedback (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010). The intention of this was to engage in a dialogue with the participant concerning what the researcher had found so far.

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview 3 Protocol for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program. The period between the second

and third interview (see Appendix I) was used to transcribe the second interview and to identify important topics to follow up on. As with the second interview, the third interview began with the participant feedback (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010), as the written summary of the first and second interviews were provided to her, as well as the themes that had come up so far in the previous two conversations. Then I used the prompt questions from the third interview protocol as a guide to further discuss topics related to the participants' plurilingual profile. It finished with a moment in which the researcher thanks the participant for agreeing to collaborate in the project and shares the timeline that the researcher is to follow in the development of her project.

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Former Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program. The logistics of the interview with former students (see Appendix J) followed a similar organization as that of the interview sessions with the current student. For former students, the first part of the semi-structured interview gathered socio-demographic data about the participant, along with information related to her linguistic and educational background and to her language(s) use in formal and informal contexts of social interaction. The second part of the interview followed a protocol with prompt questions that covered different aspects pertaining to the research questions, namely, their language(s) acquisition process(es), their context of language(s) use (people, places and situations they use their languages with), the role of their languages in their lives (function, meaning, benefits and challenges of each language), and the language(s) used with children in their families.

A second conversation was scheduled to go through the process of participant feedback (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010): The researcher read out loud the written summary from the first interview, and the participant made comments, additions, or corrections to the information that

the researcher had gathered. When participants were unavailable to do a live session, the written summary was sent by email and the participant provided written or recorded feedback.

How did each instrument contribute to the gathering of information to answer the research questions? The Online Participant Surveys enabled me to create individual profiles with concrete facts. The online participant semi-structured Interviews provided information on family language(s) transmission process using present-day experiences and past stories, observations or comments and anecdotes about the multiple actors and factors involved: people, locations, and periods of time. I organized this information in an Excel table with descriptions, anecdotes, and quotes per participant. With information from the surveys and the interviews, I created narrative sections for Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and English language use of the participants. I also created narrative sections for the shared present-day experiences and past stories regarding academic and professional language(s) use, including observations, comments or anecdotes about the multiple actors and factors involved: people, location, and periods of time.

Data Organization and Data Analysis Procedures

The information gathered by means of the online survey was organized, initially, by participants, to create and present their individual profiles. Then, it was organized by topic to serve as support for some of the comments made in the discussion of the findings.

For the interview data organization, I followed Hycner's (1985) phenomenological procedure due to the fact that it is very clearly described, not only procedurally, but by providing an explicit example of how an analysis is carried out following the steps indicated.

1. I began by writing the first reduction, also known as researcher's "setting-aside" process or "hermeneutic reduction" (Finlay, 2012). I answered the instruments from the study, and I wrote a text that describes my personal experiences with the topic being researched.

The aim of this piece was to bring forward and be aware of my experiences, preconceptions, and assumptions regarding the issue, so that they interfered the least possible when doing both the collection and the analysis of the data. Following Stolz's (2023) recommendation to ensure that the method and validation were clear, and that I represented my participants' perspective instead of my own, I engaged in participant feedback (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010) with my collaborators.

2. Transcribing. Afterwards, I transcribed each interview. To generate a text transcript of the audio recording of each interview, I used the free version of the app Happy Scribe. Then I listened to the audio while reading the automatically generated transcripts and made adjustments and edits to ensure its accuracy. Then I either printed it or worked on it on the computer.
3. Identifying the context or sense of the whole of each interview. I listened to the recordings and read the printed transcripts to look for "a sense of the whole" (Hycner, 1985); I focused on the extra-linguistic aspects of the audio recording to make notes that provide a contextual sense of how things were said by the participant. More specifically, I paid attention to the tone, the silences, the things that are stressed more, and the like.
4. Identifying general units of meaning. Next I went over the transcript to identify the general units of meaning, staying close to its literal word choice, in order to identify "those words, phrases, non-verbal or para-linguistic communications which express a unique and coherent meaning (irrespective of the research question) clearly differentiated from that which precedes and follows" (Hycner, 1985, p. 282).
5. Once I had identified the general units of meaning in the transcript, I identified the units of meaning which were related to the main research question and the secondary research

questions. The answers to the open-ended questions from the online survey about the perceived challenges and benefits of the participant's language(s) usage were added to the transcript of each participant.

6. I eliminated the units of meaning that were repetitive. Before doing this, I corroborated with the notes and the audio recording that the paralinguistic elements of such a unit were also the same; if they are not similar, I keep the unit of meaning as is. Also, I observe the number of repetitions, as this may be indicative of the importance that such content has to the participant.
7. I then analyzed each unit of meaning and tried to identify which units of meaning referred to a similar issue, with the intention of arriving to themes or essences related to the topic of inquiry. In this part of the process, I came up with names or labels for the created clusters of units of meaning.
8. After creating clusters of meaning, I analyzed each cluster to come up in writing with a theme that "expresses the essence of these clusters (and that portion of the transcript)" (Hycner, 1985, p. 290).
9. Next, I wrote a summary of the transcript, including the themes that were created. This exercise was intended to be a complementary one: the interview fragments or quotes provided context to the themes that serve as a frame of the lived experiences.
10. I used the above-mentioned summary to do the participant feedback (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010). When it was the case, I continued the conversation after participant feedback using the interview questions from the corresponding interview protocol. When more information was given, steps 1 through 9 were followed during the transcript and analysis of the additional interview.

11. With potential new clusters of meaning from the information obtained during the following interview, I went over the themes and made any necessary adjustments that reflect that I am looking at all the data of the participant as a whole. In addition, the summary of all interviews with each participant was checked and rewritten accordingly.
12. Steps 1 through 11 were followed after the second and third interview. This only applied to the one participant who is a current student.
13. This procedure was done with each participant of the study. After finishing the above - mentioned process with each participant, I took Hycner's approach: "to look for the themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as the individual variations" (Hycner, 1985, p. 292). This is the process of coming up with the essence of the phenomenon in question. First, I clustered the themes and created a general theme that reflected such clustering. Simultaneously, the individual differences were also pointed out.
14. I then provided a context for each of the general themes, placing it next to its description and meaning in light of interview segment(s), as well as a pertinent discussion.
15. Finally, I wrote a "composite summary" (Hycner, 1985, p. 294) of all the interviews, which describe the essence of the phenomenon being researched from the perspective of the participants' lived experiences.

In sum, once I had the data from each participant, I created individual narratives based on the information provided in the online participant survey, the interviews, and the participant feedback (see Steps 10 and 11).

The following table shows the data organization and analysis process, with the “relationships among the individuated essences, ranging from the absolutely individual and concrete to the most shared and abstract (Mortari & al., 2023, p. 7).

Table 1.

Sample of Collected Data Analysis Procedure

| Individual lived experiences | Category | Macro category |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Vane says that, since she was born, everything has been in Spanish. | Parental lx transmission of Spanish | Spanish needed |
| Chinitos says he is unsure about why his parents, who spoke Yucatec Maya to each other, decided to speak Spanish to their children. | | |
| Ajtuukul makes a comparison between his own and his wife's childhood language acquisition process and concludes that the strength of the Yucatec Maya language in his community of origin and with the people around him did not lead to a choice between Spanish and Yucatec Maya for family communication and community interaction. It was until his mother went through a forced learning of Spanish, which carried its share of challenges and discrimination for being monolingual in Yucatec Maya, that she determined that Spanish should be transmitted early on, and she did so with her youngest son and with her grandchildren. | | |
| Lau's parents decided to speak Spanish to their children so that they wouldn't struggle in school even when they speak Yucatec Maya to their own parents, siblings and to members of the community. | Spanish for school and work | |
| Lizabeth's parents taught their children Spanish once they entered school so that they wouldn't struggle with the language of instruction. She remembers her parents speaking to her in Yucatec Maya at home, but when she had trouble with Spanish in kindergarten, her parents switch to | | |

| | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| <hr/> <p>Spanish at home to make things easier at school.</p> <hr/> | | |
| <p>Jpiil uses Spanish with his students and with their parents, although he also speaks Yucatec Maya with all of them. In his daily life in Valladolid, Jpiil speaks Spanish in the stores and when running errands. Jpiil believes that Spanish is the language imposed by the schooling process and therefore merely an educational medium.</p> <hr/> | | |
| <p>Lau has asked her mother why she doesn't communicate with her in Yucatec Maya, as that would allow her to talk and learn more. Her mother replied that it would be weird for her since she's used to talking with Lau in Spanish.</p> <hr/> | <p>Parental refusal to use YM</p> | <p>Refusing YM use</p> |
| <p>Jpiil works in an Indigenous preschool located in what he describes as a Yucatec Maya speaking community. The school children and their parents speak Spanish in school. Jpiil observes that even though the parents know Yucatec Maya, they don't use it when they are in the school area. He concludes that they probably use Yucatec Maya at home, but once they are in the street or in the school, they prefer to use Spanish; and he specifies that the only parents who do not understand Yucatec Maya are those that come from other states of the country.</p> <hr/> | | |
| <p>Chinitos's paternal grandparents spoke to him in Yucatec Maya while he was growing up, but he would not reply in Yucatec Maya.</p> <hr/> | <p>Participant refusal to use YM</p> | |
| <p>Vane considers Spanish her mother tongue and is currently learning Yucatec Maya at university.</p> <hr/> | <p>Formal learning of YM and English</p> | <p>Exposure to (standard) YM</p> |
| <p>Chinitos learned Yucatec Maya from his grandparents by listening to the language, but he never spoke it until he arrived at the university and began taking formal Yucatec Maya courses.</p> <hr/> | | |
| <p>Lau says that she is very glad to have chosen the Language and Culture</p> <hr/> | <p>Formal exposure to YM</p> | |

undergraduate program because she wasn't expecting to learn how to write Yucatec Maya, which is something she really liked.

Vane notices how exciting it is when Yucatec Maya-speaking professionals come in for conferences and workshops and deliver their lectures in Yucatec Maya, they ask questions in Yucatec Maya. She wishes she were more capable in the language so that she could ask questions and participate more fully in the conversations, as the Yucatec Maya-speaking students do.

Vane expressed that if she has children, she will teach them three languages—Spanish, Yucatec Maya and English

Reconsidering YM

Repertoire negotiation

Vane is learning Maya at school, and she practices Yucatec Maya with her father when she goes back to her community.

Chinitos discussed how part of his professional development at the university required him to learn Yucatec Maya, express himself in Yucatec Maya, and do Maya assignments. Seeing that his knowledge and skills in this language were insufficient, he turned to his parents and told them he needed their help and wondered why they hadn't taught it to him when he was little

Chinitos says that if he is in a gathering with his parents and siblings, he can use both Spanish and Yucatec Maya. But if he is with his siblings or with his cousins, he uses Spanish only.

Including YM

With his nuclear family, wife and son, Jpiil uses Spanish and Yucatec Maya. His wife is learning Yucatec Maya from interacting with Jpiil's family and his son is learning Yucatec Maya from Jpiil and his paternal extended family.

Ajtuukul and his wife speak Spanish and Yucatec Maya to each other, although he says that his wife speaks more Spanish than Yucatec Maya.

Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya to his

children, who are in constant contact with the Indigenous language through their maternal grandmother who takes care of them. Ajtuukul recalls that during the first years of their lives, his children were being taken care of by his mother, who only spoke Spanish to them.

When Jpiil is at his brother's restaurant, he says that sometimes people come in who only speak English. If one of the employees who speaks English is not there, Jpiil uses the translator on his phone to communicate with the customer. Jpiil says that he has always wanted to learn English but finds it difficult to learn.

Ajtuukul says that he is now beginning to reconsider the role of English in his life as he identifies new potential activities and work that would require him to know English. For example, he has received many requests to make translations from Yucatec Maya to English directly, something he cannot do because he can only translate to Spanish.

In addition, I created narrative vignettes (Ammann, 2018) that would illustrate my participants' lived experiences and serve as a starting point for the theoretical discussion using a plurilingual lens on multiple language(s) use for this particular Mexican Indigenous Maya context and with the participants of the project.

Amman (2018) explains that narrative vignettes are a research tool that follows a phenomenological research tradition. They consist of short and lively texts that record human experiences. It is a method that allows us to then empirically reflect on and investigate such lived experiences (Amman, 2018). The goal of narrative vignettes is to show the situation, as opposed to reporting it, as close as possible, so that the reader can understand how the people lived it and reacted to it.

For the purposes of this study, once I had organized the collected data into themes (Hycner, 1985) or macro categories (Mortari & al., 2023), I reflected on the participants' lived experiences that would best bring the reader close to meaningful language use situations that had been shared with me during the interviews and that represented organizational categories for all the information. It must be pointed out that given my methodology, I did not create the vignettes after being on-site with the participants. Rather, I used all the elements provided in the interviews, in addition to my prior knowledge and familiarity with their contexts and lives, to come up with these brief texts. In sum, except for choosing a pseudonym to name a friend of one participant, I based my vignettes on the collected data.

The function of the narrative vignettes included in the Findings chapter of this investigation was to illustrate my participants' lived experiences and to serve as examples in the answering of the research questions and, also, as support for the theoretical discussion using a plurilingual lens on multiple language(s) use for this particular Mexican Indigenous Maya context and with the participants of the project.

Concretely, I created narrative vignettes on the following themes:

- Parental refusal to interact using Yucatec Maya in formal settings like the school grounds. Fixed functions/fixed people for each language despite having the option to be flexible and use them both/all.
- Spanish as the language of urban settings (vs. communities), of schooling and work, with an academic, economic, and work-related function.
- Parental Spanish transmission to participants, instead of or parallel to Yucatec Maya, which responded to an intention of keeping children from struggling at school or being discriminated.

- The personal resistance/refusal to interact using or replying in Yucatec Maya. The change in attitudes and practices after participants encounter the learning and use of oral and written Yucatec Maya upon entrance to their undergraduate program in Language/Linguistics and Culture.
- The exposure to academic events in Yucatec Maya during their Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program.
- The formal learning of Yucatec Maya alongside the formal learning of English during the Language/Linguistics and Culture program. The learning of oral and written Yucatec Maya.
- English as a language with an academic, economic, and work-related function.

In the following chapter I present the collected data. I follow the phenomenological principles originally developed by Husserl (1939/1989): That is, the information is first presented in descriptive detail. I make extensive use appendices to facilitate its reading. Then, I discuss the patterns or themes that have emerged from the data in relation to the research sub-questions.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a description of the data collected for this project with reference to my research questions. I focus on the patterns that emerge. As Bunton (2005) once noted, there are many ways to organize the chapters found in a thesis. Given the complexity of the phenomenon under study, I have decided to conceptualize my findings chapter as a descriptive presentation of the data organized thematically. My analysis and synthesis appear in the subsequent chapters.

First, I provide an overview of the theoretical and methodological foundations that framed the data collection and the data organization process.

Then I present a table with the participant profiles using the information gathered in the online participant survey. The table is followed by data summary tables. Each summary is organized by the topics covered during the interview processes. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. As detailed in my methodology chapter, this data was transcribed, translated, coded and checked for reliability. In this chapter, I have summarized the data in English.

In accordance with the empirical phenomenological approach (Aspers, 2009; Mortari et al. 2023; Moustakas, 1994) described earlier, I created a substantial section with the emerged data collected during the interview processes. The full description of the emerging data organized by participants can be found in Appendices K-P. The full description of the emerging data organized by the topics included in the research questions can be found Appendix Q.

The last section of this chapter includes the answers to the research questions using the emerging data. I also refer to the narrative vignettes (Ammann, 2018) that I created to illustrate my participants' lived experiences. As mentioned earlier, narrative vignettes are brief texts that

record human experiences with the goal of showing the situation, as opposed to reporting it, as close as possible, so that the reader can understand how the people lived it and reacted to it.

Theoretical and Methodological Foundation of the Study

As mentioned in the previous chapters of this thesis, the intention of my inquiry was to see if the concept of plurilingualism for the purposes of language learning and use could be applied to and resonate in the context of Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program.

The reason for choosing a plurilingual perspective for multiple language(s) practices responded to the fact that in the context of the study, participants juggle different languages in their daily lives. Instead of considering knowledge and usage of multiple languages as isolated communication tools, a plurilingual perspective interconnects all languages and links their usage with the context (Piccardo, 2018). Simultaneously, the specific historical, political and social elements of the context would shed some light into how such language(s) practices were experienced by the participants. Since the participants are multiple language users, I wanted to see if and how their language practices could be explained from a theoretical perspective that fosters multiple language use while explicitly connecting individual practices to societal narratives.

In an effort to work *with* Indigenous participants (Smith, 1999) an empirical phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) served as inspiration. The rationale for choosing this methodological approach was to have their pre-theoretical (Zahavi, 2018) language(s) usage descriptions, interpretations and reflections as the guide to a collective meaning of the experience in question.

As Zahavi (2018) explained, “our world of experience has its own criteria of validity and truth and does not have to await the approval of science” (p. 52). This position is important when working with underrepresented groups such as Indigenous Maya students from southeastern Mexico because it aligns with the claims that Indigenous ways of knowing are alive and valid, regardless of them being accepted (or not) by the scientific or academic community.

Once the data was collected, the emerging themes were organized according to the research sub-questions in order to present the findings of the study which would afterwards serve as the evidence for a theoretical analysis and discussion.

Participant Individual Profiles

Table 2

Participant Individual Profiles

| Pseudonym | Self-identified gender | Age | Self-identified ethnic group | State of origin | University | Student status | First generation student | Self-identifies as speaker of |
|-----------|------------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Vane | F | 20 | Maya | Quintana Roo | A | Current student | No | Spanish, Yucatec Maya and English |
| Lau | F | 23 | Maya | Quintana Roo | A | Former student | Yes | Yucatec Maya and Spanish |
| Chinitos | M | 22 | Maya | Quintana Roo | A | Former student | Yes | Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English |
| Lizbeth | F | 29 | Maya | Quintana Roo | A | Former student | Yes | Yucatec Maya and Spanish |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|----|------|---------|---|----------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| Jpiil | M | 35 | Maya | Yucatan | B | Former student | Yes | Yucatec Maya and Spanish |
| Ajtuukul | M | 36 | Maya | Yucatan | B | Former student | Yes | Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English |

Participant Summary Tables

Table 3

Self-Identification of Benefits and Challenges of Language(s) Spoken

| Pseudonym | Benefits of using YM | Challenges of using YM | Benefits of using Sp | Challenges of using Sp | Benefits of using En | Challenges of using En |
|-----------|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| Vane | Using YM language allows her to help a lot in her community, seeing herself as eventually being able to teach non-Maya speakers to be able to understand and speak the Maya language. | Not being able to engage in advanced communication with speakers of Maya and not fully understanding Maya. | To communicate more efficiently on a daily basis and can communicate with other countries and people. | Not using the correct vocabulary on some occasions. | Benefiting from learning English in terms of education and interpersonal relationship, whether locally, nationally, or internationally. | As with Maya, she still can't communicate efficiently with native speakers of the language. Nevertheless, she understands it a little more than she does Maya. |
| Lau | She | Learning the | Using | Not | Learning | Having to |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| <p>feels that learning more about the language allows her to help other people who have the initiative to learn to speak Maya. One of her self-described benefits of writing Maya is the ability to write reports and transcribe Maya stories. Speaking Maya has helped her to meet other people who also know about</p> | <p>correct spelling of new words, having to learn how to pronounce words correctly, and knowing when to use words, phrases, etc. in the right way.</p> | <p>Spanish allows her to help relatives or family members because not everyone speaks Spanish and instead use their mother tongue, Yucatec Maya. However, speaking Spanish makes it easier for Lau to communicate with other people she knows who only speak Spanish.</p> | <p>knowing what a word refers to or the meaning of a word when in conversation with someone, learning to write new words, and learning the meaning of unfamiliar words.</p> | <p>English in university is enabling her to catch up with peers who have studied the language since high school.</p> | <p>learn to write it, to pronounce the words properly, and to spell it. It is complicated because she has to learn even more about his language because of the need to face new things and new people coming from different places.</p> |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| | the language. | | | | | |
| Chinitos | Chinitos believes modern expressions help more people become interested in and interact with the language. His immersion into the language allows him to understand phenomena that are only used within the Yucatec Mayan culture. | Chinitos felt that not everyone understands the value that the language conveys, so discrimination is often present. Likewise, it is very difficult to get academic material in the language. | Chinitos notes the ability to communicate with people who are not native to the region. | Chinitos had no comments. | Chinitos notes how communication with foreigners (in English) helps in the transmission of the Maya language and culture and is very useful for academic purposes. | Chinitos so far has only found it difficult to express certain things in the language. |
| Lizbeth | Sharing the Yucatec Maya language with other generations is priceless; she enjoys | The young population does not understand Yucatec Maya when she communicates with them. It is a challenge, she says, for | Lizbeth describes being able to interact with other people in different environments. | Lizbeth said that because Spanish is the most used language in the whole state by the new generations, there is therefore no | Lizbeth sees English as a way of meeting and interacting with other people while learning about their culture and lifestyle. | In Lizbeth's community and workplace, no one communicates in English, and there is, therefore, no challenge. |

| | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| | sharing her mother tongue with others so that it does not disappear and will continue to be spoken for many more years to come. | Yucatec Maya speakers to continue preserving it and getting young people interested in learning the legendary Yucatec Maya language. | | challenge for communication. | | |
| Jpiil | Jpiil said he feels more confident to express himself as learning the language boosts his self-esteem. | Jpiil said he can't use it in different contexts; most people use Spanish. | No comments were made by Jpiil on this topic. | Jpiil describes needing to first remember and apply the grammatical structure to order his ideas so that he can be understood by the audience. | Jpiil describes being very stressed by not being fluent in English. | Jpiil rarely uses English. |
| Ajtuukul | First, he learns new words, which gives him the power to learn and strengthen | Institutions that do not have translators or interpreters do not allow you to express ideas in Maya, and many words do not have a Spanish | Ajtuukul said that Spanish allows him to understand people, get products from establishments, and actively | Ajtuukul has difficulty using appropriate Spanish and recognizing words that are not regionalisms. In addition, | Ajtuukul embraces English as a way to help in understanding academic books; with organizations requesting | Ajtuukul is concerned with mispronunciation and understanding of the language. |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| writing ability in his languag e. If he talks to older people, the languag e brings him closer to their way of thinking . With children, he is able to demonst rate the strength of the languag e. To write in chat teaches the algorith ms of the keyboar d to recogniz e words and gives strength to the words. There is access to rituals and | translation. There is discriminatio n against Maya speakers by people who do not sympathize with the Maya language. You are restricted from using it in establishment s and shopping centers. There is discomfort because if you speak you are observed as something strange. There are groups on WhatsApp that do not accept writing in Maya. | participate in activities. He notes that most jobs require Spanish to communicat e and schools have teachers who speak more in Spanish. | challenges are found in explaining situations that are specific to local activities and using incorrectly conjugated verbs. | Yucatec Maya- English translations, he sees an opening to employmen t possibilities . |
|---|--|--|--|--|

ways of
life that
are
unique
to the
commu-
nity.

Table 4*Family and Community Language(s) Use*

| Pseudonym | Family language(s) use | Link to YM in family dynamics | YM and Sp. in family transmission | Community language(s) use |
|-----------|---|---|--|---|
| Vane | With her nuclear family Vane usually communicates in Spanish. Family interaction and daily communication among Vane's father, mother and siblings, happens in Spanish. Vane says that, since she was born, everything has been in Spanish. Nonetheless, Vane expressed that if she has children, she will teach them three languages—Spanish, Maya and English. | Her father is the only family member that speaks Yucatec Maya since Vane's maternal grandmother, who was a Yucatec Maya speaker, passed away recently. Vane and her brother, a university student as well, are both learning Maya at school. Vane practices Yucatec Maya with her father when she goes back to her community. | Since Vane was born, everything has been in Spanish. In her case, the use of Spanish (instead of Yucatec Maya) for the purposes of family communication changed in the generation of Vane's parents. | Vane's community interaction happens in Spanish because that is the language that she is a speaker of. She uses Yucatec Maya or English under particular circumstances in which she makes a conscious effort to employ a language that she is still learning. |
| Lau | Daily communication among Lau's father, mother and siblings happen in Spanish. Spanish is spoken inside their home. Family interaction with Lau's | Her maternal grandparents (now deceased) spoke Maya to Lau's parents, to Lau and her siblings, and to all of her cousins. Lau says that it was because of | In Lau's case, the selection of Spanish for the purposes of nuclear family communication happened with her generation and within Lau's nuclear family in particular: Lau's father speaks | Lau speaks Yucatec Maya with her friends, with her extended family, and with people in the community. |

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| | cousins in the community is in Yucatec Maya. Communication with her paternal grandparents fluctuates between Spanish and Yucatec Maya, depending on the topic or on the language that was spoken first. | them that all of her family, on her mother's side, learned to speak Yucatec Maya. | Spanish to her and to her siblings, and Yucatec Maya to his parents and to his in-laws. Lau's mother spoke, and speaks, Spanish to Lau and to her siblings and Yucatec Maya to her parents and to her in-laws. | |
| Chinitos | Family interaction and daily communication happen in Spanish and Yucatec Maya. Chinitos says that if he is in a gathering with his parents and siblings, he can use both Spanish and Yucatec Maya. But if he is with his siblings or with his cousins, he uses Spanish only. | Chinitos's paternal grandparents spoke to him in Yucatec Maya while he was growing up, but he would not reply in Yucatec Maya. They passed away when Chinitos was 15 and 20, before he could really hold a full conversation in Yucatec Maya. | In Chinito's case, the selection of Spanish for the purposes of nuclear family language transmission happened with his generation. Chinito's father spoke to him and his siblings in Spanish but speaks Yucatec Maya with his wife (Chinito's mother). Chinito's mother spoke to him and his siblings in Spanish but she communicated in Yucatec Maya with her husband, Chinito's father. Chinito recalls that sometimes his parents would include some Yucatec Maya in their explanations. | For Chinitos, community interactions depend on location: He considers that his life is bilingual (YM-Sp.) when he is in his village, but that it is monolingual in Spanish when he is in the town where he works. |
| Lizbeth | Family interaction and daily communication happens mostly in Yucatec Maya: Lizbeth uses | Yucatec Maya is present as a language from home and for daily interaction. She uses Yucatec | Lizbeth considers that she learned Yucatec Maya and Spanish from her parents and her seven older siblings. | Lizbeth's community interactions happen in Yucatec Maya and Spanish. |

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| | <p>Yucatec Maya to communicate with her mother, father, siblings, in-laws, and 1-year-old son. She uses Spanish to communicate with her husband, although sometimes she talks to him in Yucatec Maya as well, even if he does not reply in Yucatec Maya.</p> | <p>Maya with her parents, her siblings, and friends from her village. She points at the fact that the younger generations do not speak it as much or can only understand it and not speak it.</p> | <p>Lizbeth's parents taught their children Spanish once they entered school so that they wouldn't struggle with the language of instruction.</p> | <p>With elders and adults, Lizbeth uses Yucatec Maya. She says the older generation find it difficult to speak Spanish. With younger generations (teenagers and children), Lizbeth tries to use Yucatec Maya but she acknowledges that either they don't understand her or that they do understand her but always reply in Spanish.</p> |
| Jpiil | <p>Jpiil normally communicates in Yucatec Maya with his parents and siblings, regardless of the location. With his nuclear family, wife and son (6), Jpiil uses Spanish and Yucatec Maya. His wife is learning Yucatec Maya from interacting with Jpiil's family and his son is learning Yucatec Maya from Jpiil and his paternal extended family.</p> | <p>Jpiil says that he learned Yucatec Maya from his parents, his grandparents, the people in his community and from his siblings.</p> | <p>Jpiil says that he learned Yucatec Maya from his parents, his grandparents, the people in his community and from his siblings. Jpiil recalls learning Spanish at a young age from watching television and from listening to his aunts and uncles who worked in Valladolid, where they used Spanish, when they came back to the village for the weekend.</p> | <p>Jpiil mentions that his community is a Yucatec Maya speaker community; however, due to media and to globalization, children nowadays have begun to communicate more in Spanish than in Yucatec Maya.</p> |
| Ajtuukul | <p>In Ajtuukul's nuclear family,</p> | <p>With his grandparents,</p> | <p>In Ajtuukul's community, Yucatec</p> | <p>For Ajtuukul, since he moves</p> |

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| with his wife and children, daily communication happens mostly in Yucatec Maya and sometimes in Spanish. With his parents and siblings, family communication happens in Yucatec Maya. | Ajtuukul always spoke in Yucatec Maya. Ajtuukul's father spoke Yucatec Maya to his nuclear family but he knew Spanish since he was 14-15 years old and he used it for work purposes in Cancun, during Ajtuukul's childhood. Ajtuukul's mother spoke Yucatec Maya to most of her children. | Maya was spoken all the time, with his parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents. In his childhood neighborhood in Valladolid, Yucatec Maya was spoken as well due to the fact that he and his family lived in an area (<i>comisaría</i>) where everyone spoke Yucatec Maya, although in other areas of Valladolid people spoke Spanish. | from the village where he and his wife and children stay, to Valladolid and other communities where he works, as well as to his community of origin, his community interactions happen in both Yucatec Maya and Spanish. |
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Table 5*Language(s) of Schooling and Occupation*

| Pseudonym | Language(s) of prior schooling | Language(s) in university | Language(s) with classmates | Language(s) and occupation |
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| Vane | Vane used Spanish during her elementary, junior high, and high school levels of schooling. Vane remembers that in her previous levels of schooling prior to the post-secondary level, none of her teachers was a Yucatec Maya speaker. | Vane says that most of the university instructors use Spanish in their courses. When it is a Yucatec Maya language course or an English language course, the professors use the target language during class. Furthermore, if the teachers see that the class is having a hard time understanding, they switch and | Outside and inside the university, with her classmates she normally speaks Spanish, as only a few of them are fluid Yucatec Maya speakers. Vane's cohort has 20 students. They all speak Spanish. Only 5 speak Yucatec Maya. | In the future, Vane sees herself as a <i>promotora cultural</i> [cultural promoter] in her community, working with people from the village teaching Yucatec Maya and promoting the Mayan culture to local children. |

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| | | explain in Spanish. The university administrative staff speaks and communicates with the students in Spanish. | | |
| Lau | Lau used Spanish during her elementary and junior high school. She used Spanish and Yucatec Maya in high school. | Lau expresses that at her university, she used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with her professors, but only Spanish with the administrative staff. | With her university classmates she used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English. | Lau, who has just finished her undergraduate program, would like to work as a Yucatec Maya language teacher because she likes teaching and because she feels she is improving as she continues to learn herself. |
| Chinitos | Chinitos used Spanish during his elementary, junior high, and high school levels of schooling. | He says that at his university, he used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with his professors and Spanish and Yucatec Maya with the administrative staff. | He says that he used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with and with his classmates. | Chinitos works as a Yucatec Maya and English language teacher at his former university. |
| Lizbeth | Lizbeth used Spanish during her elementary, junior high and high school levels of schooling., | At her university, she used Spanish and Yucatec Maya with her professors, and Spanish with the administrative staff. | At her university, she used Spanish and Yucatec Maya with her classmates. | Lizbeth works as a teacher in an elementary school with an Indigenous modality. Her students are learning the basics of Yucatec Maya, such as |

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| | | | | greetings. They are also learning English. Lizbeth observes that the children are more interested in English because it gives them more job opportunities in the future. They have the idea that English is better than the Maya language |
| Jpiil | Jpiil says he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish during his elementary and junior high schooling periods. He recalls using Spanish in his high school. | In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his professors, and Spanish with the administrative staff. | In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his classmates. | Current Indigenous preschool teacher, Yucatec Maya language promotor and activist, farmer/agriculturist. Jpiil works in an Indigenous preschool located in what he describes as a Yucatec Maya speaking community. The school children and their parents speak Spanish in school. Jpiil observes that even though the parents know Yucatec Maya, they don't use it when they are in the school area. He concludes that they probably use Yucatec Maya at |

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| | | | | home, but once they are in the street or in the school, they prefer to use Spanish; and he specifies that the only parents who do not understand Yucatec Maya are those that come from other states of the country. |
| Ajtuukul | Ajtuukul says he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish during his elementary school and high school. He recalls using Spanish in his junior high school. | In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his professors and with his classmates; and Spanish with the administrative staff. | In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his classmates. | Current Yucatec Maya language teacher and ancient written Maya (epigraphy) consultant. |

Findings Organized According to Research Questions

1. What Language(s) Do Current and Former Undergraduate Maya Students Use with Various Members of their Academic and Professional Communit(ies) and for What Purposes?

The following narrative vignette illustrates, for non-speakers of Yucatec Maya, or for participants who knew the language but refused to use it, the exposure to the formal learning of Yucatec Maya upon entrance to their Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program and the exposure to academic events in Yucatec Maya during their Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program.

When students enter their Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program, they are exposed to the formal learning of Yucatec Maya and to academic events in such language. In the Language and Culture program, speaking Yucatec Maya was not an admission requirement. The following narrative vignette illustrates how Vane, a non-speaker of Yucatec Maya, recalled her experience with academic events in the Indigenous language.

Vane is walking from her classroom to the university's auditorium. She is not alone: Students and faculty members from other classes follow the same route. Everyone is chatting as they head to the event. You can hear a lot of Spanish and very random Yucatec Maya in the conversations.

Vane enters the auditorium and finds a seat next to her friends. They are here for a colloquium. She thinks for a moment about her undergraduate program. She had always wanted to study something related to language pedagogy and so here she is.

The presentation begins. It is in Yucatec Maya. Vane feels frustrated. Ever since she started university sometimes she wishes she spoke Yucatec Maya instead of Spanish. She would really like to be able to ask a question or make a comment at the end of this seminar, but her Yucatec Maya is not fluent enough to participate.

Ever since she was born, everything has been in Spanish. She speaks Spanish with her mother, Spanish with her father and Spanish with her siblings. Her father is the only person in her family who speaks Yucatec Maya, but he only uses it with elders in the community.

Now that Vane is learning Yucatec Maya at university, she practices it with her father whenever she goes back to her village. He speaks very fast and it's difficult to understand him, so she asks him to slow down or repeat. Sometimes he gets frustrated and translates in Spanish.

Back to the auditorium. Vane continues listening but her thoughts drift away again...

During her Translation course, they meet a German guest speaker. In addition to German, the man speaks English, Spanish and Yucatec Maya fluently. He tells the class how he learned each language and gives them tips to continue learning English and Yucatec Maya. He mentions that it is important to maintain the Yucatec Maya language, particularly in the Maya region of Quintana Roo. Vane is surprised and motivated to meet a foreigner who has learned the Indigenous language of the region.

Academic Communit(ies) Language(s) Use. The information shared by participants indicates that Spanish was their language of schooling from preschool to university. The analysis suggests that Spanish was perceived by participants' parents as the language of schooling, which their children had to learn or know to keep them from struggling during the course of their formal education. This might have led some parents of the participants to choose Spanish as the home language or to include it as an additional language in the household.

For example, Lizbeth's parents originally spoke to her in Maya, but taught their children Spanish once they entered school so that they wouldn't struggle with the language of instruction. (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023) In the families that had Yucatec Maya as the home language, Spanish was included and promoted as the language of schooling and work. Additional input sources were relatives living in urban settings (who had left the community for work purposes); television; and, later, social media.

Jpiil recalls that he began to learn Spanish at a young age from watching television and from listening to his aunts and uncles who worked in Valladolid, where they used Spanish. On weekends, they came back to their home village.

In some cases, the promotion of Spanish as the home language may have also resulted from witnessing or experiencing first-hand discrimination for being a Yucatec Maya speaker and

the intention to protect the next generation from experiencing the same or because it was the language needed for schooling purposes.

Lau's mother grew up monolingual in Yucatec Maya and began learning Spanish in her early twenties when her children entered school in the community. She then found herself having to help them with their schoolwork and decided to speak Spanish to her children so that they wouldn't struggle in school. Nonetheless, she also encouraged them to use Yucatec Maya with her own parents, Lau's maternal grandparents.

Presently, Jpiil believes that Spanish is the language imposed by the schooling process, because if schooling had been in Yucatec Maya, they would only use Yucatec Maya. He considers Spanish to be an educational medium. Vane considers that Spanish is a language that one must learn because it is the most frequently used language where she is, and all the school content, courses and assignments are in Spanish. Chinitos considers Spanish to be a widely used academic form, a personal and interactive way to communicate with people who do not speak Yucatec Maya.

The data indicates that Yucatec Maya and English are languages that are taught as subject matters in participants' Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate programs. Both oral and written forms of Yucatec Maya and English are taught. Participants have to speak and write assignments in Yucatec Maya and English. In addition, seminars in Yucatec Maya and English, as well as language exchanges for practicing purposes were part of participants' university experience.

I asked Vane if she had ever been in a situation where she would have preferred to use one language instead of another but couldn't. She responded that she would have liked to speak Yucatec Maya instead of Spanish. She notices how exciting it is when Yucatec Maya-speaking

professionals come in for conferences and workshops and deliver their lectures in Yucatec Maya, they ask questions in Yucatec Maya. She wishes she were more capable in the language so that she could ask questions and participate more fully in the conversations, as the Yucatec Maya-speaking students do (Vane, personal communication, April 22, 2023).

The data suggest that Spanish is the bridge language of instruction for university professors and that Yucatec Maya and English are used in the context of the Yucatec Maya and English language courses and as the topics of instruction. Consequently, university students use Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and English with their university professors in the context of their university language courses. Vane says that most of the university professors/instructors use Spanish in their courses. When it is a Yucatec Maya language course or an English language course, the professors use the target language during class. Furthermore, if the teachers see that the class is having a hard time understanding, they switch and explain in Spanish.

Yucatec Maya and English may also be used as languages of communication with university professors when in the context of university activities. Lau and Chinitos use Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with their university professors. Lizbeth, Jpiil, and Ajuukul use Spanish and Yucatec Maya with their professors.

The data also support the idea that Spanish is the language of interaction with the university administrative staff. All participants reported using Spanish to communicate with the university administrative staff.

The analysis identifies that Spanish serves as the bridge language to communicate and interact with classmates. Even if they come from rural Indigenous communities, the students that enroll in the Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate programs are not expected to know Yucatec Maya. University B suggests that a disposition to learn and speak Yucatec Maya is

strongly recommended, while the program in University A does not specify any language requirements. Students may also come from other states in the country and may be speakers of a different Indigenous language and not of Yucatec Maya. However, both institutions assume that all future students know how to speak, read, and write in Spanish.

Consequently, usage of Yucatec Maya with classmates depends on the Yucatec Maya speaking abilities of each person. For example, Vane says that outside and inside the university, with her classmates she normally speaks Spanish, as only a few of them are fluent Yucatec Maya speakers. Vane's cohort has 20 students. They all speak Spanish and only 5 speak Yucatec Maya.

The number of students who enter their undergraduate program having Yucatec Maya as their home language varies from cohort to cohort. By the time students in general entered university, they had used Spanish in their previous levels of schooling. Some participants reported having taken English and/or Yucatec Maya language courses in secondary school.

Professional Communit(ies) Language(s) Use. The following narrative vignette illustrates parental refusal to interact using Yucatec Maya in formal settings like the school grounds pointing at having fixed functions/fixed people for each language despite having the option to be flexible and use them both/all.

2013. Lizbeth works as a teacher in a rural community. The teachers that arrive only speak Spanish. The children have a hard time understanding because they speak Yucatec Maya. Not sharing a language becomes an instructional barrier. So Lizbeth starts teaching them in Yucatec Maya. The students improve their participation in class. They express themselves and they ask her questions. Lizbeth covers the topics from the official program, but she delivers the instruction in Yucatec Maya, bridging languages so that her students understand and improve their performance.

2023. Jpiil turns to check that everything is set up in his classroom. His students are about to arrive. He walks towards the school yard, heading for the entrance area. He sees parents arrive with students, chatting and greeting friends, neighbours, all people from the community. Once they set foot on the school ground, he hears that all the conversations are in Spanish.

Jpiil greets parents and students alike in Yucatec Maya. The parents reply in Spanish. Not because they don't understand, but because they are at school. And at school, one speaks Spanish.

Jpiil knows that parents use Yucatec Maya at home and that his students understand Yucatec Maya. So, he uses Spanish and Yucatec Maya as languages of instruction. He starts in Spanish, continues in Yucatec Maya, then Spanish, then Yucatec Maya. Jpiil moves from one to the other, bridging languages throughout the day, and his preschool students do not complain.

2023. Lizbeth has everything ready to start the day. Her students are about to arrive. She stands outside her classroom, where she encounters her colleague. – *Ma'alob k'iin* [Good morning!], greets Lizbeth. – *¡Buenos días!* [Good morning!], replies her colleague. They are from the same village, but they met when they both began to work at this school. Lizbeth knows that her colleague speaks Yucatec Maya. However - *I can't communicate with you in [Yucatec] Maya, I would feel weird. I met you speaking Spanish!*, explains her colleague.

All the teachers in Lizbeth's school are Yucatec Maya speakers. But whenever Lizbeth addresses them in Yucatec Maya, they reply in Spanish.

All the teachers in Lizbeth's school speak Spanish to the children. And all the children speak Spanish to the teachers.

Lizbeth knows that most parents, regardless of whether they know Yucatec Maya or not, use Spanish at home with their children. So Lizbeth teaches them the basics of Yucatec Maya, like greetings, that students learn alongside the basics of English.

The analysis suggests that Spanish was perceived by participants as the language needed to get work. For Lizbeth, Spanish represents something students need to know to be able to work, to be able to communicate in their fields (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023). Spanish is therefore being used by participants as a bridge language for professional purposes.

Ajtuukul considers Spanish as a means to relate to people since most people speak Spanish. In the same way, Ajtuukul considers that Spanish serves to connect people with institutions and with remunerative or work activities; the language has an economic function rather than a merely communicative or social function.

Knowledge of Yucatec Maya and/or of English may help fulfill specific job requirements. Yucatec Maya is being used as a language of instruction by participants who are currently working as teachers in the official education system. Yucatec Maya and English are being used as a subject matter by participants who are currently working as language teachers.

There is an interest in current Maya cultural initiatives that demand, for example, translations or interpretation from Yucatec Maya to English or from Spanish to English. Chinitos says that he uses English when there are foreign visitors at the university. He recalls one time when he was asked to be an interpreter from Spanish to English for a group of Canadians who were attending a lecture on community health and traditional medicine.

Ajtuukul says that he is now beginning to reconsider the role of English in his life as he identifies new potential activities and work that would require him to know English. For

example, he has received many requests to make translations from Yucatec Maya to English directly, something he cannot do because he can only translate from Yucatec Maya to Spanish. He has also been told that if the videos he and his colleagues created had English subtitles, all of his efforts to promote Yucatec Maya language and culture could be mobilized more. He also notices that many foreigners are interested in current cultural initiatives he is involved in, like the project with local *melipona* bees.

The data indicates that generally speaking, Yucatec Maya is seen as having a symbolic value, while Spanish and English are seen as having an economic value in the professional communities where participants interact. Families are choosing to transmit and students are hoping to learn the languages with a perceived economic value. These preconceptions are shared by the educational communities of participants who currently work as language teachers or as teachers in the official education system.

For example, Lizbeth currently works as a teacher in an elementary school with an Indigenous modality. The school is located in what Lizbeth describes as a small community. The children that attend the school where Lizbeth works come from homes where Spanish is the language of daily family interaction. Lizbeth explains that the parents do not speak Yucatec Maya to their children. She adds that her students are surrounded by technology.

Lizbeth's students are learning the basics of Yucatec Maya, such as greetings, at school. They are also learning English. Lizbeth, who learned English during her undergraduate program and who participated in a university exchange program in Canada, asks her students to share and practice with her what they learned in their English class. Lizbeth observes that the children are more interested in English because it gives them more job opportunities in the future. They have

the idea that English is better than the Maya language (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

In the case of Yucatec Maya language students, older language students want to learn Yucatec Maya to become teachers of the language, but younger language students want to learn English to be in contact with current trends or to get a job.

Chinitos also teaches Yucatec Maya. Chinitos teaches a Yucatec Maya literacy course to older students who have Yucatec Maya as their first language. He observes their interest in learning how to read and write the language, to potentially become Yucatec Maya teachers or cultural promoters in their own communities.

Chinitos works as a Yucatec Maya and English language teacher at his former university where he runs the English conversation circles. In those sessions, he presents or reinforces English topics using English and Spanish. He observes that students approach him asking if he knows English. Chinitos believes that younger generations perceive English as the language of cool things, of current trends, and of the promise of a future outside currently-known limits. This poses a challenge in the current work that Chinitos tries to do, because many students are more interested in learning foreign languages than in learning Yucatec Maya.

Chinitos tries to show his students that knowing and speaking Yucatec Maya can provide academic and personal benefits because the language is spoken all across the Maya region and can therefore provide a sense of belonging while allowing a constant exchange of knowledge(s).

Yucatec Maya is being currently used as a home language, but it is not being taken out to formal domains like the school setting. Parents limit the usage of Yucatec Maya to the home domain.

For instance, in the Indigenous preschool where Jpiil the school children and their parents speak Spanish in school. Jpiil observes that even though the parents know Yucatec Maya, they don't use it when they are in the school area. He concludes that they probably use Yucatec Maya at home but once they are in the street or in the school, they prefer to use Spanish. Jpiil adds that he thinks his students know Yucatec Maya from their family context; he adds that if they don't speak it, they can at least probably understand it from listening to their parents. He concludes that those children are therefore having contact with the Indigenous language.

I ask Jpiil if he thinks that the parents from his school are reflecting and consciously deciding which languages they want to transmit to their children. He replies that he doesn't think they are thinking about that; that they probably consider Spanish to be the language of communication because their community is geographically close to a city and because even if the preschool curriculum includes Yucatec Maya and Spanish as languages of instruction, once the children enter elementary school and junior high school, all the learning happens in Spanish. He concludes that because of these reasons, the parents might be teaching their children Spanish first so that they are not discriminated against or rejected.

In a school setting, Spanish may be the expected language of communication even between teacher colleagues who are Yucatec Maya speakers. Many teacher colleagues are not motivated to use Yucatec Maya as a language of instruction.

Lizbeth says that most of her colleagues are Yucatec Maya speakers but that they use Spanish when they are in their work setting. Lizbeth shares that when she addresses them in Yucatec Maya, they don't follow her initiative and they reply in Spanish to her. She explains that most of them are teachers who are about to retire and who are therefore not interested in teaching Yucatec Maya to the students, especially because they don't see the students interested in

learning such language either. With one particular teacher that comes from the same village as Lizbeth, the interaction happens in Spanish: Lizbeth's colleague says that she met Lizbeth speaking Spanish and therefore feels strange speaking Yucatec Maya with her.

2. What Language(s) Do Current and Former Undergraduate Maya Students Use with Various Members of Their Family and Home Communit(ies) and for What Purposes?

The following narrative vignette shows that parental Spanish transmission to participants, instead of or parallel to Yucatec Maya, responded to an intention of keeping children from struggling at school or being discriminated.

Lau and her mother are in the kitchen, chatting about everything and nothing in particular. Her three-year-old niece is running around, pulling her to go play. Wait a moment, Lau tells her in Yucatec Maya. The little girl looks puzzled. Wait a moment, repeats Lau, this time in Spanish. Ahhhh, the toddler confirms she understands. Repeat after me, instructs Lau, as she slowly pronounces the sentence in Yucatec Maya again. Her niece repeats obediently and runs off. Lau is following her older sister's petition to teach the little one English... which Lau has expanded into teaching the child English AND Yucatec Maya.

As her niece leaves the kitchen Lau's expression turns serious. She takes a deep breath and turns towards her mother who is behind her grabbing something. Lau asks her: Why didn't you speak Yucatec Maya to me when I was little? Why only Spanish? Her mother looks at her daughter. She is not surprised. She had been expecting this question since Lau began taking all those language courses at the university. The woman continues to take plates and utensils, and calmly answers: -I grew up speaking Yucatec Maya. When you and your sister began going to school, I had to make sure you knew Spanish because school is in Spanish... And I also had to help you with homework. It was difficult for me because I was only learning the language myself.

That's when your father and I decided to speak Spanish to all of you so you wouldn't struggle in school.

Home language. Participants normally had one home language that they identified they were brought up with by their parents: Yucatec Maya or Spanish. Their parents normally selected one language to communicate with their children (participants) at home. This language could be the same or different from the language that the parents used to communicate with elders in the family, with extended family members (their own siblings—aunts and uncles of the participants—and their children—cousins of the participants), with people in their community or with each other. For example, Vane's father used Spanish at home with his wife and children but communicated in Yucatec Maya with his mother and with people in the community. Chinitos's parents spoke in Spanish with him and with his two siblings but used Yucatec Maya with each other for couple communication.

Participant age seemed to be a potential indicator of the home language of choice. The three participants that had Spanish as their home language were in their early twenties, while the three that had Yucatec Maya as their home language were in their early to mid-thirties. The youngest child and participant sibling from one of the latter homes, who is in his early twenties, was brought up with Spanish as his home language.

When Spanish was the home language, but participants learned Yucatec Maya, some parents started using both languages with the participants, as was the case with Chinitos and Vane, while others stuck to their original home language. This was the case for Lau.

Sometimes the language used by parents to communicate with the participants was different from the language used by parents to communicate with elders and people in the community. This happens mostly, but not exclusively, when the home language is Spanish.

In Lau's case, Spanish was the home language, even when parents used Yucatec Maya to communicate with extended family members and with the community. Even though Lau spoke Yucatec Maya to her grandparents, to her cousins, and to her neighbors, Spanish remained the language used to communicate with her parents and siblings.

In Chinitos's case, Spanish was the home language, but his parents used Yucatec Maya to communicate with each other, while the community spoke a mix of Yucatec Maya and Spanish.

Family link with Yucatec Maya. In all of the participants' cases, at least one of their parents was a speaker of Yucatec Maya and used this language to communicate with extended family members or with community members on a daily basis.

Communication with Siblings. Normally, the language used by parents with the participants was the language used by the participants with their siblings in the household. This was the case for Lau, who spoke Spanish with their parents and with her siblings; and for Lizbeth, Jpiil and Ajtuukul, who spoke Yucatec Maya with their parents and with their siblings.

When Spanish was the language used by parents to communicate with their children and Yucatec Maya began to be used by the participant, the communication with siblings may have remained in Spanish or may now include Yucatec Maya if the siblings also speak it. Chinitos, who used to speak Spanish with parents and siblings and now speaks Spanish and Yucatec Maya with parents, reports that his siblings are going through the same process that he went through when he was 18. However, Chinitos still communicates in Spanish with his siblings. Vane described that she and her brother usually communicate in Spanish but sometimes they practice speaking to each other in Yucatec Maya and English, since they are both learning those two languages.

When Yucatec Maya was the language used by parents to communicate with their children and was also the language used to communicate with siblings, interactions with brothers and sisters remain in Yucatec Maya even if Spanish begins to be used by someone in the family or by many but for specific purposes. Ajtuukul recalled that his mother began to speak Spanish to his youngest son, Ajtuukul's youngest brother. However, nowadays when the siblings get together, they speak in Yucatec Maya, even to their youngest sibling. Lizbeth reported that her parents taught all their children Spanish for schooling purposes, but the language of communication in the house remained in Yucatec Maya.

Communication with Grandparents. The analysis shows that family elders, that is, grandparents, have a significant role in the transmission and use of Yucatec Maya.

In the families where Spanish was the home language between parents and participants, the need to communicate with the grandparents triggered the speaking or the understanding (listening) of Yucatec Maya. For example, Lau feels that learning Maya was a mandatory thing to be able to communicate with both sets of grandparents because they didn't speak Spanish.

This meant that grandparents were using Yucatec Maya with participant's parents, and that participants were exposed to the language as well. It also meant that whenever participants spent time with their grandparents, they would have the chance to listen to and use Yucatec Maya. In turn, when spending time together and interacting with their grandchildren (participants), grandparents used Yucatec Maya or Spanish, depending on how much Yucatec Maya their grandchildren used.

The data suggest that the role of grandparents as sources of Yucatec Maya transmission seems to fall into a continuum: If grandparents had Spanish as their home language, they might have been Yucatec Maya speakers who used Yucatec Maya with some relatives or in the

community. This was the case of Vane's grandparents, in whose household Spanish was the home language for most of their children, except for Vane's father who was the eldest child and grew up bilingual Yucatec Maya-Spanish. Family gatherings on her mother's and father's sides unfolded in Spanish. In turn, Vane did not grow up exposed to a collective family dynamic in which Yucatec Maya was used as language of communication between grandparents, aunts and uncles, and children. The promotion or the learning of Yucatec Maya found little echo throughout Vane's childhood. Nonetheless, when she began to formally learn her Indigenous language at university, there was a positive reaction in her family.

In some cases, when participants' parents used Spanish as the home language, participants were exposed to Yucatec Maya during the interactions with their grandparents. Communication between grandparents and parents would also happen in Yucatec Maya. Consequently, participants grew up exposed to a collective family dynamic in which Yucatec Maya was used as the language of communication between grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, and children (participants). The amount of Yucatec Maya used by participants varied: Lau reported speaking Yucatec Maya with her grandparents and her cousins, while Chinitos said that he understood Yucatec Maya but would always speak and reply in Spanish until the age of 18.

In such cases, parents seemed to approve of and promote the contact with and the learning of Yucatec Maya, even if they were raising their children (participants) in Spanish. In addition, there was a positive family reaction when participants began to improve their Yucatec Maya speaking skills and when they began writing the language,

The other extreme of the continuum were participants whose interaction with the family elders always happened in Yucatec Maya. With his grandparents, Ajtuukul always spoke in

Yucatec Maya. Ajtuukul participated in community activities like doing the milpa (planting and harvesting the field), which took place in Yucatec Maya only.

Communication with Sentimental Partner (Husband/Wife). Participants who have a sentimental partner reported using two languages to communicate with them. However, Spanish was reported as the language used for partner communication, regardless of how much Yucatec Maya the partners spoke. Lizbeth and her husband speak Spanish to each other because they met at university speaking Spanish. Even though they both speak Yucatec Maya, if Lizbeth speaks Yucatec Maya to her husband, he will reply in Spanish. Jpiil and his wife communicate in Spanish, although she has been learning Yucatec Maya from the contact she has had with Jpiil's family. Ajtuukul and his wife speak Spanish and Yucatec Maya to each other, although Ajtuukul says that his wife speaks more Spanish than Yucatec Maya.

Communication with (Participants') Children. The following narrative vignette illustrates that the participant Yucatec Maya transmission to children comes with intentionality and conviction from participant parents, which could be/is additionally supported by family elders in the role of caregivers.

Every time Jpiil talks to her mother they use Yucatec Maya. Jpiil's mother knows Spanish. She has known Spanish since she was young and working in Valladolid. She just never used it at home with her children. To this day, with her family, she uses Yucatec Maya.

Jpiil's mom doesn't stick to Yucatec Maya as a statement, because she thinks it's important or because some researcher came to tell her she should transmit the language. She uses Yucatec Maya because it comes natural to her and to her way of living.

Jpiil is sitting at the table, creating some material for his language course. His son arrives running, stops abruptly next to him and asks: - What are you doing, dad? After glancing at his father's writing, the boy exclaims: - Ah! It's for the Yucatec Maya class!

Jpiil replies in Yucatec Maya, sending him off so that they both continue with their activities. For a moment there, a feeling of proudness invades him: Today, he and his six-year-old son interact in Yucatec Maya and Spanish indistinctively.

Flashback to four years ago. Jpiil makes up his mind: He will speak Yucatec Maya to his son. If the toddler doesn't learn the language from his father now, it will be more difficult later. Ever since their son was born, Jpiil and his wife have been using Spanish only with him because she worries that the child might get confused if exposed to two languages. Decided, Jpiil explains that there is no risk in learning two languages at the same time. After all, the more Yucatec Maya he knows, the better he will be able to interact with his extended family.

Nowadays, when Jpiil's son visits her grandmother, the boy switches between Spanish and Yucatec Maya while the grandmother sticks to Yucatec Maya.

The data shows that, in the homes of participants with children, there were two home languages being spoken: Spanish and Yucatec Maya. However, participants who are parents are making an effort to ensure Yucatec Maya contact and transmission to their children.

The data indicates that participants with children encourage their parents or their in-laws to speak Yucatec Maya with their grandchildren in order to ensure that their children are being exposed to Yucatec Maya while they are at work, or to have an additional source of Yucatec Maya input.

Lizabeth speaks Yucatec Maya to her son, but the child is also exposed to Spanish through his father. Lizabeth's son has contact with Yucatec Maya through Lizabeth's extended family and to both Spanish and Yucatec Maya through his paternal extended family.

Jpiil speaks Yucatec Maya and Spanish to his son, who speaks Spanish with his mother. Jpiil clarifies that when his son was two years old, he began speaking Yucatec Maya to him in an effort to transmit him two languages instead of one, and before what he considered would have been too late. Jpiil specifies that it is critical to transmit the language at a young age when it is easier to learn (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023). Now, he and his son can converse in anytime in either Spanish or Maya (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023). He adds that there is no schedule for when to use each language.

Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya to his children, who are in constant contact with the Indigenous language through their maternal grandmother who takes care of them. Ajtuukul recalls that during the first years of their lives, his children were being taken care of by his mother, who only spoke Spanish to them.

Participants also reported using their linguistic repertoire to expose children in their families or at work to different languages, often under petition of family members. For example, Lau's sister asked Lau to teach English to her daughter, Lau's niece. Lau additionally teaches her Yucatec Maya expressions.

Participants who do not have children shared their ideas about how they envision their language transmission. When I asked Chinitos which language(s) he would promote if he had children, he replied that he would teach all the languages but primarily speak Maya to them; he also considers the advantages of being multilingual, particularly if his hypothetical partner speaks additional languages (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

Vane expressed that if she has children, she will teach them three languages: Spanish, Maya, and English (Vane, personal communication, May 6, 2023).

Communication with Aunts, Uncles and Cousins. The following narrative vignette illustrates how Spanish function as the language of urban settings (vs. communities), of schooling and work, with an academic, economic, and work-related function.

It's the weekend at the village and everyone seems to be at Jpiil's grandparents' house.

The parents are talking with the elders and taking care of stuff inside and outside the house. Jpiil and his siblings are running around. In the background, the television is on, playing cartoons in Spanish.

The aunts and uncles who work in the city come back to the village with their children. They greet Jpiil in Spanish. Jpiil freezes. He knows what to say but he feels a little embarrassed to reply in Spanish. The aunts and uncles know Yucatec Maya as well so he replies in Yucatec Maya.

The scene repeats every weekend until Jpiil and his siblings start elementary school. By then, the television content and the gradually prolonged chit chats with the aunts and uncles from the city have prepared Jpiil for a schooling journey in Spanish.

The data suggest that the location of participants' aunts and uncles seemed to be an important factor for the selection of the language to use with them for communication purposes. The location represented the place where these relatives had raised their families and were currently living in. The language selection applied either if participants were visited by their aunts, uncles and cousins, or vice versa.

Yucatec Maya was the reported language used to communicate with aunts, uncles, and cousins who were in the community of origin or in nearby villages. Spanish was the reported language used to communicate with aunts, uncles, and cousins in cities or urban centers.

The language used to communicate with cousins was usually the same as the one used to communicate with aunts and uncles. The language used to communicate in extended family gatherings varied from participant-to-participant family.

Community Language Use. Participant language(s) usage in and with their communities of origin varied from case to case. The elements that seem to determine which language to use when interacting in the community are the language commonly used in the community, age, and origin of the interlocutor.

Generally speaking, participants mentioned that elders and adults are the part of the population that speaks Yucatec Maya, while youth and children may understand or know some Yucatec Maya but will speak in Spanish even when addressed in Yucatec Maya.

3. What Language Use Occurs in Various Formal and Informal Domains and for What Purposes?

Yucatec Maya. Participants report using Yucatec Maya as their home language, to communicate with extended family or community members, to take part in cultural or traditional activities, and as a potential topic of instruction or of work.

Vane said that she uses Yucatec Maya with her university teachers that teach in Yucatec Maya, and with her father every time she goes back to her home village. Her father is the only member of her nuclear family who speaks Yucatec Maya.

Lau speaks Yucatec Maya with her paternal grandparents, although they will follow and respond in the language Lau uses with them, either Spanish or Yucatec Maya; with her

community friends that were the neighbors she grew up with and who barely speak Spanish; with some cousins (her mother's brother's children, who speak Yucatec Maya and only a little Spanish); with the vendors in the local stores; with her 3-year-old niece (Lau says something in Yucatec Maya and asks her to repeat); and with her aunts, uncles and cousins who live in other communities.

Chinitos speaks Yucatec Maya with his mother, with his father and with his maternal grandmother, in combination with Spanish; with his maternal great-grandmother; and with his students in the class, he teaches at a neighboring town, where he teaches to read and write in Yucatec Maya. In the past, when Chinitos started speaking Yucatec Maya at the age of 18, he used it to communicate with his paternal grandparents who are now deceased.

Lizbeth speaks Yucatec Maya with the elders and with her grandparents; with her mother and father; with her seven siblings; with her students at the school where she works where Yucatec Maya is taught at a basic level; and with her son (1 year old). In university, Lizbeth spoke Yucatec Maya with her teachers of Yucatec Maya language subjects and with her university classmates. Most of her group spoke Yucatec Maya; out of 8 students who finished the program, 6 were Yucatec Maya speakers from home.

Jpiil speaks Yucatec Maya with his mother, with his father, and with his six siblings. Jpiil also speaks Yucatec Maya in his community to shop and to run errands there, with his extended family, with his students at the preschool where he works (although he combines Yucatec Maya and Spanish), and with the parents of his students.

In his family context, Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya with his father, with his mother, with most of his siblings, with his mother-in-law, with his wife (who speaks more Spanish than Yucatec Maya because her father, who was a teacher, promoted the use of Spanish at home for

his children), with Ajtuukul's own children (ages 6 and 4, who spent the first four years speaking Spanish under the care of Ajtuukul's mother, but are now learning Yucatec Maya under the care of their maternal grandmother, Ajtuukul's mother-in-law), with the elders, and with his friends from the community. In his work context, Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya as part of his professional activities, whether it is for linguistic consulting, to give tours of archaeological sites, to facilitate workshops on gastronomy and/or epigraphy, or in his community work promoting the rights of the Maya people.

Reported benefits of using Yucatec Maya include feeling confident as a result of being able to communicate in the language and to improve the knowledge of it; having trained people to help promote interest and transmission and/or teaching of the language, to help maintain it, and additional understanding of aspects or phenomena specific to the Mayan culture.

Reported challenges of using Yucatec Maya include concrete ignorance about specific grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation aspects of the language; feeling confident in communicating in the language or feeling unable to fully understand and communicate in it; dealing with a lack of knowledge or interest from younger generations to learn it or use the language; discrimination towards Yucatec Maya speakers; lack of material to teach and learn it; lack of institutional Yucatec Maya translators and interpreters; and open prohibition to using written Yucatec Maya in social media.

Spanish. Participants said they use Spanish as an academic or work language and as a home language to communicate with extended family (from and in cities) and community members.

Vane uses Spanish with everyone in her nuclear and extended family: father, mother, siblings, elders, and children. She also uses Spanish to interact in her community and in her university, as well as with her friends.

Lau speaks Spanish with her mother and father, who speak Yucatec Maya with their siblings (Lau's uncles), with their parents (Lau's grandparents), and with everyone in her community, but Spanish with their own children (Lau, her older sister, and her younger brother). She also speaks Spanish with her siblings (an older sister and a younger brother), her paternal grandparents (with whom she also speaks Yucatec Maya), her 3-year-old niece (her sister's daughter), her friends and colleagues at the university, and with her uncles and cousins who live in cities (Playa del Carmen and Cancun).

Chinitos speaks Spanish at home, in his community of origin, with his mother and father, aunts and uncles, younger brother, younger sister, cousins, maternal grandmother, maternal and paternal grandparents (the paternal grandparents are deceased; with his maternal grandparents he used Spanish until he learned Yucatec Maya and now communicates with them in Yucatec Maya only), his friends from the community, and in the town where he went to university and where he currently works.

Lizbeth speaks Spanish with her husband: They met at university and always spoke Spanish with each other. She also speak Spanish with her older nephews in junior high and high school, with the children in her family who are in elementary school, in the school where she works as a teacher, with her teacher colleagues, and with her students and their parents. At university, Lizbeth spoke Spanish with her teachers and administrative staff, and with some classmates who were not Yucatec Maya speakers.

In the family context, Jpiil speaks Spanish with his wife and with his son, although he also speaks Yucatec Maya with him. In his work context, an Indigenous preschool, Jpiil uses Spanish with his students and with their parents, although he also speaks Yucatec Maya with all of them. In his daily life, Jpiil speaks Spanish in the stores and when running errands.

Ajtuukul uses Spanish to run errands, to shop, to fulfill job requirements, to communicate in his various jobs and projects, and to talk to schoolteachers.

Reported benefits of using Spanish include helping relatives who have little mastery of the language, effective communication with people from other regions or countries, and effective communication for transactions, errands, and activities. Reported challenges in Spanish usage include grammar and vocabulary knowledge, but some participants perceive no challenges due to the language's frequent use by people and in places.

English. The narrative vignette presented next illustrates using partial English competence and Spanish in a community situation, and how English functions as a language with an academic, economic, and work-related function.

Vane is in her hometown, during a holiday break from the university. Her town is not a touristic place, but foreigners sometimes stop there on their way to more popular destinations in the area. Tourists are normally seen in the center of the village, walking to stretch their legs, getting a snack from a convenient store or buying handicrafts.

And this is just where Vane is, in her village's main square. All of a sudden, she hears a mixed, bumpy dialog in Spanish and English. She turns and observes. The Spanish is coming from a handicraft vendor lady standing behind her display of products; the English is coming from a couple of tourists pointing and making questions.

Vane knows exactly what the scene is about: Potential customers ask the price; seller gives a price; potential customers bargain a little; seller declines or accepts; customers agree and take out the money, counting slowly because they are unfamiliar with the coins and bills; seller takes the money, counts again and confirms amount given; customers leave happy with their Mexican souvenir; vendor makes an income.

Today, however, things seem to be stuck in step one. The tourists are asking for the price in English and the vendor is providing it in Spanish. Clearly, the vendor doesn't speak English and the tourists do not understand Spanish.

Vane starts feeling extremely nervous. She speaks Spanish and she has been learning English for a few years now. But classes are not real life! What if she opens her mouth and makes a mistake? Uff!, the thought freezes her for a moment. She is unsure of what to do...

Two nanoseconds later she realizes that she knows enough English to help the lady. It'll just be a few numbers, a yes, a no, and a thank you. That's it, no need to stress. So she quickly approaches the scene and positions herself next to the lady. Vane plays the interpreter role until the scene wraps up with: Customers leaving happy with their Mexican souvenir and vendor making an income.

Phew! A big sigh and an enormous sense of accomplishment. The vendor lady is grateful, and Vane is happy she was able to help.

English is not commonly used in home or community interactions. Its usage is related to a language learning process considered useful for academic and work purposes, hence its presence in school and with children, whether they are relatives or pupils, and the belief that knowing that language provides an economic advantage.

Vane's home village is close to Cancun, and foreign tourists often pass by to eat or to buy handcrafts. Vane recalls using English to help a local vendor communicate with tourists who were asking questions about what the lady was selling: Vane translated from Spanish to English and vice versa, and the woman was able to sell her products to the foreigners. Vane shared that felt nervous and hesitant at first, but more confident once she realized she understood, and that she was able to help.

One of Jpiil's younger brothers opened a restaurant in a tourist area of the town where they live and where Jpiil collaborates with cultural initiatives. Sometimes they have clients who only speak English. If one of the employees who speaks English is not there, Jpiil uses the translator on his phone to communicate with the customer. Jpiil considers English useful for communicating and meeting new people.

Lau considers that she knows little and speaks English to her 3-year-old niece at the request of her mother, Lau's sister. Lau says she is teaching her niece the basics of English: Lau says something, and the niece repeats it.

Reported benefits of English usage include being able to communicate with people, access to academic knowledge and activities, fulfillment of job requirements, and an increase of employment possibilities.

Reported challenges in English usage include vocabulary and grammar knowledge, effective understanding and communication with English speakers, learning the language later in life, learning it with people that are more fluent in have more knowledge of the language, or learning it parallel to the learning of Yucatec Maya.

4. What Is the Perceived Relationship Between Their Life and Academic/Career Goals and Their Language Use?

The narrative vignette shown next illustrates the formal learning of Yucatec Maya alongside the formal learning of English during the Language/Linguistics and Culture program, as well as the learning of oral and written Yucatec Maya.

The sun is coming out. Lau gathers her things quickly, in the latest zombie fashion. She stayed up most of the night, studying. She hurries out the door. Today she has an English test.

Lau enters the classroom and looks for her friend Ana. Ana is sitting in her desk. She looks cool, calm and collected. Lau grins at her with a nervous smile; she feels like a pack of nerves. English is so difficult!

Well, not for Ana: She began learning English in secondary school; she improved it in high school because she did a lot of independent studying; and then she spent a semester in Canada as part of the university's exchange program. No wonder she is comfortable today!

Good thing Ana helps Lau with the English reports and assignments or she'd be lost.

The sun is coming out. Lau gathers her things calmly. She feels rested. She exits her room. Today she has a Yucatec Maya test.

Lau enters the classroom and heads to her desk. Ana enters and walks straight towards Lau. Today, Ana has the nervous smile on her face. Lau, on the other hand, feels very confident: Yucatec Maya is not hard.

Lau has been speaking Yucatec Maya since childhood with friends in her village and with her grandparents. The new thing for her is writing the language. She wasn't expecting to learn how to write Yucatec Maya but she is enjoying the process and she feels she is always improving her writing and speaking skills. Even her father is impressed by her progress! Him, who

originally wanted Lau to focus on improving her Spanish and to learn English! No wonder Lau is comfortable today!

But Ana finds Yucatec Maya challenging. Good thing she has Lau to help her with the Yucatec Maya reports and assignments or she'd be lost.

Data suggest that intercultural universities and interculturality-inspired programs in public universities are an affordable option for Indigenous youth in rural, southeastern Mexico. Most of the participants (5 out of 6) were first-generation students who were able to attend university due to their close location and the low cost of their programs.

For example, Vane joined the program because it was an affordable option for her family. Ajtuukul, on his end, didn't think he would have the option of continuing his studies. He thought that he would finish secondary school and would go find work in the Mayan Riviera.

The analysis also shows that the undergraduate programs in Language/Linguistics and Culture promote the message that Yucatec Maya should be valued, used, and transmitted because it is a regional communication tool, allows access to and a deeper understanding of the regional Maya knowledge system, and is a source of professional income.

When asked about his opinion on the role of his university towards the promotion of Yucatec Maya, Chinitos stated that University A tries to make students realize that learning Yucatec Maya is an opportunity that everyone should profit from. Chinitos considers that if he hadn't selected the Language and Culture program, he probably wouldn't have become interested in learning and speaking Yucatec Maya. According to this participant, University A professors emphasize that Yucatec Maya is a language that helps to understand many cultural elements from the regional knowledge system that have existed since the time of the ancient Maya people.

Being exposed to this perspective made Chinitos question why he only understood Yucatec Maya without speaking it. He recalls that before entering university, whenever someone spoke Yucatec Maya to him, he would reply in Spanish. However, as a result of his personal conviction and efforts to learn and constantly improve his Yucatec Maya speaking skills, Chinitos now feels that he can reply in Yucatec Maya to whoever uses that language with him.

The university Language/Linguistic and Culture programs resulted in the expansion of participant linguistic repertoire to strengthen, acknowledge, or include Yucatec Maya. In participant speakers of Yucatec Maya, the learning of its grammar and its writing form added to the value of a language that was already perceived as a present and significant tool of communication.

Usage of Yucatec Maya at home happens only in its oral form. Grammar knowledge of the language (reading, writing) is only taught at school. Vane mentioned that the few classmates that speak Yucatec Maya from home speak very well but they don't know how to write it properly because grammar is not taught at home but at school (Vane, personal communication, February 20, 2023).

Lizbeth, who had Yucatec Maya as her home language, explains that she was interested in the Language and Culture program because its curriculum included the study of Yucatec Maya speaking and writing, as well as the Maya cultural elements.

In participants who understood Yucatec Maya but chose not to speak it, or in participants who spoke Yucatec Maya but had Spanish as a home language, a process of acknowledgement of the presence of Yucatec Maya and of its value for personal and professional development was triggered. In participants who were not familiar with the language, an interest to learn it, use it, and transmit it was generated.

From an early age, Chinitos understood the Yucatec Maya language but did not speak it. He never practiced speaking it until he was 18, when he started university. Chinitos believes that speaking Yucatec Maya brings academic and personal communication benefits, to be able to communicate in any place of the Maya region: Maya is now everything to him (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

The data show that participants consider that students from the Language/Linguistics and Culture programs have the responsibility to promote the value of Yucatec Maya and to transmit it, to compensate for the generalized lack of interest from people to speak it.

In her online participant survey, Vane states that speaking Yucatec Maya would provide a benefit to her as a person, as well as to her culture. When I ask her to elaborate on what the benefits would be she explained that because there are fewer people who are interested in speaking it, there needs to always be leaders among each generation who work to speak, preserve, and share the language. This level of dedication is necessary in the face of a broader young population who sees more personal gain to be found in learning English instead (Vane, personal communication, February 20, 2023).

Jpiil also feels a responsibility toward the teaching of languages when he says that professionals in Language and Culture have the knowledge and power with language to transmit it to the younger generations, and a responsibility to do so lest the language become lost (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Chinitos also speaks about his responsibility as a Yucatec Maya teacher to make his students acknowledge the importance of learning Yucatec Maya. He tries to show his students that knowing and speaking Yucatec Maya can provide academic and personal benefits because

the language is spoken all across the Maya region and can therefore provide a sense of belonging while allowing a constant exchange of knowledge(s).

Some participants chose their undergraduate program in Language/Linguistics and Culture after wondering about the future of their Indigenous language and with the conviction to get formal training to teach Yucatec Maya to the next generations in their community and in the region.

Lizbeth had been observing the interactions among the children in her family, which were mostly in Spanish, and began to wonder if the children would grow up speaking Maya or not. This concern led to her passion for learning and enrollment in the Language and Culture program as a way of ensuring transmission of the language (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Ajtuukul says that he and his younger brother were always driven towards working with and for the community and in language and culture-related issues. Their mother, however, was expecting them to become teachers, doctors or lawyers, so they could leave their village, earn money and improve their lives. She did not support Ajtuukul's decision to do an undergraduate degree related to the Yucatec Maya language and culture. His father, on the other hand, only told him to finish what he was about to begin. Ajtuukul believes that his mother's rejection was related to the discrimination she had suffered in her process of learning Spanish. Ajtuukul has this perspective very much present because he feels the responsibility of figuring out what can be changed so that people do not experience, feel, or think like his mother did.

Both institutions train students, among other things, to be Yucatec Maya language teachers, and one also trains them to be English language teachers. This training has an impact on the language knowledge of the current and former students and also shapes their career

expectations and their opinion on the role they have as Yucatec Maya speakers in regard to the transmission of this Indigenous language.

The analysis suggests that participants acknowledge the importance of having a family link to Yucatec Maya for personal and professional language learning purposes. Former student participants that are currently working teaching Yucatec Maya point at how much easier it is for local Indigenous non-speakers of Yucatec Maya to learn such language because they all have family members and community elders who are Yucatec Maya speakers and who therefore can be their teachers in the process.

Chinitos identifies that people from the region have the advantage of having Yucatec Maya teachers at home, which makes it easier to learn Maya if one lives in the region. All the inhabitants of these communities as a result become teachers, argues Chinitos, and daily immersion at home is the best way to learn (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

The analysis suggests that Yucatec Maya serves as a communication tool to connect with people and students and to build a sense of community between the families and the educational institutions.

Lizbeth's previous experiences working in the communities in the region also motivated her to teach and study Maya and eventually return to the communities. In 2013, while teaching in rural communities, she observed that the teachers who arrived spoke Spanish and the children had a hard time with it. Since she knew the Maya language at the time, she taught them in their mother tongue, Maya, and that allowed for the child to perform better and to communicate better, and even to learn a variety of subjects more easily when they were able to discuss the ideas in Maya. Lizbeth concludes that teachers need to know Yucatec Maya to communicate and to understand their students (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

There is the expectation that after finishing their undergraduate program in Language/Linguistics and Culture, students will find a job as language teachers or as cultural promoters in the region. For instance, Lau says that she would like to work as a Yucatec Maya language teacher because she likes it and because she feels she is improving as she continues to learn herself. Vane, who had Spanish as her home language and has been learning Yucatec Maya as part of her undergraduate program, sees herself as a *promotora cultural* in her community, working with people from the village teaching Yucatec Maya and promoting the Mayan culture to local children.

Nonetheless, there is a perceived lack of effort from classmates or friends who are former students of Language/Linguistics and Culture programs to explore or establish links between their professional field and the work possibilities related to current cultural and linguistic issues, instead of expecting a tenure-track position teaching Yucatec Maya language.

Ajtuukul reflects on the evolution in the approach his undergraduate program has taken. He says that the first six generations were trained to work in multiple fields: As translators or interpreters, as teachers of Yucatec Maya, as cultural promoters and workshop creators, or to work in government. However, Ajtuukul observes that after the first generations, the program changed to focus only on Yucatec Maya teaching. Ajtuukul sees this teaching orientation as a problem because his university is not the only institution training language teachers. The problem, he adds, is that since there aren't enough jobs for all the people that finish, the former students don't know what to do and end up doing graduate studies or continuing their education, which only perpetuates their unemployment.

Ajtuukul identifies a lack of entrepreneurship in the new generations that exit the program, and he says that he is always inviting them to explore work alternatives related to

Yucatec Maya language and culture. With friends who studied gastronomy, for example, he tells them to think about how they can incorporate traditional Maya foods and methods into haute cuisine (Ajtuukul, personal communication, August 2, 2023).

Lizbeth has high regard for the Language and Culture program because University A offers many job opportunities as a result of its multifaceted approach that encourages a variety of skills including translation, interpretation, and teaching (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

5. What Is the Perceived Relationship Between Their Indigenous Identit(ies) and Their Language Use?

The following narrative vignette shows an initial personal resistance/refusal to interact using or replying in Yucatec Maya and the change in attitudes and practices after participants encounter the learning and use of oral and written Yucatec Maya upon entrance to their undergraduate program in Language/Linguistics and Culture.

Chinitos has been listening to Yucatec Maya for eighteen years, as if the language were a radio station constantly playing in the background of his life. When someone talks to him in Yucatec Maya, he replies in Spanish. It's as simple as that. And by someone I mean his grandparents and the people in his community. But he is no different from many kids in the village. If your parents speak Spanish to you, what do you do? You speak Spanish to the world.

The confusion and the questioning enter once he is in the Language and Culture program at university. He is there because he wants to become an English language teacher.

Today, he is in class with this professor who is going on about how learning Yucatec Maya is an opportunity that everyone should profit from because it is a language that helps us

understand many cultural elements from the regional knowledge system that have existed since the time of the ancient Maya people, bla, bla, bla, bla, bla...

Ok, fine. In a way he kind of knows Yucatec Maya, right? He has heard it all the time, even at home when his parents speak to each other. He just never articulated it.

As Chinitos realizes that learning Yucatec Maya is a requirement of his program he asks for help at home: He tells his parents that he will start practicing and speaking Yucatec Maya with them. But please, don't make fun of me, he adds.

Four years go by. Chinitos now communicates with his parents in both Spanish and Yucatec Maya. He currently works as a Yucatec Maya and English language teacher and he feels able to communicate in Yucatec Maya anywhere in the Maya region.

Chinitos now feels the responsibility to make his students acknowledge the importance of learning Yucatec Maya: He tries to show them that knowing and speaking such language can provide academic and personal benefits because it provides a sense of belonging allows constant exchanges of knowledge(s).

In this study, all current and former student participants self-identify as belonging to the Indigenous Maya ethnic group. The data supports that participants acknowledge that the Yucatec Maya language is part of their Maya culture. The data also indicate that Yucatec Maya is learned informally at home or with family members in an oral form, while a formal Yucatec Maya learning process at school includes learning its written form as well.

Students who had Yucatec Maya as their home language speak very well, according to Vane, when they enter their undergraduate program and they help their classmates with Yucatec Maya course assignments. However, they don't know how to write in their Indigenous language because writing is something that is learnt at school.

In the families that had Spanish as the home language, participants' parents are pleased to see that their children (participants) start speaking Yucatec Maya when participants knew the language but were not speaking it, or when participants didn't know the language at all, and also that they learn to write it. Sometimes they reinforce the participants' university choice and training by expressing the importance of preserving their culture and language. For instance, when I asked Lau how her father felt about the fact that Lau speaks and writes both Spanish and Yucatec Maya, she explained that he never imagined that she could go far learning Maya (Lau, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

The participants who were brought up speaking Yucatec Maya at home (Lizbeth, Jpiil and Ajtuukul) consider the language a part of their personal essence or identity and have a hard time visualizing an alternative path of communication with their close ones. In addition, they shared their concerns and efforts to transmit Yucatec Maya to their children.

Lizbeth says that Yucatec Maya represents her identity, her culture, her practices, and her whole being because she grew up with it and she communicates with it.

For Jpiil, the Yucatec Maya language is a channel of communication that he uses daily with his family. (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023). He and his siblings always speak Yucatec Maya, wherever they are: their home community, Valladolid, or Merida (the state's capital).

Participants who were raised speaking Spanish at home (Vane, Lau, Chinitos) and who reported different mastery levels of Yucatec Maya, also acknowledged a link between Yucatec Maya language and their Maya cultural background and showed interest in continuing learning Yucatec Maya and in sharing it with the next generations.

Participants also acknowledge that knowing Yucatec Maya helps to have access and an understanding of many cultural elements that can only be fully appreciated when one speaks the language. Ajtuukul expressed that one of the benefits of speaking Yucatec Maya is that it provides access to rituals and ways of life that are unique to the community (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

The analysis suggests that Yucatec Maya was identified as the language used to communicate with most elders in the families of the participants. Elders in the families of Vane, Lau, and Chinitos were reported to have Spanish as an alternative language to communicate with their grandchildren, who had Spanish as their home language. However, in Chinitos's case, those elders switched to using Yucatec Maya the moment their grandson began Yucatec Maya with them. In addition, Lau reported a sense of responsibility to learn and use Yucatec Maya with her grandparents even when Spanish was her home language.

In the dynamics of family elders, daily activities usually unfold in Yucatec Maya. Women elders are the head of the kitchen chores, around which all the home dynamics develop. Men elders lead agricultural work: preparing the land, planting, and harvesting. Traditional rituals and ceremonies in Maya villages also happen in Yucatec Maya. These elders may be the ones taking care of the participants' children while at work, as is the case with Ajtuukul and Lizbeth's children. Family elders' homes are also a common weekend or holiday meeting point for extended families to gather, as reported by Jpiil; on such occasions, Yucatec Maya is a language used for collective communication.

Participants identify a lack of Yucatec Maya transmission to the new generations and a lack of interest in them in learning or speaking Yucatec Maya. When expressing what she saw as the challenges in using Yucatec Maya, Lizbeth shared that the young population does not

understand Maya when she communicates with them. This makes it difficult for Maya speakers to continue preserving the language (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Participants who have children identified their parental responsibility to transmit Yucatec Maya to their own children or to ensure that somebody speaks Yucatec Maya to them so that the children are exposed to their Indigenous language (along with exposure to Spanish, which is being provided by family members as well) and are able to learn it and speak it. Direct exposure to Yucatec Maya through extended family members (grandparents, aunts and uncles) with an evident intentionality is a current option for children to learn and practice the Indigenous language. This is the case of Ajtuukul's children that are being taken care of by their maternal grandmother, who speaks to them in Yucatec Maya.

The analysis indicates that exposure to Yucatec Maya through family members and community interactions are perceived as an important path to learn the language. When such linguistic contact comes from family interactions, it may result in an unintentional and gradual learning and speaking. Jpiil shares that this is the case of his wife and of one cousin, both of whom spoke Spanish and began to learn Yucatec Maya from being in contact with Jpiil's extended family dynamics in the village.

The data suggests that among current and former Language/Linguistics and Culture students, there seems to be an awareness of the present-day narrative that advocates for Indigenous language revitalization of Yucatec Maya and for the rights of Indigenous peoples, as well as for the developmental and cognitive benefits of speaking more than one language. When their son was two years old, Jpiil explained to his wife that knowing two languages was better than knowing one and that he would start speaking Yucatec Maya to their son so that he would

learn it. Up to that point, his wife, who had been brought up speaking Spanish only, had been concerned that the child would get confused if he heard two languages at the same time.

The analysis also indicates that among current and former Language/Linguistics and Culture students, there is an awareness of the hegemonic narrative that promoted Spanish as the language of schooling, which sometimes led to their parents choosing Spanish as the home language or to include it as an additional language in the household. Jpiil believes that Spanish is the language imposed by the schooling process; if schooling had been in Yucatec Maya, they would only use Yucatec Maya. However, in the case of the participants who work as cultural promoters, as teachers or as language teachers, the data show the use of Yucatec Maya alongside Spanish in their work setting.

There is also an awareness of the limits in the usage of Yucatec Maya, as explained in some of the challenges that participants face when trying to communicate in such language. For Instance, Chinitos says that not everyone understands the value the language conveys, so discrimination will be present in many places. Likewise, it is very difficult to get academic material in Yucatec Maya (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Ajtuukul elaborated on this, stating that institutions without translators or interpreters do not allow you to express ideas in Yucatec Maya, and many words do not have a Spanish translation. There is discrimination against Yucatec Maya speakers by people who do not sympathize with the Maya language and using it in public places is regarded as strange. (Ajtukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

In the following chapter, I offer an analysis of the themes that emerged from the collected data, in light of a plurilingual approach to language learning and use.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to analyze the shared lived experiences of the participants from the perspective of a plurilingual approach to language learning and use in the context of the study.

First, I remind the reader the purpose of this study. Afterwards, I present a summary of the findings based on the research questions. Based on the themes underlying the narrative vignettes, which represent the empirical collected data, I then offer a discussion of participants' lived experiences from a plurilingual approach to language(s) learning and use. For the purposes of clarity, I include explanations of the main concepts behind a plurilingual approach to language learning and use that guide the above-mentioned discussion and I refer to the literature on multiple language use in Mexico and in the Yucatan Peninsula, to further anchor the topic

The limitations and the relevance of the study, along with its practical and theoretical implications, are presented in the following chapter.

Purpose of the Study and Research Problem

The purpose of this study has been to explore the lived experiences of Indigenous, Maya, current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula with their formal academic and informal community/family-based language(s) use(s).

A plurilingual theoretical approach was chosen in this study because I found it useful to understand how multiple languages are used in any given context while taking into explicit consideration the interconnection between the macro, meso, and micro levels of society (Piccardo, 2018). Thus, to understand how participants of this study perceived and used their

language(s), I wanted to situate their daily linguistic interaction in their larger social and cultural context (Despaigne & Grossi, 2011).

The theoretical backdrop of this research was the consideration of a plurilingual approach in the context of an Indigenous language, which have been historically underrepresented in language/educational policy, and where a monolingual disposition (Piccardo, 2014) with Spanish as the *de facto* language (Terborg et al., 2006) prevails.

To have a closer look at how Indigenous multiple language(s) speakers perceive their language(s) use, the empirical phenomenological approach of this study served the purpose of collecting data without prior interference of the theoretical framework that was later used for its analysis.

Summary of Findings Based on Research Questions

Participant Academic and Professional Language(s) Use

The data indicates that Spanish was their language of schooling from preschool to university. Yucatec Maya and English are languages that are taught as subject matters in participants' Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate programs. Both oral and written forms of Yucatec Maya and English are taught.

Spanish was the bridge language of instruction for university professors and that Yucatec Maya and English are used in the context of the Yucatec Maya and English language courses and as the topics of instruction. Spanish also served as the bridge language to communicate and interact with classmates because the number of students who enter their undergraduate program having Yucatec Maya as their home language varies from cohort to cohort.

The analysis suggests that Spanish was perceived by participants as the language needed to get work while knowledge of Yucatec Maya and/or of English may help fulfill specific job requirements.

The data indicates that, generally speaking, Yucatec Maya is seen as having a symbolic value, while Spanish and English are seen as having an economic value in the professional communities where participants interact. Nowadays, families are choosing to transmit, and students are hoping to learn the languages with a perceived economic value.

Family and Community Language(s) Use

Participants normally had one home language that they identified they were brought up with by their parents: Yucatec Maya or Spanish. The analysis shows that family elders, that is, grandparents, had a significant role in the transmission and use of Yucatec Maya.

Participants who have a sentimental partner reported using two languages to communicate with them. However, Spanish was reported as the language used for partner communication, regardless of how much Yucatec Maya the partners spoke. The data also shows that, in the homes of participants with children, there were two home languages being spoken: Spanish and Yucatec Maya.

Generally speaking, participants mentioned that elders and adults are the part of the population that speaks Yucatec Maya, while youth and children may understand or know some Yucatec Maya but will speak in Spanish even when addressed in Yucatec Maya.

Formal and Informal Language(s) Use

Participants reported using Yucatec Maya as their home language, to communicate with extended family or community members, to take part in cultural or traditional activities, and as a potential topic of instruction or of work. However, usage of Yucatec Maya at home happens only

in its oral form. Grammar knowledge of the language (reading, writing) was only taught at school.

Participants said they use Spanish as an academic or work language and as a home language to communicate with extended family (from and in cities) and community members.

English is not commonly used in home or community interactions. Its usage is related to a language learning process considered useful for academic and work purposes, hence its presence in school and with children, whether they are relatives or pupils, and the belief that knowing that language provides an economic advantage.

Relationship between Academic/Career Goals and Language(s) Use

The analysis also showed that the undergraduate programs in Language/Linguistics and Culture promote the message that Yucatec Maya should be valued, used, and transmitted because it is a regional communication tool, allows access to and a deeper understanding of the regional Maya knowledge system, and is a source of professional income.

In participants who understood Yucatec Maya but chose not to speak it, or in participants who spoke Yucatec Maya but had Spanish as a home language, a process of acknowledgement of the presence of Yucatec Maya and of its value for personal and professional development was triggered. In participants who were not familiar with the language, an interest to learn it, use it, and transmit it was generated.

Both institutions train students, among other things, to be Yucatec Maya language teachers, and one also trains them to be English language teachers. This training had an impact on the language knowledge and practice of the current and former students; it also shaped their career expectations and their opinion on the role they have as Yucatec Maya speakers in regard to the transmission of this Indigenous language.

The analysis suggests that participants acknowledged the importance of having a family link to Yucatec Maya for personal and professional language learning purposes. Former student participants that are currently working teaching Yucatec Maya pointed at how much easier it is for local Indigenous non-speakers of Yucatec Maya to learn such language because they all have family members and community elders who are Yucatec Maya speakers and who therefore can be their teachers in the process.

Relationship between Indigenous Identity and Language(s) Use

Participants acknowledged that knowing Yucatec Maya helps to have access and an understanding of many cultural elements that can only be fully appreciated when one speaks the language. Those who were brought up speaking Yucatec Maya at home consider the language a part of their personal essence or identity and have a hard time visualizing an alternative path of communication with their close ones.

Participants identify a lack of Yucatec Maya transmission to the new generations and a lack of interest in learning or speaking Yucatec Maya. Those who have children identified their parental responsibility to transmit Yucatec Maya to their own children. The analysis indicates that exposure to Yucatec Maya through family members and community interactions are perceived as an important path to learn the language.

Discussion of Results

The discussion I present next approaches the topic of multiple language use (Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English) by Maya current or former undergraduate students of Language/Linguistics and Culture programs in the context of the Yucatan Peninsula. Following the empirical phenomenological approach (Aspers, 2009; Mortari et al. 2023; Moustakas, 1994) here I try to understand the topic of this inquiry positioning myself from the perspective of the

participants. Thus, I use the themes that emerged from the data collection and data analysis procedure, which were turned into narrative vignettes (Ammann, 2018) to illustrate the lived experiences of participants. Furthermore, I employ plurilingualism (Piccardo, 2018) as the theoretical lens to understand what the phenomena means to social science theory (Aspers, 2009).

The colonial historical and political specificities of the Yucatan Peninsula led to concrete social attitudes related to the transmission and use of Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English. Arnott et al. (2017) suggest considering the colonial impact in the language practices at the Canadian context. I applied such recommendation to the Mexican context and to the goal of this study: current Yucatec Maya language revitalization convictions and efforts promoted by the institutions and participants of this study can only be fully understood, valued and supported when one takes into consideration why and how Yucatec Maya became neo-colonially (Kubota, 2014) dominated (May, R., 2016; Lizama, 2008) by Spanish (Terborg et al, 2006) and then English (Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019).

Spanish Needed

While raising them, the parental Spanish transmission to participants, instead of or parallel to Yucatec Maya, responded to an intention of keeping children from struggling at school or being discriminated in a context where the hegemonic narrative nurtured the belief that Spanish was the language needed to get ahead in life. This aligns with the discourse of progress (Lam, 2020) which comes with the denigration of the Indigenous language (Lam, 2020; Messing, 2007).

Despite growing up in rural and Indigenous Maya contexts, exposure to Yucatec Maya was limited to non-existent at the meso school level; that is, in formal educational domains

during participants' childhood and adolescence. The data show that Spanish has been the language of schooling for the participants from preschool to university: it was, or it is the language to communicate with professors and administrative staff. In addition, it is a bridge language for classmate interaction because not everyone that enrolls in the Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate programs speaks Yucatec Maya.

The lack of presence of Yucatec Maya in formal educational domains may have reinforced the above-mentioned idea of fixed language functions in some participant parents and in some of the participants themselves, concluding that Yucatec Maya was for informal use only. It is likely that when the parents of the participants who used Yucatec Maya in the family dynamics introduced Spanish for the purposes of schooling, they were sending the implicit message to their children that those two languages did not oppose to each other; rather, as Messing (2007a) stated, that each one had a context where it was meaningful or useful: Spanish for public settings and Yucatec Maya for private settings. However, as mentioned earlier such functional divide contributed to considering the Indigenous language as less useful in formal domains of life.

Nowadays, sticking to using Spanish when there is the possibility of using both Spanish and Yucatec Maya may be interpreted as evidence of the conception that Spanish is the language needed to get ahead in life, the one that has economic value (Lam, 2020; Messing, 2007b). This points to the fact that in the Yucatan Peninsula, Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English are not perceived as equally valuable (Despaigne & Grossi, 2011).

Lizbeth shared her experience with her husband and her colleague, with whom the communication has always been in Spanish even though the three of them speak Yucatec Maya as well. She met her husband speaking Spanish, and when she speaks to him in Yucatec Maya, he

says he cannot answer her in the same language. He tells her that he met her while speaking Spanish at a university, and even though he'll speak with her family in Yucatec Maya, with her it is only Spanish. He cannot explain why that is (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Lizbeth explained that a similar situation happens between her and a colleague who comes from her same village. She has no problem speaking in Yucatec Maya to the colleague, but the colleague only replies in Spanish, with the same explanation as the husband: Spanish is the language in which they first met, and so she cannot speak in Yucatec Maya. Sometimes she'll answer with Yucatec Maya expressions, but that's as far as it goes. They do not engage in a deep conversation in the Maya language. (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Refusing Yucatec Maya Use

Participants normally had one home language that they identified they were brought up with by their parents: Yucatec Maya or Spanish. In some cases, the grandparents passed on Yucatec Maya to the participants, making it an additional language that was part of their private linguistic repertoire.

At participant micro level interactions, it must be noted that up to their entrance to university, each language in the participants' language(s) repertoire was used with fixed people, for concrete situations, or in specific settings. This lack of dynamic essence in some participants whose linguistic repertoire includes more than one language continues to this day. Put simply, there is a denial, a difficulty or a resistance to use more than one language with the same person or group of people. This is the case of Jpiil when he interacts with his parents and siblings. Jpiil always communicates in Yucatec Maya with them, and he says he cannot envision using Spanish for the same purposes, even when everyone speaks both languages. In a similar fashion, Lizbeth said that all her brothers and sisters communicate in Yucatec Maya. Talking to each other in

Spanish is not very common and difficult to do as they are not used to it (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

The denial or resistance to add flexibility to the linguistic repertoire to include the possibility of switching between Yucatec Maya and Spanish whether in personal or in professional settings follows Messing's (2007a) division of private and public uses of specific languages. Spanish in formal settings; Yucatec Maya in informal ones.

On the one hand, in the original context of participants' family language transmission, sticking to Yucatec Maya at home ensured the maintenance of the language of intimacy or solidarity (Messing, 2007a). Nowadays, in the context of Yucatec Maya language revitalization, this may not be perceived as a counterproductive thing since the Indigenous language has lost many generations of speakers and domains of use. Thus, having a permanent group of people with whom one can use vernacular Yucatec Maya is crucial from a practical perspective of language revitalization (Canche Teh, 2014; Cru, 2016). In other words, the intentional use of Yucatec Maya for family communication supports current efforts to maintain the Indigenous language alive because they provide meaningful situations for its use while exposing the younger generations to it. This is true for the interaction between Lizbeth and her siblings, Jpiil and his siblings, and Ajtuukul and his siblings. In addition, these three participants identified and assumed their parental responsibility to transmit Yucatec Maya to their own children. The analysis indicates that exposure to Yucatec Maya through family members and community interactions are perceived as an important path to learn the language.

From a plurilingual approach to language learning and use, the dynamic essence in a plurilingual profile is characterized by conceiving the linguistic repertoire as an open, interconnected system, in permanent internal and external change (Piccardo, 2014). At the

individual micro level conceptualization, plurilingualism emphasizes the fact that, on the one hand, there are no clear-cut boundaries between the languages that an individual develops through her lifetime; on the other hand, such continuous process may be and is actually modified through time according to her life needs and/or circumstances (Piccardo, 2018). For instance, Chinitos shared that he began speaking Yucatec Maya, in addition to Spanish, with his parents, the minute he entered university and began to formally learn the language he had listened to all his life. This aligns with de Korne's (2017) idea that speaking the Indigenous language reinforces a collective ethnic identity that would benefit from meaningful communicative and social interactions. In Jpiil's case, he was able to renegotiate his language(s) use(s) with his nuclear family; that is, with his wife and son. After communicating with them only in Spanish, and once his wife and son had begun learning Yucatec Maya through him and his extended family, he began using both Spanish and Yucatec Maya for daily interactions.

Exposure to (Standard) Yucatec Maya

Intercultural bilingual programs inevitably align with the monolingual disposition (Piccardo, 2014), because they are part of the Mexican official system. Even when these postsecondary institutions claim to promote cultural and linguistic awareness and pertinence, Spanish is presented as the lingua franca for Indigenous language speakers (Terborg et al., 2006). Evidence of this is the fact that the institutional program requirements of participants of this study assumed that Spanish was the first language of students and considered Yucatec Maya a language to be taught and learned as a second language along with English.

Despaigne & Grossi (2011) signal the need for educational initiatives that promote the acknowledgement, value and function of Indigenous languages as well as of mainstream languages. The teaching and learning of the Indigenous language, Yucatec Maya in this case, is

only the first step to do so, as attention should be paid to the inner contextual workings of the language (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009; Cru, 2016).

Framed by a neoliberal narrative about the value of cultural and linguistic diversity (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009; de Korne, 2017), the learning of oral and written Yucatec Maya reflects the national and regional intercultural literacy strategy for Indigenous language(s) revitalization (Canche Teh, 2014; Cru, 2016).

Apart from the hegemonic narrative that established Spanish as the bridge language in the Yucatan Peninsula, Piccardo (2018, 2014) also credits a scientific vision which resulted in the idea that languages are fixed entities separated from their context and their speakers. Evidence was found in the present study, as the data show that Yucatec Maya was orally transmitted and learned at home for some participants. Consequently, depending on their cohort, some or many of the Language/Linguistics and Culture students know and use Yucatec Maya by the time they enter their undergraduate program.

Reflecting a lack of contextual consideration, Yucatec Maya was taught as an academic requirement to all students without Yucatec Maya language levels according to prior knowledge. In other words, regardless of the characteristics of their selected program, Yucatec Maya language and cultural knowledge that is related to the family and community life of the student body is put on hold upon entrance to the postsecondary institution. Having identified this in her own work, Canche Teh (2014) recommended including diagnosis and levels for the Yucatec Maya language courses, taking into consideration prior contextual knowledge.

For instance, Vane mentioned that the few classmates that speak Yucatec Maya from home speak very well but they don't know how to write it properly because grammar is not taught at home but at school (Vane, personal communication, February 20, 2023). The second

part of Vane's observation can be linked to Cru's (2016) concern about the risk of developing purist ideologies when focusing exclusively on the teaching and learning of standard Yucatec Maya. Put differently, scholars in the field emphasize the importance of strengthening the link between institutional initiatives and community practice for the purposes of oral transmission and/or learning.

In this study, participants acknowledged the importance of having a family link to Yucatec Maya for personal and professional language learning purposes. Former student participants that are currently working teaching Yucatec Maya pointed at how much easier it is for local Indigenous non-speakers of Yucatec Maya to learn such language because they all have family members and community elders who are Yucatec Maya speakers and who therefore can be their teachers in the process. This aligns with Cru's (2016) proposal to remove the stigma of the vernacular form of the language to establish more links with communities of speakers.

Those who had Yucatec Maya as a home language were able to engage in Yucatec Maya interactions with classmates and professors, expanding the possibilities of Yucatec Maya use beyond the limits of the language course work. Participants who had Spanish as a home language could witness but not take part in such interactions. Nonetheless, seeing peers speak Yucatec Maya in a natural way for communicative and for academic purposes while being exposed to the program's goal acted as an incentive for non-Yucatec Maya speaker students to learn or to expand their Yucatec Maya knowledge and use.

Repertoire Negotiation

The opportunity to join the undergraduate programs reflects the discourse of Indigenous identity and languages as a treasure (de Korne, 2017) which allows for formal education and/or professional opportunities to Maya youth. As mentioned earlier, the two undergraduate programs

from this study were the affordable and feasible postsecondary option for the families of the participants and therefore, became the option for the participants. Most of them (5 out of 6) were first-generation students who were able to attend university due to their close location and the low cost of their programs.

Contrary to the perspective that conceives languages as having fixed functions, participants of this study were exposed to the idea that their languages have a dynamic essence (Piccardo, 2014), that Yucatec Maya can also serve a formal academic function, and that such language can and should be transmitted from an early age at home and parallel to Spanish.

Fleming et al. (2023) point at the fact that a plurilingual approach to language learning and use can increase self-confidence in speakers. This statement aligns with Jpiil's opinion regarding what he perceives as the benefit of using Yucatec Maya in his daily interactions. This would be particularly true when considering the use of Indigenous languages that remain present in informal domains of life, but which have been underrepresented or/and denied as communication tools in formal ones. Revaluing Yucatec Maya by encountering it in a formal domain aligns with de Korne's analogy of Indigenous university students finding a treasure and a legacy in interculturality-based initiatives.

Generally speaking, Yucatec Maya was re-acknowledged and re-valued during the participants' undergraduate program. As a result, participants became motivated to learn, speak, and teach it or transmit it to their own families. For example, Lau says that she is very glad to have chosen the Language and Culture undergraduate program because she wasn't expecting to learn how to write Yucatec Maya, which is something she really liked.

Canche Teh (2014) and Cru (2016) argue that even though school is not the expected place to generate social change, it can be considered a space to reflect on language preconception

and uses. Similarly, Rhodes and Bloechl (2020) are hopeful that such a reflection may foster an heteroglossic approach towards language learning and use.

In the next chapter, I present the limitations and the relevance of the present study, along with its implications for theory, for practice and for future research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to outline the relevance and limitations of the present study and its implications for educational practice and for theory, along with some recommendations for further research. First, I provide a summary of the discussion along with the contribution of the project. Then, the contribution to theory is discussed in the following section. I outline the implications for educational practice and the limitations of the study. Afterwards, I offer some recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with a conclusion of the work done.

Summary of Discussion and Contribution of the Project

The purpose of this study has been to explore the lived experiences of Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula with their formal academic and informal community/family-based language(s) use(s).

Summary of Findings

Participants of this study seem to find themselves in the middle of many contrasting language learning preconceptions and practices. To begin with, their family and community language(s) use, heteroglossic for the most part, had to adapt to a monoglossic-oriented reality. Then, through their intercultural programs, they revisited and questioned the possibilities of their own multiple language use, as well as the historically set functions of the regional languages of power and of trust (Messing, 2007a). Their Indigenous language, Yucatec Maya, was leveraged, triggering a range of attitudes that go from interest in learning it to intentionally including it in their own nuclear family repertoire. Nonetheless, as they joined the job market and re-

encountered family and community language attitudes that follow the Mexican hierarchical monolingual disposition, they became aware that they are going against a strong current.

The intercultural undergraduate programs, among other official initiatives, are helping to make Yucatec Maya visible and useful as a communicative tool. However, there is a much present risk to develop purist ideologies by focusing on the literacy approach that the pro-Indigenous narrative comes with unless stronger connections between these undergraduate programs and communities of speakers are developed. A good starting point is the fact that many participants identified and turned to family members to strengthen or increase their Yucatec Maya practice. For the purposes of Yucatec Maya language revitalization, any (formal or informal) educational initiative that aims to generate new generations of Yucatec Maya speakers has to also consider the inner workings of the language (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009) and validate its vernacular use (Canche Teh, 2014; Cru, 2016).

Contribution to Theory

In this study, an empirical phenomenological approach allowed me to understand meaning making from a first-person perspective. Next, I would like to focus on the theoretical implications of multiple language learning and use in an Indigenous context and with and Indigenous language in the repertoire.

Multiple language use in current and former students of the Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate programs will be considered here, first, from a plurilingualism's macro level: that is, in the context of the Yucatan Peninsula. The inclusion of Yucatec Maya in the media, the standardization and the creation of the Yucatec Maya norm, and the promotion of new generations of professionals that promote Yucatec Maya culture and language, evidence an official narrative that acknowledges linguistic diversity. Having said this, the apparent leveraging

of Yucatec Maya does not come with a heteroglossic foundational support. Put differently, Yucatec Maya is following the same path set by languages that represent nation-states: a monolingual-based journey of fixed or appropriate internal delimitations and distanced co-existences.

A crucial step towards the design of a healthier interculturality policy and its implementation would require the official recognition of multiple languages in the daily reality of Yucatec Maya speakers, to begin with. Consequently, this acknowledgment would need to pair with the idea of inevitable contact and metalinguistic tensions among language systems; in other words, flexible boundaries between Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English. Additionally, and positioned still from a macro level angle, such (re)consideration would also admit its share of internal evolution and dynamism in such systems.

In turn, an official policy with a plurilingual foundations would foster meso and micro level initiatives that:

- Recognize and promote multiple language use in regional family dynamics.
- Encourage the transmission of Yucatec Maya, parallel to the exposure and learning of Spanish, at an early age at home.
- Recognize the existence and the functional validity of different registers of Yucatec Maya (standard and vernacular) to help relieve some of the tension and preconceptions.
- Identify the purpose and function of different registers among new generations of Maya professionals and/or Yucatec Maya users.
- Promote the validity of partial Yucatec Maya language competence in speakers of the vernacular.

- Remove the stigma of language borrowings and pragmatic code-switching in the vernacular use.
- Create links between formal Yucatec Maya learning groups and communities of speakers to foster oral practice.

All of these ideas may very well be implemented bottom-up, through individual initiatives. The participants of this study exited or intend to exit their undergraduate programs full of energy and with the intention to reverse or modify the inequities found in their linguistic landscape. However, as the present study and the reviewed literature show, the influence of official narratives on community, family and individual language practices is inevitable. Hence, the importance of an atmosphere of support for the efforts coming from the new generations of professionals in Language/Linguistics and Culture.

Limitations of the Study

Using Spanish and English as tools for carrying out this research project was time-consuming. I carried out this inquiry in English and Spanish. During the first stages of this project, everything I did was in English so that it could be read, understood, and approved in the context of the University of Ottawa. Simultaneously, my communication in the context of my study and with the participants was in Spanish. I then had to translate forms and instruments to Spanish for the purposes of developing the project with the participants. After gathering and organizing the data in Spanish, I went back to working in English for the purposes of efficiency. I now wonder, what would have happened if I had done my doctoral project with English-speaking participants in Canada, for example?

In terms of data gathering, one limitation I had was the availability of potential participants, which resulted in a small sample size. The participant who is a current student had

to purposefully make time to virtually meet with me during the weekends because she was very busy with her academic commitments during the week. In the case of former students, their availability was limited due to work and family commitments, reducing the possibility of doing more than one interview and one participant feedback session. What would have happened if more current student participants had been involved in the project? What would have happened if I had been able to do more interviews with former participants?

The research topic of my study found a familiar echo in the participants because they are interested in and used to reflecting and discussing language(s) use, language policy and planning, and language pedagogy as part of their university training. Although this was useful because the participant profile enabled the metalinguistic reflections of their lived experiences with the languages of the study, I wonder what would have happened if this study had been done with participants from undergraduate programs that did not focus on Language/Linguistics and Culture issues?

In addition, the line of work from the participants of this study enabled for the reflections on language use to continue and to be complemented with practical hands-on experiences. All the former students were working in areas related to their field of study. None of the participants had finished their program and gone to work in the tourism industry of the Maya Riviera, for example, as is the case of Lizbeth's husband. What would have happened if this study had been done with participants who, after graduating, had found work in restaurants and hotels?

Another limitation of this study is the fact that formal education initiatives that support or promote the use of the standard regional Indigenous language, Yucatec Maya, may not be present in all educational levels or post-secondary programs aimed at Indigenous Maya student population and, much less, to all non-Indigenous Mexican student populations. What would have

happened if this project had been done with non-Indigenous undergraduate students from a private post-secondary institution, for example?

Regarding the data analysis, this study drew from the phenomenological notion of lived experience and its analysis to provide voice to the participants in a descriptive but also in a reflective way. This approach could be questioned for being too simplistic or not too clear: its intention was to trace multiple experiences to see if there were any common bottom-up patterns in the observed topic so that the study could serve as the foundation for future research.

As for the theoretical framework used to analyze the findings, the plurilingual organization of linguistic interactions into a macro, a meso, and a micro level takes into consideration the fact that individual language practices (micro level) are influenced by or connected to language policy (macro level) and planning (meso level). However, when it was time to describe what people do—that is, how they use their languages—and why they do what they do—that is, the rationale behind their language(s) usage decision-making processes—there were no boundaries and all levels interconnected. In consequence, it became impossible to build a text that stayed within the limits of each level: participant experiences were related to school settings or to official language policies and vice versa. As a result, the text illustrates a constant back and forth between the abovementioned levels.

Contribution to Research

In her work, Bermúdez-Urbina (2017) mentioned that studies related to Indigenous student post-secondary experiences often lack explicit mention of how such inquiries will help the participants, the institutions, or the research. This section points to the contributions for research that result from the present investigation. In addition, the contributions for educational practice at a general level and for the participant universities specifically are included as well.

For this study, a plurilingual approach to language learning and use was chosen to observe the interconnections between official language policy, language planning, and individual language(s) use, following Kubota's (2014) invitation to understand what language practices represent in "current neocolonial hegemonies" (p. 9)

Using a plurilingual lens to analyze institutional and participant language choices made visible contextual power structures that are unattended in the Mexican intercultural bilingual curriculum (Flores Farfán, 2015; Despaigne, 2013).

This study has also shown that intercultural bilingual programs align with a monolingual disposition (Piccardo, 2014) because Spanish is presented as the lingua franca for Indigenous language speakers (Terborg et al., 2006) and Yucatec Maya and English are taught as second languages.

Morales Silva (2013) suggests considering all the actors that are part of students' lives. How were family life and community life taken into account as part of participants' postsecondary experiences? The absence of Yucatec Maya language levels according to prior knowledge in the Language/Linguistics and Culture programs reflects a lack of contextual consideration because part of the student body already knows or speaks Yucatec Maya before entering university. Nonetheless, the inclusion of Yucatec Maya language teaching as part of the curriculum in the Language/Linguistics and Culture programs strengthened the link between family and school, which constantly oscillates between tension and harmony (Chávez González, 2014) given the historical and formal invalidation of Maya culture in the educational sector. The analysis suggests that Yucatec Maya serves as a communication tool to connect with people and students and to build a sense of community between the families and the educational institutions.

In an effort to avoid essentializing current and former undergraduate students' language(s) experiences (Bermúdez-Urbina, 2017), this study touched upon their language(s) acquisition processes in the context of their family and community life, as well as in the context of their schooling journeys. The data show that family and community dynamics are crucial elements in an individual's language(s) acquisition and development journey.

The data also show that extended family gatherings and activities with elders evidenced the important role that ethnic networks with linguistic and cultural diversity play as pointed out by González Apodaca (2014), in the creation and negotiation of participants' Indigenous identity. In addition, participants of this inquiry explained how knowledge of Yucatec Maya is needed to understand and to participate in meaningful community practices from the region, whether that be teaching in a rural school or doing agricultural work.

In line with Mateos Cortés' (2017) claims, the findings in this study point at the possibilities for Language/linguistics and Culture students to develop a critical reflection about the historical, political and social circumstances that have had an impact in the transmission and usage of Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and English, allowing for adjustments to their own linguistic capital. However, the identified lack of entrepreneurship and work found in the new generations that finish these programs echoes the risk of post-university unemployment pointed out by the same author.

Contributions for Educational Practice

This study has focused on language(s) use at a micro level. It has become evident that individual language(s) practices are always linked to family and community life. Family and community interactions are, however, inevitably influenced by the presence of the educational

system. Consequently, the latter has a strong impact on what happens to and in the linguistic repertoire of a person.

A particular emphasis of this inquiry has been made on Yucatec Maya because it is the language related to the ethnic and cultural background of the participants and because it has suffered from the tensions that emerge when hegemonic Spanish and international English language are added to the equation of daily regional interactions.

Positioning myself from a perspective where the transmission and use of Yucatec Maya is considered meaningful and useful in different domains of life, this study can be used as a starting point for the following educational applications:

- To create spaces where students can share and reflect on their lived experiences with Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English throughout their program
- To diagnose student Yucatec Maya knowledge and practice before they enter the program so that they can be placed in Yucatec Maya language courses according to their level
- To maintain Yucatec Maya language instruction spaces where students who are starting to learn Yucatec Maya can benefit from the knowledge from peers who have more mastery of the language
- To create Yucatec Maya language instruction spaces for students with previous and diverse knowledge of the language, where they can continue to develop their Yucatec Maya skills and knowledge
- To promote professional training in resource compilation and material creation for Indigenous and Yucatec Maya language instruction purposes
- To generate instances for students to connect their professional interests and experience with organizations and institutions that offer professional development opportunities

This study can be used as inspiration to implement a similar initiative during the enrollment period of students in Universities A and B in order to obtain concrete knowledge of the language acquisition and the language-use decision making processes that students have experienced during their life and before entering their undergraduate program. Collecting such information may help understand language attitudes and language usage that students may have during their studies, enabling faculty members and regional policy makers to develop educational initiatives that find roots and echoes in the language diversity of their student body.

There are also concrete implications for each of the two universities since each institution has a specific student profile. For University A, the institution could follow up on the career expectations of their student body and see if they match the labor market that they are preparing them for. Ajtuukul pointed at that everyone expects to be a language teacher with a position in an official institution, with benefits and job security. For University B, the institution could follow up on the evolution of the language(s) used by their student body (including the related attitudes that support usage and non-usage and motivation to use in the case of Yucatec Maya) throughout the length of their undergraduate program, in order to identify areas of improvement in the delivery of their message that advocates for language diversity. In addition, the institution could inquire into the language network each student arrives with to identify Yucatec Maya and English language learning communities of support during the length of their program.

Recommendations for Further Research

What does knowing a language mean to people? What does self-identification as a speaker of a language require and imply? The analysis presented here shows that when a language was used in natural interaction situations, participants self-defined as speakers of it. For

example, when Vane used English to help a vendor sell her products or when Lizbeth used English to get around during her academic exchange program in Canada.

However, when the language was used as a topic of study to teach or to help someone practice it, it did not necessarily mean that the user (participant) felt like a speaker of it. For instance, Lau, who said she knew little English, shared that she was teaching what she knew to her niece. Lizbeth, on her end, said she doesn't use English anymore but that she practices basic English greetings with her students.

The present inquiry can be seen as the unboxing of a thousand-pieces reality puzzle. Next, I mention some potential paths for further research in relation to the topic of multiple language(s) learning and use in this context.

- How does student approach in regard to language(s) learning and use evolve during the course of their undergraduate studies in the Language/Linguistics and Culture program?
- How does family language transmission of Yucatec Maya support formal instruction of the language?
- Is family exposure to the Indigenous language enough to generate speakers of it when there is a complement of formal instruction, as is the case of some of the participants of this study, or would the family transmission of Yucatec Maya require a language transmission process that extends all the way into speaking the language, not just listening and understanding, regardless of its complementary formal instruction?
- What are the current language transmission practices in families of parents who were part of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program?
- How does a plurilingual perspective of language learning and use support informal and formal Indigenous language revitalization initiatives?

- How does passive/inactive language knowledge relate to a plurilingual language repertoire?

Final Thoughts

The title of this thesis refers to the bridging of languages in the lives of the participants from the study. I originally chose the verb “bridging” to evoke the idea of connection: I wanted to find out how many languages my participants spoke; to learn how they felt about each one of them; and to see if and how they used them in their daily interactions.

I am aware that the verb bridging may very easily trigger the idea of a tangible, land bridge, like the ones that we cross whenever we go from Hull, on the Quebec side, to Ottawa, on the Ontario side of Canada’s capital region. We then may be tempted to think that bridging the languages in an individual means surfacing the connection between them. Nonetheless, this research project was done in an effort to see and understand language connections that exist but that are not always evident.

Put in another way: in the Yucatan there are no water bodies on the land’s surface and thus, there are no bridges. What we find in that region are underground water deposits also known as sinkholes (English), *cenotes* (Spanish), *d’zonot* (Yucatec Maya). They result from the extremely permeable soil, which filters the water, eroding the earth and creating what very simplistically –since they are considered sacred by the Maya worldview- could be described as caves with pools.

I mention this because it is a known fact that *cenotes* are intercommunicated, and that they form unperceivable underwater currents between them. Thus, in line with a plurilingual approach to language learning and use, we can think of an individual’s different languages as

underground deposits, which connect to one another in a natural yet subtle way, like Chinitos experience being exposed and learning Yucatec Maya (see Appendix T).

I have always been fascinated by people who juggle languages on a daily basis. In the process of this investigation, I became one of them. When I first started my doctoral program, my perspective was observing and wondering about the life of my potential participants as someone who was from a close geographical location but from a distant ontological planet. I think that part still applies.

However, I am finishing my doctoral path after many years of being an international student in a foreign country. To summarize facts and emotions, I can say that I have experienced, and I still do, the need to use my additional languages to communicate and function in my current location. For instance, when I have to speak French in my son's school, I relate to Vane's emotions when she used English to communicate with tourists in her village.

But then, the unperceivable language currents do their magic. At home, I jump from Spanish to English to French in one day, in any order, sometimes sticking to one language, other times mixing two or three in one conversation. I think of how Jpiil and his son switch from Spanish to Yucatec Maya and vice versa and I feel relieved at the thought that my own child can adapt to his different linguistic contexts in Canada and in Mexico.

My wonder and interest towards multiple language negotiation in individuals continues and it is a conversation topic that comes out naturally to me. Today, as a so-called newcomer to Canada, whenever I meet someone I always inquire about the languages spoken at home, with the children, the partner, the parents, at work, and etcetera; just like I do with myself and just like I did with the participants of this study, as I (re)searched to find the underground currents.

My hope is that this research project contributes to different initiatives in the Yucatan. Especially, those that foster a language(s) –related reflection among current and future Maya undergraduate students, who juggle Yucatec Maya, Spanish and English in the sacred and touristic land of the *cenotes*. Additionally, I hope that this project serves as inspiration for young parents who find themselves at the crossroads of language transmission.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Text for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Program

Invitation to Participate in Study (Stage 1: Online Participant Survey; Stage 2: Semi-Structured Participant Interviews, Linguistic Autobiography, Language Portrait Silhouette) for Language/Linguistics and Culture Students

Dear student,

This is an invitation for you to participate in the study: Bridging language(s): Undergraduate Maya students' language(s) use(s), conducted by Mariana Domínguez González to obtain the degree of PhD in Education.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore how plurilingual, Maya, undergraduate students conceptualize their lived experience with formal academic and informal community/family-based language(s) use(s) while enrolled in a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula. By exploring the lived experiences of the participants, this project will provide insights into their language(s) use manifestations with members of their academic communit(ies), their home communit(ies), and their family; and how these experiences relate to their academic/career goals and to their Indigenous identit(ies).

Procedures:

There are two stages to this project. The first one consists of an online participant survey; the second one consists of a set of three semi-structured interviews, as well as of two activities you will do independently: A linguistic autobiography and a language portrait silhouette (LPS). This is the invitation to participate in both stages. However, you will have the choice to participate only in the first stage or both in the first and second stages. Not all those who fill out the survey will be contacted to participate in the second stage of the project.

If you are interested in participating, please contact the researcher, Mariana Domínguez González, by sending her an email and expressing your interest to participate in the project. She would then send you the information pertaining to the first stage of the project: Online participant survey and its corresponding consent form, along with the information to participate in the second stage of the project.

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to do so, you may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. This study is independent from the Language/Linguistics and Culture program and participating or not participating will not have an impact on your studies.

The information you share with the researcher will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. It will remain and will only be processed by the investigator and her thesis supervisor. Your identity will remain anonymous and you will be asked to choose a pseudonym for the analysis and for the reporting of the research.

If you are interested in participating in this study please write an email expressing your interest to Mariana Domínguez González.

Thank you very much for your time.

Kind regards,

Mariana Domínguez González

Doctoral Student and Principal Investigator

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Appendix B

Recruitment Text for Former Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Program

Invitation to Participate in Study (Online Participant Survey and Semi-Structured Participant Interview) for Indigenous Maya Former Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program

Dear former student,

This is an invitation for you to participate in the study: Bridging language(s): Undergraduate Maya students' language(s) use(s), conducted by Mariana Domínguez González to obtain the degree of PhD in Education.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula with their formal academic and informal community/family-based language(s) use(s). By exploring the lived experiences of the participants, this project will provide insights into their language(s) use manifestations with members of their academic communit(ies), their home communit(ies), and their family; and how these experiences relate to the students' academic/career goals and to their Indigenous identit(ies).

Procedures:

As a former student of the *Language/Linguistics and Culture* undergraduate program at *Name of institution in Yucatan/Quintana Roo*, your participation will consist in two activities: answering an online survey and participate in a virtual, audio recorded, individual interview. This is the invitation to participate in both activities. However, you will have the choice to participate only in the first or in both.

If you are interested in participating, please contact the researcher, Mariana Domínguez González, by sending her an email and expressing your interest to participate in the project. She would then send you the information pertaining to the two above mentioned activities.

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to do so, you may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. This study is independent from the *Language/Linguistics and Culture* undergraduate program and participating or not participating will not have an impact on your relationship with the researcher or with the university officers from your former university.

The information you share with the researcher will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. It will remain and will only be processed by the investigator and her thesis supervisor. Your identity will remain anonymous and you will be asked to choose a pseudonym for the analysis and for the reporting of the research.

If you are interested in participating in this study please write an email expressing your interest to Mariana Domínguez González.

If you know of any other former students of your program who might be interested in participating in this project, please share this invitation with them.

Thank you very much for your time.

Kind regards,

Mariana Domínguez González

Doctoral Student and Principal Investigator

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Appendix C

Current Student Consent Form for Online Participant Survey and Online Participant Survey

Participant Consent Form for Online Participant Survey

Thank you for your interest in the project Bridging language(s): Undergraduate Maya students' language(s) use(s), conducted by Mariana Domínguez González to obtain the degree of PhD in Education. The purpose of this study is to explore how plurilingual, Maya, undergraduate students conceptualise their lived experience with formal academic and informal community/family-based language(s) use(s) while enrolled in a *Language/Linguistics and Culture*] undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula.

This research will provide a deeper understanding of plurilingual Maya undergraduate students' language(s) use(s) and its manifestations with members of their academic communit(ies), their home communit(ies), and their family; and how these experiences relate to their academic/career goals and to their Indigenous identit(ies).

This is the first stage of the project. Your participation will consist in answering an online participant survey. It will take you approximately 45 minutes to complete. Your participation will entail that you respond to questions about the languages you speak or use. This may trigger emotional, political, or anxious situations or it may cause you to feel that you are sharing personal experiences and insights. Please share only what you feel comfortable sharing. You can contact the NGO *Centro cultural y de derechos humanos "Ts'u'unun Naj"*, *Casa Colibrí* located in Valladolid (on Facebook or by telephone at +52 985 109 6443)to further share or discuss any emotional, political or anxious reactions you may experience as a result of answering this online survey. Every effort will be made to respect your personal reflections in the writing and reporting of the research.

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. The data of participants who withdraw from the study will be destroyed. This study is independent from the *Linguistics and culture* program and participating or not participating will not have an impact on your studies.

The information you share will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. It will remain and will only be processed by the researcher and her thesis supervisor. Your identity will remain anonymous and you will be asked to choose a pseudonym for the analysis and for the reporting of the research.

In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality, it is recommended that you use standard safety measures, such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your device when you are no longer using it/when you have completed the study. Your personal information will be safely stored. The survey files will be kept in a secure manner on a password protected computer. The data will be destroyed after 10 years.

If you choose to participate in this first stage of the project, you will also be invited to be part of its second stage. However, not all those who fill out the survey will be contacted to participate in the second stage. The information about it is found at the end of this survey. Survey information from the students who do not participate in the second stage of the project will also inform the study and therefore will be securely stored for ten years. Any identifiers will be destroyed.

By filling out and submitting this questionnaire, you agree to participate in the above research study conducted by *Mariana Domínguez González* of the *Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa*, whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Douglas Fleming. You understand that by accepting to participate you are in no way waiving your right to withdraw from the study. You also agree that the data may be used for the thesis work of the student researcher.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the researcher and/or her thesis supervisor:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mariana Domínguez González Principal Investigator Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa Email: Telephone: | Douglas Fleming Thesis Supervisor Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa Email: Telephone: |
|---|---|

If you have any ethical concerns regarding your participation in this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

You are invited to save or print a copy of this survey and the project information it contains.

Online Participant Survey

Thank you for answering in an honest manner.

Section 1.

1. Name (optional) _____
2. For the purposes of research analysis and the reporting of the research, please choose a pseudonym _____
3. Email (optional) _____
4. Age _____
5. In terms of your gender identity, how do you self-identify?
 Male
 Female
You don't have an option that applies to me. I identify as (please specify) _____

6. Place of origin _____
7. Program of studies _____
8. Session _____
9. According to your ethnicity, do you self-identify as Indigenous? Yes / No
If yes, from which group? _____
10. Are you a first generation student? In other words, are you the first person in your family to pursue post-secondary studies, whether at Institution or in another institution? Yes / No
11. Do you have any other family members enrolled at Institution? Yes / No
If so, who? _____
12. Besides being a student, do you have any other occupation(s)? (ex: a job, raising children, work on the *milpa*, making handcrafts, etc.) Yes / No

If so, what? _____

Section 2.

1. What languages do you use?

| Please check Yes or No depending on your answer for each language. | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----|----|
| Code | Language | Yes | No |
| | I use Yucatec Maya (YM) | | |
| | I use Spanish (Sp.) | | |
| | I use English (En.) | | |
| | I use other(s): _____ | | |

2. What languages do you use in your daily interactions?

| Please check the language(s) code(s) that apply to each one of your answers. You can select all the language options that apply to each one of your answers. | | | | |
|--|------|-------|-------|---------|
| | (YM) | (Sp.) | (En.) | (other) |
| 1. With my parents (and aunts and uncles) I use | | | | |
| 2. With the elders I use | | | | |
| 3. With the children in my family I use | | | | |
| 4. With friends from my community I use | | | | |
| 5. With (other) members of my community I use | | | | |
| 6. In my elementary school I used | | | | |
| 7. In my secondary school I used | | | | |
| 8. In my high school I used | | | | |
| 9. With my university professors I use | | | | |
| 10. With my university administrative staff I use | | | | |
| 11. With my university peers I use | | | | |

Section 3. Please answer the following questions based on the language(s) you use. There is no limit to the length of your answer. Thank you for providing your honest opinion.

1. What do you think you gain from using Yucatec Maya?

Answer: _____

2. What do you think you gain from using Spanish?
Answer: _____
3. What do you think you gain from using English?
Answer: _____
4. What do you think you gain from using (other: _____)?
Answer: _____
5. What do you think is a challenge when using Yucatec Maya?
Answer: _____
6. What do you think is a challenge when using Spanish?
Answer: _____
7. What do you think is a challenge when using English?
Answer: _____
8. What do you think is a challenge of using (other: _____)?
Answer: _____

Invitation to Participate in the Second Stage of the Project

This is the end of the first stage of the project. You are invited to participate in its second stage, which consists of three audio one-on-one, online, audio-recorded interviews, the writing of a linguistic autobiography, and the creation of a Language Portrait Silhouette (LPS). Each interview would last no more than 60 minutes, and it would be scheduled at a time of your choosing. They would be done through an internet app such as Zoom, WhatsApp, or Skype or one of your choosing. Each interview would be held approximately two weeks after the previous one. The entire interview process will be conducted and can be modified in ways that you are comfortable with. The goal is to conduct 3 interviews: The first interview would be to talk about moments, people, places and situations in which you use your language(s). The second interview would be to talk about the decision process behind your language(s) use, and the experiences that have impacted your current language(s) use(s). The last interview would be to talk about the role of your language(s) in your life and the emotions and motivations behind their usage.

The linguistic autobiography and the LPS would be done independently and they would be presented during the second and third interview, respectively. The linguistic autobiography is a text (500-700 words) that contains information about your language(s) acquisition, the contexts where you use your language(s) and the role of your language(s) in your life. The researcher would send you the file with its instructions by email or by an app of your choosing, and you would have to write your text (either on a computer or by hand) and send it (either by email or by app) to the researcher. The LPS is a task where you have to locate on a body silhouette the different language(s) you speak/use, while also choosing different colors to represent them. In the back of the drawing, you would have to briefly explain your color selection and why you placed the languages where you did. The researcher would send you the LPS silhouette file with

its instructions by email or by an app of your choosing. You could either print it or copy it by hand in order to do the task. Then, you would have to take a picture of our work and send it back to the researcher. Each independent activity would take you approximately 60-90 minutes.

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to do so, you may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. This study is independent from the *Linguistics and culture* program from *Universidad de Oriente* and participating or not participating will not have an impact on your studies.

The information you share with the researcher will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. It will remain and will only be processed by the investigator and her thesis supervisor. Your identity will remain anonymous and you will be asked to choose a pseudonym for the analysis and for the reporting of the research.

A written consent form would be sent to you prior to the activities of the second stage of the project.

Please choose one of the following options:

Yes, I would like to participate in the second stage of the study *Bridging language(s): Undergraduate Maya students' language(s) use(s)*.

No, I do not want to participate in the second stage of the study *Bridging language(s): Undergraduate Maya students' language(s) use(s)*.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

Appendix D

Former Student Consent Form for Online Survey and Virtual, Audio-Recorded Interview

Informed Consent

Interest in Participating: I am interested in participating in the research study entitled *Bridging language(s): Undergraduate Maya students' language(s) use(s)*, conducted by Mariana Domínguez to obtain the degree on PhD Education.

Purpose of the Study: I understand that the purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of Indigenous Maya current and former students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula with their formal academic and informal community/family-based language(s) use(s), and to gain a deeper understanding of the Indigenous Maya undergraduate students' language(s) use(s) in relation to their academic goals and to their Indigenous identity.

Participation: As a former student of the *Language/ Linguistics and Culture* undergraduate program at *name of postsecondary institution*, my contribution to this project will consist in answering an online survey and participating in a virtual, audio-recorded, individual interview. The survey will take me approximately 45 minutes to complete. The interview would last no more than 60 minutes, and it would be scheduled at a time of my choosing. It would be done through an internet app such as Zoom, WhatsApp, or Skype or one of my choosing. The entire interview process will be conducted and can be modified in ways that I am comfortable with, and it would be to talk about moments, people, places and situations in which I use my language(s), the decision process behind my language(s) use, and the experiences that have impacted my current language(s) use(s).

This is the consent form to participate in both activities. However, I can choose to participate only in one of them or in both. The link to answer the survey is located at the end of this consent form. Once I have answered the survey, the researcher will coordinate with me to schedule the date and time of the interview.

Risks: I understand that my participation in these activities will entail that I respond to questions about the languages I speak/use, and this may trigger emotional, political, or anxious situations or it may cause me to feel that I am sharing personal experiences and insights. I will share only what I feel comfortable sharing. I can contact the NGO *Centro cultural y de derechos humanos "Ts'u'unun Naj"*, *Casa Colibrí* located in Valladolid to further share or discuss any emotional, political or anxious reactions I may experience as a result participating in the survey and interview. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to respect these personal reflections in the writing and reporting of the research.

Benefits: My participation in this study will provide a deeper understanding of my plurilingual, Maya, former undergraduate student language(s) use(s) and its manifestations with members of my academic/professional community, my home community, and my family; and how these experiences relate to my academic/career goals and to my Indigenous identity.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. It will remain and will only be processed by the researcher and her thesis supervisor. My identity will remain anonymous and I will be asked to choose a pseudonym for the analysis and for the reporting of the research.

In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure my confidentiality, it is recommended that I use standard safety measures, such as signing out of my account, closing

my browser, and locking my device when I am no longer using it/when I have completed the study.

Conservation of data: My personal information will be safely stored. The audio recordings, transcripts and texts will be kept in a secure manner on a password protected computer. Hard copies of the transcripts and texts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The data will be destroyed after 10 years.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. This study is independent from the *Language/Linguistics and culture* program. If I choose to withdraw, online survey data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be securely stored, in a separate file, for ten years. Any interview data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed. Any identifiers will be destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in an online survey and an online interview that are part of the above mentioned research study conducted by *Mariana Domínguez González* of the *Faculty of Education* at the *University of Ottawa*, whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Douglas Fleming. I understand that by accepting to participate I am in no way waiving my right to withdraw from the study.

I also AGREE that the data may be used for the thesis work of the student researcher.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the student and/or her professor at the numbers mentioned below:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mariana Domínguez González Principal Investigator Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa Email: Telephone: | Douglas Fleming Thesis Supervisor Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa Email: Telephone: |
|---|---|

If I have any ethical concerns regarding my participation in this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

The link to access the online survey is the following:

INSERT ONLINE SURVEY LINK HERE

If I have difficulties accessing the survey, I will contact the researcher by telephone or email.

I am invited to save or print a copy of this consent form and the project information it contains.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Thesis supervisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E

Former Students Online Participant Survey

Thank you for answering in an honest manner.

Section 1.

1. Name (optional) _____
2. For the purposes of research analysis and the reporting of the research, please choose a pseudonym _____
3. Email (optional) _____
4. Age _____
5. In terms of your gender identity, how do you self-identify?
 - ___ Male
 - ___ Female
 - ___ You don't have an option that applies to me. I identify as (please specify) _____
6. Place of origin _____
7. What is your occupation? What do you do? _____
8. According to your ethnicity, do you self-identify as Indigenous? Yes / No
If yes, from which group? _____
9. Were you a first generation student? In other words, were you the first person in your family to pursue post-secondary studies, whether at Institution/Institution or in another institution? Yes / No
10. Did or do you have any other family members enrolled at Institution/Institution? Yes / No
If so, who? _____
11. What is your occupation? What do you do? _____

Section 2.

1. What languages do you use?

| Please check Yes or No depending on your answer for each language. | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----|----|
| Code | Language | Yes | No |
| | I use Yucatec Maya (YM) | s | o |
| | I use Spanish (Sp.) | | |
| | I use English (En.) | | |
| | I use other(s): | | |

2. What languages do you use in your daily interactions?

| Please check the language(s) code(s) that apply to each one of your answers. You can select all the language options that apply to each one of your answers. | | | | |
|--|------|-------|-------|---------|
| | (YM) | (Sp.) | (En.) | (other) |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| |) | | | |
| 1. With my parents (and aunts and uncles) I use | | | | |
| 2. With the elders I use | | | | |
| 3. With the children in my family I use | | | | |
| 4. With friends from my community I use | | | | |
| 5. With (other) members of my community I use | | | | |
| 6. In my elementary school I used | | | | |
| 7. In my secondary school I used | | | | |
| 8. In my high school I used | | | | |
| 9. With my university professors I used | | | | |
| 10. With my university administrative staff I used | | | | |
| 11. With my university peers I used | | | | |

Section 3. Please answer the following questions based on the language(s) you use. There is no limit to the length of your answer. Thank you for providing your honest opinion.

1. What do you think you gain from using Yucatec Maya?

Answer: _____

2. What do you think you gain from using Spanish?

Answer: _____

3. What do you think you gain from using English?

Answer: _____

4. What do you think you gain from using (other: _____)?

Answer: _____

5. What do you think is a challenge when using Yucatec Maya?

Answer: _____

6. What do you think is a challenge when using Spanish?

Answer: _____

7. What do you think is a challenge when using English?

Answer: _____

8. What do you think is a challenge of using (other: _____)?
Answer: _____

Thank you for your time and contribution!

Appendix F

Current Student Consent Form for Semi-Structured Interviews, Linguistic Autobiography and Language Portrait Silhouette

Informed Consent

Interest in Participating: I am interested in participating in the second stage of the research study entitled Bridging language(s): Undergraduate Maya students' language(s) use(s), conducted by Mariana Domínguez to obtain the degree on PhD Education.

Purpose of the Study: I understand that the purpose of the study is to explore how plurilingual Maya undergraduate students conceptualize their lived experience with formal academic and informal community/family-based language use while enrolled in a Language/Linguistics and Culture undergraduate program in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Participation: My contribution to the second stage of this project will consist in participating in three one-on-one, online audio-recorded interviews; writing a linguistic autobiography; and creating a Language Portrait Silhouette. Each interview would last no more than 60 minutes, and it would be scheduled at a time of my choosing. They would be done through an internet app such as Zoom, WhatsApp, or Skype or one of my choosing. Each interview would be held approximately two weeks after the previous one. The entire interview process will be conducted and can be modified in ways that I am comfortable with. The goal is to conduct 3 interviews: The first interview would be to talk about moments, people, places and situations in which I use my language(s). The second interview would be to talk about the decision process behind my language(s) use, and the experiences that have impacted my current language(s) use(s). The last interview would be to talk about the role of my language(s) in my life and the emotions and motivations behind their usage. The linguistic autobiography and the LPS would be done independently and they would be presented during the second and third interview, respectively. The linguistic autobiography is a text (500-700 words) that contains information about my language(s) acquisition, the contexts where I use my language(s) and the role of my language(s) in my life. The researcher would send me the file with its instructions by email or by an app of my choosing, and I would have to write my text (either on a computer or by hand) and send it (either by email or by app) to the researcher. The LPS is a task where you have to locate on a body silhouette the different language(s) I speak/use, while also choosing different colors to represent them. In the back of the drawing, I would have to briefly explain my color selection and why I placed the languages where I did. The researcher would send me the LPS silhouette file with its instructions by email or by an app of my choosing. I could either print it or copy it by hand in order to do the task. Then, I would have to take a picture of my work and send it back to the researcher. Each independent activity would take me approximately 60-90 minutes.

Risks: I understand that my participation in these activities will entail that I respond to questions about the languages I speak/use, and this may trigger emotional, political, or anxious situations or it may cause me to feel that I am sharing personal experiences and insights. I will share only what I feel comfortable sharing. I can contact the NGO *Centro cultural y de derechos humanos "Ts'u'unun Naj"*, Casa Colibrí located in Valladolid to further share or discuss any emotional, political or anxious reactions I may experience as a result participating in the interviews and/or creating my linguistic autobiography and/or my Language portrait silhouette (LPS). I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to respect these personal reflections in the writing and reporting of the research.

Benefits: My participation in this study will provide a deeper understanding of my plurilingual, Maya, undergraduate student language(s) use(s) and its manifestations with members of my academic community, my home community, and my family; and how these experiences relate to my academic/career goals and to my Indigenous identity.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. It will remain and will only be processed by the researcher and her thesis supervisor. My identity will remain anonymous and I will be asked to choose a pseudonym for the analysis and for the reporting of the research.

In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure my confidentiality, it is recommended that I use standard safety measures, such as signing out of my account, closing my browser, and locking my device when I am no longer using it/when I have completed the study.

Conservation of data: My personal information will be safely stored. The audio recordings and transcripts, as well as the files with the drawings and texts will be kept in a secure manner on a password protected computer. Hard copies of the transcripts, drawings and texts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The data will be destroyed after 10 years.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without any negative consequences. If I withdraw from the study, my data will be destroyed. This study is independent from the *Linguistics and culture* program and participating or not participating in it will not have an impact on my studies.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the second stage of the above research study conducted by *Mariana Domínguez González* of the *Faculty of Education*, whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Douglas Fleming. I understand that by accepting to participate I am in no way waiving my right to withdraw from the study.

I also AGREE that the data may be used for the thesis work of the student researcher.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the student and/or her professor at the numbers mentioned below:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mariana Domínguez González Principal Investigator Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa Email: Telephone: | Douglas Fleming Thesis Supervisor Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa Email: Telephone: |
|---|---|

If I have any ethical concerns regarding my participation in this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

I am invited to save or print a copy of this consent form and the project information it contains.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Thesis supervisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview 1 Protocol for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program

Time: TBD _____
 Date: TBD _____
 Place: Virtual meeting through: _____
 Meeting information: _____
 Interviewer: Mariana Domínguez González, researcher
 Interviewee position: *Language/Linguistics and Culture session #*
 Interviewee's pseudonym: _____ + attach survey

- I. Consent form confirmation or verbal consent (audio-recorded)
- II. General information

1. What languages do you use?

| Please check Yes or No depending on your answer for each language. | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----|----|
| Code | Language | Yes | No |
| | I use Yucatec Maya (YM) | | |
| | I use Spanish (Sp.) | | |
| | I use English (En.) | | |
| | I use other(s): _____ | | |

2. What languages do you use in your daily interactions?

| Please check the language(s) code(s) that apply to each one of your answers. You can select all the language options that apply to each one of your answers. | | | | |
|--|------|-------|-------|---------|
| | (YM) | (Sp.) | (En.) | (other) |
| 1. With my parents (and aunts and uncles) I use | | | | |
| 2. With the elders I use | | | | |
| 3. With the children in my family I use | | | | |
| 4. With friends from my community I use | | | | |
| 5. With (other) members of my community I use | | | | |
| 6. In my elementary school I used | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 7. In my secondary school I used | | | | |
| 8. In my high school I used | | | | |
| 9. With my university professors I use | | | | |
| 10. With my university administrative staff I use | | | | |
| 11. With my university peers I use | | | | |

III. Prompt questions:

Spanish. I would like to talk about when you speak Spanish in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak Spanish?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak Spanish?
- Can you think of a place where you speak Spanish?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak Spanish?

Yucatec Maya. I would like to talk about when you speak Yucatec Maya in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak Yucatec Maya?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak Yucatec Maya?
- Can you think of a place where you speak Yucatec Maya?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak Yucatec Maya?

English. I would like to talk about when you speak English in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak English?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak English?
- Can you think of a place where you speak English?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak English?

Other: _____. I would like to talk about when you speak _____ in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak _____?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak _____?
- Can you think of a place where you speak _____?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak _____?

IV. Provide linguistic autobiography instructions with handout share. Confirm email/app to send file with instructions.

Appendix H

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview 2 Protocol for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program

Project: Undergraduate Maya students formal and informal language(s) use.

Time: TBD _____

Date: TBD _____

Place: Virtual meeting through: _____

Meeting information: _____

Interviewer: Mariana Domínguez González, researcher

Interviewee position: *Language/Linguistics and Culture* #session _____

Interviewee's pseudonym: _____ + attach survey

+ attach summary from Interview 1
+ page for notes on Lx autobio writing process

- I. Follow up question: Is there anything that stayed on your mind after our last conversation?
- II. Participant feedback with summary from Interview 1.
- III. Conversation about participant's process of writing her linguistic autobiography:
 - How did you decide what content, anecdotes, and ideas to include? Why did you organize the text the way you did? How did you feel during the process of writing it? How did you feel with the final piece/version of it?
- IV. Prompt questions:
 - How do you know when to speak *Spanish*? / How do you choose between speaking *Spanish* or speaking another language you know? What does your decision depend on? What factors come into play when deciding the language you are going to use? Do you think about this before choosing the language you use or does it come naturally?
 - Have you ever been in a situation where you would have preferred to use Spanish but you could not? Or the opposite: Have you ever been in a situation where you would have preferred to use Yucatec Maya but you could not?
 - Has anybody ever commented on the way you speak? What did s/he say? And how did you react?
 - Of all the places where you have been, of all the experiences that have impacted you, and all the people you have met, which ones have impacted the most on the way you speak today/now?
- IV. Language Portrait Silhouette (LPS) instructions with handout share. Confirm email/app to send file with instructions.

Appendix I

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview 3 Protocol for Current Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program

Project: Undergraduate Maya students formal and informal language(s) use.

Time: TBD _____

Date: TBD _____

Place: Virtual meeting through: _____

Meeting information: _____

Interviewer: Mariana Domínguez González, researcher

Interviewee position: *Lingüística y cultura maya* undergraduate student #session

Interviewee's pseudonym: _____ + attach survey
 & 2 + attach summary from Interviews 1
 + page for notes on LPS creation

I. Follow up question: Is there anything that stayed on your mind after our last conversation?

II. Participant feedback with summary from interviews 1 & 2.

III. Language Portrait Silhouette (LPS) presentation based on text written after making the drawing: How did you decide the colors, shapes and location of your languages?

IV. Prompt questions:

- What role does Yucatec Maya play in your life?
- What role does Spanish play in your life?
- What role does English play in your life?
- What role does (other:) _____ play in your life?
- What encourages you to use your language? What keeps you from using your language?
- Of all the places where you have been, of all the experiences that have impacted you, and all the people you have met, which ones have impacted the most on the way you speak today/now?
- Has anybody ever commented on the way you speak? What did s/he say? And how did you react?
- If you have children, what language(s) do you use with them? Why? If you don't have children but are planning to have them in the future, do you want them to learn Yucatec Maya? How are they going to learn it?

V. Thank you to participant.

VI. Sharing of project timeline with participant.

Appendix J

Online Participant Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Former Students of a Language/Linguistics and Culture Undergraduate Program

Project: Undergraduate Maya students formal and informal language(s) use.

Time: TBD _____

Date: TBD _____

Place: Virtual meeting through: _____

Meeting information: _____

Interviewer: Mariana Domínguez González, researcher

Interviewee position: University officer of *name of program and institution*

Interviewee's pseudonym: _____ + attach survey

I. Consent form confirmation or verbal consent (audio-recorded)

II. General information

1. What languages do you use?

| Please check Yes or No depending on your answer for each language. | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----|----|
| Code | Language | Yes | No |
| | I use Yucatec Maya (YM) | s | o |
| | I use Spanish (Sp.) | | |
| | I use English (En.) | | |
| | I use other(s): _____ | | |

2. What languages do you use in your daily interactions?

| Please check the language(s) code(s) that apply to each one of your answers. You can select all the language options that apply to each one of your answers. | | | | |
|--|------|-------|-------|---------|
| | (YM) | (Sp.) | (En.) | (other) |
| 1. With my parents (and aunts and uncles) I use | | | | |
| 2. With the elders I use | | | | |
| 3. With the children in my family I use | | | | |
| 4. With friends from my community I use | | | | |
| 5. With (other) members of my community I use | | | | |
| 6. In my elementary school I | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| used | | | | |
| 7. In my secondary school I used | | | | |
| 8. In my high school I used | | | | |
| 9. With my university professors I used | | | | |
| 10. With my university administrative staff I used | | | | |
| 11. With my university peers I used | | | | |

3. Language(s) acquisition

- a. How did you learn the language(s) you speak today?
- b. Who taught you?
- c. Was it easy/difficult?

4. Contexts of use

Spanish. I would like to talk about when you speak Spanish in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak Spanish?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak Spanish?
- Can you think of a place where you speak Spanish?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak Spanish?

Yucatec Maya. I would like to talk about when you speak Yucatec Maya in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak Yucatec Maya?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak Yucatec Maya?
- Can you think of a place where you speak Yucatec Maya?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak Yucatec Maya?

English. I would like to talk about when you speak English in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak English?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak English?
- Can you think of a place where you speak English?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak English?

Other: _____. I would like to talk about when you speak _____ in your daily life.

- Can you think of one moment (in your day) in which you speak _____?
- Can you think of someone with whom you speak _____?
- Can you think of a place where you speak _____?
- Can you think of a situation in which you speak _____?

- a. In which contexts do you use your language(s)?
- b. In which contexts do you use both Yucatec Maya and Spanish?
- c. When you have the option of choosing between Yucatec Maya and Spanish, which one do you choose? What influences your decision?

- d. Have you ever been in a situation where you would have preferred to use Spanish but you could not? Or the opposite: Have you ever been in a situation where you would have preferred to use Yucatec Maya but you could not?
2. The role of language(s) in your life
- a. What role does Yucatec Maya play in your life?
 - b. What role does Spanish play in your life?
 - c. What role does English play in your life?
 - d. What role does _____(other) play in your life?
 - e. What encourages you to use your language? What keeps you from using your language?
 - f. Of all the places where you have been, of all the experiences that have impacted you, and all the people you have met, which ones have impacted the most on the way you speak today/now?
 - g. Has anybody ever commented on the way you speak? What did s/he say? And how did you react?
 - h. If you have children, what language(s) do you use with them? Why? If you don't have children but are planning to have them in the future, do you want them to learn Yucatec Maya? How are they going to learn it?

Appendix K

Participant Summary: Vane

Self-identification of Languages Spoken.

Vane is a speaker of Spanish, Yucatec Maya and English. She is currently learning Yucatec Maya at university and applying such learnings by practicing with her father when she visits her community. Vane considers Spanish her mother tongue and a language that one must learn because it is the most frequently used language where she is, and because all the school content, courses and assignments are in Spanish.

Use of Yucatec Maya (YM). Vane uses Yucatec Maya: With her university teachers that teach in Yucatec Maya. Her Yucatec Maya usage draws from what she is learning at the university and from what she observes in real life. Vane gets the chance to practice her Yucatec Maya with her father every time she goes back to her home village, which is whenever she has school holidays. Her father is the only member of her nuclear family who speaks Yucatec Maya.

Reported Benefits of Using YM. In her online participant survey Vane expressed what she considers the benefits of using Yucatec Maya to her as an individual student and a person, but also to the language and culture at large. She believes that using the language allows her to help a lot in her community, seeing herself as eventually being able to teach non-Maya speakers to be able to understand and speak the Maya language (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

When I asked her to elaborate on how it would benefit her as a person, as well as the perceived benefits to her culture, she explained that for the very reason that there are fewer people who are interested in speaking it. It will always be good that, for example, among each cohort of students, at least one person is interested in studying this kind of thing because most of them are not interested in anything related to culture or language. This would allow for the

preservation and care of Maya culture and language. This feeling motivates Vane to continue studying as a way to stand against the overwhelming influence of Spanish in the community. Vane notes that students generally prefer to learn English rather than Maya because they see it as a language that brings you money. This interest in money diminishes interest in language and culture (Vane, personal communication, February 20, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using YM. Vane considers that her challenge when using Yucatec Maya is not being able to engage in advanced communication with speakers of Maya and not fully understanding Maya (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Use of Spanish. Vane uses Spanish with everyone in her nuclear and extended family: father, mother, siblings, elders, and children. She also uses Spanish to interact in her community and in her university, as well as with her friends. Vane says most of her daily life unfolds speaking Spanish. Vane and her brother moved from their home village to pursue their undergraduate studies. They share a room in the town where their university is located. They communicate with each other in Spanish throughout the day. Sometimes they talk in Yucatec Maya or in English, but it is just for fun, as her brother is also learning those two languages. Learning Yucatec Maya and learning English are mandatory parts of the curriculum of both of their undergraduate programs.

Vane considers Spanish her mother tongue and a language that one must learn because it is the most frequently used language where she is, and because all the school content, courses and assignments are in Spanish.

Reported Benefits of Using Spanish. On the benefits of using Spanish, Vane expressed how she communicates more efficiently on a daily basis and can communicate with other countries and people (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using Spanish. Vane describes not using the correct vocabulary on some occasions (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Use of English. English is not used in Vane's daily life because she says the language is not used where she is now. Sometimes, in her current location or at her university, Yucatec Maya-English or Spanish-English language exchanges are set up between locals and foreigners. Sometimes foreigners come and speak English, but in her current context, it is not as common as the more frequent use of Yucatec Maya.

Reported Benefits of Using English. Vane finds she is benefiting from learning English in terms of education and interpersonal relationships, whether locally, nationally, or internationally (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using English. Vane shared that, as with Maya, she still can't communicate efficiently with native speakers of the language. Nevertheless, she understands it a little more than she does Maya (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Family Language(s) Use. With her nuclear family Vane usually communicates in Spanish. Family interaction and daily communication among Vane's father, mother and siblings, happens in Spanish. Vane says that, since she was born, everything has been in Spanish. Nonetheless, Vane expressed that if she has children, she will teach them three languages—Spanish, Maya and English (Vane, personal communication, May 6, 2023). I asked her how she envisioned what such a process would look like, and she shared that she once saw a video where a mother with children talked about teaching them three languages or possibly four since they were little: English, Spanish, German, and possibly Italian. The mother said it's a long and difficult process because children learn by listening. Based on her studies, Vane believes it could work because children learn from an early age, unconsciously. Vane adds that we should go a

little deeper into the subject, not only talking to them in several languages, but also putting it into practice with them. It would be a long process, not only in childhood, but also in adolescence, and they would continue practicing it when they are adults (Vane, personal communication, May 6, 2023).

Link to YM in Family Dynamics. Vane's father is the only family member that speaks Yucatec Maya since Vane's maternal grandmother, who was a Yucatec Maya speaker, passed away recently. Vane and her brother, a university student as well, are both learning Maya at school. Vane practices Yucatec Maya with her father when she goes back to her community.

YM and Spanish in Family Transmission. Vane says that, since she was born, everything has been in Spanish. In Vane's case, the use of Spanish (instead of Yucatec Maya) for the purposes of family communication changed in the generation of Vane's parents. Although Vane's father learned Yucatec Maya from his parents, the rest of his siblings only spoke Spanish. As a result, when Vane's paternal aunts and uncles get together today, they communicate in Spanish.

On the other hand, Vane's mother only learned Spanish from her parents, despite the fact that her mother knew Yucatec Maya. Vane says that her maternal grandmother spoke Yucatec Maya with the older people in the community and Spanish to her own nuclear family.

Community of Origin Language(s) Use. Vane's community interaction happens in Spanish because that is the language that she is a speaker of. She uses Yucatec Maya or English under particular circumstances in which she makes a conscious effort to employ a language that she is still learning.

Language(s) Use in Elementary, Secondary and University Schooling. Vane used Spanish during her elementary, junior high, and high school levels of schooling. Vane remembers

that in her previous levels of schooling prior to the post-secondary level, none of her teachers was a Yucatec Maya speaker.

Vane says that most of the university instructors use Spanish in their courses. When it is a Yucatec Maya language course or an English language course, the professors use the target language during class. Furthermore, if the teachers see that the class is having a hard time understanding, they switch and explain in Spanish. The university administrative staff speaks and communicates with the students in Spanish.

Vane says that outside and inside the university, with her classmates she normally speaks Spanish, as only a few of them are fluid Yucatec Maya speakers. Vane's cohort has 20 students. They all speak Spanish. Only 5 speak Yucatec Maya. Vane mentions that they speak Yucatec Maya very well but they don't know how to write it properly (Vane, personal communication, February 20, 2023), because grammar is not taught at home but at school. Since learning Yucatec Maya and learning English are a mandatory part of the curriculum in her undergraduate program, the students that are fluid Yucatec Maya speakers help the rest with the Yucatec Maya course work, especially with translations. Vane says that they are very good speakers but they don't know any grammar, which they are learning in the program.

Current or Expected Occupation. In the future, Vane sees herself as a *promotora cultural* [cultural promoter] in her community, working with people from the village teaching Yucatec Maya and promoting the Mayan culture to local children. In addition, Vane expressed that she would not like to transmit only one language to her potential future children; rather, she would like to teach them Spanish, Yucatec Maya and English.

Appendix L

Participant Summary: Lau

Self-identification of Languages Spoken.

Lau is a speaker of Spanish and Yucatec Maya. Lau learned Yucatec Maya from her maternal grandparents and used it throughout childhood with both sets of grandparents and with her neighbours from the community. As for English, Lau started learning it when she entered university. She considers that she knows little and speaks English to her 3-year-old niece at the request of her mother, Lau's sister. Lau says she is teaching her niece the basics of English: Lau says something and the niece repeats it.

Use of Yucatec Maya (YM). Lau speaks Yucatec Maya with her paternal grandparents, although they respond in the language Lau uses with them, either Spanish or Yucatec Maya; with her community friends and neighbors she grew up with and who barely speak Spanish; with some cousins (her mother's brother's children, who speak Maya and only a little Spanish); with the vendors in the local stores; with her 3-year-old niece (Lau says things to her in Yucatec Maya and asks her to repeat); and with her aunts, uncles and cousins who live in other communities. Lau feels that learning Yucatec Maya was mandatory for communicating with both sets of grandparents, who didn't speak Spanish.

Reported Benefits of Using YM. In the online participant survey, Lau expressed the benefits she perceives of using Yucatec Maya. She feels that learning more about the language allows her to help other people who have the initiative to learn to speak Maya. One of her self-described benefits of writing Maya is the ability to write reports and transcribe Maya stories. Speaking Maya has helped her to meet other people who also know about the language (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using YM. Lau identified the following challenges of using Yucatec Maya: learning the correct spelling of new words, having to learn how to pronounce words correctly, and knowing when to use words, phrases, etc. in the right way (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Use of Spanish. Lau and her siblings speak Spanish with her mother and father—who speak Yucatec Maya with their siblings (Lau's uncles), with their parents (Lau's grandparents), and with everyone in their community. Lau also speaks Spanish with her siblings (an older sister and a younger brother); with her paternal grandparents (with whom she also speaks Maya), with her 3-year-old niece (her sister's daughter), with her friends-colleagues from university, and with her uncles and cousins who live in cities like Playa del Carmen and Cancun.

Reported Benefits of Using Spanish. In her online participant survey, Lau wrote how using Spanish allows her to help relatives or family members because not everyone speaks Spanish and instead use their mother tongue, Yucatec Maya. However, speaking Spanish makes it easier for Lau to communicate with other people she knows who only speak Spanish. (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using Spanish. Lau's challenges include not knowing what a word refers to or the meaning of a word when in conversation with someone, learning to write new words, and learning the meaning of unfamiliar words (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Use of English. Lau started learning English when she entered university. She considers that she knows little and speaks English to her 3-year-old niece at the request of her mother, Lau's sister. Lau says she is teaching her niece the basics of English: Lau says something and the niece repeats it.

Reported Benefits of Using English. In the online participant survey Lau expressed how learning English in university is enabling her to catch up with peers who have studied the language since high school (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using English. Lau identified the following challenges of using English: having to learn to write it, to pronounce the words properly, and to spell it. It is complicated because she has to learn even more about his language because of the need to face new things and new people coming from different places (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Family Language(s) Use. Present-day family interaction and daily communication among Lau's father, mother and siblings happen in Spanish. Spanish is spoken inside their home. Family interaction with Lau's cousins in the community is in Yucatec Maya. When Lau visits her relatives who live outside her community, in cities like Cancun or Playa del Carmen, she speaks Spanish. Communication with her paternal grandparents fluctuates between Spanish and Yucatec Maya, depending on the topic or on the language that was spoken first.

Link to YM in Family Dynamics. In Lau's family, her maternal grandparents (now deceased) spoke Maya to Lau's parents, to Lau and her siblings, and to all of her cousins. Lau says that it was because of them that all of her family, on her mother's side, learned to speak Yucatec Maya. During her childhood, Lau's paternal grandparents spoke Yucatec Maya to Lau's parents and to everyone in the community, and Spanish to Lau and siblings. Nowadays, Lau communicates in Spanish and in Yucatec Maya with them.

YM and Spanish in Family Transmission. In Lau's case, the selection of Spanish for the purposes of nuclear family communication happened with her generation and within Lau's nuclear family in particular: Lau's father speaks Spanish to her and to her siblings, and Yucatec

Maya to his parents and to his in-laws. Lau's mother spoke, and speaks, Spanish to Lau and to her siblings and Yucatec Maya to her parents and to her in-laws. Lau has asked her mother why she doesn't communicate with her in Maya, as that would allow her to talk and learn more. Her mother replied that it would be weird for her since she's used to talking with Lau in Spanish (Lau, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Lau's parents decided to speak Spanish to their children so that they wouldn't struggle in school even when they speak Yucatec Maya to their own parents, siblings and to members of the community. Lau feels that learning Yucatec Maya was a mandatory thing to be able to communicate with both sets of grandparents because they didn't speak Spanish.

Community of Origin Language(s) Use. Lau speaks Yucatec Maya with her friends, with her extended family, and with people in the community.

Language(s) Use in Elementary, Secondary and University Schooling. Lau used Spanish during her elementary and junior high school. She used Spanish and Yucatec Maya in high school. Lau expresses that at her university, she used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with her professors, but only Spanish with the administrative staff. With her university classmates she used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English.

Lau says that she is very glad to have chosen the Language and Culture undergraduate program because she wasn't expecting to learn how to write Yucatec Maya, which is something she really liked. However, she says that learning English was a complicated process for her because she had to write reports and assignments in Yucatec Maya and to also study and do coursework in English, a language that was challenging to her. Lau remembers that when she had Yucatec Maya tests, she didn't have to study; conversely, she spent the whole night studying whenever she had an English test.

Lau recalls a friend of hers who was very good in English and would often help Lau with the English assignments. This person began learning English in junior high school, improved it in high school because she did a lot of independent studying, and then spent a semester in Canada as part of a university exchange program. Lau's friend shared with her that she would spend a lot of time listening to music and watching videos to improve her English. On the other hand, Lau was the person who provided help with the Yucatec Maya assignments because this friend found such language challenging.

Current or Expected Occupation. Lau, who has just finished her undergraduate program, would like to work as a Yucatec Maya language teacher because she likes teaching and because she feels she is improving as she continues to learn herself.

Appendix M

Participant Summary: Chinitos

Self-identification of Languages Spoken.

Chinitos is a speaker of Spanish, Yucatec Maya and English. Chinitos says he manages to communicate in Spanish, Yucatec Maya and English, although he communicates more effectively in Yucatec Maya than in English.

Use of Yucatec Maya (YM). Chinitos speaks Yucatec Maya with his mother and father, who communicate in Yucatec Maya with each other, in combination with Spanish; with his maternal grandmother in combination with Spanish; with his maternal great-grandmother; with his paternal grandparents who are now deceased; with his students in the class he teaches at the municipality of Carrillo Puerto to whom he teaches to read and write in Yucatec Maya.

Reported Benefits of Using YM. Chinitos's response focused on the transmission of the language and culture in a modern way. Chinitos believes modern expressions help more people become interested in and interact with the language. His immersion into the language allows him to understand phenomena that are only used within the Yucatec Mayan culture (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using YM. Chinitos felt that not everyone understands the value that the language conveys, so discrimination is often present. Likewise, it is very difficult to get academic material in the language (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Use of Spanish. Chinitos speaks Spanish at home and community of origin, with his mother and father, aunts and uncles, younger brother and sister, cousins, his maternal and paternal grandparents (the paternal grandparents are deceased; with his maternal grandparents he used Spanish until he learned Yucatec Maya and now communicates with them in Yucatec

Maya), friends from the community, and in the town where he went to university and where he currently works.

Chinitos considers Spanish to be a widely used academic form, a personal and interactive way to communicate with people who do not speak Maya.

Reported Benefits of Using Spanish. Chinitos notes the ability to communicate with people who are not native to the region (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using Spanish. Chinitos had no comments.

Use of English. Chinitos speaks English with the students in the English conversation circles at University A, where he gives reinforcement topics. He also uses it to communicate with foreigners who come to University A, such as the group of Canadians who came and asked him questions. Additionally, he uses English for interpretation in his workplace, to review or read texts, and peruse academic publications.

Reported Benefits of Using English. Chinitos notes how communication with foreigners (in English) helps in the transmission of the Maya language and culture and is very useful for academic purposes (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using English. Chinitos so far has only found it difficult to express certain things in the language (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Family Language(s) Use. For Chinitos, family interaction and daily communication happen in Spanish and Yucatec Maya. Chinitos says that if he is in a gathering with his parents and siblings, he can use both Spanish and Yucatec Maya. But if he is with his siblings or with his cousins, he uses Spanish only.

When I asked Chinitos which language(s) he would promote if he had children, Chinitos replied that he would speak to them in all the languages he knows. He is uncertain if that is

possible, however. With more confidence, he states he would get them more involved in learning Maya, and this would also allow them to connect with his Maya-speaking parents. He also considers his theoretical spouse's language, considering the possibility of a bilingual child, or if they're really lucky, trilingual. This would remove the need for so much studying, with the university becoming a place to reinforce skills (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

Link to YM in Family Dynamics. Chinitos's paternal grandparents spoke to him in Yucatec Maya while he was growing up, but he would not reply in Yucatec Maya. They passed away when Chinitos was 15 and 20, before he could really hold a full conversation in Yucatec Maya. Chinitos's maternal grandparents, especially his maternal grandmother and great grandmother, spoke Spanish to him while he was growing up. However, the minute they found out Chinitos could speak Yucatec Maya, his maternal great grandmother never spoke Spanish to him again.

YM and Spanish in Family Transmission. In Chinito's case, the selection of Spanish for the purposes of nuclear family language transmission happened with his generation. Chinito's father spoke to him and his siblings in Spanish but speaks Yucatec Maya with his wife (Chinito's mother). Chinito's mother spoke to him and his siblings in Spanish but she communicated in Yucatec Maya with her husband, Chinito's father. Chinito recalls that sometimes his parents would include some Yucatec Maya in their explanations.

With his nuclear family (mother, father, and younger brother (20) and sister (19)) and with his aunts, uncles, and cousins who live in the community, Chinitos communicated in Spanish during his childhood. When he was 18, Chinitos began to speak Yucatec Maya with his extended family members and with his parents.

Chinitos says he is unsure about why his parents, who spoke Yucatec Maya to each other, decided to speak Spanish to their children. He first says that it could have been due to the discrimination issue but that he doubts it since both his mother and father enjoy speaking Yucatec Maya and they also like sharing the Mayan culture. Chinitos believes that most likely his parents spoke Spanish to him due to the community development: The population of his community was using Spanish and many of the daily activities were in Spanish. Chinitos concludes that his parents may not have even had to make a decision: since he was born at a time when Spanish was already predominant and so he was taught Spanish (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

Chinitos' parents spoke Spanish to him and to his siblings, while communicating in Yucatec Maya with each other. Chinitos learned Yucatec Maya from his grandparents by listening to the language, but he never spoke it until he arrived at the university and began taking formal Yucatec Maya courses.

Community of Origin Language(s) Use. For Chinitos, community interactions depend on location: He considers that his life is bilingual when he is in his village, but that it is monolingual in Spanish when he is in the town where he works.

Language(s) Use in Elementary, Secondary and University Schooling. Chinitos used Spanish during his elementary, junior high, and high school levels of schooling. He says that at his university, he used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with his professors and with his classmates; and Spanish and Yucatec Maya with the administrative staff.

Chinitos discussed how part of his professional development at the university required him to learn Yucatec Maya, express himself in Yucatec Maya, and do Maya assignments. Seeing that his knowledge and skills in this language were insufficient, he turned to his parents and told

them he needed their help and wondered why they hadn't taught it to him when he was little (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

In his current job as a Yucatec Maya and English language teacher, Chinitos uses English when he runs the English conversation circles at the university. In those sessions, he presents or reinforces English topics. For such activities he uses English and Spanish. Chinitos says that he also uses English when there are foreign visitors at the university. He recalls one time when he was asked to be a translator from Spanish to English for a group of Canadians who were attending a lecture on community health and traditional medicine.

Chinitos and another person were the first two people to pursue postsecondary studies in his community. His parents told him to go to University A to stay close to the village. Chinitos recalls that he wanted to study something related to foreign language teaching, particularly, English. He chose his undergraduate program in Language and Culture because it focused on English and Yucatec Maya language teaching. He says that he is satisfied with the teacher training abilities he developed during the program.

Chinitos mentions that currently only five or six people from his community are at the postsecondary level of studies. Out of those people, two are his siblings. He adds that most of his generation left school and began to work, either at the Mayan Riviera or working the field growing citrics.

Current or Expected Occupation. Currently, Chinitos works as a Yucatec Maya and English language teacher at his former university.

Appendix N

Participant Summary: Lizbeth

Self-identification of Languages Spoken.

Lizbeth is a speaker of Spanish and Yucatec Maya. She learned Yucatec Maya from her parents and considers it her mother tongue. Lizbeth learned to speak Spanish when she entered preschool; her parents reinforced her learning of Spanish so that she would not struggle in elementary school.

Use of Yucatec Maya (YM). Lizbeth speaks Yucatec Maya with the elders and her grandparents; with her mother and father; with her seven siblings; with her students at the school where she works and where Yucatec Maya is taught at a basic level; and with her son (1 year old). In university, Lizbeth spoke Yucatec Maya with her teachers of Yucatec Maya language subjects and with her university classmates (most of her group spoke Yucatec Maya: out of 8 students who finished the program, 6 were Yucatec Maya speakers from home).

Lizbeth considers the Yucatec Maya language to be her mother tongue of birth (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023), and she uses Spanish in academia and in her work. Lizbeth says that Yucatec Maya represents her identity, her culture and her practices; she adds that Yucatec Maya represents her whole being because she grew up with it and communicates with it.

Reported Benefits of Using YM. Lizbeth felt that sharing the Yucatec Maya language with other generations is priceless; she enjoys sharing her mother tongue with others so that it does not disappear and will continue to be spoken for many more years to come (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using YM. Lizbeth described how the young population does not understand Yucatec Maya when she communicates with them. It is a challenge, she says, for Yucatec Maya speakers to continue preserving it and getting young people interested in learning the legendary Yucatec Maya language (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Use of Spanish. Lizbeth speaks Spanish with her husband whom she met at university and always spoke Spanish to. She also speaks Spanish with her older nephews in junior high and high school, the children in her family in elementary school, in the school where she works as a teacher, with her teacher colleagues, and with her students and their parents. At university, Lizbeth spoke Spanish with her teachers and administrative staff and with some classmates who were not Yucatec Maya speakers.

Lizbeth learned to speak Spanish when she entered preschool; her parents reinforced her learning of Spanish so that she would not struggle in elementary school. This is something they did with each and every one of their eight children—Lizbeth is the eighth and youngest of them. Lizbeth used her Spanish in preschool, elementary school, middle school and high school. She says Spanish is a tool needed for professional communication and work purposes.

Reported Benefits of Using Spanish. Lizbeth likewise describes being able to interact with other people in different environments (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using Spanish. Lizbeth said that because Spanish is the most used language in the whole state by the new generations, there is therefore no challenge for communication (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Use of English. Lizbeth speaks English with the students at the school where she works so that they can practice greetings and basic phrases. Lizbeth used her English when she went on a university exchange program to Canada. Later, she used English as a recent graduate for a job.

Lizbeth believes that English is a good thing, allowing her to move around and communicate with other people in other parts of the world.

Reported Benefits of Using English. Lizbeth sees English as a way of meeting and interacting with other people while learning about their culture and lifestyle (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using English. In Lizbeth's community and workplace, no one communicates in English, and there is, therefore, no challenge (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Family Language(s) Use. In Lizbeth's case, family interaction and daily communication happens mostly in Yucatec Maya: Lizbeth uses Yucatec Maya to communicate with her mother, father, siblings, in-laws, and 1-year-old son. She uses Spanish to communicate with her husband, although sometimes she talks to him in Yucatec Maya as well, even if he does not reply in Yucatec Maya.

Lizbeth shares her experience with her husband and her colleague, with whom the communication has always been in Spanish despite the fact that the three of them speak Yucatec Maya as well. She met her husband speaking Spanish, and when she speaks to him in Yucatec Maya, he says he cannot answer her in the same language. He tells her that he met her while speaking Spanish, and even though he'll speak with her family in Yucatec Maya, with her it is only Spanish. He cannot explain why that is (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Lizbeth explains that a similar situation happens between her and a colleague who comes from her same village. She has no problem speaking in Yucatec Maya to the colleague, but the colleague only replies in Spanish, with the same explanation as the husband: Spanish is the language in which they first met, and so she cannot speak in Yucatec Maya. Sometimes she'll

answer with Yucatec Maya expressions, but that's as far as it goes. They do not engage in a deep conversation in the Yucatec Maya language. (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

In a similar fashion but with another language, Lizbeth says that all her brothers and sisters communicate in Yucatec Maya. Talking to each other in Spanish is not very common and difficult to do as they are not used to it (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Link to YM in Family Dynamics. In Lizbeth's case, Yucatec Maya is present as a language from home and for daily interaction. She uses Yucatec Maya with her parents, her siblings, and friends from her village. She points at the fact that the younger generations do not speak it as much or can only understand it and not speak it.

YM and Spanish in Family Transmission. Lizbeth considers that she learned Yucatec Maya and Spanish from her parents and her seven older siblings. Lizbeth's parents taught their children Spanish once they entered school so that they wouldn't struggle with the language of instruction. She remembers her parents speaking to her in Yucatec Maya at home, but when she had trouble with Spanish in kindergarten, her parents switch to Spanish at home to make things easier at school. (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Community of Origin Language(s) Use. Lizbeth's community interactions happen in Yucatec Maya and Spanish. With elders and adults, Lizbeth uses Yucatec Maya. She says the older generation find it difficult to speak Spanish. With younger generations (teenagers and children), Lizbeth tries to use Yucatec Maya but she acknowledges that either they don't understand her or that they do understand her but always reply in Spanish.

Language(s) Use in Elementary, Secondary and University Schooling. Lizbeth used Spanish during her elementary, junior high and high school levels of schooling. At her university,

she used Spanish and Yucatec Maya with her professors and classmates, and Spanish with the administrative staff.

Lizbeth had been observing the interactions among the children in her family, which were mostly in Spanish, and began to wonder if her nephews and nieces would learn to speak Maya or forget that language. She was determined to rescue her family, to help the younger members communicate in the Maya language and grow up knowing the culture and the language. This led to her interest in studying in the Language and Culture program (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Current or Expected Occupation. Lizbeth currently works as a teacher in an elementary school with an Indigenous modality. Her students are learning the basics of Yucatec Maya, such as greetings. They are also learning English. Lizbeth, who learned English during her undergraduate program and participated in a university exchange program in Canada, asks her students to share and practice with her what they learned in their English class. Lizbeth observes that the children are more interested in English because it gives them more job opportunities in the future. They have the idea that English is better than the Maya language (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Appendix O

Participant Summary: Jpiil

Self-identification of Languages Spoken.

Jpiil says he speaks Yucatec Maya and Spanish because he does not speak only one language. Regarding the use of both languages simultaneously, Jpiil says that he can speak with his son at any time in Spanish or Maya (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023). He adds that there is no schedule for when to use each language.

Use of Yucatec Maya (YM). Jpiil speaks Yucatec Maya with his mother, his father, and his six siblings. Jpiil is the second of seven; besides him there are 3 other boys and 3 girls. One of his younger brothers studied Gastronomy at University B and started a restaurant in a tourist area of Valladolid where Jpiil collaborates with cultural initiatives. Jpiil also speaks Yucatec Maya in his community to shop and to run errands there, with his extended family, with his students at the preschool where he works (although he combines Yucatec Maya and Spanish), and with the parents of his students.

Jpiil learned Yucatec Maya from his parents, his grandparents, from the people in his community, and from his siblings. For Jpiil, the Yucatec Maya language is a channel of communication that he uses daily with his family; if there wasn't the language, he feels he wouldn't be able to communicate with his family (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Reported Benefits of Using YM. Jpiil said he feels more confident to express himself as learning the language boosts his self-esteem (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using YM. Jpiil said he can't use it in different contexts; most people use Spanish (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Use of Spanish. In the family context, Jpiil speaks Spanish with his wife and with his son, although he also speaks Yucatec Maya with him. In his work context, an Indigenous preschool, Jpiil uses Spanish with his students and with their parents, although he also speaks Yucatec Maya with all of them. In his daily life in Valladolid, Jpiil speaks Spanish in the stores and when running errands. Jpiil believes that Spanish is the language imposed by the schooling process and therefore merely an educational medium.

Reported Benefits of Using Spanish. No comments were made by Jpiil on this topic.

Reported Challenges of Using Spanish. Jpiil describes needing to first remember and apply the grammatical structure to order his ideas so that he can be understood by the audience (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Use of English. Jpiil considers English useful for communicating and meeting new people. For example, when he is at his brother's restaurant, Jpiil says that sometimes people come in who only speak English. If one of the employees who speaks English is not there, Jpiil uses the translator on his phone to communicate with the customer. Jpiil says that he has always wanted to learn English but finds it difficult to learn.

Reported Benefits of Using English. Jpiil describes being very stressed by not being fluent in English (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using English. Jpiil rarely uses English (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Family Language(s) Use. Jpiil normally communicates in Yucatec Maya with his parents and siblings, regardless of the location. With his nuclear family, wife and son (6), Jpiil uses Spanish and Yucatec Maya. His wife is learning Yucatec Maya from interacting with Jpiil's family and his son is learning Yucatec Maya from Jpiil and his paternal extended family.

Link to YM in Family Dynamics. Jpiil remembers that when he was a child, his mother also knew Spanish but she never spoke it at home. His mother came to work in Valladolid in her youth. While she said she spoke Spanish, she did not use it in the house and never once spoke to her children in Spanish. Jpiil recalls that every time a child communicated with her, it was in the Maya language. To this day, when his son visits, she speaks to him in Yucatec Maya even though Jpiil's son speaks to her in Spanish (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

YM and Spanish in Family Transmission. Jpiil says that he learned Yucatec Maya from his parents, his grandparents, the people in his community and from his siblings. Jpiil recalls learning Spanish at a young age from watching television and from listening to his aunts and uncles who worked in Valladolid, where they used Spanish, when they came back to the village for the weekend.

Community of Origin Language(s) Use. Jpiil mentions that his community is a Yucatec Maya speaker community; however, due to media and to globalization, children nowadays have begun to communicate more in Spanish than in Yucatec Maya.

Language(s) Use in Elementary, Secondary and University Schooling. Jpiil says he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish during his elementary and junior high schooling periods. He recalls using Spanish in his high school. In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his professors and classmates, and Spanish with the administrative staff.

Even though English language courses were included in Jpiil's undergraduate curriculum he finds English difficult. Jpiil feels that he would have to go live somewhere where only that language is spoken so that he can practice it and learn it.

Jpiil feels a responsibility toward the teaching of languages among people studying Language and culture; these people who have that level of knowledge have the ability to transmit

the language and culture to other generations. He fears that these things will be lost if the experts do not share them (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Current or Expected Occupation. Current Indigenous preschool teacher, Yucatec Maya language promotor and activist, farmer/ agriculturist. Jpiil works in an Indigenous preschool located in what he describes as a Yucatec Maya speaking community. The school children and their parents speak Spanish in school. Jpiil observes that even though the parents know Yucatec Maya, they don't use it when they are in the school area. He concludes that they probably use Yucatec Maya at home, but once they are in the street or in the school, they prefer to use Spanish; and he specifies that the only parents who do not understand Yucatec Maya are those that come from other states of the country.

Appendix P

Participant Summary: Ajtuukul

Self-identification of Languages Spoken.

Ajtuukul is a speaker of Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and English. He learned Yucatec Maya from his parents. Ajtuukul says that he speaks primarily Yucatec Maya ; then Spanish; and sometimes English, but very little. Ajtuukul recalls that he first learned to speak Yucatec Maya and then Spanish through school. He explains that he took courses in English, Italian, and French but does not use these languages in his daily activities, so he only understands some texts and phrases or expressions of the people who speak them.

Use of Yucatec Maya (YM). In his family context, Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya with his father, mother, siblings (there are six siblings in total, five boys and one girl, and only the youngest son (22 years old) does not speak Yucatec Maya), mother-in-law, wife (who speaks more Spanish than Yucatec Maya because her father, who was a teacher, promoted the use of Spanish at home for his children), children (ages 6 and 4, who spent the first four years speaking Spanish under the care of Ajtuukul's mother, but are now learning Yucatec Maya under the care of their maternal grandmother, Ajtuukul's mother-in-law), elders, and friends from the community. In his work context, Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya as part of his professional activities, whether for linguistic consulting, to give tours of archaeological sites, to facilitate workshops on gastronomy and/or epigraphy, or in his community work promoting the rights of the Maya people.

Ajtuukul considers that all the activities he does are related to Yucatec Maya language and culture and that he always tries to link the people he knows with these topics. Ajtuukul wants

his children to have the opportunity to learn not only the current aspects but also ancestral elements of Maya culture and language.

Reported Benefits of Using YM. Ajtuukul shares what he considers are the benefits of using Yucatec Maya:

Yaaxile' kin kanik ujeel t'uumben t'aano'ob, ku ye'esik yaan teen u páajtalil in kanik in ts'iibt in t'aan, wa yéetel nukuch wiinike' ku yáantik in náats'al ti' u tuukulo'ob, yéetel mejen paalale' ku chiikbesik yaan u muuk' k t'aan. Ti'al ts'iibe' ku ka'ansik le teclado le celular u na'at le t'aano', ku ts'áajik u muuk' in t'aan.

First he learns new words, which gives him the power to learn and strengthen writing ability in his language. If he talks to older people, the language brings him closer to their way of thinking. With children, he is able to demonstrate the strength of the language. To write in chat teaches the algorithms of the keyboard to recognize words and gives strength to the words. There is access to rituals and ways of life that are unique to the community (Ajtukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using YM. Ajtuukul shares what he considers the challenges of using Yucatec Maya: institutions that do not have translators or interpreters do not allow you to express ideas in Maya, and many words do not have a Spanish translation. There is discrimination against Maya speakers by people who do not sympathize with the Maya language. You are restricted from using it in establishments and shopping centers. There is discomfort because if you speak you are observed as something strange. There are groups on WhatsApp that do not accept writing in Maya (Ajtukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Use of Spanish. Ajtuukul uses Spanish to run errands, to shop, to fulfill job requirements, to communicate in his various jobs and projects, and to talk to school teachers.

Ajtuukul considers Spanish a means to relate to people since most people speak Spanish. In the same way, Spanish serves to connect people with institutions and with remunerative or work activities, so Ajtuukul considers that this language has an economic function rather than a merely communicative or social function.

Reported Benefits of Using Spanish. Ajtuukul said that Spanish allows him to understand people, get products from establishments, and actively participate in activities. He notes that most jobs require Spanish to communicate and schools have teachers who speak more in Spanish (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using Spanish. Ajtuukul has difficulty using appropriate Spanish and recognizing words that are not regionalisms. In addition, challenges are found in explaining situations that are specific to local activities and using incorrectly conjugated verbs (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Use of English. Ajtuukul says that he is now beginning to reconsider the role of English in his life as he identifies new potential activities and work that would require him to know English. For example, he has received many requests to make translations from Yucatec Maya to English directly, something he cannot do because he can only translate to Spanish. He has also been told that if the videos he and his colleagues created had English subtitles, all of his efforts promoting Maya language and culture would be enhanced more. He also notices that many foreigners are interested in current cultural initiatives he is involved in, like the project with local *melipona* bees.

Reported Benefits of Using English. Ajtuukul embraces English as a way to help in understanding academic books; with organizations requesting Yucatec Maya-English

translations, he sees an opening to employment possibilities (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Reported Challenges of Using English. Ajtuukul is concerned with mispronunciation and understanding of the language (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Family Language(s) Use. In Ajtuukul's nuclear family, with his wife and children, daily communication happens mostly in Yucatec Maya and sometimes in Spanish. With his parents and siblings, family communication happens in Yucatec Maya.

Link to YM in Family Dynamics. With his grandparents, Ajtuukul always spoke in Yucatec Maya. Ajtuukul participated in community activities like doing the *milpa*, which took place in Yucatec Maya only. Ajtuukul's father spoke Yucatec Maya to his nuclear family but he knew Spanish since he was 14-15 years old and he used it for work purposes in Cancun, during Ajtuukul's childhood. Ajtuukul's mother spoke Yucatec Maya to most of her children. She learned Spanish when she was in her early 20s and had a hard time getting involved in the school's activities and interacting in Cancun and in areas of Valladolid where Spanish was spoken. She experienced first-hand the discrimination of being monolingual in Yucatec Maya. As a result, with her last child she began speaking Spanish only and she currently does the same with her grandchildren, Ajtuukul's daughter and son.

YM and Spanish in Family Transmission. In Ajtuukul's community, Yucatec Maya was spoken all the time, with his parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents. In his childhood neighborhood in Valladolid, Yucatec Maya was spoken as well due to the fact that he and his family lived in an area (*comisaría*) where everyone spoke Yucatec Maya, although in other areas of Valladolid people spoke Spanish.

All levels of schooling for Ajtuukul were in Spanish, as well as the interaction with the teachers. However, his classmates and their parents spoke Yucatec Maya when they interacted because they were all from the same neighborhood where Yucatec Maya was spoken. In addition, Ajtuukul participated in a public program (*Ko'ox kanik maya*) that taught children to read and write Yucatec Maya. By the age of 12, he knew how to read, write, and speak both Spanish and Yucatec Maya.

Ajtuukul makes a comparison between his own and his wife's childhood language acquisition process and concludes that the strength of the Yucatec Maya language in his community of origin and with the people around him did not lead to a choice between Spanish and Yucatec Maya for family communication and community interaction. It was until his mother went through a forced learning of Spanish, which carried its share of challenges and discrimination for being monolingual in Yucatec Maya, that she determined that Spanish should be transmitted early on, and she did so with her youngest son and with her grandchildren.

Community of Origin Language(s) Use. For Ajtuukul, since he moves from the village where he and his wife and children stay, to Valladolid and other communities where he works, as well as to his community of origin, his community interactions happen in both Yucatec Maya and Spanish.

Language(s) Use in Elementary, Secondary and University Schooling. Ajtuukul says he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish during his elementary school and high school. He recalls using Spanish in his junior high school. In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his professors and with his classmates; and Spanish with the administrative staff.

Ajtuukul wanted to be a tourist guide in order to work in the archaeological sites only accessible to archaeologists, anthropologists, and tourist guides. He took language courses and

obtained a technical diploma for such purposes before he began his undergraduate program in Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture at the university. He admits that originally he thought he would go work at the Mayan Riviera after finishing his high school since he never thought he would have an undergraduate degree.

Before doing his undergraduate program, Ajtuukul worked for a government educational program called *CONAFE*, which would assign teachers to a rural community to teach the official curriculum in Yucatec Maya. Ajtuukul remembers that while being in that community, he was also contacted to provide literacy courses for adults. He recalls that those were educational experiences but that they also contributed to the development of a strong relationship with the community

Current or Expected Occupation. Current Yucatec Maya language teacher and ancient written Maya (epigraphy) consultant.

Appendix Q

Emerging Data by Topic

Participant Descriptions of Language(s) Usage

If I asked you: “What language(s) do you speak?” What would you say? The first section of the participant collective narrative explores participant use of Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and English in their current, daily lives.

Use of Yucatec Maya in Daily Life. Vane uses Yucatec Maya: With her university teachers that teach in Yucatec Maya. Her Yucatec Maya usage draws from what she is learning at the university and from what she observes in real life. Vane gets the chance to practice her Yucatec Maya with her father every time she goes back to her home village, which is whenever she has school holidays. Her father is the only member of her nuclear family who speaks Yucatec Maya.

During our first conversation, Vane told me she uses Yucatec Maya on the weekends when she goes shopping at the market or in stores: since some vendors don’t speak Spanish, she finds herself speaking Yucatec Maya in order to communicate with them. However, during the participant feedback at the beginning of our second conversation, Vane clarified that speaking Yucatec Maya to and with the vendors at the market is unusual since the people that sell do not communicate in Yucatec Maya with their customers; they use Spanish as a default language and only speak Yucatec Maya with the people they know or with the people that they know speak Yucatec Maya. When I ask her if the vendors speak Spanish fluently, she described a variety in how much Spanish and/or Yucatec Maya the vendors speak.

Lau speaks Yucatec Maya with her paternal grandparents, although they respond in the language Lau uses with them, either Spanish or Yucatec Maya; with her community friends and

neighbors she grew up with and who barely speak Spanish; with some cousins (her mother's brother's children, who speak Maya and only a little Spanish); with the vendors in the local stores; with her 3-year-old niece (Lau says things to her in Yucatec Maya and asks her to repeat); and with her aunts, uncles and cousins who live in other communities.

Lau feels that learning Yucatec Maya was mandatory for communicating with both sets of grandparents, who didn't speak Spanish. Lau, who has just finished her university undergraduate program and would like to work as a Yucatec Maya teacher.

Chinitos speaks Yucatec Maya with his mother and father, who communicate in Yucatec Maya with each other, in combination with Spanish; with his maternal grandmother in combination with Spanish; with his maternal great-grandmother; with his paternal grandparents who are now deceased; with his students in the class, he teaches at the municipality of Carrillo Puerto to whom he teaches to read and write in Yucatec Maya.

Lizbeth speaks Yucatec Maya with the elders and her grandparents; with her mother and father; with her seven siblings; with her students at the school where she works and where Yucatec Maya is taught at a basic level; and with her son (1 year old). In university, Lizbeth spoke Yucatec Maya with her teachers of Yucatec Maya language subjects and with her university classmates (most of her group spoke Yucatec Maya: out of 8 students who finished the program, 6 were Yucatec Maya speakers from home).

Lizbeth considers the Yucatec Maya language to be her mother tongue of birth (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023), and she uses Spanish in academia and in her work. Lizbeth says that Yucatec Maya represents her identity, her culture and her practices; she adds that Yucatec Maya represents her whole being because she grew up with it and communicates with it.

Jpiil speaks Yucatec Maya with his mother, his father, and his six siblings. Jpiil is the second of seven; besides him there are 3 other boys and 3 girls. One of his younger brothers studied Gastronomy at University B and started a restaurant in a tourist area of Valladolid where Jpiil collaborates with cultural initiatives. Jpiil also speaks Yucatec Maya in his community to shop and to run errands there, with his extended family, with his students at the preschool where he works (although he combines Yucatec Maya and Spanish), and with the parents of his students.

In his family context, Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya with his father, mother, siblings (there are six siblings in total, five boys and one girl, and only the youngest son (22 years old) does not speak Yucatec Maya), mother-in-law, wife (who speaks more Spanish than Yucatec Maya because her father, who was a teacher, promoted the use of Spanish at home for his children), children (ages 6 and 4, who spent the first four years speaking Spanish under the care of Ajtuukul's mother, but are now learning Yucatec Maya under the care of their maternal grandmother, Ajtuukul's mother-in-law), elders, and friends from the community. In his work context, Ajtuukul speaks Yucatec Maya as part of his professional activities, whether for linguistic consulting, to give tours of archaeological sites, to facilitate workshops on gastronomy and/or epigraphy, or in his community work promoting the rights of the Maya people.

Ajtuukul mentions that at the family level, his siblings who did not study linguistics or who do not do cultural promotion and/or linguistic revitalization activities, are always encouraged to think about how or what can be done to link their disciplines with the Yucatec Maya language and culture for the benefit of the community. Ajtuukul is proactive in getting professionals to advocate by using their skills creatively. For example, he asks what engineers can create for the people of the community or how computer scientists might design apps for

teaching Maya language. (Ajtuukul, personal communication, August 2, 2023). Ajtuukul does the same with his friends and acquaintances. With those who studied gastronomy with him, he recommends, for example, thinking about how to incorporate traditional foods and cooking methods into haute cuisine. Additionally, he points out how food-related verbs and nouns have shared roots. (Ajtuukul, personal communication, August 2, 2023).

Benefits of Using Yucatec Maya. Reported benefits of using Yucatec Maya include feeling confident as a result of being able to communicate in the language and to improve the knowledge of it; having trained people to help promote interest and transmission and/or teaching of the language, to help maintain it; additional understanding of aspects or phenomena specific to the Mayan culture.

In her online participant survey Vane expressed what she considers the benefits of using Yucatec Maya to her as an individual student and a person, but also to the language and culture at large. She believes that using the language allows her to help a lot in her community, seeing herself as eventually being able to teach non-Maya speakers to be able to understand and speak the Maya language (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

When I asked her to elaborate on how it would benefit her as a person, as well as the perceived benefits to her culture, she explained that for the very reason that there are fewer people who are interested in speaking it. It will always be good that, for example, among each cohort of students, at least one person is interested in studying this kind of thing because most of them are not interested in anything related to culture or language. This would allow for the preservation and care of Maya culture and language. This feeling motivates Vane to continue studying as a way to stand against the overwhelming influence of Spanish in the community. Vane notes students generally prefer to learn English rather than Maya because they see it as a

language that brings you money. This interest in money diminishes interest in language and culture (Vane, personal communication, February 20, 2023).

In the online participant survey, Lau expressed the benefits she perceives of using Yucatec Maya. She feels that learning more about the language allows her to help other people who have the initiative to learn to speak Maya. One of her self-described benefits of writing Maya is the ability to write reports and transcribe Maya stories. Speaking Maya has helped her to meet other people who also know about the language (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Chinitos's response focussed on the transmission of the language and culture in a modern way. Chinitos believes modern expressions help more people become interested in and interact with the language. His immersion into the language allows him to understand phenomena that are only used within the Yucatec Mayan culture (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Lizbeth felt that sharing the Maya language with other generations is priceless; she enjoys sharing her mother tongue with others so that it does not disappear and will continue to be spoken for many more years to come (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Jpiil said he feels more confident to express himself as learning the language boosts his self-esteem (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Ajtuukul shares what he considers are the benefits of using Yucatec Maya:

Yaaxile' kin kanik ujeel tuumben t'aano'ob, ku ye'esik yaan teen u páajtalil in kanik in ts'iibt in t'aan, wa yéetel nukuch wiinike' ku yáantik in náats'al ti' u tuukulo'ob, yéetel mejen paalale' ku chiikbesik yaan u muuk' k t'aan. Ti'al ts'iibe' ku ka'ansik le teclado le celular u na'at le t'aano', ku ts'áajik u muuk' in t'aan.

First he learns new words, which gives him the power to learn and strengthen writing ability in his language. If he talks to older people, the language brings him closer to their way of thinking. With children, he is able to demonstrate the strength of the language. To write in chat teaches the algorithms of the keyboard to recognize words and gives strength to the words. There is access to rituals and ways of life that are unique to the community (Ajtukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Challenges of Using Yucatec Maya. Challenges of using Yucatec Maya range from concrete ignorance about specific grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation; lack of confidence in communicating in the language or feeling unable to fully understand and/or communicate in it; dealing with a lack of knowledge or interest from younger generations to learn it and/or use the language; discrimination towards Yucatec Maya speakers; lack of material to teach or learn it; lack of institutional or official Yucatec Maya translators and interpreters; open prohibition against using written Yucatec Maya in social media groups.

Vane considers that her challenge when using Yucatec Maya is not being able to engage in advanced communication with speakers of Maya and not fully understanding Maya (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Lau identified the following challenges of using Yucatec Maya: learning the correct spelling of new words, having to learn how to pronounce words correctly, and knowing when to use words, phrases, etc. in the right way (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Chinitos felt that not everyone understands the value that the language conveys, so discrimination is often present. Likewise, it is very difficult to get academic material in the language (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Lizbeth described how the young population does not understand Maya when she communicates with them. It is a challenge, she says, for Maya speakers to continue preserving it and getting young people interested in learning the legendary Maya language (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Jpiil said he can't use it in different contexts; most people use Spanish (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Ajtuukul shares what he considers the challenges of using Yucatec Maya: institutions that do not have translators or interpreters do not allow you to express ideas in Maya, and many words do not have a Spanish translation. There is discrimination against Maya speakers by people who do not sympathize with the Maya language. You are restricted from using it in establishments and shopping centers. There is discomfort because if you speak you are observed as something strange. There are groups on WhatsApp that do not accept writing in Maya (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Use of Spanish in Daily Life. Vane uses Spanish with everyone in her nuclear and extended family: father, mother, siblings, elders, and children. She also uses Spanish to interact in her community and in her university, as well as with her friends. Vane says most of her daily life unfolds speaking Spanish. Vane and her brother moved from their home village to pursue their undergraduate studies. They share a room in the town where their university is located. They communicate with each other in Spanish throughout the day. Sometimes they talk in Yucatec Maya or in English, but it is just for fun, as her brother is also learning those two languages. Learning Yucatec Maya and learning English are mandatory parts of the curriculum of both of their undergraduate programs.

Vane recalls a recent experience that occurred during a field trip to the state of Oaxaca, in which the vendor of a store identified the Spanish accent from Vane and her group of friends as the Yucatecan accent, something that surprised Vane because she had never been told she had an accent when speaking Spanish. Vane says she was not upset with the comments but rather happy to be recognized as a speaker with a Yucatecan Spanish accent. Vane considers that the Yucatecan Spanish accent is present not only in the state of Yucatan but also in the state of Quintana Roo, and it is a result of the influence of the Maya language, which provides a specific intonation to the words (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Lau and her siblings speak Spanish with her mother and father—who speak Yucatec Maya with their siblings (Lau's uncles), with their parents (Lau's grandparents), and with everyone in their community. Lau also speaks Spanish with her siblings (an older sister and a younger brother); with her paternal grandparents (with whom she also speaks Maya), with her 3-year-old niece (her sister's daughter), with her friends-colleagues from university, and with her uncles and cousins who live in cities like Playa del Carmen and Cancun.

Chinitos speaks Spanish at home and community of origin, with his mother and father, aunts and uncles, younger brother and sister, cousins, his maternal and paternal grandparents (the paternal grandparents are deceased; with his maternal grandparents he used Spanish until he learned Yucatec Maya and now communicates with them in Yucatec Maya), friends from the community, and in the town where he went to university and where he currently works.

Lizbeth speaks Spanish with her husband whom she met at university and always spoke Spanish to. She also speaks Spanish with her older nephews in junior high and high school, the children in her family in elementary school, in the school where she works as a teacher, with her teacher colleagues, and with her students and their parents. At university, Lizbeth spoke Spanish

with her teachers and administrative staff and with some classmates who were not Yucatec Maya speakers.

Lizbeth learned to speak Spanish when she entered preschool; her parents reinforced her learning of Spanish so that she would not struggle in elementary school. This is something they did with each and every one of their eight children—Lizbeth is the eighth and youngest of them. Lizbeth used her Spanish in preschool, elementary school, middle school and high school.

In the family context, Jpiil speaks Spanish with his wife and with his son, although he also speaks Yucatec Maya with him. In his work context, an Indigenous preschool, Jpiil uses Spanish with his students and with their parents, although he also speaks Yucatec Maya with all of them. In his daily life in Valladolid, Jpiil speaks Spanish in the stores and when running errands.

Ajtuukul uses Spanish to run errands, to shop, to fulfill job requirements, to communicate in his various jobs and projects, and to talk to school teachers.

Benefits of Using Spanish. Benefits of using Spanish include helping relatives who have little mastery of the language, effective communication with people from other regions or countries, effective communication for transactions, errands, and activities.

On the benefits of using Spanish, Vane expressed how she communicates more efficiently on a daily basis and can communicate with other countries and people (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

In her online participant survey, Lau wrote how using Spanish affords her opportunities to help relatives or family members because not everyone speaks Spanish and instead use their mother tongue, Yucatec Maya. However, speaking Spanish makes it easier for Lau to

communicate with other people she knows who only speak Spanish. (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Chinitos notes the ability to communicate with people who are not native to the region (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Lizbeth likewise describes being able to interact with other people in different environments (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Ajtuukul said that Spanish allows him to understand people, get products from establishments, and actively participate in activities. He notes that most jobs require Spanish to communicate and schools have teachers who speak more in Spanish (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Challenges of Using Spanish. Challenges in Spanish usage include grammar and/or vocabulary knowledge. Sometimes no challenges were perceived due to its frequent use by people and in places.

Vane describes not using the correct vocabulary on some occasions (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Lau's challenges include not knowing what a word refers to or the meaning of a word when in conversation with someone, learning to write new words, and learning the meaning of unfamiliar words (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Chinitos had no comments.

Lizbeth said that because Spanish is the most used language in the whole state by the new generations, there is therefore no challenge for communication (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Jpiil describes needing to first remember and apply the grammatical structure to order his ideas so that he can be understood by the audience (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Ajtuukul has difficulty using appropriate Spanish and recognizing words that are not regionalisms. In addition, challenges are found in explaining situations that are specific to local activities and using incorrectly conjugated verbs (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Use of English in Daily Life. English is not used in Vane's daily life because she says the language is not used where she is now. Sometimes, in her current location or at her university, Yucatec Maya-English or Spanish-English language exchanges are set up between locals and foreigners. Sometimes foreigners come and speak English, but in her current context, it is not as common as the more frequent use of Yucatec Maya.

Vane recalled using English to help a local vendor in her home village (which is close to Cancun, with foreign tourists often passing by to eat or buy handcrafts) to communicate with tourists who were asking questions about what the lady was selling: Vane translated from Spanish to English and vice versa, and the woman was able to sell her products to the foreigners. Vane felt nervous and hesitant at first, and then more confident once she realized she understood and that she was able to help.

Lau started learning English when she entered university. She considers that she knows little and speaks English to her 3-year-old niece at the request of her mother, Lau's sister. Lau says she is teaching her niece the basics of English: Lau says something and the niece repeats it.

Chinitos speaks English with the students in the English conversation circles at University A, where he gives reinforcement topics. He also uses it to communicate with

foreigners who come to University A, such as the group of Canadians who came and asked him questions. Additionally, he uses English for interpretation in his work place, to review or read texts, and peruse academic publications.

Lizbeth speaks English with the students at the school where she works so that they can practice greetings and basic phrases. Lizbeth used her English when she went on a university exchange program to Canada. Later, she used English as a recent graduate for a job. Lizbeth believes that English is a good thing, allowing her to move around and communicate with other people in other parts of the world.

Benefits of Using English. English is not present in home or community interactions. Its usage is related to a language learning considered useful for academic or work purposes. Hence, it is present in school with children, whether they are relatives or pupils, and in the shared idea of having to know the language to have an economic advantage. Benefits of English usage include being able to communicate with people, access to academic knowledge and activities, fulfillment of job requirements, and increase of employment possibilities.

Vane finds she is benefiting from learning English in terms of education and interpersonal relationships, whether locally, nationally, or internationally (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

In the online participant survey Lau expressed how learning English in university is enabling her to catch up with peers who have studied the language since high school (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Chinitos notes how communication with foreigners (in English) helps in the transmission of the Maya language and culture and is very useful for academic purposes (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Lizbeth sees English as a way of meeting and interacting with other people while learning about their culture and lifestyle (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Jpiil describes being very stressed by not being fluent in English (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Ajtuukul embraces English as a way to help in understanding academic books; with organizations requesting Yucatec Maya-English translations, he sees an opening to employment possibilities (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Challenges of Using English. Challenges in English usage include vocabulary and grammar knowledge, effective understanding and communication with English speakers, learning the language later in life, learning it with people that are more fluent and have more knowledge of the language, or learning it parallel to the learning of Yucatec Maya.

Vane shared that, as with Maya, she still can't communicate efficiently with native speakers of the language. Nevertheless, she understands it a little more than she does Maya (Vane, personal communication, February 18, 2023).

Lau identified the following challenges of using English: having to learn to write it, to pronounce the words properly, and to spell it. It is complicated because he has to learn even more about his language at the same time as a foreign one because of the need to face new things and new people coming from different places (Lau, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Chinitos so far has only found it difficult to express certain things in the language (Chinitos, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

In Lizbeth's community and workplace, no one communicates in English, and there is, therefore, no challenge (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 10, 2023).

Jpiil rarely use English (Jpiil, personal communication, August 9, 2023).

Ajtuukul is concerned with mispronunciation and understanding of the language (Ajtuukul, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Relationship, Family, and Community - Language(s) Use

If I asked you: “How did you learn the language(s) you speak?” What would you say? This second section of the collective narrative reports the findings of participant language(s) use with their family and with community members.

Family Language(s) Use. This sub-section describes present-day language(s) use among participant nuclear and extended families, as well as language(s) transmission processes during childhood and the family link to Yucatec Maya usage for each participant. It must be mentioned that the family includes their nuclear family as well as their extended family. For participants who are single, the nuclear family refers to their parents and siblings. For participants who have a partner and children, their nuclear family refers to their partner and children; however, in their recollection of experiences, they refer to their original nuclear family constituted by their parents and siblings. For all participants, the extended family includes grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Family interaction and daily communication among Vane’s father, mother and siblings, happens in Spanish. Vane says that, since she was born, everything has been in Spanish. Nonetheless, Vane expressed that if she has children, she will teach them three languages— Spanish, Maya and English (Vane, personal communication, May 6, 2023). I asked her how she envisioned what such a process would look like, and she shared that she once saw a video where a mother with children talked about teaching them three languages or possibly four since they were little: English, Spanish, German, and possibly Italian. The mother said it's a long and difficult process because children learn by listening. Based on her studies, Vane believes it could

work because children learn from an early age, unconsciously. Vane adds that we should go a little deeper into the subject, not only talking to them in several languages, but also putting it into practice with them. It would be a long process, not only in childhood, but also in adolescence, and they would continue practicing it when they are adults (Vane, personal communication, May 6, 2023).

Present-day family interaction and daily communication among Lau's father, mother and siblings happen in Spanish. Spanish is spoken inside their home. Family interaction with Lau's cousins in the community is in Yucatec Maya. When Lau visits her relatives who live outside her community, in cities like Cancun or Playa del Carmen, she speaks Spanish. Communication with her paternal grandparents fluctuates between Spanish and Yucatec Maya, depending on the topic or on the language that was spoken first.

For Chinitos, family interaction and daily communication happen in Spanish and Yucatec Maya. Chinitos says that if he is in a gathering with his parents and siblings, he can use both Spanish and Yucatec Maya. But if he is with his siblings or with his cousins, he uses Spanish only.

When I asked Chinitos which language(s) he would promote if he had children, Chinitos replied that he would speak to them in all the languages he knows. He is uncertain if that is possible, however. With more confidence, he states he would get them more involved in learning Maya, and this would also allow them to connect with his Maya-speaking parents. He also considers his theoretical spouse's language, considering the possibility of a bilingual child, or if they're really lucky, trilingual. This would remove the need for so much studying, with the university becoming a place to reinforce skills (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

In Lizbeth's case, family interaction and daily communication happens mostly in Yucatec Maya: Lizbeth uses Yucatec Maya to communicate with her mother, father, siblings, in-laws, and 1-year-old son. She uses Spanish to communicate with her husband, although sometimes she talks to him in Yucatec Maya as well, even if he does not reply in Yucatec Maya.

Lizbeth shares her experience with her husband and her colleague, with whom the communication has always been in Spanish despite the fact that the three of them speak Maya as well. She met her husband speaking Spanish, and when she speaks to him in Maya, he says he cannot answer her in the same language. He tells her that he met her while speaking Spanish, and even though he'll speak with her family in Maya, with her it is only Spanish. He cannot explain why that is (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Lizbeth explains that a similar situation happens between her and a colleague who comes from her same village. She has no problem speaking in Maya to the colleague, but the colleague only replies in Spanish, with the same explanation as the husband: Spanish is the language in which they first met, and so she cannot speak in Maya. Sometimes she'll answer with Maya expressions, but that's as far as it goes. They do not engage in a deep conversation in the Maya language. (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

In a similar fashion but with another language, Lizbeth says that all her brothers and sisters communicate in Maya. Talking to each other in Spanish is not very common and difficult to do as they are not used to it (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Jpiil normally communicates in Yucatec Maya with his parents and siblings, regardless of the location. With his nuclear family, wife and son (6), Jpiil uses Spanish and Yucatec Maya. His wife is learning Yucatec Maya from interacting with Jpiil's family and his son is learning Yucatec Maya from Jpiil and his paternal extended family.

In Ajtuukul's nuclear family, with his wife and children, daily communication happens mostly in Yucatec Maya and sometimes in Spanish. With his parents and siblings, family communication happens in Yucatec Maya.

Yucatec Maya and Spanish in Transmission. This sub-section describes how participants learned the national languages they currently use, Yucatec Maya and Spanish, in different domains of their lives.

In Vane's case, the use of Spanish (instead of Yucatec Maya) for the purposes of family communication changed in the generation of Vane's parents. Although Vane's father learned Yucatec Maya from his parents, the rest of his siblings only spoke Spanish. As a result, when Vane's paternal aunts and uncles get together today, they communicate in Spanish.

On the other hand, Vane's mother only learned Spanish from her parents, despite the fact that her mother knew Yucatec Maya. Vane says that her maternal grandmother spoke Yucatec Maya with the older people in the community and Spanish to her own nuclear family.

In Lau's case, the selection of Spanish for the purposes of nuclear family communication happened with her generation and within Lau's nuclear family in particular: Lau's father speaks Spanish to her and to her siblings, and Yucatec Maya to his parents and to his in-laws. Lau's mother spoke, and speaks, Spanish to Lau and to her siblings and Yucatec Maya to her parents and to her in-laws. Lau has asked her mother why she doesn't communicate with her in Maya, as that would allow her to talk and learn more. Her mother replied that it would be weird for her since she's used to talking with Lau in Spanish" (Lau, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Lau's mother grew up monolingual in Yucatec Maya and she began learning Spanish in her early twenties when her children entered school in the community. She then found herself having to help them with their school work and decided to speak Spanish to her children so that

they wouldn't struggle in school. But she also encouraged them to talk in Yucatec Maya with her own parents (Lau's maternal grandparents). On that topic, Lau specifies that she's ask her mother why she didn't start speaking Maya to her when she was little and chose Spanish instead. Her mother explained the choice as a way to help Lau succeed in her schooling that was conducted in Spanish only (Lau, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

I asked Lau if her father is happy with the fact that Lau speaks both Spanish and Yucatec Maya, and she replies that he never imagined that she could go far learning Yucatec Maya. At first he thought there was no need for her to learn Maya and that learning other languages, specifically English and Spanish, would be better. And so, he is impressed by Lau's progress in writing and speaking Yucatec Maya (Lau, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

In Chinito's case, the selection of Spanish for the purposes of nuclear family language transmission happened with his generation. Chinito's father spoke to him and his siblings in Spanish but speaks Yucatec Maya with his wife (Chinito's mother). Chinito's mother spoke to him and his siblings in Spanish but she communicated in Yucatec Maya with her husband, Chinito's father. Chinito recalls that sometimes his parents would include some Yucatec Maya in their explanations.

With his nuclear family (mother, father, and younger brother (20) and sister (19)) and with his aunts, uncles, and cousins who live in the community, Chinitos communicated in Spanish during his childhood. When he was 18, Chinitos began to speak Yucatec Maya with his extended family members and with his parents.

Chinitos says he is unsure about why his parents, who spoke Yucatec Maya to each other, decided to speak Spanish to their children. He first says that it could have been due to the discrimination issue but that he doubts it since both his mother and father enjoy speaking Yucatec

Maya and they also like sharing the Mayan culture. Chinitos believes that most likely his parents spoke Spanish to him due to the community development: The population of his community was using Spanish and many of the daily activities were in Spanish. Chinitos concludes that his parents may not have even had to make a decision: since he was born at a time when Spanish was already predominant and so was taught Spanish (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

Lizbeth considers that she learned Yucatec Maya and Spanish from her parents and her seven older siblings. Lizbeth's parents taught their children Spanish once they entered school so that they wouldn't struggle with the language of instruction. She remember her parents speaking to her in Maya at home, but when she had trouble with Spanish in kindergarten, her parents switch to Spanish at home to make things easier at school. (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Jpiil says that he learned Yucatec Maya from his parents, his grandparents, the people in his community and from his siblings. Jpiil recalls learning Spanish at a young age from watching television and from listening to his aunts and uncles who worked in Valladolid, where they used Spanish, when they came back to the village for the weekend. At that time, some of his aunts and uncles were working in Valladolid. On weekends they would come to his grandparents' house and would speak a little Spanish to themselves and would also start to speak Spanish to the children. At the beginning, Jpiil and his siblings were a little embarrassed to use Spanish because their mother tongue was the Maya language. It was only when he started elementary school that Jpiil realized he could speak Spanish fluently (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

In Ajtuukul's community, Yucatec Maya was spoken all the time, with his parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents. In his childhood neighborhood in Valladolid, Yucatec

Maya was spoken as well due to the fact that he and his family lived in an area (*comisaría*) where everyone spoke Yucatec Maya, although in other areas of Valladolid people spoke Spanish.

All levels of schooling for Ajtuukul were in Spanish, as well as the interaction with the teachers. However, his classmates and their parents spoke Yucatec Maya when they interacted because they were all from the same neighborhood where Yucatec Maya was spoken. In addition, Ajtuukul participated in a public program (*Ko'ox kanik maya*) that taught children to read and write Yucatec Maya. By the age of 12, he knew how to read, write, and speak both Spanish and Yucatec Maya.

Ajtuukul makes a comparison between his own and his wife's childhood language acquisition process and concludes that the strength of the Yucatec Maya language in his community of origin and with the people around him did not lead to a choice between Spanish and Yucatec Maya for family communication and community interaction. It was until his mother went through a forced learning of Spanish, which carried its share of challenges and discrimination for being monolingual in Yucatec Maya, that she determined that Spanish should be transmitted early on, and she did so with her youngest son and with her grandchildren.

Link to Yucatec Maya in Family Dynamics. This sub-section describes the family members with whom participants interact using Yucatec Maya throughout their lives.

Vane's father is the only family member that speaks Yucatec Maya since Vane's maternal grandmother, who was a Yucatec Maya speaker, passed away recently. Vane and her brother, a university student as well, are both learning Maya at school. Vane practices Yucatec Maya with her father when she goes back to her community.

In Lau's family, her maternal grandparents (now deceased) spoke Maya to Lau's parents, to Lau and her siblings, and to all of her cousins. Lau says that it was because of them that all of her family, on her mother's side, learned to speak Yucatec Maya.

During her childhood, Lau's paternal grandparents spoke Yucatec Maya to Lau's parents and to everyone in the community, and Spanish to Lau and siblings. Nowadays, Lau communicates in Spanish and in Yucatec Maya with them.

Chinitos's paternal grandparents spoke to him in Yucatec Maya while he was growing up, but he would not reply in Yucatec Maya. They passed away when Chinitos was 15 and 20, before he could really hold a full conversation in Yucatec Maya. Chinitos's maternal grandparents, especially his maternal grandmother and great grandmother, spoke Spanish to him while he was growing up. However, the minute they found out Chinitos could speak Yucatec Maya, his maternal great grandmother never spoke Spanish to him again. Chinitos's maternal grandmother uses both Spanish and Yucatec Maya with him. Since his maternal grandfather is monolingual in Yucatec Maya, and a man of few words, now that Chinitos is grown up and not a child anymore, he can communicate with him in Yucatec Maya.

Chinitos grew up listening to Yucatec Maya at home and in his community even though he never spoke it until he was in university and taking formal Yucatec Maya courses. He now acknowledges that it is easier to learn Yucatec Maya than a foreign language because Yucatec Maya is a language very much present in the region and in most families. He emphasizes the gift that it is to have the possibility of practicing Yucatec Maya with the elders, as is his case. Chinitos can now use both languages, Yucatec Maya and Spanish, when interacting with his parents. He observes that his brother and sister are going through the same linguistic process that he went through.

In Lizbeth's case, Yucatec Maya is present as a language from home and for daily interaction. She uses Yucatec Maya with her parents, her siblings, and friends from her village. She points at the fact that the younger generations do not speak it as much or can only understand it and not speak it.

Jpiil remembers that when he was a child, his mother also knew Spanish but she never spoke it at home. His mother came to work in Valladolid in her youth. While she said she spoke Spanish, she did not use it in the house and never once spoke to her children in Spanish. Jpiil recalls that every time a child communicated with her, it was in the Yucatec Maya language. To this day, when his son visits, she speaks to him in Yucatec Maya even though Jpiil's son speaks to her in Spanish (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

I asked Jpiil if he thinks his mom did that on purpose and he replied that he thinks she naturally used to use the language since she grew up with it. She doesn't see it as going out of her way to teach Yucatec Maya to her son because it's important or because some researcher came to tell her she should. Rather, he believes she talks to her children in a natural way as she is used to her way of living (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Regarding the transmission of Yucatec Maya to his own son, Jpiil specifies that he has thought about it because if he doesn't, it will be very difficult for him to learn it later on. Since in Valladolid, most people communicate in Spanish, there is little opportunity to listen to Yucatec Maya or repeat it. Hence Jpiil's consideration of teaching his son both languages (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Jpiil considers that as long as you are in the appropriate context and having contact with a language, there is no need to purposefully plan how to learn it or to transmit it. He recalls the experience of a cousin and a nephew who were Spanish speakers and learned Yucatec Maya from

interacting in the community. The cousin is about 16 years old and grew up in Valladolid. He visited their grandparents' house every 15 days, every month, and would listen to aunts speak Yucatec Maya and Spanish. His first language was Spanish because here he grew up in Valladolid and studied in the schools of Valladolid. But because he visited the Maya-speaking community often, he listened to Yucatec Maya and came to be a speaker (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Jpiil adds the case of his nephew who was born in Valladolid, so first he learned Spanish. But after living in the village for a time, he is now, at seven, communicating in Yucatec Maya (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

With his grandparents, Ajtuukul always spoke in Yucatec Maya. Ajtuukul participated in community activities like doing the *milpa*, which took place in Yucatec Maya only. Ajtuukul's father spoke Yucatec Maya to his nuclear family but he knew Spanish since he was 14-15 years old and he used it for work purposes in Cancun, during Ajtuukul's childhood. Ajtuukul's mother spoke Yucatec Maya to most of her children. She learned Spanish when she was in her early 20s and had a hard time getting involved in the school's activities and interacting in Cancun and in areas of Valladolid where Spanish was spoken. She experienced first-hand the discrimination of being monolingual in Yucatec Maya. As a result, with her last child she began speaking Spanish only and she currently does the same with her grandchildren, Ajtuukul's daughter and son.

Community Language(s) Use. This sub-section briefly describes present-day community language(s) use in participant communities of origin.

Vane's community interaction happens in Spanish because that is the language that she is a speaker of. She uses Yucatec Maya or English under particular circumstances in which she makes a conscious effort to employ a language that she is still learning.

Lau speaks Yucatec Maya with her friends, with her extended family, and with people in the community.

For Chinitos, community interactions depend on location: He considers that his life is bilingual when he is in his village, but that it is monolingual in Spanish when he is in the town where he works.

Lizbeth's community interactions happen in Yucatec Maya and Spanish. With elders and adults, Lizbeth uses Yucatec Maya. She says the older generation find it difficult to speak Spanish. With younger generations (teenagers and children), Lizbeth tries to use Yucatec Maya but she acknowledges that either they don't understand her or that they do understand her but always reply in Spanish.

Jpiil mentions that his community is a Yucatec Maya speaker community; however, due to media and to globalization, children nowadays have begun to communicate more in Spanish than in Yucatec Maya.

For Ajtuukul, since he moves from the village where he and his wife and children stay, to Valladolid and other communities where he works, as well as to his community of origin, his community interactions happen in both Yucatec Maya and Spanish.

Relationship, Academic, and Career - Language(s) Use

If I asked you: "What language(s) do/did you speak at school?" What would you say? This third section of the collective narrative presents the findings related to the language(s) used in the elementary and secondary schooling of the participants, in their university period, and in their current work setting.

Vane used Spanish during her elementary, junior high, and high school levels of schooling. Vane remembers that in her previous levels of schooling prior to the post-secondary level, none of her teachers was a Yucatec Maya speaker.

Vane says that most of the university instructors use Spanish in their courses. When it is a Yucatec Maya language course or an English language course, the professors use the target language during class. Furthermore, if the teachers see that the class is having a hard time understanding, they switch and explain in Spanish. The university administrative staff speaks and communicates with the students in Spanish.

Vane says that outside and inside the university, with her classmates she normally speaks Spanish, as only a few of them are fluid Yucatec Maya speakers. Vane's cohort has 20 students. They all speak Spanish. Only 5 speak Yucatec Maya. Vane mentions that they speak Yucatec Maya very well but they don't know how to write it properly (Vane, personal communication, February 20, 2023), because grammar is not taught at home but at school. Since learning Yucatec Maya and learning English are a mandatory part of the curriculum in her undergraduate program, the students that are fluid Yucatec Maya speakers help the rest with the Yucatec Maya course work, especially with translations. Vane says that they are very good speakers but they don't know any grammar, which they are learning in the program.

Lau used Spanish during her elementary and junior high school. She used Spanish and Yucatec Maya in high school. Lau expresses that at her university, she used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with her professors, but only Spanish with the administrative staff. With her university classmates she used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English.

Lau says that she is very glad to have chosen the Language and Culture undergraduate program because she wasn't expecting to learn how to write Yucatec Maya, which is something

she really liked. However, she says that learning English was a complicated process for her because she had to write reports and assignments in Yucatec Maya and to also study and do coursework in English, a language that was challenging to her. Lau remembers that when she had Yucatec Maya tests, she didn't have to study; conversely, she spent the whole night studying whenever she had an English test.

Lau recalls a friend of hers who was very good in English and would often help Lau with the English assignments. This person began learning English in junior high school, improved it in high school because she did a lot of independent studying, and then spent a semester in Canada as part of a university exchange program. Lau's friend shared with her that she would spend a lot of time listening to music and watching videos to improve her English. On the other hand, Lau was the person who provided help with the Yucatec Maya assignments because this friend found such language challenging.

Chinitos used Spanish during his elementary, junior high, and high school levels of schooling. He says that at his university, he used Spanish, Yucatec Maya, and English with his professors and with his classmates; and Spanish and Yucatec Maya with the administrative staff.

Chinitos discussed how part of his professional development at the university required him to learn Maya, express himself in Maya, and do Maya assignments. Seeing that his knowledge and skills in this language were insufficient, he turned to his parents and told them he needed their help and wondered why they hadn't taught it to him when he was little. (Chinitos, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

In his current job as a Yucatec Maya and English language teacher, Chinitos uses English when he runs the English conversation circles at the university. In those sessions, he presents or reinforces English topics. For such activities he uses English and Spanish. Chinitos says that he

also uses English when there are foreign visitors at the university. He recalls one time when he was asked to be a translator from Spanish to English for a group of Canadians who were attending a lecture on community health and traditional medicine.

Chinitos and another person were the first two people to pursue postsecondary studies in his community. His parents told him to go to University A to stay close to the village. Chinitos recalls that he wanted to study something related to foreign language teaching, particularly, English. He chose his undergraduate program in Language and Culture because it focused on English and Yucatec Maya language teaching. He says that he is satisfied with the teacher training abilities he developed during the program.

Chinitos mentions that currently only five or six people from his community are at the postsecondary level of studies. Out of those people, two are his siblings. He adds that most of his generation left school and began to work, either at the Mayan Riviera or working the field growing lime or raising animals to earn a living.

Chinitos currently teaches a Yucatec Maya literacy course to older students who have Yucatec Maya as their first language. He observes their interest in learning how to read and write the language, to potentially become Yucatec Maya teachers and/or promoters in their own communities or jobs. However, Chinitos also observes the perception of his younger Yucatec Maya students at University A, who approach him asking if he knows English. Chinitos believes that younger generations perceive English as the language of cool things, of current trends, and of the promise of a future outside currently-known limits. This poses a challenge in the current work that Chinitos tries to do because many students are more interested in learning foreign languages than in learning Yucatec Maya.

Lizbeth used Spanish during her elementary, junior high and high school levels of schooling. At her university, she used Spanish and Yucatec Maya with her professors and classmates, and Spanish with the administrative staff.

Lizbeth had been observing the interactions among the children in her family, which were mostly in Spanish, and began to wonder if her nephews and nieces would learn to speak Maya or forget that language. She was determined to rescue her family, to help the younger members communicate in the Maya language and to grow up knowing the culture and the language. This led to her interest in studying in the Language and Culture program (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Lizbeth's interest was furthered by the curriculum that included the study of Yucatec Maya speaking and writing, as well as the Maya cultural elements. Lizbeth praises the Language and Culture program because University A offers job opportunities as well. It teaches translation, interpretation, and teaching, training students for everything. If her studies were only theoretical, Lizbeth would regard them as useless (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

In 2013, while teaching in rural communities, she observed that the teachers who arrived spoke Spanish and the children had a hard time. Since she knew the Maya language at the time, she taught them in their mother tongue, Maya. This enabled the children to perform better, to communicate better, to clarify their doubts, and to learn. Spanish represented a barrier for the children when the teacher only spoke Spanish, and so Lizbeth was able to help them through translation (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Lizbeth currently works as a teacher in an elementary school with an Indigenous modality. The school is located in what Lizbeth describes as a small community. The children that attend the school where Lizbeth works come from homes where Spanish is the language of

daily family interaction. Lizbeth explains that the parents do not speak Yucatec Maya to their children. She adds that her students are surrounded by technology.

Lizbeth's students are learning the basics of Yucatec Maya, such as greetings. They are also learning English. Lizbeth, who learned English during her undergraduate program and who participated in a university exchange program in Canada, asks her students to share and practice with her what they learned in their English class. Lizbeth observes that the children are more interested in English because it gives them more job opportunities. They have the idea that English is better than the Maya language (Lizbeth, personal communication, April 16, 2023).

Lizbeth says that most of her colleagues are Yucatec Maya speakers but that they use Spanish when they are in their work setting. When she addresses them in Yucatec Maya, they don't follow her initiative and instead reply in Spanish to her. She explains that most of them are teachers who are about to retire and who are therefore not interested in teaching Yucatec Maya to the students, especially because they don't see the students interested in learning the language either.

With one particular teacher that comes from the same village as Lizbeth, the interaction happens in Spanish: Lizbeth's colleague says that she met Lizbeth speaking Spanish and therefore feels strange speaking Yucatec Maya with her.

Jpiil says he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish during his elementary and junior high schooling periods. He recalls using Spanish in his high school. In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his professors and classmates, and Spanish with the administrative staff.

Even though English language courses were included in Jpiil's undergraduate curriculum he finds English difficult. Jpiil feels that he would have to go live somewhere where only that language is spoken so that he can practice it and learn it.

Jpiil feels a responsibility toward the teaching of languages among people studying language and culture; these people who have that level of knowledge have the ability to transmit the language and culture to other generations. He fears that these things will be lost if the experts do not share them (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Jpiil works in an Indigenous preschool located in what he describes as a Yucatec Maya speaking community. The school children and their parents speak Spanish in school, and even though the parents know Yucatec Maya, they don't use it when they are in the school area. He concludes that they probably use Yucatec Maya at home, but once they are in the street or in the school, they prefer to use Spanish; and he specifies that the only parents who don't understand Yucatec Maya are those that come from other states of the country.

I ask Jpiil if he thinks that the parents from his school are reflecting and consciously deciding which languages they want to transmit to their children. He replies that he doesn't think they are thinking about that, that they probably consider Spanish to be the language of communication because their community is geographically close to Valladolid and because even if the preschool curriculum includes Yucatec Maya and Spanish as languages of instruction, once the children enter elementary school and junior high school, all the learning happens in Spanish. He concludes that for these reasons, the parents might be teaching their children Spanish first so that they are not discriminated against or rejected.

Jpiil says that he thinks his students know Yucatec Maya from their family context; he adds that if they don't speak it, they can at least probably understand it from listening to their parents and that those children are therefore having contact with the Indigenous language.

Jpiil teaches using Spanish and Yucatec Maya and he acknowledges that most of his students understand Yucatec Maya since just a few are growing up with Spanish only. Most of

Jpiil's teachings are based on oral expression since it is a preschool. When he is explaining something to his group, he combines or alternates Spanish and Yucatec Maya in what he calls a natural way of seamlessly switching languages while discussing a topic (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Nonetheless Jpiil wonders what the best way for children to learn several languages is, whether simultaneously or one at a time (Jpiil, personal communication, August 19, 2023).

Ajtuukul says he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish during his elementary school and high school. He recalls using Spanish in his junior high school. In his university, he used Yucatec Maya and Spanish with his professors and with his classmates; and Spanish with the administrative staff.

Ajtuukul wanted to be a tourist guide in order to work in the archaeological sites only accessible to archaeologists, anthropologists, and tourist guides. He took language courses and obtained a technical diploma for such purposes before he began his undergraduate program in Yucatec Maya Linguistics and Culture at the university. He admits that originally he thought he would go work at the Mayan Riviera after finishing his high school since he never thought he would have an undergraduate degree.

Before doing his undergraduate program, Ajtuukul worked for a government educational program called *CONAFE*, which would assign teachers to a rural community to teach the official curriculum in Yucatec Maya. Ajtuukul remembers that while being in that community, he was also contacted to provide literacy courses for adults. He recalls that those were educational experiences but that they also contributed to the development of a strong relationship with the community.

Ajtuukul says that he and his younger brother were always driven towards working with and for the community and in language and culture-related issues. Their mother, however, was expecting them to become teachers, doctors, or lawyers, so they could leave their village, earn money, and improve their lives. She did not support Ajtuukul's decision to do an undergraduate degree related to the Yucatec Maya language and culture. His father, on the other hand, only told him to finish what he was about to begin. Ajtuukul believes that his mother's rejection was related to the discrimination she had suffered in her own process of learning Spanish. Ajtuukul has this perspective very much present because he feels the responsibility of figuring out what can be changed so that people do not go through what his mother had to go through for speaking Yucatec Maya only.