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Consequences of language hierarchization:

Language ideologies among Purepecha (heritage) speakers in the US.

Implications for language maintenance and learning

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Applied Linguistics

by

Valeria Valencia Zamudio

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Consequences of language hierarchization:

Language ideologies among Purepecha (heritage) speakers in the US.

Implications for language maintenance and learning

by

Valeria Valencia Zamudio

Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Susan Plann, Chair

In my dissertation, I examine some of the language ideologies towards Purepecha and indigenous speech in seven Purepecha speakers and seven Purepecha heritage speakers in the U.S. I analyze the way language hierarchization has been established in Mexico and the ways in which Purepecha speakers and Purepecha heritage speakers alike deal with this hierarchization. I also analyze how standardizing language policies have impacted Purepecha language maintenance, as well as how language ideologies about Purepecha and other indigenous languages in Mexico are present in the interviewees' discourse. I examine the possible role that language ideologies have in speakers' decisions to shift from Purepecha to Spanish and to English.

Among the language ideological features I study is Purepecha's status as a language in contrast to Spanish and English, and the iconization and racialization of Mexican indigenous speech, resulting in the creation of a stereotyped *Indio* ethnicity. Finally, I examine interviewees'

language learning investments when learning a language other than their own, as well as resistance and appropriation processes that result from the imposition of learning dominant languages.

Key words: language standardization, indigenous Mexican languages, language ideologies, iconization of Indigenous Mexican speech, language policies, heritage language learners

The dissertation of Valeria Valencia Zamudio is approved.

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2015

DEDICATION

A nuestros antepasados, cuyas lenguas y voces hemos olvidado.

To our ancestors, whose languages and voices we have forgotten.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction	
1.1 Data Collection Methodology	7
1.1.1 Data Collection	7
1.1.2 Study Participants	7
1.1.3 Interviews	8
1.1.4 Questionnaire	9
1.1.5 Ethnographic Field Notes	13
1.1.6 Data Analysis	13
Chapter 2 Theoretical Background. Critical Applied Linguistics and Language Ideologies	
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Critical Approaches to Language and Power, Language and Social Relations and Language Ideologies	16
2.3 A Critical Approach to Language Learning and Linguistic Imperialism	18
2.3.1 Investment, Resistance and Appropriation in Language Learning	20
2.4 Language Ideologies	22
2.4.1 Standardization	23
2.4.2 Linguistic Differentiation: Iconization, Fractal Recursivity and Erasure	24
2.5 Proposing a new definition: speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages	26
Chapter 3 The Purepecha Community, Purepecha Language and Migration to the U.S.	
3.1 The Purepecha Language	31
3.1.1 Purepecha Language Documentation During the Spanish Colonization	33
3.1.2 Purepecha as a Mexican Indigenous Language	36
3.2 The Purepecha and Purepecha Migration	39
3.2.1 Purepecha Migration and Purepecha Communities in the U.S.	41
3.2.1.1 Purepecha Language in the U.S.	45
Chapter 4 Language Policies and Dominant Language Ideologies in Mexico and the U.S.	
4.1 Introduction	47
4.2 Language Policies as Colonization Strategies	49
4.2.1 Dealing with Multilingualism in the ‘New World’	50
4.2.2 Officializing Language Policies through Royal Decrees and Documents	52
4.2.3 Spanish and Indigenous Languages in Universities of the ‘New Spain’	57
4.3 Language Policies During the 19 th Century	60
4.4 Language Policies Between the 1920s and the 1960s	64
4.5 Language Policies from 1980 to 2012	66
4.6 Conclusion	72

Chapter 5 Linguistic Biographies: Purepecha Proficiencies, Usages and Maintenance Practices of Purepecha in Los Angeles.	
5.1 Introduction. The Purepecha Community in Los Angeles	75
5.2 Female Purepecha Heritage Speakers in Los Angeles	76
5.2.1 Jessica	77
5.2.2 Ileri	80
5.2.3 Flor	82
5.3 Summary of Results	85
5.4 Male Purepecha Heritage Speakers in Los Angeles	88
5.4.1 Rosendo	90
5.4.2 Omar	92
5.4.3 Justino	94
5.4.4 Humberto	96
5.5 Summary of Responses	99
5.6 Conclusion	102
Chapter 6 Linguistic Biographies: Purepecha Proficiencies, Usages and Maintenance Practices of Purepecha in Chicago	
6.1 Introduction. The Purepecha Community in Suburban Chicago, Illinois	105
6.2 Female Interviewees in Chicago	107
6.2.1 Monica	108
6.2.2 Elodia	110
6.2.3 Soledad	113
6.3 Summary of Responses	115
6.4 Male Interviewees in Chicago	118
6.4.1 Hilario	119
6.4.2 Juan	122
6.4.3 Refugio	124
6.4.4 Jesus	126
6.5 Summary of Responses	128
6.6 Conclusion	131
Chapter 7 Language Hierarchies, Indigenous Language Racialization and Shame	
7.1 Introduction. Linguistic Differentiation and Language Hierarchies	134
7.2 Linguistic Hierarchies: The use of ‘dialecto’ versus ‘language’ among interviewees	136
7.3 Indigenous Language Racialization	143
7.4 Indigenous Speaker Racialization. On Being Called an <i>Indio</i>	148
7.5 Shame and Pride	154
7.6 Conclusion	163
Chapter 8 Resistance, Appropriation and Language Learning. Learning Purepecha, Spanish and/or English	
8.1 Introduction	165
8.2 Purepecha Experiences Learning Spanish as a Second Language. Language	167

Hierarchies, Power Relations, Resistance and Appropriation	
8.3 Learning English as a Second or Third Language	178
8.3.1 Experiences Learning English as an Immigrant Child	179
8.3.2 Experiences learning English in Mexico and as an adult in the U.S.	184
8.4 Learning Purepecha as a heritage language	194
8.4.1 Purepecha heritage learners with low to zero proficiencies	196
8.4.2 Purepecha heritage learners with high proficiencies	206
8.4.3 Conclusion	212
Chapter 9 Conclusions	
9.1 Revisiting the status of the Purepecha language and usage among interviewees	216
9.2 Ideologies about Purepecha, Spanish and English and their impact on speakers' usages of these languages	219
9.3 Investment and resistance while learning Spanish and English versus Purepecha	221
9.4 Contribution of this study and considerations of language maintenance	223
9.4.1 Proposing a model for studying speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages	224
9.5 Considerations for future research and limitations of this study	225
References	227

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2003 the Mexican government recognized all 68 indigenous languages and their varieties as having co-national status along with Spanish in Mexico.¹ Spanish is the dominant language in Mexico, with around 100 million speakers, it is the language used in all official administrative transactions, in education, and by the media today. The imposition of Spanish on indigenous language speakers for centuries along with the discrediting of indigenous languages via language policies has pushed many speakers of indigenous languages to reject their heritage and language and to shift completely to Spanish; currently only 7% of the Mexican population speaks an indigenous language.

Indigenous languages in Mexico have long been treated as sublanguages, and speakers of Spanish, the dominant language, have systematically stigmatized and racialized indigenous language speakers: Spanish is associated with civilization and education, while in contrast, indigenous languages are generally associated with savagery, primitiveness and ignorance (Van Dijk, 2005). This linguistic hierarchization and the language ideologies that accompany Spanish and Purepecha have a colonial origin, in the language policies that were imposed during the Spanish colonization of the Americas, and were subsequently and emphatically imposed after Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821. After this year, the new government established Spanish as the official national language. Later, with the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920, Hispanization efforts continued, as the government sought ways to modernize

¹ These have been recognized as 'national languages' along with Spanish and Mexican Spanish sign language.

the country by providing education for everyone based on eugenicist approaches to homogenize the Mexican population and eliminate indigenous language speakers.

Because of this, the Purepecha, like other speakers of indigenous languages, have suffered the same fate as speakers of languages that have been under colonization for a prolonged period of time: a radical decrease in its number of speakers mainly due to policies and ideologies that have favored other hegemonic languages, an imposition of a dominant language through educational institutions, and a discrediting of its speakers. For this reason, there are a great number of heritage speakers of Mexican indigenous languages, who are mainly Spanish speakers. Thus, one of the goals of this study is to illustrate, at an individual level, how language hierarchization has affected indigenous language speakers and pushed them to shift to other languages.

Since there are Purepecha community members that immigrate to the U.S. as Purepecha heritage speakers while being dominant Spanish speakers; as well as dominant Purepecha speakers whose second language is Spanish before immigration, the study of these groups of speakers has unique characteristics and raises interesting questions. For instance, how can we account for language loss in a migration setting for heritage speakers of an indigenous language who are mainly Spanish dominant? And how can we account for language loss in a migration setting for Purepecha speakers as dominant speakers of an indigenous Mexican language? Which languages will be passed on to future generations? Can this loss be explained by imposed language hierarchization and policies and to the symbolic value ascribed to dominant languages?

This dissertation will analyze how standardizing policies and ideologies became established, and how they have affected the way Purepecha (heritage) speakers express

themselves about their (heritage) language and the role that language ideologies and language hierarchization have in Purepecha language maintenance at the individual level. The purpose behind including groups of speakers that are Purepecha dominant as well as Purepecha heritage speakers is to have a better understanding of processes that have led to language shifts among the Purepecha community, as well as to compare and contrast interviewees' ideological experiences with all three languages: Purepecha, Spanish and English. This study specifically seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

- a) How have standardization policies affected/influenced Purepecha people's language ideologies about Spanish and/or English?
- b) In what way, do speaker's ideologies about Spanish, English and Purepecha affect their usages of these languages?
- c) How do speaker's ideologies affect whether Purepecha is learned or passed on to future generations?
- d) Are Purepecha (heritage) speaker's attitudes towards and ideologies about Purepecha correlated with their usage of Purepecha?
- e) Are Purepecha heritage speaker's attitudes towards and ideologies about Purepecha correlated with their interest in re-learning Purepecha?

While existing scholarship has examined the language ideologies of indigenous Mexican language speakers in non-migration settings, my study breaks new ground by examining the language ideologies of indigenous Mexican language speakers in a migration setting. Furthermore, studies have yet to be conducted on the role that language ideologies have on Purepecha individuals either in Mexico or in the U.S. Current research has focused on studying the formal aspects of Purepecha's grammar and linguistic

phenomena as related to its contact with Spanish and English; for example, scholars have noted the presence of loanwords from the latter two languages. My study will also add to previous work related to language ideologies among speakers of other indigenous languages in Mexico, such as the studies conducted by Hill (1998) on Mexicano,² Messing (2007) on language ideologies in speakers of Mexicano in Tlaxcala, Mexico, Reynolds (2009) on language ideologies in speakers of Mayan languages in Guatemala, among others. Hill's study (1998) examines the symbolic power of Spanish among speakers of Mexicano, for whom language mixing between Spanish and Mexicano represents a threat to Mexicano identity. While Messing's study (2007), specifically addresses the language ideology conflicts that affect the shift from Mexicano to Spanish among speakers in Central Mexico; the author finds that Spanish is associated with socioeconomic advancement. While Reynolds's (2009) study focuses on how reversing previously stigmatizing language ideologies among Mayan speakers in Guatemala, has been used as a strategy for language revitalization purposes.

In a similar manner, my study will contribute to research on the symbolic value of Purepecha, Spanish and English among migrant Purepecha speakers and heritage speakers alike; adding to studies on multilingual speakers' ideologies about languages and their perspectives on dominant versus minority languages, such as studies conducted by Kendall and Haboud (2011), Kroskrity (1998), Pitkänen-Huhta and Hujo (2012), Schüpbach (2008) Lüdi (1996).

The theoretical framework I use to contextualize and analyze my data stems from critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis theories as proposed by

² Mexicano is another name used to refer to the Mexican indigenous language Nahuatl.

Pennycook (2010) on linguistic imperialism, power, and pedagogy, as well as on Norton's contributions to language learning and poststructural theory (1995, 1997, 2010); I also draw from theories on Language Ideologies from the field of Anthropological Linguistics, Silverstein's (1996) notions of standardization, as well as Irvine and Gal's (2000) notions of standardization practices in the form of iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the theories that I will use in order to analyze my data, and to further illustrate the importance behind taking a critical applied linguistics approach to help us understand the consequences that linguistic imperialism and language hierarchization has for language shift among the Purepecha community; it will also serve to illustrate the importance of contextualizing these situations within specific sociocultural, historical and political contexts, as well as the importance of examining the intricacies of language ideologies at the individual discourse level.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the reader to the Purepecha community, the Purepecha language, the current linguistic situation of Purepecha as compared to other indigenous languages in Mexico and the U.S., as well as Purepecha migration to the U.S.

In Chapter 4, I provide an overview of the language policies that have been implemented in Mexico since the Spanish colonization, until present times, in order to illustrate how language policies in Mexico generated negative language ideologies and stereotypes about indigenous language speakers, as well as how these policies evolved into the ones that are being implemented today.

Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to interviewees' linguistic biographies. While I present the reader with language biographies from interviewees in Los Angeles in

Chapter 6, in Chapter 7, I present the reader with the language biographies of interviewees from Chicago. Unlike interviewees from Los Angeles, those from Chicago all have high proficiencies in the language and have all emigrated from the same Purepecha town, Cheranastico. Thus, their experiences with Purepecha, Spanish and English usages are different from those of Purepecha speakers in Los Angeles. This chapter provides an intimate view into interviewees' experiences with Purepecha usage in the U.S., by comparing and contrasting experiences of interviewees from Chicago who speak Purepecha as their first language with interviewees from Los Angeles who speak Purepecha as a heritage language.

In Chapter 7, I also examine examples of indigenous language hierarchization in interviewees' discourse, among them the use of the term *dialecto* to denominate Purepecha and other indigenous languages; as well, as examples of language racialization present in interviewees narrations of how non-Purepecha describe indigenous language speakers. In this chapter I examine interviewees' descriptions of themselves or others experiencing a sentiment of shame towards speaking Purepecha.

In Chapter 8, I discuss interviewees' investments when learning languages other than their own. The goal of this chapter is to examine interviewees' descriptions of their language learning processes as these reflect the ways in which interviewees deal with language hierarchies established at different institutional levels, within the classroom, family and community; as well as how interviewees have dealt with linguistic impositions. I also examine interviewees' investments in learning a language based on the symbolic social and economic value that learning Spanish and English has for some

interviewees as well as Purepecha heritage speakers' investments in learning Purepecha for the same reasons.

1.1 Data collection methodology

Because the present study is based on individual case studies, I have used qualitative methods to gather my information and data. Among them, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic field notes.

1.1.1 Data Collection.

I invited interviewees to participate via personal referrals and research flyers. I also attended two Purepecha festivals organized in Los Angeles to search for potential interviewees during September, 2011 and September, 2012. There I talked to attendees and distributed flyers. From these events I was able to make contact with half of my interviewees in Los Angeles. However, personal referrals were the easiest way to contact potential interviewees in Los Angeles. The Purepecha festivals I attended were not organized by a Purepecha organization, but by an organization called Asociación de Clubes Michoacanos, whose members are all mestizos with some being of Purepecha heritage. A personal referral also allowed me to contact members of the Purepecha community of Cheranastico in Chicago. I explain these events in more detail in Chapter 6.

1.1.2 Study Participants

I interviewed a total of thirteen individuals, six female and seven male participants. I did not control the number of speakers for age differences since the focus of my study is to analyze individual case studies. However, all participants were at least 18 years of age or older.

Since the purpose of my study was to comparatively learn about speakers' ideologies concerning Purepecha, Spanish and English, in my study I include both Purepecha first language speakers and Purepecha heritage speakers that fit the broad heritage speaker definition proposed by Polinsky and Kagan (2007). Polinsky and Kagan suggest that a broad definition of a heritage speaker is an individual that grows up in a home where the language spoken is different from the dominant language spoken outside the home setting. For the purposes of this study, I did not specifically choose speakers that had some level of proficiency in the language. The reason behind this is that I wanted to focus on analyzing speakers' ideologies that may have led them to shift from Purepecha to Spanish and/or English, and whether these ideologies were also present in fluent Purepecha speakers.

1.1.3 Interviews

All interviews were conducted individually, however, some interviewees felt comfortable with the presence of relatives and friends; some of them also purposely invited them to be present for the occasion. Interviewees choose the location of the interview. Most interviewees in Los Angeles chose public spaces such as coffee shops to hold our interviews, and two of them invited me to their homes. Interviewees in Chicago all invited me to perform interviews in their homes. Interviews had an approximate duration of an hour to an hour and half and participants had the liberty to exclude themselves from the study after the interview was conducted; however this never occurred.

All interviews were performed based on a previously prepared questionnaire, which I discuss in the following section. Given that the purpose of the interview was to

explore the interviewees' experiences with Purepecha, Spanish and English, as well as some of their language ideologies, interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for follow-up questions.

1.1.4 Questionnaire

The questionnaire I used during my interviews was comprised of four sections: biographic data, language use, language proficiency, and language and identity. The first concerning biographical data was designed to collect interviewees' origin, age, number of languages spoken, migration history of the family and languages spoken in their current community. The purpose of this section was also to gather biographical information that would allow me to explore possible life turnings and adaptations that may have influenced individuals' ideologies concerning languages as well as their linguistic practices. Mandelbaum (as cited in Wolcott, 1999, p. 166) has pointed out the importance of "turnings" as periods in an individual's life when a major change takes place. Following these 'turnings' in an individuals' life, there are periods of adaptation, which are equally important. Mandelbaum defines 'adaptations' as alterations that individuals make of established patterns of behavior to cope with new situations, in the case of my study, to cope with new linguistic situations.

In order to protect interviewees' privacy I did not collect interviewees' names or birthdates. By protecting interviewees' identities I also wanted to conceal interviewees' ideologies about languages that may not be well received by other members of the community.

Below is the set of questions that I used to gather biographic data: although these are closed questions, I also resorted to follow-up questions to explore individuals' language usage as they were growing up.

Biographic Data:

1. Where were you born?
2. How old are you?
3. What languages do you speak?
4. If you moved to the U.S. from a different country, at what age did you move?
5. Where are your parents from? If they moved to the U.S. from a different city or country, how old were they when they moved?
6. What languages do your parents speak?
7. What languages are spoken in the community you grew up in?

The questions I included in this section, regarding immigration history also allowed me to understand interviewees' different experiences with Purepecha, Spanish and English in Mexico and the U.S.

The second set of questions devoted to language use was meant to gather information concerning interviewees' usages of Purepecha, Spanish and English. Their answers provided information on how, when and with whom they consciously report using these languages, as well as the contexts that they used them in. In this section I also included questions that would allow me to explore the ideas and feelings that interviewees have towards using or not using Purepecha, Spanish and English, as well as to elicit interviewees' ideologies and feelings around the three languages.

Language Use:

1. When do you speak Purepecha / English / Spanish?
2. Which language(s) do you use when speaking to your parents?
3. Which language(s) do you use when speaking to your grandparents?
4. Which language(s) do you use when speaking to your siblings?
5. Which language(s) do you use when speaking to your friends?
6. Which language(s) do you use at work and or school?
7. Do you sometimes mix languages in the same conversation? With whom?
8. What percentage of the time do you speak in Purepecha/ English / Spanish?
9. When you're out in public with friends or family, which language do you use the most?
10. Is there a situation or setting in which you feel more comfortable (or uncomfortable) using any of the languages you speak? (E.g. Are you comfortable speaking this language on the bus? At the supermarket?)
11. Do you prefer using any of the languages you speak in a specific context? Why? (E.g. What do you prefer to speak at home with your spouse or children?)
12. Do you feel like you're losing your Purepecha / Spanish? If so, how do you feel about this?
13. How do you feel about mixing languages in the same conversation?

Interviewees were also asked about their language proficiency in all three languages.

These questions were aimed at examining interviewees' language ideologies regarding language hierarchies, and some of them were designed to elicit interviewees' ideologies regarding their own linguistic priorities.

Language Proficiency:

1. At what age did you learn Purepecha/English/Spanish?
2. How well would say you speak these languages?
3. How did you learn these languages? (E.g. At home, at school, through TV, other...)
4. Would you like to improve your proficiency in any of these languages?
5. Would you like to improve your speaking, comprehension or reading and writing ability in Purepecha?
6. Would you like to improve your speaking, comprehension or reading and writing ability in Spanish?
7. Would you like to improve your speaking, comprehension or reading and writing ability in English?
8. Is improving your proficiency in one of these languages more important than in any other?

Finally, I also asked about interviewees ideas related to language and identity. The purpose was to explore whether or not Purepecha heritage speakers make a correlation between their identity as either Purepecha, Mexican or Latino with the languages they speak, their Purepecha, Mexican traditions.

Language and Identity:

1. How would you describe your identity? Purepecha, Mexican (or Latino) or American?
2. In what respects do you feel more Purepecha? More Mexican (or Latino)? More American?
3. Is being Purepecha related to speaking Purepecha?

4. Is being Purepecha related to speaking Spanish?
5. Is being American related to speaking English?
6. What aspects of American culture have you adopted? What aspects of Purepecha culture do you want to hang on to?

1.1.5 Ethnographic Field Notes

Furthermore, I also kept ethnographic notes on the Purepecha festivals that I attended. I did this in order to register and later examine the types of activities carried out during these Purepecha celebrations as well as to record information about the people that attend them. I followed the guidelines of Schensul, Schensul, & Le Compte (1999) for conducting ethnographic observations of events. These included reporting on the who, what, when, where, why and for whom. I recorded an approximate count of attendees by gender and age; descriptions of the site; how people were arranged in the event space; a description of people's activities and behavior from beginning to end; and the details of each event. I also included details of each of the events taking place at the Purepecha festivals, such as dances, singing performances, food stands, etc... Finally I registered information on the history of the festival, how long it has been held, a schedule of activities that take place and an explanation of each activity (Schensul, S., Schensul, J.J., & Le Compte, M.D., 1999: 102).

1.1.6 Data Analysis

After conducting all of my interviews, I transcribed and edited them in order to eliminate hesitations and false starts, given that this study does not specifically focus on the way speakers construct their discourse linguistically.

Since I intend to analyze interviewees' ideologies about languages, I selected responses that pertained to the subject of my study. Thus, I selected answers related to: iconicity of indigenous speech, usages of Purepecha, Spanish and English, Linguistic Purism, Language and Identity and Language and Standardization, and also to language usage in different contexts, as well as experiences with language learning.

I compared and cross-analyzed speakers' answers in order to examine differences and similarities in their language ideologies, and further examine whether there were salient ideologies that pertained to interviewees' experiences as Purepecha heritage speakers versus Purepecha speakers.

The analytical framework that I used is described in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
CRITICAL APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

2.1 Introduction

One of the main goals of the present study is to examine linguistic phenomena from a critical analysis framework. The purpose of taking this approach is to analyze the hierarchical dynamics that have been imposed onto Purepecha speakers, as speakers of an indigenous Mexican language; by examining the role that Purepecha, Spanish and English have at an institutional level as well how these are represented at the individual speaker's level; by examining individuals' usages, approaches and ideologies around these three languages. Given that hierarchical differences render Purepecha as a minority language below Spanish and English, interviewees participate in imposed ways as speakers of an indigenous language to relate socially.

I utilize Pennycook's (2010) proposals with regards to critical applied linguistics methodologies as a basis to examine my data, and analyze interviewees' accounts of their different language usage and language learning experiences; among them, their reported interactions with non-Purepecha Spanish and English speakers, as well as the difficulties that interviewees faced when learning a different language than their own. Their experiences were also reflective of broader linguistic and cultural differentiation processes that occur at the macro level, which also reflect social practices of inequality.

One way of examining the impacts of language hierarchization at the individual level is by examining language ideologies present in individuals' discourse, as they will reflect prevalent beliefs about the languages that individuals use everyday. By examining language ideologies we may also understand how institutionalized language policies have affected beliefs that speakers have about different languages, especially about Purepecha.

I will specifically look at instances of: iconization, recursivity and erasure, as explained by Irvine and Gal (2000).

Furthermore, as immigrant learners of dominant languages, learners invest in language learning depending on whether they see themselves as part of an ‘imagined community’, where power relations with the speakers of dominant languages may also hinder a learners’ investment. Conversely, as Purepecha as an indigenous language is loaded with negative stereotypes, heritage speakers of these language make little efforts to invest in learning it. I will thus, also discuss Norton’s (1995, 1997, 2011) concept of investment to further illustrate this process.

2.2 Critical Approaches to Language and Power, Language and Social Relations and Language Policies.

A critical approach to applied linguistics research may take two forms: that of engagement with a political evaluation of social relations, or of engagement with matters of power and inequality. One of the fundamental challenges of Critical Applied Linguistics is to find ways to describe the micro and macro relations that exist between questions related to “society, ideology, global capitalism, colonialism, education, gender, racism, sexuality and class, and classroom utterances, translations and conversations, genres and second language acquisition, media texts (Pennycook, 2010: 5);” and also to find ways that help us understand these relations, conveying these issues within broader socio-cultural and political relations. It is insufficient to draw straightforward conclusions between micro-linguistic events and macro-relations of social inquiry and it is necessary to problematize social relations at the macro-level as well (Pennycook, 2010).

This study analyzes interviewees' discourse by contextualizing it within a broader framework, where theories pertaining to racism, colonialism, language acquisition, and language policies and ideologies, help us understand the linguistic choices that individuals make, their discourse and language maintenance. In the present study I also include a chapter that illustrates the way language policies and ideologies around indigenous languages in Mexico were established and challenged.

Given that language policies are not necessarily inherently critical, and that in fact the central problem of language planning lies in the way in which these policies have been developed and implemented in an uncritical manner; failing to address broader social and political issues within which language use is in itself problematic (Pennycook, 2010).

One of the many critiques to formal sociolinguistic studies, from a critical perspective, is that it generally avoids questions of social inequality and correlates language variation only to superficial social stratification; failing to connect an individual's place within a social hierarchy and the different kinds of oppression that they are subjected to; especially linguistic oppression. From a critical perspective sociolinguistic research needs to incorporate not only views around language society and power, but also the role that language plays in constructing differences in terms of access, power, disparity and difference (Pennycook, 2010). For this study I will also examine how language is used to construct differences, in the same way, as there exists a hierarchy among languages, these hierarchies are also applied onto individuals as social agents.

The goal of taking a critical approach to Purepecha language usage and maintenance concurs with Pennycook's proposals, in that I seek to answer questions around the ways we conceive language and power relations; the ways people oppose power when using language and through language; ways in which we appreciate difference relative to language, education and literacy; and the ways in which ideologies function related to discourse.

2.3 A critical approach to language learning and linguistic imperialism

Generally in linguistic research, there is little critical understanding of how social class and variety are linked to issues of power or that "using, speaking, learning, teaching a language are forms of social and cultural action (Pennycook, 2010: 53)".

If we want to understand the politics of linguistic imperialism, we need to discuss and find ways to understand language policies from a global expansion perspective, in order to address broader questions in relation to "political and ethical visions that support or oppose arguments for diversity" instead of merely examining "corpus or status planning" (Pennycook, 2010: 56). The importance of analyzing linguistic imperialism from this perspective resides in that by examining "colonial celebratory" positions that boast the benefits of a dominant language over other languages, such a dominant language is suggested as inherently superior to others, in terms of both their intrinsic and extrinsic qualities (Pennycook, 2010: 56). A similar "colonial celebratory" attitude occurs both when conceiving Spanish as colonial language in Mexico for indigenous language speakers as well as English as a global language.

It is also important to analyze the attitudes towards the spread of a dominant language, as they fail to account the power that a dominant language exerts over other

minoritized languages and the inequitable relation between this dominant language and local languages (Pennycook, 2000). Furthermore, policies that favor these dominant languages tend to do so partly due to its dynamic and cumulative socioeconomic and marketable value, and the education systems legitimizes these given linguistic power relations. Promoting a dominant language as a “universal second language” while supporting local languages as home languages, straightforwardly demotes other languages as less significant; as is the case between Purepecha versus Spanish in Mexico; Purepecha versus English in the U.S.; Spanish versus English in the U.S. (Pennycook (2010). In order to comprehend how language policies affect the way a society is organized and how it functions, policies have to be interpreted within a framework that underlines power and competing interests, i.e. “power must be seen within the context of its role in serving the interests of the state and the groups that dominate it (Tollefson in Pennycook, 2010: 60).

Pennycook further emphasizes that straightforwardly arguing that individuals that chose to use a dominant language merely by an “ideological reflex of linguistic imperialism”, also lacks in acknowledging individuals’ “sense of agency, resistance, or appropriation”, ignoring thus the effects of this dominant language with regards to what individuals do with it (Pennycook, 2010: 62). Because of this, I believe it is important to analyze the ways in which my interviewees use both Spanish and English as dominant languages, and their individual language learning processes while engaging in practices of resistance and appropriation of these languages.

2.3.1 A Critical Approach to Language learning. Investment, Resistance and Appropriation

If we want to understand the ways in which individuals resist or appropriate languages that are being forced on them we need to examine the complexities found in postcolonialism, understood “as an oppositional stance to the continuing effects of colonialism, and an appropriation of colonial tools for postcolonial ends (Pennycook, 2010: 67);” challenging persisting colonial discourses. Because of this, it is important to incorporate a historical meaning to critically contextualize from a postcolonial perspective linguistic issues that we examine, Pennycook suggests the notion of ‘situatedness’ as necessary in postcolonial research (Pennycook, 2010:68).

As hegemonies are also filled with complex local contradictions (Kroskrity), with the resistances and appropriations as a crucial component of the postcolonial perspectives, it is also important to understand how different communities appropriate a dominant language to “dynamically negotiate meaning, identity, and status in contextually suitable and socially strategic ways” (Canagarajah in Pennycook, 2010: 71)”

In this sense, the notion of ‘investment’ a concept introduced by Norton (1995; 1997) becomes valuable as a critical supplement to the psychological notion of ‘motivation’ previously coined as a fundamental aspect of Second Language Acquisition. Norton argues that studies that focus on language learning and motivation do not deal with the complexities that learners undergo, in terms of identity and unequal power relations that they experience during their learning processes. Thus investment has been proposed as a construct that seeks to make a just representation of a learner’s

commitment and longing to learn a language, as well as framework to examine language practices that occur in the classroom and/or the community (Norton & Toohey, 2011). According to Norton a fundamental aspect of the construct of ‘investment’ lies in the concepts of ‘imagined communities’ and ‘imagined identities’; given that a learner’s hope for better life expectations oftentimes is a central part of a language learner’s identity. In Norton’s own words:

“for many learners, the target language community is not only a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships, but also a community of imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future. An imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and a learner’s investment in the target language can be understood within this context. (Norton & Toohey, 2011: 415).”

Norton and Toohey’s arguments are based on observations Norton (1995) performed on individual language learners who despite having high motivation levels to learn a language made little investment on their language practices, as they experienced discriminatory practices by speakers of the target language (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

The notion proposed by Norton becomes useful in that it also helps us understand the reasons individuals have for the linguistic choices that they make, especially in terms of their own language learning, as their investments in learning a language may also be determined by their desire to belong to an imagined community or a longed identity.

Norton’s construct of ‘investment’ is based in great part on the economic metaphors on language learning made by Bourdieu, who along with Passeron (1977) came up with the term ‘cultural capital.’ Norton links the idea of ‘cultural capital’ to the

investment that language learners make, as she observed that learners ‘invested’ in a target language because of their beliefs in that acquiring a specific language will increase their cultural capital. As the significance of learner’s cultural capital increases, learners reassess their sense of themselves and their desires for the future (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Norton argued that investment and identity together signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their occasional ambivalent desire to learn and practice a language (Norton & Toohey, 2011: 420).

Finally, as Norton considers that ‘investment’ allows us to observe learners as individuals with complex identities that may also change along time and within different contexts, ‘investment’ seeks to link a learner’s longing and dedication to learn a language, and their changing identities in a significative way. In this sense, Norton suggests that researchers and teachers alike to ask about the extent that learners are motivated to learn a target language, as well as to examine learners investments in various language learning practices.

2.4 Language Ideologies

Research on language ideologies has focused on identifying and analyzing ideologies that speakers have around linguistic varieties and differentiation, and on how individuals map these beliefs onto its speakers and their cultures (Silverstein, 1979; Kroskrity, Schieffelin and Woolard, 1992; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994; Irvine and Gal, 2000).

The importance of analyzing speakers’ language ideologies, lies, as Irvine and Gal (2000:403) have pointed out, in that language ideologies are not only of interest per se, but that the consequences that these ideologies have on their speakers are important to

look at. In the particular case of Purepecha heritage speakers, I believe it is crucial to explore the consequences that language ideologies have played in the valorization and language maintenance of Purepecha as speakers of a Mexican indigenous language.

2.4.1 Standardization

One important issue to examine in my study is *standardization*, since the language ideologies that I have encountered originate from standardizing regimes. According to Silverstein (1996), standardization is exerted by valuing linguistic practices that are sustained via institutions. Institutions serve as legitimizing agencies that explicitly recognize the hegemony of the community's linguistic norm. Norms in turn are enforced by the use of normative instruments such as grammars and standardized writing systems through which the "best" linguistic practices are recognized. The presupposition of these standardized practices oftentimes makes that speakers of standardized languages conceive non-standardized languages as if these were not quite "real" languages. Often times the "very concept of 'language'" lies in utilizing institutional paraphernalia to support standardization ideologies, e.g. the written standardization of a register, the creation of grammars, dictionaries and thesauruses, the literacy of its speakers, and authoritative judgments in relation to "correctness" (Silverstein, 2000) that are zealously enforced via institutions.

Another common function of linguistic standardization ideologies is to link languages to national identities, and to conceive communities as if they had one single language, something that Silverstein (1996, 2000) has denominated as the monoglot standard. Despite that evidence of plurilingualism constantly surrounding us, nation-states are continuously trying to unify societies and to make societies as linguistically

uniform (Silverstein, 1996). This monoglot standard notion underlies people's understanding of how languages should be used in their community and how people understand sociolinguistic behavior as the performance of a linguistic collective order (Silverstein, 1996). From this perspective, an important aspect of society-hood is the formation of a speech community that shares a set of norms or regularities that should be used during interaction by means of languages. In practice, language standardizing nationalist programs are in fact sustained by political-economical interests that benefit certain groups over others (Kroskrity, 2000).

It is under Silverstein's (1996) notion of standardization that I will analyze the ways standardizing language ideologies and practices have affected the perceptions that Purepecha and non-Purepecha Spanish speakers have of their language as well as the ways in which Purepecha's status as a language is described under this notion. I will explore the way individuals deal with standardizing language ideologies, the ways speakers describe "correctness" in use of their languages, as well as their views about other speakers' speech.

2.4.2 Linguistic Differentiation: Iconization, Fractal Recursivity and Erasure

Among other processes analyzed within the language ideological framework, researchers have focused on analyzing aspects regarding: Iconicity, Fractal Recursivity and Erasure. Irvine and Gal (2000) have defined these notions in the following terms: Iconization as those linguistic features that index social groups as iconic representations of them, "as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence" (Irvine and Gal, 2000). For example, when speakers take linguistic features as representative of certain ethnicities. In her study focused on mock

Spanish Hill (2008), analyzes how English speakers use certain linguistic features to represent Mexican speech in a mocking way, however indexing in a covert manner racialized representations of Mexicans in the U.S.

Concerning iconization, I will focus on some speakers' accounts that reveal iconized ideas about indigenous languages in general.

The notion of Fractal Recursivity has been described by Irvine and Gal (2000) as the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level. These researchers argue that oppositions are not defined as fixed or stable social groups, but that oppositions provide individuals with the discursive resources to claim and attempt to create shifting "communities", identities, selves, and roles, at different levels of contrast.

Under the notion of fractal recursivity I will examine how these Purepecha heritage speakers subtly differentiate themselves from other Purepecha, by strongly identifying as Purepecha in some respects but distancing themselves from "Purepecha" traits they consider undesirable and in a similar process by differencing themselves from other "real" Purepecha, in terms of higher proficiency in the language.

Erasure, as has been discussed by several scholars (Irvine & Gal, 2000) is the process in which ideology renders some persons invisible. For example, when a totalizing vision in which elements that do not fit its interpretive structure are either ignored or transformed, or when by focusing on linguistic differences, we intend to draw attention to some semiotic properties of those processes of identity formation.

In regards to erasure, I will examine interviewee's descriptions that relate to ongoing assimilation and erasure linguistic policies in Mexico as well as how erasure is reflected in the way speakers describe their own language.

The way in which I will support my analysis is by examining how these semiotic processes apply in the case of Purepecha heritage speakers. I will examine the metalinguistic accounts that these speakers provide about Purepecha, I will specifically examine interviewees' accounts that refer to iconization, fractal recursivity and accounts of Purepecha language or identity erasure in their descriptions about the language.

By asking open-ended questions, I will give speakers the opportunity to discuss the reasons behind their usage or not of their heritage language and of Spanish and English.

2.5 Proposing a new definition: speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages.

Finally, given that part of the goal of this research is to analyze Purepecha heritage speakers' investment in learning their heritage language, I believe it is important to illustrate the characteristics of heritage speakers of indigenous languages that immigrate to the U.S. Most definitions around heritage speakers have not included individuals that are heritage speakers of an indigenous language of a country different than the U.S. This study contributes by examining cases of individuals who are heritage speakers of a minoritized language before immigration to a country where the dominant language is both different than their heritage language, as well as different from the dominant language in the place of origin. In this sense, this study also contributes by performing transnational research on heritage speakers of an indigenous language, and

illustrates the linguistic situation of other speakers of Mexican indigenous languages that migrate from Mexico.

In his article on heritage language and education in the U.S., Fishman (2001) describes indigenous heritage languages as those spoken in American Indian communities that have struggled with governmental incursion but have managed to free their institutions from outside and westernized authority. He further characterizes colonial heritage languages in the U.S. as those spoken by settlers that colonized this country, among them speakers of Dutch, Finnish, Swedish, German, French and Spanish, where many of its speakers are no longer in contact with their original roots; while on the other hand he describes immigrant heritage languages as languages not regarded as a national resource in the U.S. and whose speakers have refused to let them fade away.

However, in Fishman's descriptions of heritage languages in the U.S. are not included speakers such as the ones I examine in this study; who are heritage speakers of Purepecha, an indigenous language from a country different to the U.S.; who also become heritage speakers of Spanish, the colonial language of the country of origin; while at the same time are heritage speakers of two immigrant languages, Purepecha and Spanish. Due to the characteristics of my interviewees, in terms of origin of their heritage language they can be characterized as speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages.

Other definitions that have been proposed to describe heritage language speakers and learners have utilized criteria that ranges from descriptions of speakers in terms of the linguistic status of the languages they speak, such as minority versus dominant language speakers (Carreira & Kagan, 2011); to categorizing as such individuals that were raised in the U.S. in a home where a language other than English is spoken, and

either speak or merely understand the home language (Valdés, 2001); others define heritage speakers as broadly those that have had some “exposure to non-English language[s] outside the education system”, taking the language spoken at school as the parameter (Draper and Hicks; 2000), other definitions refer to the degree in language proficiency of the language spoken at home that the heritage speaker has in contrast to English, and so forth.

In terms of language proficiency Polinsky & Kagan (2007), have taken these definitions and grouped them between what she has termed a ‘broad’ and a ‘narrow’ definition. Within the broad definition, Polinsky & Kagan include individuals that grow up in a home, where the language spoken is different from the dominant language in the country; while the ‘narrow’ definition includes only those heritage speakers that have actually some level of proficiency in the language, and listen to it and use it at home.

Defining what constitutes a heritage speaker is oftentimes problematic, since there is a large range of individual experiences and differences that cannot be accounted for via a single characterization. A similar problematic rises when defining what a heritage language learner is. Hornberger and Wang (2008) suggest that there is no single profile to describe a heritage language learner, and Carreira (2004) points out that it is difficult to configure a description that is both explicit and flexible enough to encompass the diversity of individuals that can be labeled as heritage language learners.

Due to constant immigration of people from several parts of the world to the U.S., it is very common to find heritage speakers of languages belonging to a wide range of language families as well as from very diverse linguistic situations. Wiley (2014) has pointed out the problem that arises when trying to delineate heritage languages where

multilingual settings exist as well as in defining the roles of these languages throughout and individual's lifetime; he also points out that taking a mere linguistic approach towards the relation between language and identity in these contexts is in itself problematic. The heritage speakers that I have interviewed also deal with the usage of three languages, Purepecha, Spanish and English, where not only one language is taken as representative of an individual's identity, but oftentimes present themselves as multilingual speakers with multiple identities.

For my own work, in terms of language proficiency, I will draw from the broad definition of a heritage language speaker and learner as proposed by Polinsky and Kagan, since I focus on Purepecha heritage speakers with a broad proficiency range. I have interviewed two individuals who have zero proficiency in Purepecha but have been exposed to this language at some degree, and have family members who speak it; one interviewee that was born in the U.S. that learned both Purepecha and Spanish from her parents at home; another interviewee that has some proficiency in the language but is the son of someone who is a Purepecha heritage speaker himself; and three interviewees that were born and raised in Mexico and immigrated as adults to the U.S., they received their education in Spanish and used mainly Spanish with their parents even though they were proficient in Purepecha.

As pointed out above, because of the characteristics of Purepecha heritage speakers, children of Purepecha individuals that immigrate to the U.S. may be viewed as heritage speakers of two languages, first as Purepecha is the language spoken by their parents and relatives in their community of origin, and also since Spanish is the dominant

language spoken in the broader context in Mexico, and most Purepecha speakers are also Spanish bilingual speakers.

Finally, I believe it is important to examine not only the linguistic situation of speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages but also to understand the broader reasons that have prompted the linguistic situation in their community of origin, as it will help us understand the consequences of the linguistic imposition that these speakers have experienced in their lifetime; with the imposition of more prestigious languages in the country of origin, as well as abroad. This will also help us understand the ways these linguistic practices are incorporated into the new familial and community setting in the U.S. in speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages.

CHAPTER 3
THE PUREPECHA COMMUNITY, PUREPECHA LANGUAGE, AND
MIGRATION TO THE U.S.

3.1 Purepecha Language

The Purepecha language is one of the 68 indigenous languages (recognized by the, INALI, *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas*) spoken in Mexico today. It is considered to be an isolated language. That is, it has not been classified as belonging to any presently known linguistic family, although some researchers have examined possible earlier ties with Quechua mainly at the lexical level (Chamoreau, 2009).

Among Purepecha's morphosyntactic characteristics are the use of agglutination that relies mostly on suffixing and the existence of nominative and accusative marking. It is said that its main word order is Subject-Verb-Object, but that it is also possible to find V-O-S, V-S-O, O-V-S and O-S-V orders that fulfill different stylistic functions.

Purepecha's phonology is comprised of 23 consonants and 6 vowels. Some pronunciation variations have been found among various Purepecha towns. However, studies have found diverging evidence that does not support for actual dialectal variations. Chamoreau (2009) has analyzed some of these studies, among them, the ones done by Friedrich (1971, 1975) and Chavez (2004) and has concluded that the case of Purepecha seems similar to the cases of other indigenous languages like Tzetzal, Tzotzil and Quiché, in Mexico, whose speakers resist dialectal fragmentation, despite some regional differences. A similar resistance is what Chamoreau speculates is what makes it harder to delimitate Purepecha dialectal areas (Chamoreau, 2009). However, this

researcher also carefully points out that Purepecha is not a homogeneous and uniform language, and disagrees with researchers who make such accounts about the language.

As well as other indigenous languages in Mexico, Purepecha has suffered a decrease in its number of speakers. According to statistics published in the official Mexican government journal '*Diario Oficial de la Nación*', in January of 2008, there were around 105,556 Purepecha in Mexico. The data reported in the *Diario* however does not provide an account for speakers' language proficiency, therefore there is no way of identifying with accuracy the actual endangerment status that Purepecha has, the number of bilingual and bilinguals speakers, or the individuals that have shifted completely to Spanish. Without this data it is difficult to estimate the amount of fully proficient Purepecha speakers that presently exist.

Researchers however have been interested in the Purepecha language and its speakers for quite a while now. When the Spanish arrived to what is now Mexico, Purepecha was one of the first languages that the Spanish sought to document, and in which they also had a high interest to train interpreters. Since the Purepecha were an important nation at the time that was also enemies with the Aztecs, Spain's main adversary.

Thus, very early on in the Spanish colonization period, there was an interest in documenting via Latin script the Purepecha language for religious conversion purposes. An outcome of this interest was the creation of a first Purepecha grammar published in 1558. Since then, there have been published around 150 books and articles focused on the Purepecha language, such as grammars, dictionaries, linguistic studies on Purepecha syntax, phonology and morphology, as well as language teaching materials. These

publications provide evidence of the high interest that has existed and exists in the Purepecha language, whether the purpose has been learning about the language for preservation purposes or translation.

One of the most recent publications is Chamoreau's (2009): "*Hablemos Pur'epecha. Wantee Juchari Anapu*" (Let's Speak Purepecha), published by several Mexican, Purepecha and French institutions in collaboration, among them the new Intercultural University in the Purepecha region, *Universidad Intercultural Indígena de Michoacán*³. The book was created as a didactic tool for Purepecha speakers, language learners and researchers and it is used in the Purepecha linguistics class taught at the Universidad Intercultural. During my first visit to the intercultural university, I received a complimentary copy from one of the receptionists and have used it for my own personal language learning.

3.1.1 Purepecha Language Documentation During the Spanish Colonization

During the Spanish colonization of the Americas there was a massive effort towards the elimination of indigenous cultural and religious beliefs. However, the Spanish colonizers also made efforts to record the Purepecha history and the language in Latin script. These records were made either by Spanish or indigenous scribes (Chamoreau, 2009).

Since one of the Spanish colonizers' main colonization strategies was religious conversion, Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustine religious orders were established in the Purepecha region. Among these, the Franciscan was the only religious order that predicated using indigenous languages. Franciscan's religious conversion strategies

³ Intercultural Indigenous University of Michoacan.

included the creation of catholic doctrines, sermons and confessionaries, along with religious plays that were translated into indigenous languages, used as replacements to originally indigenous religious rituals (Pellicer, 1993). According to Chamoreau (2009), between 1524 and 1572, there were 13 publications made in the Purepecha language, and only two were publications focused on the Purepecha language and grammar.

However, Purepecha was the second language for which a grammar and a Latin based writing system were created during the Spanish colonization. The first language was Nahuatl, the language of the Pre-Hispanic dominating group; these two indigenous language grammars precede others done for several European languages.

A French Franciscan friar named Marturino Gilberti was the one who wrote this first Purepecha grammar; *Arte de Michoacán* published in 1558. In his prologue to the *Arte de Michoacán*, Marturino expressed the reason behind writing the Purepecha grammar was:

“De todos está vista y entendido cuan gran daño e inconveniente experimentamos en esta tierra, así en lo temporal como en lo espiritual: por falta de no entender bien la lengua de estos naturales: porque puesto caso que la piedad evangélica (por la cual fuimos enviados) nos constriñe a entender en sus negocios espirituales y corporales, muy mucho nos estorba la ignorancia de la lengua.” (Gilberti, M. *Arte de la lengua de Mechuacan*, In Warren, B. 27: 2007).”

“Everyone has seen and understood how much harm and inconvenience we experience on this earth, both at the terrestrial and spiritual level: by lacking understanding of the language of these indigenous people: and given that we are obligated to understand their spiritual and corporal issues because of the evangelical piety (by which we were sent)

[we are obliged] to understand their spiritual and corporal world, [thus] ignoring the language is a great obstacle”.

The words expressed by Marturino in his prologue exemplify Pellicer’s (1993) suggestion that the creation of indigenous language grammars during this period was part of a religious “multi-ethnic and multi-cultural utopia”, since in fact indigenous people were forced to collaborate with Spanish friars that wanted to learn indigenous languages. Pellicer suggests that their interest in these languages resided in that knowing these languages could provide a doorway that would enable the Spanish to penetrate the indigenous people’s history, as a way to find explanations about the indigenous’ world (Pellicer, 1993).

This is clearly illustrated in Marturino’s emphasis on the moral obligation he asserts to have as a religious envoy and his emphasis on how in lacking knowledge of the Purepecha language, his religious enterprise would be faced with a great obstacle. However, for Marturino, it is not only important to understand the Purepecha language in order to have a better understanding of its people, but also, in order to be able to predicate in the language “Christ words should be predicated in the language that is intelligible to the hearer, so we can convert them and bring them to faith (Gilberti, *Arte de la lengua de Mechuacan*)”. In his argument he also claimed that knowing the language would prevent him and other friars from making mistakes when predicating.

The efforts to use the indigenous’ language for religious conversion purposes being done by Friars such as Marturino were soon after challenged by the Council of the Indies, which proposed to king Phillip the Second, in 1596, the obligatory use of Spanish for all religious practices. The Council’s argument was that the mysteries of faith could

not be well explained by using the languages of the indigenous and that if predicating in the indigenous people's languages continued, Creole⁴ and Mestizo clergy would soon gain advantage and displace Spanish clergy. However, Phillip the Second's response did not openly comply with the Council's proposition, and recommended to not explicitly motivate the indigenous to leave their language, to continue appointing clergy who only knew the language of the indigenous people, but assigning teachers of Spanish at schools for those who voluntarily wanted to learn the language (Zavala, 1993). In 1770, a royal statement completely prohibited the usage of indigenous languages in order to favor a general shift towards Spanish (Jacinto, 1997).

3.1.2. Purepecha as a Mexican Indigenous Language

As mentioned above, Purepecha is one of 68 indigenous languages spoken in Mexico today. The number of languages spoken before the Spanish colonization five hundred years ago was much higher. Since then, indigenous language speakers have continuously shifted to Spanish over the years.

Because of colonial language policies and the colonial language ideologies that resulted from them, indigenous languages in Mexico have had for a long period of time a lower status than that of Spanish. This is reflected in the way Spanish has constituted the main language used in all mainstream media, and the language in which most education is available in Mexico. It is also the language in which the Mexican constitution and most written law is available. But also, both Spanish and indigenous language speakers generally regard indigenous languages as being inferior to Spanish.

⁴ Of European descent but born in a Spanish-American colony.

Currently, indigenous languages in Mexico have decreased in its number of speakers. Today speakers of indigenous languages represent roughly 7% of the entire population, which in itself is a dramatic decrease in contrast to the high percentage of indigenous language speakers, during the 19th century which was of around 70%. A dramatic decrease can be traced back to the first decades after the Mexican Revolution (after the 1920s), when indigenous language speakers diminished from 60% to 20% of the entire Mexican population.

Only as recently as 2003 all 68 indigenous languages and its 364 varieties have been recognized as co-official to Spanish⁵. This official recognition came along the creation of the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas*, the Mexican government's latest institution geared towards Mexico's indigenous population⁶.

The INALI has begun a lengthy process of creating video, audio and written materials to promote Mexican civil rights in all indigenous languages. As part of these recent efforts, the *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* was translated into all 68 languages. In accordance to some of the laws stipulated there, a few government lead campaigns have also been translated little by little to some indigenous languages, among these to protect people against human trafficking, against domestic violence, to promote women's rights, and children's linguistic rights. These are all available via INALI's website⁷ and are broadcasted on public radio stations⁸.

⁵ These have been recognized as 'national languages' along with Spanish and Mexican Spanish sign language.

⁶ I will further address Mexico's institutional history oriented towards indigenous populations.

⁷ www.inali.gob.mx

⁸ I am unfamiliar with the extent of these broadcasts and whether radio stations operated by indigenous communities transmit INALI's spots.

The INALI has also created an interpreter and translator certification program to prepare indigenous language speakers to become certified interpreters and translators, in order to serve as such for other speakers of the language.

In addition to this, some government agencies have begun to include information about the services they provide, in some indigenous languages. Among these, there is ProVictima. A governmental program geared to assist individuals that have been victims of criminal violence that provides medical and psychological assistance, and free legal consultations.

One of the most important programs that INALI has created is an indigenous languages revitalization program: *Programa de Revitalización, Fortalecimiento y Desarrollo de las Lenguas Indígenas Nacionales*, PINALI. Whose goal is “to establish linguistic policies through which revitalization, strengthening and effective promotion and development of indigenous Mexican languages” (PINALI 2008-2012: 8).

These efforts nevertheless, cannot currently compete against the sphere of influence that Spanish has had. Spanish is now spoken by the majority of Mexico’s population; around 100 million people. It is the main language used in all administrative transactions, the main language at almost all levels of education as well as the language used in all mainstream media. This was not, however, always the case.

First due to colonizing strategies implemented by the Spanish crown during the colonization of the Americas, then, as part of nationalistic plans that intended to homogenize Mexico’s population in the name of modernity and progress, after its independence from Spain, the Spanish language has been imposed as the main language of communication in Mexico, to the detriment of indigenous languages and its speakers.

The imposition of Spanish and the discredit of indigenous languages via these language policies have pushed many speakers of indigenous languages over the years to reject their indigenous heritage and language and shift completely to Spanish. Thus indigenous languages in Mexico have long been treated as sublanguages that speakers of Spanish, the dominant language, have stigmatized as linked to racialized traits that indicate being uneducated and inferior. The Purepecha language and its speakers have undergone this same treatment.

3.2 The Purepecha and Purepecha Migration

The Purepecha are an indigenous Mexican community that once survived the Spanish conquest and colonization. In Pre-Hispanic times, the Purepecha were part of a greater empire that opposed the Aztec triple alliance; as opposed to other groups at the time, such as the Tlaxcaltecas, Purepecha were not under Aztec domination. It is said that when in war their management of metal weaponry, gave them an advantage over other groups in the region. Little is known about the Purepecha's Pre-Hispanic history. However, what is known today about the Purepecha in Pre-Hispanic times stems from the 1540 *Relación de Michoacán*, which documented the oral history of the Purepecha's origins as narrated by elders at the time. Purepecha historians are still currently trying to fully interpret the content of this *Relación*. The '*Relaciones*' were official written reports that were written for the Spanish crown's administration of new lands and its people. The *Relación the Michoacán* in particular was written in Spanish by scribe Jerónimo de Alcalá. In the *Relación*, elders' narratives point out that Purepecha travelled to what is now Michoacán, and settled there after inter-marriage with already established groups. Among these were some of Nahuatl origins. The *Relación* also describes some of the Pre-

Hispanic rites and common laws applied by high priests, the geography of the land where Purepecha are settled, economic activities among other things that were of the Spanish crown's interest.

Nowadays there are some 105, 000 Purepecha settled mostly in the Mexican state of Michoacán. The Purepecha territory spans to 21 municipalities distributed around 3,500 kilometers within Michoacán state. However, due to constant migration to other parts of Mexico and the U.S., some original Purepecha settlements now have a 0% growth while still others have even had a decrease in the number of inhabitants during the last decade (Leco Tomás, 2009).

Unfortunately there is no accurate way of accounting for how many Purepecha fluent speakers exist within the different Purepecha communities or their age ranges, how many are bilingual and how many are simply Spanish dominant. The Mexican government has not done extensive research to keep a record of this information, nor the community itself.

The official Mexican Census however do point out that Purepecha community is comprised of around 105, 500 speakers, however there is no information included about individuals' Purepecha fluency or Purepecha-Spanish bilingualism. Furthermore, from my interviewees' accounts of the linguistic situation in their communities of origin, it is worth to point out that individual perceptions about the presence and usage of Purepecha within a given community are also variable. While some point out a specific town as having more Purepecha dominant speakers than Spanish, others may point out the contrary. Cheran was mentioned among the current Purepecha towns with a low number of speakers.

Since the focus of my study is to examine instances that have had an impact in Purepecha language maintenance within individuals' linguistic biographies, I have interviewed both Purepecha heritage speakers with low Purepecha proficiency as well as Purepecha with higher proficiency; in order to comparatively examine factors that impacted individuals' acquisition and maintenance of Purepecha.

3.2.1 Purepecha migration and Purepecha communities in the U.S.

Michoacán is the second largest Mexican state that exports workforce to the U.S. Both Mexicans of mixed and Purepecha heritage have immigrated to the U.S. for several decades. There are differing accounts as to when the Purepecha started migrating to the U.S. However, Leco Tomás (2009) dates it back to the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. According to this researcher, one of the first Purepecha migration occurred around 1905, when Don Samuel Hernández Campanur from Cheran, Michoacán, migrated to the U.S. Because of the revenues Don Samuel received for his work in the U.S., he came to be known as a fairly prosperous individual in the community, and this in turned prompted other Purepecha in his town to migrate to the U.S.

Whether this was the first Purepecha migration to the U.S. or not, researchers have identified different migration periods of more or less massive migration. Beals (1992) for example, indicates that during the Mexican civil war known as "*La Revolución Mexicana*", the town of Cheran was attacked and burned down on two occasions, killing several of its inhabitants and prompting migration to other parts of Mexico and the U.S., after the war ended during the 1920s.

Several researchers have also mentioned the *Bracero* Program, between the 1940s and 60s, as another period of continuous Purepecha legal migration (Schaffhauser, 2000;

Leco Tomás, 2011). Around this same time, another local catastrophe prompted Purepecha to look for other means of living: The quick growth of a new volcano in the middle of a cornfield in the Purepecha town San Juan Parangaricutiro (Pavageau and Schaffhauser, 1995). Lava covered the entire town within a period of a few days and its people were left without a home or means to live.

The above illustrates the way Purepecha migration has not been done in a homogeneous way and it has occurred both legally and illegally throughout different periods (Leco Tomás, 2009). Whether hiring a coyote to come across the border or entering via a temporary H2-A visa to work in the fields; migrating to the U.S. has become more or less a part of the lifestyle for many Purepecha families. In fact, it can be said that there is no Purepecha family that does not have one of its members in the U.S. (Leco Tomás, 2009).

When migrating to the U.S. Leco Tomás (2011; 2009) has pointed out that Mexican indigenous migrants tend to fill the jobs that Mestizo immigrants, the non-indigenous Mexican population, are not working in. An example of this is Purepecha that work in agricultural fields, who often pick tobacco, tomato, lettuce, cotton, cucumber and apples in states such as North Carolina, Arkansas, Louisiana and California (Leco Tomás, 2009; Mummert, 2003; Schaffhauser, 2000). However, from my interviewees' accounts, Purepecha migrants also work as carpenters, cooks and waiters in restaurants and food trucks, as well as translators and language teachers, and some also have their own businesses.

Schaffhauser (2000) has suggested that Purepecha migration to the U.S. is mainly divided into two types: temporary migration where Purepecha migrate to work in the

fields, and prolonged migration that is mainly done to the American metropolis. However, whether temporary or prolonged, we cannot straightforwardly characterize Purepecha migration as being conducted in these two ways, as there is also socioeconomic mobility; and networking has also provided Purepecha with opportunities to expand their work areas.

Several U.S. states are now home to various Purepecha communities. Researchers have pointed out the existence of Purepecha communities in states such as Illinois, Oregon, California, Texas, North Carolina, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Washington (Schaffhauser, 2000; Anderson, 2004; Leco Tomás, 2000; Smith and Furuseh, 2006; Emery, Ginger, & Chamberlain, 2006; Velasco, 2009). Within Mexico, there is also Purepecha inner migration to states such as Baja California and Sinaloa in the North, Jalisco and Guanajuato, which are neighboring states to Michoacán, and to the country's capital, Mexico City (Leco Tomás, 2000; Veloz Contreras, 2010; Spiller, 2011).

Thus, language shift either to Spanish or English due to migration is not new among the Purepecha community; however, it has not been examined to date.

An important means of maintaining ties with the community among Mexican indigenous immigrant groups when in the U.S., is the formation of community organizations. These are usually associations whose main goals are to keep its community members informed about their legal rights in the U.S., to promote community festivities and activities, to inform about important situations that are occurring back home, others also function as spaces where activism and social justice is promoted. According to Leco Tomás (2009), Purepecha immigrants have not formed any

institutionalized organizations in the U.S. However, according to my findings, at least as of 2011 a non-profit organization called *Orgullo Purepecha* has been created. *Orgullo Purepecha* is based in the state of Washington and promotes itself via a webpage, a Facebook page and Youtube account. This organization has also a Google group, where scholars interested in the Purepecha can be in touch with each other; receive information about recent publications, events, and latest news that affect the Purepecha region in Mexico. *Orgullo Purepecha* has also uploaded Purepecha language lessons on Youtube, where basic pronunciation, grammar structure and vocabulary are explained.

However it is not clear how accessible to these resources are to the wider Purepecha population in the U.S.; given its strong dependability on electronic media and given that several topics discussed there in the forums are scholarly discussions. It is still early to say what the impact of this organization has across the Purepecha population in the U.S. and Mexico. Most of my interviewees knew about Purepecha online radio stations, however, not all of them knew of the existence of *Orgullo Purepecha*.

The Purepecha presence in the U.S. has also called the attention of the U.S. government. In 2010, the U.S. Census office contacted *Orgullo Purepecha* leaders and asked for their opinion regarding the incorporation of Purepecha ethnic identity in the U.S. Census survey. The reason for contacting the organization was to include Purepecha ethnicity in the Census count as a minority immigrant population. After several back and forth emails between *Orgullo Purepecha* and the U.S. Census office, both parties reached an agreement to include Purepecha ethnicity under the Indian American category in the

survey form⁹. However, since in order to register oneself as a Purepecha one needs to know about this Indian American sub-categorization, not all Purepecha in the U.S. might now about this option.

3.2.1.1 Purepecha Language in the U.S.

According to the U.S. Census there are 2397 registered Purepecha in the U.S. However, out of these, only 437 reported speaking Purepecha. Several linguists in the U.S. have studied the Purepecha language, the Summer Linguistics Institute has also worked on Purepecha grammar studies; however only recently have educators started looking at the presence of Purepecha speakers in American Classrooms. Among these educators are Swanson, Ballash and Adler (2006) from the Reynolds School District in Oregon who performed a study in order to find out the best ways to teach academic language, literacy and ESL to young Purepecha in elementary schools in Oregon. As part of their research, these teacher-researchers also visited their students' hometowns in Michoacan and sought the help of Purepecha experts from El Colegio de Michoacan. Their study focused on seeking best practices to attend their Purepecha students and concluded that it was important to avoid using Spanish in their classroom as a transition language to teach children English. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints among other issues this team was not able to continue their work (via personal communication with Michelle Kost, May 12th, 2010).

⁹ I found this information while starting a google search with the words Purepecha and U.S. Census. A document communicating other members of the organization of the negotiations that went on with people of the U.S. Census office can be found online at <https://groups.google.com/forum/m/#!msg/orgullo-purepecha/0XK0jCJPQd0/WYi7njovVuYJ>

Purepecha music is a very important part of the community, and it is common for communities in the U.S. to have members that form Purepecha music bands. In these bands, traditional Purepecha songs called, *pirekuas*, are commonly sung. In addition to this, rap music has also found its way among the Purepecha youth; and at least one rapper identifies as having Purepecha origin, and sings mainly in Spanish but includes Purepecha and English in his songs.

Furthermore, because of the availability that the Internet provides; Purepecha in the U.S. are also able to access Purepecha online radio stations, such as: *Xiranhua Kuskua*, *Radio Movimiento*, among others, where *Pirekuas* are also commonly played. Ultimately, there have also been uploaded online Purepecha language lessons via Youtube videos. In these lessons, explanations about grammar and pronunciation are done in English. Currently, it is only possible to find four of these lessons which consist of greetings, vocabulary, Purepecha pronunciation and basic Purepecha language structure. However, these Youtube videos have not been updated since 2009.

CHAPTER 4

Language Policies and Dominant Language Ideologies in Mexico

4.1 Introduction

Since the main problem of all language planning resides in the way in which these policies have been developed and implemented in an uncritical manner; we should not fail to address the broader social and political issues within which language use is embedded (Pennycook, 2010). Because of this, before I begin the discussion of my interviewees' language biographies, experiences with language use and language ideologies, I believe it is important to illustrate the way in which the language policies that currently exist in Mexico, originated; as it will help us understand, how despite a recent change in favor of indigenous languages in Mexico, indigenous language speakers continue to be subjected to discrimination and stigmatization.

As Kroskrity (2003) has suggested there is a permanent battle and adjustment amongst states and their opponents, and even hegemonic language ideologies are responsive to continuous changing and opposing forms in a dynamic way. We thus need to understand the way specific groups have had their ideologies standardized and made them represent the hegemonic force for the broader society.

The following chapter explores some of the main language policies established in Mexico from the colonization period in the 16th century until now, and illustrates the ways in which different hegemonic powers at different time periods generated and promoted language ideologies around indigenous languages that were later standardized.

In 2003 the Mexican government granted national status to all indigenous languages and their varieties spoken in Mexico along with Spanish, (*Diario Oficial de la*

Federación, 2003)¹⁰; in an attempt to amend the five hundred years of linguistic oppression that indigenous language speakers had suffered. This recognition was granted after the federal government negotiated for several years with the indigenous insurgency *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional*, EZLN, (National Liberation Zapatist Army), which demanded the recognition, acknowledgment and implementation of the constitutional rights of indigenous people, Among their demands was a request for the official recognition of all indigenous languages, along with a guarantee that the linguistic rights of indigenous language speakers would be respected, and that these speakers would have access to education in all indigenous languages.

The official recognition of these languages in Mexico, however, has not brought immediate social change, as there are pervasive colonial and nationalistic language ideologies in Mexico, that still propagate negative beliefs about indigenous language speakers; which the mestizo population still uses to target and discriminate these speakers.

Currently, Spanish is still the dominant language in Mexico and it is the language used for all official administrative transactions, the main language used for education and the predominant language represented in the media; despite some efforts to account for the representation of indigenous languages. Currently, around 110 million people in Mexico speak Spanish while only 6 million people speak an indigenous language. These numbers can be explained by systematic language Hispanization policies and the lack of recognition of the linguistic rights of speakers of over 68 indigenous languages.

¹⁰ As I will discuss later in this chapter, these have been recognized as ‘national languages’ along with Spanish and Mexican Spanish sign language.

In the following sections I describe how Hispanization language policies have been implemented in Mexico; the political context in which they were put into practice, and the way they were applied to and have affected indigenous language speakers, without any respect for their linguistic rights. I will further describe how Hispanicizing language policies have been challenged and were finally revoked in 2003.

4.2 Language Policies as Colonization Strategies

Spanish is a colonial language with a presence in Mexico roughly after 1521. During the colonization period from 1521 to 1810, Spanish was imposed upon indigenous language speakers through the establishment of contradictory language policies based on the economic interests of the Spanish Crown.

During the first years of colonization the Spanish Monarchy was faced with an overwhelming linguistic diversity and experimented with different linguistic policies and strategies, in order to administer the economic, geographic, and human resources of the newly appropriated land and people, among them: 1) capturing indigenous speakers of different languages in order to train them as interpreters; 2) using the language of the previously dominant group in the region, Nahuatl; 3) having administrators and friars learn indigenous languages; 4) and finally through the Hispanicization of indigenous language speakers and the eventual establishment of Spanish as the main language of communication and instruction.

In the following sections I examine some of the Spanish Monarchy's language policies during its three hundred years of occupation of what is now Mexico.

4.2.1 Dealing with Multilingualism in the ‘New World’

Before venturing into the ‘Indies’, Christopher Columbus took some linguistic precautions for his trip that included bringing interpreters for a range of languages that he thought he would encounter along his journey to the ‘new world’. Among the interpreters he brought were speakers of Hebraic, Aramaic, Arabic and Latin, who were of no use, once he and his crew arrived to American lands (De Solano, 1991). After realizing that the interpreters Columbus had brought were useless, colonizers turned to the capture and training of indigenous people to serve as interpreters¹¹. However, after subsequent explorations it became evident that people in the Americas spoke numerous languages, oftentimes different from the ones used by the people in previously explored lands (De Solano, 1991, doc 36, 38). Faced with this linguistic paradox the Spanish monarchy had to look for more practical linguistic ways to continue with its colonization of the Americas.

One language that had served as a lingua franca in pre-Hispanic times was Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. The Aztecs had dominated and expanded their empire through a vast region that spread from Mexico to Central America, establishing Nahuatl as the main language of communication in this region. Nahuatl was mainly used

¹¹ Using interpreters to communicate with inhabitants of colonized lands was actually not an improvised enterprise. The Spanish Crown had a strong and institutionalized language interpreter system, with established norms concerning interpreters’ functions and responsibilities. These norms underlined the trust that the Spanish Crown vested in a correct interpretation job as well as the Crown’s expectations of interpreters’ loyalty and poise (De Solano, XXVI). Interpreters had an important function for the administration of lands during the colonial period and treason, accepting gifts from natives or being caught in fraudulent operations, could be punished through forced exile (De Solano, XXVI). Salaries were also high for these interpreters, since it was in the Crown’s best interest to please them in order to secure loyalty (De Solano, XXXVIII). One of the most important interpreters for the initial stages of the Spanish colonization of the Aztecs was an indigenous woman known as Doña Marina or Malinche.

for the collection of tribute from dominated nations. In fact, the Aztecs also had a well-established institution where interpreters and scribes were trained in order to help sustain the Aztec's tribute-based economy. Because of this hierarchical importance, proficiency in Nahuatl was also an ability that denoted distinction among some indigenous communities (Heath, 1972). Dakin (2006) argues that it was very possible that there was a more or less common bilingualism across most indigenous communities in the region at the time, which included the knowledge of Nahuatl.

Because of this generalized knowledge of Nahuatl among some communities, Spaniards also trained their troops in this language, as well as in other extensively spoken languages of the time such as Mixtec and Zapotec (Mathew, 2000; Dakin, 2006). However, in spite of the prevalent usage of Nahuatl among the indigenous population of the time, the Spanish crown, fearing that indigenous nations would later use this language to secretly organize rebellions, did not use it as a *lingua franca*. Heath (1972) also suggests that the Spanish monarchy did not evaluate the pre-existence of Nahuatl as a *lingua franca* because of a continuation of linguistic ideologies and policies that prevailed in Spain at the time of the colonization, namely, the desire for the Hispanization and Christianization of re-conquered regions previously occupied by Arab settlers in Spain.

Due to the geographical and political ambitions of the Spanish crown, the Spanish conquerors rapidly established urban centers in the Americas prompting a fast expansion that soon imposed Hispanization on all indigenous people and settlements in the form of indigenous reservations, prompting both an urban as well as a linguistic conquest (De Solano, 1991: LIX). As these establishments grew larger, soon the policies that the

Spanish Crown established from afar often contradicted the interests of new settlers, friars, and language interpreters already settled in New Spain (Heath, 1972).

4.2.2 Officializing Language Policies through Royal Decrees and Documents

The first language policies that the Spanish crown imposed via official laws were dictated in the *Leyes de Burgos de 1512* (1512 Burgos Laws), which were created after a group of Dominican friars, lead by Friar Montesinos, publicly accused Spanish conquistadors of cruel treatment and exploitation of indigenous people. Montesinos arranged for a private hearing with the King to communicate his concerns and the King gathered theologians and lawmakers to meet in order to find a solution (Sanchez Domingo, 2012). Since the main objective of the Dominican order was the religious conversion of indigenous people to Catholicism, the Burgos Laws proposed language policies that emphasized the importance of Hispanization for religious conversion.

One of the decrees included in the Burgos Laws was that all Spaniards that had fifty or more indigenous people under their custody should select one among them, and educate him or her in the Catholic faith; teaching their charge how to read and write¹², as well. The decree's purpose was for select indigenous people to indoctrinate others in the community under the supposition that their fellow community members would take them more seriously than their Spanish counterparts.

In 1542 the Burgos Laws underwent a revision and the Spanish crown elevated indigenous peoples' status to that of subjects as opposed to slaves. Since this reform conferred indigenous people the right to report abuses that they were subjected to by local

¹² The law does not specifically state in which language this individual should learn to read and write. We can assume that he or she was expected to learn these skills in Spanish.

Spanish mayors who oftentimes asked for excessive tributes; the 1542 amendments mandated that a copy of a document containing the fair amount to be collected by all mayors, be kept in the towns' archives and translated into the local language. Indigenous people were also to be informed of their rights and obligations to the Crown via an interpreter (De Solano, 1991). However, although this policy sought the protection of some indigenous peoples' rights, it was not always followed.

Even though Hispanization for the purpose of religious conversion was still enforced, some friars took the initiative to teach Nahuatl and Nahuatl literacy to all indigenous people regardless of their linguistic background. Initially there was some tolerance for this practice outside the law, but in May 1550, King Charles I and the Viceroy of New Spain discussed, via written communication, some of the fears and potential consequences that this practice would have for the Crown. The Viceroy feared that if an increased number of indigenous people became literate in Nahuatl (De Solano, 1991), this would allow people of different indigenous origins to communicate, and thus he considered this possibility a potential danger for rebellion (De Solano, 1991). After the written exchange between the King and Viceroy a new decree was made official in June 1550, in which the King mandated all friars to teach only Spanish and not Nahuatl to indigenous people. Instead of acknowledging their fears of rebellion, the King's main argument was that Spanish-only instruction would better guide indigenous people into acquiring the Catholic faith. The King also made the instruction in Spanish comparable to teaching indigenous people European "orderliness and good manners" and "[since] this way they will be able to understand and be indoctrinated in the Christian faith" (De Solano, 1991:49).

Nonetheless, a few years later, in 1556, the Spanish King mandated all clergy in active service to learn the languages that were spoken around their congregation. Friars were now strictly required to be fluent in the indigenous languages spoken where they resided; and being unable to prove fluency in these languages could result in their removal from their religious practice (De Solano, 1991).

It was not until 1596 that an official decree mandated by King Phillip II established that all children be instructed in Spanish; arguing that early Spanish instruction was a key component “to get rid of idolatry and other vices with which they get distracted [...], when using their language” (De Solano, 1991:101). In addition to this, some friars had been reporting the difficulty of teaching Spanish to adults because adult indigenous language speakers resisted learning Spanish and sometimes even expressed hatred towards the language (De Solano, 1991), they suggested that the solution was to Hispanicize younger generations. From this point on and for the next three hundred years, the Spanish Crown continuously re-emphasized, via subsequent royal decrees, the Hispanization of indigenous language speakers since early childhood.

Resistance to learn Spanish was not uncommon during the Spanish colonization, and edicts that emphasize Spanish instruction from this period constantly mention this reluctance. An example of this is a 1694 edict in which a friar describes the resistance of indigenous elders, who considered the imposition of Spanish a way to erase their ancestors’ heritage, appealing to the court so that Hispanization could be further imposed: “different ministers have informed you that Indian elders and chiefs feel very affected by this imposition [of Spanish], and they believe that everything they inherited from their

ancestors is being erased; they thus do everything possible to speak only their natural language at their homes, daily errands and meetings (De Solano, 1991:216).”

Another way to encourage Hispanization during the colonization period was to appeal to indigenous peoples’ need to acquire political power. In 1690 indigenous people became eligible for a few local government positions, however in order to aspire for these positions, the Spanish Crown established fluency in Spanish as one of the main requirements. Even though this decree seemingly benefited indigenous people, in that it allowed them access to positions of political power and representation, the stipulation was intended to appeal to indigenous people’s “ambitious nature”, under the argument that indigenous people would feel encouraged to desire the leadership positions available, and thus feel compelled to learn Spanish (De Solano, 1991).

Lastly, the language policies that the Spanish Crown established up until the 1800s continued to enforce the Hispanization of indigenous people. Yet, as time passed, edicts and official letters became increasingly supplemented by detailed descriptions of its importance as a linguistic colonization strategy as opposed to the earlier religious conversion motivations stated in the first laws. It is worth noting one letter in particular, in which the archbishop at the time wrote to friars of his dioceses:

“There hasn’t been a cultured nation in the world that when extending their conquests, did not do the same with their language: the Greeks took as barbarians those who ignored theirs; the Romans, who later vanquished the Greeks required them to admit their Latin language [...] After the Romans became owners of our Spain, they mandated everyone to speak the Roman language, or Latin, which later corrupted after the Gothic invasion turned into Romance or corrupted Latin [...] Speaking the same language of their

sovereign and only monarch of the nation, generates a certain love and inclination among people, a familiarity that does not exist among those who do not understand each other. [Indigenous people] do not have the right to maintain their languages whatsoever, [a right that] our sovereigns do have [...] so that they can govern their land easily and uniformly (In De Solano, 1991)".

Because of the colonial importance emphasized by the archbishop in this letter, we can infer that, at the time, the Catholic Church did not consider religious conversion an immediate necessity anymore and, at this point in history, the domination and linguistic subjugation of indigenous people had acquired an overtly colonial tone.

To summarize this section, the arguments used to Hispanicize indigenous people during the colonial period first posited that Spanish was a better language for religious indoctrination, and that speaking Spanish would prevent indigenous language speakers from being distracted by their "idolatry" when speaking their own language; later as adult resistance to learning Spanish was prevalent, teaching Spanish to indigenous language speakers at a young age became of importance to continue with Catholic indoctrination; finally, as religious conversion was not imperative anymore, the Spanish colonizers appealed to their right to impose their language to indigenous people as colonized subjects.

Nevertheless, there were also religious people that appealed for the inclusion of indigenous languages in the school curricula. In the following section, I will briefly describe the curricula in some schools and institutions of higher education in which both Spanish and some indigenous languages were taught. I will especially focus on two

universities: El Colegio de Tlatelolco and El Colegio de San Nicolas de Obispo, which was established around the Purepecha community.

4.2.3 Spanish and Indigenous Languages in Universities of the ‘New Spain’

Schools and universities were an important means for institutionalized Hispanization and literacy instruction during the colonial period. During the first decade of the colonial period between the 1520s and the 1530s, only indigenous people of noble descent were allowed to study in religious institutions of higher education. In them, students studied subject matters common to European education. As Spanish settlements grew larger, the Spanish Crown established additional schools, religious seminars and convents under the belief that creating more of them would generate a better social environment.

The first European-style institution of higher education in America was established in what is now Mexico City in 1533: El Colegio de Tlatelolco. One of its main objectives was to provide higher education to children of noble Aztec descent as well as to Spanish seminarians. At El Colegio de Tlatelolco students learned Latin grammar, logic, arithmetic, and religion, as well as Nahuatl Latin-based literacy, and other indigenous languages. The Colegio de Tlatelolco was a space where young Nahuas¹³ were not merely under the imposition of a Spanish-style education, but it was a place where a profound level of transculturation occurred, as these young men became “translators and mediators between one world and another” (Silvermoon, 2007:9). El Colegio de Tlatelolco also played a crucial role in the colonization and religious conversion of indigenous people since, after three years of instruction, students were sent

¹³ Aztec descendants.

back to their hometowns, where they were asked to police the religious practices of their family members and to be strictly vigilant towards non-Catholic rituals and the presence of Pre-Hispanic idols in their family's household (Silvermoon, 2007:77-78).

In what is now Michoacan (Purepecha territory), another important university provided education to young men regardless of their descent, and admitted students with no pre-Hispanic noble status. This was the Colegio de San Nicolas Obispo founded in 1540 in Patzcuaro, Michoacán¹⁴ by Bishop Vasco de Quiroga. As opposed to El Colegio de Tlatelolco, this institution did not hold separate classes for Spanish seminarians and indigenous students, since one of its explicit purposes was to create spaces where people of indigenous, mestizo, and Spanish descent would interact with each other on a daily basis in order to learn from each other's cultures. Its founder Bishop Vasco de Quiroga wanted to create an institution where both Purepecha people and Spaniards could mediate and generate more respectful ways of interaction. Another of Vasco de Quiroga's goals was to offer Purepecha and other indigenous students an adequate education, so that they could acquire skills that would elevate them to the socio-cultural level that Spaniards held in Mexico at the time (Miranda, 1972:140).

The Colegio de San Nicolas fostered two types of students: those who studied to become clergymen proficient in Purepecha and other indigenous languages,¹⁵ and children of locals who were either indigenous, mestizo, or Spanish and whose education mainly consisted of acquiring literacy skills and Catholic education. The first type of

¹⁴ Other institutions provided education only to children of mixed native and Spanish descent.

¹⁵ They were called *clérigos-lenguas* or language-clergies.

students resided permanently at the Colegio while the second went to school everyday for their instruction (Miranda, 1972).

Vasco de Quiroga established several other schools and seminars that provided free education for indigenous people, and Spanish and mestizo seminarians in other indigenous languages. Vasco de Quiroga also established schools in other parts of Michoacán among them, in Santa Fe, Guayangareo and Tiripitío. In this last one seminarians of the Augustine order studied the Purepecha language (Miranda, 1972: 148). He had projected that these seminarians were to become the future heads of churches and parishes in other parts of Michoacan, and hoped that indigenous seminarians would turn into “interpreters [...] and after being ordained they could make up for the lack of ministers [of Spanish descent]” (Miranda, 1972: 137-138).

The Colegio de San Nicolas also offered education to non-seminarian children who spoke “different indigenous languages, [and to the] poor and orphans from remote regions.” The Colegio also provided shelter and food to these children: “everything is given to them, by the love of God, so that they can later be well instructed in good manners and sent to indoctrinate those of their own language and nation” (Miranda, 1972: 140).

The Colegio de San Nicolás continued offering education until the beginning of the 19th century, and closed its doors only after the battles for Mexico’s independence begun. The independent insurgents converted the Colegio into a prison in 1810 (Miranda, 1972: 265). The most important national independence supporters and fighters, friars Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Maria Morelos, were alumni from the Colegio de San Nicolas and Hidalgo was a fluent Nahuatl, Purepecha and Spanish speaker. During that time the

Colegio had already been transferred to Morelia, the state's capital. The Colegio de San Nicolas is now the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolas Hidalgo and currently provides education mainly to mestizo students.

El Colegio de Tlatelolco had a different fate. Not all friars at the time approved the objectives and curricula that it offered. Friars Jeronimo Lopez and the Dominican friars Domingo de Betanzos and Diego de la Cruz openly objected the curriculum offered at the Colegio de Tlatelolco for noble Aztec descendants. And wrote to king Charles V to share their fears of social disorder if indigenous communities in the surrounding areas of Mexico City continued to be educated "in such a way" (Romano, 2004:263). The Colegio de Tlatelolco was abandoned and halted its program in 1595.

After 1821, when Mexico gained its independence from Spain a new period in linguistic policies began. In the following section I will describe the manner in which the newly independent Mexican government dealt with Mexico's multilingual reality, education and the ideologies behind language policies established during a one hundred year period.

4.3 Language Policies During the 19th Century

Spanish continued to be the language of instruction during the 19th Century and Mexico's independent government considered Spanish the language that would represent Mexico's newly acquired independent status.

Despite efforts to Hispanicize the indigenous population during the Spanish colonial period, indigenous language speakers still represented a majority in Mexico at the time of its independence from Spain. As I mentioned above, it has been calculated that at the beginning of the 19th century, indigenous language speakers comprised 70% of

Mexico's total population, and that Spanish was a language that only 30% of the people spoke. However, by the turn of the century in 1895 some studies calculate that only 17% of the population spoke a Mexican indigenous language.

This rapid decrease in the number of indigenous language speakers can be attributed to further Hispanization campaigns that were based on nationalistic ideologies generated after Mexico's independence. The newly created Mexican nation, faced with a need to be recognized as independent, considered Mexican indigenous communities an obstacle to the country's future economic growth. Because of this ideology Spanish was officially made the country's national language and indigenous communities were isolated into fragmented agrarian lands (García, 2004). After the church and state separated in 1824, education policies focused on eliminating all religious references from the curricula, physical punishments associated with Catholic schools, and doctrinal thinking. Instead in the nation's new educational program, the government promoted civil responsibilities, scientific knowledge and research, and Spanish as the main language of instruction (García, 2004). And even though some intellectuals of the time defended the linguistic rights of indigenous language speakers, these opponents were seldom taken seriously.

A new Mexican constitution was created in 1857 which declared that education was the pathway to progress and freedom of thinking, now liberated from ecclesiastical influence. However, rather than benefit indigenous communities, this new educational plan marginalized them even more, as they lost some of the privileges inherited from the colony, the administration of some lands and access to religious schools such as the ones I described above.

During the post-independence period liberals and conservatives constantly debated the nation's fate. This debate also included the role that education would have in Mexico's new configuration as a nation, as there was "an urgent need to construct a democracy, [education] was considered a factor for order and progress, [...] a fundamental element for social integration and for the conformation of a national identity" (Silva & Muñoz, from Meneses Morales, 1992:198). Yet, due to these constant debates, there were continuously new and different educational plans, policies, initiatives, and laws that were sometimes in conflict with each other.

Nevertheless, the new independent government ignored the needs of indigenous communities and by the final decades of the 19th century the political class, Mexican intellectuals and the scientific community considered that in order to achieve progress and modernization, ethnic homogenization was necessary (Urías Horcasitas, 2007:15).

Francisco Pimentel, a conservative and well-known linguist at the time wrote an article in a local newspaper in 1864 concerning what he considered the causes for the generalized poverty among indigenous communities; his article also included suggestions to remedy this issue. Pimentel believed that indigenous people had a "melancholic" nature and that they were in fact "slow" workers (Urías Horcasitas, 2007:44). According to Pimentel, these so-called indigenous characteristics were to blame for the lack of economic progress among indigenous communities; which, in his view, also affected Mexico's progress as a nation. These stereotyped ideologies about indigenous communities as inferior and backwards became part of political discourses and debates about the economy of the time.

Along with Pimentel, other Mexican intellectuals of the time, supported this idea. Justo Sierra, a liberal and important figure in the configuration of Mexico's educational system as well as member of the Mexican Academy of Language had a written debate in 1881 with Manuel Altamirano, of indigenous heritage and then president of the Mexican Society for Geography and Statistics. This discussion, took place via printed letters that were published in the national newspaper, *La Libertad* (The Liberty), which were focused on the obligatory nature of education. Justo Sierra favored the Hispanization and homogenization of indigenous communities and emphasized that the main objective behind basic education should be the elimination of indigenous languages; he specifically said that “[the goal should] not [be] that of preserving [indigenous] languages [but] to destroy them” (Sierra, 1881, in Yañez, 1977:113). Sierra's main argument was that Hispanicizing the population would finally unify Mexico. Sierra also considered that basic education would also “civilize” indigenous people and would make them come in contact with the “modern” world; and given the high percentage of illiteracy among the indigenous population at the time, he considered that this was an issue that put Mexico at a disadvantage against its increasingly powerful neighboring country, the U.S. Because of this, Sierra thought it was urgent to increase literacy levels among the Mexican population in order to solidify Mexico's democracy, he believed this could be done through Hispanization of indigenous language speakers (Sierra, 1881, in Yañez 1977:114).

In 1905 Justo Sierra created the *Secretaria de Instruccion Pública y Bellas Artes* (Department of Public Education and Fine Arts). During this period he recommended that special attention be given to Spanish instruction in rural schools and asked the different

heads of Mexico's educational districts to report teachers of students who were receiving instruction in Spanish (Sierra, 1881, in Yañez, 1977 :434).

Justo Sierra contributed to creating the basis for a national education system that included all levels of education in Mexico, from basic to higher education, and focused on raising literacy levels among the Mexican population. His educational plan however, as altruistic as he meant it to be, paved the way to institutionally eliminate indigenous languages in favor of homogenization; as is visible from the rapid decrease in the number of indigenous language speakers during this period.

4.4 Language Policies Between the 1920s and the 1960s

In 1910, a civil war in Mexico surfaced as a response to the political instability that existed during the period after Mexico's independence from Spain; as well as a revolt against Porfirio Diaz' dictatorship. The political ideology behind the Mexican Revolution was to break with previous economic, social, and ailing political structures of the previous regime (Nahmad, 1980). After the Mexican Revolution was over two opposing political ideologies surfaced: one, that regarded Mexico's multiculturalism as an everlasting source of richness and as a resource for the development of a national culture; and another that advocated a need for a homogenization of the Mexican population at all levels, and as a way to erase social differences among the population (Duran, 1988). These conflicting ideologies were at the basis of the government's social, educational and cultural projects. However, as the previous regime to the revolution, the Mexican government also saw in the homogenization of Mexico's population the solution to its economic problems.

Because of this, during this period, the Mexican government supported research that was based on a eugenicist perception of progress, which linked the latter to a genetic basis (Carrillo, 2009); seeking to rid the Mexican population of any characteristic that could be considered indigenous. Which included the elimination of indigenous ethnic physical features, what was seen as indigenous behavior, as well as indigenous languages. In this regard, the government also covertly motivated racial mixture by having lax immigration laws for European descendants; similar to immigration policies implemented in other Latin American countries as well, such as Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Venezuela and Costa Rica, among others (Stavenhagen, 1988). In sum, the political leading group established after the Mexican Revolution reverted to the idea that modernization and progress would only be possible via an “ethnic unity” (Urías Horcasitas, 2009).

During this period the government created Indigenist institutions that had non-indigenous goals (Urías Horcasitas, 2009), and as a consequence, indigenous people in Mexico continued to be marginalized and had no political rights; the new constitution of 1917, did not acknowledge the existence of indigenous populations, erasing indigenous peoples' participation in politics and public affairs. Government institutions between 1921 and well into the 1980s continued to emphasize Hispanicization in order to integrate Mexico's indigenous population to a national plan of ‘modernization’ (Durán, 1988).

Among the Indigenist institutions created at the time were the Department of Indigenous Education and Cultures (1921), Department of Cultural Missions (1927), Department of Indigenous Education (1937), Council of Indigenous Languages (1939), The Tarascan Project (1939), Literacy Institute for Indigenous Languages (1947),

National Indigenist Institute (1948), Indigenous Patrimony of Mezquital Valley (1951), System of Bilingual Promoters (1952), General Direction of Indigenous Education (1978) (Acevedo, 1997). Most of the educational policies implemented before the 1960s resorted to the direct Hispanization of indigenous students; however, after this period and until the 1980s there was a shift towards subtractive bilingual education, and Hispanization was still the ultimate goal.

The Tarascan Program created in 1939 was important for the documentation of indigenous languages all across Mexico, but especially for Purepecha (or Tarascan). Among the linguists involved in the project were Mauricio Swadesh, Barrera Vazquez and Max Dwight Lathrop. One of the project's goals was to increase the literacy numbers among the indigenous population and to introduce students to Spanish literacy afterwards (Jacinto, 1997).

The post-civil war period was also colored by its political instability, and almost with each new government federal election, new institutions were created, and thus, projects like The Tarascan Project did not have any continuity. As the debates continued around whether to incorporate indigenous populations to a national project via their assimilation to mainstream mestizo culture, or whether to acknowledge and respect Mexico's indigenous communities as part of its multicultural composition, indigenous communities still lacked school programs appropriate for their linguistic needs.

4.5 Language Policies from 1980 to 2012

In 1979, the Anthropological Research Institute of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) organized a forum to discuss language policies in Mexico of the time. Government officials, anthropologists, ethnologists, Mexican linguists, and

American linguists from the Summer Linguistics Institute gathered for the forum. The purpose of this forum was to discuss indigenous communities' educational needs and how to address them. Presenters also discussed how previous language policies had affected indigenous language speakers, as well as ways to incorporate the needs of indigenous communities into the national economic growth program. The UNAM later published the proceedings from this forum in 1980 under: *Indigenismo y Lingüística. Documentos del foro "La política del Lenguaje en México"* (Indigenism and Linguistics. Documents from the forum: 'Language Policy in Mexico').

Even though some presenters critiqued previous governmental language policies that focused on Hispanization, some still favored this language policy. One example of this was Nahmad (1980) who considered it necessary to Hispanicize over 150,000 children and to provide bilingual education to 1 million young indigenous students (Nahmad, 1980:31-32); along the same lines, Rockwell (1980) argued that governmental language policies had no role whatsoever in indigenous language maintenance; while Cifuentes (1980) suggested it was possible for indigenous communities to maintain ethnic "particularities" (such as languages and cultures) while at the same time inducing indigenous communities towards modernization. López y Rivas (1980), on the other hand, criticized the existence of professionalization programs for indigenous ethnolinguists, since they had not originated from indigenous communities' political mobilization but rather the Mexican government had created them based on its beliefs about what was beneficial for indigenous communities.

The majority of the presenters made direct references to the lack of effectiveness of both direct and indirect Hispanization policies for the well-being of indigenous people

and some even directly criticized each other's role in the maintenance of indigenous languages; linguists from the SLI, who were also presenters, were particularly strongly criticized.

After the forum was over, around ninety anthropologists and linguists signed a document that synthesized their position with regards to the topics discussed. In the document the signers criticized how the Mexican government had been implementing language policies with the goal of homogenizing and politically controlling indigenous communities. The results of this forum were relevant in that, for the first time in some decades, Mexican intellectuals and academics challenged the government's language policies. The 1979 forum was one of the first steps taken to question the purposes of the Hispanization and indigenous education policies that prevailed after the Mexican Revolution, however there was still much to be done in terms of reclaiming indigenous language speakers' rights.

It was not until 1994, that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) challenged the Mexican government and its discriminatory policies and threatened to continue their rebellion unless the government heard their demands. The objective of this movement was to emphasize the existence and vitality of indigenous communities in Mexico, by contesting government policies that had discriminated against and ignored indigenous people for decades. After a brief armed uprising by the EZLN in (1994), the Zapatista movement and the government began a dialogue and negotiation in hopes of resolving the conflict peacefully. With this dialogue both the EZLN and the incoming President of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo signed the 1996 agreement *Acuerdos de San Andres Larrainzar*, The San Andres Larrainzar Agreements.

With the San Andres agreements the government pledged to treat indigenous communities justly, guaranteed access to media that would communicate government actions to different indigenous communities in their languages in an accurate way; it also included the right to administer and possess their own media: radio, television, press, telephones, satellite and computers (Agreement 8). Among other linguistic rights, indigenous language speakers were to have the right to a qualified interpreter present in all trials and legal processes (Agreement 5).

The EZLN and the government also issued a joint declaration in which they stipulated a series of principles that were necessary in order to cultivate a new relationship between the government and indigenous communities, among them: policies to help increase the general well-being of indigenous communities by supporting indigenous communities' economic development, as well as a just treatment. The elimination of discriminatory ideologies, attitudes, and behavior against indigenous people in Mexico; as well as to foster a culture of tolerance by acknowledging indigenous ways of life and beliefs about socio-economic development.

With regards to language, through the San Andres Agreements the government also committed to the promotion of laws and policies that recognized that all indigenous languages had the same social value as Spanish; as well as the support for indigenous language maintenance and literacy instruction available in all indigenous languages; and a deterrent of the discrimination against indigenous language speakers. These linguistic rights also included access to a bilingual-intercultural education in which students could use and maintain their indigenous languages and cultural heritage. Lastly, the San Andres

declaration emphasized that only through a direct co-participation of indigenous people and society a profound governmental reform could be achieved¹⁶

With the EZLN uprising there was a historically rapid recognition, at least in paper, of basic human rights that indigenous communities had not had access to for centuries. Yet, it was not until the following presidential period that the government changed its Constitution and the San Andres agreements were officially included and established as part of an official national plan.

Under Vicente Fox's presidency in 2001 these reforms to the Constitution were published in a leaflet entitled *Derechos de Los Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas en la Constitucion Politica de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (Indigenous Communities and Establishment's Rights included in the Bill of Rights of the Political Consitution of the United States of Mexico); that included, amendments to the 1st and 2nd articles of the Mexican Constitution and modifications to the 4th and 18th articles. These modifications legally prohibited the discrimination motivated by "ethnic or national origin, gender, age, different capacities, social status, health conditions, religion, opinion, preferences, civil status" (Article 1); included the recognition of Mexico's multi-cultural configuration (Article 2); and guaranteed access to bilingual and intercultural education, literacy and basic, post-secondary and higher education.

A new national indigenous program was formed called the, *Programa Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indigenas* (National Program for the Development of Indigenous People) PNDPI; whose slogan 'Towards a new relationship' was intended to

¹⁶ Taken from former president of Mexico Ernesto Zedillo's government web page zedillo.presidencia.gob.mx/pages/chiapas/prensa.htm

acknowledge the San Andres Agreements previously established between the EZLN and the previous government.

The government also created a Council for the Development of Indigenous Communities that would function as a government consulting organization as well as the General Coordination of Bilingual Intercultural Education to fight discrimination and develop educational models that addressed the educational needs of indigenous people. Finally, an institution focused on addressing the linguistic needs of all indigenous communities in Mexico was established, known as the *Instituto Nacional de las Lenguas Indigenas*, INALI, (National Institute for Indigenous Languages). Among the immediate goals of this institution were to promote research of indigenous languages, encourage the usage of these languages, as well as to aid in indigenous language maintenance and revitalization. In addition, the institution aimed to train and certify professional translators for all indigenous languages. As of this year, 2014, the INALI has already translated the Mexican Constitution to 13 of the 68 indigenous languages; yet, literacy levels among indigenous language speakers in their language are still low.

A series of Intercultural Indigenous Universities have also been created, with the goal of providing higher education to indigenous students in nine states of Mexico: Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz, Michoacan, Estado de Mexico, Puebla, Quintana Roo and Sinaloa; for speakers of languages such as Otomí, Maya-Quiche, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Nahuatl, Popoloca, Popoluca, and Purepecha.

The Intercultural Indigenous University in Michoacán (UIM), receives mainly Purepecha and Otomí indigenous students, among the classes included in its major on Language and Intercultural Communication are: Language Policies and Education for

Indigenous Communities; Oral History; Descriptive Grammar for Indigenous Languages; Translation of Indigenous Languages; Language Contact and Bilingualism; Workshop for the Elaboration of Materials for Indigenous Language Maintenance and Development; among others. Even though the first generation of students has already graduated, some still see flaws in the program that need to be overcome, among them a better communication between students and teachers with administrators appointed by the government (personal communication with teachers at the UIM).

As we have witnessed throughout this section, indigenous language speakers in Mexico during the past century have had little influence on the language policies that have affected them as speakers of an indigenous language. For an extended period of time, governmental institutions have considered indigenous language speakers mere objects of study and passive recipients (Durán, 1988: 44), neglecting their active role as agents in the construction and execution of their own identities.

4.6 Conclusion

The first language policies that followed the Spanish colonization were initially part of the political strategies that the Spanish Crown established in order to administer tributes collected from indigenous people. Hispanization was soon imposed as a linguistic means to indoctrinate indigenous people into Catholicism, but later became a simple means of colonial linguistic subjugation and oppression. With Mexico's independence from Spain in the 19th century, Spanish was chosen as the new nation's language, even though some independentist insurgents like Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Maria Morelos were fluent indigenous language speakers. During this period, state funded Hispanization programs were implemented as politicians considered that indigenous people needed to

be incorporated and assimilated, as they were considered uneducated, backwards and slow, and thus were seen as an impediment for Mexico's economic advancement as a nation. This way of thinking became more pronounced after Mexico's civil war when, from a eugenicist approach, the government sought biological explanations to Mexico's economic problem, targeting again, indigenous communities. And even though there were some debates and opponents, this Hispanization continued to be used as a means of assimilating indigenous people into mainstream mestizo culture, while eliminating indigenous languages and cultures. As debates concerning the mistreatment of indigenous language speakers and people continued between intellectuals and government officials, it was not until the 1994 EZLN insurgency when the constitutional and linguistic rights of indigenous people began to be considered. The San Andres Larrainzar Agreements secured the recognition of all indigenous people's rights and linguistic needs. And, as of 2004, all indigenous languages have been recognized as having co-national status along with Spanish and with this there has been a creation of government institutions that monitor the implementation of these rights.

Finally, since indigenous people and their languages and cultures have only recently been recognized as existing entities for the Mexican government, only recently measures have been taken to protect some of the constitutional rights of indigenous people. The translation of the Mexican constitution to 13 of the 68 languages (plus their varieties) spoken in Mexico is but a mere administrative step towards the inclusion and linguistic recognition of indigenous language speakers, and as long as discrimination continues, indigenous language speakers are being pushed to shift to the dominant language. We have yet to see the impact that intercultural education will yield at all levels

for those indigenous communities that have been able to benefit from this program, as well as the impact this will have in indigenous language maintenance and recognition from non-indigenous language speakers. Ultimately, prevalent language ideologies about indigenous languages in Mexico today, have originated from the broader social and political state of affairs that have pervaded throughout Mexico's configuration as a nation, since its colonization. Furthermore, given that the groups that have been in power for centuries have sought the assimilation and Hispanization of indigenous language speakers, nowadays, only 6% of the Mexican population speaks an indigenous language. However, given that at the state level hegemonic language ideologies have been challenged through the official recognition of indigenous languages as co-national languages along with Spanish, there is hope that indigenous language speakers will be able to reclaim their rights and finally revert negative language ideologies and stereotypes concerning indigenous languages and their speakers.

CHAPTER 5

LINGUISTIC BIOGRAPHIES; PUREPECHA PROFICIENCIES, USAGES AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES OF PUREPECHA IN LOS ANGELES.

5.1 Introduction.

According to the U.S. Census 2010 there are around 480 individuals that self-identify as Purepecha or of Purepecha origin, in Los Angeles County, however, there is no way of knowing the exact status of their Purepecha language proficiencies from this 2010 source. Despite this relatively high number of Purepecha in Los Angeles, there does not seem to be a Purepecha community there that engages in everyday contact such as the one established in Coachella Valley, California or the community in Blue Island, Chicago that I will discuss in chapter 7. In fact, two of my interviewees were unaware that there were other Purepecha in Los Angeles; according to one interviewee, who is involved in planning annual Purepecha festivals in Los Angeles, the Purepecha families that he knows of in Los Angeles do not live close to one another.

The majority of interviewees in Los Angeles were from Cheran and other Purepecha towns that have already experienced a high shift to Spanish and are known for having low numbers of Purepecha fluent speakers, such as San Felipe de los Herreros and Atapaneo. The interviewee with the highest Purepecha proficiency was Jessica, whose parents are from San Andres Tzirondaro, a Purepecha town that has a high population of proficient Purepecha speakers.

Most of the interviewees in Los Angeles had low Purepecha proficiency and little daily interaction with fluent Purepecha speakers. Interviewees in Los Angeles also had better life and housing conditions, as well as a higher education than my interviewees from Chicago. The parents of all interviewees in Los Angeles used mainly Spanish, or

only Spanish, and not Purepecha to address them while they were growing up, hence their proficiency in Purepecha tended to be low or very low. A few interviewees mentioned ‘shame’ as a possible reason behind their parents’ decisions to shift to Spanish, and also the possibility of protecting their children from this feeling. Shame, however was also a feeling that motivated some interviewees to learn Purepecha. Finally, for some interviewees, language shift occurred in a previous generation, since their parents were not sufficiently proficient in Purepecha to pass on this language to their children, and could not learn it from their parents.

5.2 Female Purepecha heritage speakers in Los Angeles

In Los Angeles I interviewed three female Purepecha heritage speakers from three different age groups and Purepecha backgrounds: Jessica, Ileri and Flor, from San Andres Tzirondaro, Atapaneo and Cheran, respectively.

While Cheran and Atapaneo are Purepecha towns that have been shifting to Spanish, as I pointed out above, San Andres seems to still have high numbers of Purepecha speakers, according to the accounts that interviewees provided concerning the status of Purepecha in their hometowns, based on their experiences while living there or visiting.

Jessica and Ileri were both raised in the U.S. and received all of their education there. However, Jessica and Ileri have had different experiences and contact with the Purepecha community in Mexico and in the U.S. Their Purepecha proficiency is also different due to the exposure and contact that each had with the language and its speakers; while Jessica’s parents spoke both Spanish and Purepecha, Ileri’s parents were Spanish dominant and Purepecha heritage speakers themselves. In contrast, Flor received her basic education in Cheran and came to the U.S. at a later stage in life and did not

continue with her studies as she was focused on raising her children. Nonetheless, due to the daily contact that Flor had with Purepecha speakers in her hometown during the first years of her life, she managed to acquire some proficiency in the language.

In the following section, I will further explore each interviewee's experience with Purepecha, Spanish and English, within their household, extended family and their surrounding communities.

5.2.1 Jessica

I began my research on Purepecha heritage speakers after I met Jessica; who was 20 years old at the time. Jessica was born and raised in the city of San Marcos, in San Diego County, California. Jessica's parents spoke to her in both Purepecha and Spanish when she was a child, although her parents speak mainly Purepecha. Nevertheless, while growing up, she considered that her parents spoke broken Spanish and because of this perception, she used the Spanish spoken in *telenovelas* (soap operas in Spanish) as a linguistic model instead. Because she was interested in communicating with members of the larger Latino community in her hometown, she felt compelled to increase her proficiency in Spanish.

Jessica's parents are from the Purepecha town of San Andres Tzirondaro and speak Purepecha and Spanish. Jessica's mother came to the U.S. when she was seven months pregnant with her, and Jessica jokingly pointed out during our conversation, "I was conceived in San Andres, but was born in San Diego." According to Jessica, there are around ten families from San Andres Tzirondaro living in San Marcos, San Diego, who stay in close contact with each other and attend each other's celebrations such as baptisms, birthday parties, as well as religious celebrations like Easter. Within these ten

families, mainly the first generation, people the age of Jessica's parents still speak Purepecha, while the second generation now speaks mainly Spanish and English. This close interaction with the Purepecha community in San Diego, the fact that Jessica's parents spoke both Purepecha and Spanish to her and that she was interested in learning the language at a young age, allowed her to acquire a high proficiency in Purepecha.

According to Jessica the majority of people in San Andres, her parents' hometown, currently speak Purepecha, and in her perception the majority of people there have higher proficiency in Purepecha than Spanish. However, when Jessica visits San Andres and people speak Purepecha to her, she usually replies in Spanish, and only occasionally uses Purepecha. Jessica thinks that her Purepecha pronunciation is "ugly" and because of this perception she is afraid of speaking it and of being criticized by the people in San Andres. Jessica, however, does make an effort to speak Purepecha when buying things at the local convenience store when she visits her parents' hometown. Jessica does not speak Purepecha with relatives her age there either, and usually speaks to them in Spanish because of this fear; conversely, Jessica's cousins in San Andres are ashamed of speaking Spanish, since they do not feel they speak it very well. As for her cousins in the U.S., they prefer using either Spanish or English and not Purepecha. The fear and shame of using a language with more fluent speakers of a language is a common cross-cultural phenomenon; however, in these specific contexts a linguistic hierarchization also occurs, in which Spanish and English are placed at a higher level than Purepecha by the younger generations.

Jessica only speaks Purepecha with her parents and grandparents, as well as with her sister when they joke around with each other, but her sister would rather converse in

English. With other relatives, such as her godparents, Jessica speaks mainly in Spanish. She attributes this to her godparents having obtained a higher education. Institutionalized higher education in Mexico is mainly available in Spanish, and consequently Spanish is associated with being educated, in contrast to indigenous languages, which are associated with having low education levels; this correlation furthers negative stereotypes around indigenous languages and their speakers.

At the time of the interview, Jessica was an undergraduate finishing her bachelor's degree at a prestigious university in Los Angeles. She was the first Purepecha interviewee I had, and later served as my Purepecha tutor for a couple of months, when I was taking a course on learning less commonly taught languages. For the course, we were required to learn on our own and design personal lesson plans for the language of our preference. Since I chose Purepecha, I asked Jessica if she would kindly be my tutor, for the purpose of having someone monitor my language use and help me correct my linguistic production. Jessica, however, did not feel sufficiently confident about her Purepecha fluency and was a bit hesitant to serve as my tutor at first; she would occasionally call her mother to ask specific questions about phrases and pronunciation.

Even though Jessica has some insecurity about her Purepecha fluency, her proficiency in the language is high enough to tutor a non-Purepecha speaker. During our interview, Jessica oftentimes referred to Purepecha as "our language," suggesting she has a strong connection to the language. However, because, Jessica was born and raised in the U.S. and received all of her education there, currently Jessica's strongest language is English.

5.2.2 Ileri

Ileri was finishing her doctoral dissertation in Ethnic Studies at the time of our interview, working on research on Purepecha religious rituals. She is a strong advocate and activist for both indigenous Mexican and Indian American rights. Ileri was born in Atapaneo, Michoacan and came to the U.S. with her mother when she was five years old. I met Ileri through an acquaintance that had studied with her during her BA years in California. During our interview, similar to Janet, Ileri joked that she was conceived in Oregon, but was born in Mexico during one of her mother's visits there.

Ileri has almost zero proficiency in Purepecha, since she was never sufficiently exposed to the language while growing up. She is a second-generation heritage speaker, given that her parents themselves were heritage speakers, and she was only in contact with the language via her grandmother when she was a child. Both Ileri's mother and father have Spanish as their first language.

Ileri is of indigenous mixed heritage. Her father's side of the family is from Charo, a town in Michoacan of both Matlatzinca and Purepecha heritages, while her mother's side is Purepecha from Atapaneo. According to Ileri, her father once mentioned to her that his mother tried to teach him Matlatzinca, and, his father tried to teach him Purepecha. Nonetheless, at the time, her father was more interested in learning English, given that he had been traveling to the U.S for work since he was nineteen years old.

According to Ileri, her family has a long tradition of immigration to the U.S. Both her maternal and paternal grandfathers worked in the U.S. under the Bracero Program during the 1950s and 1960s, and went back and forth from the U.S. to Mexico. Both her

parents, also worked in the U.S. and Mexico before Ileri was born. Ileri's paternal grandfather was hesitant to teach his offspring Purepecha, fearing that other non-Indigenous Mexican migrants would mock him and his children: "He never wanted to teach much [Purepecha] to his children or grandchildren. Since he had worked in California as a *bracero* before, he felt ashamed. He said he felt ashamed [because] people [who were Spanish speakers] could make fun of him, and could make fun of his children also, for speaking a language that other Mexicans who were also farm workers, did not understand... and so that is why he did not want to teach his children." The sentiment of shame that Ileri's grandfather felt stems from the negative stereotypes associated with indigenous language speakers in Mexico, which portray them as uneducated, poor, low class and backwards, an analysis that Van Dijk (2005) has already put forth around racism in Mexico.

Nevertheless, Ileri spent her early childhood with her maternal grandmother, who was fluent in Purepecha and would sometimes speak to her in this language. Unfortunately, Ileri was not able to understand her grandmother, as Ileri's first language was Spanish.

Ileri was interested in learning Purepecha since she was a child, but she began to actively learn it at a later stage. Part of her motivation lay in that whenever she would go visit her grandparents' hometown and other Purepecha communities she felt ashamed of not speaking the language, and because whenever people there spoke Purepecha and laughed, she was embarrassed about not being able to understand and was afraid that they were making fun of her. Her knowledge of the language, however, is still limited to a few words and expressions. Ileri is more proficient in Spanish and English, and while Spanish

is a language she uses with her parents, friends and colleagues, she communicates with her husband, siblings and other friends and colleagues mainly in English.

Ileri was not aware of her Purepecha and Matlatzinca heritage until she began asking questions about her origin when she was around thirteen years old. Her mother used to tell her that they were mestizos, and despite her grandparents speaking some Purepecha in her presence and telling Purepecha tales, their Purepecha heritage was never mentioned.

It seems that in the case of Ileri's familial history, both 'shame' and the desire to learn a language that would facilitate economic mobility such as, Spanish or English, were reasons to shift from Purepecha. Currently, Ileri strongly self-identifies as an indigenous woman of Purepecha and Matlatzinca heritage and as a woman of color in the U.S.

5.2.3 Flor

I met Flor at one of the Purepecha festivals held every year in Los Angeles, while I walked around searching for Purepecha heritage speakers to interview. In this festival, Flor had a food stand, where she was selling traditional Purepecha tamales called *corundas*. While I was ordering *corundas* at her stand, I asked her whether she was of Purepecha heritage and talked to her about my research. After our brief conversation, she agreed to an interview and we scheduled a meeting.

Flor is the sister-in-law of one of the male interviewees, Rosendo, and aunt to his son, Omar, who I will talk about in the section below. Flor was born in the Purepecha town of Cheran, as were her brother-in-law and nephew. She is a housewife and is married to a man also of Purepecha heritage. Flor came to the U.S. when she was

seventeen years old and eight months pregnant with her first child. She has been in the U.S. for thirty-four years, and all her children and grandchildren were born here.

Flor's parents were also both from Cheran and were Spanish-Purepecha bilinguals. However, while Flor's parents used Purepecha to speak with each other, Spanish was the language they used to communicate with her. Her paternal grandmother was the only one who addressed her and her siblings in Purepecha. Nevertheless, even though Flor was able to understand most of what her grandmother expressed in Purepecha, her replies to her were mainly in Spanish. In fact, Spanish was the prevalent language used in Flor's household and Purepecha a language that only some of her older relatives used. Flor also spoke mainly in Spanish with her siblings, and her oldest sister was the only one that managed to acquire a high proficiency in Purepecha. Flor and her siblings used Purepecha on few occasions when they were young, especially when cursing, despite having low Purepecha proficiency. During our interview, however, the curse words that Flor provided as examples seemed to be Spanish curse words not Purepecha. They were also words that did not seem pronounced differently than Spanish, which otherwise could have suggested they were Spanish words lexicalized into Purepecha; however, I did not feel comfortable pointing this out during our interview, so as to not appear to be questioning her.

When Flor lived in Cheran, it was common for her to greet her relatives in Purepecha but not her close friends. Flor does not understand why her family lost the language and she was never interested in learning Purepecha when she was young. She feels that she was simply raised speaking Spanish and never questioned why this was so; she considered that "Purepecha was simply being lost". Flor's response and attitude

towards this Purepecha shift to Spanish among her generation seemingly illustrates the unquestionability and acceptance of this linguistic shift, as something that was naturally occurring.

Flor's basic education in her hometown Cheran was mainly in Spanish, despite her teachers being fluent in Purepecha. Flor attributes her teachers speaking mainly Spanish to their being from a more Hispanicized Purepecha town, Paracho, where people felt they had a higher socio-cultural level, as if "they weren't little Indian women anymore as we women [were] over there in Cheran". The status ascribed to Spanish in this example illustrates a linguistic hierarchization between Purepecha and Spanish, where Purepecha is rendered as being a "less-sophisticated" language and Spanish as a language used to denote a higher status: a hierarchization that might further suggest why Purepecha among her generation were inclined to reject their heritage language.

Flor's Purepecha proficiency is limited. When someone is speaking Purepecha around her she is able to understand half of what is being said, and since she has not been back to her hometown in a long time, Flor thinks that her oral proficiency might have also diminished. Even though Flor points out that her Purepecha is not as good as it used to be, she is able to sing songs in this language, and she frequently sang Purepecha songs to her grandchildren, in hopes that they would learn the language.

Flor does not know how to read and write in Purepecha, and Purepecha literacy is not common among the population. However, her paternal grandmother, who was proficient in Purepecha, was literate in this language as well as in Spanish. Her grandmother was the only member of her immediate family to have this ability and because of this she was a very popular woman in her hometown. Flor remembers seeing

Purepecha books and magazines in her grandmother's household, which she used to teach Christianity in Purepecha to other children. Flor's grandmother converted to this religion because of the American missionaries that visited her hometown.

Currently, Spanish is the language that Flor uses with her husband, who is also from Cheran and of Purepecha heritage; they also use Spanish with their children. But, Flor's children use predominantly English to communicate with each other, and English is her grandchildren's main language; however, Flor oftentimes asks them to speak to her in Spanish, since her English proficiency is low. Flor wishes that her grandchildren would learn Purepecha.

Two of Flor's children recently became interested in learning this language. Her son, asks her about the Purepecha words for various things, mainly words for food and items around the kitchen, while her younger daughter has acquired this interest after attending the yearly Purepecha festivals where Flor has her food stand. Although Purepecha is not a language used in Flor's household, it is common for her and her family to listen to and enjoy Purepecha music. After thirty-four years living in the U.S., Flor feels she is not able to speak Purepecha, Spanish or English well.

5.3 Summary of results

In table 1, below, we can see a comparative illustration of these three female interviewees' multilingual experience and their self-assessed proficiencies in Purepecha, Spanish and English.

Summary Table

Female Purepecha Heritage Speakers Table 1.

	Jessica	Ireri	Flor
Place of birth	San Marcos, San Diego, County	Atapaneo	Cheran
Age	20	30	55
Age arrived at U.S.	US born	5	17
Profession	University student	Ethnic Studies Professor	Homemaker
Spanish	Native proficiency	Native proficiency	Native proficiency
Purepecha	High comprehension, good oral proficiency	Some phrases and lexicon.	50% listening comprehension, low speaking ability.
English	Native proficiency	Native proficiency	Pragmatic competence
Spanish usage context	With immediate family, sister and parents	With immediate family: siblings, parents. Other Spanish speakers in the U.S.	With family, with friends.
English usage context	With sister, friends, English speakers in the U.S.	With colleagues and students, husband and other English speakers in the U.S.	With other English speakers in the U.S .
Purepecha usage context	Her parents, grandparents and older relatives	Occasionally with the people she interviews	“Curse words “ with her siblings while growing up. Purepecha greetings with her family members.

Of the three interviewees Jessica only is almost fully proficient in all three languages, with Purepecha being the language in which she has a slighter lower proficiency. Ireri’s strongest languages, on the other hand, are Spanish and English and she is in the process of learning Purepecha. Flor’s main language is Spanish and she has a very low proficiency in Purepecha, and some pragmatic competence in English.

Because Flor spent the first seventeen years of her life in Cheran, received her schooling there and used mostly Spanish with her parents and siblings, Spanish is her dominant language. Conversely, Jessica and Ileri, spent most of their lives in the U.S., where they did all of their basic education, as well as post-secondary education, and because of this English is their dominant language. Only, Ileri had little to no contact with Purepecha speakers while growing up, and the only occasions in which she heard the language was when her grandmother occasionally used it when she was a child, but unfortunately she was not able to understand her.

The cases of Jessica, Ileri and Flor provide a perfect example of the Purepecha/Spanish hierarchization that occurs within some Purepecha families and Purepecha communities, where ‘shame’ is a sentiment that prevents people from speaking Purepecha for fear of being stigmatized and Spanish is seen as the language of education and status, but nonetheless, where ‘shame’ is also a sentiment that would motivate a heritage speaker to learn Purepecha.

Because Jessica, Ileri and Flor have individual and different experiences with Purepecha, this language also has a different symbolic meaning for each of them. On one hand, Jessica has a close contact with the language at home, as her parents speak to her in both Purepecha and Spanish. Purepecha is thus a familial language, but also a language that symbolizes her Purepecha background; on the other hand even though Purepecha was not her parents' first it symbolizes a recovered part of her identity, as she became interested in Purepecha when searching for information about her indigenous background as a teenager; currently the Purepecha culture and community are also a main part of Ileri's research. Finally, Flor associates Purepecha with her life in her hometown before

she immigrated to the U.S. at 17, where she used to greet people in this language. A common thread also delineates Jessica's, Ireri's and Flor's biographical narratives, one that revolves around maternity and migration, of conceiving and being conceived on one side of the border and being born or giving birth on the other, which also symbolizes the experiences that women of Purepecha heritage undergo during migration and the impact it has in their lives.

5.4 Male Purepecha heritage speakers in Los Angeles

The four male Purepecha heritage speakers that I interviewed in Los Angeles were Rosendo, Omar, Justino and Humberto. Rosendo and Omar are father and son, respectively, and as pointed out above they are related to Flor. Like Flor, Rosendo was born in Cheran, while his son Omar was born in Los Angeles, although he spent part of his childhood in Cheran and received all of his basic education there.

The other two interviewees, Justino and Humberto, are not related to each other and were born in the Purepecha towns of Cuanajo and San Felipe de los Herreros, respectively.

As previously noted, currently Cheran is known for having a vast shift to Spanish, and a similar shift to Spanish has occurred in San Felipe de los Herreros. Cuanajo, on the other hand, seems to still have a high number of Purepecha speakers, and there is a Cuanajo community in Chicago where Purepecha is still being used by half of the population (Zavala, 2010).

Rosendo, Justino and Humberto came to the U.S. when they were in their twenties in search for better life opportunities. At the time, all three were already Spanish dominant speakers with low Purepecha proficiencies. In the case of Omar, after receiving

his elementary school education in Cheran, he was brought back to the U.S. when he was twelve years old and he was also already Spanish dominant.

As I pointed out earlier, there is no known tight-knit Purepecha community established in Los Angeles, although there is a yearly Purepecha Michoacano festival held in September in Bell Gardens, California, organized by the Michoacan- Purepecha community in Los Angeles. Rosendo is heavily involved in its planning and through these festivals he and his son stay in contact with other members of the Purepecha community in the Los Angeles area. Regrettably, Spanish is the main language used in these festivals and there is not much Purepecha spoken there, since most people who attend this festival are of Latino descent in general and not specifically Purepecha. Thus, Rosendo and Omar have few opportunities to practice the language with fluent Purepecha speakers. On the other hand, Justino and Humberto, do not have ties to a broader Purepecha community in the U.S., and apart from family members or acquaintances that are Purepecha heritage speakers themselves, they have no interaction with Purepecha speaking individuals. In fact, before our interviews, they were unaware of the Purepecha Michoacano festivals organized each year in Los Angeles or that there were established Purepecha communities in the U.S. Justino and Humberto are also married to non-Purepecha Mexican women, which might also limit their possibilities of practicing the language within the household and their expression of their Purepecha identities at home.

In the following section, I will further explore these male interviewees' experiences with Purepecha, Spanish and English within their household, extended family and their surrounding communities.

5.4.1 Rosendo

Rosendo was born and raised in the Purepecha town of Cheran, Michoacan and came to the U.S. when he was twenty years old, in search of a better life. Spanish is his first language and according to his self-assessment his mastery of Purepecha is around 60%. His parents were also both from Cheran and their first language was Purepecha; however as Rosendo was growing up, his parents spoke to him mainly in Spanish.

Rosendo married a woman who is also from Cheran, with whom he has three children, all of them born in the U.S. The children are second-generation Purepecha heritage speakers and they have acquired little Purepecha proficiency. Nevertheless, Rosendo speaks some Purepecha at home with his wife, although according to him, his wife's Purepecha proficiency is lower than his. He rarely speaks Purepecha with his three children and says that they use mostly Spanish and English.

The only occasions in which Rosendo speaks Purepecha when in Los Angeles is with “people who have Purepecha as their first language, and have Spanish as their second language”, implying that he uses the language only with those who are less proficient in Spanish and rarely with heritage speakers, which suggests that among heritage speakers, Spanish is the main language of communication.

Even though Rosendo's wife has a lower proficiency and they rarely communicate in Purepecha among themselves, they listen together to a Purepecha online radio station. When they do, Rosendo, oftentimes translates what broadcasters say for his wife and he uses this activity to evaluate how much Purepecha he is currently able to understand. Rosendo occasionally uses Purepecha words and phrases with his family,

although Spanish is the main language spoken in the family. However, English is the language his children use among themselves.

Rosendo indicated that during his childhood 80% of Cheran's population spoke Purepecha and that "it has been diminishing over time. [...] I consider that today even the people my age... well, there are few people who speak it." According to Rosendo, only elders in Cheran currently speak Purepecha, and he considers himself to be an example of this generational language shift to Spanish in his community. Rosendo attributed this to a sentiment of 'shame': "well, because erroneously, there are people who are my same age (me included) that are ashamed of our origin. There are people that try to pretend to be from the largest city in the state [Michoacan]. [So when they are asked] 'Where are you from?' [they say] 'I am from Morelia or Uruapan.' No. I always say: 'I am from Cheran'." Rosendo positions himself as a Purepecha heritage speaker who has felt ashamed of his Purepecha heritage at one point in his life, but who currently proudly acknowledges that he is from a small Purepecha town and not from the largest cities in Michoacan which are Spanish dominant and of mixed heritage; and in doing so, he challenges the stigmatization that indigenous people undergo in Mexico. Out of all the interviewees, Rosendo is also the only one to defend Purepecha's linguistic status as a language, in opposition to a 'dialect', a term used to label indigenous languages in Mexico as sub-languages. Thus, even though Rosendo is not fully proficient in Purepecha, he actively asserts his Purepecha heritage, through the festivals he helps organize, by listening to Purepecha music and Purepecha online radio stations and by instilling this identity in his children.

5.4.2 Omar

Rosendo's son Omar and his family live in the Lynwood, Los Angeles area. As pointed out above, though Omar was born in Los Angeles, during his early childhood, he and his family moved back to Cheran, where he received all of his basic elementary education, and where classes were all taught in Spanish. After his last year in basic education, the family moved back to the U.S., where he continued his studies and earned a BA in Spanish. When Omar was growing up, his parents spoke to him and his siblings in Spanish, and only his paternal grandmother spoke to him in Purepecha.

Omar is married to a woman whose parents are also from Cheran, whom he met in Mexico City during one of his trips there. Omar's wife is also a Purepecha heritage speaker and together they have a son, who was four years old at the time of the interview. Omar and his wife speak mainly in Spanish with each other and to their child.

Omar considers Spanish to be his first language and Purepecha a language that he has heard constantly but he does not speak. According to him, he still has some opportunities to listen to the language, for example when his relatives are conversing in Purepecha or, as Rosendo also mentioned, when he listens to Purepecha music. Because Omar's paternal grandmother had a higher proficiency in Purepecha than Spanish, she communicated with him mainly in Purepecha. On this occasion, even though Omar was able to understand most of the things she said to him, he was not able to reply to her. This motivated Omar to learn some Purepecha phrases, especially the phrases his grandmother used when sharing food at the table. Thus Omar has an emotional and familial connection to Purepecha, a connection that links him with his late grandmother.

During our conversation Omar shared several examples of Purepecha phrases he knows and the different contexts in which he sometimes makes use of them; in some cases he provided translations or gave approximate explanations of what these phrases meant. In other cases, he was unsure of their exact meaning in Spanish. Through these examples Omar also illustrated how he sometimes infuses his Spanish speech with Purepecha when speaking to his cousins back in Cheran.

According to Omar, the people who were fluent Purepecha speakers when he lived in Cheran were mostly his grandmother's age, which confirms Rosendo's own assessment on the linguistic status of Purepecha there. As an example, Omar mentioned that his older relatives used to rely on Purepecha to survive in their everyday lives: "On my father's side of the family, everyone is a merchant, so they would go to different Purepecha towns, and in all the towns... [...] sales were made in Purepecha." Through this example, Omar also suggests that Purepecha was once valued by a previous generation in his family for its use during business transactions at a time when Purepecha was more prevalent in Cheran. Hence Purepecha might not be currently necessary, as Spanish has become the main language there. Omar's father, Rosendo, is now a vendor, following his family business tradition; however, the main language he uses for commercial transactions is now English. Omar, nevertheless, has witnessed his father speaking Purepecha with his brother at their business, whenever they want to privately discuss a price without their client finding out about their negotiation; in such instances Purepecha acquires a different value, as a language used to discuss private matters.

For Omar, Purepecha is both a language linked to his family background as well as a rediscovered part of his identity. He does not feel he has been losing the Purepecha

he already knows; on the contrary, he has been increasingly learning new words, ever since he became more interested in his Purepecha heritage. Like Ileri, Omar became more interested in his heritage during his university studies. At that time he realized the importance of the Purepecha in Mexico's history, and that the Purepecha fought against the Aztecs as well as the importance of all Pre-Hispanic cultures for Mexico's configuration. Omar feels he has learned to appreciate much more his Purepecha heritage since he left Cheran when he was twelve. He is currently a Spanish teacher and coach at a high school in Los Angeles; when we last spoke, he was continuing his education and pursuing a Masters degree in an education related field. His ultimate goal is to become a high school principal in Los Angeles.

5.4.3 Justino

Justino currently lives in the East Los Angeles area. He was born and raised in San Felipe de los Herreros, Michoacan and immigrated to the U.S. when he was twenty-one years old. He married a Mexican woman of mestizo descent, whom he met in the U.S. Justino's wife is not from a Purepecha town but from a town in the Mexican state of Jalisco, where there is mixed heritage. Together they have three children, who were born and raised in the U.S. Since Justino's wife does not speak Purepecha, the main language of communication between him and his wife is Spanish. He also uses Spanish with his children, although, according to him, they are more proficient in English, and this is the language they use to reply to him.

With regards to his Purepecha proficiency, Justino says he is able to understand it but he does not have anyone with whom he can practice it in Los Angeles, thus suggesting that his proficiency is decreasing for this reason:

“I understand Purepecha, I understand it but I can speak only a little of it [...] Since I came to this country [U.S.], I have stopped practicing it because there is no person that speaks the same dialect here (Purepecha language)... It is only recorded in my mind, so when I get to go to Mexico, well there... [I will practice] with the people who still speak it...”

Given that Justino does not have any direct connections with other Purepecha speakers in the U.S., he feels that Purepecha is now mainly a language in his mind, and he looks forward to the time when he will be able to practice it with people in his hometown in the future. It is not clear whether Justino is able to go back freely to his hometown or whether he might have an undocumented status. Either way, this disconnection from his hometown and from other fluent Purepecha speakers in Los Angeles has prevented him from using his Purepecha.

Justino’s parents spoke Purepecha and Spanish and they spoke to him in these two languages when he was growing up. However, Justino mainly acquired a listening comprehension competence in Purepecha and in contrast to his native proficiency in Spanish. Justino pointed out that when he was young he was able to understand what his parents asked of him in Purepecha: “If my parents asked me to do something in Tarascan (Purepecha), I knew what they meant, but now I cannot have a conversation.” Justino wishes he had learned more Purepecha from his parents because he wanted to pursue a career as a teacher in his hometown. However, in order to obtain this position, Justino needed to pass a Purepecha fluency test, which he failed, despite his efforts to prepare by practicing with some of his older relatives.

Justino also commented on how a generalized decrease in Purepecha fluency occurred among the people his age in his hometown. Similar to Rosendo's account, Justino stated that: “[people] from my generation started losing [the language]. Parents did speak it. Around fifty percent [of the people] spoke it. But their children did not... little by little they stopped speaking it”. He suggests that a probable reason for this decrease could have been that people his age had to leave their hometown in order to pursue their secondary studies, where people were mostly Spanish speakers. For this reason they gave priority to speaking Spanish, as this was the necessary language to succeed in school, a recurring situation for several Purepecha heritage speakers.

In Los Angeles, although Justino is in touch with other people from Michoacan, whom he met through his work, he and his co-workers rarely engage in Purepecha conversations, since most of them have low to zero proficiency in the language. As pointed out above, Justino is not connected to Purepecha speakers with higher proficiencies in Los Angeles either, and he was unaware of the existence of the Purepecha festival held here each year, or of the existence of other Purepecha communities settled in different parts of the U.S.

5.4.4 Humberto

Humberto came to the U.S. when he was 24 years old, and he was born in the Purepecha town of Cuanajo. His linguistic biography is a bit different than that of the previous three male interviewees and has been in part determined by his family's early migration to Michoacan's capital, Morelia. Humberto and his family migrated to Morelia when he was only four years old. There, virtually all conversational interactions are done in Spanish. Humberto received all of his education in Morelia and even finished a couple of years of

college Law studies. When he was a child, some of his neighbors were Purepecha but he never conversed with them in this language. Like all previous interviewees, all of Humberto's education in Mexico was in Spanish and he has interacted mostly with Spanish speakers during most of his lifetime. He thus describes himself as mainly a monolingual Spanish speaker. He also recalls few occasions in which other family members used Purepecha to address him; he does not remember his father speaking to him in Purepecha, or his mother or grandparents. Nevertheless, Humberto is aware of his Purepecha heritage and he stated that he knows at least two words in Purepecha, the word to express 'hurry up' and the Purepecha word for 'tortilla', which at the moment of the interview he had a hard time retrieving. He does not recall his parents speaking Purepecha among themselves when he was a child either, and he provided contradictory information with regards to his mother's knowledge of the language. He is however, positive that his father was fluent in Purepecha.

All of his grandparents passed away before he could meet them, except for his paternal grandfather, who would occasionally visit them in Morelia. However, their conversations were mainly in Spanish. He did not recall any occasions in which Purepecha words were used at home while he was growing up, and only his brother acquired a higher listening Purepecha comprehension than the rest, and has even named one of his daughters with a Purepecha name. The few opportunities that Humberto had to witness others conversing in Purepecha occurred at large family gatherings, where conversations in Purepecha would take place. However, according to Humberto, he was never curious or interested in learning the language, or in finding out more about his heritage. Since Humberto sometimes had a hard time retrieving memories about

Purepecha usage in his family, we met several times for interviews. When I asked him for the possible reasons behind Purepecha language loss in his family, he stated that his mother probably just did not like speaking Purepecha, but that his parents never overtly told him and his siblings which language to learn. Nevertheless, he also commented that one of his sisters felt uncomfortable acknowledging in front of her friends that she had Purepecha heritage, because some of her friends sometimes made racialized jokes about people they saw on the street wearing traditional Purepecha clothing. Humberto provided other examples in which a family member, who was married to a non-Purepecha woman, was constantly harassed, racialized and called an Indio by his in-law relatives. Even though Humberto did not specifically emphasize the fear of racialization and discrimination as factors that could have played a role in Purepecha language loss within his family, these examples suggest that events like these could have impacted the linguistic choices that Humberto's parents made regarding teaching Purepecha to their children.

Because Humberto had been curious about a Purepecha language textbook that I mentioned during a conversation, on our last interview, I showed this textbook to him. When we finished conversing he jokingly pointed out that I was now “making him want to learn it.” And added “I think that now that I look at it. Learning Purepecha would be like learning Chinese to me. My mother is going to say “Y ahora qué? (Now what?)” However, despite some attempts to provide a copy of this book to him, he still does not have it in his hands.

5.5 Summary of responses

Table 2 provides a comparative overview all four male interviewees' multilingual experiences with Purepecha, Spanish and English, including their self-assessments.

Summary Table

Male Purepecha Heritage Speakers Table 2

	Rosendo	Omar	Justino	Humberto
Place of birth	Cheran	Los Angeles, CA	San Felipe de los Herreros	Cuanajo
Age	55	31	45	49
Age arrived at U.S.	20	Was born in the U.S. Went to Cheran when he was 2 Returned to the U.S. at 12	24	24
Profession	Business owner/Salesman	Spanish teacher	Construction worker	Construction worker
Spanish	Native	Native	Native	Native
Purepecha	Around 60% mastery	Phrases, common for pragmatical purposes	High comprehension, low speaking proficiency	Two words
English	Around 60% mastery	High proficiency	Pragmatic competence	Pragmatic competence
Spanish usage context	With his family, other Mexicans or Paisanos, other Hispanics	With his wife and son, siblings but mainly with his brother.	Wife and children, immediate family, co-workers	His immediate family, wife and children, co-workers
Purepecha usage context	With other Purepecha speakers.	Uses some phrases with grandmother or his aunts and uncles.	When in his hometown	No one
English usage context	With some clients, at the gym, with friends who speak English	At work, with friends and sister.	At work and with other English speakers in the U.S.	At work and with other English speakers in the U.S.

Of the four male interviewees, Rosendo and Justino have the highest Purepecha proficiency; they both had similar experiences growing up in their hometowns and witnessed a generalized shift to Spanish among the people of their generation. However, while Rosendo is married to a woman also of Purepecha descent and is heavily involved in planning Purepecha Michoacano festivals in Los Angeles, Justino is married to a non-Purepecha Mexican woman and does not have any ties with a broader Purepecha community in the U.S.

Rosendo's son, Omar, has acquired some Purepecha proficiency and even though he was not fully aware of his Purepecha heritage, he is now more aware of his identity and has made some efforts to learn a bit more Purepecha. Humberto, on the other hand, did not learn any Purepecha at home; he and his family left his hometown when he was 2 years old, and even though he heard occasionally some of his relatives speaking Purepecha at family gatherings, he was never curious or interested in learning the language.

Because Rosendo, Justino and Humberto all received their education in Mexico in Spanish, and their parents spoke to them in this language, Spanish is the language in which they have their highest proficiency. Omar on the other hand, received his basic education in Mexico, in Spanish, and continued his postsecondary studies in the U.S. He therefore considers himself fully proficient both in Spanish and English.

The linguistic choices made within male interviewees' families also reveal the linguistic hierarchization that positions Purepecha at a lower level than Spanish and English: Spanish is associated with having mixed heritage in Mexico, and therefore with not being indigenous and the negative traits ascribed to indigenous people, and Spanish

and English have been valued for the economic mobility that speaking these languages represents. In this linguistic hierarchization, again ‘shame’ is a sentiment that has been pointed out in relation to speaking Purepecha or having Purepecha heritage, sometimes as a result of racialization by others. Additionally, Spanish is also placed at a higher hierarchical level: as it is the main language used at schools in Mexico in post-secondary education, it is also the language used in all institutions outside of the Purepecha region.

At a more intimate level, each male interviewee also allocated individual linguistic symbolic meanings to Purepecha. For Rosendo, Purepecha is a language very much linked to his Purepecha identity; he actively participates in disseminating the Purepecha culture through the annual Purepecha Michoacano festivals that he organizes. For Omar, Purepecha has also an emotional value that he associates with his late grandmother; he also appreciates the value that Purepecha had when his family used it to make commercial transactions with their clients in a previous generation, and as a language his father and uncle use occasionally to speak privately at work. Justino saw in Purepecha a potential economic value when he wanted to become an elementary school teacher, but he ceased to increase his proficiency when he realized this was not possible. Finally, Humberto seemed to have a hard time assigning any personal value to Purepecha and he was oftentimes surprised to realize that he did not know much about the usages of Purepecha within his own family.

Even though all male interviewees had low to zero Purepecha proficiency, some resorted to a number of strategies to learn Purepecha. For example, Rosendo and his wife listen to an online Purepecha radio station and take it as an opportunity to evaluate their comprehension; Omar memorized some of the courtesy phrases his grandmother used at

the dinner table, and viewed them as phrases he would be able to use continuously with others in the community; Justino turned to his older relatives for help in order to acquire a higher proficiency and in preparation for his Purepecha exam; finally Humberto, who was never curious about learning Purepecha, mentioned he was becoming interested in learning it after our series of interviews, but it is hard to say whether this interest will continue.

5.6 Conclusion

It is clear that a linguistic hierarchization in favor of Spanish occurred in the majority of interviewees' families, motivated by the need for economic mobility, or to obtain a higher education in Mexico; as well as a means to eliminate the racialization and stigmatization that indigenous language speakers are subjected to. In relation to this, 'shame' was a common reason mentioned among interviewees for language shift to Spanish, although only one interviewee, Rosendo, recognized feeling ashamed of his Purepecha heritage at one point in his life; other interviewees, such as, Ileri, speculated about their relatives possibly feeling ashamed of speaking Purepecha around other non-Purepecha Mexicans. Some interviewees, like Flor and Humberto, were unable to provide information about the possible reasons behind Purepecha language loss in their families and they themselves were unsure about the reasons for their lack of interest in learning the language when they were young.

Two interviewees, Omar and Ileri, became interested in their Purepecha heritage during their high school/middle school years in the U.S. when searching for their heritage and identity, and realized they were not from Aztec or Mexica descent. After this, Omar acquired a heightened awareness of his Purepecha heritage, while Ileri became an

indigenous rights activist as well as she becoming involved in researching the Purepecha community.

Only one interviewee, Jessica, expressed an interest in learning the language as a child and she managed to acquire a high proficiency in Purepecha. Out of the seven interviewees, Jessica is the one with the highest Purepecha proficiency.

In the U.S. the majority of the interviewees, with the exception of Humberto and Ileri, mentioned that they continue to be in contact with the Purepecha language through Purepecha music recorded on CDs or by listening to online Purepecha radio stations.

Table 3 below illustrates the language that interviewees' parents used to communicate with them and the dynamics of Purepecha language use and loss within the family.

Finally, second generation Purepecha in the U.S., Jessica and Ileri, as well as 1.5 generation Purepecha, Omar, received their education in the U.S., and English and Spanish are their strongest languages.

Since Purepecha is mainly an oral language, and there is little literacy among the population, most interviewees are incidental language learners, as is common for heritage speakers of other languages, in that Purepecha acquisition was not through direct instruction. Given that for most, Purepecha was not a language spoken at home, opportunities to learn Purepecha incidentally were low.

Table 3

	Jessica	Ileri	Flor	Rosendo	Omar	Juvenal	Humberto
Languages spoken by interviewees' parents	Purepecha and Spanish	Spanish	Purepecha and Spanish	Purepecha and Spanish	Purepecha heritage speaker and Spanish	Purepecha and Spanish	Purepecha heritage speakers and Spanish
Language parents spoke to interviewee	Purepecha and Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Purepecha and Spanish	Spanish	Purepecha and Spanish	Spanish
Language used to reply or speak to parents by interviewee	Purepecha and Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish and Purepecha	Spanish
Language used by interviewee to speak to own children	NA	NA	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	NA
Reasons behind language loss in the family	NA	Grandfather's fear of being stigmatized. Shame	"Unknown" Purepecha was simply being lost	'Shame of being Purepecha.	"Unknown"	Leaving hometown to study	"Unknown" Leaving hometown at an early age. Shame.

CHAPTER 6

LINGUISTIC BIOGRAPHIES: PUREPECHA PROFICIENCIES, USAGES AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES OF PUREPECHA IN CHICAGO.

6.1 Introduction. A community of Purepecha (Heritage) speakers in suburban Chicago, Illinois

I began making contact with this Purepecha community settled in the outskirts of Chicago during a trip there for the National Heritage Language Institute in June 2013. A colleague of mine, who was living there, had mentioned that one of his family members, who taught at a local school, had some students of Purepecha origin. On that same trip and subsequent ones, as pointed out above, I managed to interview seven Purepecha (heritage) speakers.

Although the U.S. Census 2010 reports that there are 111 individuals self-identified as Purepecha in Chicago City, there were no Purepecha registered in Blue Island, Chicago, in this report. Since in order to check this option, one must know in advance of its existence, it is possible that not all individuals of Purepecha heritage were aware of this self-identification option. Hence the number of Purepecha in both locations, Los Angeles and Chicago, could be greater.

According to my interviewees, members of the Cheranastico Purepecha community have been immigrating to this Chicago area since the 1990s; most of them are related either directly or indirectly through family members. The Cheranastico community in Chicago has created a close-knit network, in which people rely on and support each other. This arrangement also allows them to keep alive some Catholic Purepecha religious traditions, sometimes with the support of their local Catholic Church. In their ongoing interaction, members of this community use Purepecha in their everyday

lives: when communicating with neighbors or relatives who speak Purepecha, as well as within their household. Nonetheless, the younger members of this community, oftentimes the U.S. born generations, learn little to no Purepecha, favoring instead both Spanish and English. Most interviewees live in trailer park neighborhoods and in close vicinity to one another, which also allows for this everyday close interaction.

The opportunity to interview members of this close-knit Purepecha community in the U.S. was valuable in that it allowed me to gain insights into the usage of Purepecha in members' daily lives, and it afforded me a glimpse into the dynamics of Purepecha language maintenance within a Purepecha community in the U.S. Community members in Chicago contrasted sharply with my interviewees in Los Angeles, who were more proficient in Spanish and or English than Purepecha, and who had either zero or little everyday Purepecha interaction with other fluent Purepecha speakers.

In Chicago I interviewed four males and three females, all with high Purepecha proficiencies. All of them were either born or raised in Cheranastico, and while growing up there they maintained everyday interactions with other Purepecha speakers; their parents also spoke to them in Purepecha or in both Purepecha and Spanish and for this reason, some of them learned these two languages at home at the same time. In Cheranastico there is still a high Purepecha language maintenance among the population; in fact, several of my interviewees pointed out that Cheranastico is known for having “good” Purepecha speakers, since a female representative of this town commonly wins a yearly Purepecha speech contest called ‘Purepecha flower’.

The interviewees of this Purepecha community had varying proficiencies in the language; while some had Purepecha as their first language, others had partial

acquisition, still others learned it at a later stage in life, when migrating back to the community during their childhood. Nonetheless, even some interviewees that considered Purepecha to be their first language believed that their Purepecha proficiencies were not as good as those of their elders; and those who mentioned having Purepecha as their first language also considered that they were not fully proficient in Spanish. This self-perception contrasted with the full apparent native mastery of Spanish demonstrated during our interviews, which were conducted completely in Spanish and during our interview they had few if any problems using the language.

6.2 Female interviewees in Chicago

I interviewed three female Purepecha (heritage) speakers in Chicago: Monica, Elodia and Soledad. All three are from the same Purepecha town, Cheranastico, and all three came to the U.S. when they were in their twenties and with at least one of their children already born. As pointed out above, these three interviewees keep close ties to each other, and rely on one another to perform their everyday life activities, such as caring for each other's children, cooking or sewing together, or preparing for the religious Purepecha celebrations that the Cheranastico community carries out in Chicago. Monica, Elodia and Soledad, went to school in Cheranastico, where classes were taught mainly in Spanish, and in fact, knew they each other back in their hometown. However, only Monica and Soledad learned the basics on how to read and write in Purepecha since a Purepecha class was offered at their school. Even though all three women were born and went to school in Cheranastico, their experiences with Purepecha and Spanish differed as to the extent that these languages were spoken within their families while growing up.

6.2.1 Monica

I met Monica during my first visit to Chicago, after making contact with her through my friend's sister. When we met she invited me to her home to help her prepare traditional Purepecha bread called *tekechos*. The bread we prepared was going to be used in a traditional Purepecha Saint John celebration, in which young women give animal shaped bread to young men. I was not able to attend the celebration, since I left the next day, but I was happy to be able to participate in such intimate pre-celebration activity.

Monica left Cheranastico and for the U.S. when she was twenty-three years old, with two of her daughters who were around four and three years old at the time. She came to this country to join her husband, Juan, another of my interviewees, who had arrived a couple of years earlier. She has now been in the U.S. for thirteen years and works at a local food stand in her neighborhood, preparing food. Her father was also born in Cheranastico and speaks both Purepecha and Spanish; however, Purepecha is his first language. Monica's mother was born in Cheran; Spanish is her dominant language and she is a Purepecha heritage speaker. As we can recall, Cheran is a town currently known for having people with very low Purepecha proficiency, as pointed out by Rosendo, Flor and Omar in the previous chapter. Given that Monica's mother had a higher proficiency in Spanish and her father had a higher proficiency in Purepecha, they learned these languages from each other. Monica's parents spoke to their children in their dominant language, her father in Purepecha and her mother in Spanish. Thus, Monica feels that she acquired Purepecha and Spanish simultaneously. In this respect there was apparently no hierarchical dissymmetry established between Purepecha and Spanish within her household. However, this seems to have changed, given that currently when Monica and her parents

speak over the phone, they do so mainly in Spanish; the initial seemingly balanced use of Purepecha and Spanish appears to have shifted to give way to a predominant use of Spanish. However, Monica did not provide more information about why this switch might have occurred.

Monica does speak Purepecha when she communicates with other relatives in Cheranastico over the phone; specifically, with her grandmother, her aunts, and her mother-in-law. With her siblings she speaks mainly in Spanish, and this is also the language that she and her husband use to communicate with each other as well as with their children. Occasionally she and her husband use Purepecha to speak confidentially in their children's presence, which suggests that their children's Purepecha comprehension levels are fairly low.

In Cheranastico, Monica finished two years of elementary education. Her classes were in both Purepecha and Spanish and because of this, she acquired some Purepecha literacy. However, Monica states that since she did not finish her elementary education there, she was unable to fully acquire Purepecha literacy, and thus she does not make much use of this ability.

As the years have passed in the U.S. Monica says that her Purepecha fluency has diminished. She sometimes finds herself asking others how to say certain words in Purepecha and for this reason Monica feels that she is not a completely fluent Purepecha speaker, despite using Purepecha in her everyday life.

Monica reports that she is proud of her Purepecha heritage and has never felt ashamed of speaking Purepecha in front of other people. Some of her co-workers that have heard her speaking Purepecha with other co-workers, have asked her about the

language she is speaking with curiosity; however, others have made fun of her. A male co-worker once told Monica in a mocking way that that the language she was speaking was an “Indian thing” racializing her and making Monica feel bad. Nevertheless, even though Monica felt bad because of this man’s remarks, she comforted herself by reflecting on the fact that she knew more languages than him, who in contrast spoke only Spanish.

This racialization and stigmatization experience resembles the descriptions that some interviewees in Los Angeles suggested as probable reasons behind language loss within their families; even though Monica did not specifically mention experiences such as these as the reason she has chosen to speak mainly in Spanish with her children, the fear of her children being targeted and discriminated could be one of them.

6.2.2 Elodia

Monica introduced me to Elodia, her sister-in-law, with whom she has a close relation. Like Monica, Elodia was also born and raised in Cheranastico, and she came to the U.S. when she was around twenty-six years old. She has four children, two of them born in Cheranastico and two of them in the U.S. Elodia’s first language is Purepecha; this was the language that Elodia’s parents used to communicate with her while growing up, and it is still the language they use to communicate over the phone today. Elodia’s parents are mainly Purepecha speakers, and she explained that although her parents are able to understand Spanish, they prefer to converse with her in Purepecha, which suggests that her parents’ Spanish proficiency could be low.

Elodia went to school in Cheranastico and finished the third grade; however, in contrast to Monica’s experience her classes were all in Spanish, signifying that Purepecha

classes had not been introduced at school when she was attending. Although Elodia's parents spoke mainly in Purepecha at home, while her teachers spoke to her in Spanish at school, where she learned this language; she became more fluent once she started leaving her hometown to work in the farm fields in Sinaloa, Mexico. In Sinaloa Elodia felt obliged to use Spanish because some of her co-workers did not speak Purepecha. Spanish was also a necessary language when she wanted to buy goods at the local stores around the farm field. So Elodia felt the need to learn Spanish in order to communicate with people outside her hometown.

In the U.S. Elodia is a stay at home grandmother, looking after her grandchildren and preparing meals for the rest of the family. While she still speaks Purepecha with her husband, she speaks mainly Spanish with her children and grandchildren.

Unlike Monica Elodia did not learn how to read and write in Purepecha, because her classes were all in Spanish. As Flor pointed out in the previous chapter, her teachers were from other more Hispanicized Purepecha towns, like Paracho and Cheran. Since Elodia's first language was Purepecha, it was oftentimes hard for her to understand what her teachers were saying. She does not recall her teachers ever explaining things for her in Purepecha and she pointed out that it was also common for them to hit children when they did not understand something. Because of this, Elodia did not like going to school and she thinks this is also a contributing factor to the high drop-out rate in Cheranastico. Another interviewee, Soledad, mentioned a similar situation in her classrooms when she was a child; however this did not hinder her motivation to go to school. It is unclear, how prevalent this practice was among teachers in Cheranastico.

As pointed out above, Elodia has four children, two born in Cheranastico, to whom she spoke mainly in Purepecha when they were young, and two born in the U.S., to whom Elodia spoke mainly in Spanish. When Elodia and her family migrated to the U.S., she was afraid to leave her children at school because her two older children, who were five and eight years old at the time, did not know either Spanish or English. After their first three months at school Elodia noticed that her children were afraid of going, just like she was when she was a child. Because of this, she and her husband were planning on taking their children back to Cheranastico with their family; however, after asking their children repeatedly whether they wanted to stay or leave, they eventually decided to try going to school in order to stay with their parents in the U.S. After this experience with their older children, Elodia and her husband resolved to speak mainly in Spanish to their two younger ones, and because of this they did not learn much Purepecha as their older siblings. Elodia and her husband chose to speak Spanish to their children because they wanted them to be able to interact with their peers with confidence and they thought that Spanish and English were important to achieve this; as for Purepecha, they considered that their children could learn it on their own later in life.

Like Monica, Elodia also stated that she has never felt ashamed of speaking Purepecha in front of non-Purepecha speakers. However, she also shared a story about when she and her family first arrived to the U.S., and shared housing with another family from Puebla, Mexico, who were Spanish speakers. During those times, Elodia and her family did not interact much with the other family in their home, since Elodia's children did not speak or understand Spanish very well. Elodia did not explain why this would be

a problem; however, it can be inferred that she wanted to protect her children from feeling uncomfortable or being targeted by the other family's children.

Finally, even though Elodia's first language is Purepecha, she feels like her Purepecha is different from that of her ancestors. When Elodia lived in Cheranastico, she remembers occasions in where she did not understand the Purepecha words or phrases that elders or older relatives used, among them names of food items such as 'onion' or 'chile' as well as some kitchen utensils. The words that Elodia uses instead for these items are mainly Spanish words lexicalized into Purepecha. However, regardless of this observation, Elodia considers herself a 100% Purepecha speaker.

6.2.3 Soledad

Soledad was also born and raised in Cheranastico, Michoacan and lived there until she was twenty-six years old. She then immigrated to the U.S. with her first-born child, who was five years old at the time. She is Elodia's neighbor and friend, and she is also friends with Monica. Soledad has been in the U.S. for twelve years and is a stay-at-home mother, however, she occasionally also works at a small T-shirt factory.

In a similar way to Elodia's background, Soledad's parents were also born in Cheranastico and speak Purepecha as their first language. Purepecha was also the main language that they used to speak to Soledad while she was growing up, and thus this was also Soledad's first language. Soledad still uses Purepecha during conversations with her parents when she calls them from the U.S., as well as with her siblings.

Soledad also went to school in Cheranastico and, in contrast to Monica and Elodia, she finished the sixth grade. Like Monica, Soledad also knows how to read and write in Purepecha and because she finished her primary education, she has a higher

literacy than Monica, although Soledad feels it is a bit hard for her to read Purepecha. During her primary education her classes were mainly in Spanish, but she had a one-hour daily class devoted to developing Purepecha literacy skills. In her Purepecha classes, Soledad not only learned how to read and write in Purepecha, but also to recite in this language; this was one of Soledad's favorite activities, and because she took this class Soledad is able to write down the lyrics to Purepecha songs, and Purepecha recipes, among other things.

In a similar way to Elodia, Soledad learned Spanish when she was in primary school in Cheranastico. However, although her first language was Purepecha, like Elodia, she was never placed in a Spanish as a second language class. From her account and those of other interviewees it can be inferred that classes there were simply Spanish immersion classes; students had few opportunities to practice learning Spanish as a second language in a safe classroom environment, thus heightening the imposition of Spanish. Paradoxically, for this reason, Soledad acquired a much higher literacy in Spanish in contrast to her Purepecha literacy skills.

In the U.S., Soledad speaks Purepecha with her husband, siblings that are in the U.S. and friends and neighbors that speak Purepecha, and maintains a Purepecha network that includes Elodia and Monica. She also occasionally uses Purepecha with her children. However, Soledad's children are more proficient in English, and for this reason they oftentimes reply to her in this language, occasionally in Spanish and rarely in Purepecha. Soledad feels that it is necessary for her children to have a firm grasp of Spanish and English in order to succeed in school, and even though she would like her children to learn Purepecha so that they can communicate with their grandparents, her wish for them

to succeed in school is higher. Soledad's own school experience while growing up parallels that of her children who attend a school where classes are taught in a language different than the one spoken at home. In contrast, however, Soledad's children do not speak the language of their parents and for this reason, negotiating between Purepecha, Spanish and English at home is also an everyday task.

Soledad says that she speaks 100% Purepecha, just as Elodia evaluated her own proficiency. Interestingly, Soledad was also the only interviewee that referred to her hometown as Cheranastikuri and not Cheranastico, the Hispanicized form. Like Elodia and Monica, Soledad says she has also never felt uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in front of other people, and she thinks that people who do not speak Purepecha cannot know what language she is speaking, or cannot understand what she is saying, so they cannot judge her. Finally, I should also point out that Soledad has a fair complexion, and so does her husband, which might have shielded her from fully experiencing the racialization that other interviewees have encountered.

6.3 Summary of responses.

In contrast to interviewees from Los Angeles, all three female interviewees in Chicago have high or full Purepecha proficiencies, and only Monica does not consider herself to be fully proficient, since she grew up in a Purepecha-Spanish bilingual home. Soledad and Elodia grew up in households where Purepecha was the main language spoken; both their parents were Purepecha dominant speakers and had little Spanish fluency, and thus Soledad and Elodia learned Purepecha as their first language.

In table 4 below we can further compare and contrast these three female interviewees' multilingual experience and language use at home while growing up, at school and currently within their household.

Table 4

	Monica	Soledad	Elodia
Place of birth	Cheranastico	Cheranastico	Cheranastico
Age	36	38	41
Age arrived at U.S.	23	26	26
Profession	Homemaker and part time worker at a food stand.	Homemaker and occasional worker at a T-shirt factory	Homemaker
Purepecha	High proficiency	First language	100% Self-assessment
Spanish	High proficiency	High proficiency (Self Assessment 50%)	High proficiency (Self Assessment >50%)
English	Some words and phrases	Some words and phrases	Some words
Purepecha usage context	With her aunts, grandfather, mother-in-law. With her husband, neighbors and relatives in the U.S.	With her husband, friends in the U.S who speak Purepecha, parents and mother-in-law, sometimes with her children	With her husband, friends in the U.S. who speak Purepecha and relatives.
Spanish usage context	With her parents, husband, siblings, children.	With her children, sometimes with husband	With her children, grandchildren
English usage context	A little at work	At a restaurant, when people have asked her for directions	NA

All three interviewees attended school where Spanish was the main language in what seemed to be Spanish immersion programs, with no Spanish as a second language courses offered for students not fluent in this language.

Only Monica and Soledad received classes in Purepecha at their school and there they learned how to read and write it; however, only Soledad acquired a high level of Purepecha literacy. Since Elodia's courses were all mainly in Spanish she was not offered this possibility at school.

With regards to their Spanish proficiencies, Soledad and Elodia self-assessed their Spanish around 50%, despite having been schooled in this language. Our interview conducted entirely in Spanish revealed few to no problems. As for English, all three interviewees mentioned knowing only a few words or phrases in this language and they were unsure about how to self assess their fluencies.

Monica, Elodia and Soledad have chosen to speak to their children mainly in Spanish. Both Soledad and Elodia stressed that this language will help their children succeed at school, since their children's schools in the U.S. offer mainly Spanish and English bilingual programs. Elodia was also concerned about her children's interactions with other children and thought that teaching them Spanish would give them an advantage.

As for Purepecha, since this is the main language the three women use to communicate with other members of the Purepecha community in Chicago, as well as with their parents, siblings or other family members in Mexico, it is a means by which Purepecha community cohesiveness is maintained abroad, and Purepecha Cheranastico

identity is exerted; these are privileges that the younger non-Purepecha speaking generation may not have access to.

All three interviewees recounted personal experiences with racialization. Monica shared stories in which a non-Purepecha speaker racialized her for speaking Purepecha, something that might have contributed to her decision to speak mainly Spanish to her children. While Soledad and Elodia stated that they have never felt uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in front of other non-Purepecha speakers, Elodia did mention avoiding interaction with another Mexican family with whom she and her family had shared a home in the past, because her children did not speak Spanish. This suggests that she might have wanted to protect them from being targeted and discriminated for not speaking Spanish.

Finally, as pointed out above, all three interviewees came to the U.S. after at least one of their children had already been born, in order to catch up with their husbands who were already in the U.S. In the U.S. they maintain their Purepecha identity through the use of Purepecha with other members of the community that have also immigrated, as well as through the celebration of Catholic Purepecha festivities, the use of Purepecha clothing in special celebrations, and through Purepecha music that they listen to at home.

6.4 Male interviewees in suburban Chicago, Illinois

I interviewed four male Purepecha (heritage) speakers: Hilario, Juan, Refugio, and Jesus. All four interviewees were either born or raised in Cheranastico and are all married to women from that town. Hilario is the oldest of this group, and the one that has the strongest and most outspoken attitudes in favor of conserving the Purepecha language; he is also the brother of Elodia and Juan, who is the youngest sibling. Juan is

married to one of the female interviewees, Monica, and Jesus is married to Soledad. As previously noted, all interviewees live close to each other, within less than a mile distance, and they keep in touch constantly. These male interviewees sometimes play Purepecha music together as a band at family events such as birthdays and family gatherings; some of them also mentioned having Purepecha co-workers, which indicates that their ties to the Purepecha community extends to the work place.

Hilario and Juan, are siblings, whose parents were mainly Purepecha speakers; they acquired Purepecha as their first language and this was the main language used within their household while they were growing up. On the other hand Jesus's parents and Refugio's were Purepecha-Spanish bilinguals; however, while Jesus's parents used these two languages at home and to communicate with him, Refugio's parents used mainly Spanish. Finally, in contrast to the female interviewees' experience at school, none of the male interviewees mentioned having a class in Purepecha literacy, although some mentioned it being optional. Thus, for most interviewees, both male and female, Spanish was the main language used at school, which further corroborates the linguistic imposition of this language in the Purepecha community and the institutionalized linguistic hierarchization that places Spanish at a higher level than Purepecha.

6.4.1 Hilario

Hilario who was born and raised in Cheranastico, started working on and off in the U.S. from the time he was around twenty-two years old. According to him, the reason he first sought work abroad was because one of his children got sick when he was young, and Hilario went into debt in order to pay for his son's medicine. In order to pay this debt, Hilario periodically worked in the U.S. for a year and then went back to

Cheranastico for a couple of months, and then back to the U.S. again, during several years. However, the last time he entered this country he wandered through the desert for almost a month, and for this reason he has not gone back to his hometown in eight years, nor has he seen his wife who is back in Cheranastico, all of which suggests that he has an undocumented status in the U.S.

As mentioned above, Hilario's both parents are both from Cheranastico and are Purepecha dominant speakers. Purepecha is also Hilario's first language. He did not begin learning Spanish until he started school, like his sister Elodia and friend Soledad. Even though Hilario's classes were all in Spanish and he finished the fifth grade, he feels that he did not learn much Spanish at school; however, he increased his proficiency when he started leaving his hometown to work to other parts of Mexico, when he was twelve years old. Hilario pointed out that when he was young, teachers did not much care whether students understood the lessons being taught in Spanish or not, and he considers that because of this students felt un-motivated to learn and oftentimes found themselves repeating a grade. Although he did not feel constrained to speak only Spanish in class, teachers reprimanded him during class more often when he spoke Purepecha than when he spoke Spanish. He attributes this to his teachers' goal to make students learn Spanish in order to continue their education outside of Cheranastico in Spanish dominant schools. Because he did not have a class in Purepecha, Hilario did not learn how to read and write in this language; nonetheless, he has learned on his own and oftentimes tries to practice when he composes Purepecha songs for the band that he is a member of. Hilario considers that since he does not know how to read and write Purepecha, his Purepecha proficiency is only 50%, suggesting that he takes his lack of literacy to reflect a lack of

Purepecha proficiency, an observation that none of the other interviewees made. Hilario also pointed out that his Purepecha is different from that of his elders in that he uses more Spanish words lexicalized into Purepecha, and also because his pronunciation is different, which further suggests that Hilario has also a more purist appreciation of Purepecha fluency than the other interviewees. In this sense, his self-assessment differs from that of his sister, Elodia; even though Elodia also said that her Purepecha differed from that of her elders, she evaluated herself as a 100% proficient Purepecha speaker; this suggests that Hilario's more purist approach may not be universally shared among the community. A purist approach with regards to an endangered language could hinder new generations from wanting to learn the language, as Makihara (2007) has noted in her research around Rapa Nui.

Hilario and his wife always spoke Purepecha to their five children; however, in addition to Purepecha Hilario also spoke to his children in Spanish. Hilario is very proud that his children are able to speak Purepecha and he was the only interviewee that shared this feeling about his children's proficiencies. Hilario's grandchildren, on the other hand, were born in the U.S but speak mainly Spanish; they recently moved back to Cheranastico and one of his granddaughters is now learning Purepecha at school. Hilario mentioned that his granddaughter is trying to learn it, despite it being hard for her at times. It thus seems that schools in Cheranastico have adopted new language policies since Hilario went to school there and he is happy that his granddaughter is now able to learn Purepecha at school¹⁷.

¹⁷ When Hilario went to school in Cheranastico there were only subtractive bilingual programs offered for Purepecha children, in order to promote language shift to Spanish.

Purepecha is of great value for Hilario and he would like to see it preserved; because of this he is surprised and also sad that his nephews and nieces in the U.S. do not speak it.

6.4.2 Juan

Juan is Hilario and Elodia's younger brother and is married to Monica, one of the female interviewees. He was born in Cheranastico and came to the U.S. when he was seventeen years old. He has now been in the U.S. for over seventeen years. While growing up in Cheranastico, his parents also spoke to him mainly in Purepecha, and this is Juan's first language. He stills speaks in Purepecha with his parents in Mexico when they talk over the phone.

Now that Juan is in the U.S. he speaks Purepecha with his brother and sister, and other relatives that also live in the U.S. Some of Juan's relatives are also his neighbors, or live in neighborhoods close by. Since one of his nephews is a co-worker, he oftentimes also speaks Purepecha with him at work. As for the language that Juan uses with his wife Monica during our conversation Juan made contradictory statements, mentioning Purepecha on one occasion and Spanish on another, as their main language. His wife Monica, however, stated that she communicates mainly in Spanish with him, except when they want to speak confidentially in their children's presence. As for his children, Juan speaks mainly in Spanish with them, as well as with his young nieces and nephews, suggesting either that the younger generation in his family is mainly proficient in Spanish, or that this is the language that Juan considers important for younger speakers.

As pointed out above, Juan's first language is Purepecha. He began learning Spanish when he was 12 or 13 years old, like his brother and sister Hilario and Elodia, he became more exposed to this language, when he started leaving his hometown for work. Juan finished the 8th grade, and during his primary education, most of his classes were both in Purepecha and Spanish; however, his teachers spoke to him mainly in Purepecha. Even though Juan had classes in Purepecha, he did not learn how to read and write in this language. This contrasts with the education received by his brother and sister, whose classes were mainly in Spanish, and with his wife's accounts regarding having Purepecha literacy as part of her Purepecha class.

Juan's oldest daughters, who are in their teenage years, oftentimes ask Juan to teach them Purepecha, but he says that when he tries to do so, his daughters usually do not understand him, suggesting that he might not know how to teach them Purepecha. When I asked Juan for why he did not speak to his daughters in Purepecha when they were young, he replied that it was simply something that he and his wife just let pass, but he did not elaborate on why this was so, and he feels that it is now too late for him to teach them.

Juan thinks that some people in the U.S. do not want to speak Purepecha because they are ashamed and afraid that non-Purepecha speakers might make fun of them. In contrast, Juan claims that he is not ashamed of speaking Purepecha because when people hear him speak it they are usually curious about the language; in fact, some people have told him that because he speaks Purepecha, Spanish and English he has three times the value. Conversely, in Mexico, Juan was afraid and ashamed of speaking Purepecha outside of Michoacan, mainly because he was afraid of people calling him an "Indio".

These experiences have led Juan to consider that people in the U.S. are more tolerant towards him speaking Purepecha in public and are more tolerant in general towards people speaking other languages, than people in Mexico, and he feels more comfortable speaking Purepecha in in public in the U.S., as opposed to other parts of Mexico outside the Purepecha Meseta in Michoacan.

Juan does not feel that he has been loosing his Purepecha proficiency since he has been in the U.S. He believes that since he was born Purepecha, he is never going to forget the Purepecha language that he learned as a child and he considers it a very important component of his Purepecha identity. Because he does not fear losing his Purepecha, Juan has tried to focus more on learning Spanish and English.

6.4.3 Refugio

Refugio's story is unique among my interviewees. He was born in Tlaquepaque, a small city outside of Guadalajara, in the sate of Jalisco, a neighboring state of Michoacan, where he lived with his parents until he was around eight or ten years old. Tlaquepaque is a Spanish-speaking city; and Refugio received the first part of his elementary education there. However, Refugio considers himself to be from Cheranastico, his parents' hometown.

Refugio's parents are fluent in both Purepecha and Spanish; however, Spanish was the main language used in his household, and because of this Refugio considers Spanish to be his first language. When Refugio was around ten years old, he and his family moved to Cheranastico, where people spoke mainly Purepecha, and this is where Refugio started learning his heritage language, motivated by his realization that he was unable to understand when people there spoke to him.

Refugio went to school in Cheran, the neighboring town to Cheranastico, where classes were all mainly in Spanish, even though some of the teachers were proficient in Purepecha. Thus he did not learn to speak Purepecha at school, or how to read or write in Purepecha either, although at his school, there were women volunteers who taught children how to read and write it if they were interested. Refugio, however, was not one of them.

Since Purepecha was not spoken at his home and since his classes in Cheranastico were mainly in Spanish, Refugio learned Purepecha from his friends and people he encountered around Cheranastico. During his experience learning Purepecha from more fluent speakers, Refugio oftentimes found that his friends would tease him by teaching him wrong words and phrases that had offensive meanings instead of the things he wanted to learn. He would become aware of his friends' intentions when he would go home and share with his mother the new things he had learned; she in turn was surprised about what other children were teaching her son. In light of this situation, Refugio's mother became more involved in his Purepecha learning process. However, despite Refugio's interest in learning Purepecha, the main language used at home within his family continued to be Spanish, while Purepecha was the language he used around town in Cheranastico or other neighboring Purepecha towns, establishing a somewhat familial diglossia practice. Refugio's grandparents, on the other hand, did not speak Spanish but were monolingual Purepecha speakers; because of this Refugio later practiced and spoke Purepecha with them.

Refugio is married to a woman also from Chearanastico, who is also a Spanish-Purepecha bilingual. In their home, Refugio and his wife speak both these languages, but

they speak mainly in Spanish to their two-year-old son, who according to Refugio reacts more when they speak to him in Spanish than Purepecha.

In Chicago Refugio also speaks Purepecha with some of his neighbors, friends and acquaintances from other Purepecha towns who live around that same area; at work he uses mainly either Spanish or English, as these are the languages most of his co-workers speak.

Refugio did not mention ever feeling ashamed of speaking Purepecha in public, but he did feel uncomfortable once, when he and other members of the Purepecha community speaking Purepecha at a restaurant where mainly white diners were eating, in Chicago. On that occasion a white man approached them and asked him what language they were speaking, and even though the man told them that he liked the language, he also pointed out that people at a separate table thought that they might be talking behind their backs or making fun of them. Because of this experience, Refugio is now cautious and tries to speak Spanish whenever non-Purepecha speakers are present. Refugio's decision not to speak Purepecha in public when non-Purepecha speakers are around has turned into a hyper-awareness out of concern that his words might be misunderstood.

6.4.4 Jesus

Jesus was born in Cheranastico and began coming back and forth to the U.S. for temporary work since he was twenty-one years old. He is now thirty-six and married to Soledad, one of the female interviewees. His paternal grandfather was from a Spanish-speaking town in Jalisco and was raised speaking Spanish. Jesus's grandmother was a Purepecha speaker from Michoacan, and this is where Jesus's paternal grandparents met; eventually they settled and raised their family in Jalisco, where Jesus's father was born.

Jesus's father spoke mainly Spanish, and some Purepecha that he learned from his mother. Because of this Jesus's father used both Purepecha and Spanish, to communicate with him. Jesus's mother on the other hand was born in Cheranastico and a speaker of Purepecha, and this was the language she spoke to Jesus; he thus became a Purepecha-Spanish bilingual.

Jesus received three years of elementary education in Cheranastico, where classes were all taught in Spanish, and according to him, none of his classes included Purepecha instruction. However, he jokingly pointed out that he did not go to school much and that he probably was not aware that courses in Purepecha were offered during other school years.

As pointed out above, Jesus is married to Soledad and together they have three children, one of whom was born in Cheranastico, while the other two were born in the U.S. According to Jesus he speaks both Purepecha and Spanish with his wife, and this is the language that he uses predominantly with his children. Nevertheless, his children usually reply to him in English and sometimes in Spanish.

I was able to witness one such exchange after we finished our interview, when Jesus's son asked him a question in English, and Jesus replied in Spanish.

Jesus says he has tried speaking to his children in Purepecha, but when he does they usually laugh at him because they do not understand what he is saying. Jesus used this example to illustrate how it has been hard for him to teach his children Purepecha. In this respect, his experience when speaking to his children in Purepecha is similar to Juan's.

Jesus says that because he grew up in a Purepecha-Spanish bilingual home, he feels that he is not fully proficient in Purepecha, and he self-assesses his proficiency in around 80-90%. Like Hilario, Jesus also stated that he is not fully proficient since he does not speak the Purepecha that his elders spoke; he also added that the language itself has changed. As other interviewees have also expressed, Jesus said that the main group of words that have been appropriated from Spanish into Purepecha are food items and numbers. With regards to the latter, Jesus pointed out that since he did not finish school, he was not able to learn the full Purepecha numeric system, suggesting that he could have if he had taken the Purepecha class. Although his knowledge of the numeric system is incomplete, Jesus has been teaching the few Purepecha numbers that he does know to his younger daughter.

6.5 Summary of responses

In table 5, below, we can see a comparative illustration of these interviewees' multilingual experiences at home while growing up, at school and currently within their households.

Table 5

	Hilario	Juan	Refugio	Jesus
Place of birth	Cheranastico	Cheranastico	Tlaquepaque	Cheranastico
Age	47	34	27	36
Age arrived at U.S.	22	17	14	21
Profession	Self-employed	Self-employed	NA	NA
Purepecha	High proficiency Self assessment 50%-80%	High proficiency	High proficiency Self assessment 50%	High proficiency Self assessment 80-90%

Spanish	High proficiency	High proficiency (Self Assessment 50%)	High proficiency	High proficiency 90%
English	Some words and phrases	Some words and phrases	60%	50%
Purepecha usage context	With his parents, siblings, relatives, children.	With his wife, parents and siblings.	With his wife, friends and relatives	With his wife and mother.
Spanish usage context	With his children some relatives and neighbors	With his children	With friends and neighbors, some co-workers	With his children and co-workers
English usage context	A little at work	NA	At work	Co-workers.

Of the four male interviewees, only the siblings Hilario and Juan grew up in a household where Purepecha was the main language spoken, and have Purepecha as their first language. Out of the two, only Hilario spoke to his children in Purepecha and thus they were able to learn Purepecha at a young age; however, it is not clear how much proficiency they were able to acquire. Although Purepecha was their first language, Hilario and Juan learned Spanish when they were between 12-13 years old, after they started leaving their hometown for work. This further indicates the need to learn Spanish in order to work outside the Purepecha community, and illustrates how learning this language has been a necessity for economic mobility among the Purepecha population and to a large extent a significant reason for language shift to Spanish in Mexico. Thus Spanish is valued for its use outside the Purepecha community, to acquire a job and to communicate with other co-workers in the U.S.

In contrast, in Refugio's household Spanish was the main language spoken, although his parents were Purepecha-Spanish bilinguals. Refugio only came to learn Purepecha from friends and acquaintances once he and his family moved to Cheranastico, when he was nine years old. Refugio's case also illustrates the possibility to learn

Purepecha at a later stage in life, since speaking Purepecha is necessary to communicate with people around town.

Finally, Jesus was raised in a household where both Spanish and Purepecha were spoken and grew up in a bilingual environment, which allowed him to learn both languages well; however, even though he grew up in a bilingual household, he speaks mainly in Spanish to his children.

Like the female interviewees, male interviewees use Purepecha in their everyday lives in the U.S. to communicate with relatives, friends and other Purepecha speakers here, which allows them to maintain cohesive ties with the community and maintain a Purepecha identity; by participating in community Purepecha celebrations, listening to Purepecha music as well as by playing Purepecha music.

All interviewees immigrated to the U.S. when they were in their teenage years or early twenties and all married women from Cheranastico and, with the exception of Hilario's, interviewees' wives also immigrated to the U.S.

As pointed out above, only Hilario spoke Purepecha to his children, while the other three interviewees spoke mainly in Spanish to their offspring. However, in contrast to the female interviewees, male interviewees did not share a reason as to why they decided to speak mainly in Spanish to their children; accordingly Juan merely pointed out that not speaking Purepecha to his children was something that he and his wife just let happen, implying that he did not give much thought to it.

Of the four interviewees only Juan shared an experience in which he felt racialized as a Purepecha speaker, which could have potentially contribute to his decision to speak mainly in Spanish to his offspring; in a similar way, Refugio shared an anecdote

in which he felt uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in front of non-Purepecha speakers, however, since his first language was Spanish and not Purepecha his reasons for speaking mainly in Spanish to his child might also simply be influenced by his own language acquisition at home.

6.6 Conclusion

The dynamics of Purepecha usage of interviewees in Chicago differs in many ways from that of interviewees in Los Angeles. Interviewees in Chicago rely on their Purepecha usage to maintain a cohesive community engagement with each other; it also reinforces their specific Cheranastico identity, as they have everyday interactions with other Purepecha speakers from their hometown and this is the main language they use to communicate. Their usage of Purepecha language is, however, confined to spaces where they feel safe from being targeted or racialized by Spanish or English dominant speakers, and some interviewees described switching to Spanish whenever dominant Spanish speakers were around, either for fear of being stigmatized or to prevent non-Purepecha speakers from feeling threatened by or left out of their conversations in Purepecha.

Most interviewees whose first language was Purepecha felt obliged to learn Spanish in order to work outside the Purepecha community in Mexico, having had initial exposure to this language at school via immersion classes and reinforcing it after they left their hometown. In the U.S., however, Spanish has also been a resource to communicate with other Spanish-speaking individuals whether at work or in the broader Latino community, as most have also co-workers and neighbors who are Spanish speakers. Thus, due to the potential utility that Spanish has for interviewees in the U.S., This has prompted most interviewees to speak Spanish to their children; however this reason alone

does not explain why most interviewees decided to use mainly Spanish and not both Spanish and Purepecha with them. Soledad and Elodia stated that they considered that speaking Spanish to their offspring would help them better at school in the U.S. and interact freely with Spanish speaking peers; because their children attend schools that offer Spanish-English bilingual programs where students are of a majority Latino background. The decision not to speak Purepecha to their children could have its roots in interviewees' own experiences, of being racialized as indigenous language speakers, stigmatized or made fun of or looked at with suspicion when speaking Purepecha in public; thus they may wish to protect their children from having these experiences altogether.

The value and usage of Purepecha, Spanish and English in each interviewee's life is related to the potential benefit that each language might yield, and language ideologies, racialization, and economic mobility are major factors that affect interviewees' decisions of whether to maintain Purepecha or switch to Spanish or English.

Finally, as we can see from the table 6 below, even though some interviewees learned both Spanish and Purepecha at home and spoke these two languages with their parents, they did not always decide to speak both these languages with their own children, and oftentimes decided to use mainly Spanish and not Purepecha with them. Interestingly, interviewees whose parents spoke mainly in Purepecha to them and who had Purepecha as their first language also decided to speak either mainly Spanish or both Purepecha and Spanish with their children, as we can see in Soledad, Elodia, Hilario and Juan's case. With the exception of Hilario's children, all other interviewees' children are either mainly Spanish dominant speakers, Spanish-English or English dominant speakers.

Thus, even having parents whose first language is Purepecha is no guarantee that the language will be passed on to the next generation.

Table 6

	Monica	Soledad	Elodia	Hilario	Juan	Refugio	Jesus
Language parents spoke to interviewee	Purepecha and Spanish	Purepecha	Purepecha	Purepecha	Purepecha	Spanish and some Purepecha	Spanish and Purepecha
Language interviewee used to reply or speak to parents	Spanish and Purepecha	Purepecha	Purepecha	Purepecha	Purepecha	Spanish	Spanish and Purepecha
Language used by interviewee to speak to own children	Spanish and some Purepecha	Spanish and Purepecha	Spanish and some Purepecha to her first two children. Spanish to her oldest U.S. born children.	Spanish and Purepecha	Mainly Spanish and some Purepecha	Spanish	Spanish and some Purepecha

Chapter 7

LANGUAGE HIERARCHIES, INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE RACIALIZATION AND SHAME

7.1 Introduction. Linguistic Differentiation and Language Hierarchies

Irvine and Gal (2000) ascertain that linguistic differentiation occurs by contrasting or opposing one language over another within a sociolinguistic context. Linguistic differentiation has its basis in ideologies that are concomitantly transferred onto individuals, or speakers or actions that are of importance to them; where linguistic features are considered an expression of broad cultural images and representations of people, oftentimes taken as if these were evidence of systematic contrasts made of indexed groups at aesthetic, moral, affective and behavioral levels.

In order to understand the sign relationships established within these conceptions, Irvine and Gal (2000) identify three main semiotic practices through which linguistic ideologies can be recognized, and through which linguistic differences are also underlined: iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure. Under the presumption that no view onto people and languages is un-positioned, Irvine and Gal further examine not only the structures that lie beneath linguistic differentiation but also and mainly the dynamics and the consequences that these have for speakers of given languages.

In examining the structures of linguistic differentiation that are made between Purepecha in contrast to other languages, namely Spanish and English, this chapter considers these semiotic practices and their dynamics represented in interviewees' discourse as well as the consequences they have for Purepecha (heritage) speakers as speakers of an indigenous Mexican language.

The aspects that I analyze in search for the processes by which linguistic differences are manifested, include interviewees' experiences with linguistic and speaker hierarchization and racialization, as well as sentiments of shame and pride, which appear as a dynamic discourse across interviewees' narratives and as a response to instances of linguistic differentiation. I argue that racism and paternalistic views are at the basis of this linguistic differentiation and that these ideologies are also at the core of some Purepecha speakers' decisions not to maintain the language for future generations.

Teun Van Dijk (2005) has already made observations regarding anti-indigenous racism in media and political discourse in Mexico in the 20th century; discourses that were based on paternalistic and racist schemes that conceived indigenous people as a problem that needed to be solved. This officialized anti-indigenous discourse iconized and essentialized indigenous communities as backwards entities; these representations also transferred onto indigenous languages. Other researchers have made references to similar contexts in which indigenous languages are opposed to colonial ones, among them Barbara Meek (2006), who found that a similar linguistic differentiation process occurred in Hollywood movies in which Native Americans are depicted as speaking dysfluent English along with other derogatory representations of Native Americans. Katrina Thompson (2006), has also noted the characterization of normative "Swahili" characters that are markedly opposed to ethnic Others labeled as backward culturally and linguistically in Tanzanian comics, replicating in this way colonial discourses.

This chapter asks whether oppositions such as the ones mentioned above are also present in Purepecha (heritage) speakers' descriptions of the Purepecha language, and

also examines references made by interviewees that have witnessed how non-Purepecha speakers refer to the language.

Given that Purepecha (heritage) speakers are aware of some of these stereotyped representations of Mexican indigenous languages, shame is also a sentiment that is described as either felt or avoided, in situations where interviewees have experienced or have been confronted with linguistic differentiations made by others, based on stereotypes of Mexican indigenous languages and peoples.

7.2 Linguistic Hierarchies: The use of ‘dialecto’ versus ‘language’ among interviewees

Languages are categorized, counted and positioned in different types of linguistic hierarchies: ‘official’, ‘national’, or ‘other’ (Nikula, Saarinen, Pöyhönen, Kangasvieri 2012), hierarchically arranging languages in multilingual contexts where those that are valued the most represent the interests of a dominating class (Silverstein, 1996), be it political, economical or ideological. Furthermore, Silverstein (1996) has suggested that it is common for speakers to conceive as not being “real” those languages that are not institutionally standardized, that is, those that do not possess linguistic paraphernalia, in the form of a writing system or a normative grammar. In Mexico indigenous languages have also been considered as sub-languages due to the belief that they do not possess such standardizing institutional paraphernalia, thus speakers have felt that these tongues are not worthy of the category of language.

As mentioned previously in Chapter 4, the official language of Mexico until 2003 was Spanish, and only then were indigenous languages recognized as having co-national status along with Spanish. This linguistic dissymmetry which was established during the Spanish colony and later reinforced by the Mexican government until 2003, stripped

indigenous language speakers of any type of linguistic rights. This legal void was also reinforced by the negative conceptions of indigenous people present in official political discourse, as noted above.

Given the inferior value that the Mexican government assigned to indigenous languages for many centuries, they were conceived and thus popularly classified as sublanguages, referred to by the term 'dialecto'. This denomination is used in other contexts as well to label indigenous languages as a 'dialect' in opposition to a (previously) colonial language. Makihara (2007) found a similar use of dialect to denominate the Rapa Nui language versus Spanish, in Chile, whereas Andronis, (2004) has examined the use of this term when popularly contrasting Quichua and Spanish in Ecuador, among other cases (Reynolds, 2009).

Dialecto is also a term prevalently used among the general population in Mexico to designate indigenous languages, and in fact several of my interviewees referred to Purepecha as a 'dialecto' and not a language, both when directly making references to the language and when sharing stories about how other non-Purepecha individuals referred to the language. The use of this term would not call our attention if it were not for the hierarchical and differentiating features that it indexes: among them the racialization of indigenous language speakers, the sub-categorization of indigenous languages as not full languages and its discriminating practices.

One of the contexts in which I found the most prevalent use of the term *dialecto* among my interviewees was when heritage speakers, positioned themselves as less proficient Purepecha speakers while Othering more fluent speakers, and in a sense distancing themselves from Purepecha speakers. For example, Hortensia, one of the

heritage speakers, used the term ‘dialecto’ when I asked her if she greeted everyone in her hometown in Purepecha, and she replied “No, just with people in my family that speak that dialect”. In a similar way Justino used this term to refer to Purepecha, also with regards to people who were fluent in the language: “There, the teachers would speak that dialect, just like you and I are speaking Spanish.” In these two examples, Othering more fluent speakers was further emphasized by the use that interviewees made of the demonstrative ‘that’ to establish distance between them and fluent Purepecha speakers. Only one fluent Purepecha speaker from Cheranastico, Jesus used the term ‘dialecto’ when illustrating a hypothetical conversation with a non-Purepecha Spanish speaker who was curious about the Purepecha language and asked: “What is that dialect that you people speak? What is it called? How do you say this?” In this narration’s example he positions himself as the recipient of a question by a Spanish speaker who asks him whether he speaks a ‘dialecto’, illustrating indirectly how he himself is Othered. This example further reveals how this term is used mostly by non-fluent or non-Purepecha Spanish speakers to Other speakers of indigenous languages. Significantly, other than Jesus’s example, none of the Purepecha fluent interviewees used this term during any part of the interview.

Due to the widespread use of this term, it was not surprising to find one interviewee that used ‘dialecto’ interchangeably with the word ‘language’ to denominate Purepecha. Such was the case of another heritage speaker, Omar, who during our interview used mainly the word ‘language’ to denominate Purepecha, however while providing an example of his awareness of his Purepecha identity when he was younger, he stated: “But well, I knew that the language, well the dialect, was Tarasco

(Purepecha)”, clearly self-correcting his utterance. Omar’s need to correct his statement and switch from ‘language’ to ‘dialecto’, in spite of using the first term more prevalently during our interview, indexes his need to make evident for the interviewer that he has the ‘appropriate’ knowledge of the term used to label indigenous languages; however, Omar did not explicitly explain the reason behind his self-correction, nor did I ask him further about it.

Noticing that some interviewees used the term ‘dialecto’ while others did not, I decided to ask some of them about the reason for such differentiation. In their replies they described *dialecto* as a term used roughly to denominate Mexican indigenous languages overall versus Spanish and other European languages. For example, Justino, a heritage speaker, as part of his response explained how whenever he rides the bus in Los Angeles, he hears people from Guatemala speaking a ‘dialecto’: “It has happened to me with the people of Guatemala [when] they are speaking on the phone with their dialect, called Quiché, which seems to me similar to Tarasco.” Justino’s reference of Quiché as an example of a dialect demonstrates that he uses this term both to label indigenous languages from Mexico, and to index indigenous languages in general as opposed to Spanish, classifying them under a single category and erasing linguistic and cultural particularities as if all indigenous languages had similar linguistic features.

Justino also mentioned other places in Mexico, such as Guerrero and Oaxaca, as places where *dialectos* were spoken and further explained that dialects were spoken by “ethnic groups” while “Spanish, English and French” were languages, a distinction that clearly makes an opposition between (colonial) European languages and indigenous ones. He also stated that: “Purepecha is a dialect, it is not a language. The difference is that

[dialects] are spoken by ethnic groups.” Thus, the term ‘dialecto’ is a differentiating marker used to separate languages between those that are spoken by minority or ethnic groups versus the dominant colonial and institutionalized languages.

When I asked Humberto, another heritage speaker, about the meaning of this term, he made a similar distinction, using political delimitation as a basis to account for a differentiating linguistic status. For him ‘dialecto’ was used to designate a language spoken in a small community while ‘language’ was used to denominate what is spoken nation wide. He thus stated: “Dialect is, for example, from a community and language is the one [that belongs] to a country or to a larger territorial extension.”

Humberto’s example also indirectly illustrates not only the way language ideologies position some languages at a higher level than others, but also how this differentiation reflects political decisions that officialize one language over others as the main language of a nation (Silverstein, 1996).

Other interviewees, like heritage speaker Hortensia, were not sure about what the difference between a ‘dialecto’ and a ‘language’ was. Jesus, one of the Purepecha speakers with high proficiencies, was also unsure about what this distinction meant and commented that he knew there were many dialects spoken all over Mexico, in states such as Oaxaca and Mexico state. However, he was unsure whether Purepecha was a language or a dialect, and he only referred to Purepecha as a dialect in the following example, in which a Spanish speaker asked him if he spoke a dialecto. He stated: “To tell you the truth... I don’t know which one is it [language or dialect]. Although I know it is like a dialect.” Given this ambiguity, it is not clear whether Jesus is aware of the hierarchical differences that the use of dialect indexes with regards to indigenous languages. As

pointed out above, no other interviewee with a high proficiency in Purepecha used the term ‘dialect’ to refer to Purepecha. This could mean that it is likely that both Spanish speakers and heritage speakers use this term more consistently as a way to Other indigenous language speakers, while indigenous language speakers use it with less frequency.

Nonetheless, Rosendo was among the few heritage speakers who contested and challenged the use of the word *dialecto* to denominate Purepecha. During our interview he emphasized that Purepecha was a language, in a clear opposition to the way ‘dialecto’ is used to demerit Purepecha’s linguistic status:

“I think there is an area here around Cathedral City. Around there is a community where, it is said that there are around three or four hundred people living in a small area, as if it were a small village, and those people are, in regards to the language... Because Purepecha IS a language, it has a writing system, yes... and, so, I want to say is that those people... are [Purepecha] in regards to the language, because Purepecha is a language.”

However, even though Rosendo opposes the way Purepecha has been treated as a sub-language, he also distances himself from other more proficient Purepecha speakers, and in a sense, his positioning is also used to Other proficient speakers as people with a stronger Purepecha identity. Furthermore, Rosendo’s argument in defense of Purepecha’s linguistic status is based on the fact that it has a writing system, an argument derived from language ideologies that differentiate languages from “sublanguages” on the basis of whether printed linguistic material exists or not for a determined language; this dominant language ideology is commonly used to legitimize a language’s linguistic status

(see Silverstein, 1996; 2000), and it could also make us wonder whether Rosendo considers languages that do not have a writing system a sub-language.

In addition, Rosendo's clarification regarding Purepecha's linguistic status and arguments to prove that Purepecha is a language also evidence prevalent ideas in Mexico that indigenous languages are "dialects" because of a lack of norming instruments such as the one mentioned above. As Silverstein (1996; 2000) has pointed out, dominant language ideologies are so established that they surface continuously, even during a contestation such as the one made by Rosendo.

During one of the Purepecha festivals that I attended to search for potential interviewees, I also encountered situations in which people referred to Purepecha as a dialect. One example of this occurred when I approached two men and asked them if they were from Michoacan, they replied that they were actually from Puebla and Guadalajara respectively, and they asked me why I was looking for people from Michoacan. After telling them that I was searching for people who spoke the Purepecha language for an interview, one of them corrected me and said, "Oh, the [Purepecha] dialect"; the second man then asked: "Dialect?" to which the first man finally replied: "Yes, it is a dialect". After this exchange they both looked at me in a challenging way. However, I did not partake in prompting a potential argument about it.

The fact that these men were not Purepecha and yet one felt confident enough to point out that my knowledge about Purepecha being a language was "wrong" also speaks about the prevalence of this ideology around the Mexican population, even when these men have immigrated to a different country where these ideologies could have potentially been challenged. Thus this also indicates that stereotypes and ideologies about indigenous

people and languages in Mexico travel to the U.S. where indigenous language speakers are also exposed to Spanish speakers of non-indigenous descent (or who have long been detached from an indigenous language) and might even feel threatened by them.

Finally, the above examples evidence that despite the fact that as of 2003 all indigenous languages have been recognized as having a co-official status along with Spanish, this recognition has not automatically changed the linguistic hierarchies that continue to exist in Mexico nor the popular belief that indigenous languages are “dialects” instead of languages. Officializing indigenous languages that have long been subordinated has not changed the perception that the general population has of them, evidencing that this change in status is only a small step towards the emancipation of indigenous languages in Mexico.

Furthermore, in the end the usage of ‘dialect’ to denominate indigenous languages constitutes in itself a language ideology “that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group” Kroskrity (8:2003), which in the case of Mexico had a colonial origin first and later a nationalist basis, whose interests favored Spanish speakers over indigenous language speakers as pointed out in chapter 4.

7.3 Indigenous language racialization

Language racialization, yet another form of linguistic differentiation, is a phenomenon where linguistic features are used to erroneously index speakers of a given language, by either mocking or demeaning a group of speakers via these representations. A seminal study on speaker racialization of American Indian English is Barbara Meek’s (2006) ‘And the Injun goes “How!”: Representations of American Indian English in white public space’; Meek found that American Indian speech in Hollywood movies was

represented by non-standard English linguistic features associated with ‘foreigner’ and ‘baby’ talk, through which white American individuals ‘Other’ American Indian people. Meek’s main in this study was to put forth the ‘imagined speech’ that white Americans use to represent American Indians, as opposed to previous studies that focused on analyzing the language used to describe this population. Meek critically evaluated the images of indigenous people performed through these linguistic representations and found that there is a speech style “that underscores and reinforces certain aspects of a generic Indian image.” Among them: an atypical use of pauses that can be placed anywhere in the speech, lack of tense marking and contraction, as well as deletion of grammatical components.

In a similar way to the occurrences described by Meek, non-indigenous language speakers in Mexico resort to the use of caricaturized linguistic features to index a so deemed Mexican indigenous language “speech style”, furthering a generic stereotype of Mexican indigenous people.

Drawing on interviewees’ descriptions, and in a similar way to Meek’s analysis, in this section I analyze non-indigenous language speakers’ racialization of Mexican Indigenous Speech (MIS), non-Purepecha speakers’ racialization of Indigenous Spanish (ISp) as performed by a presenter in a Purepecha Festival in Los Angeles, as well as a heritage speaker’s representation of ISp I focus on the linguistic features used to racialize Mexican indigenous people’s speech as another example of linguistic differentiation.

As a first example, I return to my interview with heritage speaker Rosendo. After asking him about his Purepecha identity, he described how he was proud of his Purepecha heritage in contrast to other people his age who are ashamed of their heritage

and avoid acknowledging that they are from a Purepecha town. However, when Rosendo has shared with non-Purepecha Spanish speakers that he is from Cheran, he has been racialized. Rosendo illustrated his experience by narrating how people have sarcastically and mockingly asked him if he speaks an indigenous language:

“Well, because erroneously, there are people who are my same age (me included) that are ashamed of our origin. There are people that say, for example... who try to pretend to be from the largest city in the state [Michoacan]. [So when they ask them] ‘Where are you from?’ [They say] “I am from Morelia or Uruapan.” No. I always say: “I am from Cherán”. You know, they used to tell me: -“Oh, so you are ‘Indio’?” -“No, I am not an Indio. I am from an indigenous community, which is different, all right?” [and they asked me]-”So you speak (like) ta-ta-ra-ta-ta?” [to which I respond] “Yes, yes I do speak it.” [People] say this in a derogatory way... other Mexicans, people from other [Mexican] states or [non-Purepecha] people who were themselves from Michoacán.”

Rosendo’s example not only provides an example of racialization, but also illustrates how this is performed via an escalating racializing dialogue, in which initially Rosendo shares the name of his hometown with a non-Purepecha interlocutor. After realizing the geographical location of Rosendo’s hometown, the interlocutor proceeds to label him as an ‘Indio’; when Rosendo responds by suggesting the less racialized denomination ‘indigenous’, his interlocutor further racializes by sarcastically and in a mocking way asking him if he speaks “ta-ta-ra-ta-tá”. This nonce noun is used as an iconized representation of Mexican indigenous speech, which portrays Mexican indigenous speech as meaningless, unintelligible, and primitive, since actually it consists of five syllables, 4 of which are identical. Through this example, Rosendo also illustrates

how indigenous languages are objects of erasure, since this nonce word is used as a replacement for the way an indigenous language (in this case Purepecha) is actually denominated, as if all indigenous languages could be named by this same nonce utterance.

As mentioned above, another form of speaker racialization that surfaced during my interviews was the speech racialization of Mexican Indigenous Spanish, MISp, in which speakers that have an indigenous language as their first language are portrayed as heightening the mid vowels found in normative Spanish. In this example, heritage speaker Justino generalizes how second language speakers of Spanish that have an indigenous language as their first language heighten their mid vowels as a general stereotyped norm. Thus [e] may become [i] and [o] may become [u]. In Justino's example, 'eso' is pronounced 'esu' and 'te', 'ti'.

"I don't know if you have ever heard someone from Guatemala [who] speak[s] [both] a dialect and Spanish. I think that when one speaks English, this is probably how we also sound, with a tone, a tone that goes, for example, "Ya te lo dije (I already told you) [uttered instead in ISp as] "esu ti dije." "TI DIJE". With an accent [that suggests] that the person is from a small farm because of the way they talk. They don't [pronounce] Spanish very well [and might say something like] "la mapa" for "el mapa", which makes you think that the person speaks a dialect."

In this example Justino not only emphasizes linguistic features that any other second language speaker of Spanish might use, but characterizes indigenous Spanish speech as being pronounced in a specific way, by heightening the mid-vowels /o/ and /e/ to /u/ and /i/; Justino also points out errors with regards to article-noun gender agreement

as part of this indigenous Spanish. Nonetheless, through Justino's characterization of indigenous speech he indexes not only that the speaker is a Spanish second language speaker but that he is also less sophisticated, educated and/or belongs to a lower socio-economic class, as he points out that people who talk this way are from a rural area. Furthermore, Justino uses in his example a "speaker" from Guatemala, grouping once more indigenous language speakers who have Spanish as a second language under a same category, racializing indigenous speech.

A similar characterization was made during one of the Purepecha festivals I attended, when one of the announcers at the event mentioned in a joking way that people from Michoacan and Guanajuato spoke Spanish by heightening their mid vowels. The example that the announcer used was: "-And that's why people from Guanajuato and Michoacan, we all speak the same: 'Vamus pur la lechi' [Let's go get some milk]" Again, changing the mid vowels in the last syllable of the words from /o/ to /u/ and from /e/ to /i/, as in Justino's example; in normative Spanish the announcer's phrase would have been: "Vamos por la leche".

Even though the announcer did not state directly that this was an example of Indigenous Spanish, his mockery may well be interpreted as so, given the similarity in the traits pointed out by Justino, as well as the fact that his mockery referred to a deviation from normative Spanish, and consequently a sanctioned way of speaking. Thus, in a sense, the announcer was stigmatizing those that spoke Spanish with this particular accent and by extension furthering the popular belief that indigenous speakers of Spanish pronounce Spanish this way when they speak.

7.4 Indigenous speaker racialization. On being called an *Indio*

Another form of indigenous speaker racialization is racializing indigenous language speakers as “Indios”. Mexicans have long used this term not only to racialize people that belong to an indigenous community but also to refer to anyone that is considered of lower status, and in general to individuals that lack anything that the Mexican elite is constantly acquiring (Friedlander, 2007). In this sense it is a category with an ever-changing criteria as it is dependent upon the new trends and customs adopted by the dominant class. From this perspective, while elite cultural identifiers are considered as ever changing, indigenous identifiers are in contrast considered as those that remain the same (Friedlander, 2007). Examples of the classist discriminatory connotations that the term *Indio* indexes and also of its racist intentions can be found by merely searching for profiles with the term *Indio* in the social media, where it is common to find social profiles that include the word *Indio* accompanied by other insulting terms. These racialized insults link being *Indio* to ugliness, drunkenness, stupidity, “bad taste,” low class, bad smell, and unsolicited sexual proposals, among others. Moreover, some of these profiles have been created as a means of expressing hatred towards others, labeling certain behaviors as undesirable and as something that only an *Indio* would be “capable” of doing; oftentimes such profiles are also accompanied by pictures of brown skinned men with awkward and digitally altered facial expressions, drunken men, or indigenous stereotyped images of half naked men with feathers on their heads and a bow and an arrow in their hands¹⁸ (See Appendix 1). Thus, calling someone an *Indio* because of the

¹⁸ The labels that described these pictures were:

- 1) I love you very much lousy, vulgar *indio*. Take care, you are loved.
- 2) -Goodbye gorgeous -Goodbye lousy, ugly *indio*
- 3) Cellphones are now called arrows. Any lousy *indio* has one.

language she or he speaks or because of the way someone speaks also manifests these racialized connotations.

Unfortunately and despite the insulting and negative connotations in which the term *Indio* is used, several interviewees mentioned being labeled in this way, specifically whenever they were speaking Purepecha and other non-Purepecha Spanish speakers were around. Purepecha speakers with high proficiencies were the ones that experienced this the most and they shared stories in which they were subjected to such stigmatization, especially whenever they were in Mexico.

In the following example, Juan, explains that he has felt uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in Mexico as he feels this way more often when he is visiting large cities in Mexico as well as places outside of his home state Michoacan:

"I think that [I feel more uncomfortable speaking Purepecha] in Mexico and outside of Michoacan even more [than in the U.S.]. Because I think that over there a lot of the times people take it as if we are *Indios*, right? They sometimes think that. When you leave Michoacan and go to the city and all that, right? If you speak Purepecha people think that and they say [that we are] *Indios* and stuff [...] In my opinion there are different languages, right? But I think that a lot of people have never listened to Purepecha and [because of this] they think that "[Oh] they are *Indios* because they are talking this way."

In this example, Juan explains that how he is more vulnerable to being labeled as an *Indio* in Mexico than in the U.S. and for this reason he feels more uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in Mexico. He attributes this to peoples' stigmatization of those that speak a language that Spanish speakers do not understand, and he considers that Purepecha is probably a language that they have not heard before and therefore because

of this they label these speakers as Indios. Since Juan has experienced this racialization whenever people hear him talk in Purepecha, he thus feel uncomfortable speaking it outside of his home state, which is probably a reason for why he has chosen to speak to his children mainly in Spanish.

Similarly, Hilario also mentioned that he has felt uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in Mexico, and he also pointed to the fact that people have called him an Indio when he has spoken in Purepecha in large cities in Mexico. On one occasion, while he was visiting his brother in Guadalajara, Mexico, with his mother, who only speaks Purepecha, he felt uncomfortable and vulnerable to being called an Indio:

"In major cities in Mexico, whenever someone hears you speaking in Purepecha they make fun of you because of it. And say things like (whispers): -You Indio and ("la fregada" an expletive in Spanish), and this and that... [That] is what people say. [...] It was in Guadalajara, and whenever we go on vacation to Mexico. However, we always go on vacation to Guadalajara to visit my brother. [On this occasion] we [had] brought our mother with us, and well she speaks to us in Tarascan, well Purepecha, right? And even though we tried speaking to her in Spanish, she always replied in Purepecha. And yes, that is the reason why... (laughs)."

Again, as in Juan's example, Hilario illustrates how being called an Indio commonly occurs when a Spanish speaker listens to someone speaking Purepecha in Mexico. In his example, Hilario describes not only the stigma of being called an Indio but also mockery that speaking Purepecha carries. As a way of protecting himself and his family from such a stigmatizing and demeaning practice, on that occasion, Hilario chose to switch to Spanish when he was around Spanish speakers. However, since his mother

speaks mainly in Purepecha, concealing their ability to speak an indigenous language was not possible and therefore they were prone to become a vulnerable target to such stigmatization.

At the end of his narration, Hilario seemingly laughs at the irony behind his language switching strategy, since his mother as a Purepecha speaker was not able to participate in it. Nevertheless, Hilario has felt uncomfortable using Purepecha whenever Spanish speakers are around, and because of this, switching to Spanish has been a way for him to protect himself and his family from such stigmatization. Moreover, Hilario in a different section of our interview pointed out that he has never felt ashamed of speaking Purepecha. I will discuss further in detail this topic in the section below.

Even though both Juan and Hilario mentioned experiencing racialization mainly in Mexico, Monica mentioned being racialized in such a way in the U.S. when a man whose main language was Spanish heard her speaking Purepecha:

"I remember one day that a man asked me: -What are you speaking? And I told him: -It's Purepecha. (She smacks her lips) [He said] -What is that? An Indio thing? Or he said something like that. [So I told him] -Something that you don't even know about. [So] I also told him: -Who knows what YOU speak. -So you are like an "India." He said to me. But I didn't feel bad because I said to myself, I know how to speak another language that he... [doesn't]: -You only know how to speak Spanish, and no, you can't even speak English, but I do know how to speak another language."

In this example, Monica, narrates how she is directly racialized when a man hears her speaking Purepecha. She smacks her lips to characterize the man's surprise, in turn and instead of asking her which language Purepecha is, he strips Purepecha of its

language status and treats it like a thing: “What is that?,” The man further demeans the language as well as Monica as a Purepecha speaker by asking her whether it is an “Indio” thing. In her narration, Monica feeling upset talks back to him and questions his linguistic ability and the fact that he is a monolingual speaker of Spanish, using multilingualism as a strategy to position herself at an advantage over the man.

As we can recall, in the previous section 7.2 on indigenous language racialization, Rosendo shared a similar story in which a man asked him directly whether he was an Indio. Since Rosendo is a Purepecha heritage speaker and not a fluent speaker like Juan, Hilario and Monica, the example with his interlocutor took place in Spanish, thus Rosendo’s interlocutor did not call him an Indio because he heard him speak Purepecha, but because he considered that Rosendo’s hometown, Cheran, was an identifiable indigenous community. In that example, Rosendo challenged his interlocutor’s stigmatizing use of the word Indio and suggested a less racialized denomination ‘indigenous’: “I always say: “I am from Cherán”. You know, they used to tell me: -“Oh, so you are ‘Indio’?” -“No, I am not an Indio. I am from an indigenous community, which is different, all right?””

Rosendo’s need to challenge the label further demonstrates the demeaning connotation of this term.

Finally, Elodia stated that she has never been in a situation in which people have mocked her and her family for speaking Purepecha and consequently she has never felt uncomfortable or ashamed of speaking Purepecha in front of others. However, she is well aware of the stigmatizing practices that non-indigenous Spanish speakers can engage in whenever they hear someone speaking an indigenous language, and she pointed out how

some people who do not understand Purepecha might think that she and her relatives are probably "Indios": "People never made fun of us, right? But maybe other people did make fun of us [without us noticing], right? They probably said -Oh, these Indios. Or I don't know what they might say, right? (laughs)."

In Elodia's example, being labeled as an Indio is seemingly not a threatening act, as she dismisses the hypothetical scenario in which she and her family are labeled as Indios. This is additionally emphasized when at the end of her narrative, when Elodia laughs, further dismissing such a potential threat.

The above examples illustrate how some Purepecha speakers have experienced first hand stigmatization and mockery by Spanish speakers, both in Mexico and in the U.S., even though Juan and Hilario mentioned having experienced such racialization in a more marked fashion in large cities in Mexico. Because of this racialization, some interviewees have felt uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in front of non-indigenous Spanish speakers. However, different speakers used different strategies to deal with such a confronting stigmatization: Juan rationalizes his attackers' intentions and attributes it to their ignorance of the Purepecha language; Hilario switches to Spanish when he is around Spanish speakers, especially in large cities in Mexico; Monica confronted her interlocutor and devalued his monolingualism in contrast to her multilingual abilities; Rosendo mitigated his interlocutor's mockery by pointing out that he belongs to an indigenous community and is not an Indio; and finally, Elodia dismissed altogether having ever felt uncomfortable of speaking Purepecha around Spanish speakers and mocks any attempts to label her and her family as *Indios*.

In these examples interviewees talked about feeling uncomfortable due to the fact of being labeled as an Indio. In the section below, I will discuss further emotional effects that language and speaker racialization has had for Purepecha (heritage) speakers.

7.5 Shame and pride

One of the consequences of the systematic practices of linguistic differentiation in linguistically oppressing situations such as the ones exemplified above is that speakers of minority languages experience a sentiment of shame, as a result of being mocked by speakers of dominant languages. This effect has been appreciated in several contexts in which shame has a strong impact on speakers' decisions to shift to a dominant language; contexts include: Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998) on Tlingit speakers in Alaska; Güemez Pineda (2006) on Maya speakers' accounts in Yucatan, Mexico, and Kouritzin (1999) for speakers of languages such as Cantonese, Hungarian and Cree, in Canada, among others.

In research done on biographies of language loss among heritage speakers of minority languages in Canada (Kouritzin, 1999), a Canadian born Cantonese heritage speaker, explained that because she grew up in a pre-multicultural Canada where English-only policies were enforced, she was oftentimes a witness to how children mocked those with a non-normative English accent at school, as well as how the latter were systematically downplayed by some of their teachers; as a consequence this interviewee devoted great efforts to acquiring the normative English accent and grammar, and she felt ashamed of her Cantonese heritage. Similarly in Kouritzin (1999) an individual from a full Cree indigenous heritage also pointed out that because of the enforcement of English at school in Canada, when he was growing up, he felt ashamed of

learning the Cree language and because of this main language is now English. In looking back on his childhood, this man felt that the Cree people were in essence shamed away from speaking the Cree language and shamed into speaking English (Kouritzin, 1999:67); his statement reflects the emotional and linguistic toll that monolingual policies take on minority language speakers and the impact on their linguistic choices.

Other studies have also found that both shame and pride are sometimes at the center of linguistic minorities' discourses around their (heritage) language. McCarty, Romero, & Zepeda (2006) in their study around indigenous youth's counter-narratives on language loss and revitalization found that "the discourse of shame, pride, and caring [also] interact[ed] with larger power relations in complex ways to produce language ideologies and choices." In their study, they found that Navajo youth referred to the Navajo language and identity using expressions that denoted both pride and shame, and moreover where "the hegemony of English [and] the iconic bonding of English and whiteness" were also at the core of these narratives (MacCarty, Romero, & Zepeda 2006); as a consequence most Navajo youth hid from their teachers the fact that they had high levels of Navajo proficiency for fear of being stigmatized. However, in a concomitant way, Navajo adults and youth, while feeling proud about their Navajo (heritage) language, nonetheless, gave primacy to English, as it was linked to both privilege and opportunity (MacCarty, Romero, & Zepeda, 2006:42). In this last example we can see how switching to the dominant language oftentimes serves the purpose of protection from discrimination, in addition to switching to the dominant language because of the potential economic mobility value that speakers foresee in it.

Moreover, researchers such as Kramsch and Whiteside (2008), have found that in workplace contexts where Spanish speakers with different dialectal variations interact in the U.S., English provides an escape from discriminatory treatment to those that have an indigenous language as their first language and Spanish as their second language, since speaking English takes the attention away from the stigma of speaking Spanish with an “indigenous accent.” Because of this Maya speakers from Yucatan, who were part of that study, also valued English further for its “portable capital” by learning it in order to teach it to others back home who were also planning to immigrate to the U.S.; in contrast, however, speaking Maya brought upon them a sense of shame.

Among my interviewees, references to both shame and pride were also oftentimes made concerning the Purepecha language, sometimes as examples, as well, of intricate language ideologies contending at the center of their language usage and Purepecha identity. In a similar way, I found that though proficient Purepecha speakers mentioned not being ashamed of speaking Purepecha and instead felt proud of doing so, they nevertheless chose to speak mainly in Spanish to their children. This decision was also based on the notion that Spanish would provide their children with more opportunities for economic mobility and better ways to interact with the broader Latino community in the U.S.

In this first example, heritage speaker Ileri mentioned that shame was probably the reason behind her grandfather’s decision to not teach the language to his children, specifically mentioning that he was afraid of non-Purepecha Spanish speaker’s mockery: “[My grandfather] felt very ashamed, he said that he felt very ashamed and that he felt that people were going to make fun of him, and that they were going to make fun of his

children for speaking a language that other Mexican farm workers did not understand.”

In Ileri's example, shame is explicitly associated to a fear of being stigmatized for speaking a language “other than Spanish”, namely an indigenous language; this fear prompted her grandfather to speak to his children mainly in Spanish in order to protect them from such a stigma. Nevertheless, according to Ileri, her grandfather's decision to speak Spanish to his offspring was also accompanied by his desire to provide better life opportunities for them, also valuing Spanish for its economic mobility potential in contrast to Purepecha.

As we were able to see in an example provided in the previous section of this chapter, heritage speaker Rosendo also mentioned how language loss in his community among people his age might have been brought upon by a generalized sentiment of shame: “Well, because erroneously, there are people who are my same age (me included) that are ashamed of our origin. There are people that say, for example... who try to pretend to be from the largest city in the state [Michoacan].”

His testimony adds to those that point out shame as a sentiment behind language shift among the Purepecha population. In this example although Rosendo includes himself as someone who has felt ashamed of his Purepecha origin earlier in his life, he also positions himself as someone who is now proud of his heritage and also challenges those who might mock and discriminate against indigenous people;

In contrast to narrators such as Rosendo, Purepecha speakers with high proficiencies did not acknowledge presently feeling shame or feeling uncomfortable speaking Purepecha, and instead mentioned that they felt proud, despite not teaching the

language to their children. In the following example, Monica, who grew up as a Purepecha-Spanish bilingual stated:

“I have never felt ashamed of it. There are some people at work that have asked me about my language, my Purepecha. And well there are a lot of people that do make fun of me, but I say to myself, I am not ashamed. On the contrary, I feel very proud because I know a language that they do not speak. When I leave the U.S. I will be able to speak with everyone around town because I have learned it. I can now speak three languages. It is a beautiful thing learning [languages].”

As we can see in Monica’s example, a sense of pride comes as a response to being stigmatized and harassed by her co-workers. In reaction to her co-workers’ harassment, Monica validates her ability to speak Purepecha and points out that she knows a language that her co-workers do not know; in so doing she positions herself at an advantage over those that harass and mock her at work, further emphasizing that she as opposed to them knows how to speak three languages: Purepecha, Spanish and English. Finally, in validating multilingualism, Monica considers that learning languages is a beautiful activity in itself.

In a similar way to Monica, her husband Juan expressed not feeling ashamed of speaking Purepecha, and instead distanced himself from such experience and pointed out how others in contrast do feel ashamed of speaking Purepecha in front of non-Purepecha speakers:

“I think that [people don’t want to speak Purepecha] because they are ashamed of speaking Purepecha. Some people think that if they are around friends who do not speak it, they are going to make fun of them when they speak Purepecha. I always speak

Purepecha wherever I am, at work or whether I am with my Purepecha speaking friends [or those that don't speak it], and they tell me: -Speak to us [in Purepecha]. [They also tell me] -You are worth three times as much because you speak Purepecha, Spanish and English.”

In this example and in contrast to his wife Monica's narrative, Juan distances himself from situations in which people are mocked for speaking Purepecha and seemingly positions himself as someone who has not experienced this situation, as he points out that other Purepecha are probably ashamed of speaking the language because non-Purepecha might make fun of them. In this example, Juan also appears to challenge other Purepecha speakers' reasons of fear of being mocked, as according to his experience non-Purepecha are sometimes curious about the language and also praise him for knowing three languages.

Yet despite being proud of their Purepecha language, Monica and her husband have chosen to speak mainly in Spanish to their children. When I asked them for the reasons behind this decision, they each mentioned that not speaking Purepecha to their children was just something that simply occurred, as if this had never been discussed within the family.

Jesus, another of the Purepecha speakers with a high proficiency, also mentioned the sentiment of shame, however, as a sentiment related to the past but not specifically linked to a time period or context. During our interview he pointed out that in the past he had felt ashamed of speaking Purepecha in front of non-Purepecha speakers: “Before, I did feel ashamed of speaking [Purepecha] but not anymore. Now I see someone [who

speaks Purepecha] and I speak, we speak in Purepecha... Before, [I used to be worried] that people would think that we were speaking behind their backs.”

Like Monica and Juan, Jesus also positions himself as someone who is not presently ashamed of speaking Purepecha, but who nevertheless acknowledges having felt this way in the past. Jesus, however, does not explain how he overcame his sentiment of shame, the process that entailed or whether it was a consequence of migration. Furthermore, like Monica and Juan, Jesus also mainly speaks to his children in Spanish, although he occasionally sits with them to teach him Purepecha numbers and a few Purepecha words. In Jesus’s narration, his fear of speaking Purepecha was also linked to concerns that others who did not speak the language would think that he was speaking behind their backs. However, Jesus did not provide an example of such a situation.

In all the previous examples shame has been discussed as a sentiment generally associated with speaking Purepecha in front of non-Purepecha Spanish speakers, however, one heritage speaker also mentioned feeling ashamed of not being able to speak Purepecha.

During our interview, Ileri mentioned feeling ashamed whenever she visited her grandfather’s hometown because she was not able to communicate:

“I have learned some Purepecha because I am interested. At least in learning some words. Because whenever I go back to the Purepecha communities, or my grandfather’s community, I am ashamed about not understanding much, and [when] I sometimes see that they are laughing or something. I am ashamed, like [I think] –Oh, they are saying things about me ((laughs)). And I don’t understand what they are saying. Because of that

I am very curious about what they are saying, since I was a child, at least being able to understand, and to know.”

In her example, Ileri, positions herself as a frustrated heritage speaker unable to understand what her relatives are saying. However, her narration also functions as a counter narrative to her grandfather’s feelings of shame about speaking Purepecha. In contrast to her grandfather’s sentiment of shame, Ileri’s shame springs from her desire to be able to understand what other members of the Purepecha community, are talking about, and in a sense, it is also linked to her desire to become a full member of the community, as she would like to also be able to partake in people’s conversations. Furthermore, even though Ileri positions herself as an outsider, the fact that she laughs in the middle of her narrative positions her as someone who despite feeling ashamed for not speaking Purepecha does not feel threatened by this situation, in contrast to his grandfather, whose sense of shame stemmed from a fear of being negatively stigmatized and racialized.

Another counter narrative to shame can be seen in the denomination of a non-profit Purepecha organization called “Purepecha Pride;” the title is clearly aimed at remediating a generalized sense of shame within the Purepecha community, and the goal is to promote positive aspects of the Purepecha community, among them Purepecha traditions, but also Purepecha activism both in the U.S. and Mexico. In a sense “Purepecha Pride” constitutes a response to the systematic stigmatization that the Purepecha and indigenous communities have been subjected to along the years.

In general, then, shame was a sentiment that either resulted as a consequence of being mocked for speaking Purepecha or because of a fear of this occurring. For this

reason some interviewees associated this sense of shame to a generalized Purepecha language loss either among members of their family or among the broader Purepecha community.

While heritage speakers mentioned that their relatives or other members of the community might have felt ashamed of speaking Purepecha, those with high Purepecha proficiencies mentioned not feeling ashamed of speaking the language but instead being proud of doing so. Nonetheless, proficient speakers also chose to speak to their children mainly in Spanish and not Purepecha. This seeming contradiction reflects the complex relation that lies at the center of interviewees' language ideologies, Purepecha shame and pride, and the implications for the usages that members of the Purepecha community make of the language. Given the powerful feeling that shame represents, it is most likely that it was also difficult for interviewees to acknowledge personally having such a sentiment of shame; we can thus hypothesize that some interviewees might not have felt comfortable enough to share this experience openly.

Finally, shame arises as a consequence of practices such as mockery that result from linguistic differentiation, where Purepecha speakers are placed at a disadvantage to Spanish speakers in situations in which non-Purepecha Spanish speakers mock Purepecha as indigenous language speakers.

Almost none of the interviewees mentioned feeling ashamed of speaking Purepecha in front of dominant English speakers. The sole exception was Refugio, who mentioned an occasion in which in a predominantly white English language setting he felt uncomfortable speaking Purepecha in a public space, after a white man approached

him to warn him that English speakers thought they might be talking at their backs. Nevertheless, Refugio labeled this situation as merely uncomfortable.

7.6 Conclusion

In analyzing interviewees' discourse and descriptions about Purepecha, I found evidence of language ideologies that differentiate indigenous Mexican languages from Spanish and other European colonial languages, by denominating the former as a *dialecto*. Even though not all interviewees provided an explanation as to why they used the term *dialecto* to differentiate Purepecha from a language, some made apparent the colonial versus indigenous language distinction. *Dialecto* was more prevalently used by Purepecha heritage speakers to Other more proficient speakers, while speakers with higher proficiencies used it in examples where they were being 'othered' by Spanish speakers. Furthermore even though one of the interviewees contested the linguistically lower hierarchical positioning of Purepecha, the supporting evidence that the interviewee used to contend this was in the form of legitimizing institutional paraphernalia, namely the existence of a writing system.

This ongoing linguistic hierarchization between indigenous languages and Spanish and English further evidences the continuous subordination and stigmatization of indigenous language speakers, to the point that indigenous language (heritage) speakers themselves are prone to use these distinctions in their discourses.

Furthermore, in light of the prevalence of this linguistic differentiation it is not surprising to find that it has also seeped into Spanish speakers' representations of indigenous language speakers, namely in the form of racialization. Thus speakers of

Spanish mock those that speak with an "indigenous Spanish" accent and or racialize them as 'indios.'

Moreover, the continuous harassment that indigenous language speakers are subjected to impacts them to the point of feeling ashamed about speaking Purepecha whenever non-indigenous Spanish speakers are around. Nevertheless, most interviewees with high Purepecha proficiencies also manifested feeling pride of speaking Purepecha and in a way opposing this sentiment of shame by contending the effects of this negative linguistic differentiation.

These examples provide evidence of the impact and consequences that linguistic differentiation has for Purepecha speakers, the negative outcomes it potentially represents in terms of community language maintenance and the challenges that Purepecha speakers face not only in Mexico but also in the U.S. as speakers of a minoritized language.

CHAPTER 8

RESISTANCE, APPROPRIATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING: LEARNING PUREPECHA, SPANISH, AND/OR ENGLISH.

8.1 Introduction

In the present chapter, I examine interviewees' individual experiences when learning a language different than their first language outside the home setting, whether in an institutional setting; or while engaging in language learning activities as independent and autonomous learners. The goal of this chapter is to examine interviewees' descriptions of their language learning processes as they reflect the ways in which learners dealt with language hierarchies established at different institutional levels, within the classroom, family and community. I examine these processes as set in specific institutional and geographical contexts, since these will also reveal local ways in which individuals negotiate language hierarchies, through resistance, appropriation, investment or non- investment to learn a language.

Norton's notion of language learners' *investment* suggests that the hope for better life expectations is oftentimes what drives learners to engage in learning a language; because of this Norton proposes to account for the ways in which learners also deal with shifting identities and power relations during their learning process in a contextual way (Norton and Toohey, 2011: 415). Pavlenko and Norton (2007) suggest that it is important to examine individuals' notions of imagined communities; since by understanding how individuals imagine themselves as potential members of multiple imagined communities, we may also understand its influence in language learners' "motivation, investment, and resistance (Pavlenko and Norton, 2007: 589)" to learn specific languages, and

furthermore bridging the gap that exists between theory and practice in terms of language education and pedagogy.

Finally, since interviewees are Purepecha (heritage) speakers, an indigenous Mexican language, it is also important to examine their experiences from a postcolonial and critical applied linguistics perspective, acknowledging and positioning their language learning experiences within this framework, by observing the complex ways and local contradictions of linguistic hegemonies, where resistance and appropriation are a vital part of postcolonial perspectives (Pennycook, 2010: 71).

In three separate sections of this chapter I examine a) interviewees' experiences learning Spanish as second language in Mexico, b) learning English as a second or third language, and c) learning Purepecha as a heritage language by those that were heritage speakers. I do so by examining interviewees' reported interactions with their teachers, peers or speakers of the target language, as these also reveal inherent power relations that emphasize language ideologies occurring both at the micro and the macro level, as well as interviewees' reported individual and independent investments in their own learning.

Some methodological limitations of relying on interviews to examine individuals' language learning investments include obtaining limited or incomplete information of interviewees' learning experiences and/or that interviewees accommodate to perceived or expected responses from the researcher. Examining direct classroom interactions and/or asking interviewees to keep detailed journals of their language learning investments and language usages in different contexts could provide a broader perspective towards the efforts that individuals make in learning specific languages.

8.2 Purepecha experiences learning Spanish as a second language. Language hierarchies, power relations, resistance and appropriation.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of my interviewees learned Spanish at home when they were growing up, either because they had parents who spoke to them mainly in Spanish (regardless of their Purepecha proficiency), or because their parents spoke to them both in Purepecha and Spanish. However, for a third group of interviewees Purepecha was the main language used at home, it was the language their parents used to communicate with them and the main language they used to communicate with their siblings; this group of interviewees began learning Spanish at school when attending Spanish-only immersion programs that were enforced at the time in which interviewees attended primary school (between the 60s through early 90s), and oftentimes they continued with their Spanish learning individually and intuitively after leaving or finishing school.

As pointed out in chapter 5, Mexico had strong Hispanization campaigns for indigenous language speakers that immersed these speakers in Spanish-only school programs well up until the 1990s; although they were called bilingual programs during the last decades, these were in fact subtractive bilingual programs whose goal was to promote early Hispanization in indigenous language speaking children. The emotional consequences of these policies for indigenous language speakers have been rarely examined; neither have the unequal power relations that Purepecha speaking students experienced in their Spanish-only classes at school. The goal of this section is to provide a glance into this unequal linguistic situation and the ways in which Purepecha speakers experienced these programs and and/or learned Spanish independently.

As pointed out above, interviewees dealt in different ways with the imposition of Spanish at school, either through resistance by leaving school, or through appropriation by finding ways to adapt to the linguistic situation at school.

Interviewees Elodia, Soledad, Hilario and Juan attended these Spanish immersion programs when they were young; all four have Purepecha as their first language. During our conversations the first three mentioned having Spanish as the main and only language of instruction at school, while Juan mentioned having teachers speak to him in Purepecha as well.

I asked these interviewees about their experiences while attending elementary school as well as about their experiences with their continued Spanish learning after leaving their hometown. Some discussed the ways in which their teachers reprimanded them when they were not able to understand the class content in Spanish and sought help from their classmates, while others underscored how they were able to succeed in school only after resorting to more proficient Spanish speaking classmates; for some the real challenge of speaking Spanish began after they left their hometown and were obliged to interact with Spanish speakers, which was when they felt they learned the most. Their stories provide insights into the resistance and appropriation processes that speakers of an indigenous language experience when learning Spanish as the dominant language in Mexico.

Since the interviewees in this section shared their experiences as Purepecha speakers immersed in Spanish-only language classes, this section further illustrates some of the power relations experienced in the classroom between teachers as speakers of Spanish and Purepecha students.

A first example of a resistance and appropriation process towards acquiring Spanish is the case of Elodia, who struggled during her elementary school years in her Spanish-only school program and later as a form of resistance ended up leaving school. The reasons that Elodia did not want to continue going to school when she was young were because her teachers spoke a different language than her own and because her teachers would hit Elodia and other students when they did not understand the class content; as a consequence, Elodia ended up leaving school:

“Yes, because we.... since the teachers spoke in Spanish [to us], one did not understand what they were saying and I would think ‘What could that mean?’ [When we did not understand] our classmates would tell us. Yes, they would tell us and we would ask each other, whether the teacher meant this, and such” “[However] if we did not understand then they [the teachers] would hit us. Because in the past, teachers were very, oh, no... If you were to slightly turn to ask your classmate something, they would throw things at you and such. Yes... like an eraser or a stick, and they would smack us with it (laughs). And yes, that is the reason one would not want to go to school sometimes because you were afraid of the teachers and because you would not understand because they were speaking Spanish. I did not want to go [to school] because they spoke another language and I did not know much [how to speak it]. If you were to understand at that young age, you would be afraid, instead, right (sic)?”

Elodia’s story also illustrates some of the power relations that occurred within her classroom, where teachers who were speakers of Spanish, the dominant language exerted their power also by physically punishing students who did not comprehend the content and as were speakers of the minority language, Purepecha. Thus, Elodia was not only

afraid of going to school because she did not understand what her teachers were saying in Spanish, but also because she was afraid to ask her teachers and peers for clarification out of fear of being sanctioned and physically punished for it. Furthermore, Elodia's lack of comprehension also affected her performance in class as she had a hard time reading her textbooks and doing her homework. Finally, since Elodia constantly found herself struggling at school with a language she did not understand, she felt unmotivated and left school having finished only the third grade.

Elodia's decision to leave school as an act of resistance reveals the power relations that were linguistically and institutionally imposed, where those who did not adapt to this education system were consequently expelled from it.

Nonetheless, even though Elodia resisted the imposition of Spanish at school when she was young, later in life, she was obliged to learn it, as she left her hometown to work in the farm fields where Spanish was again the dominant language. Thus, later in life Elodia was faced with learning the dominant language in order to communicate at work outside her community. Elodia now blames herself for leaving school and not being "completely" fluent in Spanish or fully literate in this language, attributing this to the fact that she left school at an early age; this further illustrates the emotional consequences of this linguistic imposition for her.

When Elodia began working in the farm fields in Sinaloa, Mexico, away from her Purepecha town, she continuously found herself interacting with Spanish speakers, when buying goods at the local convenience store, or when speaking with other coworkers; this compelled Elodia to increase her Spanish proficiency. At first, her father-in-law would write on a piece of paper in Spanish things for her to buy at the store, and Elodia would

give the clerk the paper to read, later Elodia began increasing her proficiency through these interactions.

Finally, Elodia considers that her experience also influenced her decision to speak mainly in Spanish to her two younger children, so that they would not struggle at school as she did.

Soledad had a different experience from that of Elodia's; it was not one of resistance but of appropriation. Unlike Elodia, Soledad never experienced physical abuse from any of her teachers and when I asked her if her teachers helped her with her Spanish at school, she pointed out that they had to help her in any way they could: "Well, they tried to teach us, right? Since my first language is Purepecha, well [I learned Spanish] little by little. They taught us how to write, read and everything. Because they also knew that it was a small town and that we did not know [Spanish]." Soledad's experience at school seemed to be more encouraging and one of appropriation of the language imposed in the school system than of resistance. According to Soledad, her teachers were helpful with her learning and were understanding towards her lack of knowledge in Spanish. Moreover, Soledad also mentioned that her teachers actually did know how to speak Purepecha: "They had to know how to speak [Purepecha] because there were sometimes children that did not understand [Spanish]. Or they asked them, or I don't know how they did it. But, yes they [the teachers] tried."

In contrast to Elodia, Soledad felt that her teachers were helpful and that they did use Purepecha to communicate with their students in order to help them out. Thus Soledad explained that going to school was something she actually enjoyed doing. In her

opinion, going to school was something that required making an extra effort, even more so, because her parents were not proficient in Spanish:

“When one wants to go to school, you try [hard], right? And since neither my mother nor my father spoke Spanish, well [I] tried to do it or tried to understand it. That’s the way it was, but well... [However I could] I tried to answer [my homework]. I tried to answer it. I didn’t fare well every time, but I tried to do it, just because I wanted to go to school. I liked going to school very much.”

Soledad made efforts to succeed on her own and she was not discouraged by the fact that she did not always fare well at school. Accordingly, Soledad managed to finish her entire elementary school education, although she did not continue with her secondary studies. One of Soledad’s strategies to navigate the school system was to seek help from her peers with higher Spanish proficiencies in order to get through her classes. Soledad’s experience in this sense, however, contrasted with Elodia’s since her teachers did not sanction her or her classmates when she asked for clarification from her peers; we can also speculate that perhaps Soledad was merely not one her teachers’ targets:

“Well I used to hang out with a friend. I used to hang out with a friend who spoke more Spanish [than I did], because her family spoke a lot of Spanish. And so I would ask her ‘What did the teacher say?’ [And she would say]: ‘-The teacher said this’. And yes, well out of luck I had a friend who spoke Spanish.”

Also, unlike Elodia, Soledad relied on her peers with higher Spanish proficiencies in a sustained way, which made her feel lucky as she had someone at school she could count on linguistically. Soledad might not have been able to get through school if not for her peer’s help. However, the fact that Soledad had to seek the help of others with higher

proficiencies in Spanish in order to succeed in school also positioned her at a lower linguistic status in class and at a disadvantage compared to peers with higher Spanish-speaking proficiencies, thus despite Soledad's success at school, her achievements were measured and determined by her ability to appropriate the language of instruction at school, which was different than her home language. This, nonetheless, did not discourage Soledad from finishing her education or from rejecting the imposition of Spanish at school altogether.

Hilario, Elodia's older brother, elaborated on how he believed that the use of Spanish as the main language of instruction when he was in elementary school was in fact a subtractive practice whose purpose was to prepare children at school to leave the community and continue their studies elsewhere: "At the time when I went to school they [the teachers] didn't teach much Purepecha, like I said. So what they were trying to do is for people to learn Spanish so that they could leave town to go study, right? That is why they tried teaching people Spanish."

As Hilario points out in the example above and as was mentioned previously in chapter 4 the purpose of the Hispanization policies enforced in Mexico at the time when he was in elementary school was to increase the educational level of indigenous language speakers. However, as we can appreciate in Elodia's testimony and experience, these Hispanicizing educational policies in Mexico were also harmful for students' academic achievement, thus Hilario's teachers did not make any effort to ensure that children would understand what was being taught in Spanish, and he considered that as a consequence, children would continually have to repeat a year: "In my hometown a lot of people would repeat year. Back then at school, one would repeat year up to three or four

times and stay behind in the same class. I had the experience of being with people that [when I was] in fifth grade, they had already been there for three or four years, in fifth grade. And [even more when] I graduated that year, I left them behind to repeat another year.”

Even though Hilario was successful during his elementary school years, he only finished the fifth grade because he did not have the means to continue going to school. Like his sister Elodia, Hilario regretted not being able to finish school, since he wanted to “at least become a teacher,” an aspiration that he felt made him stand out from his peers: “Even though a lot of people [did not want to go to school] I did want to go to school. I wanted to at least become a teacher. Yes, I wanted to but it didn’t happen for me.”

As in the case of Soledad, Hilario felt motivated to continue going to school, but his aspiration was cut short, as he lacked the economic means to continue with his education. It is unclear whether Hilario viewed the Hispanicizing linguistic policies at his school from a positive or a negative perspective; however, it seems that for Hilario since the ultimate goal of having Spanish as the main language of instruction was to further children’s education as long term goal, then Spanish-only instruction was justified; thus, whether his attitude was one of resistance or of appropriation is somewhat unclear.

During Hilario’s last visit to his hometown Cheranastico eight years ago, he was able to witness how children were now learning Purepecha at school as part of their school program, and he was proud to find out that one of his granddaughters was now learning Purepecha at her school.

Even though Hilario’s classes at school were all in Spanish, Hilario feels that it was not enough for him to become sufficiently proficient in that language, and that he

actually began increasing his proficiency on his own after he left his hometown for work, as his sister Elodia did, through his interactions with Spanish speakers. At a very young age, Hilario left his hometown to work in the farm fields in Colima, and later in the farm fields of Sinaloa, Mexico.

However, Hilario did not feel confident about his Spanish proficiency at first and he would stay away from people who were speaking Spanish in order to listen-in on their conversations: “Well, the first time I left my hometown, I tried not to get too close to people. [I tried] to stay away from people. Why? Because they were saying things that I did not understand. So, what did I do? I would stay away and sit by myself. Apart from others... Then I tried to [understand] what they were saying and started listening and thinking about it [like]: ‘The other day, he said this, or it was like that, so that means this and this.’ And so, little by little, yes...”

The fact that Hilario felt the need to increase his comprehension of Spanish on his own further reveals his sense of vulnerability with regards to being targeted as a non-native Spanish speaker and his probable fear of being discriminated as an indigenous language speaker. Thus, Hilario, timidly increased his comprehension by listening-in on Spanish speakers’ conversations.

The fact that Hilario had to learn Spanish naturalistically at that stage in life also illustrates the economic disadvantages that he had as a Purepecha speaker, not only because he had to learn the dominant language for economic mobility purposes but also because there were no appropriate Spanish as second language resources available or accessible for him at the time. Thus, his case further illustrates the way Spanish as a dominant language not only represents a linguistic hierarchical differentiation over

indigenous languages, it also represents the social inequalities that indigenous language speakers have had to undergo and overcome in order to survive, socially, academically and economically. Lastly, in increasing his Spanish proficiency Hilario never resorted to the use of a dictionary or any other SLA institutionalized tool, which also suggests that these resources might not have been readily available for him.

Finally, similar way to previous interviewees, Juan also had his first contact with Spanish when he began elementary school, although he pointed out that his teachers would speak to him mainly in Purepecha and not Spanish. His experience was a bit surprising and different, given that it contrasted with other interviewees' testimonies. Thus, even though Juan mentioned that his teachers would speak to him in Purepecha and Spanish, he did not learn how to read and write in Purepecha, as his teachers did not teach this at school. However, he did acquire this ability in Spanish: "We didn't learn much [how to read and write] in Purepecha, only in Spanish. And I think that is the reason the majority of people do not know how to write in Purepecha... they did know how to speak it but they could not write it. But now, they are teaching Purepecha at school, so that [children] can write it and speak it well."

Unfortunately, Juan did not elaborate more on his experience at school and I was unable to ask about it in more detail. Thus, it is not clear whether his school experience was a positive or a negative one. However, his personal story adds to the previous ones in that it seems that Purepecha children who attended elementary school became literate mainly in Spanish and not Purepecha, and furthermore felt they did not fully learn Spanish at school but increased their proficiencies once they began interacting with more proficient Spanish speakers outside their hometowns.

With regards to instances of resistance, we found that Elodia did not want to go to school because her teachers spoke only Spanish in class, which was not her first language. Elodia also felt constrained from seeking help from her peers who were more proficient in this language. Thus Elodia not only felt frustrated with her learning but also abused by her teachers who also physically punished her when she did not understand; because of this, Elodia left school.

Soledad, on the other hand, felt motivated about going to school, although she was also taught in Spanish, she felt that her teachers were supportive towards her; she was also able to rely on her peers for help. Soledad not only enjoyed school, she stayed and finished her basic education.

Lastly, Hilario witnessed how the usage of Spanish by his teachers hindered other Purepecha students' learning and stopped them from advancing in their studies. Even though Hilario continued with his education, the injustice of this situation marked his perception of the usage of Spanish at school, where children who were mainly Purepecha speakers were taught in a language that was hard for them to understand.

The linguistic and academic disadvantage of Purepecha speakers, and their resistance and appropriation processes towards Spanish reveal the struggles that Purepecha have undergone in their relation with the dominant language; their struggles are also revealed by the complexities of becoming Purepecha-Spanish bilinguals that interviewees underwent individually, as postcolonial dynamics that illustrate the language shift process that occurs among the Purepecha community.

It is also imperative to point out the reality that Spanish as a dominant language also represented a socioeconomic mobility asset that allowed interviewees later in life to

communicate with Spanish speakers after leaving their hometowns for work purposes, both in Mexico and the U.S., after immigrating.

As a final point, it is important to emphasize how these testimonies illustrate some of the academic problems that indigenous language speakers immersed in subtractive bilingual programs experienced. Their testimonies should help counter popular beliefs about indigenous language speakers' lack of interest in education, when in reality the education system itself has failed to provide an adequate learning environment for Purepecha and other indigenous language speakers. As we were also able to see from interviewees' testimonies, those that did not finish their education also blamed themselves for not succeeding in school or for not having acquired a higher fluency in normative Spanish or Spanish literacy; this sentiment also reflects the postcolonial situation within the Purepecha community towards the imposition of Spanish.

8.3 Learning English as a second or third language

With interviewees' immigration to the U.S. in search of better life opportunities also came the need to learn English, the dominant language of this country. While some interviewees began learning this language once they migrated to the U.S., others had their first contact with English in Mexico, whether by studying it at school as one of their language requirements or by learning it from relatives who had learned English while working temporarily in the U.S. Still others who were born in the U.S. or immigrated there during childhood began learning English at a young age at school there. This last group of interviewees experienced resistance and appropriation processes similar to those of interviewees that attended Spanish only classes in Mexico, as discussed in the previous section. For this reason, this section is separated into two subsections, in which I describe

learning English during childhood at school as an immigrant child, and learning English in Mexico both formally at school and informally from relatives who had immigrated to the U.S. Because learning a language outside of the school setting entails a different learning process, one that involves learners' motivation and investment in learning this language, this second section focuses on learners' investment in learning English.

8.3.1 Experiences learning English as an immigrant child

Three of my interviewees were raised in the U.S. However, they began learning English only after they began going to school there when they were young. For these interviewees Spanish was the main language of communication in the home and their first language, while Purepecha was the language spoken by either their parents or other relatives. Because these Purepecha heritage speakers had Spanish as their first language they learned English at school, in the immersion programs in the U.S. For this reason, as was mentioned above, their experience is comparable to that of Purepecha learners of Spanish, who were also faced with a linguistic imposition during their school years and went through a similar process of resistance and later appropriation. However, in contrast to learners of Spanish, these interviewees had more resources available to learn English, including tutoring and help from teachers who provided advice to children and their parents.

Jessica and Ileri began learning English when they started attending kindergarten and later elementary school. Omar, who finished his elementary school education in Mexico and came to the U.S. when he was twelve years old, began learning English when he started attending secondary school in the U.S.

When at a young age, these interviewees were faced with learning English, they sometimes manifested different forms of resistance, whether because they feared being judged by more proficient speakers, or they felt anxiety about separating from their home as young children.

An example of this is Jessica's resistance to learning English when she was a child, because she did not want to go to school. Fearing that her parents would send her off to school, as a strategy Jessica resisted learning English. However, once Jessica was in school, she felt that learning English was imperative as other children mocked her for not being able to speak it:

“Yes, I learned English through the TV. [But] I did not want to learn English. I didn't learn until when I was six years old, [I was] forced to. Because I did not know what to do, I did not want to go to school and thought that if I did not learn English they could not make me go, because [that way] I would not understand what people were saying. But it didn't work out. It didn't work ((laughs)) Yes, so they [my parents] sent me to school anyway. The kids there would make fun of me because I would not understand anything, [they thought] that I was dumb. And so, in the end, I began to...”

Jessica at an early age found a way to resist learning a language that was different from the ones spoken at her home, Purepecha and Spanish, and different from the language (Spanish) that her parents spoke with her. However, after she was faced with the mockery of her peers at school, she began learning English. In a sense, Jessica began learning English as a way to avoid being stigmatized and ostracized at school, for not speaking the dominant language. Jessica's initial resistance to learn the dominant language later subsided, as she felt confronted by the dominant language speakers.

In Ileri's case, on the other hand, the main language used at home was Spanish and not Purepecha, and she recalls her experience learning English as a struggle when she began her elementary school studies; she blames her problems on her family's need to continuously move because of work, as her mother was a farm worker:

“[My experience learning English] was very hard because, since my mother was a farm worker, we used to move around a lot between different states. [...] so when I began school I was moving around every three to six months. I did not stay much in a single school and I was not learning much. I did not retain much of what I was learning, especially the [English] language. I tried learning it during my first two years but it was very hard and I also remember other children making fun of me. Because, for example, I did not know how to pledge the American flag and could not always say the right words, or I changed the words around, and so I was ashamed and I did not want to learn. I would sort of enclose myself within and I felt isolated because they would make fun of me. So I had to go through kindergarten twice because I was not retaining English”

Since Ileri's family was constantly moving because of her mother's work, it was not easy for her to learn English. Furthermore, because she was a non-native English speaker other children who were speakers of the dominant language mocked her and made fun of her fluency. And in addition to this, since Ileri failed to exhibit what other children valued as linguistic markers of an American identity, such as being able to pledge the flag in “proper” English, they did not accept her. This situation made Ileri feel insecure about her English proficiency and because of this, she struggled even more with the language.

The struggles that Ileri had with her English acquisition also had a major impact in Ileri's family's decisions in relation to work. On one occasion one of Ileri's teachers told her mother that since Ileri was not learning much English, she might have to repeat year. As a consequence Ileri's mother decided to stop moving, as she considered it a priority to invest in her daughter's English acquisition, to the point of changing her work habits and risking the family's economy. Thus, Ileri's mother considered that for her daughter, learning English was a valuable asset for her wellbeing.

Ileri now considers that because she was able to stay in a single school she was able to improve her English proficiency. She also received additional ESL tutoring from a program called 'Migrant Education,' which provided individualized bilingual attention to children and parents with an immigration background.

Similar to Jessica, as a child Ileri underwent a process of resistance to learning English; however, her resistance originated from the fact that Ileri was mocked by other children at her school for not being able to speak the language fluently and not because, as in Jessica's case she did not want to attend school. In the end, both Jessica and Ileri appropriated the language and continued with their post-secondary education.

Omar had a somewhat different experience as he began to learn English when he was twelve years old, after he and his family moved back to the U.S. Omar obtained a scholarship to study in a private secondary school in Los Angeles. However, up until then he had not studied English at all. In the U.S. all his classes were full immersion courses in English and because of this he was having trouble comprehending what was said in class. It was not until a Spanish teacher at his school suggested that he attend her class that he began learning English, via the English-Spanish translations provided in his textbook for

Spanish as second language learners. Furthermore, since he was the only Spanish speaker at his school, his program did not include bilingual classes:

“I was the only Latino at school and obviously, it was not like in Latino communities where you have bilingual classes. There it was the contrary, all of my classes were in English and I had only one in Spanish. One of the Spanish teachers, she was the one who recommended me to take the Spanish class... and logically I wanted to take a language that was not Spanish, like French, you logically want to learn more languages, but she told me: ‘No, take the Spanish class because it will be helpful for you.’ And she was right, because everything was in Spanish but it had English translations, so if you wanted to know how to say ‘table’, it was also there in Spanish. So, in a sense, I learned it the opposite way. I learned what the cognates were. And I think that is why when I became a teacher, because I was in a school where ninety per cent [of the content] was in English and ten per cent in Spanish, that I gained respect towards languages.”

In Omar’s case, the challenge of learning English when immersed in an English-only school program was later remediated by taking a Spanish class for second language learners of Spanish. Omar’s initial reaction to his teacher’s suggestion that he take that course was that of resistance, as he wanted to invest in learning a different language than the one spoken at home. But as his Spanish class progressed, Omar felt that the translations provided in his textbook were useful. However, he was only able to acquire English through a language course that was not designed for second language learners of English, but of Spanish. Thus, ironically, even though Omar had obtained a scholarship to attend a private secondary school, he was not provided with the appropriate means to succeed linguistically in this program. Omar's appropriation process of the English

language occurred only after he found the support of one of his teachers, and devised his own method to master the language using a text for students of Spanish as a second language.

To summarize, in the English immersion learning context, interviewees also underwent a process of resistance and appropriation towards the language imposed at school. On one hand, while Jessica resisted learning English because she did not want to attend school, but after being mocked by her peers at school, she felt compelled to appropriate the language. Jessica's objective of learning the language became a way of protecting herself from other children's mockery. On the other hand Ileri resisted learning English as a result of being mocked by her peers her lack of fluency, but later appropriated the language as she found herself in a more stable academic environment when her family stopped moving for work.

All three interviewees became fully proficient in English and acquired a higher education and even graduate degrees. Thus appropriating English and investing in learning it provided them with opportunities to attain a higher education in the U.S., in contrast to interviewees in the previous section, who did not continue their studies after acquiring the dominant language, Spanish.

8.3.2 Experiences learning English in Mexico and as an adult in the U.S.

Eleven interviewees went to school in Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. as adults. In the U.S. these interviewees did not continue their post-secondary education but some of them studied English via adult ESL courses; others learned English on their own as independent language learners, through organized study with peers, from relatives and friends, and/or through their everyday interactions with English speakers in the U.S.

Investment in learning English varied greatly among interviewees. Among the motivations and reasons that interviewees had to invest in learning this language were: passing an American citizenship test, communicating with co-workers and/or clients, and wanting to communicate with English speakers in general in the U.S.

Some of them talked about the contrasting attitudes and investment efforts towards their English learning when they were in Mexico, where English was a course requirement at school, versus their need to learn this language and attitude towards it after they came to the U.S.

Interviewees like Justino and Humberto, who are Purepecha heritage speakers and grew up in Mexico in a home where Spanish was the dominant language, began studying English when they were in high school back in Mexico; there, they considered English merely as a required class to graduate. Thus investing in learning English when they were young was not an appealing endeavor, it did not represent or symbolize an economic mobility asset, nor was it seen as a potential medium to become part of an imagined community (Norton and Pavlenko. (2007); moreover, English was not a dominant language in Mexico either, and thus it was not institutionally imposed. However, all of this changed after Justino and Humberto immigrated the U.S.

Justino described his experience learning English as a merely instrumental and de-contextualized practice when he was in high school:

“Over there in Mexico, English, is just like any other subject. You only [learn] sentences like, ‘good morning’, but not conversation. This was in Mexico during high school, but not here. Here is where I actually taught myself [...] Here [in the U.S.] I went to school. I went to an adult school but I only finished the third grade, and that’s how I’ve

experienced it. Sometimes I enroll myself [in an English class] and sometimes I drop out because of work. But it's important, yes it's important and I need to learn more English. [...] I would say I [know] as much [English] as Tarascan (Purepecha). For example, if they show me a picture of a man on the beach, [I can describe it] 'He is in the beach', and I can continue 'The men (sic) is working in the...' and other sentences like these that I can say in English."

As we can appreciate from Justino's testimony, once he came to the U.S. he became engaged in learning English and invested in it; he enrolled himself in an adult school for ESL learners and managed to complete the first three grades; he also taught himself after leaving school and the only reason he stopped attending his ESL class was because of his work schedule. Justino does not consider that he has acquired great fluency in English. He considers himself to have as much proficiency in English as in Purepecha. Finally for Justino, investing in learning English was not something he sought out before coming to the U.S., as immigrating to the U.S. was something that he probably did not foresee when he was young.

Humberto also began learning English in Mexico when he was in secondary school, but in a similar way to Justino, he mentioned that it was just another language requisite at school:

"Well, over there in Mexico when I was in school, we did have some English courses, in secondary school. Of course, it's not THE English, but it is a class that you have to take, yes. [In the U.S.] I became interested and went to a school to learn [English] at an evening school, an ESL program, English as a Second Language. It was hard because it was something that one would practice at school and listen to in the streets and it was

hard at first... But [I did it] only for a while. I could not continue because of the type of work that I had. My English is not perfect, the way I see English, I think that I have only around sixty percent proficiency.”

According to Humberto, because English was just another language requirement for him at school when he was young, and because he only heard spoken English was during that class, he lacked a personal interest in learning it. Thus, for Humberto, investing in learning English was not a priority. However, after immigrating to the U.S. Humberto, in a similar way to Justino, enrolled in an ESL program because he wanted to be able to communicate more with people in the U.S., especially in order to be able to request services. For Humberto, after he came to the U.S. investing in learning English became an imperative endeavor because he wanted to be able to communicate and as a way also to incorporate to the dominant language speaking English community in the U.S.

For other interviewees who had close relatives already coming back and forth to the U.S., investing in learning English was something that they began to do when they were young before immigrating. These were interviewees mainly from Cheranastico who learned English words and phrases from relatives who had been in the U.S. before them. However, once in the U.S. none of them attended ESL courses probably also due to a lack of resources for ESL speakers in their surrounding community.

One of these interviewees was Jesus, who stated that he began learning English from his father while he worked on and off temporarily in the U.S. for several years. Jesus did not study English at school back in Mexico, like Justino and Humberto, nor has

he ever enrolled in ESL classes in the U.S., and he learned English mainly through family members and coworkers.

Jesus pointed out that at the beginning his father would teach him “easy” words and phrases, but that he would feel discouraged with his progress. His father nevertheless encouraged him to continue learning:

“When I was in Mexico, my father used to teach me some words. Since he would come [to the U.S.] and go back [to Mexico] he already knew a little English and he would teach me the easiest words, right? ((laughs)). Like how to say ‘thank you’ and such things like ‘good night’ [,] greetings and the names for vegetables and fruits. And yes I was learning little by little, yes. And I would tell him ‘-I don't think I am ever going to learn.’ And he would tell me ‘-Yes you are going to learn little by little.’ Because my first year here [in the U.S.], I wanted to learn fast, right? ((laughs)) I wanted to learn fast and he would tell me ‘-Yes, you are going to learn little by little’. And that is how I learned, working with people, like that and listening to words and [figuring out] ‘No, this means this’ and so I would ask them. But yes, I never studied it. That is I never went to school. I learned it at work, the little [English] I know.”

Because of the close relationship that Jesus had with his father, who had been coming regularly to the U.S. when Jesus was young, he began investing in learning English at an early age, probably because he foresaw himself immigrating to work in the U.S. as his father did. Once in the U.S. Jesus continued learning English from his coworkers, who sometimes corrected him: “Because Americans... yes, if one does not, if one does not speak English and to say, does not pronounce it well, they correct you. And

that is how one starts learning it... well yes... [I would think]. I did not do it right, but I will say it better next time, and so on, that is how it happened.”

Thus after learning initially from his father, Jesus, then began learning from his co-workers, who would model for him how to pronounce normative English. This also illustrates how Jesus was open to receiving corrective feedback from speakers of English as a way to incorporate him into the dominant English speaking community.

In contrast to his own learning, Jesus also mentioned that his brother was more determined to learn English and in fact had told himself that he would learn it in five years. His brother would teach himself through books and dictionaries and would study during the evenings. Because of this, Jesus considered himself to be not as bright as his brother: “[My brother] would make an effort... he would study, and buy dictionaries and would study every evening, and he learned like that. And I didn’t because I was more of a dunce ((laughs)), [I would settle] only with what stuck with me.”

Despite evaluating himself as a less bright learner, it is important to emphasize the importance of Jesus’ investment in interacting with speakers of English and his openness towards it; through this anecdote we can also see that Jesus considers that his investment in learning English was not as vast as that of his brother, who resorted to the aid of dictionaries and ESL books and would also engage in active autonomous learning. Nevertheless, we cannot compare their proficiencies or their experiences as I was not able to interview Jesus's brother.

Like Jesus’s brother, Hilario also invested in learning English by himself, sometimes by trying to figure out meaning through context but also through organized learning activities with his peers. Hilario began learning English only after he came to the

U.S. When he lived in Mexico, he would hear other people who had worked in the U.S. and came back to the community speaking English, and it made him feel angry. He does not understand why he felt angry, but after he came to the U.S. he realized how necessary this language was. Thus after three years in the U.S., Hilario and some of his friends started teaching themselves:

“And so there we tried teaching ourselves, right? We bought dictionaries and yes for English. And we even bought a blackboard and [we improvised a classroom] where we lived... [We would say] 'Let's do it!' It was not the same as going school, but among us... We would teach ourselves, little by little, little by little, we would teach ourselves. In fact, when I was in Mexico, I did not know the alphabet very well. No, I would get stuck, I did not know it, but in English I got it quickly. I did not get myself around it [in Spanish], but here [in English] I paid more attention, yes. But yes, here we would go to the black board and [we would say] 'Let's do it!' ((laughs)).”

Hilario and his friends taught themselves English with this method for over a month, he was 25 at the time. Before that, since Hilario worked in the farm fields, English was not as necessary for him, so he did not put much effort in learning it. Back then he knew how to say 'hi' and how to ask for things when he wanted to buy something. For him, it was enough to be able to count money, but he did not learn much because he worked long hours. After his lessons with his friends, Hilario has not formally studied English again, and he currently resorts to listening-in on peoples' conversations, as he did when he was learning Spanish, and relying on other people who explain to him what things mean and how to say them. “Well, just by listening, working around people here. They nevertheless tell you, '-I said this'. Or if one is not understanding something

[they tell me] ‘-This is called this.’ Little by little. I don’t speak too much [English] but yes, now, [I do] more or less.”

According to Hilario he is now able to understand almost everything when someone talks to him on the streets in English or when he has to buy something; however, his English literacy is low.

Among this group of interviewees, women seemed to be less invested in learning English, except when they felt they needed the language for work. However, for those who were homemakers or had part-time jobs with little interaction with English speakers, learning English was not a central concern. On the other hand, most of the men invested in their English learning in one way or another.

For example, although Flor who learned English mainly to pass her American citizenship test would like to learn more English and to learn how to read and write it, and although she thinks it is important to learn how to speak and read and write English, the only time she went to school to learn it was when she was going to take this test. She thus, prepared for it and practiced answering the questions they might ask her during her exam at a community outreach program for people who are not completely fluent in English, but she did not continue studying the language after that, and she is not in much contact with English speakers in her everyday life.

On the other hand, Monica, who works at a food stand in Chicago and engages in continuous interaction with English speakers, has managed to acquire some pragmatic proficiency through her interactions with co-workers.

Before coming to the U.S., Monica also learned some English words informally from her father in Mexico when she was a young girl; as Monica's father used to come to the U.S. for temporary work and had learned a few words and phrases in English:

“I remember that my father used to say ‘OK’ all the time, and since I always used to ask him ‘-Dad, what are you saying?’ [And he would say] ‘-The thing is that well, over there at work, I used to tell this to my manager: ‘It’s fine. Oh, ok.’” So when he would ask me to do something [I would say] “Ok, it’s fine” (laughs). That’s what I remember.”

Monica also remembers when his father used to ask her mother to prepare him a meal, it could turn into an English lesson. On one occasion, since Monica’s mother did not know how to prepare a hamburger, she asked him how to make it and what the ingredients were called in English:

“And so my mother asked him ‘-How do they call the lettuce over there? ... at the place you go’ And my father said: ‘-Well they call it ‘leres.’” I remember he told her ‘leres’ or ‘letes’ ((laughs)). Since he did not know well [how to say it]. I always remember because I once told him: ‘-Dad, how do you call the cucumber (pickle)? If you say that the hamburger has cucumber. How do they call it?’ [And he would say:] ‘-They call it ‘pikos’.That’s how they call it right? [I would say:] ‘-Oh, ok’ ((laughs)). That’s all I remember”

Monica has never been to school to study English but she has relied on her older daughters to teach her some things and also on her co-workers, from whom she has increased her vocabulary and learned the basic English vocabulary needed at work. At her workplace she prepares hotdogs, hamburgers, salads and serves drinks or malts, among other things. Monica does not know how to read and write much in English, but

she can read the food orders. She is also able to have a basic conversation with her co-workers:

“[I know how to say in English] ‘How are you?’, ‘What did you do this weekend?’, ‘Did you go to a party?’ ((laughs)). If you went to a party, or why didn’t you come last week, or what did you eat. I can ask some things and answer others. Like today, a woman asked me ‘-Oh, you’re leaving?’ And I told her: ‘-Yes’ Or if she says: ‘-When will we see each other again?’ Yes, in English. So I told her, well ‘-Tomorrow, I’m coming to work’. I told her ‘tomorrow.’” At this point in the interview, Monica’s son intervened and whispered to his mother “Tomorrow, I am gonna go work”. To which Monica laughed.

Finally, Soledad has not formally studied English either, and she relies on her husband, who is more proficient in English, and on her children. She sees the need to learn English, because when she was hospitalized she was unable to ask for water and there was not always an interpreter. Because of this she sometimes watches TV in English, she finds it very hard to understand and learn this way. She says she can understand isolated words and phrases: “Well the basics, only ‘chair’, ‘water’, ‘table’, ‘bobby pin’, ‘television’ ‘song’. Not many things, but like I tell you, I cannot speak with another person in English.” Soledad is also able to understand some greetings and it was interesting that during our interview, even though she does not speak English, Soledad would use the English discourse marker ‘so’ with high frequency. However, it seems that Soledad might not be aware that she does this.

Soledad has not invested any additional particular efforts to increase her English proficiency, and it is not clear whether she intends to do so.

To summarize, interviewees like Justino and Humberto began formally studying English when they were in secondary school back in Mexico, however, since this was not a language continuously spoken in their surrounding community, nor was it a dominant language in Mexico, they did not invest much in learning it. In addition to this, Justino and Humberto viewed English as a mere language requirement at school. When they came to the U.S., however, both interviewees began actively investing in learning this language, as it represented potential economic gains, as well as a means to communicate with the surrounding English speaking community. Because of this, both men enrolled in ESL courses; however, it is not clear whether studying English directly brought about these benefits.

On the other hand, interviewees like Jesus and Monica began learning English from their respective fathers, before immigrating to the U.S. as both their fathers had temporarily immigrated to the U.S. for work. On one hand, Jesus's father would teach him basic words and phrases required to interact at a potential job site. On the other, Monica took the initiative to ask her father to teach her English words and phrases, as Monica was curious about the language spoken at her father's workplace in the U.S.

All the interviewees, only Hilario invested in creating his own formalized English learning environment, along with his peers, by creating an ESL learning environment where he and his peers would teach each other English. Their reason for discontinuing the English lessons is not clear.

8.4 Learning Purepecha as a heritage language

Out of the fourteen interviewees, eight were Purepecha heritage speakers, as they partially learned this language by hearing it occasionally from their parents and/or other

relatives, or members of the Purepecha community; their proficiencies varied, and while some had high listening comprehension skills, others knew only a few Purepecha words. For these interviewees, investing in learning Purepecha was not a common pursuit, in contrast to the investment, whether formal or not, that some interviewees' made in learning English or Spanish: meaning that learning Purepecha did not possess the same capital value as English and Spanish. However, the investment that interviewees made in learning Purepecha was in the form of direct and informal learning from other Purepecha speakers and in the form of listening comprehension practices when listening to Purepecha songs and Purepecha online radio stations.

Because literacy is not prevalent among the Purepecha community nor is it used as an institutionalized linguistic norming tool, Purepecha written literature is scarce. In fact most Purepecha heritage speakers considered it to be mainly an oral language and did not recall being in contact with Purepecha printed material, much less with Purepecha language learning material. Only one interviewee said that in order to increase his proficiency he resorted to printed material. Furthermore, availability or access to formal or institutionalized Purepecha lessons or classes is almost null, and none of the interviewees ever had Purepecha as the language of instruction at school, either in Mexico or the U.S.

If as Norton has pointed out, learners' investment in learning a language is partly related to their desire to belong to an imagined target community, the lack of investment in learning Purepecha among some interviewees might also index interviewees' little interest in becoming full fledged members of the community, or it may suggest that individuals associate their membership to the Purepecha community with other aspects

of the culture. One reason for a lack of investment in learning Purepecha may also well be that those who live outside of a Purepecha community in Mexico do not foresee a broader use of this language, as it is not considered useful for economic mobility purposes.

8.4.1 Purepecha heritage learners with low to zero proficiencies

Ileri has knowledge only of a few Purepecha words. Her parents did not know how to speak Purepecha since they also were Purepecha heritage speakers and grew up mostly speaking Spanish; however, since Ileri was raised by her grandmother until she was five years old, she was exposed to the Purepecha that her grandmother spoke to her as a child:

"Yes, my grandmother raised me until I was five years old. And yes, she spoke to me [in Purepecha] but I did not understand her or I didn't know that it was a different language. Just as [I didn't know] that they named me Ileri, [a Purepecha name]. Back then I did not know it was not Spanish. I used to think that they were the same, but they weren't. I didn't see any difference in them. So, she [my grandmother] would tell me things in Purepecha or in Spanish"

According to Ileri when she was young she was not aware that Purepecha and Spanish were two different languages; and even though her grandmother spoke to her in both languages, she did not learn much Purepecha.

When I asked Ileri if she had ever tried to learn Purepecha on her own she answered that because after she left her grandmother's house she listened to it only sporadically, she never considered learning it. In addition, her mother used to tell her that

they were mestizos, as it was more acceptable to be mestizo than indigenous. This made Ileri even more unaware of her indigenous Purepecha and Matlatzinca heritages:

"I listened to [Purepecha] occasionally from my grandparents, from my paternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother. Words here and there. Things, legends that they would tell us when we were little, but they never told us we are Purepecha and I am going to tell you this and it is going to be a Purepecha story. They just did it because it was part of who they were, part of what they wanted to share with their grandchildren. But I didn't even know that we were indigenous, or Purepecha, or Matlatzincas or anything. Until I was around thirteen years old I began asking about what culture we belonged to, whether we were Mexica... Ok, yes we were Mexican. But, what culture in Mexico did we come from? My mother used to tell me that we were mestizos but then I would wonder, why did my grandfather say that we were indigenous? And so, I began to ask more."

As Ileri points out, it was not until she was thirteen years old that she began to understand the complexities of her familial background and realized that she was not merely a mestiza, a person of mixed indigenous and European ancestry, but in fact Matlatzinca and Purepecha. Because of this, lack of knowledge about her heritage, when Ileri was a child she was not aware that her grandparents spoke Purepecha to her; furthermore her grandparents never acknowledged their Purepecha identity in an overt way either, as they considered themselves generically indigenous. When Ileri began to become aware of this situation she became interested in learning more about her background during her university studies.

With regards to the Purepecha language, Ileri also recognized that when her grandfather was alive, she never sought out the possible resources that he might have had in order to learn the language; after her grandfather passed away, this task became harder for her. However, even though Ileri did not invest much in learning Purepecha, she did invest in learning about the Purepecha culture, its politics, and Purepecha identity. She is currently actively reclaiming her Purepecha identity through her research about the Purepecha culture and traditions:

"But about the language well I never looked at the resources we had in order to learn it. My grandfather died during those years and I never found those resources. Later as a university student I became very interested in learning about the culture, about things. I have always been very interested in politics, identity and that is what I am studying about the [Purepecha]. About contemporary topics that the community is interested in."

In the end, Ileri has connected to the community through her research and identity as an indigenous woman scholar.

Humberto's parents were also Purepecha heritage speakers. They both spoke some Purepecha, but Humberto does not recall ever hearing them speak this language as he was growing up. He does not remember his siblings speaking in Purepecha to each other either, and the only words that he himself recalls in Purepecha were one of his niece's name, the word for avocado and the word for tortilla which at the time of our interview, he had a hard time remembering.

Humberto grew up in Morelia, the capital of the state of Michoacan, which is around 45 minutes away from the closest Purepecha town. Humberto does not know why his mother did not speak Purepecha to him, but he speculates that she did not like

speaking it, or that she was uncomfortable speaking Purepecha. For his part, Humberto was never interested in learning this language either:

"I remember, I don't know how, that my mom did not like to speak much [Purepecha]. Well, if she did not speak it, it was probably because she did not like it. But no, no, they never told us which language we should prefer speaking. No, at all. [...] And honestly, I never became interested. Honestly, no, no, I never became interested because maybe I just adapted to life in the city [Morelia]. That was it, and the [Purepecha] language was really not used there."

For Humberto, growing up speaking Spanish and not Purepecha was a normal occurrence, because he grew up in the state's capital. Since his mother did not speak this language to him, he never reflected on the fact that his parents spoke Purepecha and other relatives were able to speak it too. In addition to this, Spanish and not Purepecha was the main language used in the city where he grew up, so Purepecha was not a language that he heard everyday.

When I asked Humberto if he wasn't ever curious about learning Purepecha when he became an adult, he reiterated:

"Honestly, I didn't. I did not become curious and I didn't try to research about it either or to learn about some of the traditions or about where I come from, and all of that. No, I never tried, nor did I really become interested in it either."

Thus, contrast to Ileri, Humberto never became curious about learning the Purepecha language, nor did he become interested in learning more about the Purepecha traditions, or about his origin. Despite the fact that he was in contact with the language

when he was a child through Purepecha music and because whenever there were family gatherings, Humberto heard some of his relatives speaking the language:

"When I was a small child, I do not remember, but when I was older, I do remember that we bought some records that had some Purepecha songs. How do they call them? Pirekuas. Yes, but that was when I was older. [And] well for example when we had parties at my house, when one of my siblings, for example, would get married, we invited relatives or friends from our hometown to the city, Morelia, and I remember that they spoke that language, the one spoken there in our hometown, which was Tarascan [Purepecha]. That is, I would listen to Tarascan and Spanish at the same time during our parties."

Humberto does feel that if he had learned Purepecha when he was young, he would have done things to promote the Purepecha culture:

"I think that if I had learned it [Purepecha] and if I had been able to speak it, here [in the U.S.] it would have been useful for me... it would have influenced me in order to achieve something. [...] I don't know, like getting involved in activities, getting involved in activities that would have been helpful to improve the place where I come from [...] for example, to promote, to show that we also exist and that we still exist."

Humberto considers that if he had learned the language, it would have been a useful resource for him to promote the Purepecha culture, especially in the U.S.; thus in this example, Humberto recognizes the potential economic value that knowing a little known language in the U.S., might have had for him. However, when I pointed out to Humberto that he might also still be able to do it in Spanish or English, he hesitated and said:

"Well, I would need to think about it very well because, maybe I am now more focused on where I am now and what will come next. And I think that I haven't thought about that, about Tarascan (Purepecha). Instead I have focused more in learning English."

Humberto's hesitation about learning Purepecha and about promoting the Purepecha culture also further illustrates his current linguistic priorities, which are investing in learning English, as this is the language that will be most useful for him at work in the U.S.

During our last interview, I brought a Purepecha language textbook, to show to Humberto. As he was looking through it, I asked him what he thought about the book and about its content:

"Well, at this moment it is like a big emotion. At this moment it seems like it is not that hard and it seems interesting. I will try, I am going to try. [...] And well here, while browsing through the book I can see the name of my niece, who is called Erandani, which means 'sunrise'. Right?"

Even though it is not known whether Humberto will invest in learning Purepecha in the future, the fact that he became emotional when he held a Purepecha language textbook in his hands suggested that despite not having invested in the language, he does still have an emotional connection to his Purepecha identity, and he was able to recognize a familiar word: his niece's name.

In contrast, Flor grew up listening to people continuously speaking Purepecha, as she was raised in the Purepecha town of Cheran, Michoacan. However, her parents spoke to her mainly in Spanish; as a consequence Flor never became interested in learning the

language, but she does have a high enough proficiency to understand parts of a conversation in Purepecha:

"Well, as a child, as I was telling you, I did not speak much Purepecha. But my grandparents, they spoke it perfectly. I grew up surrounded by people who spoke Purepecha. But I did not do anything to learn it, but I can understand a conversation when people are talking. I can speak it... but it is like my English."

Flor also recalls that in her everyday life in her hometown of Cheran, greeting her relatives in Purepecha was a common thing for her to do; however, she did this mainly with relatives that were more proficient in Purepecha than Spanish.

Among the people that spoke Purepecha around Flor were her paternal grandmother and her aunts. Flor, however, usually replied to them in Spanish and she never became interested in learning Purepecha, despite her grandmother being fully proficient in the language and fully literate. In fact, since Flor's grandmother had converted to the Christian religion, she also preached in Purepecha to a group at her church.

Like Humberto, Flor attributes her lack of interest in increasing her Purepecha proficiency to the fact that she was raised speaking Spanish. However, she said that if she had the chance to do it now, she would try to learn it, as she would also like her grandchildren to learn Purepecha:

"Well, no [I was never curious]. Since we were raised like that [speaking Spanish], it never attracted our attention. But today, yes. I would like that for my grandchildren, to learn it. My grandchild, who is nine years old now, when he was younger, I used to sing to him in Purepecha. I would sing to him with the little Purepecha that I could. And it

seemed that he liked that type of music. But as he grew older, it stopped. But yes, I would like for him to learn Purepecha. [And currently] Yes, yes I would like to learn it. Both [to read and write] like in English. You see how one would like to learn to write it and speak it well, as well."

Despite not having a high proficiency in Purepecha, Flor currently teaches the little Purepecha that she knows to her son, who has become interested in learning it. Her son oftentimes asks her how to name things in Purepecha around the kitchen, like food items and utensils. Flor also regularly listens to Purepecha songs at her home and her family is involved in this activity. Interestingly enough, Flor also compares her possibility of learning Purepecha to the activity of learning English, viewing them as comparable endeavors.

In contrast to Ileri and Humberto, Omar grew up listening to both Purepecha and Spanish. However, like Ileri, he mainly heard this language from his grandparents and not directly from his parents, who were also heritage speakers themselves with partial proficiency in the language. Through Omar's conversations with his paternal grandmother and the Purepecha music that he listened to, he learned some of the Purepecha words and phrases that he currently knows:

"Spanish is my first language and Purepecha, I only listened to it from my grandmother. My father's mother, she spoke around 40% Spanish, but she spoke more Purepecha with my uncles. I listened to Purepecha music all the time. So I grew up with Spanish and Purepecha, and different [Purepecha] phrases that my grandmother used stuck with me and obviously through music, Purepecha music. When I was twelve years old I learned

English, and presently I am fluent in two languages [English and Spanish], and well Purepecha I still listen to it through the music."

Thus, not only were Omar's interactions with his grandmother important for him to learn some aspects of the language, but he also continuous to connect to the language by listening to Purepecha music. In fact, when Omar and his cousins were young they would actively try to imitate some of their grandmother's words and phrases that they were able to pick up from her speech in Purepecha:

"When I was approximately nine to twelve years old we would use some phrases that we heard [from her], that she sometimes used. Some phrases would stick with us from our conversations with our grandma and we would start saying these things sometimes without knowing what we were saying, just to imitate my grandma. Some phrases, more or less sentences. My grandmother was a very social person and she would like to share things. So she would always offer us something. And so I remember that, for example, she would tell us '-Nora wa?' Which means: 'Would you like some?' 'Would you feel like having some?' And since they [my relatives] were merchants, everything they bought, no matter whether they were little things, like for example, at dinner time, if she had tortillas left she would say: 'Nora wa, ich?' Which means: 'Would you like some tortillas?' And yes it was always like that and that remained recorded in me. That everything was a matter of offering..."

Given that Omar describes the way he and his cousins would try to imitate their grandmother's Purepecha speech in order to learn how to speak like her, it can be inferred that his cousins were also Spanish dominant speakers and that their parents most likely did not speak Purepecha to them. However, since Omar and his cousins would actively

engage in this learning activity together, we can also infer that they had an interest in learning the language that their grandmother spoke and in a sense, in communicating with her.

In summary, neither Ileri nor Humberto, was interested in learning Purepecha when they were young, and as adults they have not invested in learning the language either. On the one hand, Humberto, never became interested in learning the Purepecha language or about the Purepecha culture because according to him, he grew up in Morelia, where mainly Spanish was spoken; however, he reacted positively to the possibility of learning Purepecha in the future after I showed him the Purepecha language textbook. On the other hand, even though Ileri has not tried to actively learn Purepecha, she has searched for information about her Purepecha background and is currently engaged in research on the Purepecha history, politics and culture.

Flor, who grew up listening to Purepecha everyday in her hometown, never invested in actively learning Purepecha, as she grew up mainly speaking Spanish; despite this she has a somewhat high listening comprehension proficiency. Flor would like to increase her Purepecha proficiency.

Finally, Omar, was the only interviewee in this group to describe his investment in learning Purepecha when he was younger, as he tried to imitate some of the words and phrases that he and his cousins were able to distinguish from their grandmother's speech. Though he is not fully proficient nor he is able to currently learn from his grandmother, he still listens to Purepecha music at home as a way to keep in contact with the language. Thus, Omar's investment in learning Purepecha was due to an emotional and familial tie to his grandmother.

It is not clear whether Humberto, Ileri and Flor resisted learning Purepecha for fear of being stigmatized as potential indigenous language speakers, nor whether Omar, stopped studying this language for this same reason as he grew older; or whether because they didn't see it as a useful language.

8.4.2 Purepecha heritage learners with high proficiencies

Jessica grew up in the city of San Marcos, California, a city that belongs to San Diego county. Both of her parents are fluent Purepecha speakers; however they spoke to Jessica mainly in Spanish. Despite this, Jessica managed to acquire a high proficiency in Purepecha, namely by asking her parents to speak to her in this language.

However, other Purepecha heritage speakers in San Marcos are not as fluent in Purepecha as Jessica, and according to her, they are not interested in learning it either, as they consider that it is not a language "needed" in the U.S.

Jessica said that in contrast, she and her sister are interested in learning Purepecha and her parents are proud of this:

"Here in San Marcos [California], well, I don't think they care much about learning Purepecha because they don't need it here; but I am interested in learning it more. I don't know how am I going to do it [and] I only know my sister who, also wants to learn Purepecha. Because of this I always tell my dad '-Talk to us just like that and don't let us reply in Spanish' [My father] laughs and says; '-All right'. Yes. He feels very proud about us [learning Purepecha] in contrast to our cousins who don't care about it. My mom also laughs about it and says: '-All right. If you want to learn it, it's OK. [However] they don't say anything [about writing Purepecha] because they don't know how to do it either. They

can't read Purepecha. But they do read Spanish because they went to school and finished, I think, until the 9th grade."

Jessica is a highly proficient Purepecha heritage speaker who has mainly learned from her interactions with her parents. In fact, Jessica tutored my Purepecha independent language learning activities, but she does not feel as proficient as her parents, so she would continuously ask call her mother asking for clarification.

Jessica's parents usually spoke to her in Spanish, and Jessica was the one to ask her parents to speak to her in Purepecha, and her learning has centered on her verbal interactions with them in Purepecha. As Jessica points out, her parents have always acknowledged her interest in learning the language, and they seem pleasantly amused of Jessica's interest in learning Purepecha.

Even though Jessica is actively engaged in increasing her Purepecha proficiency, she does not associate this with formalized Purepecha instruction, especially since at the time this study was conducted, she was studying for a bachelor's degree in a different area. Thus, she considered her learning to be more of a personal experience:

"It is more personal because I am not focusing on any of that [for my bachelor's degree] but I would also be interested one day in [studying Purepecha grammar], but first I want to finish what I am doing now and then focus on Purepecha."

As a heritage speaker, Jessica does not feel good about her Purepecha proficiency, and she plans on taking her future children to her parents and grandparents to learn the language:

"Yes, yes. I don't feel like I am that good at speaking Purepecha but I am going to take my [future] children to my parents, so that they speak to them only in Purepecha. Or to my grandparents."

Because of the orality of the Purepecha language, in Jessica's projection of the future, she plans on taking her children to her parents in order to learn Purepecha, just as she also did.

Finally, according to Jessica, someone from another Purepecha community in San Diego contacted her father once because they were interested in him teaching a Purepecha class:

"One day they tried to contact my dad, by email. They wanted him to teach Purepecha but I don't know what happened to that idea. In the end, it was not done. I think this was going to be in San Diego to teach [there] because there is a group, I don't know where they are from, they are not from San Andres [Mexico]. But there is a group that speaks Purepecha that were interested in teaching Purepecha, and so they wanted my dad to help."

Justino is also a Purepecha heritage speaker. He has a high listening comprehension and is able to have a basic conversation in Purepecha. However, since he came to the U.S. he has not been able to practice as the language because he is not in contact with other fluent Purepecha speakers:

"I understand Purepecha. I understand it but I can speak just little of it. I have been... well, now I haven't had time anymore since I came to this country, so I have stopped practicing it because there is no other person with whom I can speak this same dialect

(sic) [in the U.S.] So that is the reason that if you ask me something now [in Purepecha]... I may be able to answer it."

Justino considers that Purepecha is a language that is engrained in his mind and he cherishes it as something he will be able to practice only once he goes back to his hometown:

"[I can speak] Purepecha and a bit of English as well. Yes. and Spanish, too. I am fluent in it and I can write it because it is the language I practice the most. As for work, English, only English for work. And Purepecha that one, definitely, there is no one [here to speak it with]. I have it only recorded in my mind. When I go back to Mexico, then I will be able to speak it there with the people who still speak it."

In his self-evaluation of his ability to speak Purepecha, Spanish and English, Justino associates Purepecha with Mexico and his hometown, where the people with whom he would be able to speak it live.

However, Justino has not only been a passive learner of the language. He has actually taught himself to read and write in Purepecha by using some of the books at his community's library:

"I tell you that there are books. There is a community library there and I would go there and since everyone in our town knows each other, I would tell them: '-I want... I don't know if you have here books about...' Or '-Where can I find them?' Or '-Should I go to the INI' (Instituto Nacional Indigenista). And so they had there like three books or so... I think there are probably more, but yes they had some. The important ones to have a conversation. Or [to learn] how to write this or how to write that, a lot of them. A lot of words. They are like dictionaries. But yes, that's it."

Furthermore, when Justino wanted to become a bilingual teacher, he decided that he wanted to learn more Purepecha, so he would ask his parents and other relatives to speak to him more in Purepecha in order to practice:

"Yes, when I wanted to become a teacher, well a bilingual [teacher]. That was when [I asked my parents to] speak to me in Purepecha and so then I would tell them. I would tell my mom: '-Speak to me [in Purepecha], mom' '-Tell me this' But it was too late because in fifteen days I was going to have to take the exam and I would see then... If I didn't pass it then I would not get the [tenure track teaching] job. And so [I would tell people] '-Everyone speak to me [in Purepecha].' I even went to older people than my mom, to the grandmothers, neighbors who were [older]. And so I remember well... Her name was Nana Pernalina. What a name! She would not speak a word of Spanish and yes I would try to go to her in the evenings, but this time with a specific interest, in order to see if I could practice more [...] And so I wanted to take a Tarascan (Purepecha) exam which was going to be oral as well as written. So they [the older Purepecha] would tell me everything. [We would have] conversations about everything that surrounded us. They would tell me '-Look, this is called this, and this, like that.' And '-It's like saying in Spanish this and that.' [...] And I also went to the library and there were like two or three rooms. Because there, there weren't many, [Purepecha] books in the town's library. There were like around four. I remember... And I would also ask them '-How do you say this or that.' But I never thought that the [exam] questions would only be two: 'Explain the rain process' and 'Explain the sowing time'. [Like] 'What do you need in order to sow?' 'Ok, I need the plow' But this in Tarascan (Purepecha). [Like] 'I need to plow the land in this month so that the rain and the humidity..' All of that but in Tarascan.'

Justino made a big effort to learn Purepecha in order to prepare for his exam. Not only did he ask his parents to speak to him in Purepecha, but he also resorted to older Purepecha speakers in his neighborhood as well as other relatives who were proficient in Purepecha. In order to increase his proficiency he focused on having verbal interactions with these speakers as a way to increase his vocabulary and practice his speech. Nonetheless, even though he practiced with others as a way to increase his Purepecha proficiency before taking his exam, he was not able to pass it. Furthermore Justino was disappointed about the focus of the exam, as he was only asked two questions in order to assess his proficiency, and he felt unprepared. We can infer that Justino did not make any additional efforts to increase his Purepecha proficiency or to re-take the exam, as he did not mention this during our interview, except for saying that after he moved to the U.S. he has not been able to practice it anymore.

Both Jessica and Justino made efforts to learn Purepecha and invested in learning this language by asking speakers with higher proficiencies in Purepecha to teach them; they resorted to oral and informal learning activities such as direct interaction and conversation. While Jessica asked her parents to teach her Purepecha, Justino asked older relatives and members of the community to help him.

Jessica and Justino invested in learning Purepecha out of their own curiosity to learn the language, and not especially because their parents were initially inclined to teach them this language, since both their parents spoke to them mainly in Spanish as they were growing up. In Jessica's case, her interest in learning Purepecha seemed to stem from an emotional connection to her parents and in a way a desire to belong to the broader Purepecha community as she grew up in the U.S., away from her parents'

hometown. As for Justino, his renewed interest in learning Purepecha when he lived in Mexico originated from his interest in becoming a Purepecha-Spanish bilingual teacher in his hometown, however, due to his lower proficiency as a heritage speaker, he was not able to obtain this job.

In summary, both these Purepecha heritage speakers learned the language because of their own interest in it; they did not seem to have an explicit academic purpose, except for the fact that Justino wanted to become a bilingual Purepecha-Spanish teacher in his hometown, which however, symbolized an economic mobility value. For Jessica, learning Purepecha did not represent an economic mobility asset, instead it symbolized the emotional connection to her family and with it a way to identify as a member of the broader Purepecha community.

8.4.3 Conclusion:

In this chapter we have seen how as suggested by Norton and Pavlenko (2007) language learners' real and desired membership towards specific imagined communities shaped their learning experiences in different ways, as reflected in learners' resistance, appropriation or investment in learning a specific language.

Instances of resistance such as Elodia's in her Spanish-only elementary school illustrate the consequences of imposing Spanish and some of the power relations that teachers as speakers of this language exerted over young Purepecha speakers; in a different experience, Soledad did not undergo such oppressing imposition of Spanish and her experience at school was a positive one.

By contrasting and comparing interviewees' individual experiences learning Spanish, English and Purepecha, we are able to understand the symbolic capital that

interviewees designated to these languages; by examining their resistance and appropriation processes we are also able to further understand the way interviewees relate to the usage and learning of dominant languages, as well as the hierarchical linguistic struggles and nuances of interviewees dealing with their multilinguality.

From a post-colonial perspective, Purepecha speakers have struggled with the usage of Spanish as the only language of instruction at schools, however, learning Spanish also represented the possibility to communicate with co-workers outside of their hometown both in Mexico and the U.S., as well as the possibility to attain literacy and access to education within the community, since both literacy and basic education were only provided in this language at the time interviewees attended elementary school. Thus, learning Spanish was also associated with a prospective access to a higher education and consequently better socioeconomic mobility opportunities. As we remember the case of Elodia who described with regret having left school when she was in the third grade because she considered that she had not learned enough Spanish, something she believed would have been helpful for her in the present.

As for learning English, its symbolic capital varied according to different contexts. First for those who studied it during secondary school in Mexico, this language did not possess a significant value, as interviewees considered it merely a language requirement. However, this changed once they immigrated to the U.S., where they actively invested in learning this language by attending ESL courses because it represented socioeconomic mobility opportunities as well as the possibility to communicate with speakers of the dominant language.

In contrast, interviewees such as Jesus and Monica, who learned English from their parents before coming to the U.S., were able to envision themselves as potentially becoming a part of the immigrant community in the U.S., as their first lessons were aimed at preparing them to communicate in the future with English speakers at work or with the broader English speaking community. Thus English had a different symbolic capital associated to immigration and better life opportunities before migrating. Once in the U.S., however, these interviewees did not invest in learning English formally but they did so by interacting with co-workers and by relying on feedback from their children who are more proficient in English.

With regards to Purepecha heritage speakers, for some, increasing their heritage language proficiency did not represent a high symbolic capital value, since Purepecha did not symbolize a potential economic mobility asset, neither in Mexico nor in the U.S. Furthermore, aside from Purepecha towns in Mexico, Purepecha is not perceived as being dominant language useful for everyday communication with a large population. Nevertheless, among the interviewees that did invest in learning this language, this was done when the possibility of being a fluent Purepecha speaker carried a potential economic benefit, for example, when Justino foresaw the possibility of becoming a bilingual teacher in his hometown. Purepecha's symbolic capital was also attached to emotional and identity ties, as interviewees like Jessica and Omar associated their Purepecha learning to being able to share the language that parents and other family members spoke.

In terms of imagined communities, it seems that Purepecha heritage speakers viewed the Purepecha community either as distant or invisible, or as closely linked to

emotional familial ties. While Purepecha L1 speakers view Spanish as a language that provides access to an imagined community linked to higher education in Mexico, the usage of Spanish in the U.S. might also include access to the broader Spanish-speaking Latino community.

Finally, different interviewees valued English in different ways. While in Mexico some associated it as a language tied to migration to the U.S., others considered it just a language requirement associated to a distant community. In the U.S. English was viewed as tied to the work environment and the possibility of attaining a voice to communicate in critical situations such as when Soledad felt the need to speak English when she was hospitalized.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Revisiting the status of the Purepecha language and usage among interviewees

There are approximately 105, 500 Purepecha speakers in Mexico, and the 2010 U.S. Census accounts for 2397 Purepecha in this country; of these only 437 acknowledge knowing how to speak the Purepecha language, however, this number could be higher. Given that the Mexican Census has no way of accounting for Purepecha identity versus Purepecha linguistic fluency, the number of Purepecha heritage speakers is difficult to estimate; thus, there is no accurate way of knowing how many Purepecha heritage speakers exist. Furthermore, even though we can conjecture that language shift is continuously occurring across the Purepecha community, currently, the rate of Purepecha language shift to either Spanish or English is unknown, also due to the fact that Census are conducted with long periods of time in between.

In order to learn about Purepecha language usage, maintenance and Purepecha, Spanish and English language learning at an individual level, this dissertation has examined the linguistic biographies of 14 Purepecha individuals, 8 of them with either high fluency or native speaker ability in Purepecha. I also interviewed 6 Purepecha heritage speakers with low proficiencies in Purepecha. For the first group of speakers, speakers with high Purepecha proficiency, I examined their experience using Purepecha and their decisions to teach the language to their children when applicable. For the second group, Purepecha heritage speakers, I examined their heritage language learning investments and reasons and motivations to learn the language or not.

As a result of the interviews I found that in the same way as in other linguistic communities in immigration situations, only those Purepecha speakers that were able to actively participate in other linguistic activities with Purepecha speakers, were able to continue using the language abroad and outside their Purepecha towns in Mexico. This was mostly the case of interviewees from Cheranastico that established themselves as an immigrant community in suburban Chicago. These interviewees are able to use the language on a day-to-day basis, with neighbors, relatives and other Purepecha speaking co-workers. In addition, they also maintain close ties to the community that help them reinforce their Purepecha identity and foster community cohesiveness, by organizing traditional celebrations in conjunction with their local Catholic church in the U.S., all of which enables Purepecha speakers to continuously use the language.

In contrast, half of the interviewees in Los Angeles did not maintain close ties with a close-knit Purepecha community or with individuals that have high proficiency in the language, as 1) they either related to other Purepecha that were heritage speakers themselves, or 2) they were not in contact with other Purepecha on a daily basis. Because of this, they were less likely to interact constantly with other Purepecha speakers and they participated only occasionally in Purepecha celebrations and traditions in Los Angeles. Among this last group of speakers were individuals whose spouses were of non-Purepecha background, and whose children had little contact with a Purepecha identity; these interviewees were also unaware of the existence of other Purepecha communities established in the U.S. Only three interviewees actively participated in annual Purepecha celebrations in Los Angeles, however, these festivities mainly celebrated Latino heritage

overall while featuring some Purepecha dances and Purepecha food, and did not celebrate the use of the Purepecha language.

Regardless of whether interviewees belonged to established Purepecha communities in the U.S. or not, most of them mentioned also staying in contact with the broad Purepecha community through the use of online resources such as web pages focused on promoting a Purepecha identity and online radio stations that broadcast Purepecha music, with the exception of two interviewees from Los Angeles.

With regards to language maintenance in the U.S., it is unknown whether organized efforts have been made to teach Purepecha to younger generations in this country as none of the interviewees mentioned their existence. However, there are several Purepecha communities established in California, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, New Mexico and North Carolina; community efforts to maintain the language in these communities have not yet been documented.

Ultimately, the Purepecha language is still largely an unknown language in the U.S. and there seemingly have not been any concerted efforts made to institutionalize its preservation in this country; bilingual school programs in the U.S. are not designed for children that are native speakers or heritage speakers of Purepecha. Furthermore, it is widely assumed in the U.S. that immigrants from Mexico and other parts in Latin America speak (only) Spanish; since indigenous Mexican languages have rarely been included at the institutional level, speakers of these languages remain invisible to American institutions. The above is further evidence of the continuous erasure that Mexican indigenous communities face and are subjected to, not only in Mexico, but also when immigrating to the U.S.

9.2 Ideologies about Purepecha, Spanish and English and their impact on speakers' usages of these languages

As language policies in Mexico promoted language shift of all indigenous languages to Spanish for centuries, they also promoted an institutionalized racialization of the speakers and their systematic discrimination. Despite a recent change in governmental language policies in favor of indigenous language preservation, ideologies around speakers of these languages are still imbued of negative stereotypes. We can still find these stereotypes in interviewees' stories when describing how non-indigenous Spanish speakers perceived speakers of Purepecha. These stereotypes included speaker racialization which included racialization of indigenous language speech as an unintelligible language, furthering ideologies that position indigenous language speakers as incomprehensible and thus as a racialized Other.

Language hierarchization in favor of Spanish and/or English was also a language ideology present in some interviewees' stories. Interviewees mentioned how these stereotypes and the fact that Spanish speakers have subjected Purepecha speakers to discrimination has provoked a sentiment of shame for speaking Purepecha, suggesting that these stereotypes have also impacted language usage and preservation among the Purepecha community.

Among other manifestations of language ideologies was the labeling of indigenous language speakers as *Indio*. Several interviewees mentioned how they experienced, witnessed or heard stories from their relatives of the usage of such terminology to discriminate against Purepecha speakers. This racialization as an *Indio* was used to stigmatize individuals that belong to an indigenous community, as something

to be ashamed of. Those that experienced such racialization also mentioned that they experienced this when speaking Purepecha and/or acknowledging their Purepecha identity in front of non-indigenous Spanish speakers. As a consequence of this racialization as an *Indio* and of the linguistic differentiation between Purepecha and Spanish speakers, several interviewees also mentioned how they themselves, their relatives or their parents experienced feeling shame when speaking Purepecha; some interviewees suggested also that shame was a probable cause behind their relatives' decisions not to teach Purepecha to their children.

In the discourse of some interviewees there were also language ideologies that differentiated Spanish and indigenous languages in a hierarchical way; this occurred when they labeled Purepecha as a *dialecto* as opposed to a 'language'. This label was used to denominate Purepecha to oppose it both to Spanish and English; the latter were contrastively labeled as languages per se. Oftentimes this distinction was made by roughly grouping indigenous languages as *dialectos* while colonial tongues such as Spanish, English and French were labeled as languages. By differentiating Purepecha from Spanish and English in this manner, speakers reproduced originally colonial ideologies about indigenous languages and also illustrated how they are still prevalent among the Mexican population and moreover, how they are also known and sometimes used among the Purepecha community. Nevertheless, heritage speakers of Purepecha were more inclined to use *dialecto* and not the term 'language' to denominate Purepecha; this might index that some heritage speakers use the term as a way to differentiate themselves from proficient Purepecha speakers, and while othering these speakers, distancing themselves from potential stigmatization.

9.3 Investment and resistance while learning Spanish and English versus Purepecha

In addition to indigenous language speaker stigmatization, racialization and shame, interviewees mentioned other reasons and motivations to shift to dominant languages like Spanish and English. Several Purepecha (heritage) speakers considered that investing in Spanish and English had a higher symbolic value for them, given that these languages were associated with academic and socioeconomic success; thus interviewees made more investments in learning Spanish and English than in learning Purepecha (those that were heritage speakers of the language), or teaching Purepecha to their children. Furthermore, since there was not much education offered in the Purepecha language, except for some elementary schools in Mexico at the time of the interviewees' school years, for some, learning Purepecha did not represent a potential socio-economic mobility benefit for the future.

In addition to this, for some interviewees Spanish was also the imposed language when they were attending elementary school, and due to their traumatic experience attending school because of this linguistic imposition, they felt that teaching Spanish to their children would allow them to have a better experience at school. Because of having experienced the imposition of Spanish, some interviewees as an act of resistance left school and did not finish elementary school in Mexico. This was also the case for some interviewees for which English was the language imposed at school.

As Purepecha continue to migrate to other parts of Mexico and the U.S., where the dominant language is either Spanish or English, shift to the dominant languages may be impending. Cases of sustained Purepecha-Spanish bilingualism, Purepecha-English

bilingualism, or trilingualism across several generations have yet to be documented. Therefore, as Spanish and English continue to be dominant languages and the main languages in which education is offered, Purepecha speakers might continue shifting to Spanish and English as a means that will enable them to become successful academically and socioeconomically. This in turn might also influence their decisions to teach the dominant languages to their children as a way to anticipate better economic projections for the future.

In terms of investment in learning a language, those that were Purepecha heritage speakers did not invest much in learning their heritage language; probably as they did not foresee Purepecha as having a high symbolic value, and it might not have represented an economic mobility asset, either in Mexico or in the U.S. Furthermore, for most heritage speakers Purepecha might not be a language that they feel can they potentially use in everyday communication with other members of the community, as heritage speakers mainly interact with other heritage speakers or Spanish and English speakers. Because of this, Purepecha heritage speakers probably also conceive the Purepecha community as a somewhat distant imagined community, or as one that is limited to their family setting.

As evidence of the importance of the symbolic capital of a language, one of the heritage speakers that did invest in learning Purepecha did so, when possessing a higher proficiency in Purepecha potentially involved gaining an economic benefit in the future; as this opportunity faded, the efforts to learn the language did so too. Thus, investing in learning Purepecha for those that were Purepecha heritage speakers did not represent a potential economic return, and in addition to the negative language ideologies about Purepecha and racialization of indigenous language speakers; lack of potential economic

advantages is one more reason why Purepecha heritage speakers might not want to invest in learning the language.

Finally, learning Spanish and English afforded interviewees a sense of acquiring a higher symbolic capital as opposed to learning Purepecha, which was associated to ties with the Purepecha community and family members but not as a language needed to advance socially and economically.

9.4 Contributions of this study and considerations for language maintenance

Because this dissertation examines the linguistic biographies of Purepecha speakers and Purepecha heritage speakers, it provides an in-depth understanding of individual language learning experiences, while learning Purepecha, Spanish and English; and it allows us to understand in a comparative way how individuals deal with language ideologies about these three languages and the impact they have on speakers' linguistic choices in terms of both language use and learning. This study also contributes by examining the linguistic experiences of individuals that belong to immigrant Mexican indigenous communities in the U.S.

Finally, as there are limited resources for learning the Purepecha language in a formal way, an important task for future language maintenance efforts is to create language-learning materials that are accessible to the Purepecha community in the U.S., and document the success or limitations of their application. Given the prevalence of negative language ideologies around Purepecha, language-learning materials must also include reflective and critical approaches concerning stereotypes of indigenous languages in Mexico and the U.S., as well as critical pedagogy that examine hierarchical symbolic values to different languages. Language learning materials must also incorporate

reflective activities related to individual learning processes, resistance and appropriation of the heritage language.

9.4.1 Proposing a model for studying speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages

Among some of the characteristics that speakers of indigenous heritage migrant languages might share are: being heritage speakers of a minoritized language in the country of origin, in most cases in favor of a colonial language; having a higher proficiency in the dominant language of the country of origin or having a degree of bilingualism in the heritage language and the dominant language; being subjected to institutionalized erasing practices, among them language policies that have promoted the elimination of the heritage language; having little access to education in the heritage language and little or no rights to produce media content in the heritage language; a systematic and institutionalized discrimination of its speakers.

It is important to examine the situation of heritage speakers of these languages not only at a linguistic level, but most importantly at the individual biographical level and the broader institutional and sociocultural and political context. As Pennycook (2010) has pointed out, it does not suffice to draw straightforward conclusions about what occurs at the individual language usage level as related to the broader sociocultural context; it is also important to examine the complex ways in which individuals deal with the institutionalized discrimination they are subjected to, and the individual consequences it has on language maintenance among heritage speakers of a language.

The above will help us understand the way individuals deal with the linguistic imposition of yet another dominant language in migration situations, where speakers are

able to negotiate or challenge the value institutionally and socially ascribed to their heritage language in the country of origin; either by further rejecting their heritage language or on the other hand by appropriating it; or by experiencing a process of continued revalorization after migrating to a context where the heritage language's value is more flexible; whether it is regarded as the language of the community of origin, the family, or whether it is rejected as a language associated to a painful past.

9.5 Considerations for future research and limitations of this study

Some interviewees of this study reported knowing people that were born and raised in the U.S. and were in fact only Purepecha-English bilinguals. However, I was not able to make contact with individuals with these linguistic characteristics. Examining the linguistic biographies of individuals that are Purepecha-English bilinguals could allow us to have a broader perspective of the language ideologies of individuals in the U.S. who learn Purepecha and English, and not Spanish. Examining their language acquisition processes, as well as the context of their language usages may further shed light into the language hierarchization of Purepecha and English over Spanish for some individuals.

Other limitations of this study included that only an adult population of Purepecha was interviewed; the limitation that this entails is that while it allows us to have the perspective of adults who look back into their childhood for early language acquisition experiences and stories, we are not able to examine how younger Purepecha deal with issues around their bilingualism or trilingualism during their upbringing in the U.S., or with Purepecha language maintenance at a young age. Interviewing younger Purepecha would allow us to examine whether language acquisition is done independently, and whether young Purepecha consider learning their heritage language a burden; as models

of language endangerment consider the youngest generations as prime stakeholders in language revitalization efforts and as crucially important to a language's future (Wyman, McCarty, & Nicholas, 2014). Given their role as parents of a next generation of speakers and their language socialization decisions.

On the other hand, since the Purepecha language has been recently established as the language of instruction in some elementary schools in Mexico, we have yet to see the effects of this new linguistic and educational policy and its implications for future generations of Purepecha speakers, in terms of language maintenance for the Purepecha community both in Mexico and the U.S. We have also yet to see the impact of Purepecha usage as the main language of instruction for future generations, and whether this policy will positively affect language maintenance and language ideologies across a new generation of speakers.

Furthermore, as this is a qualitative study, we were not able to determine the percentage of Purepecha in the U.S. that are teaching the language to their children. Examining language maintenance percentages within specific Purepecha communities in the U.S. would also allow us to have a better perspective about language shift rates in the U.S. and the extent to which Purepecha is maintained among further generations in the U.S., as well as of the prevalence of language ideologies such as the ones shared by my interviewees.

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