Language ideologies and the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla Totonac: Reconceptualizing language vitality

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines language ideologies and the linguistic ecology in the community of Huehuetla, Puebla, Mexico, where Huehuetla Totonac is spoken. I examine how language ideologies (beliefs about language) and characteristics of the linguistic ecology (context) are related to the language vitality (strength) of Huehuetla Totonac. The study shows that the current theoretical understanding of language vitality does not adequately account for how the people of Huehuetla talk about, view, and use their languages in daily life, as seen in the ethnographic analysis of language ideologies and the linguistic ecology of the community. While the traditional theoretical concept of language vitality is weighted towards intergenerational transmission, speaker numbers, and structural factors such as institutional support (e.g. Fishman 2001; Lee and Van Way 2016; Lewis and Simons 2016; UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages 2003), my study shows that language ideologies are central to language vitality and how people define their relationships with their language(s) and with each other.

To explore these ideological mechanisms, I examine discursive evidence including communicative practices and people's beliefs about these practices and those who use them. People's perspectives on how and why they use Totonac and Spanish informs the understanding of their relationships with their languages and how their languages are meaningful to them. My study examines two main types of language ideologies in Huehuetla—essentialist ideologies and syncretic ideologies—which interact and intersect, creating a complex language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018). Treating languages and identities as naturally discrete and bounded, and equating language and identity are kinds of essentialist ideologies (Phillips 2010: 53; Silverstein 2003: 202). Through essentialist ideologies, speaking Huehuetla Totonac is equated with being Indigenous, and speaking Spanish is equated with being *mestizo,* or non-

Indigenous. Syncretic language ideologies merge an ideological opposition between languages and social categories (Kuryłowicz 1964: 40 cited in Hill and Hill 1986: 57; Hill 1999: 244–45). Unlike essentialist ideologies, syncretic ideologies are not built on the assumption that language and identity categories are discrete or exclusive, instead they position identity and language as contextual and dynamic processes and performances. In Huehuetla, a syncretic ideology of community solidarity is evident in how people talk about their languages and identities with respect, and in their dynamic multilingual practices. Despite the factors in the linguistic ecology that work to undermine and potentially endanger people's Totonac language practices, Totonac continues to be spoken and valued in Huehuetla, and I show that syncretic language ideologies are central to this vitality.

The main finding that syncretic ideologies underlie the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac would likely be overlooked using existing assessments of language vitality that are primarily defined around speaker numbers and degree of intergenerational transmission. These conceptualizations that have been recognized by scholars, notably linguistic anthropologists, as overlooking the social life of language in people's daily lives (e.g. Dobrin, Austin, and Nathan 2009; England 2002; Gal and Irvine 1995; Hill 2002; Moore, Pietikainen, and Blommaert 2010; Whaley 2011). The current study therefore makes an important contribution to the literature by informing the theorization of language vitality as centred on the ideologies of the people who speak the language, want to speak it, or support its use. My approach also combines the analysis of language ideologies with the framework of linguistic ecology. Using ethnography and discourse analysis I explore how language ideologies are related to specific contexts in the linguistic ecology, building off the linguistic ecological approaches taken in some studies of multilingual education and language policy and planning (e.g. Blackledge 2008; Hornberger

2002; Mühlhäusler 2000). The finding show that not only are language ideologies and the linguistic ecology interconnected, but that language ideologies are foundational in (re)constructing the linguistic ecology and are thus evidenced in the linguistic ecology itself. This supports my reconceptualization of language vitality because I show that language ecological factors that have been identified in existing theories of language vitality, such as institutional support, are also affected by underlying ideologies.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Rachel McGraw. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, project name "Intergenerational ideology and language use in Huehuetla, Puebla, Mexico", No. Pro00052025, November 25, 2015.

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I would also like to thank my family, my partner Alberto and my two daughters Sara and Jenny, who accompanied me to Huehuetla and have lived this entire experience along with me. Their love and support have provided the motivation to complete this work and encouraged me in times when the goal felt unreachable.

Any remaining omissions and errors in this work are my own.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE VITALITY OF HUEHUETLA TOTONAC? ... 1

1.1 Totonacan languages ... 3
1.2 Language ideology ... 5
1.3 Linguistic ecology ... 8
1.4 Language vitality ... 10
1.5 The current study ... 13

2 THEORETICAL CONTEXT ... 15

2.1 Language vitality ... 15
2.2 Language ideologies and semiotic processes ... 26
2.2.1 Language ideologies ... 26
2.2.2 Semiotic processes ... 28
2.2.3 Essentialist and syncretic language ideologies ... 32
2.3 Linguistic ecology as an approach ... 40

3 THE COMMUNITY OF HUEHUETLA AND THE LINGUISTIC ECOLOGY OF HUEHUETLA TOTONAC ... 45

3.1 The demographic context ... 47
3.2 The Catholic Church, the *cargos* and *compadrazgo* systems, and religious syncretism ... 54
3.3 Land use and political division between Totonacs and *mestizos* ... 61
3.4 Language, education, and identity politics ... 71
3.5 Conclusion: The linguistic ecology of Huehuetla Totonac ... 84

4 METHODOLOGY, DATA, AND ANALYSIS ... 86

4.1 The field visit and observations ... 87
4.2 Interviews ... 89
4.3 Documents ... 97
4.4 Analysis and reflexivity ... 100

5 ESSENTIALIST AND SYNCRETIC LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN HUEHUETLA ... 110

5.1 Essentialist language ideologies ... 113
5.1.1 Menosprecio ... 116
5.1.2 Salir adelante ... 122
5.1.4 Semiotic relationships between essentialist language ideologies and identity categories ... 129
5.2 Syncretic language ideologies ... 135
5.2.1 Negociar categorías ... 137
5.2.2 Solidaridad comunitaria ... 147
5.3 The essentialist-syncretic language ideological assemblage and the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac ... 159

6 THE ENACTION OF LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN THE LINGUISTIC ECOLOGY OF HUEHUETLA TOTONAC ... 164

6.1 *Kakiwín tutunakú* ecotourism business ... 165
6.2 Education ... 177
6.2.1 Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz bilingual Indigenous preschool ... 180
6.2.2 Spanish primary schools ... 186
6.2.3 Intercultural curriculum in secondary and post-secondary education ... 194
6.2.4 Independent high schools: CESIK and Colegio Paulo Freire ... 204
6.2.5 Essentialist and syncretic ideologies in education ... 211
6.3 Family and community language socialization ... 212
6.3.1 Learning language ideologies through family language socialization ... 213
6.3.2 Learning language ideologies through community language socialization ... 221
6.4 Conclusion: *Solidaridad comunitaria* and the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac ... 225

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: APPLYING THE ESSENTIALIST-SYNCRETIC LANGUAGE IDEOLOGICAL ASSEMBLAGE TO THE THEORIZATION OF LANGUAGE VITALITY **230**

7.1 The language ideological assemblage and the role of *solidaridad comunitaria* 230
7.2 Language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac and implications for the practical assessment of language vitality 237
7.3 Implications for the theorization of language vitality 241
7.4 Study limitations and future directions 243

REFERENCES **245**

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCRIPT **268**

APPENDIX B: TABLE OF INTERVIEWS **270**

List of Tables

Table 1: Some demographics of the communities of the municipality of Huehuetla………48

Table 2: Interview participant information……………………………………………………93

Table 3: Catalogue of documents collected and archived…………………………………. 99

Table 4: Essentialist identity categories of Totonac and *mestizo*…………………………...134

Table 5: School enrolment in Huehuetla, 2015–2016………………………………………179

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of the Sierra Norte region of Mexico……………………………………… 4

Figure 2: Huehuetla, Puebla, Mexico in November 2016………………………………. 45

Figure 3: Map of the municipality of Huehuetla, Puebla…………………………………...46

Figure 4: Interior of the Catholic Church, Huehuetla, November 2016…………………… 60

Figure 5: Joaquina leads a Christmas procession for her school, December 2016...............157

Figure 6: Figure 6: Intersecting themes of identity produce multiple possible syncretic combinations…………………………………………………………………160

Figure 7: Facebook page of the ecotourism company *Kakiwín Tutunakú*………………… 167

Figure 8: The *voladores* performing in Cuetzalan in 2008…………………………………173

Figure 9: Page of preschool workbook…………………………………………………….. 184

1 Introduction: What is the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac?

This dissertation examines language ideologies and the linguistic ecology in the community of Huehuetla, Puebla, Mexico, where the Indigenous language Huehuetla Totonac is spoken. The main question I seek to answer in this dissertation is how language ideologies (beliefs about language) and characteristics of the linguistic ecology (context) are related to the language vitality (strength) of Huehuetla Totonac. I show that the current theoretical understanding of language vitality does not adequately account for how the people of Huehuetla talk about, view, and use their languages in daily life, as seen in the ethnographic analysis of language ideologies and the linguistic ecology of the community. While the traditional theoretical concept of language vitality is weighted towards intergenerational transmission and structural factors, such as institutional support, my study shows that language vitality is affected by the ideologies that people use to define their relationships with their language(s) and their communities. To explore these ideologies, I examine discursive evidence including communicative practices and people's beliefs about these practices and those who use them. People's perspectives on how and why they use Totonac and Spanish informs the understanding of their relationship with their languages and how their languages are meaningful to them. One particular set of language ideologies, what I call syncretic language ideologies, are central to language vitality in Huehuetla because they promote multilingualism and respect for Totonac people. Despite the factors in the linguistic ecology that work to undermine and potentially endanger people's Totonac language practices, Totonac continues to be spoken and valued in Huehuetla, and I show that syncretic language ideologies are central to this vitality. I apply the findings about syncretic language ideologies and Huehuetla Totonac language vitality to the reconceptualization of language vitality more broadly. A better understanding of language ideologies and their relationship to language vitality can help provide more effective and meaningful support for the people who speak endangered and Indigenous languages and the language revitalization efforts they may be planning.

My study examines two main types of language ideologies in Huehuetla: essentialist ideologies and syncretic ideologies. Treating languages and identities as naturally discrete and bounded, and equating language and identity are kinds of essentialist ideologies (Phillips 2010: 53; Silverstein 2003: 202). In the essentialist ideology, speaking Huehuetla Totonac is equated

with being Indigenous, and speaking Spanish is equated with being *mestizo* (non-Indigenous). Syncretic language ideologies merge an ideological opposition between languages and social categories (Kuryłowicz 1964: 40 cited in Hill and Hill 1986: 57; Hill 1999: 244–45). Unlike essentialist ideologies, syncretic ideologies do not assume that language and identity categories are discrete or exclusive, instead they position identity and language as contextual and dynamic processes and performances. In Huehuetla, the syncretic ideology of community solidarity is evident in how people talk about their languages, and in the dynamic multilingualism that people practice in their daily lives. In my analysis I also explore how essentialist and syncretic ideologies of people in Huehuetla interact and intersect, creating a complex language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018).

The findings of this study show that the theoretical concept of language vitality does not adequately capture how the language ideological assemblage of essentialist and syncretic ideologies affect language use and perceptions of language use in Huehuetla. The syncretic language ideology of community solidarity and its role in supporting multilingualism would likely be overlooked using existing assessments of language vitality (e.g. Fishman 2001; Lee and Van Way 2016; Lewis and Simons 2016; UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages 2003). These models identify speaker numbers, intergenerational transmission, socioeconomic status of the speech community, domains of use and institutional language use, language policy, and attitudes (e.g. Fishman 1991; UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages 2003). Clearly these factors are relevant; however, they do not adequately capture the perspectives of the people and their understanding of the role of their languages in their individual and community lives, which is important for informing potential language planning and policy. The theoretical concept of language vitality and the existing assessment tools also make essentialist assumptions that speakers and languages are discrete, bounded, and countable entities, despite the recognition by scholars, notably linguistic anthropologists, of the problems with this thinking that ignores the social life of language in people's daily lives (e.g. Dobrin, Austin, and Nathan 2009; England 2002; Gal and Irvine 1995; Hill 2002; Moore, Pietikainen, and Blommaert 2010; Whaley 2011). The current study makes an important contribution to the literature by informing the theoretical reconceptualization of language vitality. I show that language vitality is centred on the ideologies of the people who speak the language, want to speak it, or support its use, in contrast to the conceptualization of

language vitality as an objective numerical measurement. I conceptualize language vitality as centrally affected by the underlying ideological structures through which language is practiced, interpreted, and takes on meaning in people's daily lives. In addition to the reconceptualization of language vitality, my approach combines the analysis of language ideologies with the framework of linguistic ecology. Using ethnography and discourse analysis I explore how language ideologies are related to specific contexts in the linguistic ecology, building off the linguistic ecological approaches taken in some studies of multilingual education and language policy and planning (e.g. Blackledge 2008; Hornberger 2002; Mühlhäusler 2000). My approach shows that not only are language ideologies and the linguistic ecology connected, but that language ideologies are foundational in (re)constructing the linguistic ecology and are thus evidenced in the linguistic ecology itself. This supports my reconceptualization of language vitality as ideological, because language ecological factors identified in existing theories of language vitality, such as institutional support, are affected by underlying ideologies.

The remaining sections of Chapter 1 outline the main arguments and structure of the dissertation. In §1.1 I describe the Totonacan language family and where Huehuetla Totonac fits within the language family. In §1.2, §1.3, and §1.4 I describe the elements of my analytical approach including language ideologies, linguistic ecology, and language vitality. In §1.5 I lay out the research questions and how I go about answering them in the analysis.

1.1 Totonacan languages

The Totonacan language family is a group of languages spoken by approximately 278, 000 people in the states of Hidalgo, Puebla, and Veracruz in Mexico (INEGI 2020). The family consists of two main branches, Totonac and Tepehua. Within the Totonac branch, four sub-branches are currently recognized—Misantla, Northern, Sierra, and Lowland—with the latter three being more closely related and grouped together as Central Totonac (Brown et al. 2011: 333). Within Central Totonac, mutual intelligibility across the separate branches—Northern, Sierra and Lowland—is low due to lexical, morphological, and phonological differences (Beck to appear). However, Sierra and Lowland varieties are more closely related to each other than to Northern (Brown et al. 2011: 333–334). Research is still needed to establish the number of distinct Totonac languages and estimates range from a low of three up to possibly 20 (Brown et al. 2011: 334–335).

Huehuetla Totonac is part of the Sierra branch, and it is spoken in the region of the Sierra Norte of Puebla, seen in Figure 1 below. The Sierra branch has some distinct linguistic characteristics, including significant variations in inflectional morphology and lexicon. In addition, some Sierra varieties are distinguished by marked prosodic effects at phrasal boundaries (Beck to appear; Levy 2015; Román Lobato 2008). There is also significant variation within the Sierra branch, and neighbouring communities a few kilometers apart can have unique lexical items and phonological patterns (Beck to appear). For example, Huehuetla Totonac, Olintla, and Coatepec all lack laryngealization on vowels, which is present in other Sierra Totonac languages (Brown et al. 2011: 337; Troiani 2004).

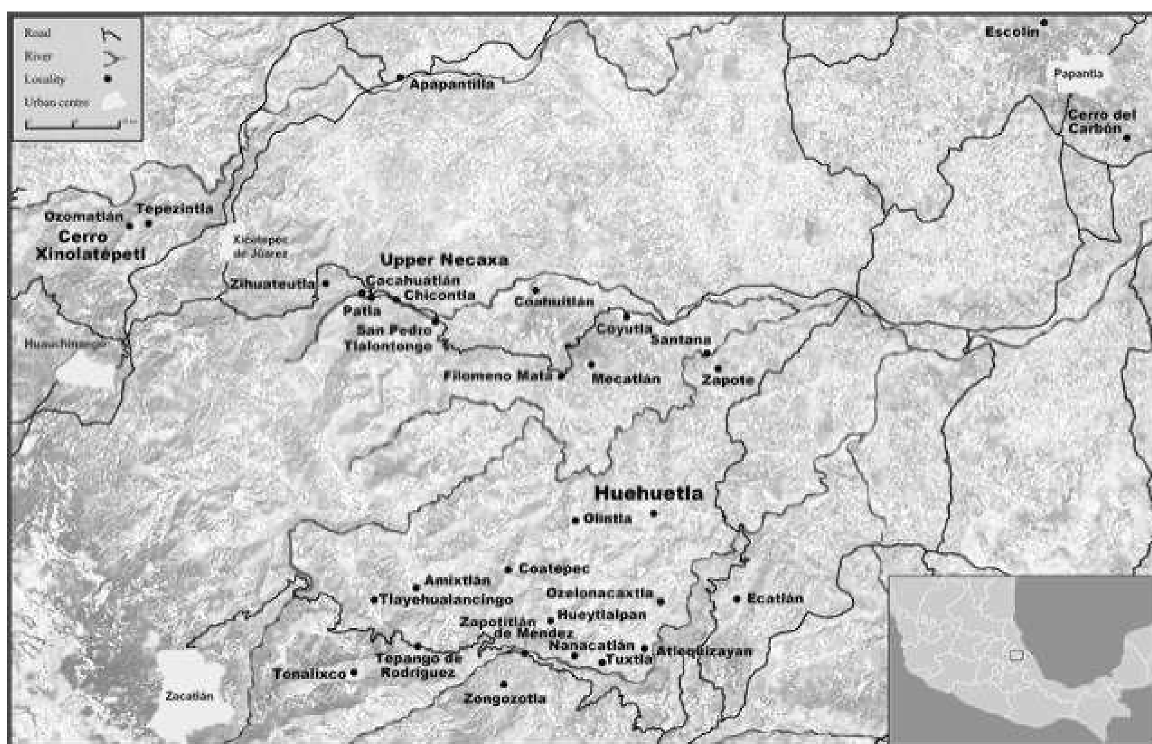

Figure 1: Map of the Sierra Norte region of Mexico (map courtesy of David Beck)

Mutual intelligibility, though not necessarily easy, seems to be possible in most Sierra varieties despite this. Though they are not entirely comfortable, speakers from Coatepec in the western Sierra can speak with those from Chumatlán (just south of Coyutla), which is located about 60 kilometers by road to the northeast of Coatepec (Beck p.c.). Huehuetla is located roughly between these two communities. While some speakers downplay variation (Beck p.c.),

some people have told me they can identify speakers from neighboring communities based on the linguistic characteristics of the varieties of Totonac. The linguistic and sociolinguistic variation of the Sierra Totonac languages is not yet well documented by linguists.

In addition to Totonac, there are also other Indigenous languages spoken in the Sierra and in Huehuetla, including varieties of Nahuatl and Otomí (INEGI 2020). There is also an increasing level of multilingualism in an Indigenous language and Spanish documented by the national census (INEGI 2020). While there is some documented language shift in Upper Necaxa Totonac communities (e.g. Lam 2009, 2020), increasing levels of multilingualism are not necessarily an indication of language shift to Spanish in all Totonac communities. The Totonac linguistic diversity and the multilingualism in and around Huehuetla has created a complex linguistic ecology that also shows a range of patterns of language maintenance and multilingualism may play an important role in this. For example, in Ozelonacaxtla, in the municipality of Huehuetla, almost all people continue to speak in Totonac with each other and use Spanish in schools and with outsiders (McGraw 2019, 2009). The current study extends the ethnographic study of Sierra Totonac language maintenance and vitality to the town of Huehuetla, the seat of the municipality of Huehuetla.

1.2 Language ideology

Language ideology as a theoretical concept comes from linguistic anthropology and can be defined as the beliefs and notions that connect language and language use to social meaning (Woolard 1998a). More specifically, language ideologies refer to speakers' and groups' underlying beliefs and assumptions about language(s), the people who use them, and how these relate to the social context (Woolard 1998a: 3–4). Language ideologies can also be thought of as processes of meaning making, or semiosis, that naturalize particular social, political, and economic conditions and construct boundaries, categories, and hierarchies across groups based on or using linguistic features (Gal and Irvine 1995; Irvine and Gal 2000). Irvine and Gal (2000) define the semiotic processes of indexicality, iconization, erasure, and fractal recursivity that (re)produce social and economic regimes and hierarchies.

Iconization is a process of creating signs that resemble their signified in some way (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). For example, a language may come to be the central definition of a social group, and membership in that group is presumed to mean being a speaker of the language. This has been observed in language revitalization contexts where language is equated with identity as

a way to motivate linguistic and political activism, such as in the Yukon where language revitalization programming at one point used the phrase "we are our language" (Meek 2010). In this sense, iconization is a process of essentialization where linguistic features are equated with and seen to resemble other social characteristics of an individual or group (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37–38). Indexicality is a contextual association between two things (Silverstein 2003: 194–195), such as a linguistic form pointing to, or indexing, a social group (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). For example, a speaker's particular accent provides their interlocutors with linguistic information that points to, or indexes, the geographic and/or social origin of the speaker, which is part of the context of the interaction. Erasure is the ideological process of naturalization, where the status quo is presented as the natural way of things, and facts that do not fit the ideology are ignored or "explained away" (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38). For example, the variation in language may be ignored by standard language ideologies that view the language as homogeneous and uniform (often for political reasons), such as the monolingual standard English language ideologies found in the United States (Silverstein 2018). Fractal recursivity is the (re)production of language ideologies across scales and contexts (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38). For example, in Messing's study of a Nahua community in Mexico, spatial discourses such as "up there" are used by community members to explain patterns of multilingualism: Indigenous language speakers are recursively marginalized in both geographic and social contexts and this recursivity also seems to naturalize the marginalization (Messing 2007: 567–568).

Another key feature of language ideologies is that there are typically multiple ideologies at play in a given context and even for the same person or group (Gal 1998). Gal describes how the concept of language ideology is a powerful analytical tool because it recognizes that individuals and groups are embedded in contexts on a range of scales from interactional, to institutional, to political (pp. 318–319). This multiplicity of ideologies in an individual, group, or context, means that the different ideologies may also be contradictory and in contention, ultimately contributing to the hierarchical positioning (power) of different social units (people, languages, practices) as contentions play out in particular contexts (pp. 319–321). The semiotic processes of iconization, indexicality, erasure, and fractal recursivity are useful analytic concepts for understanding how these multiple language ideologies operate (Irvine and Gal 2000). The study of these semiotic processes can be applied to endangered and Indigenous language contexts and there have been

calls to do this (e.g. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998). I therefore use these concepts to analyze language ideologies in Huehuetla.

My findings show that in Huehuetla, many people hold an essentialist ideology that divides Totonac and *mestizo* identities. *Mestizo* literally means "mixed" and is used to refer to people who have Indigenous ancestry but do not identify as Indigenous. While *mestizo* identity is ethnically mixed, this identity has also been idealized as the legitimate Mexican national identity. This ideology equates speaking Huehuetla Totonac with being Totonac and speaking Spanish with being *mestizo.* It also implies that multilingualism is problematic or inauthentic because the identity categories are interpreted as exclusive, you should be either one or the other and speak one or the other languages, not both. This is an ideological process of iconization between language and identity that can be described using the concept of essentialism, an anthropological term that refers to overgeneralization and naturalization of the relationship between the characteristics of people, such as their language, and their supposed natural essence or identity (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 370). We know the equation between language and identity is an oversimplification because people's language use and identity are contextual social processes (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). An essentialist ideology presumes discrete categorization of languages and identities, and this assumption can be exploited in other ideologies. For example, the assumption that languages are bounded can be used to support the hierarchical positionings of these languages, and by extension the people who speak these languages (Gal 1998). In Huehuetla, there are multiple essentialist ideologies that are recursively linked and reinforce each other: the underlying essentialist ideology that divides Totonac and *mestizo* identities; *menosprecio* "denigration" (Messing 2007), an ideology in which Huehuetla Totonac is positioned as inferior to Spanish, and by extension Totonac speakers are positioned as inferior to Spanish speakers; and *salir adelante* "to get ahead," which promotes the idea that speaking Spanish is necessary for socioeconomic advancement (Messing 2007). I show that these ideologies appear in different contexts, in fractal recursivity, and they interact to motivate language shift for some speakers of Huehuetla Totonac.

In addition to the essentialist ideology, some local ideologies take a more syncretic position. Syncretism is also a term that comes from sociocultural anthropology, where it has been used to describe the process of integrating religious and cultural practices from distinct traditions (Droogers 2011). Linguistic anthropologists also use the term syncretism to describe the lack of

marking of linguistic and sociolinguistic structures as distinct categories, such as in Hill and Hill's study of the Mexicano language Malinche Nahuatl that incorporates Spanish (Hill and Hill 1986: 57). In this study, I use the concept of syncretism to describe the ideologies and practices of people who see identity categories such as Totonac and *mestizo* as porous and flexible, rather than bounded and fixed. This ideology, which I call *negociar categorías* "negotiate categories," indicates an awareness of the performative and interactive process of identity making (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). I also use the concept of syncretism to describe the normalization of multilingualism I observe in Huehuetla. This multilingualism is observed where I also noticed people expressing the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity," that is characterized by a discourse and practice of respect and coexistence. Syncretic ideologies are present where I observed multilingual people speaking Totonac, and they are therefore important for language vitality in Huehuetla. In my analysis, I consider how these essentialist and syncretic ideologies function in relation to each other, as people display contradictions and multiplicities in their behaviour. I find that there is a language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018) of essentialist and syncretic ideologies that interact dynamically as people move through the linguistic ecology. I use these findings to inform my analysis of language vitality in Huehuetla and of language vitality as a theoretical concept.

1.3 Linguistic ecology

Linguistic ecology broadly refers to the contexts in which language is used by speakers, including the immediate social and material contexts, as well as the broader sociopolitical, economic, and geographic contexts (Mühlhäusler 1996). A linguistic ecological analysis explores the relationships that exist between people, the languages they speak, and their environment, where the environment was originally understood as the society (Haugen 1972; Mühlhäusler 1996). Environment has also come to refer to the geographic, physical, and even biological contexts in theories of language evolution (Mufwene 2001, 2008). In my analysis of Huehuetla, I draw on linguistic ecology in order to understand how Huehuetla Totonac is being spoken and viewed in the community and to inform an assessment of language vitality. I analyze demographic factors, the education system, the socioeconomic system, the political system, and the physical environment and space in and around Huehuetla that affects the community on a macro scale. On a meso scale, I look at the relationships of people to each other and how they use language in these interactions within the town of Huehuetla. On a micro scale, I discuss how

people talk about interacting and socializing, and how they represent Huehuetla Totonac and Spanish in different modalities and contexts.

The examples I discuss show how these scales are interconnected. My aim is not just to describe the linguistic ecology, but to show that language ideologies, such as the essentialist ideology that equates one language with one identity and *menosprecio* that denigrates Indigeneity are reflected in and contribute to the (re)production of the linguistic ecology. For example, education is seen as important for socioeconomic progress. The curriculum privileges Spanish as the language of instruction, even in Indigenous schools and schools with official bilingual or intercultural programs. Resources and texts are more readily available in Spanish in general, and schools vary in how willing and able they are to include Totonac language in the curriculum. I discuss how these conditions in the education system are connected to the perception that Spanish belongs at school and Totonac does not. The example of education demonstrates the recursive reproduction of essentialist language ideologies: Spanish is equated with education, Totonac is marked at school; Spanish is equated with socioeconomic progress, Totonac is equated with poverty. These perceptions may affect language use because people might choose to use Spanish in other contexts, such as in public, and at home with their family. Over time, these variations may become patterns and contribute to language shift, as Spanish moves into contexts where Totonac had been used.

At the same time, some people explicitly reject at least some of these essentialist ideologies and apply this by bringing multilingualism into contexts that are dominated by Spanish. They tell me how their own and others' knowledge and use of Totonac, in addition to Spanish—in other words their syncretic ideologies and practices—have contributed to the growth and strength of the community and to their economic success. They see a role for and practice multilingualism in Huehuetla Totonac and Spanish in education, law, community activities and programs, their businesses, and their homes. For example, a new eco-tourism business is owned and operated by Totonac women who ignore essentialist ideologies that would presume the use of only Spanish with their guests. Instead, these women teach and share aspects of Totonac culture, including food and language, with their guests. My ethnographic analysis reveals that people's language ideologies are interrelated with the linguistic ecology, and this informs the understanding and assessment of language vitality.

1.4 Language vitality

The traditional theorization of language vitality has focused on developing taxonomies of factors, often on numerical scales, such as numbers of speakers sometimes across generations, and often including attitudes, perceptions, and ideologies (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977; Fishman 1991, 2001; UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages 2003; Krauss 2007; Lee and Van Way 2016; Lewis and Simons 2010, 2016; Roche 2017). While recognizing these factors, I find that language ideologies are a central factor in language vitality because they play a direct role in affecting the linguistic choices of the people who speak the language, want to speak it, or support or hinder its use. People's ideologies underlie their behaviours, and therefore understanding their ideologies facilitates a better understanding of their language practices, specifically their choices surrounding what language(s) to use when and where, and why. Recognizing the centrality of language ideologies in turn allows for a more accurate assessment of language vitality and more effective planning for language work.

Language vitality has been variably defined in the literature. One conceptualization of vitality, developed by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor, is termed ethnolinguistic vitality, defined as "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (1977: 308). This definition is elaborated by a taxonomy of factors that includes demographic factors, institutional support, status, and speakers' and the groups' perceptions of these factors, a sociopsychological dimension (Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal 1981). Independently of Giles et al., Fishman also developed a taxonomy of factors for assessing language endangerment with the aim of "reversing language shift" (1991, 2001). Fishman's taxonomy, called the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, includes many of the same factors identified by Giles et al., though he adds and centres intergenerational transmission as the key factor in assessing language endangerment and describes his taxonomy as sociocultural as opposed to the sociopsychological model of Bourhis et al. (Fishman 1991: 87). Drawing on Fishman, UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages developed a tool for assessing "language vitality and endangerment," that includes the following factors: intergenerational transmission, absolute speaker numbers, proportion of speakers in the population, trends in existing domains, response to new domains and media, materials for language education and literacy, government and institutional language attitudes and policies, community members' attitudes, and the amount and quality of documentation (2003). Lewis and

Simons combine Fishman's and UNESCO's taxonomies, developing a more elaborate assessment tool, called the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), that provides for more granularity through a greater number of levels of vitality (2010, 2016). Lewis and Simons also center intergenerational transmission and numbers of speakers as the most important factors. Krauss also developed a scale to measure language endangerment that only considers the demographic factor of number of speakers across generations (2007). Finally, Lee and Van Way's quantitative taxonomy is quite similar to Fishman's, more heavily weighting intergenerational transmission, and including speaker numbers and domains of use (2016).

In the taxonomic approaches of Fishman, UNESCO, Lewis and Simons, Krauss, and Lee and Van Way, endangerment and vitality are understood, often implicitly, as opposites that are inversely related on the scales. For example, the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages titles their report "Language Endangerment and Vitality," and considers the same factors can be used to measure both or either endangerment and vitality (2003: 7). In Lewis and Simon's work, they title their paper "Assessing Endangerment," but at several points they also say their tool measures vitality (2010: 1, 4, 16). The implication is that endangerment and vitality are opposites. This means that, relatively speaking, a highly endangered language has low vitality, and conversely a language that is minimally endangered has higher vitality. This does not account for situations where a language that is endangered (for example, by government policy to restrict or eliminate its use) has high vitality reflected in people's ongoing use despite these threats (e.g. the many Indigenous languages such as Cree and Inuktitut that continue to be used in Canada). A language that is not endangered in this way and has a current high level of intergenerational transmission may still have low vitality if youth or adults hold underlying language ideologies that influence them to make a choice to not speak the language (this may then in turn affect language transmission). In my understanding, endangerment and vitality are therefore not opposites: language endangerment refers to the range of threats in the linguistic ecology faced by the language and community that uses the language; language vitality refers specifically to the strength of the language, which is directly affected by the underlying language ideologies held by community members.

As noted by Mufwene, the concept of language vitality has not been thoroughly theorized by linguists as a generalized concept that can be applied to all languages (2017). Following work by Hansen (n.d.) and Roche (2017), I define language vitality as the sociopolitical role of

language. Furthermore, I follow Perley, who says in his ethnography of his Maliseet community that the relationships between people and their language(s) are central to his concept of "emergent" and "alternative vitalities" (2011: 10–11). Perley also says that language vitality is centred on people, rather than on the language as an object in and of itself (2011: 4). In the Chickasaw Nation, community member and scholar Davis assesses language vitality by doing interviews with community members to gather information about language ideologies, especially connected to decisions about who is officially designated a speaker, as well as program and policy priorities (2018: 40–41). I follow Perley's and Davis' direction and understand language vitality as the relationships between people and language(s) that can be better understood by studying language ideologies. The underlying language ideologies are central to how people maintain existing language practices and also create new practices that constitute the emergent language vitalities and "alternative futures" that allow community members the choice of "language life" (Perley 2011: 7–10). Perley's understanding of vitalities as multiple and emergent captures the dynamic nature of the sociolinguistic and ideological relationships between people and language. This definition of language vitalities as multiple, emergent, and ideological is supported by the evidence presented in my study of language ideologies in Huehuetla. Even in situations where the language is endangered by other factors in the linguistic ecology (such as policy), a language that has strong underlying ideological support is more likely to be sustained over time in existing uses and developed for new uses, than a language that does not have this ideological support. Language ideologies can therefore contribute to emergent vitalities which in turn affect language sustainability. Language sustainability is the process over time by which people maintain and adapt their languages, expanding or changing contexts of use and communicative practices in response to changing circumstances, as well as transmitting their language to new speakers, rather than shifting to another language (Bastardas-Boada 2017; Ehala 2014; Engman and King 2016; Ferguson and Siragusa 2017).

As noted above, (intergenerational) language transmission is well recognized as an important factor in language vitality (Fishman 1991, 2001). At the same time, it is also important to think about how this transmission occurs. Following scholars in linguistic anthropology who center the ideological process of language socialization (e.g. Ochs and Schieffelin 2012; Ochs 2008), I explore peer-to-peer language socialization as additional sites of transmission of Totonac outside the context of the immediate family. Considering how language transmission

occurs through socialization across multiple community sites, not only intergenerationally from parents to children at home, is necessary in order to better understand the relationship between transmission, ideologies, and vitality. I use these findings to inform my assessment of language vitality in Huehuetla and to contribute to the theorization of language vitality. This can in turn contribute to more targeted and successful language planning and policy by both the community and academics who may be in advisory, consulting, or research positions in communities.

1.5 The current study

The main question I seek to answer in this study is how can information about the communicative practices and language ideologies of the people, as they are reproduced and reflected in their discourses and in the linguistic ecology, inform an understanding of the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac and the reconceptualization of language vitality more broadly? In order to answer this question, I present several more specific questions about language ideologies, the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla Totonac, and their relationship to language vitality.

1. What are community members' language ideologies about the use of Totonac, Spanish, and multilingualism in Huehuetla and how are these related to expressions and perceptions of individual and group identities?
2. How do language ideologies, discourses, and practices differ across individuals and social groups in Huehuetla?
3. How do community members' ideologies compare to and interact with societal ideologies?
4. What are the characteristics of the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla Totonac on local, regional, and national scales?
5. How are language ideologies reflected and reproduced in specific contexts of the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla?
6. What does the analysis of language ideologies and the linguistic ecology in Huehuetla contribute to our understanding of the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac and of language vitality more generally?

The dissertation proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I present a review of the theoretical literature to contextualize the dissertation. The concepts of language vitality, language ideology,

linguistic ecology, and key case studies of Indigenous languages in Mesoamerica are reviewed. Chapter 3 provides background and demographic information about the community of Huehuetla. Chapter 4 describes the ethnographic methodology of data collection during field work, including interviews, documents, and observations. In Chapter 5, I analyze people's discourses and their relationship to the essentialist-syncretic language ideological assemblage I find in Huehuetla. Chapter 6 examines how language ideologies are enacted by people in different contexts in the linguistic ecology in Huehuetla, including the development of a new eco-tourism business, the education system and several local schools, and family and peer language socialization. In the final discussion in Chapter 7, I argue that syncretic language ideologies, in particular *solidaridad comunitaria*, are central to language vitality in Huehuetla. I summarize what my analysis of language vitality contributes to the theorization of language vitality more broadly and explore some of the implications of these findings for broader discussions of language endangerment in Mexico and around the world.

2 Theoretical context

This study combines the framework of linguistic ecology and the concept of language ideology to study how people view and use Huehuetla Totonac, making a contribution to the theorization of language vitality. In the next sections, I review the literature on key theoretical concepts: the development of the concept of language vitality and how my study builds on this work in §2.1, language ideologies in §2.2, and the framework of linguistic ecology in §2.3. I include examples from case studies to illustrate key concepts and points.

2.1 Language vitality

In this section, I first briefly define language loss and discuss how language shift can lead to loss. I then review the emergence, theorization, and application of the concept of language vitality from several contributing approaches: the study of language maintenance and loss in linguistics, the study of language endangerment in linguistics, the study of language endangerment in linguistic anthropology, and the engagement with issues surrounding language endangerment in organizations outside academia. I limit the review to the works that develop and use the concept of language vitality. The inclusion of multiple streams of research is important because they use distinct definitions and ideological framings for the concept of language vitality, and this informs the theorization of the concept. In language maintenance and loss and linguistic anthropology, vitality is framed from a people-centred position, while in linguistics and often outside academia, vitality is framed from a language-centred position. To close, I discuss how I draw from and diverge from these research traditions to reconceptualize language vitality, using the case of Huehuetla to study the relationships between language, people and the ideological mechanisms and discursive processes that constitute these relationships.

There are a few ways that a language can become at risk of being lost. Sometimes a population or community is destroyed, and a language ceases to be spoken as the result of the loss of speakers due to migration, forced displacement, genocide, or death of a population (Grenoble 2011: 27). Another possible reason is language shift, the sociopolitical and sociocultural process in which speakers change their language use practices, learning a dominant or prestigious language and simultaneously abandoning their community language (Grenoble 2011: 32). Although speakers of marginalized languages often learn the dominant language, this

does not necessarily entail the simultaneous loss of the marginalized language, as different forms of stable bilingualism, multilingualism, or diglossia are also possible in language contact situations (Dorian 1998; Fishman 1991). There are many factors that have been identified for their role in the process of language shift, especially social, economic, political, and ideological factors (e.g. Dorian 1998; Edwards 1992, 2006; Fishman 1991, 2001; Grenoble and Whaley 1998; Sasse 1992). Despite a general understanding of some of the common factors in language shift, neighbouring communities in similar social, political, and economic contexts can have distinct responses to the pressure to shift languages. This is seen in Totonac communities in Mexico, where national policies have historically sought to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the dominant Spanish-speaking society (Cifuentes 1992; Lomnitz-Adler 2001: 231). Within this ecology of assimilatory pressures, some Totonac communities, such as the Upper Necaxa communities of Chicontla and Patla, are shifting to Spanish as many bilingual parents use exclusively Spanish with their children (Beck and Lam 2008; Lam 2009, 2012, 2020). In contrast, other Totonac communities, such as Ozelonacaxtla, continue to maintain their language and children use Totonac amongst themselves (McGraw 2009, 2019). This shows that it is difficult to predict whether language shift will occur, at what speed, and to what extent, simply through the presence of factors known to exert pressure to shift. The detailed study of the particular local sociocultural interpretation of the linguistic situation is necessary (Dobrin and Sicoli 2018). Specifically, it is necessary to study how these known factors in language shift affect the relationships between people, language, and the context in which they live in order to understand the ideological mechanisms through which the language is meaningful for people: language vitality.

The first main research tradition discussed is the study of language maintenance and loss in the context of intergroup relations (e.g. Giles 1977). Through their study of language maintenance of French in Canada, Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor developed the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality, defined as “that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations” (1977: 308). Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor also provide a taxonomy of the variables affecting ethnolinguistic vitality that includes demographic factors, institutional support and policy, and status (1977: 308). They later named this set of factors the objective ethnolinguistic vitality, distinguishing this from subjective ethnolinguistic vitality, which refers to people’s perceptions of their own group and other groups’ objective

ethnolinguistic vitality (Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal 1981: 146–147). Allard and Landry define subjective ethnolinguistic vitality as “group members’ perceptions of a group’s standing on the factors contributing to [ethnolinguistic vitality]” (Allard and Landry 1992: 172; Landry and Allard 2009). Subjective ethnolinguistic vitality in this research is measured through the use of questionnaires, the replies from which are quantified and compared across vitality categories (Allard and Landry 1992). The different objective and subjective (perceptual) factors interact to affect language behaviour, which then contributes to additive or subtractive bilingualism and either language maintenance or loss (Allard and Landry 1994: 122). The concept of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality is important to consider here because it acknowledges the central role of people and their perceptions. Although Allard and Landry do not use the term, the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality is clearly connected to people’s underlying language ideologies through their consideration of subjectivity and perceptions. The definition centering subjective vitality is also in contrast to the development of the concept of language vitality in linguistics and outside academia that centres language (rather than people) as the focus of the concept, which I discuss next.

The second stream of research that developed the concept of language vitality is the study of language endangerment of Indigenous languages. Language endangerment differs from the previous area of research because the latter does not have a central focus on Indigenous languages. Language endangerment can be defined as a situation where a language is at risk of being lost because it is being used and learned less (e.g. Austin and Sallabank 2011: 1). The study of language endangerment emerged in the 1990s in confluence with a new global concern over the loss of both biological and cultural diversity that often essentializes Indigenous people as responsible for sustaining this diversity (Heller and Duchêne 2007). Some influential works by linguists are Fishman’s *Reversing Language Shift* (1991, 2001) and the special issue of the journal *Language* on endangered languages edited by Ken Hale (Hale et al. 1992). Fishman developed a taxonomy of factors for assessing language endangerment with the aim of “reversing language shift” (1991, 2001). He identifies many of the same factors affecting language endangerment as scholars working on ethnolinguistic vitality, including demographics, institutional support, and status. Fishman’s discussion of how diglossia supports language vitality (1991: 85) and the centering of intergenerational transmission are important contributions to the understanding of language endangerment. Fishman’s numerical Graded Intergenerational

Disruption Scale (GIDS) is said to measure the "degree of intergenerational disruption" in a community that can tell us about how endangered a language is (1991). Although Fishman's scale is said to measure endangerment through intergenerational disruption, several of the case studies in his books say they use the scale to assess "vitality" (e.g. Lo Bianco and Rhydwen 2001; Lee and McLaughlin 2001; Spolsky and Shohamy 2001). This implies that the level of vitality is the inverse of the level of endangerment the scale is said to measure: a critically endangered language has less vitality and a less endangered language has more vitality. Fishman describes his model as "the sociocultural reverse analog to the sociopsychological language vitality measures" developed by Giles et al. (1991: 87), and Bourhis later also suggests the two models are complementary (Bourhis 2001: 112).

More linguists working in the endangerment frame include those who contributed to the special issue of *Language* in 1992. In this special issue, Krauss developed a "framework for classifying languages according to degree of viability" using a scale that is said to measure endangerment, based on speaker numbers across generations (1992, 1997, 2007: 1–2). Krauss defines an endangered language as a language that children are no longer learning, or that is being learned by children but faces other threatening factors in the linguistic ecology (2007: 2). Although Krauss does not use the term "vitality," he does use the terms "viability," which refers to the capability of survival as interpreted through speaker numbers (Krauss 2007). Krauss' scale is comparable to Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (1991, 2001), because it uses the number of speakers across child, parent, and grandparent generations to measure degree of endangerment (2007). At the same time, the demographic factor of speaker numbers is the only factor considered by Krauss, which is where it differs from Giles et al. (1977) and Fishman (1991, 2001) who consider other factors, in addition to speaker numbers.

As part of the growing public awareness of biological and cultural endangerment, people and organizations outside academia have also become involved in efforts at documenting and revitalizing these languages. For example, the United Nations has played an important role in creating and growing a global awareness of language endangerment and passing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, including linguistic rights (2007). Leading up to this declaration, the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages had built their own taxonomy to measure language endangerment, building on Fishman's work, particularly reflected in their inclusion of intergenerational transmission as an important factor (2003). The

other factors in UNESCO's "language vitality and endangerment" measurement tool are absolute and proportional numbers of speakers, trends in existing and emerging language domains and media, materials for education and literacy, institutional attitudes and policies, community members' attitudes, and quantity and quality of language documentation (2003). The authors recommend that these factors are not read together to determine a total score, but instead are applied according to the local context and the purpose of the assessment (2003: 17). The convenient availability of census data has likely contributed to the fact that speaker numbers across generations is the only factor that is applied in UNESCO's online Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (Moseley 2010). The other factors are more difficult to report, so there is room for improving the way these factors are reported in order to produce comparable data. The UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages says their scale is meant to "evaluate a language's vitality and state of endangerment" (2003: 7), again suggesting that language vitality is inversely related to language endangerment, and that the factors listed inversely contribute to endangerment and vitality.

Another example of work on language endangerment outside academia is Lewis and Simons, who work with the SIL International[1] on their language catalogue, Ethnologue. Some of their work is focused on simplifying the comparable assessment of language vitality across many languages and communities in order to best direct the fieldwork of SIL. Lewis and Simons developed a tool to assess endangerment and vitality that combines Fishman's disruption of intergenerational transmission with UNESCO's assessment of language endangerment and vitality (Fishman 1991; Lewis 2009, 2011; Lewis and Simons 2010: 110, 2016). The combined scale, called the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), has 13 categories of "intergenerational disruption," based on the range of domains of use and the distribution of speakers across generations (Lewis 2011; Lewis and Simons 2010, 2016: 79–95). The Ethnologue scale synthesizes many previously identified factors into a single model that has more levels, allowing for a higher degree of granularity than the original GIDS. This means the

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[1] SIL International is formerly known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This organization was founded by evangelical linguist William Cameron Townsend in 1934 in order to train students in linguistic documentation. These students supported Townsend's efforts to translate the New Testament into local Indigenous languages in Mexico with the goal of evangelizing the people. Today, SIL International continues its efforts to document Indigenous languages with the purpose of producing New Testaments and teaching people to read them. The assessment tools produced by SIL International are therefore aimed at determining which languages need more documentation in order to produce New Testaments.

EGIDS can account for a wider range of combinations of use and transmission than previous taxonomies. For example, there are more intricately defined differences between the levels at both the upper and lower ends of the scale. At the same time, like the other scales, intergenerational transmission and age of speakers continue to be centred as the key measure of language vitality, especially in the lower endangered range of the scale. In fact, Lewis and Simons assert that the diagnosis of language vitality provided by the scale could be correlated with the average age of the youngest users of a language (Lewis and Simons 2016: 98). While this may be generalizable across the average of a large number of language communities, the dynamics of particular sociolinguistic contexts deserve careful study because language ideologies manifest and affect language vitality differently in every community and are arguably just as important as speaker numbers, as I aim to show in this study. Similar to Krauss, both the UNESCO and the EGIDS tools centre languages in the conceptualization of vitality. If I were to apply the EGIDS model to the case of Huehuetla, it might be placed at level 6b or "threatened," because all generations currently use Totonac, but there are some conditions of Lewis and Simons' "sustainable use" that are not present, including motivation for some community members (linked to negative ideologies, such as *menosprecio*) and environment (government policies and socioeconomic pressures that privilege Spanish). The implication for the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac using the EGIDS scale, then, is that to improve transmission and vitality, the language should be developed for use in formal standardized written contexts that appear in higher levels of vitality on the scale. This includes state-run, standardized education, literacy, media, and government usage. However, this case shows that these formal efforts may not necessarily support vitality because they may reinforce essentialist ideologies that marginalize Totonac and privilege Spanish. In addition, while institutional use can certainly be helpful, there are other ways to support language vitality, as several examples in Huehuetla show. There are also creative emergent practices outside formal top-down institutions, such as locally initiated business activities, independent local schools, and the diverse multilingual practices of parents as they raise their children.

A third example of an institution originally outside academia working on language endangerment is the Endangered Languages Project, initially launched by Google. The project is now managed by the First People's Cultural Council and the Endangered Languages Catalogue team at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, meaning some academics are now working on the

project (Catalogue of Endangered Languages 2022). Lee and Van Way's work on the Catalogue of Endangered Languages uses a quantitative Language Endangerment Index to measure language vitality (2016). Lee and Van Way (2016) alternately describe their taxonomy as measuring language endangerment and language vitality, again implying that endangerment and vitality are inversely related. Their taxonomy is quite similar to previous taxonomies, such as Fishman's (1991), because it includes intergenerational transmission, absolute speaker numbers, trends in speaker numbers, and domains of use (Lee and Van Way 2016). Intergenerational transmission is positioned as the most important factor, reflected in the double weighting assigned to it in the quantitative calculation of language vitality (p. 285). The main difference between this taxonomy and previous ones is the quantitative overall measurement of the factors, which aims to allow for more direct comparison across different contexts. This is achieved through the establishment of a scale for each factor with a point value defined for each level on the scale. For example, a score of 5 for intergenerational transmission (multiplied by 2 in the final score) is defined as critical endangerment where only a few elderly speakers are left, and a score of 4 for absolute numbers of speakers is defined as severely endangered with between 10–99 speakers (Lee and Van Way 2016: 280–281). The scores for each factor are added together to give a total score for the "level of endangerment" (p. 285). In addition to this endangerment score, Lee and Van Way also lay out a formula to calculate the "level of certainty," based on the number of factors used in the calculation of the endangerment score. Despite these innovations, this tool continues to centre languages as the key entity of interest in discussions of vitality, rather than people themselves.

The language vitality definitions and assessment tools reviewed so far are taxonomic models that aim to quantitatively measure the level of vitality or endangerment of a particular language. While these taxonomic formulations and measurements of language vitality have generally been accepted and widely applied both within and outside academia, there is some important recent academic work pointing out how the conceptualization of language vitality in these scalar taxonomies can benefit from further development. For example, the linguist Mufwene applies the framework of language ecology to the conceptualization of language endangerment and vitality. Mufwene suggests that language vitality should be considered across a greater time depth with an understanding of the processes not only of language loss, but of language change and evolution more generally in the particularities of the local context (2017:

203). Mufwene criticizes broad, sweeping generalizations about globalization and colonization as causes of language endangerment that do not consider local contexts (2017). Willans and Jukes respond to Mufwene, agreeing with the benefits of taking an ecological approach that highlights the particularities of the local and can help avoid the simplistic assumptions that must be made in order to use speaker numbers to understand language vitality (2017: 264–266). At the same time, a purely ecological approach has been criticized for its dehumanizing theoretical perspective that centres languages and erases the human experience of language endangerment (Willans and Jukes 2017: 269).

The final research approach I discuss is linguistic anthropology, which returns to a people-centred framing of language vitality. As noted, the taxonomic theorizations of language vitality reviewed so far use lists of factors, measured on numerical scales where possible, including demographics, institutional support, status, domains, and intergenerational transmission. Underlying the use of these numerical scales of factors is an assumption that speakers and languages form discrete categories, such as generations and communities, that can in fact be counted. However, linguistic anthropologists contend that speakers, languages, communities, and generations are not so easily defined as to be bounded and countable, due to the complex social dynamics of multilingualism and identity, or they may not be defined in the same ways by researchers and communities (e.g. Dobrin, Austin, and Nathan 2009; England 2002; Gal and Irvine 1995; Hill 2002; Moore, Pietikainen, and Blommaert 2010; Suslak 2009; Whaley 2011). A related limitation, identified by Perley (2011: 4), is that although these assessment tools do acknowledge the key role of speakers in language vitality, the central object being considered is the language, in that it is "language" endangerment or vitality that is being measured, rather than speaker and community well-being. Perley further explains that "the most crucial variables in 'expert' assessments of language vitality are the people and their relationship with their languages" (2011: 61–62). Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor is of note here because people are centred in the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality, especially in terms of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality, which is defined as people's perceptions (1977). At the same time, Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor make an assumption that language vitality is about ethnicity, apparent through the use of the prefix "ethno-" in the name "ethnolinguistic vitality" (1977). While language and ethnicity certainly can be intricately associated, the underlying assumption is that they are consistently bound, or even homogenous, drawing on an essentialist ideology that suggests that a specific

language is part of the shared social cultural attributes of a particular ethnic group. This is a common essentialist ideology that oversimplifies the dynamic nature of the constitution of identities in the context of endangered languages (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Shulist 2016). Conceptualizing vitality in terms of ethnicity and ethnic group unity has implications for how key concepts like speaker and language are understood. Defining language use as internal to the ethnic community may overlook that community membership can be defined not only around ethnicity, but around shared sociocultural and sociolinguistic practices that can include complex forms of multilingualism (Shulist 2016).

There has been further development of the concept of language vitality by linguistic anthropologists working on language endangerment and revitalization. For example, Roche theorizes that "[v]itality is not a property of a language itself, nor of a population that speaks a language, but rather a description of the relationship between a language, its speakers, and its wider linguistic, social, and political context" (2017: 193). Using resilience theory developed in the fields of ecology and psychology, Roche first looks to identify the cyclical adaptive pattern from the field of ecology in assessments of language vitality over time, moving through the stages of the ecological adaptive cycle that include exploitation (growth), conservation (maintenance), release (collapse), and reorganization (adaptation) (Roche 2017: 191; Folke 2006; Folke et al. 2010). Roche interprets language vitality using a diachronic five factor analysis that includes setting (demographics, status), policy (formal and informal), domains, reproduction (intergenerational transmission, broader social reproduction), and identity that are rated by multiple experts and averaged to avoid bias (2017: 193). Roche uses these factors as "indicators," rather than measurements, of language vitality in two communities during five periods over 800–900 years (2017). He concludes that language vitality does not follow an adaptive cycle but is contingent on the sociopolitical context that is (re)produced by different agents driving a power imbalance that creates a situation of language endangerment (pp. 209–210). Since the ecological adaptive cycle of regeneration is not observed in patterns of language vitality, Roche suggests that a more linear pattern of resilience theory that is contingent on power dynamics, such as that developed in psychology, more adequately accounts for language endangerment (pp. 212–213). Roche, while acknowledging that he is still using a taxonomy that depends on speaker numbers, concludes that people are central to language vitality through the

political power dynamics at play in situations and circumstances where language is used or where language use is discussed (2017).

Another linguistic anthropologist, Hansen (n.d.), responds to Mufwene's (2017) linguistic ecological approach that positions the life of language as analogous to biological species. Hansen theorizes that the linguistic ecology and language vitality are sociopolitical in nature, describing the "life of language as political" and using the case study of a Nahua community in Mexico to support his argument (n.d.: 4). Hansen's work echoes Roche (2017) in showing that language vitality exists not only at the level of individual speakers who make linguistic choices, but at the social and community level where different groups use language(s) as a political tool (Hansen n.d.: 6). This sociopolitical approach allows for more thorough explanations of how similar neighbouring communities can have contrasting outcomes to a broader shared context of language endangerment, such as the differences in language shift or language maintenance observed in Nahua communities in Mexico (p. 6). In fact, communities that have been successful in responding to language endangerment have often taken an active approach to self-determination in local systems of politics, economics, education, and undertake explicit language planning and policy initiatives, including language revitalization efforts (Bastardas-Boada 2005).

The review of the theorization of vitality also shows that there is a balance to be struck between seeking a general theory of language endangerment and accounting for the particular and political contexts at the local level. While keeping in mind Mufwene's (2017) critiques of making sweeping generalizations that colonization or globalization causes language endangerment, it is clear that the most important aspect of the linguistic ecology is the relationship between language and the political context (Hansen, n.d.; Roche 2017; Davis 2017). It also cannot be denied that many endangered language communities are embedded in a colonial context of oppression, assimilation, and genocide of Indigenous peoples that has directly contributed to language endangerment and shift, a fact that is often erased in the study of language endangerment through its ideological framing that centers language(s) rather than people (Davis 2017). We can acknowledge both the local role of colonization and oppression and actual language use by community members as key aspects that contribute to language endangerment and responses to it (Ferguson and Siragusa 2017). A sociopolitical approach should thus be scalar and consider multiple levels of politics from the family, social group, institution, community, region, nation, and other relevant sociopolitical categories and actors.

Furthermore, I follow Perley's (2011) and Davis' (2018) direction and understand language vitality as the relationships between people and language(s) that can be better understood by studying language ideologies. Perley's understanding of vitalities as multiple and emergent captures the dynamic nature of the sociolinguistic and ideological relationships between people and language that I observe in my study of language ideologies in Huehuetla.

My contribution builds on these previous theorizations of language vitality, particularly the work in linguistic anthropology. I also move away from taxonomic scales of vitality and centre people and their ideologies rather than the language(s) as the crucial object of study in language endangerment. While acknowledging the initial work on subjective ethnolinguistic vitality by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) that considers people's perceptions, I do not use their questionnaire tool because it sets out to quantify language vitality and because it presumes a one-to-one relationship between language and ethnicity. Instead, I follow Perley (2011), Davis (2018), Roche (2017), and Hansen (n.d.) and recentre people in the definition of language vitality through a qualitative exploration of the relationships between people and their languages from their perspectives. These relationships can be studied by considering the mechanisms, such as the dynamic communicative practices of people and their language ideologies, through which the language is made meaningful. I do this through a scalar analysis of the interaction between sociopolitical contexts and practices, ideologies, and people's language use. While analyzing language vitality through a sociopolitical and ideological lens, I also consider how the sociopolitical and ideological contexts reflect and reproduce the linguistic ecology. The ways that language can be meaningful for people exist on multiple scales that can be jointly analyzed by taking an ecological approach. Following scholars in linguistic anthropology studying language endangerment, I use interdisciplinary and ethnographic methods to critically examine the discourses and ideologies that affect the use of the endangered language across social and political contexts of the linguistic ecology (Granadillo and Orcutt-Gachiri 2011). Going forward in this dissertation, when I use the term language vitality, I mean it in the new definition I am putting forward that centres language ideologies, rather than those existing definitions I have reviewed here (unless otherwise indicated). The present study of Huehuetla adds an additional case study for comparison of linguistic ecologies, language ideologies, and their effect on language vitality as they contribute to the construction of relationships between people and language that affect language use and sustainability over time. I also suggest some possible

improvements to assessing language vitality given these insights, to facilitate comparative study across other Totonac communities that have been studied, and other endangered language communities more generally.

2.2 Language ideologies and semiotic processes

In this section I first define the concept of language ideology in §2.2.1. In §2.2.2 I review key semiotic processes, which are the mechanisms through which language ideologies are reproduced and create meaning. I provide examples using case studies to illustrate how researchers have applied these concepts to study language ideologies in the context of language endangerment. The specific case studies I choose show examples that are similar to the patterns I find in Huehuetla. In §2.2.3 I discuss the specific ideologies of essentialism and syncretism, beginning with how these terms have been developed and used in the literature. I explore how essentialism and syncretism are analyzed in key case studies of language endangerment in Mexico and explain how I will apply these concepts to my study. The relationship between discourse and language ideologies is discussed later in Chapter 4 to illustrate how discourse analysis can be used to uncover and analyze language ideologies.

2.2.1 Language ideologies

The study of language ideologies comes from the field of linguistic anthropology, beginning with Silverstein's development of the theoretical concept of linguistic ideologies as semiotic structures. Silverstein defines linguistic ideologies as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (1979: 193). Silverstein's formulation focuses more on linguistic structure, while later definitions emphasize the social aspect, such as that of Woolard and Schieffelin (1994). Woolard and Schieffelin consider language ideologies as representations of the interface between speakers' forms of speech and their social experiences, within their broader theory of language socialization (1994). Woolard elaborates language ideologies as "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" and "a mediating link between social forms and forms of talk" (1998a: 3). Importantly, regardless of whether the analytical focus is more on the linguistic or the social component, language ideologies are about more than just language and the social component is always present (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 55).

Language ideologies are more than language attitudes, as language attitudes are attributed at the level of the individual person and are related to their emotions (Dyers and Abongdia 2010: 119). In contrast, ideologies are constructed and held not only by individuals, but also by groups, institutions, and other actors and operate as part of the sociopolitical system, meaning ideologies necessarily precede attitudes (Dyers and Abongdia 2010: 119). For Irvine and Gal, language ideologies are "the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them," in the social and moral process of "linguistic differentiation" (2000: 35). Along with their deep-seated character, ideologies may also be partial, fragmentary, and even produce contradictions. Errington says language ideology "refers to the situated, partial, and interested character of conceptions and uses of language" (Errington 2001: 110); and Kroskrity notes that "these conceptions, whether explicitly articulated or embodied in communicative practice, represent incomplete, or "partially successful," attempts to rationalize language usage; such rationalizations are typically multiple, context-bound, and necessarily constructed from the sociocultural experience of the speaker" (Kroskrity 2005: 496). Gal notes that language ideologies can exist and have influence on multiple levels or scales, and can be or appear to be contradictory, even for the same person or actor (1998). Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity also wrote a volume on the theory of language ideologies (1998). Language ideologies have been a useful analytical tool in the discussion of language endangerment in dynamic community contexts (e.g. Nevins 2004). More recently, Kroskrity has co-edited and edited a few volumes on the importance of language ideologies in the Native American communities doing language work (Kroskrity and Field 2009; Kroskrity 2012). Furthermore, Kroskrity has developed the concept of the language ideological assemblage, that allows researchers to explore ideological multiplicity and the relationships between ideologies in order to:

> understand [the] component language ideologies as part of a larger complex of relevant beliefs and feelings, both Indigenous and externally imposed, that may complement, contest, or otherwise dynamically interact with each other to modify language ideologies and linguistic practices (Kroskrity 2018: 2).

Drawing on these foundations, I define language ideologies as the beliefs and assumptions of people, groups, and actors about language(s), the people who use them, and how these are related to the social and political context. I also use Kroskrity's concept of the ideological

assemblage to explore how different ideologies are related to each other. Next, I discuss the central role of semiotic processes in the reproduction and circulation of language ideologies.

2.2.2 Semiotic processes

In their important work, Irvine and Gal discuss language ideologies as processes of semiosis, or meaning making, that naturalize associations between particular social, political, and economic conditions and language use beyond the referential level of meaning in language (Gal and Irvine 1995; Irvine and Gal 2000). These semiotic processes construct boundaries, categories, and hierarchies drawing on social and linguistic features to create differentiation (Gal and Irvine 1995; Irvine and Gal 2000). The semiotic processes of iconization, indexicality, erasure, and recursivity are a key part of the mechanism of the (re)production of language ideologies that form part of the underlying structure of social, political, and economic systems (Irvine and Gal 2000). To recall the definitions from the introduction, iconization is a semiotic process through which a sign comes to resemble its signified; for example, in language revitalization contexts, language and identity are often iconicized as a way to motivate linguistic and political activism, such as in the Yukon where language revitalization programming has used the phrase "we are our language" (Meek 2010). Indexicality is a contextual association between two things (Silverstein 2003: 194–195); for example, the use of Spanish is indexed to, or points to, higher levels of education and social status in Mexico. Another example at the level of a linguistic form is how swears are used and interpreted differently depending on the social context: swearing is interpreted as more appropriate in casual social contexts with peers, and as less appropriate in professional contexts. Swearing in casual social contexts can index affiliation, insider status, or emotion; while swearing in professional contexts is more likely to index a lack of knowledge of "professional" language or a lack of control of one's own emotions. Erasure is essentially a process of naturalization, where the status quo is presented as the natural way of things. Facts that do not fit the model are ignored or explained away (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38). Recursivity is the (re)production of language ideology across scales and contexts (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38); for example, in colonial nations, Indigenous languages are often marginalized and re-marginalized in multiple contexts such as government policy, schools, and informal social contexts. Identifying these semiotic processes in ethnographic data can support the interpretation of language use and uncover language ideologies. I present examples of these semiotic processes

next in order to illustrate their role in studying language ideologies in the context of language endangerment.

As noted, iconization is the interpretation of a particular language, variety, or linguistic form as a sign that directly resembles its signified. The application of iconization to multilingual practices can be seen in Barrett's (2008) quantitative study of Sipakapense Mayan. Barrett shows that there is a relationship between language ideology and patterns of language use in the small, relatively isolated community of Sipacapa in Guatemala. Specifically, the use of different linguistic structures in the Mayan Sipakapense language are tied to speakers' ideologies of both Sipakapense and Spanish. For some Sipakapense speakers, particularly those who are involved in purist Mayan revitalization efforts that have spread from more urban areas, using any Spanish borrowings is considered submission to Spanish colonialism and sociopolitical dominance (p. 284). These speakers, who are generally from the parent group at the time of the study, tend to choose grammatical forms that differentiate Sipakapense from Spanish as much as possible, illustrating a semiotic process through which the use of "pure" Sipakapense comes to be seen as an icon of Mayan identity. Your Sipakapense must sound "pure" in order to be considered authentic, and thus this "pure" form of Sipakapense is iconicized as how Mayan people should sound. Older speakers who are not involved in language revitalization use significantly more Spanish structures in their Sipakapense, code-switching to a greater degree, thus demonstrating a distinct language ideology that does not link a perceived "pure" form of Mayan language to Mayan identity. Barrett thus shows that language use across socially defined groups of speakers can be accounted for through a study of language ideologies, in this particular case the iconization of language and identity by a particular subset of the community.

Another example of iconization between identity and language is in a Keiwa-speaking Pueblo community in Arizona studied by Debenport (2015). A prominent language ideology in this community is that cultural knowledge and information, including language, should be protected and its circulation controlled. This ideology led Debenport to use a pseudonym for both the community and language name (there is no actual Keiwa language) (2015: 8). Debenport shows how ideologies about language purity, ritual secrecy, and literacy shaped the creation of a Keiwa dictionary, motivating the local language committee to purge the dictionary of (perceived) influences from Spanish, English, and other Pueblo and Hopi languages (pp. 28–29). This process of purist entextualization creates linguistic objects that come to serve as icons

of Keiwa Pueblo identity that must be protected (p. 5). The community spends time to develop specific protocols to both grant and limit access to texts to particular people for designated purposes (p. 45). While these purist and secretive ideologies create an iconic, semiotic link between language and identity, especially in the ritual context, Debenport also shows that the ideologies are flexible and contextual, sometimes enforced, and other times ignored to varying degrees (pp. 42–44).

Meek's work in the Kaska community of Watson Lake, Yukon Territory, Canada shows a complex pattern of indexicality and erasure that has naturalized a language shift from Kaska to English (2007, 2010). Meek shows how this language shift to English is rooted in an ideological shift in which elders' authority has become restricted to and signified by the cultural domain. Fluency in Kaska indexes, or is associated with the specialized knowledge and skills of elders who are now recognized as experts and teachers of culture and traditions, including language. The result has been the indexation of language competency, especially speaking, with age and social status, which functions to erase the previous Kaska linguistic practices of children and youth who must then resolve this sociolinguistic disjuncture (2007: 28). Further contributing to the perceived relationship between elders and Kaska is the expectation that young people show respect towards elders by listening to them and being silent, rather than speaking with them, as youth reanalyze that knowledge of Kaska comes with age and that those in positions of authority should speak Kaska, naturalizing the language shift (2007: 31–34). Revitalization efforts in Watson Lake, and the Yukon in general, promote the belief that language is identity, an iconization, using the phrase "we are our language" in promotional materials and signs (Meek 2010). Being Kaska and speaking Kaska are essentialized as Kaska identity. Erasure is also evident in this phrase that does not acknowledge community members who do not speak the language, having the potential effect of excluding them, or at least implicitly questioning their Kaska identity as non-speakers.

Recursivity is an important process that reinforces patterns, as can be seen in Davis' study of her own Chickasaw Nation (2015, 2018). In this work, Davis shows how processes of language shift and revitalization are tied up with dispossession from their land and subsequent economic developments (2018). Revitalization efforts, including language teaching and learning programs, both require funding and are creating paid positions for Chickasaw language speakers. These economic changes affect how individuals and the community view their language,

creating ideologies of kinship affiliation and community membership that are tied to language use and speaker-hood in an ethnolinguistic ideology of identity (2018: 25, 71). Davis found that Chickasaw Nation membership and identity are defined along ethnolinguistic lines, except that in the Chickasaw Nation this is not limited to only people who themselves speak the language, but also through affiliation: having kinship ties to speakers or language activists and learners is used to authenticate community membership (2015: 106–108; 2018: 76–80). Links to the community through several levels of affiliation is a type of ideological recursivity that has shaped language revitalization in the Chickasaw Nation.

Recursivity is also visible in Shulist's work on multilingualism in the urban Brazilian Amazonian community of São Gabriel where language policies have shaped perceptions of Indigeneity (2018). In this context, endangered languages are not only in an ecology with a dominant colonial language Portuguese, but also with other Indigenous languages, Baniwa, Nheengatú, and Tukano, that have recently been made official (Shulist 2018). Traditional language ideologies of authenticity indexed to territory, kinship, and linguistic exogamy in marriage shape who is considered a speaker of a given language. The education system and new official language policies have positioned different Indigenous languages in a hierarchical relationship with each other that did not exist prior, in which newly official Indigenous languages stand in for those that are not official (pp. 81, 146–147). These developments have resulted in recursive hierarchical relationships, first between Portuguese and the Indigenous languages, and now also between official Indigenous languages and Indigenous languages that are not official. In the urban multilingual context, pan-Indigeneity has emerged as preferable to ethnolinguistic affiliations, which marginalizes or erases those who maintain identity through specific affiliations to languages, especially those languages that were not made official in the new language policy (p. 83). The example of São Gabriel shows that we cannot assume that ethnolinguistic affiliation will always function in the same way: in São Gabriel ethnolinguistic identity is marginalized for some people in contrast to others, while in the Liard First Nation and the Chickasaw Nation ethnolinguistic identity and kinship affiliation are central to the language revitalization efforts and the definitions of community identity.

This section has shown examples of some of the semiotic processes, including iconization, erasure, indexicality, and fractal recursivity, through which language ideologies function, particularly in the context of language endangerment. The case studies demonstrate that the

semiotic processes create situations of ongoing interpretation and transformation of language ideologies that can vary across specific contexts and particular people or groups in the community. These same semiotic processes are also at play in Huehuetla, though not necessarily in the same dynamics as in the case studies presented here. One major piece that I add in my analysis is the further characterization of these semiotic processes as they function to reproduce essentialist and syncretic language ideologies.

2.2.3 Essentialist and syncretic language ideologies

I find many similar semiotic processes at play in Huehuetla as I presented in the review of cases in the previous section. However, in my analysis I also further analyze language ideologies and the semiotic processes of their reproduction by characterizing the ideologies as either essentialist or syncretic. In this section, I define these terms, outline their use in the literature, and provide examples of essentialism and syncretism in the context of language endangerment in Mexico.

Essentialism is a concept that has been used in the fields of psychology, linguistics, and anthropology with similar meaning, though sometimes applied to either or both cognitive and social processes. In psychology, essentialism refers to the creation of categories, or "the tendency to try to explain observable features in terms of a further unifying principle" (Newman and Knobe 2019: 586). This overlaps with the concept in linguistics, where essentialism is an important semantic process that organizes category membership through the construction of abstract schemas (Newman and Knobe 2019: 587). Essentialism can also occur at other semiotic levels, such as the level of social categories (Newman and Knobe 2019: 597). According to the linguistic anthropologist Silverstein, "[a]n essentialization or naturalization is a discovery of 'essences', qualities or characteristics predicable-as-true of individual things (including persons, events, signs of all sorts), and in particular predicable-as-true independent of the micro-contextual instance of presentation of the thing at issue" (2003: 202). This means that certain characteristics are taken as "naturally" belonging to all members of a category or group, which is presumed homogenous (Phillips 2010: 53). Essentialism allows for the negative evaluation of category members that do not possess or are perceived to not possess these presumed natural qualities. This can be seen in ideological constructions of linguistic purity, such as the belief that borrowing or code-switching are not appropriate. Linguistic purism is seen in attempts to purge a language of the influence of another language, observed in spoken Sipakapense Mayan studied

by Barrett (2008), and the written Keiwa Pueblo language resources studied by Debenport (2015) (see previous section). The concept of culture in anthropology is sometimes criticized as being plagued by essentialism, and a rejection of this essentialism has been occurring in the postmodernist movement in favour of a distributed, reflexive, and constructivist model of culture (Lentz 2017: 182; Rodseth 1998: 55, 63).

The concept of syncretism has its origins in the study of religion, where it was understood as a mixing or merging of distinct religious beliefs and practices, or religious beliefs and practices, and beliefs and practices from science, culture, or politics (Droogers 2011:195, 202). Within this study, some scholars suggest a typology of syncretism that considers the degree to which the original distinction is evident, as well as a distinction between a conscious and purposeful ideological syncretism on the one hand, and an unconscious implicit syncretism on the other (Droogers 2011: 202–203). The concept was brought into linguistics by Kuryłowicz who defined it as the "suppression of a relevant opposition under certain determined conditions" (Kuryłowicz 1964: 40 cited in Hill and Hill 1986: 57). Hill describes how the opposition can be created and suppressed at any level of meaning, from phonological contrasts to sociopolitical definitions of different languages (1999: 244–245). According to Hill, a "syncretic project" consists of a range of degrees of syncretism along a continuum that is defined at the extremes by "unobtainable" essentialist poles (1999: 245). I follow Hill to the extent that syncretism is connected to essentialist categories, but instead of a continuum I will conceptualism syncretism as a series of intersecting themes and practices of identity (see §5.3). Some scholars contend that syncretism depends on having ambiguous or ambivalent forms that can be transposed and interpreted in either system or set of conditions (Droogers 2011: 197; Woolard 1998b: 15). Hill also points out that syncretism is a social practice through which people merge perceived distinctions (1999: 245). Syncretism should also be understood in terms of power relations. Just as social, cultural, and linguistic distinctions can be established and exploited, they can also be resisted and challenged through syncretism (Droogers 2011: 205). Either essentialism or syncretism can be exploited to gain and maintain power. For example, linguistic essentialism can be used to construct certain forms as entirely distinct and incompatible, such as the case of mixing and code-switching in the Maya community that is interpreted as "impure" discussed by Barrett (2008), or the rejection of multilingualism in the old nationalist ideology that a nation is a people united by a single language. On the other hand, linguistic syncretism can erase the

influence of a group and promote assimilation. An example is the case of the syncretic appropriation and hyper anglicization of Spanish terms (lasso, lariat, arena, etc.) into the English of the Southwestern US, which are understood from a syncretic ideological position as coming from American cowboy culture, rather than from the local Hispanic communities (Hill 1999: 245–246).

Essentialism and syncretism have high analytic potential and they can be applied to several areas of study where language ideologies are at play. One important area where essentialist and syncretic categories have not been used but could be applied is in the field of bilingual education, particularly in the recent development of the concept of translanguaging (García 2009). I also present some case studies from Mexico, and while some of the studies I review do not use the terms essentialist and syncretic, they demonstrate examples where the analytical concepts of essentialism and syncretism could be applied. I use these examples to build precedence for my use of the concepts of essentialism and syncretism in the analysis of the present study of Huehuetla and to situate this study in relation to other studies of language ideology in endangered language contexts in Mexico.

The first example where essentialism and syncretism can be applied as analytic concepts is the study of bilingual education. In an effort to deconstruct problematic notions of multilingualism that suggest that languages are distinct codes separated in the mind, normally used as separate codes, and that multilingualism is a simple additive process that should be defined as native-like control of both languages, some scholars have developed the concept of translanguaging (García 2009; Otheguy, García, and Reid 2015). The language ideology that languages are clearly bounded in the mind and also exist as native-like, complete sets of knowledge, has some essentialist characteristics. In response to these conceptualizations of bilingualism that have affected education practices in a way that often excludes or erases the complex multilingual practices of students, García developed the concept of translanguaging (2009). Translanguaging is defined as “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order make sense of their bilingual worlds” and this concept includes but also goes beyond the traditional term of code-switching (García 2009: 37). The concept was later further clarified as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy, García, and Reid 2015: 283). The term translanguaging can be interpreted

as viewing multilingualism through a more syncretic language ideology: languages are not presumed to have natural boundaries and instead are defined as social constructs; similarly, hierarchies of language are viewed as ideological constructs rather than natural orders, and people's multilingual practices are not viewed as errors or gaps in knowledge of one of the codes, but as a fluid and strategic creativity (García 2009: 37; Otheguy, García, and Reid 2015: 283). While these scholars have not used the terms essentialist and syncretic to describe their concept of translanguaging, their ideas intersect with the present study because in both there is a deconstruction of presumed bounded essentialist categories and an understanding of multilingualism as a fluid, flexible set of contextual syncretic practices. The concept of translanguaging has also been applied to describe language revitalization strategies in education in the context of te reo Māori and Samoan, where teachers are encouraged to break rigid ideologies of monolingual standard classrooms (Seals and Olsen-Reeder 2020). Seals and Olsen Reeder (2020) explore how teachers can use spontaneous translanguaging strategies to support students' multilingual development and thus contribute to the use of the language, to positive attitudes to students' multilingual repertoires, and to language revitalization goals.

The second set of examples where essentialism and syncretism can be applied is in the study of language endangerment, and here I focus on cases from Mexico. A key study that initiated the use of the concept of syncretism in sociolinguistic work, is the sociolinguistic ecological ethnography by Hill and Hill (1986) of the syncretic language practices in a bilingual Nahua community in Malinche, Mexico. In their study, Hill and Hill define syncretism as a merging of a potential opposition (1986: 57). Their analysis shows the complex ways that speakers navigate different beliefs and practices related to the integration of Spanish into the local Nahuatl language, contrasting syncretic beliefs and practices with purist ones (pp. 5, 55–58). Hill and Hill discuss the syncretic linguistic practices at the structural level in detail; for example, in the phonological integration of Spanish borrowings and the morphosyntactic integration of Spanish nouns and verbs into Nahuatl. They also show that different people in the community, including those who are not Indigenous, use Spanish and Nahuatl linguistic resources strategically in different contexts to create and erase social and political boundaries or distinctions. This is done through distinct ways of speaking Nahuatl, including the "power code," which has more Spanish integration, and the "purist code," which does not allow for Spanish integration (p. 100). In the Malinche community, Hill and Hill show that language shift is

occurring because of the gradual "collapse of the syncretic project" tied to changing ideologies of identity that link Nahuatl to an identity that is "worthless and oppressed" (p. 403). Drawing on Hill and Hill's work in my analysis, I use the concept of syncretism to describe the type of language ideologies observed in Huehuetla. These syncretic ideologies allow for multilingual practices and new definitions of identities that contrast with essentialist ideologies that presume bounded relations between language and identities.

Another case of syncretic linguistic practices is seen in Faudree's work on a Mazatec poetry contest, though she does not describe the practices in syncretic terms (2013). Faudree gives an ethnographic account of the ideological underpinning of the successful cultural and linguistic revival in the Mazatec community of Nda Xo, Oaxaca, Mexico (2013). In Nda Xo, the emergence of a song writing contest for the annual Day of the Dead celebrations have been remarkably successful in encouraging young people to write songs in Mazatec, especially first language Spanish speakers who are also new Mazatec speakers and learners (p. 106). Any system or form of Mazatec writing is accepted in the contest, reflecting a level of tolerance for non-standard and idiosyncratic language use that encourages novices and youth to participate (p. 127). This practice reflects what I am calling a syncretic ideology that rejects ideologies of linguistic purity and accepts merging. This pattern of accepting diverse writing systems is seen in other communities where ideologies of language standardization are contested (e.g. the Chickasaw Nation discussed by Davis 2018: 39). Faudree attributes the success of the Day of the Dead song contest to the creation of a locally accepted context in which Indigenous literacy has been allowed to flourish and develop outside the institutional context of schools (p. 101). People are motivated to participate in an event that is simultaneously embedded in local culture and history surrounding the Day of the Dead and the expanding tourism industry. This bridges essentialist tensions between tradition and modernity, and local ethnic identity and national identity (pp. 106–107). Although the contest itself and many of the songs speak out against the hegemony of the Spanish-speaking population and society that do not identify as Indigenous, the revitalization activities remain contained to the context of the song contest and so are tolerated (p. 246). The syncretic ideological foundation of the Day of the Dead song contest provides the basis for its success as a revitalization movement because tolerance for the linguistic diversity and the range of Mazatec literacy practices of the participants, rather than an adherence to ideologies of linguistic purity and standardization, motivates local community members to

participate. As I show in my analysis, the syncretic character of Mazatec revitalization efforts is similar to the syncretic pattern of language ideologies and practices I observe in Huehuetla.

Another key study is the analysis of the Nahua community of Contla, Tlaxcala by Messing (2007). Again, this study does not use the concepts of essentialism and syncretism, but nonetheless some of the ideologies Messing defines are also found in Huehuetla. This study provides a useful comparison of a Mexican community that is geographically and socially adjacent to Huehuetla. Messing's analysis of competing discourses in Contla identified the same mainstream hegemonic ideologies that have also been identified by other researchers in Mexico at both national and regional levels (2007). One of these ideologies Messing defines as *salir adelante,* meaning "to get ahead" into a presumed "better," more modern state by leaving a more difficult situation in the past, typically defined as socioeconomic growth (pp. 558–560). The ideology of *salir adelante* implies a linear model of the passage of time and events and valorizes Western interpretations of modernity and nationality predicated on speaking Spanish and identifying as a *mestizo* person (Messing 2007: 566–567). Although the word *mestizo* literally means "mixed-race" (from the Latin *mixtus* "mixed"), the word is used as a broad category in Mexico to mean Spanish speakers who do not identify as Indigenous. This idealization of a homogenous national Mexican identity promoted by the state is termed "imaginary Mexico" in the classic study of forces of Mexican nationalization by Bonfil Batalla (1990) and is an example of an essentialist ideology. Importantly, *salir adelante* allows for a valorization of Indigeneity in the past as a representation of Mexico's cultural heritage, depth, and wealth; however, this valorization is significantly restricted to the past and Indigenous people are assumed to have assimilated into *mestizaje* "*mestizo* identity," the homogenous *mestizo* national identity. The second ideology identified by Messing in Contla is *menosprecio*, or "denigration," which she describes as an extension of *salir adelante* that assumes that in order to get ahead, past ways of life indexed to Indigenous identity must be abandoned because they represent and may be responsible for the difficulties and problems of the past (Messing 2007: 560–561). *Menosprecio* is consistent with mainstream essentialist ideologies that index Indigeneity to poverty, low social class, and backwardness (p. 562), which leads speakers to make a choice to shift to Spanish, abandon Nahuatl, and even deny knowledge of the language to their interlocutors (p. 571). On the other hand, some community members in Contla respond to this denigration with the third local ideology identified by Messing: *pro-indígena*, or "pro-Indigenous," a counter discourse to

menosprecio that reinterprets *salir adelante* as a revalorization of local Nahua identity in a modern context. According to Messing, the *pro-indígena* discourse represents Bonfil Batalla's "deep Mexico," or the Indigenous nations within Mexico that are erased or marginalized in dominant hegemonic discourses (Bonfil Batalla 1990; Messing 2007: 566). *Pro-indígena* is not merely a resistance to *menosprecio*, but rather a reinterpretation of *salir adelante* that deconstructs the disjunctures between the concepts of tradition and modernity, and peripheral and central, created in the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* (pp. 567–569). *Pro-indígena* can be characterized as a syncretic ideology, similar in some ways to the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity" that I identify in Huehuetla. The ideologies identified by Messing serve as an important point of comparison for the analysis of Huehuetla, and I use some of the same terms for the ideologies of *salir adelante* and *menosprecio* in my analysis.

Moving closer to the local context, there are some ethnographies of language use and ideology in other Totonac communities that can be directly compared to Huehuetla. In their ethnographic research on the Totonac communities of Chicontla and Patla in Puebla, Mexico, Beck and Lam (2008) and Lam (2009, 2010a, 2012, 2020) explain language shift as the result of a combination of factors that include both increased opportunities to use Spanish in daily life and the speakers' decision to shift to Spanish and abandon Totonac through an ideology of monolingualism. Beck and Lam (2008: 12), using Denison's concept of linguistic suicide (1977), say that speakers of Totonac in Chicontla and Patla are choosing to abandon their language, as a result of having adopted the broader societal ideology of *menosprecio* the denigrates the Totonac language and Indigeneity in general. Socio demographic pressures, together with speakers' interpretations of and interactions with their circumstances—that is, their ideologies— result in not only the adoption of Spanish, but also the abandonment of Totonac (Beck & Lam 2008; Lam 2009, 2012). Again, although they do not use the terms, Beck and Lam have identified an essentialist ideology in Chicontla and Patla. Lam (2010b) finds that parents value Totonac for its links to their heritage; however, they do not speak Totonac with their children and believe children should only learn one language, another essentialist ideology. In contrast, youth themselves view bilingualism in a more positive light, but believe Totonac is the language of elders, similar to youth ideologies found by Meek (2007, 2010). Totonac is being lost in Chicontla and Patla, despite there being some ideologies that support the use of Totonac, because of a decision by parents to attempt to help their children avoid discrimination and avoid having

an accent in Spanish (Lam 2020). Importantly, the abandonment of the language does not mean the children will be able to avoid discrimination, as there are other indices of identity that could lead to someone being discriminated against, which has led speakers in other Totonac communities, like Huehuetla, to develop alternative syncretic discourses and practices that counter the impossible demands of essentialism. These studies of Upper Necaxa Totonac provide ethnographic analysis of language ideologies in communities that share regional and cultural characteristics with Huehuetla, providing a key point of comparison that shows a range in the degree to which essentialism and syncretism are at work in different Totonac communities.

In contrast to Beck and Lam (2008) and Lam (2009, 2012, 2020), my previous research in the Totonac community of Ozelonacaxtla found that almost all families are maintaining Totonac and transmitting it to their children, who play with one another at home and in public in Totonac (McGraw 2009, 2019). There are fewer than a dozen residents of Ozelonacaxtla who do not speak Totonac as their first language, and all of these people are outsiders who have immigrated or intermarried (Corona Hernández 2008; McGraw 2019). Speakers see inherent practical value in Totonac for interacting with the monolingual Totonac speakers in the area, and they see the language as natural to the area and the community, which is an essentialist ideology. Speakers also have a strong emotional and cultural tie to Totonac. Alongside these valorizations of Totonac, multilingualism in Spanish is increasing rapidly due to greater availability of schooling and greater economic and social mobility of community members who recognize Spanish for its socioeconomic value. As multilingualism in Spanish increases, unlike in Chicontla and Patla, an ideology of syncretic multilingualism is supporting the Totonac language (McGraw 2019). The valorization of linguistic diversity is one key factor that has been identified by scholars as an important ideological condition for sustaining endangered languages (Meek 2016; Mühlhäusler 2000). In Huehuetla, I find a similar pattern of syncretic valorization of multilingualism as well as the active creation of new domains of use and the ideological rejection, at least in some contexts and situations, of essentialist perspectives of identity that are based on the assumption that each language aligns with one particular bounded identity.

The case studies of endangered Indigenous languages discussed here reveal how endangered language communities can have diverse and complex reactions to similar socioeconomic and sociopolitical pressure to shift to dominant languages. The range of different language ideologies presented have shown that what community members and other actors

themselves think about the languages they speak and how they use them on a daily basis can help explain the particular situation of language use observed in a given community. Focusing on ideologies can enable researchers to adequately explain how some communities not only adopt the dominant language, but also choose to abandon their traditional language, while others establish a form of sustainable multilingualism. The studies emphasize that speakers from different social groups across a community do not necessarily share the same experiences, practices, and combinations of ideologies, and that studying how intra- and intergroup diversity functions and is interpreted across contexts is important for understanding language vitality. Studying language ideologies, and in particular considering their multiplicities, interactions, and relationships, or the unique language ideological assemblages (Kroskrity 2018), is therefore key to understanding a particular situation of language vitality that will affect the sustainability of a language into the future. In the review of these examples, I also show that the application of the concepts of essentialism and syncretism have analytical power for the study of language ideologies. While Hill (1999: 245) seems to understand syncretism as a "continuum" or a line between two poles, I see syncretism as a range of intersecting categories, which can be represented in a figure of intersecting circles (see §5.3). Syncretic ideologies exploit these essentialist categories, overlapping, blurring, and contesting them. The language ideological assemblage in Huehuetla is key to assessing language vitality because these ideologies affect language use, as well as attitudes and perceptions towards language use. I also apply my analysis of the essentialist-syncretic language ideological assemblage in Huehuetla to the theoretical reconceptualization of language vitality as relational, and therefore grounded in people's relationships to each other and their language(s).

2.3 Linguistic ecology as an approach

The language ideological assemblage that I identify in Huehuetla is shaped by and in turn affects the linguistic ecology. Linguistic ecology is an approach to understanding language use and change by studying relationships between languages, people, and sociopolitical structures that make up the contexts in which languages are used (Blackledge 2008). Linguistic ecology is a useful approach for studying linguistic diversity and variability that looks at the particular local contexts of distinct language communities (Haugen 1972; Grenoble 2011; Mufwene 2017; Mühlhäusler 2000). Haugen first defined the ecology of language as the "environment of a

language," and more specifically "the society that uses [the language] as one of its codes" (1972: 325).

The ecology of language or linguistic ecology draws on analogy to the study of the ecology of biological species (Mühlhäusler 1996). This framework positions languages as living things, or species, that exist in a dynamic relationship with other languages and with other elements in the ecosystem. In his work on languages of the South Pacific, Mühlhäusler takes the position that language diversity is inherently a good thing and that language planning should aim to support the sustainability of this diversity, versus traditional language planning that tends to focus on language standardization which often has the effect of leveling linguistic diversity (1996; 2000: 306). Mühlhäusler also suggests that maintaining linguistic diversity and revitalizing languages can best be achieved by supporting linguistic ecologies and stable relationships between languages and their speakers (1996: 322). This analogy of languages as living has the effect of conceptualizing languages as bounded entities, which has many implications for the study of language endangerment; for example, the idea that it is languages that are endangered like biological species contributes to the decentering of people (e.g. Davis 2017; Heller and Duchêne 2007; Hill 2002; Jaffe 2007; Meek 2011; Muehlmann 2007; Perley 2011). Some scholars have also understood language ecology more literally to refer to the geographic, physical, and even biological contexts of language use, such as in theories of language evolution that view different languages in competition with each other (Mufwene 2001, 2008, 2017). Speakers are seen to make adaptive linguistic choices that are not necessarily morally or politically grounded, but rather based on largely socioeconomic conditions (Ladefoged 1992; Mufwene 2001, 2017). Other scholars have decentred language as a discrete object and developed the definition of linguistic ecology as the relationships that exist between people, the languages they speak, and their environment, where environment is understood as physical, biological, social, political, and economic systems (Alwin and Mühlhäusler 2001; Mühlhäusler 1996, 2000; Pennycook 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas 2011). For example, in his study of linguistic ecology, Mühlhäusler is clear that he is using ecology in a metaphorical sense and does not presume the natural existence of languages as predetermined or "given" objects (1996: 4–8). At the same time, this framing does obscure the socially constructed and distributed nature of language and other cultural symbolic systems (Rodseth 1998). The term linguistic ecology, as opposed to language ecology, is useful here because it decenters a particular language as an object in and of itself, and instead reframes

the study of the ecology to focus on the linguistic contexts, rather than the ecology of (a) particular language(s). Following these interpretations, in my study linguistic ecology broadly refers to contexts and relationships on multiple scales, including the diverse sociopolitical, economic, geographic, and material contexts in which language is used as people live their daily lives in relationship with each other, and with other actors and institutions in their community.

The combination of language ideology within an ecological approach originally comes from scholars of language policy and planning, such as Hornberger (2002, 2003a, 2003b), Ricento (2000), Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2008), who place human rights at the center of their work. Both language policy and planning, as well as linguistic human rights, draw on the understanding of language as political, and therefore ideological. There are also scholars doing ethnography of language policy who take a critical ideological approach, such as McCarty (2011). An ecological frame has been previously applied to language endangerment by Grenoble in a general sense (2011), and by Wyman (2009) in their analysis of youth language use in a Yup'ik community. I continue to expand the scope of an ecological approach beyond official policy to look at ideology on other scales within the linguistic ecology, including at the discursive and interactional levels. A key contribution I make to the study of linguistic ecology is identifying recursive reproductions and reflections of language ideologies within the linguistic ecology, illuminating the relationships between the language ideological assemblage and other components of the linguistic ecology.

Looking at both discourse and the linguistic ecology allows me to explore in rich detail the multiplicity of language ideologies in Huehuetla and the semiotic processes that produce, reproduce, and contest them in distinct contexts. I take a speaker-centred perspective to linguistic ecology, rather than a language-centred perspective, gained through an ethnographic analysis of people as agentive language users interacting on multiple intersecting and variable scales (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Carr and Lempert 2016; Costa 2013). Through discourse analysis, I identify a range of language ideologies held by Totonac people with different levels of declared knowledge of Huehuetla Totonac, as well as by *mestizos* in Huehuetla. In addition to discourse analysis, evidence of language ideologies can also be found in the linguistic ecology itself by looking at how language ideologies are reflected in and affect the contexts I analyze. The analysis of language ideologies occurs on different scales: interpersonal interactions, local kinship networks, political and socioeconomic networks, economic networks, and institutional

networks, all of which are produced and interpreted by people in an ongoing intersubjective process (Duranti 1997; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Considering language ideology on individual, local, and national scales is an important step for an ecological account of language use. The role of language in (re)producing hegemony, a dominant group ideology, and naturalizing the status quo in society in order to establish and maintain control has long been noted (e.g. Gramsci 1971; Irvine 1989; Ives 2004). Particular discourses function semiotically to naturalize language use and ideologies until they become bleached of their connection to particular interests (Paffey 2012: 21), as is seen in the case of essentialism. Examining the social, political, and economic conditions in which language use is embedded is likely to produce a more accurate interpretation or assessment of language use and vitality (Irvine 1989; Haugen 1972; Mühlhäusler 2000; Pennycook 2004). In other words, identifying language ideologies and the processes involved in their (re)production can reveal whose needs are being served by particular ideologies and practices and how power is obtained, maintained, and contested in the local language ecology. Thus, my approach to studying the relationship between language ideologies and the linguistic ecology considers the sociolinguistic context or ecology at the micro, meso, and macro levels, and incorporates a close engagement with how this context reflects, reproduces, and shapes language ideologies, and vice versa. This combination of language ideology across scales as a key part of the linguistic ecology helps to capture the diversities and subtleties on the ground, the agency of speakers and other stakeholders (including the researcher), and relates these back to broader sociopolitical and economic contexts that contribute to the linguistic ecology. This analysis of language ideologies using discursive evidence contextualized in the linguistic ecology contributes to an understanding of the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac and of language vitality more generally by illuminating the ideological support for the language not just from speakers themselves, but from all actors and institutions in the ecology.

An important concept in the ecology of language is language sustainability, which has been defined as a situation where language use continues "despite the changed circumstances and (social) environment," alluding to processes of adaptation (Ehala 2014: 89). Bastardas-Boada elaborates on sustainability in the context of language ecology as a situation that emerges due to language contact and multilingualism in which community members do not alter their linguistic practices at a speed that undermines the stability of the local language, but rather maintain and

create value and functions for each language in the community (Bastardas-Boada 2017: 37). While this describes language sustainability on the community level, it should also be understood on the scale of the individual and their daily language use performed in the context of their interconnected social networks and communities of practice (Avineri 2012; Webster 2008). Language sustainability is thus dependent on multiple scales and involves diverse actors, including individuals, families, institutions, communities, regions, nations, and others (Carr and Lempert 2016). Along similar lines, Stanford and Whaley define language sustainability as a result of the participation of speakers in the production of "dynamic linguistic ecosystems" (2010: 111). Language sustainability can be understood or predicted by studying language vitality, a point brought out in Roche's theorization (see §2.1) where language vitality is interpreted as an abstract indicator of language sustainability (Roche 2017: 193). In my conceptualization of vitality as relational and centered on people and their ideologies, following Perley (2011) and Davis (2018), language vitality does not only indicate sustainability, rather vitality constitutes sustainability over time. In the final discussion of the thesis, I discuss the current vitality of Huehuetla Totonac and the implications for its future sustainability, as well as how these findings can inform the more general issue of comparative language vitality assessment.

The next chapter provides a description of the local and national demographic, social, political, and economic contexts that contribute to the linguistic ecology in Huehuetla.

3 The community of Huehuetla and the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla Totonac

The municipality of Huehuetla is located in the Sierra Norte of Puebla in east-central Mexico, which is shown in the map in Figure 1 in Chapter 1 (p. 4). The town of Huehuetla, the head of the municipality of the same name, is pictured in Figure 2. The region is mountainous and communities in the municipality are connected by a network of winding roads, some of which have only recently been paved. Figure 3 shows the municipality of Huehuetla, including the town of Huehuetla (the head of the municipality), and the other 11 communities in the municipality: Cinco de Mayo, Xonalpu, Putlunichuchut, Kuwik Chuchut, Francisco I. Madero, Leacaman, Lipuntahuaca, Putaxcat, Chilocoyo Guadalupe, Chilocoyo del Carmen, and Ozelonacaxtla. Note that Ozelonacaxtla is geographically separated from the rest of the municipality to the south by a section of the municipality of Caxhuacan. Not shown in Figure 3 are the many small gravel and dirt paths, as well as settlements called *rancherías*, which are small groups of houses.

Figure 2: Huehuetla, Puebla, Mexico in November 2016 (photo by author)

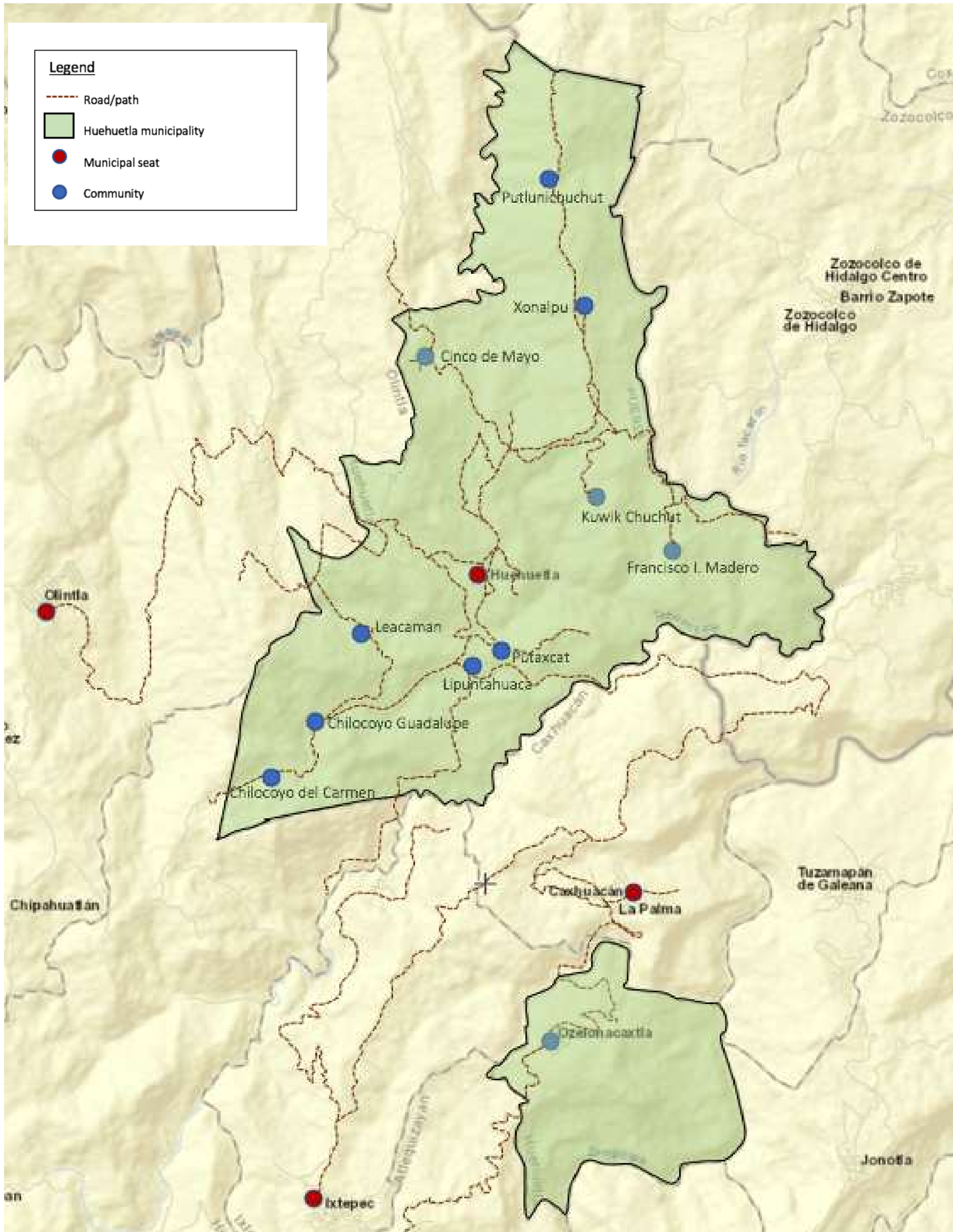

Figure 3: Map of the municipality of Huehuetla, Puebla (map by author)

In this chapter I provide the demographic context in §3.1; a discussion of the Catholic Church, the systems of *cargos* and *compadrazgo* introduced by the Church, and the practice of religious syncretism in §3.2; a discussion of land use, economic development, and the political effects of this in §3.3; and a discussion of language and education policy in §3.4. The sociopolitical, economic and institutional structures, as well as the systems of social practices that I discuss, have shaped the historical and current linguistic ecology, which I summarize in the conclusion in §3.5. This provides the background for understanding the language ideologies and the specific examples of their enaction in the linguistic ecology that are presented in the analysis.

3.1 The demographic context

The municipality of Huehuetla is in the cultural heart of *Totonacapan*, the geographic area from the coast of Veracruz inland to the Sierra Norte of Puebla that is the historical territory of the Totonac. The name *huehuetla* means "place of the old ones" in Nahuatl, the group of languages spoken by peoples that included the Aztec and other Nahua societies who dominated central Mexico and moved into the Sierra Norte before the arrival of Europeans. Many of the names of the other communities in the municipality are Totonac names: Xonalpu, Putlunichuchut, Kuwik Chuchut, Leacaman, Lipuntahuaca, and Putaxcat. This is quite unusual for the Sierra Norte region, which has mostly Nahuatl names even in regions to the south and west of Huehuetla where there are high concentrations of Totonac speakers (Beck p.c.). The town of Huehuetla plays an important role as the political, economic, and cultural centre of the municipality, and the broader region of the Sierra Norte. There are many locally organized Totonac and Indigenous institutions located in the town of Huehuetla. There is also a large weekly market, and Huehuetla is home to many traders who buy local produce and transport it to be sold in larger urban centers in the Sierra like Zacatlán and Zacapoaxtla.

The communities of the municipality shown on the map in Figure 3 above are listed with their total populations, number and proportion of declared Indigenous language speakers, and number and proportion of people living in Indigenous headed households in Table 1 (data from INEGI 2020). The census data from INEGI (2020) and an annual health survey collected by the *Hospital Integral* "General Hospital" (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016) are used to provide a limited demographic description. What emerges from the data is not a clear picture of the community, and instead shows that the census data, while quantitative, is far from objective because the census assumes clear category boundaries that may not reflect reality and reveal state ideologies

about identity and language. For example, the category "self-declared Indigenous language speakers" does not consider the context in which the data is collected: a person may not wish to admit speaking an Indigenous language to an outside census taker. This also creates a broad category of Indigenous that erases the diversity of Indigenous people in Mexico and enables the state to treat Indigenous people as a single monolith. In Huehuetla, there are in fact three distinct Indigenous languages spoken, Totonac, Nahuatl, and Otomí, but the census data ignores this, which can have consequences for state policies that affect the community.

Community	**Population**	**Self-declared Indigenous language speakers**	**Proportion Indigenous language speakers**	**People in Indigenous - headed households**	**Proportion in Indigenous-headed households**
Cinco de Mayo	2,370	2,013	85%	2,292	96.7%
Xonalpu	2,042	1,823	89%	2,035	99.7%
Putlunichuchut	1,305	1,204	92%	1,303	99.8%
Kuwik Chuchut	886	824	93%	882	99.5%
Francisco I. Madero	603	560	93%	600	99.5%
Leacaman	1,955	1,783	91%	1,952	99.8%
Lipuntahuaca	1,939	1,691	87%	1,895	97.7%
Putaxcat	827	680	82%	796	96.3%
Chilocoyo Guadalupe	438	257	59%	406	92.7%
Chilocoyo del Carmen	1,018	672	66%	867	85.2%
Ozelonacaxtla	1,209	1,101	91%	1,208	99.9%
Huehuetla	2,490	1,098	44%	1,819	73.1%
Municipal Total	17,082	13,706	80%	16,055	94%

Table 1: Some demographics of the communities of the municipality of Huehuetla (INEGI 2020)

According to INEGI, the town of Huehuetla has a population of 2,490 community members (2020).[2] There are reportedly approximately 580 households in Huehuetla, with an average of five people per household (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). INEGI reports that 1,819 people live in a household headed, or economically maintained, by an Indigenous person. This information does not indicate if the head of the household is presumed male, and it also does not indicate anything about whether people living in such a household are also Indigenous. However, if we were to assume that people in Indigenous-headed households are also Indigenous, this would mean 73.1% of the population of Huehuetla are Indigenous (2020). However, this might be an underestimate of the proportion of Indigenous people in Huehuetla because the local hospital and other academic sources suggest the population of Huehuetla is approximately 90% Totonac or higher (Ellison 2004; Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). As noted, the national census counts self-declared speakers of Indigenous languages without naming a specific language or clearly defining how this is explained when people are asked, and the local health center does not provide any information about how they counted Indigenous people. The discrepancy could also be related to a desire to not indicate Indigenous identity or knowledge of an Indigenous language to official national census takers who are typically *mestizos* not from Huehuetla, which may be connected to negative ideologies about Indigeneity such as *menosprecio* "denigration" (see §5.1.1). The higher number reported by the health center may be a result of the fact that they partner with local nurses and students who are more likely to know the people they are counting. In any case, this shows that the data-gathering process and the resulting data about Indigenous people, Indigenous languages, and numbers of speakers is anything but clear.

This census data in Table 1 also includes self-declared language use. In the municipality of Huehuetla, Totonac, Nahuatl, and Otomí are spoken, according to some people I spoke with and which I observed in my fieldwork. Nahuatl is spoken by people who have moved into the area and Otomí is spoken by a small proportion of the population who are frequently fluent in Totonac as well. INEGI does not record which Indigenous language is spoken, only if one is declared as spoken, and it is therefore not possible to give the distribution of speakers across languages or determine the degree of multilingualism in Indigenous languages. This is

[2]The *Hospital Integral* sends a team of nurses to survey households each year to collect information used for assessing community health and providing education and treatment (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). The *Hospital Integral* reports a total population of 2,850 people, 360 people more than INEGI.

interesting from an ideological perspective because it reflects that the government policy treats Indigenous people as an entire group, and also that they assume people in particular territories are of certain ethnicities without recognizing multilingualism or the possibility that people may be from multiple ethnic groups, which shows an underlying essentialist ideology. In the Sierra Norte, and Mexico more generally, Nahuatl became a language of colonial administration and therefore enjoyed prestige. There may have been some language shift from Totonac to Nahuatl in some communities during the colonial period, especially where large groups of Nahua migrated (Stresser-Péan 2009). However, most knowledge and use of Nahuatl in the Sierra Norte today, including in Chicontla, Patla, and Huehuetla, is a result of intermarriage and migration, rather than language shift to Nahuatl. Many of these people are multilingual in Nahuatl, Totonac, and Spanish to varying degrees.

As Table 1 shows, there are 17,082 people living in the municipality, 13,706 (81%) of whom self-declare as Indigenous language speakers according to the census (INEGI 2020). In the town of Huehuetla, the number of self-declared Indigenous language speakers drops to 1,098 people (44%) (INEGI 2020).[3] By comparing this number to the number of people who live in Indigenous-headed households, we can see that there is a group of people, around 720 in the town of Huehuetla (29% of the population), who live in Indigenous-headed households and say they do not speak an Indigenous language. However, it is not clear if these people consider themselves Indigenous because their family is Indigenous even though they do not say they speak an Indigenous language, or if there are some *mestizos* living in Indigenous-headed households. There are also Totonac people who live with *mestizos* who are not clearly represented by the way Indigenous households are counted. The census presumes that households are homogenous, which is certainly not the case. The remainder of people in Indigenous-headed households who are counted as not speaking an Indigenous language might indicate that there is a degree of language shift in some households, though the census data is not disaggregated in a way that shows which people, in which households, do or do not speak an Indigenous language. On the other hand, 58 people (2.4% of the population) are Indigenous language speakers with no knowledge of Spanish, according to the census, meaning the vast majority of the population are speakers of Spanish (INEGI 2020). This rate of Spanish

[3]The health survey conducted by the *Hospital Integral* states that 50% of Totonac people in Huehuetla speak Huehuetla Totonac (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016: 31).

knowledge is higher than in 2010, when 97 people (4.7% of the population) declared no knowledge of Spanish (INEGI 2010). Bilingualism also appears to be increasing: in 2010, 40.6% of people self-declared as bilingual in an Indigenous language and Spanish, and in 2020 this proportion was 41.8% (INEGI 2010, 2020). At the same time, there is no way to separate learners of Spanish from first language speakers of Spanish from the census data, and it is not clear how being a speaker is defined when the census is conducted. While it is not clear how bilingualism is counted in the census, it does appear that knowledge of Spanish is increasing among Indigenous people, and that there are some Totonac people who do not speak Totonac in the town of Huehuetla. Together, these figures may indicate that there has already been some language shift to Spanish in Huehuetla, which I observed is the case for some people (see Chapter 5).

Some interesting demographic differences between the town of Huehuetla and the other communities in the municipality also emerge from Table 1. Overall, Huehuetla is relatively larger and more urban than the other communities in the municipality, though there are a few other large towns including Cinco de Mayo with 2,370 people. Huehuetla also has the lowest proportion of people living in Indigenous-headed households compared to the other communities. This suggests that there are more Spanish-speaking *mestizos* in Huehuetla than in the other towns, likely because Huehuetla is the political, economic, and cultural centre of the municipality. While *mestizos* have settled in Huehuetla, held positions in the municipal government, and used the town as a trade center to control access to markets in the Sierra region, the *mestizos* are a clear numerical minority based on both the census and my own observations. However, it is difficult to know the number of *mestizos* in Huehuetla using the census data because not all Indigenous people speak an Indigenous language or live in an Indigenous household, so subtracting these from a 100% total does not equate to *mestizo* numbers. The data from the Hospital Integral suggests that about 10% of the population (approximately 285 people using the hospital's total population number of 2,850) are not ethnically Totonac.

In terms of self-declared language use, the smaller communities of the municipality have a reported higher concentration of Totonac people who speak Totonac and Spanish, or are monolingual in Totonac, than in the town of Huehuetla. In these communities, between 59% and 93% of the population declare they speak an Indigenous language, with many communities above 90%, as seen in Table 1. For example, in Ozelonacaxtla 91% of people are reported as

self-declared Indigenous language speakers, and my fieldwork confirms the proportion of Totonac speakers is very high (INEGI 2020; McGraw 2009, 2019). The population of Ozelonacaxtla is 99.9% Indigenous according to INEGI (2020); however, during my field work in 2010 there were about a dozen *mestizos* (about 1% of the population), including the doctor, nurses, and their families. While a part of the municipality of Huehuetla, Ozelonacaxtla is more independent than the other communities in two ways. First, Ozelonacaxtla is geographically and politically separated from the main part of the municipality, while being situated only about 10 km directly to the south of Huehuetla (see Figure 3). However, by road the trip is 23 km, about a 40-minute drive, going around the mountains and passing through either the municipality of Caxhuacan or Ixtepec. Second, its status as an auxiliary branch to the municipality means the local leaders are chosen through the *cargos* system (see §3.2) administer programs and resources that are funded through the municipal government in Huehuetla. The leadership of the auxiliary government in Ozelonacaxtla are Totonac people who speak Totonac and conduct their official affairs in Totonac (McGraw 2019). This local, non-*mestizo* control of government is different from Huehuetla, where the partisan system has been in place for several decades now. Many people from Ozelonacaxtla regularly make the trip to Huehuetla to access their jobs, the market, or schools in or near Huehuetla. I learned that students from around the municipality travel daily to schools in and around Huehuetla, such as the Federal Primary school, the independent high school *Centro de Estudios Superiores Indígena Kgoyom*, and the *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla* in Lipuntahuaca (just south of Huehuetla). Huehuetla is also connected to the broader region, with people coming from neighboring municipalities for the market and festivals. This interconnectedness has also been increasing due to the development of infrastructure in the last half century; for example, the paving of roads by the federal and state governments in the 1980s and 90s, combined with an increasing access to vehicles. This affected the movement of goods through the market and the mobility and migration of people.

Emigration has been increasing over the past 50 years as roads are paved, creating more opportunities for community members to get work outside of Huehuetla in order to contribute financially to their households through multiple forms of local and urban work and diversify incomes without necessarily having to permanently relocate to the cities (Govers 2006; Smith 2004b). Many people I spoke with during my field work mentioned that they or their family members work part of the time in other communities or cities and travel back to Huehuetla

regularly. I was told that people migrate to find work in the cities because well-paying local work opportunities are limited, and there are also more people without land as family plots are redivided. According to the *Hospital Integral,* in 2015 the number of people from the municipality of Huehuetla who had migrated out of the community to urban centers such as Zacapoaxtla, Zacatlán, Puebla, and Mexico City, was 464 people, or about 16% of the population (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016).[4] People of working age (around 15–60 years of age) account for 66% of all migrants. Children between 2 and 14 years old (about 20% of the migrants) are likely migrating with their parents, older siblings or relatives, or their *padrinos* "godparents." Some youth also leave to work or attend school while living with their extended family members or *padrinos* in the cities. There is a range of emigration patterns: some people leave permanently, while others return either occasionally or regularly, and some leave for a time and then permanently return. Some people maintain a part time arrangement in Puebla or Mexico City, while also supporting their family members, homes, and farms in Huehuetla. The seasons shape their patterns of movement to and from the cities. After returning to cultivate maize in early November and late March, emigrants remain for a time and participate in important cultural and spiritual celebrations such as *Día de los Muertos* and *Semana Santa*, before returning to the city while their crops grow.

The demographic data provided here show that the census, while it is the only data available, is not very useful for determining how many people speak Totonac or the levels of multilingualism in Huehuetla. In fact, the assumption that speakers and languages are discrete and bounded and can be easily counted has been critiqued by some linguistic anthropologists as an oversimplification (e.g. Dobrin, Austin, and Nathan 2009; England 2002; Gal and Irvine 1995; Hill 2002; Moore, Pietikainen, and Blommaert 2010; Whaley 2011). Levels of and types of multilingualism in an Indigenous language and Spanish are not clear because of how Indigenous language speakers are defined as self-declared, and Indigenous-headed households are treated as homogenous. Indigeneity is treated as homogenous and Indigenous languages are not distinguished in the census, so it is also not possible to know anything about multilingualism in multiple Indigenous languages from the census. Nevertheless, even from the data that is

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[4] There is no community specific information about migration available through INEGI, only the report from the health clinic cited here. I was not able to collect multiple reports in order to compare across years, though this would be useful.

presented in the census, it is clear that the municipality and the town of Huehuetla are not linguistically homogeneous communities. The issues with the census data I have detailed here demonstrate why the existing theoretical understanding of language vitality as a quantitative measure of speaker numbers from the census is simplistic and may miss subtle dynamics connected to local definitions of speakerhood and community membership. For further discussion of the irregularities and ambiguities of the Mexican census data on Indigenous languages, see Cifuentes and Moctezuma (2006). The data about migration shows that there is a sizable piece of the population that has migrated. Since Spanish is required in the cities where there are no Totonac speakers outside the small body of Totonac migrants, these people either already know Spanish or are learning more Spanish when they are away. Migration therefore also has an impact on levels of multilingualism and the social heterogeneity when these people return to Huehuetla. In my analysis, I consider how these demographic patterns, that make up part of the conditions of the linguistic ecology, affect and are affected by the language ideologies I find.

3.2 The Catholic Church, the *cargos* and *compadrazgo* systems, and religious syncretism

The Catholic Church and the set of social, religious, and political practices it introduced and furthered, including the *cargos* "(religious) posts" and *compadrazgo* "co-parenthood" systems, have played a central role in the development of the linguistic ecology both historically and into the present in Huehuetla. The system of *cargos*, religious and government positions of responsibility, has shaped municipal government in small communities in Mexico, including Huehuetla. The religious and socioeconomic practice of *compadrazgo*, where parents choose godparents for their children, is central to establishing and maintaining social networks of solidarity. I describe some aspects of the role and influence of the Catholic Church in Huehuetla, provide details about the *cargos* and *compadrazgo* systems, and discuss the religious syncretism that has characterized the interaction of Catholicism with Totonac cosmology since colonization. These systems and practices bear relevance to the currently sociolinguistic situation in Huehuetla, further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Religious syncretism is relevant to the current research because it suggests that syncretic ideologies that may have begun in the religious domain where colonizers originally focused, may have spread to other domains, such as language. Today, *cargos* and *compadrazgo* systems continue to shape social networks, which in

turn affect with whom people speak. These systems have also had a direct impact on the current research through the social network of Joaquina García Sotero who assisted me in the field.

After the arrival of the Spanish colonizers, they used the authority of the Catholic Church, aimed to Christianize the Indigenous people of what is now Mexico: they performed baptisms, cut people's hair, forced them to abandon practices deemed non-Christian such as polygamy, and forced them to submit to the legal authority of the Church over marriages and funerals (Stresser-Péan 2009: 55–57). The Franciscans arrived in the Sierra Norte in the mid 16th Century and began to convert the Indigenous *caciques* "bosses/leaders" and nobility to Catholicism, establishing a monastery that included a school and hospital in Hueytlalpan, just to the south west of Huehuetla (Stresser-Péan 2009: 54). As the missions expanded across the Sierra in the 16th Century, the local Indigenous people were organized by the Spanish colonial state into communities around a municipal government tied to the Catholic Church. Names for the municipalities were chosen for communities by selecting a patron Catholic saint that the local Indigenous *caciques,* or leaders, felt corresponded to a Totonac deity, and sometimes combining this with an Indigenous name (Stresser-Péan 2009: 59). The municipal governments that were established in these towns, including Huehuetla, were run by Indigenous *caciques,* which meant that the new Spanish system allowed the existing Totonac leadership structure to stay intact (Smith 2004a: 73). The governments oversaw a system of *cargos* "posts" that incorporated some prehispanic elements (Carrasco 1982), but was largely based on the system from Spain (Stresser-Péan 2009: 59–60). *Cargos* are unpaid but socially prestigious positions with the responsibility to provide service to the municipal government or to the Catholic Church (Beck, Lam, and Márquez 2020; Chance and Taylor 1985; Stresser-Péan 2009: 60). The lowest *cargos* positions, acolytes or church helpers, are filled by male teenagers and young men; mid-level positions, such as secretarial service or police, are held by middle-aged married men who have held lower-level *cargos*; and upper-level positions, such as councilmen and prosecutors, and the highest position of municipal president, are held by respected elders who have served multiple times in the lower and mid-level *cargos*, meaning social networks play a key role in determining who holds *cargos* (Chance and Taylor 1985). Each position is held for a period of one year and men are nominated for *cargos* by those who are already serving in the positions (Chance and Taylor 1985). The religious *cargos* involve considerable financial responsibility in order to plan and pay for the *fiestas* that celebrate the patron saints (Chance and Taylor 1985). Some researchers suggest that

the *cargos* system was a deliberate attempt by colonial officials to undermine traditional Indigenous leadership by making the political positions subordinate to the authority of the Church (Beck, Lam, and Márquez 2020: 57; Masferrer Kan 2006: 308). On the other hand, there is some evidence that the religious *cargos* were introduced much later following independence from Spain, and that these religious duties, such as the sponsorship of patron saint festivals, or *fiestas,* were previously undertaken collectively, rather than by individuals who held specific religious *cargos* (Chance and Taylor 1985: 17, 20). Regardless of when the *cargos* system was introduced, it has played an important role in structuring the political and religious organization in Indigenous communities in Mexico.

The *cargos* system, especially the municipal government *cargos,* has gradually fallen out of practice, including in many areas of the Sierra Norte, since the introduction of cash crops in the 1960s and 70s and the shift away from subsistence farming (see §3.3 below) (Beck, Lam, and Márquez 2020; Chance and Taylor 1985). Many of the *cargos* roles have disappeared to be replaced by elected officials participating in federal political parties; for example, the *cargos* system is no longer practiced in Chicontla and Patla and the mayor is now elected after a political campaign (Beck, Lam, and Márquez 2020: 54). This is also true in the town of Huehuetla, where the mayoral contest is run through federal political parties. At the same time, some *cargos* positions in Huehuetla have been retained in the Church, the *Organización Independiente Totonaca* "Independent Totonac Organization" (OIT), and the Indigenous court. The *cargos* have also been preserved in some smaller communities, such as Ozelonacaxtla, which is an auxiliary branch to the Huehuetla municipal government that has its own administration. When I visited Ozelonacaxtla in 2010, the *cargos* system was still in place for both religious and political roles. All young men were expected to fulfill their duties in the lower-level *cargos* and the President and his advisors were respected Totonac elders selected by other *cargos* holders from those who had a long history of service in the lower-level *cargos*. The political administration in Ozelonacaxtla is therefore local and is not directly linked to federal political parties, making Ozelonacaxtla a unique part of the municipality of Huehuetla, since it is not run by *mestizos*. This cushioning from the partisan system means that the community is sociopolitically united, which may contribute to the high maintenance of Ozelonacaxtla Totonac that I observed in my fieldwork in 2008 and 2010 (McGraw 2009, 2019).

One important component of the *cargos* system is the unpaid obligatory communal labour to build and maintain community property, called *faenas* "chores/labour." In fact, many of the institutional buildings, including the Churches, schools, and municipal government offices, were built and are still maintained today through the use of *faenas*. *Faenas* can also include work such as maintaining roads, clearing vegetation, agricultural labor on collective land holdings, and more recently installing plumbing, and stringing electrical cables. These communal tasks were organized under the role of the person who held a particular *cargo*. While many *cargos* positions have disappeared, the practice of *faenas* has been maintained by the local municipal governments in some communities, including in Chicontla and Patla (Beck, Lam, and Márquez 2020), and Huehuetla. In Huehuetla, weekly *faenas* to clean the streets and collect waste in the centre of Huehuetla were still performed when I was there for my fieldwork in 2016.

In Huehuetla, the *faenas* were controlled by municipal government officials: these had been Totonac *caciques* until *mestizos* gained control from 1916 to 1989, and again since 1999 (Smith 2004a: 73). The prioritization of works in the central town of Huehuetla over the smaller surrounding communities by *mestizo* leadership contributed to a feeling of neglect in the smaller communities. In addition, because the smaller surrounding communities have high proportions of Indigenous people compared to the town of Huehuetla (as seen in Table 1 above), the prioritization of the central town contributed further to the geographic and ethnic divisions between *mestizos* and Totonac people in the municipality. In addition, since the introduction of cash crops in the 1970s, resulting integration into the broader market, and increase in relative incomes, more people have sufficient resources to pay the fine for not participating in the *faenas* (Beck, Lam, and Márquez 2020: 53). Those who are obligated to currently participate are overwhelmingly Totonac people of low socioeconomic status who cannot afford to pay the fine. Some people are now also making the choice to pay the fine for not participating in the *faenas* when the party that they oppose is in power, contributing to political factionalism. Political leaders also tend to plan *faenas* where their supporters live, rather than in areas of the municipality that did not support them in the elections. During my field work, participants complained that this favoritism and the way *faenas* are structured so that the poorest Totonac people do the labour, has been practiced by multiple successive governments, and it is viewed as disrespectful and exploitative. Because these patterns have contributed to the socioeconomic hierarchization of Totonac and *mestizo* people in Huehuetla, it has also created tensions and

perceptions of (dis)respect, which have in turn reinforced the ideological separation of the identity categories of *mestizos* and Totonac people that is significant for my analysis of language ideologies (see Chapters 5 and 6). Perhaps this has contributed to some opinions that it is simply better to stay out of politics because it has become increasingly confrontational and divisive since political *cargos* have disappeared to be replaced by the partisan system. I observe this avoidance or indifference to partisan politics in some people who hold more syncretic ideologies (see Chapter 5). For example, one participant Sol (Nov.6/16)[5] stated that she does not talk about politics with people anymore because when she did this before it caused hard feelings and she lost some of her close Totonac friends who she no longer speaks with. Refraining from active partisan politics is a way to show respect for others because it allows Sol to maintain relationships. The changing political environment that includes the increasing influence of the partisan system is part of the linguistic ecology, and it has an ideological influence because it has affected people's beliefs about what the community needs and how to meet those needs. It has also affected people's social networks; for example, that of Sol and her friends, and consequently also their opportunities to use Totonac in those networks.

Another system of social-religious practices that has played an important role in shaping the community of Huehuetla is *compadrazgo*. *Compadrazgo* is a system of religious (Catholic) and socioeconomic networks established through choosing godparents for one's children. When a child is born, choosing their *padrinos,* or godparents, is an important step in establishing their place in the community and creating socioeconomic networks to support the child. The *compadres* are expected to support the children, and by extension their families, throughout their lives through economic means, such as paying tuition and giving gifts to mark religious occasions and school graduations.[6] The system of *compadrazgo,* along with other Catholic beliefs and practices, were integrated over time with Totonac spirituality in a complex religious syncretism that also creates parallels between Totonac gods and the Christian God (Stresser-Péan 2009). Originally, Totonac people would choose other Totonac people as *compadres* or sometimes the Catholic priest; however, when more *mestizos* settled in the region after the

[5] Information drawn from interviews is referenced by pseudonyms, which are provided along with other participant characteristics and interview information in Table 2 (see Chapter 4).

[6] On one field visit, a local family asked the researcher and her partner to be the *compadres* of their 12-year-old daughter. Despite the unusualness of this request, given the fact we were not residents, our perceived wealth made us desirable as *compadres*. We did our best to graciously decline this invitation as it was deemed inappropriate because it could be perceived as unfair to other families and could interfere with the independence of the research.

Revolution, some Totonac parents would seek out the wealthy *mestizos*. In these situations, the relationship also comes at the expense of the parents' political independence, as the *mestizos* expect their Totonac *compadres* to publicly align with them politically. More recently, the introduction of cash crops and increased emigration has allowed some Totonac families to increase and diversify their incomes. This in turn has lessened the economic incentive to choose *mestizos* to fill the role of *compadres* and increased Totonac people's ability and freedom to provide financial support and mentorship to young people in their own social networks and communities. This means that more parents are choosing other Totonac people as their *compadres* as they gain more economic opportunities (Govers 2006: 109–110).

Compadrazgo is important to understand because it structures and influences social networks and social interactions that affect the use of Huehuetla Totonac. Since people who are *compadres* share socioeconomic responsibilities to each other, this creates obligations and opportunities to maintain long term multi-generational relationships that are often conducted through the Totonac language. Many people interact daily with their *compadres* and *padrinos* and make efforts to maintain these relationships. Understanding how *compadrazgo* structures social relationships and interactions in Huehuetla can facilitate the analysis of language practices, language ideologies, and the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac. In addition, the research itself was affected by *compadrazgo*, as my sample of interview participants became dependent on the *compadrazgo* network of my community contact, Joaquina García Sotero. Asking her to introduce me to Totonac speakers meant engaging with her network of *compadres* and through this activity I learned about the important relationship between Totonac language use and *compadrazgo*, which I discuss further in Chapter 6.

One key characteristic of the colonization of the Totonac of the Sierra Norte is that the Totonac responded with a pragmatic and syncretic approach that included the integration of Spanish practices into their own, which was mostly tolerated or unnoticed by the Spanish (Stresser-Péan 2009). This process of religious syncretism has been ongoing since colonization and is still ongoing today (Stresser-Péan 2009). There has been considerable integration of Totonac *cosmovisión* "cosmology" and Catholic beliefs and practices in both private homes and in the broader communities (Govers 2006). These practices are termed *usos y costumbres* "uses and customs." In my field work, I observed Totonac people practice prehispanic rites simultaneously with Catholic ones, such as the combination of candles and holy water on altars

in the home that are dedicated to honouring and making offerings to Totonac deities and deceased loved ones, as well as Catholic Saints. People also make offerings to the Totonac gods in combination with the Catholic saints when harvesting natural resources, and processions and *ferias* “festivals” have combined Totonac and Catholic practices, such as the integration of the *Día de los Muertos* “Day of the Dead” with the Christian All Saints Day (Faudree 2013; Stresser-Péan 2009: 510). These are examples of how the Totonac, and many Indigenous people across Mexico, have integrated aspects of Catholicism into their existing spiritual practices and rituals through religious syncretism (Stresser-Péan 2009).

The blending or simultaneity of practices can be observed in Huehuetla in the images in the Catholic Church itself. Figure 4 shows images of saints and Jesus Christ, the Nahuatl codex inscription carved onto the altar, the replica of the Tajín archeological site placed on top of the altar, and an image of the tree of life behind glass above the altar, an important symbol in both Christian and Totonac belief systems. The Totonac *padre*, who is from Vicente Guerrero in the neighboring municipality of Olintla, tells me that these elements were commissioned from a local artist during the 1980’s when the Church was being run by the Carmelite Nuns practicing liberation theology and they were studying and incorporating local rituals and practices into their faith (Oct.27/16). The imagery in the photo demonstrates the semiotic nature of the religious syncretism that includes not only beliefs and practices, but also in the imagery and materials connected to these practices.

Figure 4: Interior of the Catholic Church, Huehuetla, November 2016 (photo by author)

Another present example of religious syncretism is that the Catholic Church in Huehuetla offers two separate Masses: one bilingual Mass at midday that is offered in both Spanish and Totonac, and one afternoon Mass offered in Spanish. During the morning Mass, the Totonac *padre* uses both Totonac and Spanish to preach and recite hymns (Padre Oct.27/16). The cumulative translations of the hymns of previous *padres*, as well as some of the current *padre's* own work have resulted in the collection of Totonac hymns (Padre Oct.27/16). This work adds to that of priests in the colonial era who generally learned and preached in the local languages, and several of whom created alphabets and wrote scriptures or prayers in the languages (Heath 1972; Stresser-Péan 2009: 55). The multilingualism in the Mass and the written and recited Totonac hymns demonstrate that the Catholic Church in Huehuetla is an institution that has historically syncretic language practices to a noticeable degree. This practice of religious syncretism that has affected language use in the Church suggests that the syncretic language ideologies I identify in this study are part of larger pattern of sociocultural syncretism practiced by the Totonac.

This section has described how the Catholic Church, the *cargos* and *compadrazgo* systems it introduced, and the religious syncretism practiced by the Huehuetla Totonac are important aspects of the linguistic ecology in which Huehuetla Totonac is used. The Catholic Church has also had a role in municipal politics, as the *cargos* system was integrated with the selection of political leadership. The Catholic Church played and continues to play an important role in the social and cultural practices of Totonac people, in which they enact their language practices and language ideologies that I describe in the analysis. As I will show in the next section, the Catholic Church has continued to exert a political influence in Huehuetla.

3.3 Land use and political division between Totonacs and *mestizos*

In this section I discuss key national policies towards Indigenous people, land use, and economic development in Mexico and their effects on the community of Huehuetla that shaped the local linguistic ecology. Specifically, I focus on the *condueñazgo* "joint ownership" and *ejidos* "communal land" systems of land distribution and use, as well as the introduction of cash crops and related programs aimed at economic integration. The discussion of land use and related economic development provides more background to how the Totonacs and *mestizos* have interacted with each other in the past and leading up to the present. This discussion of the linguistic ecology shows Totonacs' and *mestizos'* geographic relationship to each other on the land and helps situate their relationship to each other in the economic and political domains. The

multiple refractions of their relationship across geographic, economic, and political domains are central to the social situation that is mediated by language. This context supports the analysis of language ideologies and their enaction in Chapters 5 and 6.

Reform of land use is a key area of national policy that has had a local effect in Huehuetla. In the 19th Century, following independence from Spain, a system of land use, called *condueñazgo* "joint ownership," granted land use rights to anyone who applied through the local municipal authorities. While this did not allow for private ownership, it did open the door for the buying and selling of land use rights (Smith 2004a: 72). During *condueñazgo* land policies in the 19th Century, Totonac leadership controlled the municipal government in Huehuetla, which was the *Consejo de Ancianos* "Council of Elders" chosen through the *cargos* system (Smith 2004a: 73). The population in Huehuetla was also stable enough that every family had access to a *condueñazgo* of four hectares, though over time this distribution became skewed as people began to buy and sell the rights to use the *condueñazgos* outside the authority of the municipal administration (Smith 2004a: 72–73). As some people sold the rights to their *condueñazgo*, others with the means simultaneously consolidated large tracts of land, and a proportion of local Totonac people became landless (Smith 2004a: 73). In the 1890s a wealthy *mestizo* named Maldonado, whose family remains powerful in Huehuetla, acquired a large amount of land through alleged unauthorized purchase, while around the same time in 1895, municipal authorities promised a parcel of land be set aside for people who had been left without land (Smith 2004a: 74). By 1916, the promised land still had not been set aside by municipal authorities and a large group of the people who had become landless formally petitioned the municipality, specifically claiming that Maldonado and others, including some wealthy Totonac families, had expropriated land through the unauthorized purchase of land use rights (Smith 2004a: 73–74).[7] More *mestizos* migrated into the area from the south following the 1910 Revolution (Smith 2004a: 74). These *mestizos* had sociopolitical connections to state authorities, economic connections in the broader region, and made connections with the local land-owning *mestizos* who together were able to gain control of the municipal presidency in 1916 (Smith 2004a: 74). Another contributing factor to the reduction of Totonac land ownership was that

[7] In fact, this complaint was not legally resolved until 1981 in favour of the Maldonados (Smith 2004a: 74).

people's land or land rights were subdivided further in each generation, an issue that continues today as the population grows (Smith 2004a: 76).

The 1910 Mexican Revolution was initiated in part through grassroots movements, including the Zapatistas in the southern state of Morelos, and the aim was land reform that would return the land held in *condueñazgos* to those who worked the land. Following the Constitution of 1917, a land reform program divided some *condueñazgos* into *ejidos,* or large lots*,* that were rented out under the authority of municipal governments mostly for the cultivation of cash crops, with a small area set aside for communal use (Govers 2006: 79; Maldonado Goti 2012; Stresser-Péan 2009). These *ejidos* were intended to hold the land in trust and prevent it from being privatized. However, the program also meant that more communal land was incorporated into the *ejidos* system, with the intention that Totonac people could still access the land by paying a small amount of rent to the municipality. In addition, over time the wealthy *mestizos* and *caciques* "bosses/leaders" (some of whom were Totonac), were able to consolidate tenancy on multiple *ejidos*, continuing the land aggregation begun under the *condueñazgo* system. Many of these large land users turned around and rented their land to Totonac people for a premium, when in fact this land should have been available to rent at a better price directly from the municipality, but the *mestizos* and *caciques* were politically favoured by the municipal government who ignored this practice (Smith 2004a). Another tactic used by the municipal authorities who favoured large landowners' land aggregation was excessive land taxation that forced families to give up their land use rights to avoid going to jail for unpaid taxes (Smith 2004a). When the *ejidos* system was ended in the 1990s, *mestizo* tenants were able to assert legal title because of their long-standing tenancy. The *ejidos* system, though initially intended to prevent the privatization of land, thus ultimately contributed to the consolidation of *mestizo* political and economic control because their titled ownership of the land, legitimized by the state *ejidos* program, eventually became private ownership that could be passed down to their children once the *ejidos* program ended.

The land in the central part of the town of Huehuetla has been a particular source of conflict between Totonac and *mestizo* people. Prior to the Revolution, the Totonac government had used communally owned granaries in the central plaza of Huehuetla to store corn reserves that were shared amongst those in need or in years of poor harvest or ecological disaster (Joaquina Oct.24/16; Josef Oct.29/16). The *ejidos* system resulted in the loss of communal land

very near the centre of Huehuetla that had been cultivated through *faenas* with the maize that supplied these granaries. Combined with the *mestizo* takeover of the municipal government in 1916, the granaries fell into disuse and were eventually expropriated or purchased from the municipality by *mestizos*, and some of their descendants continue to live in the converted granary buildings today. The Totonac were pushed out from using the land in and near the centre of Huehuetla, establishing many of the smaller communities of the municipality listed in Table 1 and seen on the map in Figure 3 (Smith 2004a: 74). This event remains very present in the collective memory and discourse of Totonac elders, who return to talk about it often in my own and others' interviews (e.g. Josef Oct.29/16; Maldonado Goti 2012: 39; Smith 2004a, 2004b).

In addition to the *mestizos'* control of the municipal government after the Revolution, as well as their consolidation and eventual privatization of previously communal Totonac land, economic activity in Huehuetla was and continues to be largely controlled by *mestizos.* From the 19th Century through the middle of the 20th Century, *mestizos* developed a vast trade network that moved grain, produce, and eventually commercial goods throughout the Sierra Norte, initially run using mule trains (Govers 2006; Maldonado Goti 2012; Smith 2004a). The scale and coordination of the *mestizos'* networks and their domination of the markets meant they controlled access, supply, and prices, and they manipulated these to their benefit. This often occurred at the expense of Totonacs, many of whom could not access the same markets as *mestizos* that were further away and many were thus forced to sell their produce to the *mestizo* intermediaries (Maldonado Goti 2012). Although Totonacs have always maintained their own markets and continue to compete with *mestizos* in the local region, the latter maintain control of extensive networks and are interconnected with urban and international markets.

Mestizos also began to introduce new cash crops, such as coffee, in the 1930s and this continued expanding into the 1970s, in addition to cattle ranching that took hold in the 1950s (Smith 2004a: 75). Some Totonac people with land and capital also shifted to the production of coffee during this period. In the early 1970s the *Instituto Mexicano del Café* (INMECAFE) "Mexican Institute of Coffee" was formed as a national assistance program for small-scale coffee farmers that manages the price at which coffee was sold. INMECAFE managed Mexico's coffee quotas on the international market and the program increased the amounts of land that were converted for coffee cultivation, which was bought up by wealthy *caciques* who rent the land to landless Totonac people who do the labour. (Smith 2004a: 75). Although Totonac people with

land were able to capitalize on the coffee market, the expansion of mono-crop agriculture left them vulnerable to ecological disasters and integrated them further into the national and international economies, for better or worse (Smith 2004b: 418–419). The integration of Huehuetla into the state, national, and international agricultural markets had a profound impact on the local economy and agricultural practices as many farmers abandoned subsistence farming. Local coffee farmers were susceptible to changes in the international price of coffee, which proved disastrous after the collapse in 1989 of the International Coffee Organization that had controlled prices and set production quotas, resulting in a flooded market and a price crash (Smith 2004b). Many small farmers were devastated by the price crash and abandoned their crops, no longer worth harvesting for the very low return, which in turn resulted in the coffee plants becoming unviable, as they need to be picked to encourage productivity (Smith 2004b). After years of chemical monocropping of coffee, the land was also difficult to reclaim for subsistence use (Smith 2004b: 408). Some families in the region were forced to sell their lands in order to pay off debts incurred from investments in coffee production, including the purchase of seedlings, fertilizers, and herbicides (Beck p.c.). There has also been further expansion into cattle ranching, which has a high ecological impact through increasing deforestation for the conversion of land to pasture (Govers 2006; Maldonado Goti 2012; Smith 2004b). The local economy has slowly been recovering from the coffee price crash of 1989, with some returning to subsistence farming, others back to coffee, and still others expanding into vanilla (Smith 2004b). As noted in §3.1, many people have also sought to diversify their incomes, often through migration as some family members seek employment in larger towns and cities (Govers 2006).

This period of changing land use and economic development contributed to ethnic divisions in Huehuetla, as communal Totonac land was acquired by *mestizos* in ways that were often perceived as illegitimate, landless Totonac people had little choice but to work for these *mestizos*, and *mestizos* also took advantage of Totonac farmers with their own land through the former's influence in regional agricultural markets. This situation eventually set the stage for the emergence of the *Organización Independiente Totonaca* (OIT) in the late 1980s. The formation of the OIT in 1989 came about from a confluence of factors tied to exploitation of Totonac by *mestizos* and the support of the Catholic Church. In the 1980s a group of Carmelite nuns were running the Catholic Church in Huehuetla. They belonged to a particular branch of Catholicism called Liberation Theology that originated in Latin America in the 1950s and seeks to help

exploited, poverty-stricken populations escape oppression (Govers 2006; Smith 2004a, 2004b; Wahrhaftig and Lane 1995). Catholic bishops attempted and failed to quash these Latin American factions at a conference in Puebla in 1979, which spurred groups of practitioners of Liberation Theology to move into rural areas such as Huehuetla in the early 1980s (Smith 2004b). In the context of the situation of exploitation of the Huehuetla Totonac by *mestizos,* the Carmelite nuns and their teachings from Liberation Theology became the catalyst for a group of Huehuetla Totonac leaders and students to form the OIT in 1989 with the goal to liberate the Totonac people (Smith 2004a: 83–84). The OIT is a society of social solidarity registered with the Puebla state government. In order to achieve their objectives, the OIT formed a political alliance with the left leaning *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* "Party of the Democratic Revolution" (PRD). Under this alliance, a respected local Totonac candidate who had held several *cargos* was selected to run for the office of municipal president (Josef Oct.29/16). Meanwhile, members of the alliance set out on foot to mobilize the Indigenous vote across the municipality, travelling to the eleven communities in Huehuetla (see Figure 3 and Table 1). On the day of the municipal elections in August 1989, Totonacs occupied the centre of Huehuetla, where the votes were to be cast. People who were young at that time distinctly remember the Totonac people wearing their traditional white clothing coming up and down the green hills and filling the stone streets of Huehuetla (Joaquina Oct.24/16). The *mestizo* leaders were taken by surprise, retreated to the presidential offices, and refused to concede the election until state officials intervened and forced a vote count two days later (Joaquina Oct.24/16). After almost 80 years of *mestizo*-controlled governments under the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* "Institutional Revolutionary Party" (PRI), the OIT-PRD alliance gained control of the local municipal government for the next three terms from 1989–1998. The OIT emerged shortly before the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas in 1994, and they both shared a central concern for land use rights, but there are some differences. The Zapatistas were responding to national and international policy changes, including the implementation of NAFTA and related changes to legislation around *ejidos,* while the OIT were focused on local and regional issues and also did not take up arms like the Zapatistas (Wahrhaftig and Lane 1995). The Zapatistas passed through Huehuetla in 1994 but were not able to recruit any new members (Maldonado Goti 2012).

During their time in power, the OIT government paved roads, built water supply and drainage systems, and connected many of the communities in the municipality to the new

electricity grid for the first time (Josef Oct.29/16). They also established a Totonac-speaking health center that still exists and is now attached to the Hospital Integral, as well as a Totonac-speaking tribunal run by the *Consejo de Ancianos.* The labour necessary for this community development by the municipal government continued to be performed by the local Totonac people through *faenas*. The OIT also began to fill an important economic role as an agricultural cooperative of local Totonac farmers, pooling produce, such as coffee, and collectively moving the produce to different markets using recently available transport vehicles in order to obtain the best price. This activity worked to create alternative means for producers to get their coffee to market that was not dependent on the trade networks of local *mestizos* who had dominated agricultural trade to external markets up until this point. The OIT has also worked to help Totonac people market a broader range of other crops on a larger scale, including, most recently, vanilla (Josef Oct.29/16).

During the tenure of the OIT in the mid 1990s, the federal government began an Emergency Program aimed at reviving and stimulating the struggling coffee market in the region. This program was run through the local National Indigenous Institute (INI) office. The OIT had decided that participating in the program was necessary, but they had concerns about the power of INI to administer the program because the officials were known to favour the area's influential *mestizo* families and the PRI officials (Smith 2004b: 413–414). The OIT feared that *mestizos* were disproportionately benefitting from the Emergency Program and there had been a rumour that the PRI and its allies planned to storm the municipal government buildings in an attempt to take over the government from the OIT. In response, the OIT and 2000 of its members and supporters took over the INI office in 1994 and effectively chased out the *mestizo* and PRI sympathetic administration in the INI office (Smith 2004b: 413–414). The takeover was successful in that the federal government installed a more neutral administration of the local INI office and coffee farming support program; however, the OIT gained a reputation as activist and its opponents were quick to stir up suspicions that it was allied with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, contributing to the perception of the OIT as a radical political organization.

An important figure during this period was the local Totonac lawyer and Indigenous rights activist Griselda Tirado Evangelio, who was involved in the original formation and legal registration of the OIT with the Puebla state government in 1989. She was one of the first Totonac students to complete a graduate degree in law which focused on Totonac rights in the

Sierra. Tirado Evangelio also founded, administered, and taught in *Centro de Estudios Superiores Indígenas Kgoyom* (CESIK), the OIT school, where she incorporated civil and Indigenous rights training into the curriculum of CESIK. She taught young Totonac students to take advantage of recent changes to Mexican law, such as the 1991 and 2001 Constitutional changes and emerging state policies, to assert their rights to organize as a community, rights to the land, and rights to practice their culture without exploitation (Lechuga 2010) (see §3.4 for more details about the CESIK school). As a lawyer, Tirado Evangelio was familiar with Mexican law and Indigenous rights law, becoming a strong legal advocate for her people, and she worked for the *Instituto Nacional Electoral* "National Electoral Institute" in the local region. The OIT used Totonac, alongside Spanish, throughout its initiatives, including institutional domains such as official OIT meetings, the health centre, the tribunal, and the CESIK school, which lent Totonac a new level of prestige and promoted multilingual language practices (Maldonado Goti & Terven Salinas 2008: 40).

After the OIT-PRD coalition lost control of the municipal government in 1998, political and socioeconomic conditions regressed once again under renewed *mestizo* control in the PRI municipal government, perhaps in some retaliation for the directions the OIT had taken (Smith 2004a: 160). For example, local judges were no longer chosen at community meetings, but rather designated by the municipal government (Maldonado Goti 2012). The police presence also increased, justified by suspicions of the OIT having aligned with radical Zapatistas from Chiapas and Oaxaca. In addition, a natural disaster of flooding and landslides devastated the Sierra region in 1999, and the presence of the military to provide aid became permanent, justified as disaster readiness (Smith 2004a: 14). This atmosphere resulted in heightened insecurity for the Totonac that included violence against women allegedly perpetrated by police (Maldonado Goti 2012; Maldonado Goti and Terven Salinas 2008: 41–42). The conflict crystallized in the lead up to the 2003 municipal elections, as political tensions built between the *mestizo*-aligned PRI and the OIT coalition. Although it had not yet been publicly announced, members of the OIT claim that Tirado Evangelio was to be officially backed as their candidate in the 2003 high-stakes municipal elections. In a surprise early morning attack on August 6, 2003, Tirado Evangelio was shot and killed near her own home. Tirado Evangelio's murder was seen by the OIT and its allies as a racially and politically motivated assassination perpetrated by the opposing PRI camp, while the PRI municipal authorities claimed the killing was committed by the jealous wife of her lover,

who had allegedly hired hitmen (Lechuga 2010; La redacción 2003). Many people remember Tirado Evangelio and her murder, and talk about her, *la abogada* "the lawyer" or *la licenciada* "the graduate," in their interviews as an important figure in the community who loved the people (e.g. Paulo Oct.15/16, Felipe Nov.16/16, Antonio Nov.15/16).

Since Tirado Evangelio's murder in 2003, the OIT has not been as influential as in its formative years, having lost an important founding member and representative and also coming under more direct influence of the municipal government (Brandi 2018: 113). The threat of violence against members of the OIT also influenced the organization to reduce its political activities, and former and current OIT members sometimes suggest that the OIT should never have gotten involved in politics, aligned with a political party, and partnered with state government (Josef Oct.29/16; Smith 2004a: 160–161). Nevertheless, the OIT has been successful in some initiatives since losing the 1998 election. The deteriorating conditions and increased policing after Tirado Evangelio's murder led the *Consejo de Ancianos* and the OIT to pressure the *Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado de Puebla* "State Justice Tribunal of Puebla" to allow for the creation of a locally administered Indigenous court in Huehuetla (Maldonado Goti and Terven Salinas 2008). Their efforts were successful, and in 2004 the Huehuetla Indigenous court opened under the leadership of a respected multilingual Totonac elder who was chosen by the community as the court's sole judge (Maldonado Goti and Terven Salinas 2008: 42). The original judge, who is from Putlunichuchut, was still serving during my field work in 2016. The Indigenous Court handles many types of cases including domestic disputes, land and property disputes, and the use of natural resources (Maldonado Goti 2012; Maldonado Goti and Terven Salinas 2008: 55). One of the people I spoke to, Enoc (Dec.7/16), told me about how the Indigenous Court helped him to reclaim his inheritance from his father, which had been claimed by his elder brother. Like the tribunal before it, the court is important for providing access to legal service and representation in both Totonac and Spanish. The use of Spanish in court records connects the court to the municipal and state judicial systems and the rulings are respected by the local municipal courts and the state legal system. Taken together, the formation and tenure of the OIT, the OIT's formation of the Indigenous school CESIK, and their later creation of the Indigenous Court, all demonstrate the sociopolitical awareness, or "presence of mind," and organization of the Totonac of Huehuetla in the municipal government, education system, and legal system (Smith 2004a: 31). The long assumed political dominance of the PRI, in power

since 1916, can no longer be taken for granted in Huehuetla nor in the region as a whole (Govers 2006).

Another effect of the activism that has emerged in the wake of the rise of the OIT has been the institutionalization of local alliances between Indigenous groups, seen in the formation of the *Unidad Totonaca Náhuatl* "Totonac Nahuatl Union" (UNITONA). The UNITONA is an alliance between a dozen or so of the Nahua and Totonac community leaders of the Sierra Norte, including from Cuetzalan and Huehuetla, as well as some *mestizos* who are involved in social organizing (Smith 2004b: 407). Following the major flooding and landslides in 1999, the state government was slow to send sufficient aid to the affected areas, and UNITONA was formalized so the Indigenous communities could pool resources. Since then, UNITONA has advocated for the return to subsistence farming and Totonac agricultural methods, reengaging with the lunar calendar that is a syncretic fusion of Totonac and Catholic cycles (Smith 2004a, 2004b: 407). The alliance also holds events and seminars, communicates about sustainable farming techniques and Indigenous rights, and maintains pools of communal resources for use in regional emergencies (Smith 2004b: 407; UNITONA n.d.). The meetings and workshops hosted in the region and nearby urban centers, such as Puebla, serve to inform local members, policy makers, and the public about their aims (Velasco Pegueros and Hernández García 2013; UNITONA n.d.). Recently, UNITONA has spoken out against national and international mining and pipeline companies (e.g. TransCanada) that want to build pipelines or extract resources in their territories, and against international agriculture corporations (e.g. Monsanto) that sell genetically modified corn seed and chemically based fertilizer (UNITONA n.d.). UNITONA objects to the activities of these corporations on the grounds that they threaten the sustainability of the environment and consequently threaten the local peoples who are intimately connected to the earth and its resources, both physically and spiritually (Smith 2004b). The activities of UNITONA represent an important manifestation of pan-Indigenous organization to support Indigenous communities in a range of ways, from access to resources, advocating particular agricultural practices viewed as sustainable, and organizing against natural resource extraction in the region.

In this section I have summarized land use and privatization and how this has affected municipal politics in Huehuetla from about 150 years ago until the early 2000s. The privatization and consolidation of previously communal Totonac land, along with the introduction and promotion of coffee mono-cropping and cattle farming, has mostly benefited a few wealthy

mestizo families. This has resulted in ethnic tensions between Totonac people and *mestizos,* and this culminated in the organization of new Totonac and pan-Indigenous institutions of the OIT (1989) and UNITONA (1999) (Smith 2004b). These organizations have spurred many initiatives that are aimed to support the Totonac people and protect them from the exploitation they have previously experienced, often at the hands of *mestizos* and municipal government, which is controlled by *mestizos.* The context laid out in this section shows that perceptions of distinct Totonac and *mestizo* groups, along ethnic, cultural, economic, and political lines, has a long historical foundation in Huehuetla. This is borne out in patterns of economic and political exploitation and resistance in Huehuetla that have been associated with ethnic categories. The discussion of this part of the linguistic ecology is important for showing the historical and current context in which language ideologies discussed in my analysis are (re)produced and enacted by people.

The final part of the linguistic ecology that I discuss next is language and education policy, which has a direct impact on language use, language ideologies, and therefore also language vitality. Language and education policy intersect with the socioeconomic and political context described here, as schools are places where people likely intend to gain social capital.

3.4 Language, education, and identity politics

In this section I present a brief outline of education and literacy policy in Mexico, a key component of the linguistic ecology. Language policy and the education system are tools in state nation-building efforts, including Mexico (Hamel 2017; Heath 1972). I talk about some key historical developments in language policy and their connection to different conceptualizations of national and Indigenous identities. I close the section by discussing how these policies were enacted, and the local impacts on the education system and literacy in Huehuetla. This section illustrates the role of education in the regulation of language use and the circulation of language ideologies, and provides context for the discussion of people's experience in current schools that follows in the analysis in Chapter 6.

In the colonial period in New Spain, the Spanish Crown declared Spanish the official language of the colony that Indigenous people should be taught (King 1994: 44–45). However, Spanish did not become the language of Indigenous communities in Mexico during this time in part because it was more efficient for the friars to learn the local language than to teach Spanish to the entire community (King 1994: 44–45). The Church also considered it morally superior to

convert people in their first languages and keep them separate from Spanish-speaking colonizers (King 1994: 44–45). During the colonial period, education was limited to Christianization and only a few Indigenous people in leadership would have learned Spanish. The local Spanish elite in Mexico wanted to limit full Indigenous participation in society and so supported the Church's position to not teach Indigenous people Spanish (King 1994: 46). The colonial administration eventually needed a way to administer legal questions with Indigenous leaders in the provinces of Mexico, and so they declared Nahuatl the official language of all the Indigenous people of the colony, though in practice only the administration occurred in Nahuatl (King 1994: 46-47). Following Independence from Spain in 1821, the new Mexican government abandoned the use of Nahuatl for administrative purposes and initially banned the use of Indigenous languages entirely, though this was not enforceable or practical (Heath 1972: 182). In the mid and late 19th Century in the Sierra Norte, including Huehuetla, several schools had been founded under the local administration of the Catholic Church. The schools were built and maintained through *faenas* and funded through locally collected taxes (Rodrigo 2004: 184–185). By the end of the 19th Century, elitist political debates about the monolingual Spanish vs. multilingual linguistic character of the nation were ongoing under the relatively stable government of Porfirio Díaz, while a federal Spanish primary education curriculum was implemented more systematically in mostly urban areas of the country (Heath 1972: 76–79).

After the Mexican Revolution of 1910, motivated by discontent with Porfirio Díaz' favouritism towards the wealthy, *indigenismo* "Indigenism" transformed land use (introduction of *ejidos*), and education and language policy. *Indigenismo* is a political ideology that is based on a conceptualization of citizenship of Indigenous people in the Mexican nation, along with a resultant set of policies aimed for the integration and socialization of Indigenous peoples, as opposed to their segregation and erasure (Heath 1972: 99, 120–122; Lomnitz-Adler 2001: 48–49). *Indigenismo* acknowledged, celebrated, and romanticized Indigenous people and culture as an important part of Mexico's heritage, while aiming to create a homogenous national race of *mestizos,* unified in language and convergent in culture, made by the mixing of Spanish men with Indigenous women (Gamio 1916: 14; Lomnitz-Adler 2001: 53, 250–251). Prominent social scientists and anthropologists played an important role in the development and implementation of *indigenismo*, such as the anthropologist Gamio (Franz Boas' student), who asserted that Indigenous people were neither racially nor intellectually inferior (Lomnitz-Adler 2001: 53).

Bilingualism was seen, at least officially, as one means of integrating Indigenous people into the Mexican nation: literacy in the Indigenous language was the first goal, which would then facilitate literacy in Spanish (Heath 1972: 121). *Indigenismo* was an improvement on previously more overtly discriminatory policies; however, Indigenous people continued to be positioned as a problem that needed to be fit into an idealistic vision of Mexico, what Bonfil Batalla later called "imaginary Mexico" (Bonfil Batalla 1990; Lomnitz-Adler 2001).

As part of the *Indigenismo* policies, in 1921 several reforms to the Constitution of 1917 were introduced. The federal government took control of education from the states, creating the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* "Ministry of Public Education" in order to standardize and expand access to public education, and paying more attention to rural and Indigenous communities (de León 2017: 418). The program used the direct method of teaching Spanish literacy, with almost no scaffolding for learners of Spanish. Access to federal schools remained quite limited, and many Indigenous students had to travel and live away from home in order to attend federal school. The government hoped that these young people, mostly boys because boys' schools were established first, would return to their communities and spread the use of Spanish there; however, many of them stayed to work where they attended school (Heath 1972: 186). This meant that these early efforts at teaching Spanish literacy in rural and Indigenous communities were largely unsuccessful.

Beginning in 1931, the government of Cárdenas, who was from the Indigenous Purépecha of central Mexico, recognizing the limited success of the direct method of teaching Spanish and the need to more rigorously develop a bilingual education program, allowed William Cameron Townsend to study the Indigenous languages in Mexico (Heath 1972: 101). His work was a convenient and free contribution that would aid Indigenous integration from the government's perspective because it facilitated the development of materials for bilingual education based on the Indigenous language documentation and literacy programs carried out by Townsend and his team (Hartch 2006; Heath 1972: 101–103). As part of the agreement, Townsend, an evangelical missionary, was also permitted to translate and distribute the New Testament into the Indigenous languages he was studying (Hartch 2006; Heath 1972: 101–103). By the end of the 1930s Townsend and his team were working on 18 languages (SIL International 2022; Heath 1972: 113). Although SIL was tasked with teaching Spanish literacy, their main, underlying goal was to teach people to read the New Testament in their own local language (Dobrin 2009; King 1994:

116). The Spanish literacy materials they did produce are of poor quality: they often taught incorrect Spanish based on English translation, and they also portrayed Indigenous people as subordinate and backwards compared to the *mestizos* of dominant Mexican society (King 1994: 117–118).

In 1934, Townsend founded the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)[8] to train students to help him document the languages in Mexico. The linguists working with the SIL in Mexico began supporting educators in the *Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas* "Department of Indigenous Affairs," formed in 1936, in the creation of pedagogical materials based on the phonemic transcription of Indigenous languages, rather than the use of Spanish spelling conventions (Heath 1972: 106, 115). Later in 1942, Townsend founded the Wycliffe Bible translators to create an appearance that the activities of SIL were separate from the evangelization activities also happening. Despite this institutional division, SIL and Wycliffe have the same missionary founder, Wycliffe funds SIL, and SIL linguists continue today to translate the New Testament and teach local people to read it (Dobrin 2009). Eventually, suspicion of the religious, ideological, and political agenda of the Summer Institute of Linguistics began to grow, including questions about whether some of its people were American CIA agents. In 1979 the Mexican government severed ties with SIL, although they remained in the country and have continued their work unofficially (de León 2017: 419; Hartch 2006).[9]

The first national literacy campaigns independent of schools were launched in 1944 and inscription was obligatory for people deemed illiterate between the ages of 6 and 40 (Heath 1972: 127–128). The *Instituto Nacional Indígena* "National Indigenous Institute" (INI) was formed in 1948 and they founded multiple regional coordinating centers that recruited local people to be trained as literacy teachers at the coordinating centers. INI collaborated with SIL to prepare pedagogical materials for the languages spoken in the region of each coordinating center (Heath 1972: 134, 138). Eventually in 1963 the Ministry of Public Education officially endorsed bilingual education as a federal program, and there were new initiatives to train local bilingual teachers and cultural brokers who would act as links between administration and local communities (Heath 1972: 153–154). During the 1970s, policy makers in INI and the Ministry of

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[8] Formerly the Summer Institute of Linguistics, this organization is now known as SIL International.

[9] The SIL was briefly banned in the 2000's because their missions have fostered intra-community divisions and some of their representatives take an anti-Indigenous stance (Beck p.c.).

Education began promoting bilingual and bicultural primary education and the *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* "Department of Indigenous Education" was opened as a sub-branch within the Ministry of Education in 1978 (de León 2017: 420–421). To help replace the SIL linguists that were no longer working officially with the government by this time, INI, the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, and the *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* created the first higher education program in linguistics of Indigenous languages to train Indigenous linguists in the late 1970s (de León 2017: 419). This also coincided with the organization of Indigenous teachers and other professionals who were gaining influence and pushing for more direct control of Indigenous programming and greater recognition of Indigenous languages.

By this time, there had been some organization by Indigenous people who were working in independent organizations, such as the *Confederación de Jóvenes Indígenas* "Confederation of Indigenous Youth," to further Indigenous education programs (Robinet 2020). Critics of *indigenismo* included members of these organizations and some anthropologists who saw the existing bilingual education policies as simply a modernization of the same racialized exploitation that shaped Mexico during the colonial period (Bonfil Batalla 1990; Robinet 2020). In an effort to build connections with these organizations, in 1975 INI held the first Congress of Indigenous People, out of which emerged the *Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas* "National Council of Indigenous Peoples" (CNPI) (King 1994: 69). Notably, the sub-councils in the CNPI were organized based on linguistic differentiation, rather than regions (King 1994: 69). Some of their aims were to have only local Indigenous teachers in the bilingual education system, the expansion of bilingual education to secondary and higher education levels, increased presence of Indigenous languages in the media, the recognition of Indigenous languages as national languages equal to Spanish, and the creation of a national institute for Indigenous languages (King 1994: 70–71). There was also a large Indigenous teachers' union formed in the 1970s that participated in the CNPI and was advancing similar aims for bilingual education (King 1994: 69–70).

Despite these advances, the bilingual and bicultural program had many problems, once of which was that it used the same curriculum as that used across the public education system, which was not appropriate for teaching literacy in Indigenous languages or even L2 Spanish literacy (Hamel 2017: 399). In addition, teachers were often not adequately trained in bilingual

education pedagogy and resources were often unavailable or inadequate, many being written for a different variety of the language than what was spoken by students (de León 2017: 421). Some teachers in the bilingual program simply continued to teach in Spanish, believing that Spanish was the appropriate language for school (de León 2017: 421; Hamel 2017: 400). Despite policy declaring the importance of bilingual literacy development and the value of Indigenous languages, the program in practice was largely subtractive, using the Indigenous languages orally to teach Spanish, and then teaching students to write in Spanish (Hamel 2017: 399–400).

In the 1980s there was renewed attention on eradicating illiteracy, especially in the adult population. The *Instituto Nacional de la Educación de los Adultos* "Institute of Adult Education" (INEA) was founded in 1981, running adult literacy and education programs (INEA n.d.; King 1994: 121). The official website of INEA talks about the need to eradicate illiteracy:

> *a fin de cumplir con las recomendaciones internacionales y reducir el índice de personas que no saben leer y escribir a 3.5% para 2018, con lo que podemos ser declarados un país libre de analfabetismo.*
>
> with the goal of meeting the international recommendations to reduce the rate of people who do not know how to read and write to 3.5% by 2018, at which point we can be declared a country free of illiteracy. (INEA 2015)

The statistics reported from the government census department the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática* "National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Computing Science" (INEGI) represent the number of people who cannot read and write in Spanish. Literacy rates are determined by the years of Spanish education, and those without Spanish education are assumed to be illiterate (INEGI 2020). This colonial interpretation ignores local forms of literacy in Indigenous languages and constrains literacy to reading and writing European languages that use alphabetic scripts (Collins and Blot 2003; Heath 1972). This contrasts with the view of literacy in linguistic anthropology, where literacy is defined as a set of practices including performances, ritual, recitation, reading, or writing in any language and in diverse social contexts (Ahearn 2012: 140; Ottenheimer and Pine 2019: 228–229). The policy of enumeration adopted in Mexico reinforces the association of literacy with standard Spanish taught at school (King 1994). This definition of literacy indicates that the underlying language ideology of INEA privileges Spanish monolingualism, at least in the written domain. According

to the government, adult literacy rates increased from 83% to 87% during the 1980s (INEGI 1980, 1990).

In addition to new bilingual education programs and literacy campaigns, there were some important constitutional and legislative changes that came out of the social movements of the 1980s and 90s. Mexico and other colonial nation states (e.g. Canada) were under increasing international pressure to acknowledge Indigenous rights. This pressure resulted in the adoption of multicultural and intercultural social policies and the official recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples. At the international level, Mexico signed the International Labor Organization Convention 169 in 1989 (ratified in 1990), which outlines the labor and land rights of Indigenous peoples and recommends mother-tongue literacy (International Labor Organization 1989: 1095, 2017). The 1991 revisions to the Constitution incorporated protection and promotion of the languages and cultures of Indigenous people in Mexico, and in 1993 the government passed the *Ley General de Educación Indígena* "General Law of Indigenous Education" (de León 2017: 421–422). The Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was signed by Mexico in 1994 and the official Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was signed in 2007 (United Nations 2007). Also in 1994, the Mexican government signed on to NAFTA with the USA and Canada, and combined with the ending of the *ejidos* system, this sparked the Zapatista uprising from Chiapas. By the turn of the Century, the Zapatista Army was making demands for political and economic control in Indigenous communities. In response, mostly avoiding the question of land, the government eventually made several cultural and symbolic concessions. The Mexican Constitution was amended in 2001 to assert the environmental rights of Indigenous peoples. Also emerging from the political pressure of the Zapatistas and their supporters and the 2001 changes to the Constitution, new intercultural schools and universities were established that promote the teaching of, or at least about, Indigenous cultures and languages in Mexico. The *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* "The Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act" was passed in 2003. This legislation affirms in law the right to speak an Indigenous language in all public and private domains and the right to receive services in one's Indigenous language, including in the education and justice systems (INALI 2003).

The *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* was important because it met, at least in spirit, some of the goals of activists, Indigenous teachers, linguists, and

advocates of bilingual education and Indigenous languages. Specifically, Indigenous languages and Spanish were given equal linguistic status as "national languages" (Articles 4 and 7). Some of the other steps taken in this piece of legislation include the recognition of the right to communicate in one's language in all public and private activities (Article 9), the provision of interpreters in the public service to guarantee this access (Article 10), access to public bilingual and intercultural education (Article 11), and assurance that these programs are adequately supported with resources and staff who speak the Indigenous languages (Article 12) (INALI 2003). In practice, the provisions in this law are more aspirational than material. For example, institutional barriers continue within government services: it is difficult, if not impossible, to access education and health care in Indigenous languages, even in Indigenous communities where these services are in demand (Cruz 2019).

One of the tangible effects of *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* was the creation of the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* "National Institute of Indigenous Languages" (INALI) (Article 14). INALI was and continues to be an important national body of linguists and other scholars, many of whom are members of Indigenous communities. The mission of INALI states:

> *El INALI, sustentado en la naturaleza multicultural y multilingüe de la nación mexicana, contribuye a la consolidación de una sociedad equitativa, incluyente, plural y favorecedora del diálogo intercultural, a través de la asesoría proporcionada a los tres órdenes de gobierno para articular políticas públicas en materia de lenguas indígenas nacionales, con las que se promueven el multilingüismo, el ejercicio pleno de los derechos lingüísticos, el desarrollo de las lenguas indígenas nacionales y el fomento a su uso en todos los ámbitos de la vida social, económica, laboral, política, cultural y religiosa, principalmente en aquellos en los que participan los pueblos indígenas; favorece el conocimiento y disfrute de la riqueza lingüística reconociendo la diversidad cultural a través del trabajo coordinado con las comunidades indígenas, con distintas instancias gubernamentales y con la iniciativa privada.*
>
> INALI, sustained by the multicultural and multilingual nature of the Mexican nation, contributes to the consolidation of a society that is socially equitable, inclusive, plural, and favourable to intercultural dialogue, through advice provided to the three orders of government to articulate public policies with respect to national Indigenous languages that promote multilingualism, the full exercise of linguistic rights, the development of the national Indigenous languages and the promotion of their use in all domains of social, economic, work, political, cultural and religious life, principally in those domains in which Indigenous peoples participate; cultivates knowledge and appreciates our linguistic wealth by recognizing cultural diversity through coordinated work with Indigenous communities,

> with different government agencies, and with private initiatives. (INALI 2014: 10–11, author's translation)

The work of INALI has been important for the continued documentation of Indigenous languages in Mexico. In 2008, INALI published a catalogue of Indigenous languages that included many diverse local varieties of languages and the geographical reference data for communities where each variety is spoken (INALI 2008). INALI has also been working on the documentation and development of standardized orthographies of various Indigenous languages of Mexico, including Totonac (INALI 2017) (more on this below). The recent official recognition of Indigenous rights in Mexico has had limited effects on the experiences of people in their communities (Speed 2005). The *Ley General de los Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* (INALI 2003) recognizes the right of Indigenous people to access government services in their languages; however, this is largely symbolic because in practice, services are still only provided in Spanish, even for widely spoken languages such as Nahuatl. For example, in the context of government websites, a presumably low hanging fruit that does not require significant changes to the public service, there remains almost no representation of Indigenous languages (Perez-Salazar, Aguilar-Edwards, and Mata-Martínez 2016).

This complex situation of national and local language and education policy had an impact in Huehuetla. I outline this history and the current situation, making links to the policies introduced in the first part of this section. An alphabetic Totonac writing system was first created by the Franciscan friars in the 17th Century, but alphabetic literacy in Totonac was not widely practiced or taught until the mid-20th Century. After federal primary school was introduced in Mexico in 1921, children from Huehuetla would go to schools in larger urban centers, such as in Zacapoaxtla if they wished to attend. A federal primary school was opened in Huehuetla 1954, and the federal high school opened in 1984, finally making available a complete secondary education in the municipality (Troiani 2007: 30). Outside the federal schools, the SIL's Hermann Peter Aschmann arrived in Zapotitlán de Méndez, southwest of Huehuetla (see Figure 1), beginning in the early 1960s and he worked with community members to document Sierra Totonac. Aschmann created a writing system for Sierra Totonac varieties, published a dictionary and grammar, and produced three successive translations of the New Testament in Zapotitlán de Méndez Totonac (Aschmann 1983; Beck p.c.; King 1994; Steven 2011). The Protestant evangelization of Totonac people, through the use of the New Testament in Totonac, was

furthered by Manuel Arenas, a Totonac collaborator of Aschmann's who converted from Catholicism to Protestantism. Arenas opened a mission in 1967 called the Totonac Cultural Center in La Unión near Xicotepec de Juárez where Totonac people were taught to read the New Testament (Totonac Ministries 2012). Most of the efforts of these missionaries have been to train Totonac people to open churches in their communities with wide success, and the ministry claims 150 churches were open in the Totonacapan in the mid 1990s (Totonac Ministries 2012). These missions had an impact on literacy in the Sierra, including in Huehuetla. Some of the schools operated by the missions, for example at La Unión, not only taught people to read the Totonac New Testament, but also encouraged them to write secular content in Totonac, at least to an extent (Beck p.c.). The Totonac New Testaments were widely disseminated, and copies can be found today in households in Huehuetla and across the Sierra, although it is not clear to what extent they are used. For many people who speak diverse language and varieties, the translations of the New Testament are limited in use because they do not correspond to their own particular variety that is not represented in the Totonac New Testament translations. For example, the Bible in use in Huehuetla is based on the Zapotitlán de Mendez Sierra variety of Totonac, which is a Sierra Totonac language, but not the same as Huehuetla Totonac. In another example, in Chicontla the Bibles are not used because the translators mixed multiple varieties of Totonac and created a resource that speakers are not comfortable with (Beck p.c.; Lam p.c.).

In addition to the literacy work of the SIL in Totonac, INEA ran an intense Spanish literacy program for adults in the Sierra Norte beginning in 1982. This program reportedly failed because instructors were attempting to teach Spanish literacy to people who did not speak Spanish at the level needed to learn to read and write it (Troiani 2007: 30). In 1983, a bilingual pilot program began in Huehuetla through the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* to teach five adult students to write in Totonac, in an attempt to try to teach literacy in Spanish through Totonac. After initial success, these students and two staff members petitioned the *Instituto Nacional Indígena* (INI) to change the entire literacy program to Totonac, at least for beginner adults. At first, this petition was not successful, with INI claiming that Totonac could not be written; however, the local team persisted with the help of a Totonac linguist, Crecencio García Ramos, creating an alphabet that was adopted by INEA (Troiani 2007: 30). By 1987 students' literacy skills in Totonac, described as copying, dictation, reading, comprehension, and redaction, had improved significantly (Troiani 2007: 31). By this time in the program, the leaders of the literacy campaign had

introduced Spanish as a second language, which was important because it showed that a bilingual approach to literacy could be successful (Troiani 2007: 30). More recently, since the shift in policy that recognizes Indigenous languages, there has been a renewed set of programs in Indigenous language literacy for adults, including one in Totonac (Hidalgo Morales et al. 2010).

Today in the bilingual education program in the Sierra, challenges persist, including adequate training for teachers and the availability of Indigenous language pedagogical materials. The bilingual teachers know an Indigenous language but are sometimes assigned to communities where they do not know the local language, making the program effectively bilingual in name only (Beck p.c.). In other cases, there is no shortage of people who want to teach, but they are unable to become certified because their particular variety is not recognized in the teachers' colleges that test applicants in only the variety recognized by the college (Beck p.c.). Bilingual education also remains at the primary levels, as there has not been any development of bilingual programming for junior or senior high school. The new intercultural programs have a different curriculum than the regular federal programs or the bilingual programs. In Huehuetla there is both a secondary and a high school that have yet to implement their intercultural curricula; and in Lipuntahuaca, located just south of Huehuetla (see Figure 3), there is a small program in Totonac and Nahuatl as second languages at the *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla* "Intercultural University of the State of Puebla" (UIEP) that opened in 2006. These schools are notably distinct from the bilingual education program because the programs are at the upper levels, rather than preschool and primary.

Apart from official education programs, Huehuetla has also had several independent schools that have recently offered some alternative options to the state programs. Recall from §3.3 that the OIT emerged as a result of political and economic exploitation of Totonac people by *mestizos* combined with the catalyst of the Liberation Theology introduced by the Carmelite nuns of the Catholic Church. Shortly after its formation, the OIT opened a high school in 1992 aimed at more adequately meeting Totonac students' cultural and linguistic needs. The school secured funding from the federal *Secretaría de la Educación Pública* (SEP). In 1993, the SEP rescinded official status and funding under pressure from *mestizos* who claimed that the Carmelite nuns, who were teachers at the school, were unfairly favouring Indigenous students over *mestizo* students by giving the former supplies or food without charging them (Paulo Oct.15/16; CESIK n.d.). This is another example, this time in the domain of education, where

conflict between Totonac and *mestizo* people has erupted. In response to the closure, the OIT opened a second independent school in 1994, the *Centro de Estudios Superiores Indígenas Kgoyom*[10] "Kgoyom Indigenous Center of Higher Education" (CESIK) in the centre of Huehuetla with the support of the *Universidad Autónoma de Puebla* "Autonomous University of Puebla." The opening of this school is especially significant, as the building was previously used by the Totonac as a communal granary to store maize and is located in the central downtown plaza of Huehuetla beside the municipal government buildings. One of the co-founders of CESIK, Edmundo Barrios, who is from Oaxaca, is not Indigenous, but was trained at the *Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Rural* "Centre for Rural Development" in Zautla, Puebla. During this training is when Barrios became familiar with the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire and was inspired to start an independent school in rural Mexico. The vision of the CESIK is to provide a complete education that includes the regular curriculum, while at the same time being consistent with local Indigenous epistemology and incorporating outside elements. This reflects a syncretic approach that does not aim to change the culture, but to strengthen it, as the CESIK founder states (CESIK n.d.; Lechuga 2010); for example, the performance of service to the community without the expectation of monetary compensation is a central Totonac value taught at CESIK (CESIK n.d.). Part of CESIK's strategy to achieve these outcomes is to run the school itself as a collective community. Teachers and students can live at the school and do not have to pay room and board. Most of the food for the school is grown and harvested by students themselves. Anyone who cannot pay the small annual fee to attend is supported through communal resources and not turned away (Paulo Oct.15/16). CESIK provides an education that is centred around an ideology of respect and solidarity with the community, rather than on the goal of *indigenismo* to eradicate illiteracy and integrate Indigenous people into the national Mexican state.

After Griselda Tirado was murdered in 2003, the new PRI government wanted to take control of CESIK, claiming that Totonac people had voted them in and therefore they had a mandate to run the school (Brandi 2018: 113). With Tirado gone, the municipal government saw the other founder, Edmundo Barrios, as a threat to their influence over the school and forced him to leave, though they claimed that him not being Totonac was the main factor (Brandi 2018: 113;

[10] *Kgoyom* "the slow walking of elders" is the Totonac name for Huehuetla (INALI 2017: 121).

Barrios Dec.8/16). According to Barrios, he wanted to reduce the influence of the Catholic Church on the school, in particular the Carmelite nuns who he saw as having too much influence on the OIT (Barrios Dec.8/16). Barrios was thus forced out of his role at CESIK by a combination of pressure from the municipal government and the Church, which led him to found *Colegio Paulo Freire.* A total of 26 of the 27 families who had children attending CESIK at the time withdrew their children and followed Barrios to the new school, an indication that these Totonac families viewed Barrios as the legitimate school principal (Brandi 2018: 113). Barrios told me that because he left CESIK on poor terms, he lost most of his and Griselda Tirado's teaching materials that were purposefully destroyed, despite his efforts to retrieve them (Barrios Dec.8/16). *Colegio Paulo Freire* has retained consistently more enrollment than CESIK, and in Brandi's analysis she considers *Colegio Paulo Freire* to be the same school as the original CESIK, because of Barrio's consistent leadership and the Totonac families that followed him to his new *Colegio Paulo Freire* in 2003 (Brandi 2018: 112–114). I will discuss these independent schools further in §6.2.4.

The most recent policy development for Totonac languages is a renewed official push to standardize written Totonac across the multiple Totonac languages. In 2017, INALI published a unified Totonac orthography that is being used in some schools such as the UIEP (INALI 2017).[11] The orthographies are moving away from those developed by SIL because they are deemed to have too much influence from both Spanish and English spelling conventions (Beck p.c.). Because this proposed standard is fairly recent, it is unclear how it will be adopted and applied in institutional practice. This orthography is based on the Papantla Totonac orthography, and it is not phonologically representative of other Totonac languages, which are not mutually intelligible with Papantla Totonac. It may be the case that the standardization of Totonac confers prestige through language ideologies about literacy. At the same time, because it is based on the Papantla variety that is a distinct language from what many of the communities speak, it may marginalize Totonac languages and varieties that are not represented in the standard. Some bilingual teachers in the Sierra and Northern Totonac areas are actively resisting this orthography (Beck p.c.). This might hamper the standardization effort as a practical literacy tool, and even introduce problematic hierarchies of Totonac language varieties. This has already been observed

[11] For an account of the different writing systems developed for Totonac, see Mesa 2011.

in the education context where bilingual education has taken a regional approach that develops materials in one presumed regional variety that may not represent the linguistic reality. Tangible outcomes of this have been observed in both Chicontla and Ozelonacaxtla, where fluent speakers of Totonac failed their proficiency exams to become certified bilingual teachers, sometimes multiple times, because the tests are administered by people from Papantla who are using the Papantla standard that has gained traction (Beck p.c.). Another key development is that the important work of local authors, notably Manuel Espinosa Sainos from Ixtepec (1998, 2008, 2012), has been incorporated into the independent schools and is being incorporated into the new intercultural programs. Sainos is an important figure in the Sierra Norte, and in the national Indigenous Literature community. He also speaks publicly about the importance and meaning of speaking and writing in Totonac (e.g. Rodríguez 2013).

In this section I laid out some relevant language and education policies, in particular *indigenismo* and responses to it, part of the national linguistic ecology in which Huehuetla Totonac is spoken. I also discussed how these policies have been applied in Huehuetla, producing a dynamic local situation that includes multiple federal education and literacy programs, SIL documentation and literacy programs, the emergence of local alternative independent schools, and recent efforts by INALI to standardize Totonac that have had a mixed reception. The privileging of Spanish language characterizes the pattern observed in the public education system in Huehuetla, despite official rhetoric and policy that recognizes Indigenous language and reaffirms the right to speak them and receive service in them.

3.5 Conclusion: The linguistic ecology of Huehuetla Totonac

In this Chapter I provided a detailed description of the historical linguistic ecology of Huehuetla leading up to the field visit I conducted in 2016. In §3.1 I present an outline of the demographic context. In §3.2 I outlined the role of the Catholic Church, specifically the social and religious practices of *cargos* and *compadrazgo* that have shaped political and social relations in Huehuetla, and some of the historical syncretic religious and linguistic practices of the Church. §3.3 contains a discussion of land use policies and economic development towards Indigenous people in Mexico and locally in Huehuetla. Finally, in §3.4, the development of language, education, and literacy policies is traced, including the assimilationist policies post-Independence, the subsequent shift to *indigenismo* following the Revolution of 1910, the push

for bilingual education in the mid-20th Century, the shift to Indigenous rights and interculturalism at the end of the 20th Century and early 21st Century, and literacy campaigns.

The discussion considers the practices and policies that have shaped the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla over time, allowing me to show how language ideologies have developed and are reflected in these policies and practices. Throughout the social, political, economic, and education contexts, a historical pattern of divisions between Totonac and *mestizo* people has emerged. These divisions are present recursively throughout the municipality: the distribution of land that resulted in communal land loss and the loss of land use rights over time; the resulting economic situation that forced landless people to rent land or work as labour for land owners; the geographic marginalization of Totonacs out of the relatively urban municipal seat of Huehuetla and into the more rural surrounding areas of the municipality; and the marginalization of Huehuetla Totonac in the state education system. This context is important for understanding language ideologies in Huehuetla, situating the analysis that follows in Chapters 5 and 6. For example, federal politics has essentialized *mestizo* national identity, while at the local level, Totonac practices and policies have been more flexible and syncretic. Huehuetla Totonac language and the people of the Totonac community of Huehuetla are embedded in this complex linguistic ecology, affecting language use, language ideologies, and therefore language vitality.

4 Methodology, data, and analysis

The main purpose of this research is to understand the mechanisms by which language ideologies are reproduced and reflected in the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla. These findings inform the reconceptualization of language vitality as centred on people and their relationship to each other and to their language(s) proposed in this dissertation.

The research is positioned in the field of linguistic anthropology, one of the major subfields of Anthropology, as well as the field of sociolinguistics, a subfield of Linguistics. Linguistic anthropology is concerned with "the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice" (Duranti 1997: 2), and sociolinguistics similarly aims to understand "the nature and distribution of linguistic resources in societies" (Blommaert 2005: 10). One of the methodologies used in linguistic anthropology is ethnography, which is a form of qualitative research that involves collecting three main types of data—observations, interviews, and documents—that inform the written description of the sociocultural practices and processes that organize a group of people (Duranti 1997: 85, 99; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Merriam 2014). In addition to ethnography, I also use the interpretive methods of discourse analysis to identify and analyze how people are situated in social contexts and construct meaning through discourse (Blommaert 2005; Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000; Fairclough 2013; Paffey 2012; van Dijk 1995). Critical discourse analysis is used to identify underlying language ideologies, considering the pragmatics of language use in social interaction and across interdiscursive contexts, and the relationships between discourses, ideologies, and forms of power (Blommaert 2005: 1–4). I use these qualitative methods to analyze the communicative practices and language ideologies of people in Huehuetla in the sociocultural and linguistic ecology. People's perspectives on how and why they use Totonac help clarify the sociocultural practices that make language meaningful to them. Totonac continues to be spoken and valued in Huehuetla, despite the factors in the linguistic ecology that may endanger people's Totonac language practices. The ethnographic analysis of Huehuetla and the discursive analysis of language ideologies of people in Huehuetla form the basis for the reconceptualization of language vitality.

The remainder of this chapter documents my research in the field. In §4.1, I discuss the field visit and describe how I recorded observations in field notes. In §4.2, I outline the interviewing process and how I found people to speak with. The documents I collected are

described in §4.3. In §4.4, the techniques used to analyze and interpret the data are presented along with a reflection on my own positionality.

4.1 The field visit and observations

My family and I visited Huehuetla over a period of three months, from September 30 to December 21, 2016. We came to the community through a local graduate student, Adela Juárez, who was studying at the *Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social* "Center for Research and Higher Education in Social Anthropology" (CIESAS) and who was also an instructor at the UIEP. Adela is from a Sierra Totonac community in a nearby municipality. She helped us locate a *mestiza* woman who rented us a large room near the centre of Huehuetla. Soon after arriving, I reported to the OIT and Indigenous Court office with a letter of support from Dr. Paulette Levy, a professor of Totonac linguistics and colleague of my supervisors (e.g. Levy 1990, 1999; Beck and Levy 2012) in the *Seminario de Lenguas Indígenas* "College of Indigenous Languages" at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* "National Autonomous University of Mexico" in Mexico City. The same day, I also reported to the municipal government office with this letter. In each office I explained the purpose of my visit to Huehuetla and asked for the consent of the authorities to be in the community and speak with community members, which they granted. After this initial set up period, I began to collect data.

The ethnographic field visit offers the opportunity to make direct observations of the people and social situation being studied. Observations are an important source of information because they can reveal consistencies or discrepancies between what people say and what they are observed doing. This is important for studying underlying implicit language ideologies that may become more evident through comparing people's discourses and actions. Before the field visit, I had created a list of institutions and places to visit and observe based on my preparatory research about Huehuetla and previous research experience in the region. This list included places where I expected diverse community members to engage and interact with one another: the OIT, the Indigenous court, the church, the central plaza, the hospital, the market, and the schools. Participant observation, where the ethnographer lives in the community and participates in social life to varying degrees, is important for understanding the social and cultural organization that constitutes a community (Duranti 1997: 89). During the field visit, my family and I participated in aspects of community life, such as enrolling our daughters in preschool and daycare, regular shopping at local stores and markets, attending Mass at the Catholic church

multiple times, attending meetings at the UIEP, and attending community festivals including *Día de los Muertos*, and the *Feria del café* "Coffee Festival." This participation in the community while in Huehuetla created important opportunities to make observations and connect with community members. An important example of this is registering our daughter in the Indigenous preschool *Preescolar Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz*, where I met the school principal, Joaquina García Sotero, who allowed me to speak with her about my research. During this initial meeting, Joaquina agreed to assist me by suggesting places to visit, people to speak with, and also frequently facilitating conversations and interviews. Since my daughter was enrolled, our family was able to participate in the preschool community activities, such as attending family meetings with the school staff, participating in school events to celebrate the *Día de los Muertos,* and joining a Christmas procession of students and their families through the main street. Another example of participant-observation occurred at the UIEP, partly because of my connection to Adela, an instructor in the language and culture program. I spoke with administrators, instructors, and students on multiple occasions, attended some classes, and also gave a presentation at the *Mundo Totonaco* "Totonac World" conference hosted on the UIEP campus.

There were a variety of different situations, and I was able to participate and observe to varying degrees. For example, during services at the Catholic church I sat as a member of the congregation and was able to observe both the priest and parishioners without significantly disrupting the Mass. When visiting people's homes, I participated more fully in the interactions and discourses, often collecting formal interviews. However, in addition to the formal interviews, these visits also allowed the opportunity to observe people in their homes and with members of their family who were present. In contrast to Mass where I was a participant in a public event, when I was in people's homes, the people present were purposefully made aware of my research. Finally, while visiting schools, I formally presented myself as a researcher to the administrators, teachers, and students, who knew they were being observed; however, I was not a direct participant in the classroom learning interactions and took on the role of observer.

During the field visit, observations were recorded in field notes as soon as possible and in as much detail as possible, resulting in over 70 pages of notes. Field notes provide a place for the ongoing preliminary analysis and interpretation of data, characteristic of ethnography, that is used to develop the main themes taken up in the discussion (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011; Merriam 2014: 185). Every effort was made to record observations in field notes during the

events being observed; however, in some cases this was not feasible. For example, it might be inappropriate or distracting to write notes during Mass or it could impede my participation in a casual conversation that I did not wish to formalize through notetaking, in which cases the field notes were written later on the same day to ensure that the information recorded was as accurate and detailed as possible. I knew that the construction of identity was going to be at play in the research questions about language ideologies, based on previous research in Ozelonacaxtla (McGraw 2009, 2019) and in the context of language endangerment more broadly (Heller and Duchêne 2007). This knowledge helped guide my focus on the linguistic aspects of the places and social contexts I observed and participated in to study the expression and reproduction of language ideologies. Field notes, therefore, consist of a detailed description of the events I attended and observed, including the social context of the event, the people present, their relationships to one another (to the extent known), the interactions that occurred, the language(s) used, the topics and themes of the conversations (when possible), the setting and physical layout that may have affected people's interactions, and any other notable details. Throughout the field visit, I reread field notes several times as I began the preliminary analysis. Many of my notes are annotated several times on the same page on different dates, through a comparative analytical process of going back and forth between field notes and other data including interviews and documents.

4.2 Interviews

The second type of data collected in this study are interviews conducted with community members from Huehuetla. Interviews are a rich source of discourse, a recognized site of ideology (Blommaert 2005: 158). They are also valuable sources of insider information and perspectives that cannot be obtained from observation alone, or from other methods (Merriam 2014: 88). I study the semiotic processes in the discourses of people recorded in interviews to identify language ideologies and analyze how they are reproduced and circulated (Irvine and Gal 2000) (see section 4.4). In addition, the careful analysis of meta-communicative practices, such as patterns of listening, asking, and repetition, brings into relief the contrasts in these practices between the researcher and the people they are studying that can expose ideologies (Briggs 1986: 62).

When selecting participants for interviews, the approach I took was non-random and purposeful, meaning specific criteria were used to find particular participants who were

anticipated to provide rich information related to the research questions (Merriam 2014: 76–80). The criteria I used were that participants reside in the municipality of Huehuetla and that they self-declare that they speak some Totonac, or that someone in their family speaks Totonac. I did not formally operationalize what it meant to speak Spanish or Totonac, instead relying on people's own interpretations of these criteria because I wanted to ensure a sufficient body of participants and also learn about how people interpreted these criteria. Since I do not speak Totonac, the interviews were conducted in Spanish, and participants were all able to hold a conversation in Spanish. Joaquina, the Indigenous preschool principal, assisted me in finding people to speak with for my study, including community leaders, neighbours, and friends. Over half of the participants in this study were identified by Joaquina and are part of her social network, many of them her *compadres*. A few other participants were identified through the landlady from whom we rented our apartment, and through my visits to the schools. This type of sampling is called network sampling in qualitative research studies, because the sample depends on the social networks that already exist in the community (Merriam 2014: 79). After initial contact, sometimes the interview took place immediately if people were available, while in other cases an arrangement was made to conduct the interview at a later time. When approaching potential participants, either Joaquina or I began by seeking informed oral consent. This involved introducing me, telling the potential participants who I knew and was connected to in Huehuetla, describing the project as a study about what people think about the languages spoken in Huehuetla, and informing people about the recording and their rights to refuse or withdraw their participation at any time.

Joaquina not only assisted me in identifying people to speak with, but she also often accompanied me to the interviews. She would introduce me to her *compadres* in order to establish a level of trust. Joaquina would listen and occasionally contribute to the interviews by giving commentary or clarification. Her presence had an impact on the direction of interviews: in general, I felt that her presence helped people to relax and answer questions more fully. For example, sometimes people would expand their responses based on her input to clarify my questions. These examples show instances where my interviewing technique may not have lined up with the local communicative expectations or practices. Joaquina would also remind people of events or examples that they both shared knowledge of. At the same time, Joaquina's *compadres* may share her point of view to an extent, especially when she is present, and this affected the

range and diversity of interview content. The fact is I probably would not have been able to do many of the interviews at all without Joaquina's assistance because she was able to both find people to speak with, and also explain the research and who I was to her social contacts, often in Totonac. It is unlikely that many people would have opened their doors to me by myself without a known community member like Joaquina present, unless I had a much longer field visit to establish my own social network. Thus, Joaquina had a central influence on who I selected to interview.

The only departure from network sampling that I employed in this study was the recruitment of young people at schools, and Joaquina did not assist me in this context. Instead, the young people I interviewed were selected using a targeted convenience selection of students from different schools including the *Bachillerato Oficial Agustín Melgar* and the UIEP, with the permission and assistance of instructors or administrators at the different schools. I asked that they help me to connect with students who speak Totonac themselves or who have family members that are Totonac speakers. With these criteria, the administrators often identified student participants who commuted to the schools from the communities in the municipality of Huehuetla but did not live in the town of Huehuetla. This was one of the first indications in my research that people associate Huehuetla Totonac with the surrounding communities, rather than with the central town of Huehuetla. When interviews were conducted in schools, the honorarium was not offered because I could not interview all students, and it was not appropriate to pay the students at school.

A range of participants were interviewed, including youth, parents, grandparents, adults without children, and individuals who had lived in other communities or cities. Interviews were approximately 30–45 minutes in length and were recorded using a battery-operated digital recorder, the H2 Zoom, placed between the participant and the researcher on a table, chair, or the ground. Following the interviews, adults were given an honorarium of $200 pesos, (about $16 CDN), approximately a day's wages. I collected a total of 50 recorded interviews totalling approximately 28 hours, as well as four interviews that were not recorded at the participants' request. The unrecorded interviews were instead documented by hand in field notes. Of the 50 recorded interviews, there were 47 participants who self-declared as Totonac, an additional person who was Nahua, and two *mestizo* people. 26 people were parents, of whom 10 were grandparents. There were 23 people who did not have children, though one was expecting, and

the rest were students aged 23 and younger. Some of the interviews come from community members with historical knowledge or important local roles, facilitating the understanding of the social, cultural, and political context in Huehuetla. These included the priest of the Catholic Church; the judge at the Indigenous Court; a founding member of the OIT and former municipal president; the director of the high school *Centro de Estudios Superiores Indígenas Kgoyom* (CESIK) run by the OIT; the director of the private high school *Colegio Paulo Freire*; and a local *mestizo cacique*.

Table 2 shows the interview participants in this study who are directly discussed in the text, identified by their pseudonym.[12] I randomly chose pseudonyms to refer to participants, rather than initials or codes, because I want to use names for the people I spoke with. In Table 2, participants are listed according to demographic categories and personal characteristics including age at the time of the interviews in 2016, how I perceived their gender, style of dress at the time of the interview, number and age of their children, occupation, education, and declared language use at home. I also note who was present during the interview. Most interviews were conducted in people's homes and sometimes in their businesses, while almost all young people were interviewed at their schools. My perception of gender was based on hairstyle and dress; for example, skirts and braids are traditional Totonac dress for women and only men typically had short hair cuts. I classified the style of dress I observed as either a) Western dress, including pants, button-up or t-shirts, and shoes or boots, or b) Totonac dress, which consists of white cotton *nahuas* (skirts) and embroidered blouses with sandals for women, and *calzones* (cotton pants and shirt) and handmade leather sandals for men. There were some people who mixed these styles, including men wearing *calzones* and Western shirts, or young women wearing embroidered blouses with jeans, and a range of combinations of footwear. Generally, I chose to focus on the bottom half of the person, categorizing *nahuas* and *calzones* as Totonac to simplify the data collection at the time; however, consideration of how these styles of dress are merged is an interesting point related to the expression of Totonac identity and syncretic ideologies. Since the young people I interviewed were at school, they were in uniform, which I classified as Western.

[12] A complete list of all interviews collected is provided in Appendix B.

Participant Pseudonym	People Present (excludes researcher)	Age (years in 2016)	Perceived Gender (Masculine or feminine)	Style of Dress (Western or Traditional)	No. and Age of Children*	Occupation	Education**	Declared Language at Home (Spanish, Totonac, Nahuatl)
Luz	Luz	17	F	W	–	student	high school 2 yrs	S
Regina	Regina, Joaquina	17	F	W	–	student, cashier at vet	high school 2.5 yrs	T, S
Ernesto	Ernesto	18	M	W	–	student	high school 2.5 yrs	S, T, N
Antonio	Antonio	21	M	W	–	student	uni 2 yrs	T
Felipe	Felipe	23	M	W	–	student	uni 3 yrs	T, S
Alex	Alex, customers	23	M	W	–	student, store clerk	uni	S, some T and N
Rosa	Rosa, children	28	F	W	2 (9, 5)	homemaker, teacher	uni	S
Paulo	Paulo, students	~35	M	W	–	Director of CESIK	uni, 1 year of Masters	S, N, some T
Carmen	Carmen	37	F	W	3 (19, 12, 6)	employee at daycare	secondary	S
Enoc	Enoc	39	M	T	3 (13, 12, 10)	farmer, huarache maker	secondary	T
Joaquina	Joaquina, children	42	F	W	2 (17, 6)	director and teacher of Indigenous preschool	Masters	S, some T
Hector	Hector, Hector's family	45	M	W	3 (21, 12, 6)	*mestizo* landowner, rancher	uni	S
Sol	Sol, Joaquina	47	F	T	1 (18)	homemaker, worked for CDI	secondary	T, S
Lupe	Lupe, Joaquina 2 children	49	F	W	3 (22, 19, 18)	homemaker	secondary	S, little T and N
Elizabeth	Elizabeth, Joaquina, children	51	F	W	5 (32…23)	meat merchant	none	S
Josef	Josef, wife in back, customers	63	M	W	2 (36, 35)	teacher, shop owner, OIT official	uni	S
Carla	Carla, Joaquina	70	F	T	8 (50…32)	midwife	none	T

* … indicates that the ages of the children between youngest and oldest are not known)
** *uni* indicates university undergraduate; education level is complete if no years listed

Table 2: Interview participant information

There are some patterns that emerge in Table 2. For example, younger participants tend to have higher levels of education. Some of this is due to the fact that the young people I interviewed were students, but it also speaks to the increasing availability and pursuit of education in the community. The federal high school opened in 1984, meaning only people aged approximately 45 or younger have had the chance to attend high school in the community of Huehuetla. In addition, the majority of participants declared Spanish use at home, in addition to Totonac, and there were only three households that reported using only Totonac. This pattern reflects the high level of bilingualism that was also one of the characteristics of participants for the study.[13] There were also more women represented, which is a reflection of demographic considerations of both participants and the researcher: more women in the community were available to interview during the day when I was doing interviews because they traditionally work at home, while men work in the fields or outside the community; and my identity as a woman meant men were less willing to speak to me than women were. In addition, Joaquina, who assisted me in finding several participants, is also a woman, so she was probably more likely to introduce me to other women. In a few cases, Joaquina introduced me to older men who were no longer working in the fields or to older couples.

The majority of participants I interviewed self-identified as Totonac, though they often described being Totonac in different ways. Some participants were monolingual Spanish speakers, others spoke both Totonac and Spanish to varying degrees, and some spoke Nahuatl in addition to Totonac and Spanish, as seen in the last column of Table 2. As noted, participants were selected on the basis that they either be bilingual themselves in Totonac and Spanish, or that a family member speak Totonac. If the participants were not speakers of Totonac themselves, at least one of their siblings, parents, or grandparents were. Not taking Totonac language use by the person themselves as a strict criterion for interviewing allowed me to speak with children and grandchildren of Totonac speakers who did not transmit the language at home. This is important because it provides key perspectives on changing patterns of language use and transmission that may have already occurred across generations, as well as the ways that Totonac identity and membership in the Totonac community is constituted in combination with language and/or instead of language. Examining participants' discussion of what it means to be Totonac

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[13] This should not be taken as a measure of rates of bilingualism across the community, as this sample is not representative. Everyone I spoke with had to be able to speak Spanish because I do not speak Totonac.

helps uncover how language use intersects with community membership, identity, ideologies, and the linguistic ecology in Huehuetla. Speakers with access to multiple languages have the ability to choose which language they use in different contexts, or to merge them in creative ways, depending on their knowledge and goals, a process that has implications for their own and others' perceptions of them as Totonac people and community members in Huehuetla.

The interviews began with collecting some basic demographic information, and then proceeded through questions about participants' beliefs, practices, and experiences with language(s) in different contexts, such as at home and in the community. The full interview script, as well as the original Spanish version of these questions, can be found in Appendix A. Some key questions from interviews include:

1. How did you learn to speak the languages you know?
2. How did/do/will you decide which language(s) to speak with your children?
3. What language(s) should the children of Huehuetla learn? Why? Who should teach them?
4. Can you describe when and how you use Totonac and Spanish (and other languages spoken by the participant) and what motivates you to do so?
5. Do you enjoy speaking Totonac? Spanish? Why?
6. How is Totonac (and Spanish) important to you?
7. What makes a person Totonac and why?
8. When you think about Totonac (and Spanish), who or what comes to mind?
9. Can you describe a memorable event that happened to you that was related to your speaking Totonac or Spanish?
10. Are Totonac and Spanish being used in new ways compared to when you were a child? What do you think about this?
11. How could Totonac be lost? What dangers does Totonac face?
12. What would happen if Totonac were lost?

Some of the questions (e.g. 11 and 12) use discourses that essentialize language, such as positioning the language as an object that can be lost. My use of these discourses may have primed people to discuss Huehuetla Totonac in terms of language endangerment, and in comparison to Spanish, which may have some limitations as it leads participants into a particular way of speaking about the issues. At the same time, I need a point of entry into the discussion of the meaning and value of language in order to better understand people's language ideologies. This use of a guiding script, but with allowance for the participant to direct the interaction, is commonly termed a semi-structured interview technique. Semi-structured questions are flexibly worded, the question order can change, there are open ended questions, and the researcher can redirect the interview in response to participants (Merriam 2014: 89–90). It should be noted that

all interaction, including casual conversation and formal interviews or questionnaires, is fully structured in the sense that it is an intersubjective social interaction constrained by the parameter of the context, like all social interactions (Briggs 1986; Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Eckert 2000). This means that although casual spontaneous conversation has not been planned ahead of time in the same way interview questions have, there are still established parameters and conventions structuring spontaneous interpersonal interaction, such as greetings, turn-taking, and expectations about who asks and answers what kind of questions. The semi-structured technique ensures the data collected is as rich as possible and centers the participants' perspectives (Merriam 2014: 90).

As I completed more interviews, I began to run into limitations to the scripted questions, and I allowed people to expand on topics and ask me questions as well. As an outside researcher who is a learner of local communicative practices and expectations, there were also several instances where the interview script was abandoned, at least for a time. Sometimes, the interview situation results in an inversion of local power dynamics. I was a young student from outside the community with a digital recorder, posing personal questions to people who were often older than myself and in positions of local leadership. The way some interviews proceeded can be interpreted in light of these dynamics of intersubjective positionality in which the researcher is in a position that creates disjunctures between their role as an academic expert researcher, and a newcomer to the community and learner of local practices (Briggs 1986: 77). An example of this is my interview with the OIT leader, Josef (63 years old), who holds a well-respected position of prestige in the Totonac community. During the interview, he wanted to talk about the OIT and spend time teaching me about the local history of the OIT. Instead of strictly keeping to my list of questions and directing the interview, I allowed Josef to take the lead without interrupting him, abandoning the list of questions for a time. This is in contrast to some of the high school students I interviewed who had very short one sentence answers to my questions, and I was very much positioned as the leader of the conversation. I began to regard the interview questions themselves as malleable rather than fixed, and using a semi-structured approach allowed me to adjust wording, sometimes skip or add questions, and follow the lead of the people talking to me if they showed interest in leading the conversation.

Spanish was used to conduct the interviews for numerous reasons: I do not speak Totonac, Spanish is the expected language of use with outsiders who do not speak Totonac, and it may be

seen as unusual for outsiders to learn and use Totonac, and I did not have time to learn it. Because I did not conduct interviews in Totonac, I am not able to explore the relationship between Totonac discourse and language ideologies as expressed in Totonac. The perspectives offered in the Totonac language are likely distinct from those emerging in the Spanish language, and this could further define syncretic and essentialist language ideologies in Huehuetla. Comparing the same individual in both languages would also be potentially informative. The use of only Spanish is a limitation of my study, as the choice to use a particular language or variety is never neutral and has implications for interaction between interlocutors, including interview contexts (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). However, this limitation cannot be avoided without a longer field visit that includes learning Totonac as a main objective. Learning Totonac would also allow me to expand the pool of potential interview participants to people who speak Totonac and not Spanish, or to those who have a passive understanding of Spanish. Another possible way to use Totonac in the interviews would be to have someone who speaks Totonac conduct and translate the interviews for me. I did not choose this option because of time constraints that limited my ability to find and train a Totonac-speaking assistant. Having interviews in both languages and with more than one interviewer could help show how language choice plays a role in interviewing and further reveal ideologies in more light; however, the interviews in Spanish provide a basis for this exploratory study of language ideologies and language vitality in Huehuetla.

In the presentation of interview data in the analysis chapters that follow, I include relevant sections of the interview transcripts that illustrate or support the analysis of language ideologies. These interview excerpts are numbered in order of their appearance so that they can be clearly referred to in the text of the analysis. I present the interview excerpts in Spanish first *(italics),* followed by an English translation (plain text). The lines of the interviews are also numbered on the left side, with each corresponding line in the original Spanish and the English translation having the same line number almost always. Specific lines of the transcription can therefore be clearly indicated in the text and readers can easily refer back to the original statements in the interview excerpts in either Spanish or English.

4.3 Documents

A third type of data in ethnographic research are documents (both physical and virtual) and other artifacts. An advantage of documents is that they are often produced before the field visit

and for a purpose unrelated to the research, meaning the researcher does not affect documents in the same direct way as they do interviews and observations (Merriam 2014: 139). However, documents are not neutral objects, but rather they are produced in social contexts by authors who are subjects with their own interests and situated positions that ethnographers need to be aware of, and they are interpreted by researchers who are themselves intersubjectively positioned (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 124). Documents can include a wide range of items, including, for example, public records and policies, teaching materials and student work, institutional documents and correspondence, personal accounts such as diaries and letters, photographs, physical artifacts, pop culture, websites, and social media.

The documentary data I collected consists of copies or photos of documents from different institutions and platforms in Huehuetla, most of which I gathered during the field visit in 2016. A few online sources have been consulted since then, and these sources are indicated as online sources. The documents I collected include the constitution of the OIT; court filings of the Indigenous court; local demographic health and population data from the hospital; curricula, lesson plans, and other documents produced by schools; written stories, blogs, videos, and websites from different institutions and individuals; and photographs taken of the field site, including the location, objects and artifacts like signs, and events. In cases where I was consulting a document that belonged to someone, I obtained oral consent from the appropriate authority to examine the documents and digitally archive them by taking photographs using a smartphone. Demographic data describing Huehuetla was also collected from the online census data of the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática* "National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Computation" (2020). A catalogue of documents collected is presented in Table 3, indicating the type of document, the author, and the source where I obtained the document. I was able to source most documents I collected directly from the authors, confirming information about how and why they were produced wherever possible. Some of the initial analysis of the documents occurs in my field notes, and I also annotated the digital files or created new documents with notes about my ongoing comparative analysis, considering how and where documents provide relevant data and support the analysis of language ideologies. I refer to many of these documents directly in the analysis, including excerpts where these are relevant. When the documents are external sources and referenced in the text, their full bibliographic details are given in the bibliography.

Document name	**Document type**	**Author(s)**	**Source**
OIT Constitution (section)	photos of original	OIT	OIT leader
Proyecto Faja “Project Faja”	copy of original Word document	UNITONA, OIT, Alison Spain Art Without Borders (2006)	online
Túmin Mercado Alternativo “Tumin alternative market”	website	Túmin organizers	online
CESIK blog and YouTube video	blog, YouTube video	CESIK	online
Juzgado Indígena “Indigenous court” judge CV	photos of original	judge	judge
Juzgado Indígena “Indigenous court” case file	photos of original	Indigenous court	court/judge
Bachillerato Intercultural “Intercultural high school” curriculum	photos of original	Bachillerato Intercultural	Director
Bachillerato Intercultural Diagnóstico Comunitario “Intercultural high school community diagnostic”	photos of original	Bachillerato Intercultural	Director
Ruta de mejora grupal 2016–2017 “2016–2017 group improvement plan”	photos of original	Primaria Oficial Ignacio Ramírez	Director
Indigenous preschool materials	original coil bound	Joaquina	Joaquina
Xa tachiwin tutunakú “The Totonac Language” first grade student workbook	original soft cover	Sixto Rodríguez Rodríguez	Joaquina
Kakiwín tutunakú “The Totonac Forest” Facebook page	Facebook page	Kakiwín tutunakú	Facebook
UIEP website	website	UIEP	online
UIEP *Congreso del Mundo Totonaco* “Congress on the Totonac World” program	copy of original pdf	UIEP	UIEP
UIEP *Informe de Actividades* “Report of Activities”	original pamphlet	UIEP	UIEP
Diagnóstico de Salud Consulta Externa Huehuetla “Health Diagnostic of the Huehuetla Outpatient Service”	copy of original Word document	Pablo Espinosa Vargas, Beatriz Pérez Pérez, Mariana Carreón Sánchez, Ana Filomena Gaona García	Doctor at *Hospital Integral*
community photos (over 100)	digital photo	researcher	researcher

Table 3: Catalogue of documents collected and archived

Documents are a significant source of data that provide historical and procedural context that cannot be obtained from other sources. For example, the constitution of the OIT provides an account of the establishment of the OIT and the principles and policies of the organization that can be used to help understand people's accounts of the role of the OIT. The material produced for use in schools provide a more formal or official kind of data than an interview or an observation in terms of how thematic content and pedagogical practices are presented for a particular audience; for example, the curriculum materials are quite distinct from the reports prepared for submission to officials from the *Secretaría de Educación Pública*. In contrast, an interview with a teacher or student from the school helps reveal their perceptions of the content and the practice they produce or experience, and an observation provides data from a cross-sectional perspective of the content and practice, as seen by the researcher, an outsider. The use of ethnographic methods allows for the analysis of the positionality and subjectivity of the people involved in the social situation being studied. These methods allow me to show the relationship between people, language use, language ideologies, and the linguistic ecology.

4.4 Analysis and reflexivity

The three types of data—interviews, observations, and documents—are analyzed in a process of interpretation that produces broad themes. These themes constitute the categories of analysis, in this case the two main categories of essentialist and syncretic language ideologies that I present in the following chapters. I began the research and analysis with some pre-existing thematic categories, or "sensitizing concepts" (Rampton et al. 2004: 2), that suggest avenues to pursue while encouraging a constant dialectic exchange between theory and data examining the choice to use particular categories or themes over others. The sensitizing concepts I began with were the categories *mestizo* and *totonaco* because I had found them relevant in Ozelonacaxtla (McGraw 2019). Because of the need to be responsive to the social situation in ethnographic research, the meanings and boundaries of the thematic analytical categories are not strictly defined before data collection (Duranti 1997: 153; Hammersly and Atkinson 2007: 3; Merriam 2014: 185). For example, in the study of Huehuetla, sensitivity to people's ideologies meant that as I analyzed the data, I began to see that some people used the labels *mestizo* and *totonaco* to describe the ways someone thinks and acts, rather than labels for an essentialist and racialized conceptualization of ethnicity. This interpretive approach eventually allowed the broader categories of essentialist and syncretic ideologies to emerge out of the data analysis.

An important aspect of a responsive interpretation in ethnographic research is the constant comparative method. This a largely inductive process of continuously visiting and revisiting each piece of data in comparison to other pieces of data through which analytical categories emerge, become (re)defined, and may be separated or combined into themes or threads until they best represent or fit the data collected (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 165; Merriam 2014: 30–31, 175–187). At the same time, it is understood that data analysis and interpretation cannot be wholly inductive, since the researcher still makes assumptions and may use existing sensitizing concepts (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 165). The research and analysis consist of a process of identifying and redefining emergent themes as each piece of information is examined and re-examined, going back and forth repeatedly between data, research tools, and theory (Merriam 2014: 199–200). This process begins at the start of ethnographic research design, and continues through field work, data collection, analysis, and writing. The ongoing comparative analysis and sensitivity to the data both shapes and answers the research questions and affects the design of the research tools (e.g. the interview questions), which are reconsidered and adjusted throughout the research process. In my study, the constant comparative method resulted in the interviewing technique becoming more flexible to allow for more open-ended answers when participants were inclined to provide more details. I also began to follow people's lead in the interviews to a greater extent in order to allow their own discourses, and therefore ideologies, to emerge more freely. In another example, the research questions in this study have been changed several times in response to themes that emerged during both data collection and analysis. One of the first formulations of a research question in this study was "What is the current level of language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac?" based on the existing concept of language vitality. This question has since evolved to the current "What does the analysis of language ideologies and the linguistic ecology in Huehuetla contribute to our understanding of the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac and of language vitality more generally?" This change came about after identifying factors associated with the traditional definitions of language vitality, such as speaker numbers, and realizing that these factors are inadequate to account for what is observed in Huehuetla. The data in this study show that language vitality can be better understood by considering how people themselves view their language(s).

While in the field, I was also sometimes able to form casual relationships with people and speak with them multiple times. This allowed me to conduct some member checking, which is

where some people interviewed are asked further questions to clarify, correct, and validate the emerging analysis and interpretation of what they said (Merriam 2014: 217). For example, after I interviewed someone, I listened to the recording while still in the field. Member checks were carried out when possible to clarify someone's answer to a particular question, to fill gaps in the interview content, and to present preliminary interpretations of language ideologies for their feedback, which I recorded in field notes. For people who were in our regular circle of interaction, such as the parents at the Indigenous preschool and the shop owners and staff in the centre of town, this was fairly straightforward. While extensive member checking is ideal, I was not able to do so routinely for everyone because I did not feel it was appropriate to ask Joaquina to re-accompany me to people's homes a second time, and less for me to go alone, after such a short span of time had passed to ask for more of their time. Another strategy for improving the interpretation was to ask Joaquina for help. As a community member herself, Joaquina became an important assistant in the initial analysis in the field, as I consulted with her about the interviews, observations, and documents she had helped me collect. She and I would discuss interviews afterwards, whenever possible, as part of the process of data analysis, and she acted as a secondary coder who is also a member of the community. This helped to clarify the emerging analysis and interpretation and make visible the subjective positionality of the researcher and the participants (Merriam 2014: 217). Joaquina did not help me code every piece of data in detail, but she was able to see and sometimes influence my preliminary interpretations, answer some of my questions, and provide further context to support the analysis of the interviews. It is important to acknowledge that there is an influence from Joaquina on several aspects of the research, including the sampling procedure, the interviews when Joaquina was present, and my interpretation of the interviews.

Following the field visit, I continued to apply the constant comparative method to the interview analysis process as interviews and interview sections were transcribed. I did not transcribe every interview completely, choosing to transcribe key interviews in their entirety and key sections of other interviews as I re-listened to the interviews during analysis. My transcription technique is to transcribe exactly what was said, including basic discursive transitions. For each interview, I also noted some non-verbal information, such as a description of the setting, people in the background, or activities that were going on around us. Transcription is an important analytical tool, especially when completed by the researcher themselves, because

it allows for renewed familiarity with the interview data and rich opportunities for reflecting on the interview process and the data within interviews, especially the identification of emergent themes (Merriam 2014: 110). Many of my interview transcripts are full of annotations, including highlighting and comments in the margins completed on different dates that show how I went through the analytical process of constant comparison. These annotations illustrate multiple steps in the process, including identifying relevant excerpts, reflecting on them, connecting them to other pieces of data by looking for commonalities and differences, and eventually identifying language ideologies through a process of discourse analysis.

Language ideologies are identified through the comparative analysis of the numerous samples of discourse collected. Discourse is the central focus of data analysis because it is a recognized site where ideology can be identified (Blommaert 2005: 158; Fairclough 2013: 56; Laihonen 2008; van Dijk 1995: 17). Discourse can be simply defined as language use in extended interactions (Van Herk 2018: 134); however, other scholars, taking a critical approach, expand the concept of discourse to include not just interpersonal interaction but the heteroglossic, interdiscursive, and intertextual characteristics of language in society (Fairclough 2013). Still others consider discourse even more broadly to incorporate all semiotic processes in social action, including language and also other kinds of symbolic expression, such as gesture, music, and art (Blommaert 2005: 2, 28). The study of language ideology has a critical aspect, meaning that by analyzing the relationship between ideology, language use, and other factors including the broader sociopolitical context, researchers are in fact studying power relations between different sociolinguistic groups (Paffey 2012). Critical discourse analysis is applied to examine and analyze the relationships between discourses, ideologies, and forms of power (Blommaert 2005; Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000: 449; Fairclough 2013: 27–28; Paffey 2012). When applied to the study of language endangerment, the use of critical discourse analysis within an ethnographic approach to uncover language ideologies aims to interpret and analyze the roles of different speakers and institutions in (re)producing language ideologies that affect language use in their communities. Understanding people's language ideologies through the careful analysis of their discourse facilitates the understanding of the sociocultural practices that make language meaningful to them and ultimately contribute to the maintenance of the language. Critical discourse analysis as a method involves identifying lexical items, phrases, discursive strategies such as metaphor and irony, and pragmatic patterns of interaction like turn-taking that

may reveal people's underlying stance or beliefs. The relationship between discourses I collected and language ideologies is analyzed by examining specific semiotic processes of iconization, indexicality, erasure, and recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000). An example of a pragmatic pattern with semiotic significance is when people hesitate to use certain ideologically charged words, which indicates a person's reluctance to align with a particular stance or indexical association that might be interpreted as aligning with a particular stance. Another example of the application of semiotic processes that reveal language ideologies is how Totonac language is sometimes talked about as if it were representative of Totonac identity: when asked what it means to be Totonac, speaking Totonac is identified, and the language is described as a valuable "treasure" transferred from parents to children, whose inherent "destiny" it is to speak Totonac (Juan Nov.22/16). This essentialist belief contributes to the iconization of Totonac language, since from this perspective speaking Totonac is seen as necessary for having Totonac identity. In other words, speaking Totonac matches this interpretation of having Totonac identity. I apply the methodology of identifying semiotic processes through discursive elements, such as lexical items, in the ethnographic data in order to analyze language ideologies and explore how they are circulated and reproduced.

In general, in the process of analysis of language ideology in a particular context in the data, it is helpful to ask: what does this mean for the speaker, the community, the region, and the researcher/author, and also, how does it come to mean this?" Considering language ideologies not only on individual and local community scales, but also at the scale of the national and international communities, is an important step for an ecological account of language use that can inform the reconceptualization of language vitality. I applied this in my analysis through the combination of the contemporary field visit I conducted and a historical literature review of language policies and practices in Huehuetla, and in Mexico, as well the connection to the literature on endangered languages. For example, in my analytical process I began by identifying the sensitizing concepts *mestizo* and Totonac/*totonaco,* key lexical items that may point to an underlying language ideology in the discursive interaction. Although at first I too assumed a natural essentialist division between the categories *mestizo* and *totonaco*, the data gradually revealed that these categories are by no means simple and clear. This realization led me to carefully consider how people talk about being Totonac and *mestizo*, especially in terms of how this relates to language. Essentialist ideologies were certainly present, but they did not account

for all the ideologies I was identifying, leading me to propose a syncretic category of language ideologies. By establishing a syncretic category, I was then able to consider how these pieces of data were related to either or both the essentialist and syncretic ideological categories as I built the analysis. These two categories were then further compared and organized into types of essentialist and types of syncretic ideologies. During the writing process, key excerpts were incorporated into the dissertation text where they are integrated with data from observations and documents to explain and support the discussion of essentialist and syncretic ideologies.

Ethnographers are participants in the social situations they are simultaneously observing and have an undeniable and unavoidable effect on the events and people being observed (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 11–12; Merriam 2014: 127). It is generally accepted that qualitative research is inherently and unavoidably intersubjective and reflexive, and that researchers can train themselves to become more aware of and better understand intersubjectivity (Duranti 1997: 86; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 14–16). Reflexivity is the recognition and analysis of the situated position of researchers, the acknowledgement that there is no neutral type of data or data collection, and the critical awareness that research itself has consequences not only for knowledge production but for the people and situations that are studied (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 15). Intersubjectivity, reflexivity, and the co-construction of social interactions are in fact important parts of the process of data collection: the question is not whether the researcher's presence has any effect, but rather what that effect is and how to identify and analyze it (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Merriam 2014: 127). It is suggested that people would act in a more formal or reserved manner in the presence of a researcher; however, established practice and tradition are also unlikely to be altered, even under formal observation, and an observer's effect diminishes over time (Merriam 20014: 127). Scholars of post-structuralism contend that meaning cannot be objectively observed, but rather is always a product of situated practice, interpretation, and the sociohistorical and ideological context (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 12–13). This has implications for field work and ethnography, namely that ethnography cannot be seen as neutral, but must be acknowledged as inherently political (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 14, 17).

In qualitative research such as this, the researcher is the primary instrument for both data collection and analysis (Merriam 2014: 15). Qualitative researchers use their previous field experience, skills, and intuitions as the tools to gather relevant data and interpret it in context

(Merriam 2014: 15). Taking a reflective and reflexive stance on my own positionality and intersubjectivity is important for recognizing and contextualizing how I affected the research and what the impacts of the research are. I acquired Spanish first as an undergraduate student, and I completed a minor in Spanish in 2006. During my undergraduate Spanish studies, I met Dr. Yvonne Lam who invited me to do graduate work with her. I first went to Mexico during my MA on a formal exchange program to the Universidad de Guadalajara in 2007 for 6 months. My competence and fluency in (Mexican) Spanish greatly increased as a result of this exchange program. During my exchange, I also met my now spouse Alberto, who is a Mexican citizen. After my exchange, I began to plan a field visit to the Totonac community of Ozelonacaxtla where a Totonac graduate student, Gabriela Lobato, was from. Gabriela had previously come to Edmonton on invitation of Dr. David Beck and Dr. Yvonne Lam, and so it was arranged that I would go to Ozelonacaxtla and stay with her family for my field visit (I was not yet married with children at the time). I completed a three month field visit to Ozelonacaxtla during 2007. Staying with Gabriela's family was eye-opening not only because of the research, but because of what I learned about myself and other people in general. For example, what and how much a person really needs to live, and how to accommodate one's language and communicate interculturally when the shared language is limited. While I did speak Spanish by that time, the Spanish spoken in Ozelonacaxtla was more locally relevant to agriculture, plant and animal life, food preparation, childcare and family, and local politics, and mine was more formal and standard, reflecting how I learned it largely through formal education and some time spent in Guadalajara. The research in Ozelonacaxtla was similar in nature to the current research in Huehuetla, and consisted of collecting interviews and ethnographic data. Gabriela, her mother, and some of her siblings and cousins were very interested in the research, though Gabi's mother said she thought that Totonac could not be lost in Ozelonacaxtla. I found that Totonac is spoken by most children in Ozelonacaxtla (McGraw 2009, 2019).

In spring 2010 after completing my MA, I also completed a second two month field visit to Ozelonacaxtla as a contracted Research Assistant for Dr. Beck and Dr. Lam. I had married my now spouse Alberto in 2009 and he accompanied me during this second visit. People who had met me during my first visit were quite excited I had married a Mexican man, though they joked that I should have married a Totonac man from their community. In fact, during my first visit one family encouraged me to develop a relationship with their son, which I did not pursue.

During this second visit, we stayed with some cousins of Gabriela. They were interested in my relationship with Alberto and our roles. One day I showed interest in learning to make tortillas. The eldest daughter and her mother showed me the technique of taking a small piece of masa (corn dough), wetting your hands just the right amount, and patting the masa between your wet hands to form the flat tortilla shape before placing it on the hot comal (flat cooking stone or pan). My tortillas were notably misshapen and lumpy, hardly edible, which gave us all a laugh. But our hosts had the last laugh after my tortillas finished cooking and they put them on a plate and served them to Alberto, stating that a wife makes the food for her husband! Alberto was obliged to reluctantly eat my hard, misshapen tortillas, luckily accompanied by the women's delicious, freshly made salsa. My relationship with Alberto was a subject of interest (a white lady from Canada marrying a Mexican), as was my interest in Mexico and Totonac people. Some people expressed surprise that I would come so far to the rural area to talk to them; and others were interested in Canada and some wanted to know how to move there. During the second field visit to Ozelonacaxtla, the older children of my host family assisted me to find people to interview, and similar to Gabi and her family, they played an important role in facilitating the interactions and relationships with others. The results of the research in Ozelonacaxtla have been reported in my MA thesis (McGraw 2009) as well as in an article (McGraw 2019). Alberto and I have travelled several times through east-central Mexico, spent several years in Guadalajara with his family, and I have spent some time in the area around Puerto Vallarta. We speak to each other mostly in Spanish, and to both our children in Spanish and English at home. These experiences have contributed to my knowledge of Mexico and Mexican Spanish. Following my MA, I also taught undergraduate Spanish at the UofA for several years, before I began my PhD studies, influencing my knowledge and use of Spanish.

In Huehuetla, I was a visiting international graduate student researcher with a letter of support from Dr. Paulette Levy, a professor in the *Seminario de Lenguas Indígenas* "College of Indigenous Languages" from the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* "National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City." I brought my family with me to Huehuetla, including Alberto (Mexican *mestizo* from Guadalajara) and our two children (Sara 5 and Jenny 9–12 months). As noted above, I am seen as an outsider in both Mexico broadly, and locally in Huehuetla. One incident that stood out to me happened when I told a participant that I was from Canada. They were immediately concerned and asked about what part of Canada I was from. I

said Edmonton, Alberta, and then they asked me directly if I was a representative of TransCanada, a large oil and gas company, which at the time was based in Calgary, Alberta. I explained that I was a researcher studying multilingualism and showed them the letter from Dr. Levy. They mentioned that TransCanada was trying to build a pipeline through the Sierra Norte and company representatives had been visiting and pressuring local people to try and get consent. This experience reminded of my embeddedness in local and global contexts, and how I am perceived in unanticipated ways that I may or may not be aware of. Another example is that we were perceived as wealthy by some people. In 2010 a family from Ozelonacaxlta asked Alberto and I to be their *compadres.* While we decided we could not meet the social requirements of this request, it does show that we were perceived as having wealth. Our embeddedness in context is also shown through my role as the researcher. As a woman, I stood out in masculine-coded activities, such as in the fields, in the stores (at least the ones that sell alcohol), and doing research, especially because Alberto was at home and helping with the children. My partner is also considered an outsider in Huehuetla, as a *mestizo* from Guadalajara. I do my best to consider our embeddedness in context in the analysis.

An important learning that has resulted from this field work is a better understanding of my own role as a settler participating in academic research. Although I, and the researchers I know, do not have bad intentions, there can certainly be unintended effects of research such as the extraction of, or perception of the extraction of cultural and linguistic resources in the study of language endangerment (Davis 2017; Hill 2002). As noted in Chapter 3, some linguists and anthropologists in Mexico have played roles in developing policies of *indigenismo* and Spanish education (Heath 1972: 119–122; King 1994) that have contributed to the marginalization of Indigenous people and languages. In some senses, my research can also be seen as extractive because I removed data from the community and have personally benefited from it. However, I do hope that thinking about language vitality in new ways will be beneficial for Huehuetla and other endangered language communities by supporting efforts to maintain and revitalize their languages and supporting the linguistic ecologies that contribute to their maintenance and revitalization.

Reflecting on our situated positionalities and underlying assumptions are ways to help mitigate against causing harm while doing research. A clear example of a common assumption in research on language endangerment is that there are natural links between language and identity.

The recognition of the existence of these links and their characteristics may not be shared by all community members or the researcher; for example, I had to learn that some actors, such as the OIT, define Totonac identity around social practices that serve the Totonac community. Language plays a role in that, but it is not essentialized to the degree it is in other contexts such as for Kaska where language has become an icon of identity not just for outsiders but for community membership (Meek 2007, 2010). The positionality of other people participating in the research is also important to acknowledge. Joaquina played a central role in data collection and analysis, and one way she influenced the research was through making my own positionality more visible to me through her help in the initial analysis in the field. Her questions helped me to see more clearly how the identity categories I was exploring were defined by the people we were speaking with. Instead of clearly distinct essentialist constructions of *mestizo* and Totonac identity, the theme of heterogeneity and syncretism emerged in the analysis as I observed practices and beliefs that appeared to be contradictions. Joaquina's own diverse roles as a well-respected internal community member, Indigenous preschool principal, *comadre* to many parents, and facilitator to my own research means that her presence is much less marked than my own in Huehuetla.

Another assumption often made in academic work is the naturalized link between Indigenous languages and "traditional" and "rural" places and practices. Appeals to the loss of "traditional" knowledge and a general lack of attention given to Indigenous language speakers who do not live in traditional and/or rural areas are common manifestations of this assumption in academic research (McCarty 2014; Shulist 2018). The case of Huehuetla shows that the characterization of "rural" is highly relative and dependent on scale: on the state or national scale, Sierra Norte is rural compared to the big cities of Puebla or Mexico City; however, on the more local scale, the town of Huehuetla is an important urban centre in the municipality and the broader region. The relationships between these different places, and the way they are conceptualized in relation to language use and the reproduction of identity also need to be further studied.

5 Essentialist and syncretic language ideologies in Huehuetla

This chapter identifies language ideologies in Huehuetla through an analysis of discourse and semiotic processes. According to scholars of critical discourse analysis, discourse includes language, images, and other forms of "meaningful symbolic behaviour" (Blommaert 2005:2). In sociolinguistic and sociocultural theories of identity, individual and community identity are constantly reconstituted, performed, reflected, and contested through semiotic processes that are mediated by discourse, of which language is a main component (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Eckert 2000). Through the means of discourse, people create meaningful indexical associations between languages, their speakers, and social contexts, and these are interpreted through language ideologies, and in turn reinforce these same language ideologies (Woolard 1998a: 3). The circulation, reproduction, and contestation of language ideologies are dynamic social and discursive processes that contribute to the meaning of a language to people; for example, feelings of shame or pride. Language ideologies, and the meanings they create, affect whether, how much, and when multilingual people speak their languages, as well as their perceptions of their own and others' language use in the community. This dynamic process affects language vitality as people make linguistic decisions on a daily basis that transmit both the language itself and the language ideologies that impact the use and perception of the language.

Language ideologies are identified through the analysis of the discursive semiotic processes of indexicality, iconization, erasure, and recursivity that were introduced in §2.2. By applying semiotic analysis to discourse, I identify two interconnected types of language ideologies in Huehuetla: essentialist and syncretic language ideologies. The main essentialist ideologies at work are *menosprecio* "denigration" and *salir adelante* "to get ahead." I borrow the terms *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* from Messing's analysis of language ideologies in a Nahua community (2007: 558–562). Messing's categories are similar to the discourses I encounter, and in my analysis, I develop their specific application to the context of Huehuetla. Building on these categories and analyzing them as part of a larger ideological frame, I further characterize these two ideologies as essentialist, meaning they are based on the assumption that the relevant categories are natural, and the characteristics of each category are inherent to the category members. Operating in a dialectic relationship with essentialist language ideologies are syncretic language ideologies, which I identify as *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories," and

solidaridad comunitaria “community solidarity.” These syncretic ideologies allow for a merging, overlapping, and blurring of the essentialist categories in a wide range of possibilities. According to Hill, the “syncretic project” in the Nahua community she studied creates a continuum of degrees of syncretism that is defined at the extremes by “unobtainable” essentialist ideological poles: 245). While Hill seems to suggest that syncretism exists on a line between these poles, I interpret a syncretic project as a series of intersecting categories. The outcomes of these intersections are connected to the existence of the essentialist interpretation of these categories as they combine and redefine these categories. The interaction and (im)balance of these categories, or how they form a language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018), is the focus of this study. Syncretic ideologies allow people to operate outside of established essentialist categories and challenge the definitions and boundaries of these categories. In addition, syncretic ideologies allow multilingual Totonac people to leverage both their Totonac and Spanish linguistic repertoires in flexible and creative ways that denaturalize the essentialist association between Totonac and poverty, and Spanish and socioeconomic progress. People are creating a role for the Huehuetla Totonac language both where Spanish has dominated and also in emerging contexts, and they are normalizing multilingualism and the coexistence and interaction of Totonac and *mestizo* categories. These acts are grounded in the syncretic ideology that what makes someone a Totonac person is that they act in solidarity with the community. Together, these practices encourage the use and acceptance of Totonac language alongside Spanish, recirculating language ideologies that valorize Totonac and multilingualism and thereby support language vitality and community sustainability.

Throughout this chapter, I analyze the discourses and semiotic processes that people use. These discourses are interpreted through the essentialist and syncretic language ideologies I identify in Huehuetla, showing how the ideologies are produced and circulated through discourse. In §5.1, I discuss the discursive reproduction of essentialist language ideologies, and I do the same for syncretic language ideologies in §5.2. I show that both essentialist and syncretic ideologies and practices interact in complex ways. For example, people may use the *menosprecio* discourses that equate Totonac with poverty and Spanish with higher socioeconomic status, while simultaneously displaying some syncretic practices, such as multilingualism. Alternatively, they may reject some essentialist discourses, such as *menosprecio*, without outright rejecting the identity categories of Totonac and *mestizo.* Finally, some people actively promote syncretic

ideologies that support multilingualism and blur the social class divisions indexed to Totonac and *mestizo* identities. The analysis shows that syncretic ideologies and practices draw on or make use of the essentialist categories, in this case the identity categories of Totonac and *mestizo*. The syncretic ideology of *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories" relies on the perception that there are essentialist identity categories with boundaries and definitions that can in fact be negotiated; and *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity" contends that these essentialist identity categories are meaningful, but they are not mutually exclusive and can overlap and coexist in mutual respect that rejects a socioeconomic hierarchy indexed to Totonac and *mestizo* identities. As these ideologies are circulated and reproduced, this affects people's perceptions of the meaningfulness and value of Totonac language, and through this the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac is in turn affected. My study of Huehuetla shows that syncretic ideologies, including *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories" and *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity," support language vitality because they deconstruct the boundedness of essentialist categories and the denigration of Totonac and promote the normalization of multilingualism. By countering *menosprecio* and essentialist interpretations of Totonac identity, *solidaridad comunitaria* motivates the use of Huehuetla Totonac in existing and new contexts and reinforces a favourable perception of Huehuetla Totonac and multilingualism.

Using discursive and observational evidence in the following analysis, I identify and analyze essentialist ideologies that draw on and reproduce the perception of discrete categories of Totonac and *mestizo* in §5.1. Then in §5.2, the syncretic ideologies are analyzed and their relationship to essentialist categories is outlined. In §5.3, I show that essentialist and syncretic language ideologies form a language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018) that is used by some people to redefine the boundaries and meanings of these identity categories and the practices associated with them. The analysis focuses on how these syncretic ideologies are connected to people's perceptions of language, which is in turn connected to language use and the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac. I use this evidence to inform my evaluation of language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac as relational, connected to syncretic ideologies of community solidarity and respect that encourage multilingualism. I apply the findings from Huehuetla to inform the theorization of language vitality as a concept.

5.1 Essentialist language ideologies

Essentialist ideologies presume that categories are easily defined and bounded by shared "natural" characteristics (see more detailed discussion of essentialism in §2.2.3) (Phillips 2010: 53; Silverstein 2003: 202). I first briefly show that discourses that essentialize Totonac and *mestizo* identities and Totonac and Spanish languages are present. I then discuss two related essentialist language ideologies—*menosprecio* "denigration" and *salir adelante* "to get ahead"—that are interconnected with the essentialization of identity. I close by discussing in detail the relationships between essentialist ideologies, and provide some examples of people drawing on essentialist ideologies in flexible and dynamic ways, at times also rejecting them or components of them. Through discursive semiotic processes, including indexicality, iconization, erasure, and fractal recursivity, these ideologies essentialize language and identity, contributing to the definition of discrete Totonac and *mestizo* identity categories in a naturalized, hierarchical socioeconomic relationship.

Essentialist discourses come up in discussions about language, culture, and identity. These discourses include describing Huehuetla Totonac as a "treasure," and Totonac identity as a "destiny." Totonac identity is further defined in terms of completeness and totality, including knowledge of the Totonac language. This essentialization leads to the naturalization of monolingualism: Totonac people speak Totonac and *mestizos* speak Spanish. Juan, a 17-year-old *mestizo* student at the federal high school in the town of Huehuetla provides a clear example of an essentialist interpretation of what it means to be Totonac and *mestizo*:

1) Juan Nov.22/16

1 R: *Y pues, ¿qué piensas de eso de que ya se ha perdido [la lengua] en unos lugares?*
2 Juan: *Que está mal porque no debería ser así.*
3 R: *Mhm.*
4 Juan: *Para empezar. Si tú vienes de, pues, de descendencia totonaca, y tus papás hablan el*
5 *totonaco, tienen la vestimenta totonaca, y tienen tradiciones totonacas, entonces es*
6 *tu obligación de aprender el totonaco, de guardar tus tradiciones totonacas, y ser*
7 *totonaco.*
8 R: *Mmm.*
9 Juan: *Tienes que aprender. Porque es tu obligación porque naciste de descendencia*
10 *totonaca y porque tienes tradiciones totonacas y porque de cierto modo tienes un*
11 *pues, una suerte de haber nacido en una familia así.*
12 R: *Mhm.*
13 Juan: *Porque es una riqueza.*

14 R: *Y este, dijiste al principio que tus padres son mestizos. ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre*
15 *mestizo e indígena?*
16 Juan: *Pues es un español con una indígena y pues no somos ni españoles ni indígenas, una*
17 *combinación mestiza.*
18 R: *Ok, sí. Y este, ¿y tú también te identificas como mestizo?*
19 Juan: *Pues sí.*
20 R: *¿O como totonaco?*
21 Juan: *Como mestizo, porque no soy totalmente totonaca.*
22 R: *Ok. Ajá.*
23 Juan: *No me considero totonaco porque pues no hablo la lengua totonaca, no pues, en*
24 *cierto modo no ocupo la vestimenta totonaca, y pues a veces no, no en cierto modo*
25 *todas las tradiciones totonacas. O sea, sí me han inculcado tradiciones.*
26 R: *Mhm.*
27 Juan: *O no sé, por ejemplo, ir a misa, o las ceras que se hacen, o algunos rituales. Y pues*
28 *no me considero el cien por ciento totonaca porque pues, no.*
29 R: *Está bien. Y para ti, aunque no te identificas como totonaco, pero ¿qué significa ser*
30 *totonaco?*
31 Juan: *Para mí lo que significa ser totonaco es, puedes tener una gran suerte por haber*
32 *nacido pues en una familia que habla la lengua, que está orgullosa de vestir, pues*
33 *este que lleva la vestimenta, y practican las tradiciones, que las cosas luego, luego*
34 *las hacen. Para mí, eso es suerte. Tener suerte.*

1 R: Well, what do you think about that, that Totonac has been lost in some places?
2 Juan: It is bad because it shouldn't be that way
3 R: Mhm.
4 Juan: to begin with. If you come from Totonac descent, and your parents speak Totonac,
5 and they wear Totonac clothing, and they have Totonac traditions, then it is your
6 obligation to learn to speak Totonac, to keep your Totonac traditions, and to be
7 Totonac.
8 R: Mmm.
9 Juan: You have to learn. Because it is your obligation because you were born of Totonac
10 descent, and because you have Totonac traditions, and because in some ways it is
11 your, well, your fate for being born into a family like that.
12 R: Mhm.
13 Juan: Because it is a treasure.
14 R: And well, you said at the beginning that your parents are *mestizos.* What is the
15 difference between *mestizo* and Indigenous?
16 Juan: Well, it is a Spanish man with an Indigenous woman and well we are neither Spanish
17 nor Indigenous, a *mestizo* combination.
18 R: Ok, yes. And well, and do you also identify as a *mestizo*?
19 Juan: Well, yes.
20 R: Or as Totonac?
21 Juan: As *mestizo*, because I am not completely Totonac.
22 R: Ok. Uhuh.

23 Juan: I don't consider myself Totonac because well I do not speak the Totonac language, I
24 don't well, in some way I don't use the Totonac dress, and well not, not all the
25 Totonac traditions. Or well, they have inculcated me with some traditions.
26 R: Mhm.
27 Juan: I don't know, for example, going to Mass, or making candles, or some rituals. And
28 well I don't consider myself one hundred percent Totonac because well, no.
29 R: That's fine. And for you, even though you don't identify as Totonac, what does it
30 mean to be Totonac?
31 Juan: To me being Totonac means it is your fate for being born into a family that speaks
32 the language, that is proud to dress, well to wear the clothes, and that practices their
33 traditions. To me, that is fate. To have a destiny.

We have been talking about language shift in other Totonac communities, and Juan begins to explain what he thinks about this by using discourses that index the essentialist ideology that languages and identities are bounded and discrete. Juan defines Totonac people according to language, dress, and traditions (lines 4–7, 23–25, 31–34) and he describes Totonac culture as a valuable treasure (line 13), essentializing culture and identity as objects. Juan considers it "fate or "destiny" to be born into a Totonac family (lines 11, 31–34) and describes the maintenance of language, dress, and traditions as an "obligation" or responsibility (lines 4–11). Totonac identity is defined as a natural characteristic that people are born with, and practicing Totonac traditions, including language, are framed as moral responsibilities to this natural Totonac essence. Juan also locates the responsibility for transmission of cultural practices squarely in the family, as being born into a Totonac family means you must learn these practices from your family, which is conceived of as a person's inheritance, a "treasure" or heirloom. Juan further reinforces the idea that Totonac is a bounded identity category by describing his own identity as "not completely Totonac" (line 21), and as "not 100 % Totonac" (line 28). Juan also defines *mestizo* identity in an essentialist biological way as a mixture of Spanish men and Indigenous women (lines 16–17). Importantly, Juan's discourse is not negative towards Totonac, in fact my impression is that he holds a high regard for Totonac people and culture. Therefore, there is an underlying essentialization of identities that is not inherently negative or positive, it simply constructs identities as bounded and clearly defined. At the same time, as I will show next, these essentialist constructions of Totonac and *mestizo* identity reflect the broader context of Mexican sociopolitical discourse that has promoted *mestizaje* ("*mestizo* identity") and the assimilation of Indigenous people in Mexico (see §3.4 for background).

5.1.1 *Menosprecio*

The first essentialist ideology found in Huehuetla is *menosprecio* "denigration," an ideology also present across Mexico that positions Indigenous identities and languages as inferior and as preventing people from getting ahead. *Menosprecio* has its origins in the historical policies of *indigenismo* that aimed for the integration of Indigenous people into a national *mestizo* Mexican identity (see Chapter 3). The essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* positions the lack of social and economic development observed or perceived in Indigenous communities as natural or inherent, suggesting that this condition can be left behind through identity shift, including language shift. *Menosprecio* can be used to support and justify discrimination and marginalization of Indigenous people, as well as the cultural and linguistic shift that results from that marginalization. The process of naturalization of an inferior social status is a feature of hegemonic language ideologies (Woolard 2007), such as *menosprecio*. The ideology of *menosprecio* justifies the negative evaluation of Indigeneity, and in the case of Huehuetla the negative evaluation of Totonac identity and language specifically, because of the belief in an ideal homogeneous national *mestizo* identity centred around speaking Spanish. Naturalization and homogenization of identity categories and their perceived characteristics are essentialist processes that function to reproduce the ideological separation and exclusivity of the meanings of being Totonac or *mestizo.* I identified examples of naturalization and homogenization in the local discourses about being Totonac and *mestizo*, as well as discourses about speaking Totonac and Spanish, in order to analyze *menosprecio* ideology.

My interviews with Totonac people show that many people are well aware of *menosprecio*, as they often talk about it, though not necessarily using this name. The discourses that I identified as indexing an underlying *menosprecio* ideology include expressions that position Totonac people, culture, and language as inferior or as a problem. During my field work, I heard some outright racist slurs and more subtle metaphoric insults, such as the pejorative terms *naco* "hick/low class," *indito* "little Indian," *burro* "donkey/stupid," *comadrita* "a person who gossips" used to refer to Totonac people. More common were expressions like *dialect* "dialect," *le da vergüenza* "it embarrasses them," and *discriminación* "discrimination" used by participants to refer to Totonac or to explain their own or others' attitudes towards Totonac people or language. I heard the term *dialect* from several Totonac people I interviewed. When I asked some people if they spoke Totonac, they referred to Totonac as a *dialect* in their responses (e.g.

Luz Nov.9/16; Elizabeth Nov.15/16). The word *dialect* used to refer to Totonac positions Totonac not as a language, but as something less than a language. This term is in contrast to the terms *idioma* and *lengua*, meaning "language," that in this case refer to Spanish. Using the term *dialect* for the Huehuetla Totonac language contributes to the dehumanization of speakers because they are deemed "languageless" in the sense that they are construed as only speaking a "dialect," rather than a "language" (Rosa 2016).[14] While I am not certain whether these participants are aware of the negative connotations of this word, they do use the term, despite myself using the term *lengua,* and people who hear them speaking may also be aware of the connotations. Joaquina is aware of the connotations: she tells me about hearing others use the term *dialect* to refer to Totonac, but she does not use it this way herself and prefers to use the term *lengua* or *idioma*, explaining that Totonac is a language like Spanish (Oct.24/16). The hierarchical positioning implied by the word *dialect* can then be used to further justify the teaching of Spanish to Totonac speakers, and to also justify the abandonment of Totonac.

I also observed the expression *le da vergüenza* "it embarrasses them/they are embarrassed by it," used by some people I interviewed to refer to Totonac people who are known to have knowledge of Totonac, but who are speaking Spanish despite being spoken to in Totonac. They attribute this linguistic behaviour to a feeling of shame, saying *le da vergüenza hablar* or *le da pena hablar* "they are ashamed to speak [Totonac]" (e.g. Sol Nov.6/16; Carla Nov.6/16). When I pressed for further explanation about why some Totonac speakers feel enough shame to avoid speaking Totonac, many people directly responded that it is because of discrimination. The experience of discrimination has also emerged in the context of schooling, as parents make decisions about where to send their children. In an excerpt from my conversation with Joaquina, she describes a typical conversation she has had with multiple Totonac parents who want their children to learn Spanish at her Indigenous Preschool.

2) Joaquina Oct.24/16

> *Bueno, porque luego llegaban a la escuela este, no este «traigo aquí a mi niño porque este, ya no quiero que hable el totonaco, quiero que aprenda a hablar el español.» Bueno, pero ¿por qué? Pues por la este por la discriminación que ha existido en el municipio hacia la*

[14] Many of these racialized and dehumanizing insults, even if not explicitly directed at Indigenous people, still have the effect of marginalizing Indigenous people in Mexico by perpetuating ideologies that naturalize hierarchical social organization (Consejo para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación de la Ciudad de México 2017).

> *gente indígena, ¿no? Hacia la gente. En nuestro municipio desafortunadamente existe mucha discriminación.*
>
> Well, because then they come to the school and, no, well [they say] "I've brought my child here because well, I don't want them to speak Totonac, I want them to learn to speak Spanish." Ok, but why? Well because, because of the discrimination that has existed in the municipality towards Indigenous people, no? Towards the people. In our municipality unfortunately there is a lot of discrimination.

In this statement, Joaquina explains that parents want their children to learn Spanish because this will somehow help them avoid the discrimination against Totonac people. This assertion contributes to an indexical association between Totonac language and discrimination, as the language is seen as a reason for discriminatory behaviour towards speakers. According to Joaquina, this discrimination motivates parents to want their children not only to learn Spanish, but also not to learn Totonac. This reasoning is influenced by the ideology of *menosprecio* that positions Totonac language as marked and inferior to Spanish (Messing 2007; Woolard 2007). The awareness of the effects of discrimination is so high that some of the teachers at the Indigenous Preschool *Sor Juan Ines de la Cruz*, Joaquina's colleagues, told me that they did not think I really needed to do my study because the motivation for language shift, discrimination, was so obvious to them. Their confirmation of the role of discrimination points to the relationship between Totonac people and *mestizos;* however, it is also important to understand how exactly this discrimination is being interpreted and reacted to in a range of ways by the Totonac people.

The example from Joaquina's school shows clearly one of the main effects of the ideology of *menosprecio:* it encourages people to speak Spanish and discourages them from speaking Totonac. When people respond by avoiding speaking Totonac, this has direct effects on language transmission to children, as parents make daily decisions about what language to use at home or in which school to enrol their children. Through *menosprecio*, parents are discouraged from teaching their children Totonac because it can be a target for discrimination. The learning of Spanish, because it is the unmarked language of the nation (Woolard 2007) (see also Chapter 3), is thus seen by some community members as a way to avoid the discrimination against Totonac language and identity. The assumption is that Totonac people can escape discrimination by adopting *mestizo* practices, including speaking Spanish, leading to assimilation. The coercive force of *menosprecio* naturalizes language shift, promoting Spanish monolingualism through the

denigration of Totonac, which motivates speakers to abandon Totonac in favor of Spanish. This is part of a larger pattern of shift to *mestizo* identity that also includes abandoning traditional clothing, hairstyles, and subsistence living, grounded in the broader societal ideologies and policies of *indigenismo* that aims for the socioeconomic integration of Indigenous people into broader Mexican society (see Chapter 3). In the context of language endangerment, language is an especially powerful index of identity that is constructed through the process of social interaction. Speakers manipulate linguistic and semiotic resources while going about their daily lives, intentionally and unintentionally portraying a particular image of themselves. These acts are then categorized by people interacting with them and observing them through their language ideologies, which includes the *menosprecio* denigration of Totonac identity. At the same time, through the process of social interaction, the indexicalities associated with language can change or be changed, allowing for the ongoing constitution of identity within the ideological field. This allows for the emergence of alternative and competing ideologies that are not predicated on an essentialized hierarchical division of Totonac and *mestizo* identities. These competing ideologies include the syncretic language ideologies discussed in §5.2.

This brings us to the question of who it is that is discriminating against Totonac people. The perpetrators of this discrimination are described by participants as *los del centro* "those from the center," *los de afuera que llegaron a dominar* "the outsiders who came to dominate," *gente extraña* "strangers," and *gente mestiza* "*mestizo* people," showing that people who discriminate are generally positioned as distinct from Totonac people (Joaquina Oct.24/16, Carla Nov.6/16, Regina Nov.6/16, Josef Oct.29/16). These discursive choices suggest an underlying essentialist ideological opposition between *la gente* "the people"/*nosotros* "us" who are the Totonac community that is discriminated against, and *los del centro* "those from the centre"/*ellos* "them" who discriminate against Totonac people (Carla Nov.6/16; Ernesto Nov.10/16; Joaquina Oct.24/16; Josef Oct.29/16). I also observed some discourses that marginalize or discriminate against Totonac people in interviews with some *mestizos.* For example, it was often suggested by the *mestiza* businesswoman who rented us a home that I leave Huehuetla and visit the surrounding *comunidades* "communities" if I wanted to find out more about Totonac and Totonac speakers. This is discriminatory because it denies the presence of Totonac speakers in the central town of Huehuetla, of which there are many (about 44% of the population, see §3.1), and also suggests that Huehuetla is a *mestizo* town. This comment also perpetuates the erroneous

assumption that all Totonac people are poor rural farmers. In another example, Hector, a wealthy *mestizo* landowner who employs Totonac people to cultivate his land, outright denies the legitimacy of the political activity of the OIT, clearly understood as a Totonac political institution. He says of the OIT: *"si hubiera sido un beneficio, hoy día estarían ellos [la OIT]"* "if it had been beneficial, they [the OIT] would still be in power today" (Nov.27/16). Hector thus constructs Huehuetla as a *mestizo* town, claiming that despite the OIT having been in government for two terms, the Totonac people still live in poverty, there was no substantial change, and the OIT are illegitimate (Nov.27/16). Hector further describes the OIT activists, the priest, and the Carmelite nuns who founded the OIT as *"no como católicos reales, pero como fanáticos"* "not like real Catholics, but like fanatics," and as *extranjeros* "outsiders" who sowed division in the society of Huehuetla and polluted religion with politics.[15] Other *mestizo* youth either deny that discrimination is present in Huehuetla (José Nov.22/16; Ricardo Nov.10/16; Sergio Nov.29/16), or deny that it could play a role in language shift (Juan Nov.22/16). Juan suggests instead that language shift could be happening because children do not want to speak Totonac anymore, placing the responsibility for language maintenance on children (Nov.22/16). This echoes the discourse above about feeling shame for speaking Totonac. However, even if it is true that children do not want to speak the language, either because of shame or something else, discrimination likely influences some children to feel this way. The denial of discrimination is another form of *menosprecio* because it trivializes and erases the daily experience of Totonac people, once again naturalizing the feeling of shame of being Totonac and speaking Totonac. The discussion of discrimination clearly shows that Totonac and *mestizo* are relevant social and analytical categories that are constructed as essentialist in this context, since in order to discriminate there must be an ideological distinction between at least two groups.

The ideology of *menosprecio* appears in a pattern of recursive refraction (Irvine and Gal 2000) as discourses are repeated on different scales and the hierarchical relationships naturalized by *menosprecio* emerge in multiple contexts. At the local level in Huehuetla, some examples of this refraction are the *mestizos'* political and economic position in the municipality, the physical concentration of *mestizos* in the center of the town of Huehuetla, the privileging of Spanish in official contexts both locally and nationally, and the repetition of *menosprecio* discourses to

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[15] This is perhaps an indirect reference to Edmundo Barrios who assisted in founding the OIT and is still active in the community, running an independent school discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

justify this hierarchy by *mestizos* and by some Totonac people themselves as they explain and justify their shift to Spanish. The refraction of ideologies of *menosprecio* across these scales means that *menosprecio* is at play in a broad range of situations. This is recognized by some Totonac people who describe discrimination simply as the reality they face, *así es/así son las cosas aquí* "this is the way things are" (e.g. Joaquina Oct.24/16; Paulo Oct.15/16; Josef Oct.29/16). While at first this appears to be an acceptance of *menosprecio,* it may instead be a recognition of the reality of the ideologies that affect their lives on multiple scales and limit their agency to challenge or change discrimination. Importantly, speaking Spanish at the expense of Totonac does not necessarily mean that people have adopted or internalized *menosprecio.* Instead, language shift is an act of self-preservation against the real effects of discrimination that are grounded in the colonial legacy of hierarchical and racialized societies (Davis 2017: 43–44), of which Mexico is one. It is certainly true that discrimination plays a role in language shift; however, by itself discrimination does not explain the variation in language use observed, nor the choices of people who do not shift despite the discrimination. The agency of multiple actors, including speakers, community members, and institutions, contributes to language shift. By making discrimination explicit in our discussions, people highlight their awareness of the social and political meanings of the choices people make in their daily lives, including language choices. A critical awareness of discrimination can help people see *menosprecio* as an ideology, rather than as a natural condition. This in turn supports language vitality because it makes a way for people to expose and deconstruct negative stereotypes about Totonac language and culture, affecting people's ideologies about Totonac and how they use Totonac. This discussion of the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity" that counters *menosprecio* is taken up further in §5.2.2.

In the next section, I continue to explore the ideological complexity of the pressure faced by Totonac people to shift from Totonac to Spanish. This second essentialist ideology is called *salir adelante* "to get ahead," and the discourses that invoke this ideology create indices between speaking Spanish and socioeconomic progress. I also explore how *salir adelante* intersects with the *menosprecio* that simultaneously excludes Totonac from an association with socioeconomic progress.

5.1.2 *Salir adelante*

A second essentialist ideology I identify is called *salir adelante* “to get ahead,” and it draws on discourses that link socioeconomic development and progress with speaking Spanish. *Salir adelante* implies a linear model of the passage of time and events and valorizes dominant interpretations of modernity and nationality predicated on speaking Spanish and identifying as a *mestizo* person (see §2.2.3 for details). The name for the ideology fits my observations in Huehuetla because the words in the phrase *salir adelante* are a metaphor that explains socioeconomic progress in terms of growth and forward motion through space that reflects the discourses I observed. The discourses that helped me identify the *salir adelante* ideology in interviews are the phrase *salir adelante* itself and the word *progreso* “progress” that are used to describe the relationship between speaking Spanish or using Western dress and earning more money, as well as how this makes people feel *grande* “bigger” or *más* “more” (e.g. Joaquina Oct.24/16, Sol Nov.6/16, Carla Nov.6/16, Gloria Nov.3/16). These discourses allude to the socioeconomic and political status indexed to speaking Spanish, and to other *mestizo* practices like manner of dress. The interviews also reveal how *salir adelante* relates to the ideology of *menosprecio* because the Totonac language is perceived as inferior economically, further marginalizing it through the positioning of Spanish as a way to move forward economically.

The ideology of *salir adelante* is widespread, and I was able to identify it in documents and in interviews. The first evidence I discuss is from municipal government documents, and then I move on to interview data. From 2014–2018 the municipal PRI government adopted the slogan *progreso con identidad* “progress with identity” (Sánchez 2014), which echoes the *salir adelante* “to get ahead” discourse. The slogan is even inscribed on the manhole covers in the central streets of Huehuetla, informing and reminding pedestrians as they pass by. The slogan makes explicit the importance of “progress,” while directly indexing an ambiguous “identity.” In some respects, the framing of *progreso con identidad* is contradictory when interpreted as referring to Totonac identity: progress invokes moving forwards to the future, but in policy documents, Indigenous identity is described as having been “conserved” through people’s ties to their customs and traditions, or the past. This frame appears in the municipal policy document section on cultural development (Sánchez 2014: 29):

> *Esta herencia cultural de los pueblos del Totonocapan* [sic] *se ha conservado gracias al arraigo de la población a sus costumbres y tradiciones, pero mucho tiene que ver, la conservación de la lengua originaria, el Totonaca* [sic].
>
> This cultural heritage of the people of the Totonac region has been preserved thanks to the rooted connection of the people to their customs and traditions, but much has to do with the preservation of the original language, Totonac.

Salir adelante and Totonac identity seem to index opposing temporalities in this discourse, reflecting a linear passage of time. While the discourse used by the municipality does not explicitly exclude Totonac from the idea of progress, it does so implicitly by indexing Totonac to the past. Notably, there are no explicit links made between Totonac and the modern ideal future of socioeconomic progress that the municipal planning document claims the new government will create (Sánchez 2014). The example shows that the ideology of *salir adelante* exists in official municipal level discourse and therefore it underlies much local government policy that affects everyone living in the municipality.

The second example comes from my interview with Sol (47 years old), a respected Totonac woman who is good friends with Joaquina. Sol was an employee of the *Comisión Nacional Para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* "National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples" (CDI), the descendent of the *Instituto Nacional Indígena* "National Indigenous Institute" (INI), for about 10 years. While she held this role, she was active teaching local Totonac women different sewing and weaving skills, and encouraging them to speak Totonac in their families. Joaquina and Sol converse regularly in Totonac in the interview, there is a lot of laughing, and they are comfortable and relaxed despite my presence. They are not concerned about speaking Totonac in front of outsiders or excluding me, and there is regular codeswitching, illustrating an apparent lack of concern for my inclusion, perhaps because of the research context and their having done me a favour, and because they usually speak Totonac with each other. The following exchange between Sol, myself, and Joaquina, illustrates the indexical link between speaking Spanish and socioeconomic progress, as well as the relationship between *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* ideologies as we discuss what it means to be Totonac. In this excerpt, I am asking Sol about what things come to be associated with the Totonac and Spanish languages. She describes how the Spanish language makes her think about the rich people who speak it and about how speaking Spanish and having money can make other Totonac people feel "bigger." This discourse indexes the *salir adelante* ideology.

3) Sol Nov.6/16

1 R: *Y cuando piensa en totonaco ¿qué o quién viene a la mente? Cuando piensa en*
2 *totonaco o la lengua totonaca, o sea ¿en qué piensa?*
3 Sol: *Pues este, gente pobre.* (laughing) *Gente humilde y pobre.*
4 R: *Y cuándo piensa en español?*
5 Sol: *Pues gente rica que tiene billetes, así piensa uno. … Así se ve. Ajá. Piensa uno que*
6 *tiene dinero aunque no tiene, es indígena también. Pero siempre hay diferencia al*
7 *vestirse. Nos sentimos así chiquititos, y los grandes así se siente.*
8 Joaquina: *Pero no, eso no debe de ser*.
9 Sol: *No debería ser así.*
10 R: *No…*
11 Joaquina: *Ajá. Pero ahora ¿por qué pensamos así que ellos valen mucho?*
12 Sol: *Así nos, así nos educaron los papás, por eso.*
13 Joaquina: *Que ellos valen más.*
14 Sol: *Que tienes que respetar más a los—*
15 Joaquina: *—los de razón, dicen.*
16 Sol: *Así nos decían desde chiquito.*
17 R: *Hmm. Pero ahora piensa que eso está mal, o sea ¿que no es cierto?*
18 Sol: *Pues no, somos iguales.*
19 Joaquina: *Todos somos iguales.*
20 Sol: *Todos somos iguales. Como sea, hablamos o no hablamos, somos iguales.*
21 Joaquina: *Pero aquí eso se da.*
22 Sol: *Se da eso.*
23 Joaquina: *La gente se sienten más, se sienten más.* [xxx] (both talking)
24 Sol: *Cuando vienen mi familia, a veces me siento más en confianza, pero cuando vienen*
25 *de afuera, me da pena.* (laughing) *Me da vergüenza. Como vivo no es, siempre hay*
26 *diferencia.*

1 R: When you think about Totonac, who or what comes to mind? When you think about
2 Totonac, or the Totonac language, well what do you think of?
3 Sol: Well, poor people. (laughing) Poor and humble people.
4 R: And when you think about Spanish?
5 Sol: Well, rich people who have cash, that is what one thinks. That is what it looks like.
6 Aha. One thinks they have money even if they don't, they are Indigenous too. But
7 there is always a difference in dress. We feel small, and they feel big.
8 Joaquina: But no, that shouldn't be.
9 Sol: It shouldn't be like that.
10 R: No…
11 Joaquina: Aha. But why do we think like that, that they are worth so much?
12 Sol: That's how, that's how our parents taught us, that's why.
13 Joaquina: That they are worth more.
14 Sol: That you have to show more respect to—
15 Joaquina: —to those of reason [*mestizos*], they say.
16 Sol: That's what they told us since childhood.
17 R: Hmm. But now do you think that is wrong, or that it is not true?

18 Sol: Well, no, we are equal.
19 Joaquina: We are all equal.
20 Sol: We are all equal. No matter how we speak or we don't speak, we are equal.
21 Joaquina: But here, that's how it is.
22 Sol: That's how it is.
23 Joaquina: The people feel more, they feel like they are more. [xxx] (both talking)
24 Sol: When my family comes, sometimes I feel more comfortable, but when outsiders
25 come, I'm embarrassed. (laughing) I'm embarrassed. How I live is not, there is
26 always difference.

In lines 3–7 Sol describes how Totonac language is indexed to low socioeconomic status, *gente pobre y humilde* "poor and humble people," and people who have *billetes* "money" are expected to speak Spanish, *aunque…es indígena también* "even though they are also Indigenous." Sol clearly identifies the ideological link between Spanish and socioeconomic mobility, which she notes also applies to Indigenous people. She also says that wearing Western clothing creates the impression that the person has money (line 6–7), which indexes *salir adelante*. In line 7 she states that many Totonac speakers feel inferior, or metaphorically *chiquititos* "small," compared to Spanish speakers who "feel big" (*se sienten grandes*). Sol and Joaquina also recall how they were socialized into *menosprecio* by their parents who taught them that *mestizos* are *gente de razón* "people of reason" who are worth more (*valen más*) (lines 12–16). Sol also acknowledges feeling *vergüenza* "shame" when outsiders see her Totonac lifestyle (line 24–26). This interview illustrates how *salir adelante* is predicated on *menosprecio*. *Menosprecio* naturalizes the association between Totonac, poverty, and feeling "smaller," and through this it creates a perceived lesser state from which to grow, progress, and *salir adelante*, which is understood to be achieved through an education in Spanish, and then a job which typically requires Spanish. The discussion shows that the relationship between *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* is made up of multiple layers of indexical meaning, similar to Silverstein's orders of indexicality (2003).

This example shows another important aspect of how these ideologies circulate, which is that some people are more aware of them then others and there are a range of responses to them. There are people who accept *menosprecio*, while others, such as Sol and Joaquina, reject the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio*. Sol explains that these associations are over-simplistic stereotypes, making apparent her awareness of the language ideologies at play. She dissociates language from someone's worth, denaturalizing *menosprecio*, stating "no matter if we speak or we don't speak [Spanish], we are equal" (line 20). Sol and Joaquina point out the ideological

shift in ways of thinking across generations, from the acceptance of *menosprecio* they experienced with their parents, contrasting with their own ideal of equality before the law and their critique of the power relations between *mestizos* and Totonacs (lines 18–20). This commentary shows Sol's belief that language and socioeconomic status are not a natural indication of someone's value, suggesting that there should not be a socioeconomic difference between Totonacs and *mestizos,* or that *salir adelante* should not be essentialized to identity. At the same time, Sol feels the real effects of *menosprecio* herself despite discursively rejecting it, as demonstrated by her acknowledgement of feeling embarrassed when outsiders see her lifestyle. The complexity of how language ideologies work is demonstrated here, as Sol's awareness and even rejection of *menosprecio* in principle does not mean the ideology does not have an effect on her. This also shows the deeply naturalized character of the essentialist ideologies of *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* that makes them very difficult to avoid. Sol shows a level of awareness in her analysis of relationships between Totonac and *mestizo* people.

In another example, Joaquina describes how Totonac people who have shifted to Spanish and been successful in earning some income may discriminate against other Totonac people. Her insight is helpful in understanding the relationship between essentialist language ideologies and people's behaviours including language choices that are implicated in language maintenance or shift. Joaquina describes the relationship between *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* ideologies, and the complexities of people's behaviours in daily life. Joaquina says that this produces many differences within the Totonac community, but despite these differences Totonac people maintain a shared society and culture (lines 17–19). She explains that the socioeconomic advancement promoted through *salir adelante* is also used to justify and naturalize *menosprecio* because it implies an association between Totonac language and identity and poverty. The connections between these language ideologies underlie discrimination and motivate language shift. Joaquina also points towards the role of syncretic language ideologies in her comments about internal diversity in the Totonac community.

4) Joaquina Oct.24/16

1 R: *Y ¿quién es la gente que discrimina? O sea, es, ¿no es gente totonaca?*
2 Joaquina: *Este…*
3 R: *O es gente del centro como [xxx]*
4 Joaquina: *Ajá, gente del centro, ajá, gente mestiza porque—*
5 R: *Sí.*

6 Joaquina: —*pues auténticas, o sea, o sea…*
7 R: *¿No se discriminan entre sí las totonacas, pues?*
8 Joaquina: *Mm, eh fíjese que sí. O sea, cuando una persona este, totonaca llega y*
9 *sobresale—*
10 R: *Mhm.*
11 Joaquina: —*pues ya como que discriminan a los demás.*
12 R: *Ok.*
13 Joaquina: *Sí.*
14 R: *Sí.*
15 Joaquina: *Es que eso está mal también, ¿no?*
16 R: *Sí.*
17 Joaquina: *Sí. Porque mire en donde quiera hasta en las comunidades siempre se dan las*
18 *diferencias, ¿no? Aunque sean totonacos, aunque seamos de una misma sociedad, de*
19 *una misma cultura, pero quién tiene ya un poquito más, ya se siente más que el otro.*
20 R: *Mm.*
21 Joaquina: *Quien está un poquito preparado, pues ya se siente más que el otro. Que no*
22 *debería de ser así porque quién tiene más preparación pues es más humilde, ¿no?*
23 R: *Mm.*

1 R: And who are the people who discriminate?
2 Joaquina: Well…
3 R: Or is it people from the center like [xxx]
4 Joaquina: Aha, people from the center, aha, *mestizo* people because—
5 R: Yes.
6 Joaquina: —well, authentic, well, well…
7 R: The Totonac do not discriminate amongst themselves, or do they?
8 Joaquina: Mm, eh, you see they do. Or well, when a person well, a Totonac person does
9 well—
10 R: Mhm.
11 Joaquina: —well, then the rest discriminate against them.
12 R: Ok
13 Joaquina: Yes.
14 R: Yes.
15 Joaquina: And this is also wrong, right?
16 R: Yes.
17 Joaquina: Yes. Because look, wherever you go, even the communities, there are always
18 differences, right? Even though they are Totonac, even though we are from the same
19 society, the same culture, but the one who now has a bit more, feels more than others.
20 R: Mm.
21 Joaquina: Whoever is a little bit educated, well then, they feel like they are more than
22 others. But it shouldn't be like this because whoever is more educated should be
23 humbler, right?
24 R: Mm.

This is another example that illustrates the ideological link between *salir adelante*, socioeconomic progress, and also, significantly, education, which is also highly associated with

Spanish (lines 21–23). Joaquina directly links education with progress, later stating that youth need to have *"ese proyecto de superarse, esas ganas de seguir estudiando para, pues, para salir adelante, ¿no? Para tener una, una carrera"* "that plan to overcome, the desire to keep studying and to, well, get ahead, no? In order to have a career" (see §6.2 for further discussion of education). Importantly, it is not *salir adelante*, or getting an education, that produce a negative meaning associated with Totonac; the discrimination against Totonac comes from *menosprecio.* Joaquina and I have been talking about discrimination at this point in the interview, and I want to know more about who discriminates against who. I begin by asking if people from the center of town discriminate, and then Joaquina describes them as *mestizos* (lines 1–4). This reflects the hierarchical division between Totonac and *mestizo* groups that is present in *menosprecio*. When I ask whether the Totonac discriminate against other Totonac (line 7), Joaquina confirms that those who have more socioeconomic status will sometimes discriminate against those who do not (lines 8–11, 17–19). Joaquina further explains that some Totonac people who have been educated or have more income than others begin to think they are *más que* "more than" those who have less (lines 19–22). The discussion seems to suggest that a Totonac person who is shifting to Spanish in an effort to get ahead *(salir adelante)* may feel the need to draw on the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* in order to make an ideological differentiation between themselves and the rest of the Totonac community they are shifting away from. This provides a justification for the abandonment of Totonac practices, including speaking Totonac. Discriminating against Totonac people reinforces the *menosprecio* belief in the hierarchical relationship between Totonac people and *mestizos*. The abandonment of Totonac language and cultural practices is justified when they are positioned as inferior and language shift becomes a part of people's efforts to move forward *(salir adelante)* from a perceived inferior Totonac identity. Discrimination comes not only from *mestizos*, but also from some Totonacs themselves who use discourses that index *menosprecio* in order to explain or justify their shift to Spanish. This shows that whether people perceive themselves and others as members of the Totonac community is ideologically defined. Totonac people who are shifting or have shifted to Spanish seem to view Totonac and *mestizo* as exclusively separate categories, an either/or division, which is an essentialist ideological position. This is a contradiction in some ways because they are shifting categories while asserting that the categories are natural. If the Totonac people who are

shifting do not see themselves as a member of the Totonac community, a kind of erasure, it is then also easier for them to discriminate against members of the Totonac community.

The key point of this section is that language shift to Spanish is connected to the ideologies of *salir adelante* and *menosprecio*: together they motivate the adoption of Spanish and the abandonment of Totonac language and cultural practices such as dress. The *salir adelante* ideology is predicated on *menosprecio* ideology that positions Totonac as inferior and excludes it from the parameters of progress. This has influenced some Totonac people to abandon Totonac, as they try to improve their socioeconomic situation. Those who are shifting do so by adjusting their own behaviour, such as speaking Spanish and avoiding Totonac or denying knowledge of the language, and also by discursively foregrounding differences between themselves and Totonac people who are maintaining Totonac, sometimes through discrimination. Josef sums up the interaction between *menosprecio* and *salir adelante.* In our interview he says that people who speak more Spanish, change their style of dress, and buy many consumer goods *se han amestizado culturalmente* "have become culturally *mestizo,*" and that they have *otra manera de pensar* "a different way of thinking" (Josef Oct.29/16). Josef's knowledge of the ideological process is notable as he explains the idea that people are shifting identities, and their patterns of language use are part of this shift. While Josef does not name this ideology, he has clearly identified the ideologies of *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* that have motivated these particular speakers to shift. Importantly, there are counterexamples to this pattern of *salir adelante* and the promotion of Spanish monolingualism. Many Totonac people who speak Spanish or who use Western clothing continue to also speak Totonac and consider themselves Totonac, through a syncretic ideology which I analyze in §5.2. The relationships between essentialist and syncretic ideologies are further discussed in §5.3. Before these further analyses, the final subsection of §5.1 provides a brief summary of essentialist ideologies.

5.1.4 Semiotic relationships between essentialist language ideologies and identity categories

The essentialist ideologies of *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* that are discussed in this chapter are circulating in Huehuetla and affecting people's language use and perceptions of language. So far, I have identified and analyzed the discourses produced by Totonac and *mestizo* people that construct and reproduce these essentialist language ideologies. In many of the discussions about language, language and identity are essentialized, even iconicized, as one and the same and as naturally bounded. People talk about Totonac and *mestizo* as natural and discrete

identity categories, essentializing the relationships between Totonac language and Totonac identity, and Spanish and *mestizo* identity. In this section, I provide a few additional examples to further illustrate the complexities of the essentialization of identity that is a result of the semiotic relationships between essentialist language ideologies and the identity categories of Totonac and *mestizo*.

In this example, Totonac language and Totonac identity are essentialized while I am interviewing Sol. In this excerpt we are talking about Totonac language maintenance. I ask what would happen if Totonac were lost (line 7), and Sol says there would be a lack of continuity (line 8). Joaquina comments "we would cease to exist" (line 9) and Sol makes the connection to Totonac identity explicit, saying "we would cease to be Totonac" (line 10).

5) Sol (Nov.6/16)

1 R: *¿Hay otras cosas que amenazan a la lengua totonaca?*
2 Sol: *Pues no hay problema. No más a veces, no, no queremos enseñar.*
3 R: *Mm.*
4 Sol: *No va a pasar nada si seguimos enseñando.*
5 R: *Sí.*
6 Sol: *No va a pasar nada. Al contrario, yo creo va a haber más totonacas.*
7 R: *Sí. Y ¿qué pasaría si el totonaco se pierde?*
8 Sol: *Pues es triste porque se va a perder y ya no va a haber continuación.*
9 Joaquina: *Dejamos de existir.*
10 Sol: *Dejamos de ser totonaco, yo creo. Se mueve todo. Hace triste.*
11 R: *Por ejemplo unos pueblos donde ya no se habla casi.*
12 Sol: *Mhm, ya se perdió todo. No para rescatarlo no creo.*
13 Joaquina: *Ya no.*
14 Sol: *Ya no se puede. Una vez que se pierda ya no se va a poder.*
15 R: *Sí.*
16 Sol: *Pero tiene remedio. Somos muchísima gente.*
17 Joaquina: *Los que hablamos todavía.*
18 Sol: *Ajá. La mayoría habla yo creo. Habla español y totonaco. No se ha perdido. Sigue.*

1 R: Are there other things that threaten Totonac?
2 Sol: Well, there is no problem. Just sometimes, we don't want to teach it.
3 R: Mm.
4 Sol: Nothing will happen if we keep teaching it.
5 R: Yes,
6 Sol: Nothing will happen. On the contrary, I think there will be more Totonacs.
7 R: Yes. And what would happen if Totonac were lost?
8 Sol: Well, it is sad because it will be lost and then there will be no continuity.
9 Joaquina: We cease to exist.
10 Sol: We cease to be Totonac, I think. Everything changes. It is sad.
11 R: For example, there are some villages where Totonac is no longer spoken.

12 Sol: Mhm, it is already lost. It's not possible to rescue it, I don't think so.
13 Joaquina: Not anymore.
14 Sol: It can't be done anymore. Once it is lost, it is not possible anymore.
15 R: Yes.
16 Sol: But there is a solution. We are a lot of [Totonac] people.
17 Joaquina: Those of us who still speak it.
18 Sol: Aha. The majority speaks, I think. They speak Spanish and Totonac. It hasn't been
19 lost. It continues.

Here, the loss of the language is directly equated with the loss of identity, as no longer speaking Totonac is interpreted as no longer being Totonac. This echoes Juan's comments above from excerpt 1) where he states that he would have to speak Totonac in order to consider himself Totonac. The index between language and identity is essentialized as language is interpreted itself as the identity, demonstrating the process of iconization. This example is in line with the research that suggest the semiotic processes of indexicality and iconization can be used to express or reinforce essentialist views of language and identity (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Graham and Penny 2014). The iconization of language and identity is common in the context of endangered languages (e.g. Davis 2015; Jaffe 2007; Meek 2006, 2010; Shulist 2018). The language is objectified like an artefact or heirloom, in addition to or even rather than, using language for its referential communicative function (Davis 2015). In the excerpt above, while Sol employs discourses that essentialize identity and language, at the end she says that the language is not being lost, it is continuing (lines 18–19). She also says that the majority of people speak both Totonac and Spanish (line 18), in other words they are multilingual. This is significant because Sol rejects essentialist *menosprecio* beliefs about Totonac that suggest it is at best a tool or steppingstone that should be abandoned on the road to eventual Spanish monolingualism. It is notable that Sol both essentializes Totonac identity and language, while only a few moments later she describes Totonac people as multilingual. This hints at the ideological complexity at play, pointing to a distinct language ideology, which I characterize as syncretic, that contrasts and intersects with essentialist ideologies. I take up this point further §5.2.

Another example of the complexity and interconnectedness of language ideologies is the fact that some *mestizos* in Huehuetla have learned Totonac to facilitate business with Totonac people (Sergio Nov.29/16, Hector Nov.27/16). This does not follow the essentialist monolingual expectation that *mestizos* not speak Totonac. However, there is no expectation or observed

pattern that *mestizos* would also stop speaking Spanish, unlike Totonac people who are expected to speak Spanish and stop speaking Totonac in order to *salir adelante*. This shows that *menosprecio* works to denigrate Totonac language and people, not *mestizos,* even when they speak Totonac. Essentialist language ideologies are therefore interconnected and reinforce each other. The essentialization of identity as bounded, combined with *menosprecio* that specifically denigrates Totonac identity, together promote Spanish monolingualism for Totonac people and may underlie some Totonac people's choices to avoid speaking Totonac. This is further justified and naturalized through the ideology of *salir adelante* that positions Spanish as socioeconomically advantageous. Essentialist ideologies in Huehuetla are common and widely accepted. Sometimes they are naturalized to a point that they are perhaps even subconscious, as indicated by the frequent and unquestioned assumptions that Totonac people speak Totonac and are poor, and *mestizo* people speak Spanish and are wealthier. This ideological complexity at play, from the multiplicity of ideologies to the range of degrees of awareness of those ideologies affects how people use and perceive language throughout the community, thereby affecting language vitality.

The relationship between essentialist language ideologies and *menosprecio* creates an association between Totonac, poverty, and a lack of social and economic progress, which naturalizes the perception of Totonac as inferior to Spanish. This ideology motivates and justifies the marginalization and discrimination of Totonac in the community (by *mestizos* and by some Totonac people themselves), which in turn motivates not only speaking Spanish, but also not speaking Totonac. This may not always be because people abandon or reject their Totonac identity; many Spanish-speaking Totonac people expressed respect for Totonac. Language shift is the outcome of physical and psychological violence against people who speak Indigenous languages, which includes discrimination (Davis 2017: 50). There is evidence that the threat of violence against Totonac community members exists in Huehuetla as people corroborate their experiences of discrimination (see §5.1.1), and an active and respected Totonac community member was murdered (Griselda Tirado is discussed in §3.3). Because discrimination affects the daily lives of Totonac people, they understandably take into consideration how discrimination and violence has negatively affected them and at least some of them want their children to only learn Spanish in an effort to protect them. Parents bring their children to Joaquina's school wanting them to learn to speak Spanish, and for them to also stop speaking Totonac (Joaquina

Oct.24/16). Speaking Totonac does not align with *salir adelante* "to get ahead" because in the ideology of *menosprecio*, speaking Totonac is indexed to low socioeconomic class, the past, and an abstract backwardness that is inconsistent with progress. In *salir adelante* ideology, Spanish is naturalized as the language of progress through its association with economic activity and job opportunities in Spanish-speaking urban centers. The dynamics of multilingualism and the performance of self and community in Huehuetla are not well recognized by these essentialist ideologies.

In order to summarize these essentialist ideologies, and the two categories of Totonac and *mestizo* naturalized by these ideologies, I have organized the concepts and discourses that index these essentialist ideologies into a table. Table 4 provides a visual representation of the range of discourses I observed across multiple semiotic themes. The two essentialist categories of Totonac and *mestizo* are used to name the columns of the table. The essentialist character of these categories of Totonac and *mestizo* is represented by the separateness of columns divided by a vertical line. Down the left-hand side of the table, some of the semiotic themes across which these categories are indexically constructed are listed. Each cell in the table contains terms and concepts that are present in the discourses about being Totonac and *mestizo*. The table also shows that the semiotic process of fractal recursivity contributes to the ideological structure of the essentialist identity categories (Gal and Irvine 1995; Irvine and Gal 2000). The categories of Totonac and *mestizo* are opposed to each other across several themes that represent multiple contexts and scales of reference, from the dimensions of time and space, to sociodemographic themes of gender, ethnicity, and social class, to institutional themes of religion and education. The diversity of these themes also demonstrates the complexity of essentialist language ideologies, that may on the surface seem unrelated. On close analysis, an underlying organization of indexicality between discourses and identity categories emerges. For example, the discourses about forward direction and modernity that index the ideology of *salir adelante* do not directly refer to Totonac identity, and so do not explicitly exclude Totonac from the ideology. However, another essentialist language ideology, *menosprecio,* also uses discourses of direction and time, but this time Totonac identity is described as backwards, from the past, or problematic. This situates Totonac in opposition to the idea of progress that is characteristic of *salir adelante.* These discourses share the semiotic themes of direction (forwards and backwards), and time (modern and traditional), creating an indirect link between *salir adelante* and *menosprecio*

ideologies. Since the link is not explicit, this permits the relationship between the ideologies to become obscured, as together they naturalize Totonac as inferior and motivate language shift.

Theme	**Totonac identity**	***Mestizo* identity**
Time	Tradition, past, agricultural/religious calendar	Modernity, present, future, European calendar
Space	Rural, isolated, marginal	Urban, accessible, central
Direction	Backwards, regress	*salir adelante* "get ahead," move forwards, progress
Occupation and economy	Farmers, artisans, trade, *mano vuelta* "favor," *túmin* currency, poverty, subsistence	Merchants, ranchers, cash, credit, wealth, capitalism, individualism
Social class and relationships	*Campesino* "peasant," *pobre* "poor person," inferior, discriminated	Property owner, *cacique* "boss," consumption, economic progress, superior
Ethnicity	Totonac/*totonaco/tutunakú*, Indigenous, *originario* "original"	*mestizo,* non-Indigenous
Gender	Feminine, maternal	Masculine, paternal
Dress	Traditional clothing, sandals, barefoot, uncut braided hair, ribbon	Western clothing, closed-toe shoes, cut hair
Language	Totonac, Nahuatl, Otomí, non-standard Spanish, *dialecto* "dialect," speaking Totonac aids in learning Spanish and English	Spanish, English, *idioma* "language," national, international
Education and literacy	Oral, illiterate, ignorant, uneducated	Written, literate, knowledgeable, educated
Religion and ritual	Catholic, Totonac, *usos y costumbres* "uses and customs"	Catholic, Protestant
Agency	Passive, object	Active, subject
Essence	Physical, bodies, land, nature	Psychological, minds, thought and reason

Table 4: Essentialist identity categories of Totonac and mestizo

Table 4 draws on some of the themes previously identified in King's (1994: 144) analysis of literacy in Mexico, as well as Hill and Hill's (1986: 418–419) discussion of metaphors of identity in Nahuatl communities. King's analysis presents an ideological opposition (a "symbolic device" in King's terminology) between Mexican Indigenous languages and Spanish, linking Spanish to *mestizo* identity (1994: 143–145). King notes that this division is an ideological one that does not represent real language use on the ground in Indigenous communities, since she observes Spanish being used by Indigenous people, not only *mestizos*, though notably the other direction of *mestizos* learning Indigenous languages is not observed (King 1994: 143).

This pattern echoes the ideology of *salir adelante* that naturalizes the shift from Indigenous languages to Spanish. Hill and Hill present a table of metaphors used to describe Mexicano speakers and Spanish speakers according to multiple features with varying degrees of transformability, some of which are similar to the ones I present (e.g. time and space, social class, language) (1986: 417–419). At the same time, essentialist language ideologies are not the only language ideologies that need to be accounted for in Huehuetla, or in language endangerment contexts more broadly. To talk about this additional set of language ideologies discussed next, I borrow Hill and Hill's concept of syncretism, which they apply to Mexicano ways of speaking (1986: 55–61). I use the term to describe ideologies, rather than ways of speaking, though the two kinds of syncretism are connected. In the next section, I discuss the set of syncretic language ideologies I identified in Huehuetla, ideologies that reflect the particularities of the daily lived experience of Totonac people who are maintaining their communities. The dynamics of multilingualism in Huehuetla that are erased by essentialist language ideologies are instead incorporated by syncretic language ideologies.

5.2 Syncretic language ideologies

In the previous section, I laid out the essentialist language ideologies present in Huehuetla. In this section, I discuss syncretic language ideologies that are in relationship with essentialist ideologies. I define a "syncretic project" (Hill 1999: 245) as a series of intersecting categories that draw on essentialist ideologies through combinations and redefinitions. One way that syncretic language ideologies are evidenced is through the use of borrowings and blendings of words (Kroskrity 2018); for example, in Huehuetla Totonac there are many borrowed Spanish and Nahua place names, and the name for the Totonac language is the nativized Nahua name *tutunakú*. In addition, in Huehuetla, multilingual Totonac people leverage both their Totonac and

Spanish linguistic repertoires in flexible and creative ways. These practices denaturalize the essentialist association between Totonac and poverty, and Spanish and progress. Syncretic ideologies draw on essentialist categories, merging and blurring their boundaries, as people mix practices. These syncretic ideologies reflect interpretations of the relationship between language and identity in Huehuetla that are more sensitive to the dynamic process of identity performance than essentialist ideologies. I aim to show how the constitution of identity in Huehuetla is not purely categorical or essentialist, but rather partial and contextual, taking a sociocultural linguistic approach to identity (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). The analysis shows that through this process, unexpected disjunctures and contradictions of essentialist ideologies occur, which exposes additional language ideologies; for example, there are Totonac people who may use essentialist discourses, but their multilingual practices reflect an underlying syncretic ideology. Some people learn Spanish and also maintain Totonac, suggesting that they have not adopted the essentialist *menosprecio* ideology. Some are also highly aware of essentialist *menosprecio,* as well as its relationship to *salir adelante,* which is reflected both in their discourses that explicitly contest essentialist terminology and in their multilingual practices. They explain how their multilingual practices promote individual and community well-being, which reflects an underlying syncretic ideology. Some people in Huehuetla have more "summative" beliefs and practices that promote a conscious creative multilingualism despite the presence of ideologies like *menosprecio* that promote language shift to Spanish (Granadillo 2011: 145). The analysis shows that the relationship between language and identity can be conceived of as a set of intersecting themes that allow for the syncretic and creative overlapping, merging, and contesting of the essentialist categories.

I name the syncretic ideologies at play in Huehuetla *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories," and *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity." The section proceeds first in §5.2.1 with some examples of discussion about the terminology used when Totonac people are talked about. This discursive process reflects a syncretic ideology that I term *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories" because the discussions expose and challenge the essentialist ideologies underlying the labels used to talk about people. The second syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity" is discussed in §5.2.2. People who hold this ideology believe there is a relationship between multilingualism, and individual and community well-being. The discourse of *convivencia* "coexistence" indexes the ideology of *solidaridad*

comunitaria through the respect for multilingualism and the performances that merge essentialist identity categories (previously summarized in Table 4 in §5.1.4). I explore how people talk about their own and others' multilingual language practices in order to illuminate the underlying syncretic language ideology. Practices that promote respect and support social networks across the community are highly valued by those who believe in *solidaridad comunitaria*. Finally, in §5.3 I summarize the relationships between syncretic and essentialist language ideologies, providing an analysis of the language ideological assemblage in Huehuetla.

5.2.1 *Negociar categorías*

The first syncretic ideology is *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories." This ideology is characterized by people questioning, negotiating, or rejecting essentialist category labels, such as the terms *indígena, totonaco,* and *tutunakú.* Several times in interviews during my field work, people spent time talking about terminology for Totonac people and language, discussing what certain terms meant and why they are preferred or not. This meta-commentary illustrates the role of language in the interactive performance of identity and shows a syncretic language ideology that denaturalizes essentialist identity categories. The name for the ideology recognizes people's efforts to negotiate the labels and terms used for these categories. First, I talk about terms for Totonac people, and then I discuss terms used to describe the Totonac language.

The first term I discuss is *indígena* "Indigenous," which is a term that I use in my interview questions. Participants sometimes also use the word *indígena* to talk about the Totonac people, and also to talk about Indigenous people in general, such as the Nahua and Otomí. Most of the time, people use names for specific groups, such as *totonaca*, *tutunakú,* and *nahua*. The term *indígena* became a focal point in some discussions. For example, Paulo, the current director of the OIT school CESIK, identifies as Nahua to me in our interview, and he is learning to speak Totonac with his students. As a graduate student and teacher, Paulo has a lot to say about academic research and how Indigenous people are represented in it, perhaps most vividly demonstrated by the fact that he also recorded our interview on his own phone. Interestingly, he comments on my use of the term *indígena,* despite the school itself having the word in its name.

6) Paulo Oct.15/16

1 2	R:	*Y este, los estudiantes son, la mayoría son de Huehuetla, o son de las comunidades alrededor también, o…*

3 Paulo: *Ajá. Sí, son de Huehuetla, son de las comunidades, son de otros pueblos lejos de*
4 *Huehuetla, de otras comunidades.*
5 R: *Sí. Todos son totonacas, o…*
6 Paulo: *No.*
7 R: *No, ok.*
8 Paulo: *Ahora hay totonacas, nahuas. Este…*
9 R: *¿Pero son indígenas?*
10 Paulo: *Lo que creemos. Pues sí somos, fíjate que sí tenemos este concepto, pero nosotros*
11 *pensamos que somos originarios, ¿no?*
12 R: *Mm.*
13 Paulo: *Porque también, sí claro, eh. Esta cuestión ahora nos estamos optando por este*
14 *concepto más que, claro esta es una denominación de indígena, ¿no? Porque ese es*
15 *el apelativo que nos han puesto. Pero es más esta opción por aquí porque son todos*
16 *de origen.*
17 R: *¿No está de acuerdo con ese término indígena?*
18 Paulo: *Pues digamos que pues, pues ya está.*
19 R: *Mm.*
20 Paulo: *Parece que ya la pusieron. Pero no estoy de acuerdo, nosotros consideramos que*
21 *ese, que esta palabra nos, [xxx] no es nuestra, ¿no?*
22 R: *Mm.*
23 Paulo: *Entonces digo, ustedes lo que dicen es cierto, ¿no? En ciertas condiciones somos*
24 *indígenas ante la ley, por ejemplo, pues así nos tiene.*
25 R: *Mm.*
26 Paulo: *Pero claro, los chicos que vienen de acá y sus compañeros, nos entendemos como*
27 *de pueblos originarios.*
28 R: *Originarios.*
29 Paulo: *De aquí de, de razón.*
30 R: *Sí.*
31 Paulo: *Mhm.*
32 R: *Pero también es importante cómo se auto-llaman, ¿no?*
33 Paulo: *Mhm.*

1 R: And well, the students are, the majority of the students are from Huehuetla, or are
2 they also from the surrounding communities, or…
3 Paulo: Aha. Yes, they're from Huehuetla, they're from the communities, they're from
4 communities far from Huehuetla, and from other communities.
5 R: Yes. They are all Totonac, or…
6 Paulo: No.
7 R: No, ok.
8 Paulo: Now there are Totonac, Nahua. Well…
9 R: But they are Indigenous?
10 Paulo: What we think. Well, yes, we are, you know we do have this concept, but we think
11 of ourselves as original (peoples), right?
12 R: Mm.
13 Paulo: Because also, yes clearly, eh. In this regard now we are opting for the concept more
14 than, sure this is the denomination of Indigenous, right? Because that is the name

15 they have imposed on us. But it is more this option here, because we are all
16 original.
17 R: You do not agree with the term Indigenous?
18 Paulo: Well, let's just say that it is already in use.
19 R: Mm.
20 Paulo: It seems like they have imposed it on us. But I am not in agreement, we consider
21 that that, that that word is not, [xxx] is not ours, right?
22 R: Mm.
23 Paulo: So, I say, what you all say is true, right? In certain conditions we are Indigenous,
24 before the law for example, well that is the situation for us.
25 R: Mm.
26 Paulo: But yeah, the young people who are from here and their peers, we understand each
27 other as original peoples.
28 R: Original (peoples).
29 Paulo: From here, that's right.
30 R: Yes.
31 Paulo: Mhm.
32 R: But it is also important how you name yourselves, right?
33 Paulo: Mhm.

This discussion illustrates the contested nature of terms, as Paulo and I talk about the members of the CESIK school. In lines 1–4 we discuss that the students are from Huehuetla and surrounding communities, then whether they are Totonac (line 5), and Paulo also adds Nahua (line 8). The critique begins when I use the term *indígena* to ask about the school and the students (line 9). Paulo responds that *indígena* is an outsider term, *el apelativo que nos han puesto* "the name they use to refer to us" (line 14–15). He also refers to the word *indígena* using the term *denominación* "denomination" (line 15) and says *esta palabra no es nuestra* "the word is not ours" (line 21). The word *indígena* is used by outsiders to describe Totonac and other Indigenous groups, but is not a concept used by the Totonac, nor the Nahua, to refer to themselves or one another (lines 10–11).[16] Paulo points out its association with outsiders, including myself, and political structures, such as the law (line 20–24), that he referred to collectively as *ustedes* "you all" (line 23). Notably, Paulo's acknowledgement of outsiders shows that he does see identity categories as relevant, but he actively negotiates which ones are applicable and how. This indexes an underlying syncretic ideology that allows a more dynamic interpretation of identity performance and community membership.

[16] In line 16, Paulo refers to the people as "original," in the sense of Indigenous.

Although Paulo does not say so directly himself, in the Mexican context, the term *indígena* has roots in the national *indigenismo* movement that sought to glorify Mexico's Indigenous past while at the same time "modernizing" and integrating Indigenous people through the promotion of *mestizaje* "*mestizo*-ness" (Lomnitz-Adler 2001: 231) (see §3.4). The word *indígena* thus indexes the *indigenismo* frame, and it makes sense that people who are aware of and contest these frames of integration, such as Paulo, would object to the term *indígena*. Most people I spoke with used *totonaca* or *tutunakú,* rather than *indígena*, further supporting Paulo's assertion that the concept is external to the community. In Huehuetla, the term *indígena* is generally used to deal with different kinds of institutional and outside actors, such as the government and researchers. Instead of *indígena*, Paulo says that at CESIK, members use the term *originarios* "original (peoples)" (lines 11, 27) and *de origen* "original" (line 16) to identify as a group, rather than the outsider term *indígena*. The term *originario* is polysemous, having the sense of being the first to inhabit a place, as well as the newer sense of Indigenous. In the interview, Paulo is using the term *originario* to mean the first people to inhabit a place, which is also the literal meaning of the word Indigenous, though the example illustrates that both the terms have shifted and are also used to name abstract umbrella identity categories.

The term *indígena*, or its cognate *Indigenous* in English, comes from outside the community, as Paulo points out. One source of this discourse is the international organizations dedicated to promoting linguistic diversity, such as the United Nations. The term Indigenous implies a differentiation from other groups, and also presumes a homogeneity across the category that in reality includes very diverse Indigenous groups (Faudree 2013: 43; Heller and Duchêne 2007; Patrick 2007a, 2007b). One place where this can be seen is in the United Nations discourses in their Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, who are treated as a monolithic group (United Nations 2007). More discourses can be observed in the United Nations' materials used to promote their International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019 (United Nations 2018). While the language used by the UN valorizes Indigenous languages, it also naturalizes language shift and erases colonial agency (Leonard 2019). Scholars who study language ideologies in the context of language endangerment, including Miami scholar Wesley Leonard and Chickasaw scholar Jenny Davis, point out that the label "Indigenous" and the concept of "Indigeneity" erase two things: the immense linguistic and cultural diversity encompassed by this monolithic colonial term; and local understandings of identity and

language, as well as their reproduction (Davis 2017; Leonard 2019; Muehlmann 2007; Patrick 2007a; 2007b). There are also examples in the recent literature that deconstruct the pan-Indigenous category through careful ethnographic analysis of specific multilingual colonial contexts (Haque and Patrick 2015; Shulist 2018) and in theorizations of the rhetoric and ideological framings of language revitalization (Costa 2013; Davis 2017; Patrick 2007a). Other scholars use the concept of Indigeneity as a performative and emergent intercultural frame that does not represent a central identity. Instead, Indigeneity is understood as a category bringing together diverse and emergent cultural and political projects and opportunities in and between marginalized local communities across the globe (Graham and Penny 2014).

Paulo's critique of institutional and academic discourse is an important moment in the fieldwork because it allowed me to better see the subjectivity of interaction in the ethnographic research interview. My and Paulo's discourse works to construct our positions and identities in relation to each other. Paulo took a critical approach to the interview, the discourses we used, and to research in general as extractive to the community. This example is a case that illustrates how language is political and strategic, even in the research context. At the time of field work, I had not questioned the use of the term *indígena* in the interviews. However, Paulo exposes the positionality of the term and of my research and pushes for a greater awareness of the indexicalities of the term *indígena,* specifically that the term is not from the community. This eventually led me to investigate the use of *indígena* in interviews and observations and find its association with *indigenismo.* This discourse about the term *indígena* demonstrates the process of co-constitution of identity embedded in the local Totonac community, the municipality of Huehuetla, the state and national contexts, and the broader academic community.[17] These systems may have their own language ideologies that intersect with each other, such as my and Paulo's different initial understandings of the use of some terms in the interview.

In addition to a range of terms used to indicate Totonac and Indigenous identity, the analysis also reveals that there is a set of terms in use that refer to the Totonac language. In our discussion about language use, Joaquina uses several different terms or names for the Totonac language.

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[17] During our conversation Paulo also makes comments about the extractive practices of anthropologists, referring specifically to an American anthropologist Bruce Lane, who was in Huehuetla doing fieldwork during the first OIT movement in 1989 (Lane 2000; Wahrhaftig and Lane 1995).

7) Joaquina Oct.24/16

> *Yo para comunicarme con la gente eh, yo tengo muchas comadres…Y con todas me comunico en mi lengua, en la lengua in[dígena], en to[tonaco], en la lengua tutunakú. Y este, en donde quiera que yo me encuentra, la gente saludo, pues saludo en la lengua… materna. En totonaco.*
>
> When I communicate with people, I have a lot of *comadres*…and with all of them I speak in my language, in the in[digenous], in To[tonac], in the Totonac language. And well, anywhere I go, whoever I meet I greet them in the mother tongue. In Totonac.

Joaquina's discourse shows how she applies more than one term to her description of the language. It is almost as if she is not able to settle on which one is most appropriate to use in our recorded research interview. Initially, Joaquina is talking about using Totonac with her *comadres*, referring to Totonac as *mi lengua* "my language," indexing her personal identification and association with Totonac. Joaquina then refers to Totonac as *la lengua in-[dígena]* "the In-[digenous] language," but does not finish the word before she moves on to the Spanish form *totonaco,* and then the Totonac *tutunakú*. As just discussed above, use of the word *indígena* indexes a pan-Indigenous identity that is seen in policy at both national and international scales—for example, the policies of *indigenismo,* the counting of undifferentiated Indigenous language speakers in the national census, and the international ideology of language endangerment that uses discourses that treat diverse Indigenous language communities as a monolithic group with shared characteristics and goals. This connects to what I observed from Joaquina in the excerpt above. Joaquina gradually moves to the more specific and locally relevant forms *totonaco* and *tutunakú* that differentiate the language from other Indigenous languages. The first, *totonaco*, is a Spanish rendering of the word *tutunakú*. Her switch from *totonaco* to *tutunakú* indexes a more local Totonac identity associated with the use of the term *tutunakú.* Joaquina's movement through the terms shows a change in scale and indexicality: from the institutional and outside Indigenous, to the originally Nahuatl and now *mestizo* term *totonaco*, and finally to the term used by Totonac people *tutunakú*. These conversational hesitations have a semiotic effect, suggesting that Joaquina may be questioning which term to use in conversation with me (will I know what she means by the phrase *mi lengua* or *tutunakú?*), or it could indicate an avoidance of some of these terms, such as *indígena*. This example shows Joaquina's awareness of different terms and their connotations, though she does not make the same kind of meta-commentary as Paulo did above.

The term *tutunakú* is most likely Nahua in origin meaning "those from the hot sunny lands," thought to reference the fact that the Totonac empire was located primarily to the east of Mexico City on and near the Gulf coast (Troiani 2007). The Totonac were likely in contact with multiple different Nahua groups who may have been the source of this name long before the rise of the Mexica that began in the 12th Century (Stresser-Péan 2009). *Tutunakú* is glossed by Joaquina, and many other community members, as "three hearts," sometimes talked about as referencing the three major Totonac settlements of Cempoala, el Tajín, and Teayo. In the Totonac numeral pattern, the numeral -*tutu* "three" is a morphologically bound root that requires a numeral classifier prefix and which would appear before the independent head nominal *nakú* "heart." The nativized gloss is thus a morphological reanalysis of the Nahuatl term in which the numeral becomes a prefix on the noun and there is no classifier. I heard the nativized gloss "three hearts" numerous times throughout my field work, indicating it has been widely adopted. This creative reanalysis has become so accepted that many speakers are not aware of the Nahuatl origin of the word *tutunakú* and may not believe you when you tell them (Beck p.c.). However, it is significant that speakers reanalyze *tutunakú*, as this imbues the term with local origin and meaning that indexes geographical places at the historical height of Totonac influence. The term invokes a strong sense of historical and present community continuity that connects individuals to a shared collective Totonac identity created over time by the Totonac community from multiple available sources, including multilingual sources.

At the end of our interview, after I thanked her for helping me with my study, Joaquina describes how Totonac used to be called a "dialect" (*dialecto*). As noted above in §5.1.1, this term is still used in Mexico (and elsewhere) to refer to Indigenous languages in a way that diminishes their status in relation to Spanish (e.g. Luz Nov.9/16; Elizabeth Nov.15/16). This term is in contrast to the terms *idioma* and *lengua*, both meaning "language," that index a perceived status as languages in contrast to dialects. The existence of written orthographies, dictionaries, and grammars is further used to support the interpretation of Totonac as a language, rather than a dialect. While these materials indicate a level of documentation, they do not make Totonac any more a language than those languages that remain oral. The discussion with Joaquina shows that there is a syncretic character to her conceptualization of Totonac as a language: she contests the term *dialecto,* while simultaneously pointing out the written documentation of Totonac to support her claim that it is a language. This conceptualization of

Totonac as a language is also syncretic in character since it seems to imply that Totonac may have changed status, from an alphabetless “dialect” to a “language” with a writing system. She rejects the hierarchy while drawing on its underlying system of meaning. A further syncretic characteristic is noted in the fact that the writing system developed for Totonac is based on the Spanish writing system. The following excerpt shows how Joaquina both contests and draws on these essentialist conceptualizations of Totonac, illustrating an underlying syncretic ideology that is characterized by more flexible interpretations than essentialist ideologies allow. After I thank her for her help with my study of the languages, she reflects on how Totonac is described.

8) Joaquina Oct.24/16

1 R: *Pues realmente eso es mi, mi entrevista, sí.*
2 Joaquina: *Ah, muy bien. Pues yo espero que le—*
3 R: *Sobre las lenguas, ¿no?*
4 Joaquina: *—que le sirva de algo. Y pues sí este, y lo que ha beneficiado ahorita es que*
5 *antes es este, a las lenguas indígenas les llamaban que sean dialectos y no sé qué. Y*
6 *actualmente pues ya no son dialectos, son unas lenguas porque tienen su gramática,*
7 *su fonética, y su abecedario, son como el inglés, como cualquier otra lengua, ¿no?*
8 R: *Mm.*
9 Joaquina: *Tiene sus reglas ortográficas. Ahí está, es una lengua. O sea el tutunakú es una*
10 *lengua como el náhuatl.*
11 R: *O cualquier otra, ¿no?*
12 Joaquina: *Sí.*
13 R: *Sí.*
14 Joaquina: *Como cualquier otra lengua. Sí.*
15 R: *Sí. Pues está muy bien. Muchas gracias, Joaquina.*
16 Joaquina: *No pues este, yo espero que le sirva de algo.* (laughs)
17 R: *Sí.* (sound of shutting off recorder)

1 R: Well then that’s my interview, yes.
2 Joaquina: Ah well. I hope that it is useful—
3 R: About the languages, yes?
4 Joaquina: —that it is useful to you. And well yes well, what’s better now is that before
5 well, they called the Indigenous languages dialects, and I don’t know what else. And
6 now well, they are not dialects, they are languages because they have their own
7 grammar, phonetics, alphabet, like English, like any other language, right?
8 R: Mm.
9 Joaquina: It has its spelling system, then it’s a language. Like Totonac is a language just
10 like Nahuatl.
11 R: Or any other language, right?
12 Joaquina: Yes,
13 R: Yes.
14 Joaquina: like any other language. Yes.
15 R: Yes. Well, that is very good. Thank you, Joaquina.

16 Joaquina: Well, I hope it is useful to you. (laughs)
17 R: Yes. (sound of shutting off recorder)

This final exchange with Joaquina illustrates how the terms used to describe or name the Totonac language have an important effect on how the language is conceptualized, including in relation to other languages. For example, Joaquina's contesting of the term *dialecto* to describe the Totonac language (lines 5–6) shows her awareness of the connotations of the term. She states that Totonac is not a dialect, but a language because it has grammar, a phonetic system, and an alphabet and spelling system (line 6–8). Joaquina defines a language on structural lines and on their having an alphabetic writing system, which is a language ideology drawn from the Western tradition that is at play in Mexico in national ideologies that center Spanish literacy (e.g. Boone and Mignolo 1994; Collins and Blot 2003: 15–24; King 1994). Interestingly, while Joaquina rejects the term *dialecto* to describe Totonac, her discourse also reflects the underlying ideology that originally constructed Totonac as a dialect: the fact that it did not have a written form but now does. As noted in §3.4, a Totonac writing system was first created by the Franciscan friars in the 17th Century, but alphabetic literacy in Totonac was not widely practiced or taught until the mid-20th Century. In the 1960s SIL linguist Aschmann created a writing system for Sierra Totonac varieties, of which Huehuetla Totonac is one (Aschmann 1983; Beck p.c.; King 1994). While I believe Joaquina intends to valorize Totonac, the implication of the ideology is that Totonac is a language only because it has documentation of its grammatical system and also an alphabet, which in fact many languages do not have. As a teacher, perhaps Joaquina accepts this understanding of a language, or perhaps she draws on these discourses because she is talking to an outside researcher who she knows is a linguist and is likely familiar with this idea of language. At the same time, her discourse contrasts with some other Totonac people who exhibit more explicit *menosprecio* and say that Totonac does not have a grammar or cannot be written (Beck p.c.), or that it is difficult to write (McGraw 2019). This example shows that a range of language ideologies about the Totonac language exist in Huehuetla and other Totonac communities, and individual people can exhibit complex patterns. Some discourses of *menosprecio* are outright rejected, while others are expressed, even by the same person. There is a flexible syncretic pattern to some people's conceptualizations of the Totonac language: outright denigration is often rejected, but discourses that more indirectly index essentialist ideologies, such as a language having a written form, may also be drawn on. The perceived status of

Huehuetla Totonac as a language is important because this affects expectations for language use and language practices. The valorization of Totonac as a language on par with Spanish and English in turn indexically valorizes Totonac identity through the operation of essentialist ideologies that equate language and identity. Syncretic ideologies therefore allow people to change their beliefs and change the definitions of key concepts, such as language and identity categories.

In 5.2.1 I have illustrated how terminology used to describe Indigenous peoples and Indigenous languages, and specifically Totonac people and language, draws on language ideologies about who the Totonac community is, what a language is, and the real and perceived characteristics of particular languages. In my discussions with Paulo and Joaquina, we navigate the use of terms to talk about language and identity that are shown to be contextually dependent and constitutive through their use. Our different positions and multiple scales of reference interact to produce contextual and nuanced understandings of the terms for Totonac people and language, some of which reveal contradictions, such as ideologies about what makes Totonac a language. Joaquina and Paulo use terms from the local Totonac community, the *mestizo* community, and the institutional domain, showing that they recognize many categories to which Totonac belongs, or can be construed to belong. Paulo and Joaquina both defer to more locally grounded terms of identity, *originario* and *tutunakú,* that also index a specific place or ethnicity, rather than the abstract categories implied by terms such as *indígena.* Sometimes essentialist ideologies are indexed by these same people, such as a central link between Totonac language and identity expressed by Joaquina. However, other times essentialist ideologies are rejected, such as the construal of all Indigenous peoples as the same. The syncretic ideologies are therefore partial and contextual. The examples show that people negotiate and contest terminology, denaturalizing the terms as the indexicality between them and underlying language ideologies are exposed. The negotiation and denaturalization of terms are complex discursive and ideological processes that are syncretic through the destabilization of essentialist categories. In the next section, I continue to consider dynamics of the relationship between language ideologies and the constitution of identity in the context of the community. I focus on how people view the relationship between language and their place in the community.

5.2.2 *Solidaridad comunitaria*

The second syncretic language ideology I identify in Huehuetla is the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* “community solidarity.” This syncretic ideology is grounded in a sense of respect for oneself and the community, often indexed through the discourse of *convivencia* “coexistence” and *respeto* “respect.” Respect manifests in a regard for oneself and others, and a recognition of shared interests that are furthered through mutual support. The character of this ideology is represented by the idea of community solidarity because through respect and mutual support, social relationships are cultivated and maintained in the community. People who hold the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* do not necessarily believe that the essentialist categories of Totonac and *mestizo* do not exist; most people used these terms, as do I. Instead, people may leverage the seemingly essentialist categories in the interactional process of identity performance, while recognizing that these categories are in fact not bounded and may be overlapped or merged. Through this process of identity performance around attitudes and practices rather than fixed characteristics, the categories of Totonac and *mestizo* are blurred and destabilized. The merging and blurring of existing essentialist categories and practices is an ideology that serves the community because it allows people freedom to define themselves and their community in more flexible and creative ways as they live as local Totonacs, Totonacs in relation to other Indigenous communities, and citizens of Mexico. Although *solidaridad comunitaria* is about more than language, people who hold this ideology are less concerned about an essentialist link between speaking and being Totonac, and this allows for speakers to use the full range of their multilingual repertoires. The multilingualism I observed and that people talked about demonstrates respect for the Totonac language and people, and also allows people to leverage Spanish where appropriate in the dynamics of their lives. This normalization and valorization of multilingualism means different kinds of speakers and learners of Totonac are interpreted as Totonac people based on their attitude and contributions to the community, rather than their (perceived) ethnicity, or even their knowledge of the language and culture. This ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* is sensitive to the dynamic relationship between people and their languages, which has the effect of resisting and creating an alternative to the ideological essentialization of language and identity.

Two interconnected discourses index the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria*: the first is *convivencia* “coexistence”, and the second is *respeto* “respect.” These discourses invoke living in

harmony with diverse people, and often came up when I asked questions about multilingualism in Huehuetla. In my conversations, I heard both *mestizo* and Totonac people use these discourses. For example, in my conversation with Jorge, a *mestizo* shop owner who speaks some Totonac, he describes how he learned the Totonac that he knows *"conviviendo con la gente"* "living with the people" (Nov.7/16). Josef, the former OIT president, talks about how people learn to speak both Spanish and Huehuetla Totonac. He says *"aquí en el pueblo hay muchos, muchos niños que hablan las dos lenguas. Por la, por la convivencia de, de dos culturas."* "Here in the village, there are many, many children that speak both languages. Because of, because of the coexistence of, of two cultures" (Josef Oct.29/16). I also observed a discourse of respect in my interviews with young people. Although Ernesto does not speak Totonac, he says he is Totonac (see example 16) below). He describes Totonac people as respectful and he says that he and his Spanish-speaking peers respect the students who are Totonac speakers because he thinks speaking Totonac is good (Nov.10/16).

A few other examples demonstrate some specific reasons why multilingualism is valued and how it indexes *solidaridad comunitaria.* When I ask Joaquina about her multilingualism, she describes multilingualism not in essentialist ethnic terms, but in terms of *convivencia* that values both languages.

9) Joaquina Oct.24/16:

> *Pues, me da gusto este, poder comunicarme en las dos lenguas con la gente, con la que convivo, ¿no? Porque sería, si yo no pudiera hablar la otra lengua me sentiría impotente, ¿no? Al no poder comunicarme con las demás personas porque no entenderían, ni yo les entendería, ¿no? O sea, me sentiría yo como que más pobre, ¿no?*
>
> Well, I'm glad that I can communicate in both languages with the people, the people I live with, you know? Because it would be, if I could not speak the other language, I would feel impotent, no? Not being able to communicate with the rest of the people because they wouldn't understand, nor would I understand them, no? Or well, I would feel, like more poor, you know?

In her quote, she says that if she were not multilingual, she would "feel impotent" and "feel poorer." Here she can be interpreted as referring to either Totonac or Spanish monolingualism as limiting (she uses the ambiguous *la otra lengua* "the other language"). Joaquina clearly values multilingualism and feels that it adds meaning to her life in the community and it forms ties and builds relationships within the Totonac community, and well as between Totonac people and *mestizos.* Regina provides another important perspective on multilingualism that indexes the

ideology of community solidarity. Her insight suggests that multilingualism itself is what allows people to learn how to coexist and live together.

10) Regina Nov.6/16:

> *En cada lugar, tienen su lengua materna y tienen el español. Entonces, yo siento que todos son importantes. Todas las lenguas son importantes. Si tú hablas, si tú gustas aprenderlas, aprendes. Y aprendes convivir con la gente, aprendes nuevas cosas. Bueno, el acento es distinto, pero o sea, aprendes a entenderles. Es bonito aprender de todos los idiomas. No el cien por ciento, pero que sepas tener una conversación, que sepas este, saber lo que te está diciendo.*
>
> In every place they have their mother tongue and they have Spanish. So, I think they are all important. All languages are important. If you speak, if you like to learn them, you learn them. And you learn to live with the people, you learn new things. Well, the accent is distinct, but well, you learn to understand them. It is good to learn all the languages. Not [necessarily] one hundred percent, but so that you know how to have a conversation, so you know well, what they are saying to you.

Regina talks about the value of multilingualism for learning about other people, building relationships with them, and respectfully living together. These discourses of *convivencia* and *respeto* index an ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria*, reflected in the way people discursively link language to their relationships with people.

The previous examples explicitly valorize multilingualism. The next example here shows that some people also value Totonac language practices as a sign of respect. This indexes the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* because it is based on maintaining relationships. Carla is a traditional midwife who grew up near the central plaza in the town of Huehuetla. A midwife for almost 40 years, Carla has an extensive social and kinship network. She talks about how some youth, whose births she attended and who she knows very well to speak Totonac, do not want to speak Totonac with her in public (Nov.6/16). She also links this to patterns of migration (see also §5.1.1), saying that children and youth who have migrated and returned to Huehuetla, may not want to speak Totonac, dress in traditional clothing, or eat certain foods. For example, Carla describes how some youth who she knows to speak Totonac with her in the past went to the cities and now "don't want to speak it":

11) Carla Nov.6/16

> *Antes se hablaba mucho. Los que van a la ciudad, y luego cuando regresan los jóvenes, las mujeres, ya no quieren hablar totonaco. Sabes totonaco, tú que conoces que es totonaco y*

de un totonaca. Tú le hablas totonaco y te contesta en español … Algunos como que ya no quieren hablar. No yo y mis hijos cuando vienen, el totonaco.

It used to be spoken a lot. Some that go to the cities, and then when they return, the young people and the women, they don't want to speak Totonac anymore. You know Totonac, you know that they are Totonac, that they are from a Totonac [person]. You speak to them in Totonac and they answer in Spanish … Some don't want to speak it anymore. Not me and my children, when they come [home], [we speak] Totonac.

They are not behaving as expected, since Carla has spoken Totonac with them before. This creates an opportunity for meta-commentary about language, as Carla frames this as a deliberate choice because the person feels embarrassed to speak Totonac, indexing *menosprecio.* Since Carla knows them to speak Totonac, she says she continues to speak to them in Totonac in order to encourage them to speak Totonac as well, to not be ashamed to speak Totonac, and to show respect. Despite her efforts, she said that sometimes they tell her that they do not understand her. While it could be that these youth do not want to speak Totonac and may have adopted *menosprecio*, it could also be the case that they do want to speak it but feel insecure in their Totonac skills that could be negatively evaluated. They may not have had the chance to learn and practice Totonac in particular contexts in Huehuetla. Children and youth are often subjected to a greater degree of scrutiny than adults returning to their communities (McGraw 2019), something which has also been found in other endangered language contexts (McCarty 2014; Messing 2009; Nicholas 2009; Suslak 2009). Carla explicitly mentions youth and women, and does not mention men, which may reflect the higher level of scrutiny that youth and women are under. Adult migrants have become arguably more integrated into the national economic system than children and youth (who often accompany their parents), and men more so than women (who may stay in Huehuetla or accompany their husbands; fewer migrate on their own).[18]

This example from Carla demonstrates syncretic *solidaridad comunitaria* because it shows her efforts to encourage Totonac language use out of respect. This act is significant because Carla is intimately familiar with these youth and their families as the midwife who attended their births, and she uses this familiarity to normalize her continuing to speak Totonac with the youth. Carla explains why it is important to speak Totonac, explicitly rejecting *menosprecio*: *"Es mi*

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[18] Men seem to be given more leeway to belong to multiple places and identities without being under the same level of scrutiny of their identities as youth and women. A closer look at this potential pattern is warranted but beyond the scope of this project.

lengua. Es mi nacimiento el totonaco porque, no lo tengo que despreciar" "It's my language. Totonac is where I come from so I don't need to denigrate it." In Carla's statement, she creates and naturalizes an association between one's origin and language, positioning the denigration of Totonac as comparable to the denigration of one's own body. This is a distinct essentialist ideology that is used here to challenge essentialist *menosprecio.* Carla's description of her actions and the way she speaks suggests that while she rejects *menosprecio* ideology, she does not reject the youth as Totonac because they do not want to speak. Instead, she tries to encourage them to behave with respect once again by speaking Totonac and maintaining their relationship, which indexes the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria.* A syncretic ideology can facilitate community building because it avoids marginalization based on language knowledge or use that could be out of people's control (youth who have not had a chance to learn).[19] The example also shows that people who hold syncretic ideologies also make reference to essentialist categories and ideologies, such as Carla's reference to a supposed natural link between language and the body that she uses to challenge *menosprecio*. *Solidaridad comunitaria* is also constructed through an opposition to essentialist *menosprecio*.

Another way that s*olidaridad comunitaria* is apparent is when Carla points out that many adults who migrate maintain their relationships with family and community members with whom they speak Totonac. In particular, Carla contrasts the behaviour of youth who she perceives not to want to speak, with the language practices of herself and her eight children. All of her adult children have migrated to Puebla and Mexico City and continue to speak Totonac to each other and to Carla, who says *"No, yo y mis hijos cuando vienen, el totonaco"* "No, my children and I, when they come [home], [we speak] Totonac." She says that technology, such as phone and internet, has played an important role in maintaining connections and Totonac language use between Totonac families. Her children living and working in Puebla make frequent phone calls from the city between the agricultural harvest and planting seasons when they return to farm. These conversations are in Totonac, maintaining Totonac language use in the family and the community when they return. Social networks are also strengthened by patterns of *compadrazgo*

[19] The absence of an opportunity to learn the language is even more significant in other endangered language contexts, such as Canada. First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people who attended or are descendants of people who attended residential schools suffered the violence and social effects of a forced separation of children from their families and communities. Family and community language learning opportunities were denied these children, and the violence they experienced for speaking their languages caused trauma to them and their families, contributing to language loss.

that are often maintained between people in Huehuetla and people who have migrated (see §6.3.2 for further discussion of *compadrazgo*). This is observed as well in the nearby Totonac community of Nanacatlán, where migrating families who maintain *compadrazgo* networks and their local farms, often travelling back and forth, are more likely to continue speaking Totonac than those who have settled permanently in the city and return less frequently (Govers 2006). Although migration means spending time away from home, some people continue to speak Totonac as they maintain their homes, local economic activity, and social connections in Huehuetla. These practices are syncretic because people are participating as community members while living in multiple places, showing complex patterns of social activity and multilingualism that facilitate their social network. Through the construction of this merged pattern, the essentialist associations between Totonac and rural contexts and Totonac and poverty are challenged. This then allows for the association between Totonac and progress, and an interpretation of *salir adelante* that encourages the use of Totonac for self and community well-being. The relationships between syncretic and essentialist ideologies allow for the meanings of essentialist categories to change and the normalization of Totonac and multilingualism to occur in existing and new contexts (see further discussion in Chapter 6).

Carla attributes her stance of *solidaridad comunitaria* to the formation of the OIT and its role in the community. The OIT was founded in 1989 as a *Sociedad de Solidaridad Social*, which is a legally defined work cooperative organization in Mexico. The OIT represents a community-level mobilization of Totonac people to seize their democratic voting rights (see Chapter 3). Carla describes how the OIT represented not only a political movement, but an ideological one that united people.

12) Carla Nov.6/16

Gracias a la OIT, la gente abrió sus ojos y este porque pudieron votar, porque antes como te digo no más hacían una bola de gente en el centro y ya cambiaban su autoridad. No invitaban a otros, no invitaban a la comunidad. No más eran ellos. Ahora no … Gracias a la OIT la gente supo este a participar, hablar, opinar, la gente, gracias a la OIT. Y gracias a Dios también porque nuestro padre Dios cuando vino aquí en la tierra, unió a su gente, y platicó con su gente, hasta les dio de comer.

Thanks to the OIT, people opened their eyes and well, because they could vote, because before like I told you, they [*mestizos*] just got together in a group in the centre and changed the government. They didn't invite others; they didn't invite the community. It was only them. Not anymore … Thanks to the OIT, people found out how to participate, speak, have an opinion, the people, thanks to the OIT. And thanks to God too because God our Father

> when He came to Earth, He brought His people together, He spoke with His people, He even fed them.

Carla's description of the role of the OIT shows her perception of the OIT's efforts to mobilize the local Totonac community, build solidarity across the region, and disrupt *mestizo* dominance. She recalls how after the election, the OIT worked to improve the socioeconomic stability and development of the Totonac people and raise awareness of Indigenous rights across Huehuetla and surrounding Totonac communities in the municipality. Carla credits the OIT with helping *la comunidad* "the community" and *la gente* "the people" to "participate, speak, [and] have an opinion" *(participar, hablar, opinar).* These comments echo the findings of other researchers who have studied in Huehuetla, such as Smith, who writes that the actions of the OIT and UNITONA, the local and regional community organizations, are motivated through an effort to gain *respeto* "respect" from *mestizos* (Smith 2004b: 405, 414). It is interesting that the discourses of respect used by Carla index the ideology of community solidarity in two contexts: seeking respect is the reason for the OIT social movement that materialized in the political engagement of the Totonac people; and respect is also the reason for encouraging young people to continue to speak Totonac with people who speak to them in Totonac. In Hill's study of a Nahua community, she identified a discourse of respect that was also connected to a nostalgia for a "pure" way of speaking Nahuatl (1998). Interestingly, the discourse of respect I observe in Huehuetla is not the same as that observed by Hill, since it is not connected to a purist perception of Totonac language, but rather to a notion of acceptance of a range of linguistic repertoires and a respectful attitude towards that range. While a discourse of respect can be found across communities, the enactment of that respect manifests in distinct ways as it is carried out through the different language ecologies and language ideological assemblages in each community.

The ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* is syncretic because diverse multilingual practices are recognized as legitimate, and identity categories are recognized as flexible. For example, the essentialization of identity categories of Totonac and *mestizo* and language that leads to the naturalization of monolingualism is used as a foundation for the construction of syncretic ideologies as a dynamic alternative. In the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria,* these identity categories are not necessarily erased, but they are interpreted in a more dynamic way that reflects the complexity of people's lives and their perceptions of their lives. The syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* therefore exists in a dialectic relationship with the

ideological essentialization of identity and language. In the final part of this section, I show some specific examples of how people blur the indexical links between semiotic themes and essentialist identity categories. I will talk about two examples, language and style of dress, to illustrate how this blurring occurs. As has been hinted at so far in the discussion of syncretic ideologies, Totonac and *mestizo* identities are not always clearly definable in practice, despite the strong presence of discourses that index essentialist ideologies. As noted, essentialist ideologies reproduce the perception that the *mestizo* and Totonac identities, and the Spanish and Huehuetla Totonac languages, are clearly distinct categories that people see as real, at least some of the time. What I will show here is that while these categories may be recognized as real, some people also blur the boundaries between them by countering essentialist expectations, creatively combining aspects of identity categories, and indexing *solidaridad comunitaria* in the process. The examples describe multilingual practices that blur the boundaries between essentialist interpretations of Totonac people speaking Totonac and *mestizo* people speaking Spanish.

The link between language and identity is interpreted in flexible and creative ways in Huehuetla, not necessarily always as an essentialized link where language is a central icon of identity. Some *mestizos* in Huehuetla have learned Totonac to facilitate business with Totonac people (Sergio Nov.29/16, Hector Nov.27/16), which does not follow the expectation that *mestizos* not speak Totonac. Paulo, the current principal of CESIK is another non-Totonac person (he is Nahua) who has learned some Totonac. Recall that Paulo objects to my use of the category *indígena* and overall seems to resist my naïve attempts to categorize him (see §5.2.1 excerpt 5). Through his objection to the term *indígena,* Paulo shows that he is aware of and challenges some essentializing discourses. Significantly, Paulo sometimes also draws on essentialist ideologies to support his assertions. At one point in the interview, I ask about where Paulo grew up, how he came to Huehuetla, and whether he has been learning Totonac. Our interview takes place in the CESIK school and there is a student moving books in the classroom who heard much of our conversation.

13) Paulo Oct.15/16

1	R:	*Pero usted es originario de, o sea ¿una comunidad totonaca?*
2	Paulo:	*Pues ahora originario soy de una comunidad náhuatl.*
3	R:	*Ok.*
4	Paulo:	*Mhm.*
5	R:	*Pero ¿habla totonaco?*
6	Paulo:	*Ya.*

7 R: *Sí.*
8 Paulo: *Solamente…*
9 R: *Lo aprendió.*
10 Paulo: *Vamos, ahí vamos, claro.*
11 R: *Sí.* (student and Paulo greet each other in Totonac)

1 R: But you are originally from, or well from a Totonac community?
2 Paulo: Well now I am originally from a Nahuatl community.
3 R: Ok.
4 Paulo: Mhm.
5 R: But you speak Totonac?
6 Paulo: Now.
7 R: Yes.
8 Paulo: Only…
9 R: You learned it.
10 Paulo: [my Totonac] is coming, it's coming along, yes.
11 R: Yes. (student and Paulo greet each other in Totonac)

After he says he's from a nearby Nahua community, I ask Paulo if he speaks Totonac (line 5), and he replies that he now speaks it (line 6) and that he is still learning it (line 10). At the end of this exchange, the student, who has been able to hear our interview, interjects in Totonac, directed at Paulo, to which Paulo responds also in Totonac (line 11). The interjection by the student at this particular point helps Paulo perform some of his knowledge of Totonac. Paulo's multilingualism indexes an underlying ideology of syncretism that is not based on an essentialist link between language and ethnicity, since he has no claim to Totonac identity. Paulo's performance might be interpreted as a syncretic practice that has occurred between Totonac and Nahua identities, rather than between Totonac and *mestizo.* Speaking Totonac allows the student and Paulo to develop a closer relationship, a kind of solidarity. The CESIK school has had a syncretic ideology since it was founded by Griselda Tirado in 1994. Tirado describes the goal of the school to teach Totonac students to value their culture and actively serve their community that includes the incorporation of outside elements, such as knowledge of Mexican law and Indigenous rights, that is not meant to change their culture but to strengthen it (Lechuga 2010). This indexes *solidaridad comunitaria* because it supports close community relationships as people support each other's well-being.

The next example shows a Totonac person who does not speak Totonac. Ernesto is an 18-year-old youth with a Totonac mother and Nahua father. Ernesto says he is Totonac, despite not speaking the language, because his ancestors were bilingual.

14) Ernesto Nov.10/16

> *[soy totonaca] por las costumbres que tengo y las tradiciones que tenemos en nuestra familia, yo pienso que sí porque nos heredaron nuestros antepasados y la mayor parte era bilingüe totonaco y español, entonces sí.*
>
> [I am Totonac] because of the customs I have and the traditions we have in our family, I think so because we inherited it from our ancestors and the majority was bilingual in Totonac and Spanish, so yes.

This quote is significant because it dissociates identity from his own language, referring to customs, traditions, and kinship with bilingual ancestors, which is notable. Ernesto does not show essentialist ideologies about monolingualism and identity, allowing him to discursively construct his identity as a Spanish speaking Totonac community member. His kinship affiliations constitute and authenticate his membership in the Totonac community. This is a creative interpretation because Ernesto challenges the widely circulating essentialist ethnolinguistic definition of Totonac identity and instead invokes a relational definition of identity that is about the human connection between people. A similar pattern is found in other endangered language contexts, such as the Chickasaw Nation, where kinship ties to recognized speakers are used by non-speakers to authenticate membership in the community (Davis 2015). Similarly, the Nahua studied by Hill and Hill (1986) developed a discourse of continuity across time through kinship ties to claim a Nahua identity that is not dependent on language. This pattern of flexible identity construction, illustrated in the example of Ernesto, shows that the constitution of identity in Huehuetla does not always draw on essentialist ideologies, but on a counter ideology of merging that resembles the syncretic language ideology identified by Kroskrity (2018). This syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* is important in the construction of identity for Totonac people who merge features of both Totonac and *mestizo* identities. This is because people who hold this ideology maintain their social relationships with each other in an act of community solidarity, regardless of their knowledge of either, or both, Totonac and Spanish. Some of their discourses and practices may also index essentialist ideologies, such as definitions of Totonac identity and monolingualism; however, the analysis reveals that syncretic ideologies draw on essentialist ones, so the presence of essentialist ideologies and practices does not mean syncretic ideologies are not also present in a complex ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018).

The second example of creative syncretic practices that index *solidaridad comunitaria* is variation in style of dress. I will discuss the differences between Sol and Joaquina, who, as noted,

are very good friends who speak Totonac with each other comfortably during my interview with Sol. Sol wears traditional Totonac *nahuas* (white cotton skirt), a *faja* (woven belt), an embroidered blouse, and her hair in long braids, while Joaquina dresses in a Western style with pants, blouses or shirts, and wears her hair shorter.[20] Although Joaquina wears Western clothing, she is Totonac and is seen as a Totonac community member because of her *compadrazgo* relationships, her use of Totonac language especially in public, and her professional role as the Indigenous preschool principal. Figure 5 shows Joaquina (facing the camera in the blue hat) in those two intersecting roles, directing a Christmas procession with many of her *compadres* and their children (who are also Joaquina's students).

Figure 5: Joaquina leads a Christmas procession for her school, December 2016 (photo by author)

[20] Unlike Totonac communities such as Chicontla and Patla where *nahuas* must be special-ordered or made yourself, in Huehuetla there are several stores dedicated to selling ready-made traditional skirts, blouses, and fabric, which means accessibility is not a significant barrier to wearing traditional clothing. In addition, the braids are a particularly important marker of Indigeneity, more than the blouse, as observed by Lam in her fieldwork at CIESAS where students made explicit comments when someone styled their hair in braids, but said nothing about the same person wearing a traditional blouse (Lam p.c.).

In her interview, Sol draws on an essentialist ideology when she says that *siempre hay diferencia al vestirse* "there is always a difference in dress" between *mestizos* and Totonacs (see excerpt 3) in §5.1.2, lines 6–7). However, Joaquina is an example of a Totonac person who contradicts this, having shifted dress. Although they diverge in some practices of dress, Sol and Joaquina both consider themselves Totonac and recognize each other as Totonac by speaking Totonac together. Both of them are also politically aware and active Totonac speakers in both public and private contexts. Joaquina seems to understand that Sol's comment about differences in dress does not apply to her because she does not comment on this statement, or she did not feel comfortable commenting on it. This shows fuzzy boundaries between categories that are the result of the contextual and interactional process of identity constitution. Both styles of dress are used by well-known and active Totonac community members, representing the range of creative combinations of practices that are possible: Joaquina as a local Indigenous educator and *comadre*, and Sol as a Totonac woman and former employee of the CDI. Perhaps essentialist ideologies are not at play here and the clothing is not operating as an index of identity. Or the other possibility is that the clothing styles are being reinterpreted through a syncretic lens that normalizes the blurring of category boundaries and does not attach essentialist meaning to this variation. Joaquina's merging of Western dress with her Totonac identity and her and Sol's multilingualism show that features or practices that are indexed to essentialist *mestizo* and Totonac identities are in fact in complex and flexible relationships across different scales and contexts. This recalls the community members above who suggest that the reality of people living in a community made up of two cultures or peoples in *convivencia* "coexistence," has reproduced a syncretic ideology that has supported the continuity of the Totonac community by allowing people to creatively leverage their multilingual and multicultural repertoire.

The cases presented show how language constitutes identity through discursive semiotic processes: discourses of *convivencia* and *respeto* index an ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria*; and these discourses appear in a variety of contexts. There is heterogeneity within and across the identity categories of Totonac and *mestizo* that are not bounded, but in fact porous. Carla encourages Totonac youth to speak Totonac with her, tying the concept of respect to speaking Totonac, and migration creates an opportunity to maintain family and community language practices in new contexts. The merging of identity categories is another way that the partial and contextual character of identity constitution is shown. Multilingualism indexes a syncretic

ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* that sits between bounded essentialist categories, allowing people to creatively leverage their linguistic repertoires without this being interpreted in an essentialist way. *Solidaridad comunitaria* also means people can be Totonac without necessarily speaking Totonac. Ernesto is Totonac, but he is a Spanish speaker and claims an identity through kinship rather than his own knowledge of the Totonac language. There are also people who are unexpected speakers of Totonac from an essentialist perspective: some *mestizos* speak Totonac, and Paulo (Nahua) speaks Totonac without claiming to be Totonac. Finally, Joaquina's merging of Western dress with Totonac identity blurs the indexical meaning of dress and thus counters the discrete boundedness implied by essentialist ideologies. The discussion of these examples shows that people position themselves and position others in particular and multiple social roles with corresponding practices and creative combinations of practices, such as language and dress. In this section, it has become clear that some community members I interviewed are aware of, analyze, and talk in their own terms about the complex semiotic processes that contribute to the meaning of being Totonac in Huehuetla. The final section §5.3 provides a brief summary of syncretic ideologies and summarizes their relationships to essentialist ideologies. This provides an outline of the ideological assemblage at play in Huehuetla and highlights the role of the syncretic ideologies I identified in supporting the community and the relationships upon which the community is built, and thus contributing to the maintenance and expansion of Totonac language.

5.3 The essentialist-syncretic language ideological assemblage and the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac

Throughout §5.2 I have aimed to show some of the complexities of the discursive performance of identity in Huehuetla that indexes essentialist and syncretic language ideologies in turn. The people who hold syncretic ideologies of *negociar categorías* and *solidaridad comunitaria* draw on and contest essentialist identity categories through their dynamic, communicative interactions. The discursive semiotic processes presented reveal that essentialist ideologies are in a dialectical relationship with syncretic ideologies, an example of a "language ideological assemblage" (Kroskrity 2018: 2).

In the summary of essentialist ideologies in §5.1.4, I presented these essentialist ideologies in a table with distinct columns that reflect the perceived boundedness of these categories from an essentialist perspective. To represent how essentialist ideologies are both leveraged and

deconstructed by people through syncretic ideologies, I will redraw some of the semiotic themes from Table 4 using intersecting circles in Figure 6. The multiple intersections of the circles represent the wide range of creative combinations of beliefs, practices, and factors that I have observed in Huehuetla. The dialectical relationship between essentialist and syncretic ideologies is represented through the merging, overlapping, and contesting of the definitions of identities, approximated by the overlapping and combining circles.

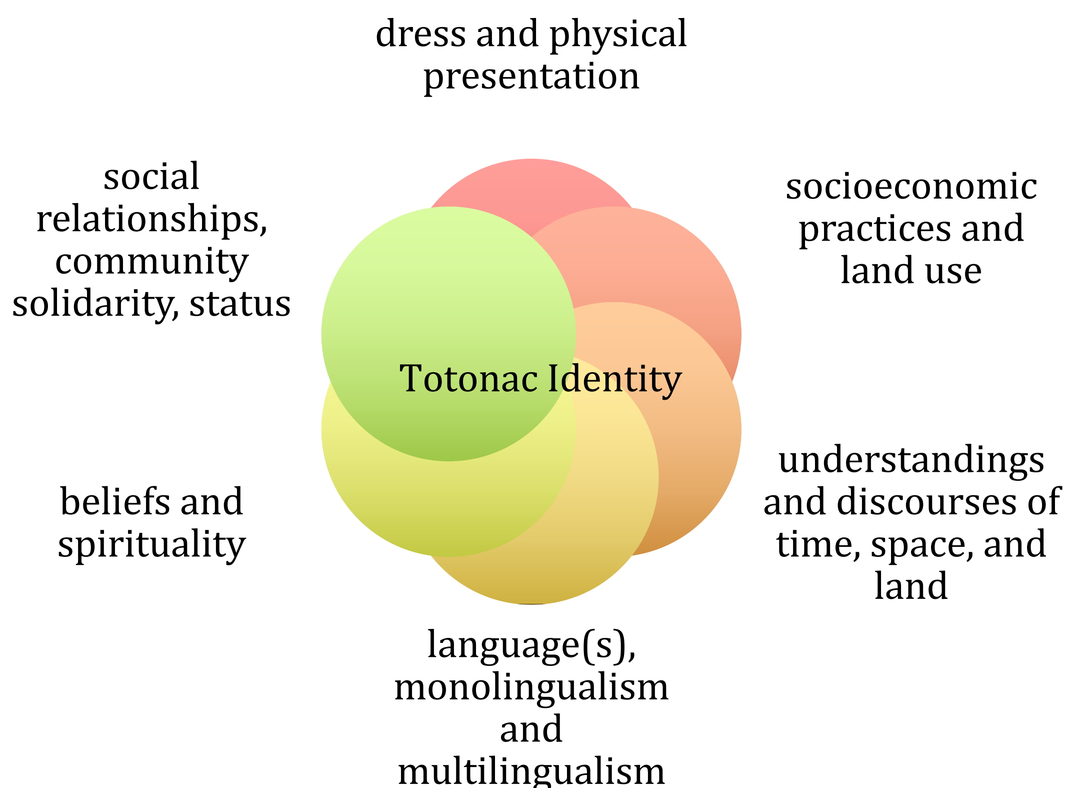

Figure 6: Intersecting themes of identity produce multiple possible syncretic combinations

Figure 6 shows the wide range of ideologies and practices and their combinations that are possible, as I will discuss some of them in Chapter 6. The circles represent the flexibility and diversity of identity when perceived as syncretic, rather than as bounded essentialist categories. The themes can overlap to varying degrees and produce many diverse, creative, syncretic combinations that produce practices such as mixed dress, new sustainable businesses, multilingualism, identity linked to kinship rather than knowledge of the language, and beliefs and practices that promote coexistence, community solidarity, and respect. For example, Ernesto

shows that he does not interpret identity as strictly bounded, since he sees himself as Totonac, but does not speak Totonac; and Joaquina and Sol are multilingual and speak both languages freely with each other and they have distinct patterns of dress, yet they view each other as Totonac. These same people may still define Totonac and *mestizo* identity in essentialist ways, despite some of their other discourses and practices indexing the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria.* Kroskrity (2018) contrasts two multilingual Indigenous communities with distinct language ideological assemblages. The Western Mono are more syncretic and hybrid, and the Tewa are more "purist" and conservative (Kroskrity 2018: 9). The Huehuetla Totonac are more syncretic, like the Western Mono.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide key examples of how people in the community of Huehuetla use and reproduce essentialist and syncretic language ideologies, and how these ideologies interact. There is a distinct language ideological assemblage in Huehuetla that consists of complex relationships between several essentialist and syncretic ideologies. In §5.1 I show how essentialist ideologies conceptualize identity categories as bounded. The essentialist ideologies in Huehuetla construct Totonac and *mestizo* identities as bounded, and then position these identities in relation to each other through *menosprecio* "denigration" and *salir adelante* "to get ahead." In §5.2 I discuss how different people draw on, and other times contest and disrupt, these essentialist ideologies. These practices demonstrate that identity is a performative and constitutive process and reveal that despite the persistence and visibility of essentialist ideologies, there is also an underlying syncretic ideology that allows for a flexibility and contextual interpretation of the definitions of language and identity. I name the syncretic ideologies *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories" and *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity." People who hold these syncretic ideologies merge and mix essentialist ideologies and practices in order to create a syncretic practice or conceptualization. Holding a syncretic ideology does not mean that essentialist categories are outright rejected, but rather that they are not seen as bounded and can therefore be creatively combined and redefined. Within Huehuetla, there are multiple ways that indexical features, such as those in Figure 6 (and Table 4), can intersect when identity is viewed as a syncretic performance and an ongoing negotiation process. Essentialist and syncretic language ideologies form a language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018) that I have represented in Figure 6: syncretic categories occur at the intersections of components that go into the construction and practice of identity and community.

This language ideological assemblage means that people perform identities and social roles in ways that index and reproduce both essentialist and syncretic language ideologies in an interactive process that is under ongoing negotiation.

The relationship between this ideological assemblage and language use is also significant for the redevelopment of the concept of language vitality and its application in Huehuetla. In particular, the essentialist ideologies erase the complex dynamics of multilingualism practiced by many speakers of Totonac: *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* promote Spanish monolingualism through the simultaneous denigration of Totonac language, and the positioning of Spanish as the language of progress. In contrast, a syncretic ideology of s*olidaridad comunitaria* is shown to support a more flexible and creative interpretation of language use and an acceptance and leveraging of multilingualism through the promotion of respect and coexistence. Multilingualism is important for allowing people to be fully engaged in their lives and communities, and to affect the processes that affect them. *Solidaridad comunitaria* normalizes people making language choices that allow for speaking Totonac and the creation of new spaces for speaking Totonac. The syncretic ideologies I identify may be the key to language vitality in Huehuetla because they allow for people to benefit from their full linguistic repertoires and participate in life more fully as Totonac community members in relationship with each other through both Totonac and Spanish. The importance of an underlying ideology of community solidarity is key to understanding how Huehuetla Totonac can continue to be maintained. Many people depend on knowledge of both Totonac and Spanish because of their relationships in the community. The ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* may provide the foundation of flexible stability on which the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac rests.

In the next chapter, I analyze the language ideologies identified here in specific contexts in the linguistic ecology. The connections between the language practices I observe in the linguistic ecology, and the way people talk about language are explored. I analyze an ecotourism business, the education system, and some examples of family and community language socialization and transmission. Essentialist and syncretic language ideologies are reproduced in these different contexts in the linguistic ecology and this has effects on how people view and use their languages. Each context I discuss in Chapter 6 provides evidence of how *solidaridad comunitaria* is currently supporting the use of Huehuetla Totonac. This informs the assessment of the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac as well as the broader reconceptualization of

language vitality as the relationships between people and their languages that I explore in this dissertation.

6 The enaction of language ideologies in the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla Totonac

In this chapter I examine how the language ideologies identified in the previous chapter are active in contexts in the linguistic ecology, including the social, economic, and political contexts in Huehuetla. I show that language ideologies, in addition to being found in the discourses of individuals and institutions, are also reflected in and co-constituted with the linguistic ecology. In §6.1, a local Totonac women's ecotourism business is supporting language vitality through the sharing of Totonac language with guests at their location, which demonstrates the relational nature of language vitality. Through their own business, Totonac people apply their own culture and language on their own terms to resolve their need for economic sustenance. In §6.2, I analyze language ideologies in the education system in Huehuetla, illustrating the ways Spanish and Totonac are used and how essentialist and syncretic ideologies are connected to these different usages. Several different types of schools are examined, including Spanish schools, bilingual schools, intercultural schools, and independent schools. Finally, in §6.3, perceptions of Totonac language socialization and transmission in family and community social contexts are documented and analyzed. Language socialization of learners is described as a dynamic process where language ideologies are transmitted, meaning socialization provides an opportunity to spread ideologies that support Totonac language vitality. Through this in-depth analysis of multiple contexts in the linguistic ecology, people's perceptions of Spanish and Totonac languages are exposed, and I interpret these through the essentialist and syncretic language ideologies I identified in Chapter 5. The circulation of these essentialist and syncretic language ideologies and practices and their effects on language vitality is considered in each context: ecotourism, education, and family and community language socialization. Throughout the chapter I discuss syncretic ideologies that support Totonac language vitality across diverse contexts in the linguistic ecology: *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity" and *negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories." *Negociar categorías* is an ideological stance that seeks to denaturalize social categories and the linguistic labels used for them, opening up the possibility for new interpretations of social identity. *Solidaridad comunitaria* is grounded in respect for the Totonac community and Totonac language, and coexistence between Totonac and *mestizo* people, and through this foundation of respect and trust in the community, the ideology promotes multilingualism.

6.1 *Kakiwín tutunakú* ecotourism business

Tourism is a growing industry in Mexico, including in Huehuetla and other parts of the Sierra region. Visits by wealthy Mexican and international tourists have been increasing. Many of these people who visit the Sierra region include both Mexican *mestizos* as well as Americans, Canadians, and Europeans. In this section I describe a locally owned ecotourism business in Huehuetla called *Kakiwín tutunakú*. An analysis of the advertisements used by *Kakiwín tutunakú* provides some examples of Totonac people representing themselves, their language, and their culture, revealing aspects of language ideologies that are present in this discourse context. The essentialist language ideology that Totonac is only for Totonac people is at play in the context of ecotourism because the expected language to use with outsider guests is Spanish. What I observed in the Kakiwín tutunakú is the unexpected use of Totonac language with guests. The women's use of Totonac language in the *Kakiwín tutunakú* business draws on local syncretic *solidaridad comunitaria* ideologies about the central role of Totonac language in daily life. The Totonac women who run *Kakiwín tutunakú* apply these language ideologies to their new ecotourism business, creating an environment that positions the multilingual women as experts and their Spanish-speaking guests as learners. This ideology that values the use of Totonac in the ecotourism business also creates an indexical association between this economic development and Totonac people, their language, and their culture. The success of the business owned by Totonac women supports language vitality through the use of Totonac language in a new economic domain that creates community growth and opportunities not in spite of Totonac language, but precisely because of it. The ecotourism initiative counters essentialist *menosprecio* ideologies for both the guests who are outsiders, and the local community in Huehuetla.

Ecotourism can be broadly defined as a responsible or sustainable form of tourism that focuses on minimal impact to the host cultures and environment, while also delivering economic benefits to the host community (Fennell 2003: 17). Some of the ways this may be done are through the local community controlling and operating the business, using infrastructure that has a minimal environmental impact, offering tours and programs that are integrated with the local environment and culture, and including an educational component in the programs (Fennell 2003: 33–34). One local ecotourism initiative in Huehuetla, called *Kakiwín tutunakú* "the Totonac forest," has an important role in supporting Totonac families and creating economic activity that strategically draws on aspects of Totonac culture. The *Kakiwín tutunakú* ecotourism

business was initiated by a Society for Social Solidarity, a women's business collective called *Taputsama Talakxtumit*, which is run by ten groups of a total of 120 Totonac women from around the municipality of Huehuetla (Kakiwín Tutunaku-Taputsama Talakxtumit n.d.). Many of the ideals of ecotourism are visible in the *Kakiwín tutunakú* business, such as the connection to and the support of local people and culture, educational experiences for guests, and using sustainable resources such as locally sourced traditional food. According to its advertising, *Kakiwín tutunakú* offers a tourist experience described as being "in harmony with nature" and connected to the vibrant Totonac culture where guests are invited to "live the Totonac experience" (Centro Ecoturístico Kakiwín Tutunakú 2019; Kakiwín Tutunaku - Taputsama Talakxtumit n.d.). The description of *Kakiwín tutunakú* from their Facebook page is given here:

> *Centro ecoturístico y de educación ambiental, promovemos la cultura totonaca y la permacultura abierto a todos los grupos que quieran vivir la experiencia… Ven y disfruta, precios accesibles, un ambiente armónico con la naturaleza.* (Centro Ecoturístico Kakiwín Tutunakú 2019)
>
> A centre for ecotourism and environmental education, we promote Totonac culture and permaculture, open to all groups who want to live the experience…Come and enjoy, affordable prices, an environment in harmony with nature.

The education provided by the business includes guided hikes to local landmarks and ecological areas. On the hikes, the Totonac guides talk about culinary and medicinal uses for local flora and fauna using both the Spanish and the Totonac names. They also offer a culinary and linguistic workshop in which guests are taught how to cook the food gathered on the hikes, and how to talk about the food and cooking techniques using the Totonac language.

Figure 7: Facebook page of the ecotourism company Kakiwín Tutunakú

The images used by the business also represent key aspects of cultural exchange and centre the Totonac people. Figure 7 shows an image of a Facebook ad from *Kakiwín tutunakú*. The text across the advertisement from left to right reads: "Kakiwín tutunakú ecotourism | Traditional dishes, ecological cabins, interpretive hikes | [contact information]." The phrase across the main photo reads "Live the Totonac experience in Huehuetla." The Totonac experience is portrayed through linguistic and semiotic choices that construct the business in a particular way that is connected to place, with the name indicating the Totonac place. This semiotic choice conveys an authenticity of the Totonac as Indigenous to the area for the target audience of Spanish-speaking tourists, such as the pair of young white tourists seen in the image of the advertisement in Figure 7 (Centro Ecoturístico Kakiwín Tutunakú 2019). The ad appears like an invitation for cultural exchange and learning with Totonac people on their land.

The name *Kakiwín tutunakú,* referring to the "Totonac forest," is written in Totonac. However, a first language speaker of Totonac would not likely use this phrase, and would probably use one of these instead: *xakakiwín tutunakú, tutunakuni:kakiwín,* or *kinkakiwínkan*

(Beck p.c.). The choice of the name *Kakiwín tutunakú* is a strategic choice because although the target audience does not likely know how to speak or read Totonac, and may not recognize that it is Totonac, it is obviously Indigenous and not Spanish. At the same time, the name is a calque from Spanish *bosque/monte totonaco* "Totonac forest," likely intended to make the name seem more pronounceable or familiar to the target audience. The word *tutunakú* is necessary in order to name their cultural group, and the word order positioning of *tutunakú* after the word for forest may be to mirror Spanish structure for the target audience. The word *Kakiwín* is likely not understood by the target audience, though some meaning can be inferred from the accompanying images. This shows the importance of analyzing the semiotics of the signs, because the importance of the name is not so much its referential meaning, but more so its indexical meaning. The name in Totonac indexes or points to Indigeneity for the target audience of outside tourists, beyond the meaning of the words in Totonac. Even if the text is not recognized as Totonac, in combination with the Totonac women wearing traditional *nahuas* it is likely easily recognized as an Indigenous language. Through this semiotic process that combines language and dress and contrasts the tourists against the host community, an Indigenous identity is indexed, and thereby also a culturally authentic ecotourist experience. The advertisement illustrates both essentialist and syncretic language ideologies. It draws on essentialist assumptions about differences between cultures, naming the Totonac experience as an authentic and distinct one. At the same time, the name mixes both Totonac and Spanish languages through the calque, which demonstrates a creative syncretic linguistic practice. The creation of this new term would likely not have occurred without the presence of underlying syncretic ideologies that position identity and language as flexible and manipulable, rather than as strictly and exclusively categorical.

There is also an educational component to the *Kakiwín tutunakú* initiative, since the Totonac women teach their guests about Totonac food, culture, and language. Through this teaching activity, they can represent themselves, their language, and their culture for their guests, aiding in countering essentialist *menosprecio* ideologies about Totonac held by outsiders. *Kakiwín tutunakú* teaches specific local cooking techniques and recipes, including hand grinding corn into masa, forming it into tortillas, tamales, or *gorditas* (fried masa stuffed with bean or meat fillings), and grinding fresh salsas on a stone metate. While showing the guests the cooking techniques, the hosts also teach the Totonac words for the foods and the techniques, thus

combining Totonac language and culture. This educational and participatory element in food preparation and language teaching and learning shows the high level of social and linguistic intimacy that characterizes *Kakiwín tutunakú*. The teaching of traditional cooking techniques and language are a significant act of constructing the relationship between Totonac hosts and their guests as equals in the interactive tourism exchange. This is also a creative syncretic act, since brand new roles are created for the Totonac women, who have not held this type of position before as independent business owners and language and culture experts. This act challenges the essentialist ideology that business owners and experts would be *mestizos* and most often men.

The Totonac women not only teach their guests to prepare food, but they also eat together with them as equal peers. Sharing food is an important sociocultural practice and performance of physical, psychological, and spiritual sustenance for the Totonac community (Ellison 2004; Govers 2006; Ichon 1973). Totonac people are proud to sit on the ground and eat with one another (Joaquina, Oct.24/16). It is notable that Totonac women in *Kakiwín tutunakú* are sharing food with their guests and teaching about the collection and preparation of the food because this shows *confianza* "trust" and *convivencia* "coexistence." The *Kakiwín tutunakú* marketing materials also depict the Totonac people in their own territory, leading educational walking tours, giving artisanal demonstrations, and teaching Totonac language to the white tourists, further examples of *convivencia*. The business positions Totonac people and their language in new teaching roles, which have traditionally been occupied by Spanish speakers, and also positions the white tourists as learners of Totonac language and culture. Teaching the Totonac language to outside tourists is notable because it challenges the essentialist *menosprecio* expectations that Totonac speakers are ignorant and passive who are expected to be students of outside white people (not their teachers), that Totonac people would linguistically accommodate outsiders, and that Spanish is the natural language of teaching. Instead, we see the ecotourism activities position the tourists as student guests who should learn to speak some Totonac, learn about Totonac culture, and defer to local Totonac practices. These practices decentre essentialist hierarchies and ideologies of *menosprecio* that assume that Indigenous languages are only for Indigenous peoples and that Spanish would be the "natural" or "anonymous" language to use with outsiders (Irvine and Gal 2000; Woolard 2016: 26), which therefore challenges Spanish monolingualism.

This close and equitable cultural exchange between Totonac hosts and their guests in the *Kakiwín tutunakú* program reflects syncretic ideologies of *negociar categorías* and *solidaridad comunitaria.* Marketing and sharing Totonac culture with outsiders, and to benefit economically from it, are not necessarily viewed as a problematic objectification, so long as this is done in an ecologically sustainable way that does not harm or exploit the broader Totonac community (Josef, Oct.29/16). This illustrates the syncretic ideology of *negociar categorías* because Totonac people are positioning the Totonac language in a new category as a resource in economic development, a position Totonac has not occupied before and that has been dominated by Spanish. The example of marketing shows some of the ideological complexity at play. The sharing of Totonac culture can be both essentialist and syncretic, and both of these can have positive and negative effects, depending on who shares it and how it is shared. When Totonac people share their own culture on their terms, it is still based on an essentialist cultural division; however, their practices are more syncretic in their approach to teaching Totonac to outsiders and engaging in a more equitable cultural exchange. This directly benefits Totonac people socioeconomically, creating indexical associations between Totonac and economic opportunity, and disrupting some of the essentialist *menosprecio* ideologies through the positive representation of Totonac to both outsiders and the community itself. The teaching of Totonac on par with Spanish outside the context of school stands out as being particularly relevant for supporting language vitality through the transmission of both Totonac language and language ideologies that support Totonac language use. These creative practices, and the syncretic ideology that underlies them, support the vitality of Totonac by creating brand new opportunities for speaking and teaching Totonac and by challenging essentialist *menosprecio* beliefs about when, how, and with whom Totonac can and should be used. Since eating and speaking together are important acts of *confianza* “trust” and *convivencia* “coexistence,” the tourists’ visits are more than business exchanges, but also social, linguistic, and cultural exchanges that result in learning and mutual respect between people. *Kakiwín tutunakú* counters the essentialist *menosprecio* belief in broader society that Totonac people are backwards farmers whose culture and language are not worth sharing or learning about. This is accomplished through the creative self-representation of Totonac women in a business exchange for hosting and sharing Totonac language and cultural practices with their guests.

The *Kakiwín tutunakú* ecotourism initiative, and the syncretic language ideologies underlying it, also contribute to the language vitality of Totonac from within the community itself because the business supports the local Totonac people and community in several ways. The business generates economic activity for the Totonac women who own and operate the business, supporting their social and financial well-being, as well as that of their families. The women are from different communities in the municipality of Huehuetla, and the business facilitates new connections and relationships between women and their families across these Totonac communities in the municipality that may not have otherwise been made. The women use the Totonac language in their social and business networks within the Totonac community. The website for *Kakiwín tutunakú* explicitly states the importance of the local business for generating a good income for Totonac women and their families within the municipality of Huehuetla, meaning they do not need to look for higher wage work outside the community (Kakiwín Tutunaku - Taputsama Talakxtumit n.d.). While there is some work outside traditional farming available in the municipality of Huehuetla, Totonac women have more typically participated in economic activities based on selling goods, produce, and artisanry at markets. Other opportunities are overwhelmingly very low wage work such as cleaning houses, washing clothes, or performing other labour for wealthier *mestizos.* The cultivation of the new ecotourism business has therefore enabled the creation of an association between Totonac language and new, higher income economic activity. *Kakiwín tutunakú* represents a significant shift of women into service-based economic activities and into new roles as business owners. In this case, the business is independent of the socioeconomic networks of the *mestizos* who have dominated the important ranching, agricultural, and merchant sectors.

The business generated by *Kakiwín tutunakú* is especially significant because it has tied the language and culture to new economic opportunities and community growth. The creation of this new local context for language use and Totonac social connections through business is unexpected from the perspective of *menosprecio* that associates speaking Totonac with poverty and backwardness. The business is built on sharing the Totonac language and culture with guests, centring Totonac as a valuable resource and creating a new role for Totonac women and Totonac language and culture. Additionally, the Totonac owners and operators interact with each other in Totonac while running the business, strengthening and expanding their social networks. The dependence of this successful new economic activity on Totonac language use and the

administration of the business by Totonac people in Totonac supports Totonac language vitality. As people engage in these practices they exploit and reproduce a syncretic ideology that creates new associations between Totonac and economic development. In *Kakiwín tutunakú*, the semiotic process of recontextualization is apparent: Totonac symbolic resources such as words, images, and cultural practices are recontextualized in a new domain, use, or purpose, and the resources lose meanings and gain new ones through these (Bauman and Briggs 1990). This type of activity that creates new and emergent uses for endangered languages is called for in the language revitalization literature as a way to support future language sustainability (e.g. Heller and Duchêne 2007a; Leonard 2011; Perley 2011). The ecotourism initiative has done this, creating a new context for language use in the local linguistic ecology that is also creating new indexicalities that convey speaking Totonac as valuable, advantageous, and worthy of sharing and teaching. This is possible because the underlying syncretic ideologies support and encourage the creation of new practices and interpretations through the establishment and development of relationships between people and their language, providing evidence for the relational interpretation of language vitality. The meaning of speaking Totonac is positively affected by *Kakiwín tutunakú*, supporting language vitality and having more potential to do so in the future. The *Kakiwín tutunakú* business uses Totonac symbolic resources, such as food and language, in a way that positions Totonac people as experts and Totonac language and culture as the subject of learning. The owners can control the representation of Totonac identity and are able to portray Totonac culture and language in the positive and authentic way they desire to their guests, the local Totonac community, and broader society. Ethnographic field work with *Kakiwín tutunakú* would provide more opportunity to investigate and develop this topic.

In contrast to *Kakiwín tutunakú*, when Totonac culture is shared in a way that exoticizes it for personal gain, this reinforces and reproduces *menosprecio* because it positions Totonac as an object disconnected from the daily life of people. A clear example of the essentialist exoticization of Totonac people and their cultural practices is the use or taking advantage of the performances of the *voladores* dance and other cultural dances in local political campaigns. The *voladores* is a dance practiced by multiple Indigenous groups in Mexico. To perform the dance, five dancers climb a pole. Four of the dancers tie their feet to the top with ropes that are wrapped around the pole many times. They lean off the platform and begin unwinding as the fifth performer dances and plays the flute on the top of the pole. The four dancers rotate to the ground.

Two points during a performance of the *voladores* dance in Cuetzalan (located to the south east of Huehuetla) can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The voladores performing in Cuetzalan in 2008 (photos by author)

What has been happening recently in the municipality of Huehuetla is that political candidates coordinate their campaigns with already occurring calendar festivals where there are dances being performed. Candidates may make campaign speeches before or after a performance to the already assembled crowd. These acts recontextualize the dances, borrowing or perhaps appropriating their cultural value into the political campaigns by taking advantage of the gathered audience of Totonac people. Perhaps this is opportunistic, and the candidates believe their message will be better received at a cultural event. The way the politicians take advantage of the Totonac cultural event is in some ways like what *Kakiwín tutunakú* does: cultural components are recontextualized for a new use and even for a new audience. However, they are also different because in *Kakiwín tutunakú,* the people benefitting are Totonac people and they use the cultural resources in complex combinations: food and language taught by Totonac women themselves, compared to outsider political candidates piggybacking on already occurring cultural events. The candidates rarely use Totonac language in their political campaigns, and the

convenience of using the dances to their advantage stands in contrast to the effort and time put in by the women who run the programming at *Kakiwín tutunakú.* During my interview with Paulo, he expressed the belief that using the dances for opportunistic gains, such as in politics, is wrong because it changes the meaning of the dance and shows a lack of respect for it. In this excerpt, Paulo makes a meta-commentary about how the recontextualization of the dances in political campaigns is contributing to changes in the social constitution of identity in Huehuetla and Indigenous communities more broadly.

15) Paulo Oct.15/16

1 Paulo: *Desafortunadamente, en este pensamiento mercantil de, la vida, um, es curioso ver*
2 *como lo* totonaco *se reduce. O no, es curioso como la experiencia de todos*
3 *nosotros se reduce a lo fascinante, exótico, y colorido.*
4 R: *Hmm.*
5 Paulo: *Sin ver que detrás hay gente de carne y hueso que pues, pone su vida para hacer*
6 *eso. La, bueno, una cosa que yo lo veo así muy visible son las danzas, por ejemplo.*
7 R: *Sí.*
8 Paulo: *Pues es muy bonito, y la gente viene a vernos y dice, bueno también te comentan*
9 *<<yo soy danzante.>> Pues, pues por eso te comparte eso, ¿no? Como, ese, ese es*
10 *un ejemplo, ¿no? Como hay gente que se enamora y dice pues <<qué bonito>> y*
11 *hasta lo vemos ya ahora en las campañas partidistas—*
12 R: *Mhm.*
13 Paulo: *—en elección de candidatos anda la gente. Pero el pueblo son gente que es*
14 *campesina, bueno que es, que viven al día, ¿no? Que dan su día, que ofrecen pues.*
15 *Y como, sí se ve muy feo, como es, o yo no sé, pues yo digo eso es como esa navaja*
16 *que va cortando esos elementos que le dan apropiación al pueblo, les van*
17 *cortando, y lo vuelven uno porque está de uso solamente.*
18 R: *Mmm.*

1 Paulo: Unfortunately, in this mercantilist thinking of life, um, it's curious to see how
2 Totonac is reduced. Or, it's curious how the experiences of all of us are reduced to
3 the fascinating, exotic, and colourful.
4 R: Hmm.
5 Paulo: Without recognizing that behind that we are people of flesh and bone who put their
6 lives into this. Well, one thing that I see as very visible are the dances, for example.
7 R: Yes.
8 Paulo: Well, it's very beautiful and people come to see us and [dancers] say, well, they
9 make comments to you like "I'm a dancer." Well, that's why they share that with
10 you, right? Like that, that is an example, right? Like there are people who are
11 enchanted and say, "how beautiful." We even see it in political campaigns now—
12 R: Mhm.
13 Paulo: —in the election of candidates you see people [dancing]. But the people are
14 country folk, that well, that live day by day, right? Who give their lives and give
15 [to others]. And well, it does look bad how it is. And I don't know, well I say it's

16 like a knife that is cutting out those elements that are appropriated from them, it is
17 cutting them out, and they only do it because it is useful.
18 R: Mmm.

Paulo comments (line 6–13) that cultural dances are a practice that has been taken out of their ritual contexts, especially when used during election campaigns. Paulo continues with a metaphor of a knife cutting apart Totonac culture (lines 15–17). This striking image illustrates how the tokenization and even politicization of cultural practices such as dances redefine them along qualities of usefulness, marketability, and esthetics, seen in Paulo's use of the term "fascinating, exotic, colorful" (line 3) and "beautiful" (line 11). Paulo makes clear that the use of the dances, or other aspects of Totonac culture, in the context of political campaigns misrepresents the Totonac people and the reality of their daily lives (line 13–15). As noted above, the recontextualization of symbolic resources in new domains can change existing meaning and create new meanings (Bauman and Briggs 1990). What Paulo refers to as the exoticization of the dances is another way of describing their recontextualization and essentialization as signs of Totonac identity through the semiotic process of iconization in the business of politics. Importantly, Paulo's comments refer to the use of particular cultural resources and notably do not refer to the use of the resources in combination with Totonac language, such as in *Kakiwín tutunakú.* For the audience of Totonac community members, this may also have the effect of erasing their daily lived experience. The recontextualization of the dances means they are not only being performed for the Totonac community in the original sense, but the performances are also used for political purposes at the same time, which Paulo interprets as corrupt.

These contrasting examples of Totonac culture and language in *Kakiwín tutunakú* and the political campaigns show how commodification of language and culture can create a tension between perceived authenticity and marketability (Heller 2003). Depending on the specific context and details of who is using a cultural resource and how, this could be interpreted in different ways. There are usually reactions to this process of recontextualization and commodification, such as the disapproval of the use of the dances in political campaigns, which is observed in Paulo's comments. Similarly, there are those in the community who do not approve of the local ecotourism initiative of *Kakiwín Tutunakú,* typically *mestizos* or those who have socioeconomic ties to *mestizos*. These are people who are invested in maintaining the

existing class divisions. They are threatened by new economic activities that could disrupt this, such as the growing local ecotourism industry and the economic advancement of women that it produces. Women traditionally maintain the home and have no income of their own; running ecotourism businesses is improving the socioeconomic status of their families without them having to leave the community, while also providing a means for the Totonac community to share and benefit from their cultural resources on their own terms. When Indigenous people themselves are in control of the business like *Kakiwín tutunakú* and the use and marketing of the linguistic and cultural resources, this can support the community and the perceptions of the language as contributing to positive community development.

As women move into new roles earning income and owning businesses, their roles in their family and community are transformed in ways that empower the Totonac people and both maintain and build new social networks. The *Kakiwín tutunakú* tourism initiative illustrates the complex intersection of socioeconomic pressures like the need for income, the new demand for culturally authentic ecotourism experiences, and ideologies about identity, culture, and language. *Kakiwín tutunakú* both draws on and challenges the semiotics of ethnic identity and expected roles along many of the same essentialist indexical associations of Totonac and *mestizo* identity categories that I presented in Chapter 5. For example, the essentialist expectation of capitalist business activity would be that men, rather than women, would run a business; the non-traditional service is owned and operated by Totonac women, when the essentialist expectation is that *mestizos* would offer this type of tourist service; and the traditional practices that are expected to remain only within the Totonac community itself are instead brought into new and modern contexts, such as Facebook, and proudly shared with outsiders both in the tourist experience and in the advertisements. By creating strategic associations between new economic activities and Totonac symbolic resources, including language and food, this disrupts essentialist ideologies that presume a natural relationship between speaking Totonac, poverty, and backwardness. The ecotourism initiative and economic activity like it support Totonac language vitality through syncretic language ideologies and practices that expand the use of Totonac in new ways and create new linguistic and cultural roles for Totonac people while supporting their social and economic well-being.

6.2 Education

Schools play a central role in the institutional use of language(s) and in language teaching and literacy, practices that can affect language vitality, or how people use and perceive the language and their relationships with the language. Education is a central influence in the lives of children and youth, who are key stakeholders in the ongoing maintenance of language (Hornberger 2008; Hornberger and King 1996; McCarty 2005, 2009; McCarty and Nicholas 2014). In Huehuetla, youth are exposed to a range of language practices and ideologies. Most of these privilege Spanish, which reflects essentialist ideologies that position Spanish as the proper language of school, while there are some that reflect syncretic ideologies that support Totonac alongside Spanish. The education system in Huehuetla, though small, is also complex. There are multiple options for parents and students in Huehuetla: federally administered Spanish schools, state administered bilingual and Indigenous schools, intercultural schools, and independent schools, though not all these options exist at all levels of schooling nor in every community of the municipality. In this section I explore how patterns of language use are related to essentialist and syncretic language ideologies observed in the language policies of the schools, teaching practices of the teachers, and the discourses of teachers and students. The impact of these patterns on language vitality is discussed; for example, teaching Totonac alongside Spanish in some schools contests the privileging of Spanish in education and it reflects the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* that promotes multilingualism.

A few general observations can be made about education in Huehuetla. The government aims to have as many children enrolled as possible and implemented the *Progresa* program in 1997 (renamed *Oportunidades* in 2002, and then *Prospera* in 2014), run by the *Secretaría de Educación Pública.*[21] This program provides funding to families to send their children to school. Local nurses administer the program and do checks in the schools to ensure the families receiving benefits are sending their children to school. Enrolment in *Prospera* in Huehuetla shows an average of about 54% for children between the ages of 2 and 19, with girls having higher enrolment at younger ages, and more older boys in the program than girls (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). Table 5 shows the different schools in Huehuetla and their enrollment numbers in the 2015-2016 school year as well as their funding source (Table 5 was created with

[21] This program was canceled in 2019; however, it was in place during my field work.

data from Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016 and INEGI 2020). Although school enrolment numbers in Huehuetla appear high (seen in the proportion enrolled in the last column in Table 5), it is hard to interpret this data because the schools accept students from surrounding communities in the municipality of Huehuetla, boosting the numbers, and student place of residence is not available in the data collected (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). The census data also shows that education rates have been going up overall in Huehuetla (INEGI 2010, 2020). Government funding is typically from several levels including municipal, state, and federal, while private funding indicates funding through donors. The schools I visited include the *Preescolar Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz* which my elder daughter attended, another preschool *Jardín de Niños Huehuetla,* the primary schools *Primaria Ignacio Ramirez* and *Primaria Benito Juarez*, the secondary school *Telesecundaria Jaime Torres Bodet,* the *Bachillerato Oficial Agustín Melgar*, the independent OIT school *Centro de Estudios Superiores Kgoyom,* a second independent high school the *Colegio Paulo Freire*, and the *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla*.

In Huehuetla, many parents see benefits to their children getting a full secondary and post-secondary education, especially for bringing in more income from diversified sources. At the same time, school is not always seen as a good thing by community members. Some youth express feelings of being lost or idle after going to school, not wanting to work in the fields and lamenting the overall lack of good jobs in the region and the necessity to leave the community in order to seek better opportunities in cities. Some elders, for example Josef, comment on the role of schools in undermining Totonac language and cultural practices, acting as catalysts to changes in language use through exposure to Spanish (Oct.29/16).

School Name	**Type and Level**	**Funding Source**	**Total Enrolment**	**Enrolment in each school level**	**Proportion enrolled**
Preescolar Indígena Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz	Indigenous Bilingual Preschool	Government[22]	72	Preschool total enrolment: 177	56/79, 71%[23] 177/180, 98%
Preescolar Cuitlahuac	Preschool	Government	33		
Jardín de Niños Huehuetla	Spanish Preschool	Government	72		
Primaria Benito Juarez	Spanish Primary	Government	497	Primary total enrolment: 554	314/318, 99% 554/382, 145%
Primaria Ignacio Ramirez	Spanish Primary	Government	57		
Telesecundaria Jaime Torres Bodet	Intercultural Junior high	Government	317	Junior High total enrolment: 317	107/116, 92% 317/198, 160%
Bachillerato Oficial Agustín Melgar	Intercultural High school	Government	241	High School total enrolment: 313	98/121, 81% 313/204, 153%
Centro de Estudios Superiores Kgoyom	Independent OIT High school	Private, Municipal	16		
Colegio Paulo Freire	Independent High school	Private	56		
Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla	Intercultural Post-secondary	Government	~500		102/303, 34% 500/303, 165%

Table 5: School enrolment in Huehuetla, 2015–2016

[22] The funding for schools is a complex array of multiple levels of government involvement. In this column, government refers to both State and Federal governments, as information provided by administrators on government websites is ambiguous and often indicates multiple levels of involvement. The meaningful distinction is between government and private funding.

[23] The lines in each cell represent the number of school aged children who attend out of the total number of school aged children in Huehuetla. The top line is compiled with data from INEGI 2020, and the bottom line is compiled with data from Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016.

While schools in general are often blamed for language loss, there are some schools that are supporting the use of Totonac. Some educators view education as a tool that can be used to support Totonac language and culture and they act in their roles as teachers to advocate for Totonac language, culture, and Indigenous rights. Joaquina is an obvious example, having completed a Master's degree, and now being the principal of the Indigenous Preschool *Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz*, in her own community of Huehuetla. Joaquina uses her role as principal to empower young students and their families to see knowledge of Totonac and bilingualism as an advantage. Through her relationships of *compadrazgo* with the parents of her students, as well as some of her teaching, she takes a syncretic approach to counter the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* and positions Totonac alongside Spanish in her school. The other important example is Paulo, the current director of the Indigenous school CESIK, who I was directed to by Joaquina. CESIK's goal, since its founding by Griselda Tirado in 1994, is to explicitly counteract some essentialist ideologies, such as the shame of Indigeneity found in *menosprecio*. In their syncretic approach they instead teach about the importance and the meaning of Totonac language and culture for the Totonac community, such as Totonac law, and instill traditional values of community solidarity and *mano vuelta* "returning favors" by practicing and living these values in the school itself, while also teaching the core state-provided curriculum in Spanish (Lechuga 2010; Paulo Oct.15/16).

In the next section I will discuss specific schools. The aim is to show how essentialist and syncretic ideologies are present in the education system, exploring how these ideologies affect the language use of students, teachers, and their families. I also discuss how these ideologies influence people's perceptions of Totonac and Spanish in school. In other words, I explore how essentialist and syncretic ideologies in education influence language vitality. The schools are presented in order of level, from preschool through to post-secondary, though I only present a discussion of the schools that I directly observed, so not all the schools in Table 5 are represented below.

6.2.1 *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* bilingual Indigenous preschool

The bilingual Indigenous preschool, *Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz* (Sor Juana), is government funded and had 72 students enrolled in 2016. The school is located in the upper north-east section of Huehuetla. Our landlady had told us that the school was an Indigenous preschool, and it was one of the first institutions I visited. There I met Joaquina García Sotero, the principal of

this school, who listened to me describe my research and provided me with some key information about Huehuetla in general, education in Huehuetla, and people I might speak with. During the field visit, our daughter Sara was enrolled at Sor Juana, and I was able to observe several teaching activities and attend some events involving the children and their families. Sor Juana is administered by the *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* "Department of Indigenous Education," part of the federal *Secretaría de la Educación Pública* "Ministry of Public Education," which gives the school the mandate to teach Totonac (Secretaría de la Educación Pública 2016).

Based on my observations and casual conversations with parents at the school, there are two main groups of parents who send their children to Sor Juana. Totonac parents see school in general as an important opportunity for their children to learn Spanish, and they see this specific school as a good fit because it is an Indigenous school that also uses Totonac. The other group of parents are *mestizos,* some of whom have Totonac relatives, who speak Spanish at home and have chosen the Sor Juana because they want their children to learn Totonac. This creates a unique situation for the teachers who are charged with meeting these multiple expectations around what it means for the school to be bilingual. Joaquina explains her approach to bilingual Indigenous education below:

16) Joaquina (Oct.24/16)

1 R: *Y este, ¿qué piensa de, de que las, los niños deben de hablar el totonaco?*
2 Joaquina: *Pues sí. Sí es importante, incluso pues en nuestra escuela les enseñamos la*
3 *segunda lengua porque yo soy maestra bilingüe. Y este, pues es importante que*
4 *se rescate nuestra lengua, porque sobre todo en el municipio ya casi no la*
5 *habla-, ya no casi no hablan la lengua. Son pocas las familias que—*
6 R: *Mm.*
7 Joaquina: *—que lo practican. Entonces este pues sí vemos la necesidad de que se rescate*
8 *nuestra lengua. Y sobre todo en los niños. Porque como yo les he dicho en las*
9 *reuniones el hecho de que una lengua, un niño habla una lengua indígena, una*
10 *lengua materna, eso no le, le quita el derecho de poder manejar una*
11 *computadora, o cosas así.*
12 R: *Mm.*
13 Joaquina: *Al contrario—*
14 R: *Sí.*
15 Joaquina: *—saben más. Mhm.*
16 R: *Y, o sea, sí los niños deben de aprender el totonaco, pero ¿quién debe de tener*
17 *esa responsabilidad de enseñarles?*
18 Joaquina: *¿De enseñarles? Pues los padres.*
19 R: *Sí.*

20 Joaquina: *Los padres de familia. Ellos son los este, los inmediatos, somos los inmediatos*
21 *responsables de enseñarles. Y pues ahorita pues las instituciones ac-, en*
22 *Huehuetla pues nada más nuestra escuela es la escuela de educación indígena*
23 *que maneja dos lenguas, el preescolar. De ahí la primaria ya es una primaria*
24 *estatal pues ahí ya no.*
25 R: *Sí, ya no enseñan.*
26 Joaquina: *Ya se pierde esa formación, se pierde ese proceso.*
27 R: *Sí.*
28 Joaquina: *Y estamos viendo la, la necesidad de formar en, de formar en nuestra, en nuestro*
29 *municipio una este, una escuela bilingüe, una escuela primaria bilingüe…*
30 R: *…Sí. Y este, para enseñar el español debe de ser la responsabilidad de los papás*
31 *también, o de las escuelas, ¿o qué piensa de eso?*
32 Joaquina: *Pues es que, bueno si los papás son este, monolingües totonacos, pues ya la, en*
33 *la escuela aprenden hablar el español. Porque pues todos los libros están en*
34 *español. Entonces el niño tiene que aprender. Si aprende a leer tiene que*
35 *aprender a, a leer en español, ¿no?*
36 R: *Sí.*
37 Joaquina: *Aunque piense en totonaco.*
38 R: *Mm.*

1 R: And what do you think about whether children should speak Totonac?
2 Joaquina: Well, yes. Yes, it's important. In our school we teach them the second language
3 because I am a bilingual teacher. And well, it's important to save our language,
4 because above all in the municipality it's almost not spoken, now they almost
5 don't speak the language. There are few families that—
6 R: Mm.
7 Joaquina: —that use it. So then well, we do see the need of saving our language. And
8 above all for the children. Because, like I say to them in the meetings, the fact
9 that a language, that a child speaks an Indigenous language, a mother tongue,
10 this does not negate their right to learn to use a computer, or things like that.
11 R: Mm.
12 Joaquina: On the contrary—
13 R: Yes.
14 Joaquina: —they know more. Mhm
15 R: And so, well, yes, the children should learn Totonac, but who should be
16 responsible for teaching them?
17 Joaquina: For teaching them? Well, the parents.
18 R: Yes.
19 Joaquina: The parents. They are the ones, the most, we are the most immediately
20 responsible for teaching them. And well, now well, the institutions in Huehuetla,
21 well, our school is the only school with Indigenous Education that teaches both
22 languages, our preschool. From there the primary school is a state school, so
23 there is none [Totonac].
24 R: Yes, they don't teach it.
25 Joaquina: That training is lost, the process is lost.
26 R: Yes.

27 Joaquina: And we are seeing the, the need to form in, to form in our, in our municipality a
28 bilingual school, a bilingual primary school…
29 R: …Yes. And well, teaching Spanish should be the responsibility of parents as
30 well, or of
31 schools, or what do you think about that?
32 Joaquina: Well, it's, well if the parents are, well, monolingual Totonacs, well then, well in
33 school they learn to speak Spanish. Because well, all the books are in Spanish.
34 And so, the child will have to learn. If they learn to read, they have to learn to
35 read in, to read in Spanish, right?
36 R: Yes.
37 Joaquina: Even though they think in Totonac.
38 R: Mm.

At the start of this discussion, Joaquina states she is a bilingual teacher who teaches Totonac as a "second language" (lines 2–3), referring to the sequence in which the languages are learned. Most children in Sor Juana are dominant in Spanish according to Joaquina, and I observed children speaking to each other mostly in Spanish during recess. In the excerpt above, Joaquina then associates teaching Totonac with "saving" the language that has been lost (lines 2–5), drawing on essentialist discourses that conceptualize the language as a heritage object. At the same time, she calls out the statement made by some parents that speaking Totonac will impede students' access to education or their *derecho* "right" to learn how to use a computer (lines 8–10). This implies that education should also be provided in Totonac to uphold the rights of all children to access education, which challenges the essentialist *menosprecio* ideology that education should be in Spanish only. The complexities of Joaquina's comments show that sometimes she draws on essentialist ideologies, and sometimes she challenges them. I ask her who is responsible for teaching Totonac to children (lines 15–16), and Joaquina explains that parents are responsible (lines 19–20) in addition to the importance of teaching Totonac at school (line 21–22), suggesting that there are multiple actors involved. Joaquina also points out the inconsistent availability of Totonac education across school levels. She states that this interruption in Totonac education means that "the training…the process is lost" (line 25). Finally, Joaquina says that "all the books are in Spanish" (line 33–35), a recognition of the systemic limitations and lack of resources she faces in her efforts to include and teach Totonac at school. Indigenous language educators are in a challenging position as they know that children have a right to education in Totonac, but they must work within the context of parents' beliefs and expectations that school is for learning Spanish and the essentialist ideologies that position

Spanish as the exclusive language of education. It is not just people's beliefs and practices involved, but also the lack of consistent and professional resources that are available for Indigenous language programs.

My observations of the school also echo many of Joaquina's comments. Joaquina and the two teachers under her direction teach Totonac as a subject in their classrooms during designated time slots, and Spanish is used as the language of instruction for all other subjects. When I observed in October 2016, Spanish was used for most of the teaching, around 1 hour and 30 minutes, with about 30 minutes in Totonac. Totonac is taught using short activities, mostly developed by the teachers themselves. In one lesson I observed, Totonac words were taught by focusing on sets that had certain sounds, in this case the vowel /a/, and these were compared to Spanish words with these sounds. In another lesson, Joaquina used Totonac to teach numbers, translating the Totonac numbers into Spanish both orally and by writing the words on the chalkboard. An example of the math workbook used by my daughter in the second year of the preschool (4 and 5-year-old children) is shown in Figure 9.

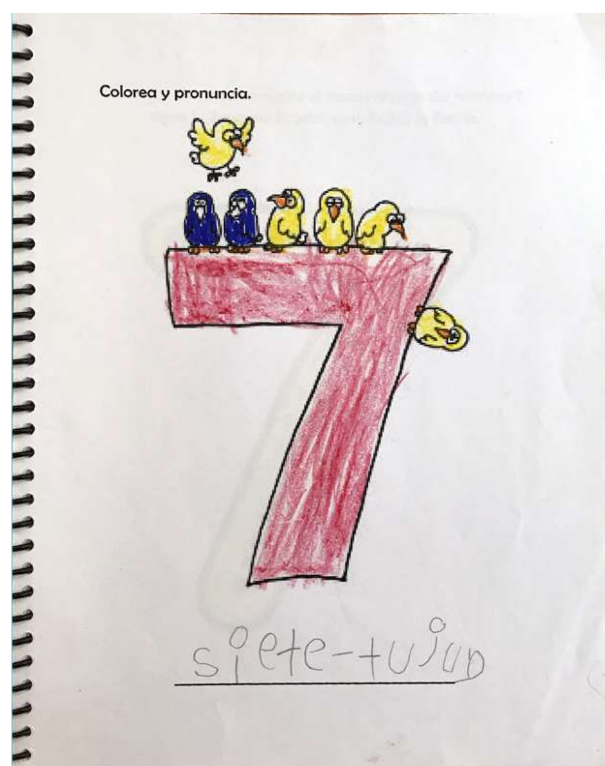

Figure 9: Page of preschool workbook (photo by author)

Figure 9 illustrates how some of the materials have been adapted from Spanish and taught using translation. This example shows that the instructions are given in Spanish, presenting the concept being taught in Spanish, and the subsequent math activities in the workbook are also explained in Spanish. According to Joaquina herself, the children copy the words down exactly as she writes them on the board, Spanish first, Totonac second, showing that the pedagogical approach focuses on translation from Spanish, rather than Totonac as a language of instruction for math (Oct.24/16). This is similar to the way the alphabet is taught, using Totonac words to teach the Spanish alphabet. This example also shows that the Totonac numerals are being taught without the obligatory numeral classifier prefixes. The form *–tujun* is a Totonac morpheme, not a word, and its use in this way puts it in the Spanish linguistic frame. This could be intended to simplify the lesson, perhaps because it creates a more parallel structure to Spanish without the numeral classifiers. Though it very likely not intentional, this use indexes the essentialist *menosprecio* language ideology that privileges Spanish: correspondence with Spanish structure is the priority and the forms are not presented in a common usage. The interpretation of the Indigenous language through the dominant, or "matrix" language is discussed by Meek and Messing in their article about the pattern of "framing Indigenous languages as secondary to matrix languages" observed in many educational texts (2007: 99). In addition to Spanish framing the Totonac language in the materials themselves, teachers also used Spanish as they spoke about the materials or about the Totonac language. I observed that the Totonac material was orally translated by the teacher as part of the pedagogical strategy. Joaquina tells me this use of Spanish is necessary because many students do not speak Totonac at home and are learners (Oct.24/16). Joaquina also tells me that the biggest challenge in her preschool is a lack of resources in Totonac, especially texts, which explains the adaptation into Totonac of resources originally created for teaching Spanish. Both the lack of resources and the adaptation of Spanish resources for Totonac further contributes to the essentialization of Spanish as the language of education. There are some Totonac texts that have been developed, such as a primary curriculum based on Huehuetla Totonac that Joaquina sometimes adapts to preschool (Rodríguez Rodríguez 2011); however, these books are produced and distributed infrequently in small batches, and the teachers run out of copies as they are quickly distributed to students.[24] Teachers are therefore

[24] A standardized primary level Totonac curriculum was published by the *Dirección General de Educación Indígena* in 2018 (Dirección General de Educación Indígena 2018). It was not in use during my field visit as it was

often engaged in a necessary time-consuming process of creating photocopied materials, such as the coiled workbook materials pictured in Figure 9 above. While these teaching practices and materials have some limitations outlined above, the teachers are doing their best to create new spaces for Totonac and teach it in a way that meets the wide range of parents' expectations. The teachers obviously care a lot about Totonac and Totonac students and their families. They are working within a context that essentializes language and identity, privileges Spanish, and that does not offer support for Totonac materials and curriculum. Therefore, the Totonac that they are incorporating is significant and a reflection of their syncretic ideologies, such as *convivencia*, as they create some new teaching practices and materials even within the limitations of this context and without fully repositioning Totonac in relation to Spanish.

The discussion of the Indigenous preschool Sor Juana illustrates some of the complexities on the ground in the bilingual Indigenous education program. The teachers are developing the content and materials themselves, often adapting existing Spanish materials, though some new Totonac materials may now be helping to alleviate this difficulty. Some parents expect the preschool to teach Totonac, and other parents expect the preschool to teach Spanish: *mestizo* families want their children to learn Totonac so they can communicate with Totonac people who may not know Spanish, and many Totonac families want their children to learn Spanish. Teachers are balancing these expectations as best they can. Although the preschool does teach some Totonac language content, the teachers must still prioritize Spanish because the children will transition into primary schools that only use Spanish. The two primary schools in Huehuetla are discussed next.

6.2.2 Spanish primary schools

The federal primary school *Primaria Benito Juarez* was the first school to open in the municipality in 1954 (Troiani 2007). It is also currently the largest school in Huehuetla, with approximately 500 students across the six grades, many of whom come from around the municipality (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). The curriculum provided in Primaria Benito Juarez is the standardized federal Spanish curriculum and there are no classes delivered in Totonac. The teachers are not Totonac speakers, and many are not from Huehuetla.

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published two years later, but it has the potential to help alleviate some of the challenges of developing materials for the preschool and primary level.

When I arrived at the school on October 18, 2016, I spoke with the principal in his office about the purpose of my visit. After our discussion, the principal showed me around the school and allowed me to observe recess and one Grade 3 class on that same day. The principal told me that students are permitted to speak Totonac during recess, and I did verify that claim as I observed a few groups of children speaking Totonac to each other outside the classrooms during both mid-morning and lunch recesses. I noticed Totonac being spoken by some parents amongst themselves at drop-off and pick-up times, and some of the students told me that if parents do not speak Spanish, they translate for their parents when speaking with school staff, none of whom are Totonac or speak Totonac. This translation task is highly complex, as children are linguistic mediators between the different adult parties, while the children are also often the subject of the conversation. The Grade 3 class I observed was made up entirely of students from Huehuetla's *comunidades,* according to the teacher, whose use of the word *comunidades* implies that they are Totonac children. According to the teacher, 22 out of 25 students speak Totonac in her class. In contrast, and according to the same teacher, one of the other classes consists almost entirely of students who are children of the wealthy Spanish-speaking *mestizos* who live in central Huehuetla. This division is significant, as it segregates students along characteristics of geography, social class, and race: either living in rural communities or the centre of Huehuetla; and either Totonac or *mestizo*. When I asked the teacher about the school's practice of segregation, she mentioned that *mestizo* parents from the centre of Huehuetla want their children in the same class with each other, not with Totonac students from the surrounding communities. The teacher also suggested that it supports student learning because students who are more like each other and have similar life experiences and skill sets are placed together. While there may be some pedagogical motivation for this division of the students based on a degree of shared Totonac language and culture, this practice discourages intercultural exchange and *convivencia* between Totonac and *mestizo* students. The division is also based on an underlying racist assumption that all Totonac and Indigenous children are the same and have the same skills, which is itself part of essentialist *menosprecio* ideology that naturalizes (perceived) differences between Totonac and *mestizo* people. While the teacher may not have conscious racist intentions, the effect is that even her seemingly innocent justification of the division naturalizes the racialized separation of Totonac students in the school institution. The division in the school reflects the broader division between Totonac and *mestizos* in the community, a clear example of

fractal recursivity. The essentialist ideology that justifies this division produces a repetition of the racialized division on different scales: a larger scale across the community which is reproduced on a smaller scale in the school.

During the class I observed, the students individually wrote a short paragraph about bullying and then the focus shifted to math with a lesson on patterns and reflections. Both the writing and math lessons were in Spanish and students answered the teacher's questions in Spanish. While students were doing the math in small groups, I heard some of them speaking Totonac with each other and the teacher allowed this without any concern. After the lesson, I was invited to eat with the class, and I heard loud conversations in both Spanish and Totonac from the students. Students then went out for recess, which gave me the chance to speak to the teacher again alone. I asked her about the Totonac language and whether she observes students speaking it in the school. She told me that she hears students speak Totonac with each other regularly, stating: *"Yo no hablo totonaco, pero benditos sean por hablar su lengua materna"* "I don't speak Totonac, but bless them for speaking their mother tongue." The teacher also expressed a sincere desire to learn to speak Totonac so that she could communicate with the parents of her students who do not speak Spanish. She did not suggest that if she learned Totonac, she could teach it or use it to teach other topics in school. These discourses of the teacher appear to support the Totonac children in her class and their families; however, they do so while maintaining the essentialist ideologies that naturalize the stratified positioning of Totonac and Spanish. Totonac is valued for communicating with Totonac speakers, but not for institutional instructional use.

While we were eating, the teacher also told me an anecdote about a student who regularly wore her traditional clothing to school. The teacher decided to allow her to continue to do this, as the child obviously wanted to, and the parents may also have been struggling to afford a uniform. Required school uniforms consist of a white shirt, navy shorts or skirt, navy sweater, white socks and black shoes. These uniforms can be purchased in the local market from suppliers who come from larger urban centres, such as Zacapoaxtla and Zacatlán. Eventually, some parents who the teacher identified as "from the centre" (indexing *mestizos*) came to say that it was unfair for the child to be receiving "special treatment" by permitting her to wear *nahuas.* The teacher attempted to resist the pressure to force the student to wear a uniform, but *mestizo* parents continued to complain to the principal, and she was forced to talk to the child's parents and enforce the dress code. Although the teacher expressed regret, this situation illustrates the

systematic marginalization or stigmatization of Totonac identity that is naturalized by the *mestizo* parents' insistence and the teacher's obligation to apply policy uniformly. This marginalization is manifested multiple ways, including the prior existence of the school dress code that does not allow traditional dress, the *mestizo* parents' perception that the child wearing *nahuas* was receiving unfair "special treatment," the eventual enforcement of the dress code that forced the child's parents to purchase a uniform, and the effects of this enforcement action. The enforcement of the policy reinforced the belief of the *mestizo* parents' that allowing the child to wear *nahuas* was somehow unfair to other children, and resulted in the prioritization of practices of *mestizaje*, in this case dress.

The way Totonac and *mestizo* practices, such as dress and language, are organized in the Primaria Benito Juarez is significant because it results in the naturalization of *mestizo* practices and the exclusion of Totonac ones in the education context. Totonac dress is prohibited, and Totonac language is limited to use as a language between students when either working quietly in small groups or at recess. Some policies also work to essentialize the Totonac identity, such as through the segregation of Totonac students in their own class. These policies and practices, reinforced by and reinforcing essentialist ideologies about the perceived appropriate use of each language, position the Totonac language as marginal and deficient for school and other institutional contexts. This positioning may also promote assimilation of Totonac speakers into dominant sociocultural, economic, and political systems. For example, teachers may talk favourably about Totonac for its cultural value and to communicate directly with parents, but the teaching practices and school policies oblige Totonac students to abandon Totonac dress and limit their use of Totonac language. These uses and positionings of each language work to reproduce ethnic and class divisions in the relatively small community of practice of the school, an indexical refraction of the ethnic and class power dynamics that exist in the broader contexts of Huehuetla and Mexico.

The other primary school in Huehuetla, *Primaria Ignacio Ramirez,* is funded by the state of Puebla, rather than the federal government. It is located further from the centre and is much smaller, with a total of 57 students across the six grades (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). I briefly visited this school on November 30, 2016. I was not able to observe a class in this school as they were not in session when I visited, so the description is limited to my observations of the facilities, my conversation with the principal, and an interview with one parent who had come to

also speak with the principal that day. The principal of this school told me that the majority of students come from *las orillas* "the margins" of Huehuetla or from the surrounding communities, an expression I heard many times to refer to where Totonac people live when I would ask people to connect me with Totonac speakers. The principal said this is the reason why the fees at his school are about half those at the Primaria Benito Juarez, and also why the outcomes are lower on standardized tests. He thus implicitly suggests, and I was able to easily interpret his meaning, that this is because a certain type of student comes to his school, one who is likely both poor and of Totonac ethnicity. Through this discourse, the principal reproduces the essentialist *menosprecio* ideology that naturalizes Totonac people as living in poverty and living in more rural areas. The curriculum used is the same federal curriculum used in the other primary school. In Primaria Ignacio Ramirez there is more visual representation of the Totonac language in classrooms compared with Benito Juarez. For example, words and numbers in Spanish and Totonac are written on colorful papers and taped to the wall. There is one teacher who speaks Totonac, who, like the students, was described by the principal as being *de comunidad* "from a community." Although there was more visibility of written Totonac words in the classrooms, the principal indicated that the teaching-learning interactions occur in Spanish. The parent I spoke with, who was from Lipuntahuaca, told me that this school was the only option for her children because there is no primary school in Lipuntahuaca and it was more economically feasible to send her children to Primaria Ignacio Ramirez, than to Primaria Benito Juarez.

Several people told me they want to have a primary school where Totonac language is taught and where some subjects are taught in Totonac. For example, Joaquina, the principal of the Indigenous Preschool, says that this would be beneficial for the students who graduate from her preschool in order to have the opportunity to continue their education in Totonac. The previous president of the OIT from 1992-1995, Josef, commented on the mixed messages and inconsistencies of the representation of Totonac in the school system. He says that schools, even the bilingual schools, actually contribute to language shift because they do not prioritize Totonac willingly, but rather as an obligation.

17) Josef, Oct. 29/16

1 R: *¿Y cree que es posible que se pierde el totonaco en Huehuetla?*
2 Josef: *Pues, se va a perder, pero va a tardar un poquito.*
3 R: *Mhm.*

4 Josef: *Porque los está absorbiendo muy rápido porque es a través de las escuelas. A*
5 *través, aunque las escuelas se promueve la lectura y escritura en totonaco, pero*
6 (clears throat)*, pero como que no tiene mucho eco porque, porque finalmente los*
7 *medios de comunicación, todos son en español.*
8 R: *Mm.*
9 Josef: *Y, y este aunque se escribe las escuelas el totonaco, pero nada más como requisito*
10 *de un programa de trabajo en la escuela.*
11 R: *Mm.*
12 Josef: *Y ya este, que, que se, ya no se escribe, se mandan mensajes por, por celulares*
13 *pero ya todo en español.*
14 R: *Sí.*
15 Josef: *Y ya no usan los jóvenes el totonaco, entonces esto quiere decir que, que no*
16 *tardando mucho tiempo se va a perder. Mient-, pero mientras existan gentes que*
17 *todavía por ejemplo de los que tienen 30, 40, 50 años, su uso diario es el totonaco,*
18 *esos todavía lo van a, lo van a tener. Pero las nuevas generaciones a lo mejor*
19 *dentro de 20, 30, 40 años va a desaparecer. Sí.*
20 R: *O sea, cree que esos jóvenes aunque, aunque son bilingües pero ¿no van a, no van*
21 *a enseñar el totonaco a sus hijos?*
22 Josef: *No creo porque este, para ellos como ven el mundo más grande así de habla*
23 *española, siempre como que le dan más importancia al español. Porque dice no*
24 *pues. Porque muchos me lo han comentado*. (doorbell) *Han ido a la ciudad. Y es*
25 *que se van a ir a otro pueblo y ahí hablan español.*
26 R: *Sí.*
27 Josef: *Sí.* (talks to wife briefly in adjoining room) *Sí. Por eso este, lo veo en un futuro así*
28 *no muy lejano.*
29 R: *O sea aunque hay escuelas bilingües aquí como dice que tratan de enseñar pero no*
30 *hay contexto afuera de la escuela para escribirlo.*
31 Josef: *Sí. Lo que pasa es que también los maestros lo hacen como, como una obligación o*
32 *siendo un programa de estudio.*
33 R: *Mm.*
34 Josef: *No, no lo hacen con la firme idea esa de, de mantener, desarrollar la lengua*
35 *totonaca. Sino simplemente como requisito que pues se los pide la SEP. Se los, se*
36 *los exige el supervisor o el director de la escuela. Pero si tuvieran una intención*
37 *los maestros así de, de que se enseñara efectivamente la lectoescritura del*
38 *totonaco, a lo mejor sería diferente.*
39 R: *Mhm.*
40 Josef: *Y, y, y los maestros se preocupan en la primaria, pasan a la secundaria, casi ya no.*
41 *Otra vez en el bachillerato, no. Llegan a la intercultural, ahí, ahí sí. Pero, pero*
42 *ya…*
43 R: *Es tarde.*
44 Josef: *Se brincaron. Sí. Ya se brincaron dos periodos, que ya no, o sea que no hay*
45 *continuidad. Pero, pero es bueno porque también este, hablar el español significa*
46 *también entender bien lo que significa lo que se anuncia en la televisión, lo que se*
47 *anuncia en la radio, o lo que se puede leer en periódico. Y también porque pueden*
48 *manejar el internet, pueden conocer el mundo. Y, y no es igual que aquél que*

49 *quede. Por ejemplo, nada más con su pura lengua totonaca que, que sería vivir en*
50 *un mundo chiquito. Y este, creo por eso mismo también va a, tiende a desaparecer.*

1 R: And do you think it's possible that Totonac is lost in Huehuetla?
2 Josef: Well, it will be lost, but it will take a while.
3 R: Mhm.
4 Josef: Because it is being absorbed very quickly now because it is through the schools.
5 Though, even though the schools promote reading and writing in Totonac, but
6 (clears throat), but it doesn't have much impact because, because in the end, the
7 modes of communication, all of them are in Spanish.
8 R: Mm.
9 Josef: And well, even though Totonac is written in the schools, but it is only a
10 requirement of a program in the school.
11 R: Mm.
12 Josef: And well, well now, it's not written, messages are sent by, by cell, but they are all
13 in Spanish.
14 R: Yes.
15 Josef: And now the young people, they don't use Totonac anymore. So, this means that,
16 that it won't be long until it will be lost. While, but while there still are people, for
17 example those people who are 30, 40, 50 years old, who use Totonac every day,
18 they will still, they will still have it. But the new generations, in 20, 30, or 40 years
19 it will likely be lost. Yes.
20 R: Then, you believe these young people even, even though they are bilingual, they
21 will not, they will not teach Totonac to their children?
22 Josef: I don't think so because for them how they see the Spanish-speaking world as
23 bigger. They sort of give more importance to Spanish. Because they say so, because
24 many have told me so. (doorbell). They have gone to the city. And well, they are
25 going to go to another town and there Spanish is spoken.
26 R: Yes.
27 Josef: Yes. (talks to wife briefly in adjoining room). Yes. Because of this, I see it
28 happening in the near future.
29 R: Then even though there are bilingual schools here, like you say they try to teach
30 [Totonac] but there is no context outside the school to write it.
31 Josef: Yes. What happens as well is that the teachers only do it as an obligation, or a
32 program of study.
33 R: Mm.
34 Josef: No, no they don't do it with a strong idea of maintaining or developing Totonac.
35 Instead, as only a requirement that SEP [Secretaría de Educación Pública, the
36 federal Ministry for Public Education] asks of them. The school supervisor or
37 director of the school demands it of them. But if the teachers had intentions of
38 effectively teaching Totonac literacy, then it might be different.
39 R: Mhm.
40 Josef: And, and the teachers do it in the primary school, they go on to secondary, hardly
41 any there. Again, in high school, there is none. When they get to the Intercultural
42 [university], there, there is some. But, but it's already…
43 R: It's late.

44 Josef: They skipped. Yes, they already skipped two levels so that there is no continuity.
45 But, but it's good too because well, speaking Spanish means understanding well
46 what is announced on television, what is announced on the radio, or what can be
47 read in the newspaper. And also, because they can use the Internet, they can learn
48 about the world. And it's not the same for the ones who stay. For example, with
49 only the Totonac language that would be to live in a very small world. And well, I
50 think that because of that, it [Totonac] will be, will tend to be lost.

This conversation with Josef is an interpretation of language use in Huehuetla as it relates to social generational change in schooling and technology. Josef links changes in language use and potential future language loss to language policy, particularly language use in schools and how Totonac is taught in schools (lines 4–10, 31–32). Josef is one of the only people I spoke with who believes that Totonac will be lost. According to Josef, teachers view teaching Totonac as obligatory work and teach it in decontextualized ways (lines 31–37). This dismissive attitude is transmitted to students and can reinforce perceptions that Totonac does not belong in schools, or that its use in schools is inauthentic. He states that young people *"ven el mundo más grande así de habla española"* "see the larger world thus, as Spanish-speaking" (line 22–23), as mass media is almost exclusively in Spanish (lines 6–7, 12–13, 44–46). Josef has identified structural and ideological factors in language shift: that Spanish gives access and opportunity through its political and economic positioning as the medium of communication in Mexico, and that students are aware of this and therefore are shifting towards Spanish use. Josef further points out how over the course of a student's career there is a lack of consistency in language pedagogy (line 39–43). A child may have some Totonac instruction in the Indigenous preschool, but they are no longer provided this at the primary level,[25] or in the *telesecundaria* and *bachillerato*, though this may change with the introduction of a new intercultural curriculum (see the next section). At the intercultural university UIEP there is more explicit teaching about Totonac language, linguistics, and culture, but there is no use or very limited use of Totonac as the actual medium of instruction.

The primary schools in the town and municipality of Huehuetla are in an influential position to teach young children for several years. Primary school education affects the development of students' language practices and ideologies at a crucial point in their linguistic

[25] Although Josef seems to suggest there is Totonac programming in primary school, and there certainly is in some of the communities in the municipality, this is not the case in Huehuetla.

and intellectual development, and this can also affect the language practices and ideologies of their families. My observations show that there is room to create more space in primary schools for Totonac children and their cultural and linguistic practices, since at the moment these practices are in some ways marginalized or excluded. This marginalization is grounded in the essentialist ideology that positions Spanish as the natural language of education, to the exclusion of Totonac. Since teachers are all or mostly Spanish monolingual *mestizos* in the primaries, hiring local Totonac teachers might be a way to improve the representation of Totonac people and language in primary education. There are many qualified Totonac teachers in Huehuetla and the municipality as a whole; however, several of them have told me that they are not hired despite their qualifications. The failure to hire these local qualified Totonac teachers might be a result of the deep-seated essentialist *menosprecio* ideologies about who should be teachers that influence hiring decisions. The lack of Totonac teachers in turn reinforces these same essentialist ideologies.

6.2.3 Intercultural curriculum in secondary and post-secondary education

In this section, I talk about state-funded schools that have recently adopted an intercultural curriculum. The schools with an intercultural curriculum that I visited include two secondary schools, the *Telesecundaria Jaime Torres Bodet* and the *Bachillerato Oficial Agustín Melgar,* as well as the *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla* (UIEP). In the Mexican education system, a *secundaria* is a junior high or middle school, and a *bachillerato* is a high school. The UIEP was established in 2006 as an intercultural university, and the two secondary schools were in a state of transition to an intercultural model in 2016. The emergence of intercultural programming in Mexico combines traditional Indigenous knowledge with the perspectives of Western science, an approach sometimes called ethnoscience (López Laínez 2015). The intercultural programs are an effort by the Mexican government to increase historically low levels of attendance and program completion by Indigenous students in the upper levels of education through the representation of their languages and cultures in the curriculum (García & Velasco 2012). While the intercultural program is fairly new, preliminary evaluations show that it has had an impact on enabling students to remain in their home regions, and to study culturally relevant programs, including at the university level (López Laínez 2015). The shift to an intercultural model, in principle, allows for the inclusion of locally relevant cultural and linguistic content. Some aspects of the transition from a Spanish dominant, bilingual model into

this new intercultural program are discussed here. The intercultural programs draw on and reinforce essentialist language ideologies by equating socioeconomic progress with education *(salir adelante),* positioning cultures as bounded units (essentialist), as implied by the term "intercultural," and continuing to privilege Spanish and other international languages like English which Totonac must compete with *(menosprecio)*. Syncretic language ideologies are also apparent in the intercultural program through encouraging the use of Totonac in the state-funded programs where it was not used before, and encouraging Totonac students to teach Totonac to their peers *(negociar categorías, solidaridad comunitaria)*, and providing students with the opportunity for secondary and post-secondary education in their own communities *(solidaridad comunitaria)*.

I visited the *Telesecundaria Jaime Torres Bodet* twice. The first visit was about 2 hours on December 2, 2016, when I spoke with the principal and toured the facilities. I visited again on December 6, 2016, and observed a class for 3 hours. Like the primary schools, education in the *telesecundaria* is almost exclusively in Spanish. One thing that is unique to the *telesecundaria* is that a portion of the content is pre-recorded (in Spanish) and broadcast over the television from the federal *Secretaría de Educación Pública.* The *telesecundaria* has 317 students enrolled across three grade levels (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016), and according to the principal, there are about 170 students (53.6%) who speak Totonac and are from communities surrounding Huehuetla. Several surrounding communities in the municipality do not have a secondary school, so these youth will travel to Huehuetla to attend. Students from outlying communities are often placed in one stream with their peers, mostly Totonac students, and students from the town of Huehuetla in another stream that are mostly *mestizo* students and some Totonac students. Similar to the primary school teacher, the teachers in the *telesecundaria* told me that it was a pedagogical choice to separate students this way because they are better able to meet students' needs. While this may be the case, the pattern also has the effect of organizing the class streams along ethnic lines. When I spoke with students, some held this perception, telling me that the reason they were in a particular class was because they are from a *comunidad*, a discourse that indexes Totonac identity. This perception can in turn reinforce essentialist ideologies that simplify the relationships between Totonac identity and other factors, such as (perceived) academic ability in the context of the school.

In some of the mixed classes with both Totonac and *mestizo* students, students interact with and learn from each other. For example, as part of the start of implementing the intercultural curriculum in the *telesecundaria*, Totonac writing is encouraged. Some Totonac students already know how to write some Totonac from their experience in the Indigenous preschool in Huehuetla, or in their preschool and primary schools in their outlying communities, or with other Totonac text material. I observed students in the seventh grade submitting short creative stories or paragraphs about their daily routine written in Totonac. The *mestizo* teacher I observed knows some Totonac through his career of over 30 years teaching in the *telesecundaria* in Huehuetla, so he is able to read the students' work. At the same time, the teacher stated that sometimes *me bajo al nivel común* "I lower myself to the common level," referring to his explanations of Spanish concepts in the lessons that he would explain in Totonac. Here the teacher is showing sincere support for the use of Totonac. He mentions that sometimes students are paired together, one with knowledge of Totonac and the other without. This positions the Totonac student as a peer-teacher with specialized knowledge. While the teacher is not in a position himself to teach Totonac, by working with the students, they are able to bring the Totonac language into the classroom in a way that valorizes it as a language of education. This activity contributes to the formation of syncretic language ideologies that may support the use of Totonac. For example, Totonac students in the class told me that they want to write in Totonac and that it was important to do so and for their peers to learn from them. The Totonac students who do not know how to write Totonac, as well as the *mestizo* students who also do not know, are interested in writing Totonac and showed enthusiasm for working with their peers on the short stories. This contributes to the emergence and support of syncretic ideologies that not only permit, but also value multilingualism in school and encourage young people to learn and use Totonac in spoken and written modalities, regardless of their ethnicity. At the same time, the teacher makes comments to me that Spanish remains the priority because the upper levels of education are all in Spanish. This comment echoes essentialist hierarchies that position Spanish as the language of education; however, his teaching practices suggest a more syncretic underlying ideology that seems to support the use of Totonac in the class amongst students themselves and encourages the students' creative skills in the language. This is similar to the pre-school teachers at Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz Preescolar Indígena, who carved out space and created materials for Totonac, while continuing to prepare students for more Spanish education.

The teacher of this class has an informative longitudinal perspective because he has been teaching in the school for over 30 years. He has seen transformations in the teaching philosophy and policies of both the school itself and at the broader state and federal levels. One of his comments to me was about the shift between different stages of official policy: *castellanización*, the teaching of Spanish, that characterized his early years; bilingual education policy, that includes Totonac at lower levels while upper levels are offered in Spanish, encouraging transitional bilingualism; to the recent intercultural approach, that offers both a local and international social and cultural curriculum. The teacher observes that the change is mostly in name: the schools were first called bilingual and now they are called intercultural, but Spanish has been and continues to be privileged. At the same time, despite the lack of higher-level support, the teacher and his students are able to collaboratively create space for Totonac in their class. In addition to Totonac, the school is planning to incorporate English classes, a plan that is also due to the new intercultural program. The inclusion of English and other international languages in the intercultural program illustrates how this model may have effects that both support and undermine Totonac language use, because English ultimately takes program space and resources that could be used to support Totonac language programming. While including English and more languages that are not local to Huehuetla is also a syncretic practice, it is possible that some syncretic ideologies and practices may have no effect or may even adversely affect the vitality of Totonac. It is therefore only the specific syncretic ideologies of *negociar categorías* and *solidaridad comunitaria* that I identify as supporting the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac. This also shows that language ideologies are not naturally good or bad, but have specific and particular applications and effects as different people enact them in diverse contexts while building and developing their relationships with each other and with their language(s).

The main high school, *Bachillerato Oficial Agustín Melgar,* currently has 241 students enrolled. Similar to the *telesecundaria,* as one of the only *bachilleratos* in the municipality, this school has a mix of students, including Totonac students from Huehuetla and surrounding communities, as well as *mestizos.* Also like the *telesecundaria*, *Bachillerato Oficial Agustín Melgar* is another upper-level school that is transitioning to an intercultural curriculum. This program was introduced in 2015 and the new curriculum had not yet been widely implemented in the classroom when I visited in 2016. Administration had begun providing professional development for teachers on the new curriculum and implementation was imminent, according to

the principal. I first visited the principal of the *bachillerato* in his office near the central plaza of Huehuetla on October 25, 2016, for about 2 hours. He then arranged to have me visit the site of the school on the northern edge of Huehuetla. While visiting the principal's office, he showed me several of the new curriculum documents. The curriculum outcomes are ambitious, including that all students learn to read Mayan codices, read and write in modern Totonac and Nahuatl, and perform poetry or narratives at the local festivals or school competitions within the four-year program (Cultura y lengua indígena IV 2015). While ambitious and likely also unrealistic, these program goals have some potential to encourage Totonac language use in upper-level education. At the very least, they acknowledge and make space for Totonac in the curriculum. However, *mestizo* teachers from outside Huehuetla would be expected to teach about local Huehuetla Totonac culture. The principal communicated to me that there is some uncertainty amongst teachers about the curriculum changes and that there has not been any formal training as of yet. This is another instance where local Totonac teachers, and their own cultural and linguistic knowledge, can contribute to a government education program. This inclusion can in turn support the local linguistic ecology and Totonac people who would be teaching in their own communities. At the moment, some qualified Totonac teachers have struggled to secure positions in their communities.

I visited the *bachillerato* three separate times, first on October 26, and then again on November 25 and November 26, 2016. Each visit lasted about 2 hours. During the first visit, I was shown around the facilities and introduced to some of the instructors and students, and I was able to have an hour-long conversation with a group of six Totonac students. On the second and third visits, I completed individual interviews with 13 students. With the assistance of the instructors, I presented to a few groups of students in their classes about my research, which generated group discussions. These were not recorded, but detailed notes were taken on the same day following the school visit. Several students at the *bachillerato* tell me that Totonac is good to learn because some businesses are seeking bilingual employees, and the Intercultural university gives out scholarships to students who speak an Indigenous language.[26] I observed that Totonac is spoken by many students in groups at recess. Some students reported to me that they sometimes use Totonac with each other in class, during group work, but that the instructors do

[26] How recipients of the scholarship are selected is unclear and needs further study.

not speak Totonac and all instruction is in Spanish. There are many students who do not speak Totonac, but in the group conversations, some of them told me they want to learn to speak it and are learning it from their peers. The intercultural program thus seems to have the potential to encourage more syncretic multilingual practices as students engage with their Totonac speaking peers and with the new curriculum content. Because the intercultural curriculum is in the process of being implemented, the effects are not yet clear. However, the program represents a shift that recognizes the importance of local Totonac people, their culture, and language, even if these remain compartmentalized as subjects, rather than as the language of instruction.

In addition to Totonac, some students want to learn other languages as well. Luz (17, Nov.9/16) is a student at the *bachillerato* who has a mixed *mestizo* and Totonac family. Some of her older relatives speak Totonac, though she does not visit them regularly. Luz does not speak Totonac, and although she expressed some interest in learning more, she says she does not have the opportunity. In addition, she also said she wanted to learn English, and stated that she thought that her peers who speak both Totonac and Spanish have an easier time when learning English. This seems to give the impression that knowing Totonac might act as a stepping stone to English. In any case, there is interest in learning Totonac and English from students in the *bachillerato*, and they think the new intercultural program is a good thing. The stated interest in learning English is also observed at the *telesecundaria*, as discussed previously. The inclusion of English in the intercultural program, again a syncretic practice, may reinforce the established pattern of bilingual education models where Totonac is a stepping-stone to dominant languages. At the same time, the intercultural program has potential to support Totonac students and the use of the Totonac language by Totonac youth and *mestizo* youth. Several students, including Luz, told me that Totonac should be taught at the school as a dedicated subject; however, they stop short of saying that Totonac should be used as the language of education for other subjects. Indeed, this is how the intercultural curriculum is organized with a specific Indigenous language and culture class, but all other subjects continue to be taught in Spanish (Cultura y lengua indígena IV 2015). The intercultural program, while it recognizes Totonac and other languages, is still based on essentialist ideologies that compartmentalize the different languages, putting Totonac in a specific class and maintaining Spanish as the naturalized language of education.

The *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla* (UIEP)offered the first intercultural program in Huehuetla. It is located in nearby Lipuntahuaca and has played an important role in

developing research, programs, and outreach in not only Huehuetla, but also in the broader Sierra region. This federally funded school opened in 2006 with two main streams of study—language and culture, and agriculture. Since then, the school has changed the name of the agriculture program to "sustainable development," added content in law and human rights to the language and culture program, and added two new programs in alternative ecotourism and forest engineering (Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla 2015; López Laínez 2015). Of the over 500 students that attend, many are from Huehuetla, some from the surrounding region, and some from as far away as Mexico City (Ramírez-Valverde and Pérez Juárez 2014).

The complete undergraduate programs in Totonac language and culture, with a significant portion of the courses taught by local Totonac instructors, is an important new language opportunity. The program portrays Totonac as worth learning at the university level, countering the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio*. There are some classes on Totonac linguistics, sociolinguistic variation, and language teaching that facilitate metalinguistic knowledge that can in turn be applied directly to language learning and teaching. The alternative ecotourism program and the forest engineering program use Indigenous knowledge in their programs and may include some Totonac concepts and words, though they do not give instruction in Totonac language. A venture does not necessarily have to be centrally about language in order to have an important linguistic component that supports Totonac language vitality, such as the *Kakiwín tutunakú* ecotourism initiative discussed in §6.1. Thus, the other programs in the university may also support the language, especially through the spread of syncretic ideologies that encourage the use of Totonac with non-Totonac people. The teaching of Totonac language, culture, and environmental practice creates significant symbolic capital by undermining *menosprecio* discourses and positioning Totonac cultural practices and language alongside Spanish and *mestizo* practices. While certainly not enough to combat or change broader inequitable systems, the intercultural universities are seen by some as somewhat successful, especially because the universities have increased access to post-secondary education for Indigenous students in their own communities (López Laínez 2015). Increased education for students may lead to increased economic opportunities, which supports an indexical association between Totonac and economic progress, since knowledge of Totonac language and/or culture has led them to be able to find good paying work and remain in their own communities.

The UIEP is working to support the Totonac community by organizing *vinculaciones con la comunidad* "links with the community." As part of their programs, students perform service to the community, which can include conducting surveys on living and health conditions, teaching Totonac literacy, and helping practitioners of traditional agriculture in the field. These local experiences help students remain connected to the community while completing their studies, combining formal education in the classroom with learning traditional Totonac values in an interactive community exchange. This is important for changing the patterns of migration of young people out of Huehuetla, first to pursue education and then in search of work. Students of the UIEP are more likely to stay in Huehuetla or the region than those students who have already moved away to study in traditional universities.

I spoke with several Totonac students who attend the UIEP, conducting interviews in a sound booth on campus. Most of the university students explain that they attend the UIEP because of the specific degrees offered and because of the intercultural programming. Totonac students at the UIEP intend to speak Totonac and teach it to their children. For example, Antonio (Nov.15/16) is a 21-year-old language and culture student from Huehuetla, and he wants to teach Totonac to his children because his parents passed it on to him and he wants to do the same. Antonio tells me that as a child at the federal primary school, he would avoid speaking Totonac because he saw how the Totonac children from surrounding communities were discriminated against by the other students for speaking their language. This means he hid his knowledge of Totonac from his peers at school and only spoke Totonac with his family at home. The marginalization of Totonac lessened in the *telesecundaria,* and Antonio's current experience at the UIEP, where Totonac is no longer marginalized, is a stark contrast to what he experienced in primary school as a child. In the UIEP, Antonio says many of his classmates do not speak Totonac but make an ongoing effort to learn it in class and speak it with him. He states he has more confidence speaking Totonac as an adult than as a child, and now speaks Totonac at his job at a shoemaker in the centre of Huehuetla and will now speak Totonac in front of the wealthy *mestizo caciques.* Some *mestizo* students in the language and culture program are motivated to learn Totonac and do not express the *menosprecio* denigration of Totonac observed from other *mestizos.* One of them, Mariel, lives in Huehuetla and she tells me that she wants to learn Totonac in order to become a better community member who can speak to everyone in

Huehuetla, including those who cannot speak Spanish, thereby showing them respect (Nov.18/16).

Antonio also explains that in addition to the jobs that students get after completing their programs, the university generates many other job opportunities in Huehuetla and Lipuntahuaca as students and instructors need accommodations and services. Local landlords, food producers, and taxi drivers are some businesses that have seen growth since demand for their services has increased as a result of the UIEP. When these jobs go to Totonac people who speak the language, this supports language vitality because they are able to make a good living in their community without having to leave. A specific example of the creation of jobs related to language comes from Regina, a young adult Totonac speaker. She tells me that some students in the language and culture program at the UIEP have come to her for tutoring help with their Totonac classes and to practice the language, and she is quite enthusiastic about helping them. This could be considered creative syncretism on Regina's part because she is using the language in new ways at work in the vet clinic and as a language tutor. Her activity creates new indexical links between being Totonac, speaking Totonac, and economic and educational progress. The institutional policies at UIEP have had the positive effect of motivating students and potential students to learn Totonac and also make connections between Totonac speakers as students seek out speakers of Totonac as teachers or tutors for their classes. The key to the success so far of the UIEP program is that they have hired qualified Totonac people to teach the Totonac programs, including many local people from Huehuetla. This has created a demand for Totonac teachers and also a demand for tutors outside class, which in turn creates income for Totonac people, prestige for Totonac as it is taught in an official university program, and new learners of Totonac. These new activities counter essentialist *menosprecio* ideology that does not position Totonac as a language of education or economic opportunity, and this supports the vitality of the language.

Like the other intercultural secondary and high schools, embracing more syncretic, creative, mixed translanguaging practices with students to bring Totonac into the class context and encourage students to use it in new ways can further support language use and vitality by encouraging positive relationships to language in schools, as has been found by Seals and Olsen-Reeder in Māori schools (2020). This would be quite feasible in the UIEP because many of the instructors are Totonac speakers and can continue to incorporate more Totonac in their teaching. The student body at the UIEP is different than in the other intercultural schools, since the latter

have local students from the municipality of Huehuetla, while the UIEP has students from a much wider area. Discussions with instructors at the UIEP reveal that they are typically making decisions all the time about how to write Totonac in their language classes when their students come from across the region and may speak a number of varieties of Totonac with phonological and lexical differences. More study of the use of the standardized writing system by the UIEP and individuals is an important potential future area of research. Perhaps encouraging a flexible approach to orthographic practices grounded in a syncretic ideology, as opposed to strict standardization, can further facilitate growing Totonac literacy. Because the university is still new in the region, more study is necessary to better understand how the UIEP can further support language vitality.

The intercultural schools discussed here demonstrate that there is a tension between *menosprecio* and *solidaridad comunitaria*: the naturalized essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* continues to underlie the programming because Spanish is privileged, even for students who speak Totonac; while *solidaridad comunitaria* is apparent in the discourses that recognize and valorize Totonac and in the fact that some space has been created for the language, or at least for learning about Totonac. At the moment, it appears that *menosprecio* continues to dominate in the intercultural programs, but a class about Totonac is still more than nothing. This tension affects the vitality of Totonac through the ways Totonac is presented and taught in the programming, as well as the motivation of students to learn Totonac and practice it in class, with their peers, and with other people in their families and communities. Both essentialist and syncretic practices and ideologies are seen and shown to have a range of effects. Totonac students are supported in the secondary schools and the UIEP and Totonac is permitted and used in several classrooms, a syncretic practice that valorizes the language. In the intercultural program at the *bachillerato*, Totonac is also positioned as a subject and will be taught by *mestizos,* rather than by local Totonac teachers. This is not ideal because it is a missed opportunity to elevate Totonac people to prestigious roles in education and have members of the Totonac community teach about their own community. While Totonac is being included, Spanish continues to enjoy its status as the primary language of education. These practices and ideologies are essentialist because they maintain Totonac in a marginal position while naturalizing Spanish. The *telesecundaria* shows complexity since both syncretic and essentialist ideologies and practices are at play simultaneously through the separation of students based on their place of origin while

encouraging students to write in Totonac and practice Totonac writing together in class. In the UIEP, the language and culture program centres Totonac and supports students to learn Totonac and to speak it freely on campus. This also has an effect on the symbolic representation of the language, strengthening its status through the creation of a language and culture program that sends the message that Totonac is important and worth studying. There are people taking advantage of the effects of the intercultural programs as they create jobs for themselves as language tutors, which might be considered as grounded in syncretic ideologies because they are creating new roles and positions for themselves and the language, and creating new uses for the language through this activity. Incorporating more syncretic practices may further contribute to Totonac language vitality in the intercultural programs. One such practice would be to further encourage Totonac students to interact in Totonac and teach Totonac to their peers, giving them roles as Totonac language experts. This practice encourages the learning and use of the language itself and communicates an ideology that positions Totonac as a language of education. A second practice would be increased hiring of local Totonac teachers, so that Totonac content is being taught by Totonac people in the intercultural programs. This positions Totonac people as experts whose knowledge of Totonac can contribute to a person's socioeconomic well-being. There are also some independent schools using programs and teaching practices that are supporting Totonac language vitality by creating new relationships between people and language. These schools, two of which are discussed next, have their own funding and most programming independent from the state, and are largely focused on serving Totonac families and other students who want to follow their approach grounded in the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria*.

6.2.4 Independent high schools: CESIK and *Colegio Paulo Freire*

Huehuetla has two independent high schools-—the *Centro de Estudios Superiores Indígenas Kgoyom* (CESIK) and the *Colegio Paulo Freire* (see §3.4 for more details on the founding of these schools). CESIK has some funding from the municipal level of government, while *Colegio Paulo Freire* does not receive any government funding. Both schools have retained control of their curricula, while also spending a considerable amount of effort to get and maintain accreditation from the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* so their graduates can attend university. Unlike the state schools, neither of the independent schools charges any substantial fees and they do not turn students away if they are unable to pay. Instead, the schools seek

sponsors and donations from parents when they are able to pay. The schools function through volunteerism and explicitly teach the value of community service by performing tasks in the community. In addition to the regular state curriculum, the schools have classes on Indigenous rights and provide training that can support young people to eventually open their own businesses in Huehuetla.

Kgoyom CESIK is the OIT owned high school founded in 1994 that operates as a collective. In 2015 there were 16 students attending CESIK (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). The principal, Paulo, was hesitant to allow me to observe the classes, perhaps because I did not have a chance to build up trust over a longer period of time. Unfortunately, this means I cannot provide direct evidence of the school's teaching practices without further field work and as a result there are remaining questions. The information here comes from documents and the interview with Paulo.

The name of CESIK includes the Totonac word *kgoyom* "the slow walking of elders," which is the Totonac name for Huehuetla. This choice of name reflects the school's origin and continued connection to the Totonac community. Teachers and students live at the school, which functions as a large household with each teacher and student contributing to serving the school and performing service in the community, such as *faenas.* In order to operate, CESIK periodically collects small fees and donations from parents, and the school community grows and prepares most of their food themselves or obtains them from local Totonac sources. Recruitment material for instructors indicates that teachers are expected to demonstrate the values of community service through their volunteer roles as instructors. Teachers receive only room and board as compensation for teaching. There are some local Totonac teachers, including Josef's daughter, who is married to Paulo. Josef is one of the original and current continuing members of the OIT, and his daughter's role is an indication of the OIT's continued role in administering the school. Paulo is also a teacher, and he is Nahua from the Sierra region. Other teachers come from the Sierra region, other parts of Mexico, or even further afield including some teachers from the United States, France, and Germany for a term or a year (Paulo Oct.15/16). Because the school is small, only one or two teachers are needed at a time, in addition to the principal who also teaches. On the CESIK blog, the call for volunteer instructors for the 2019–2020 academic year describes the role of the school in the community:

> *Un valor que buscamos preservar en el pueblo de Huehuetla es el servicio a la comunidad como forma de fortalecer el tejido comunitario ante la fragmentación social y la mercantilización laboral* (Kgoyomcesik 2019).
>
> One of the values we want to preserve in Huehuetla is service to the community, as a way to strengthen the fabric of the community against social fragmentation and the mercantilization of labour.

This quote illustrates the ideological foundation of the school connected to the Liberation Theologists, who arrived in Huehuetla in the 1980s and collaborated with the Totonac people in Huehuetla to establish the OIT. The Liberation Theologists aimed to help exploited, poverty-stricken populations escape oppression (Govers 2006; Smith 2004a, 2004b; Wahrhaftig and Lane 1995). The origin in Liberation Theology continues to be visible in the CESIK curriculum, which has a strong focus on teaching students about their rights as Indigenous students (CESIK 2017; Paulo Oct.15/16). The school teaches the standard federal high school curriculum along with locally developed material including Totonac language and culture, traditional medicine, and Indigenous rights (Paulo Oct.15/16).

In a promotional YouTube video, students and instructors describe the school experience as one of living in a family, and as a community that takes pride in local Totonac culture and that is primarily grounded in an ideology of subsistence and performing community service (CESIK 2017). The current principal Paulo and the founder Griselda Tirado describe how they teach these values of community solidarity to students, through the practice of living at the school as a unit of individuals supporting not only each other, but also the school as an institution, and the community (CESIK 2017; Paulo Oct.15/16). Students also specifically mention the importance of learning about their legal rights as Indigenous people, practicing Totonac together, and building community at the school (CESIK 2017). One of the administrators at the Juzgado Indígena is a graduate of CESIK who told me briefly about his experience as a student there. The local instructors speak Totonac in class and teach classes about Indigenous rights with an underlying message of pride and service to the community. This former student said he believes CESIK, the *Juzgado Indígena,* and the OIT, which are interconnected organizations, are important for supporting Totonac language because Totonac-speaking people established and continue to administer these institutions, and they serve many Totonac-speaking people in Totonac.

The people involved in CESIK exploit and reproduce both essentialist and syncretic ideologies in their lives at the school. Syncretic ideology is practiced through the inclusion of Indigenous rights as a key part of the curriculum. This is an acknowledgement of the embedded position of Indigenous people in local, municipal, state, and national Mexican politics. It also enables the school to prepare its students for participating fully in these political systems as informed citizens. This teaching practice certainly defies the essentialist *menosprecio* ideology that sees Totonac people as ignorant, illiterate, and uneducated. While language may not be the central focus of the school curriculum, it is likely that countering *menosprecio* about Indigeneity in general has an effect on language vitality. The students report higher levels of confidence because they know the law, they know what discrimination is, and they know about its effects (CESIK 2017). At the same time, the law places Indigenous people in a category, an essentialist ideology, and this is acknowledged as a reality through the teaching of Mexican law in CESIK. These categories and practices are described as *mestizo*, and not from the Totonac community in which the school is positioned. The school does not ignore or deny the existence of essentialist ideologies, but instead teaches students about them, how Totonac people are affected by them, and how to manipulate and make them work for the community in practical ways. This shows the transmission of the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* in the independent CESIK school. A specific example some students tell me about is that they have been able to cite the law, for example, the *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas* "Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act" passed in 2003, when they have faced linguistic discrimination in the community. These teaching practices reflect creative syncretism because they have been newly created at the school and because they promote use of Totonac and participation of Totonac people in new contexts in education and law that are traditionally Spanish domains. They are also syncretic in that they recognize that learning Spanish can be leveraged in order to support their community as they engage in the legal domain.

The *Colegio Paulo Freire* is the second independent high school in Huehuetla established in 2003. In 2016, there were 56 students enrolled in *Colegio Paulo Freire*, making it larger than CESIK by at least three times (Espinosa Vargas et al. 2016). The school is named after well-known Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who was influenced by Marxist philosophy (Freire 2000). Freire's experience as an educator of impoverished adults influenced his philosophy of education. In Freire's philosophy the student is not seen as an empty mind to be filled with

knowledge, but rather as an active participant in the creation of knowledge (Freire 2000). The teachers in *Colegio Paulo Freire* take a critical approach to education that is meant to equip students with the tools to engage with the world. *Colegio Paulo Freire* uses the complete regular federal curriculum for high schools. In addition, locally developed curriculum materials are also taught, including Totonac language and culture, local history, local ecology and botany, and traditional Totonac medicine taught by Totonac teachers (Barrios Dec.8/16). Language use at the school is multilingual, with both Spanish and Totonac spoken. While Spanish is still present and noticeable, Totonac is a subject of study taught by a Totonac teacher, and the Totonac teachers and students freely communicate in Totonac with each other (Brandi 2018: 113–114; Barrios Dec.8/16). While Barrios is not Totonac himself, he has learned some Totonac because of his 30-year presence in Huehuetla. Two of the other teachers are Totonac graduates of the school who have since returned to teach. Since almost all of the students are also Totonac, the school provides a place for students to gain a high school education with significant use of Totonac language. This practice conveys the message that Totonac is a language of education, alongside Spanish, contradicting essentialist *menosprecio* that positions Spanish as the natural language of education.

Recently, *Colegio Paulo Freire* has also partnered with local and international academics and institutions to promote and develop the Totonac language. These collaborations include Totonac poetry forums and conferences with the UIEP. Students from *Colegio Paulo Freire* are invited to perform their Totonac poetry at the Intercultural University. There is a developing relationship between the UIEP and *Colegio Paulo Freire* as several graduates of the latter have now attended the UIEP. Another example is Lucia Brandi's collaborative work with the *Colegio Paulo Freire* during her doctoral fieldwork. She worked with a group of students to translate and publish a trilingual children's audio storybook called *Tsikan chu Nipxi* "Buri and the Marrow" in Totonac, Spanish, and English (Brandi 2018). The book is published by an established professional publisher Mantra Lingua that has an Endangered Languages series. The choice of both the internationally known story and the publisher are intended to position Totonac as equal alongside English and Spanish (Brandi 2018: 253–254). Working with this publisher has enabled Brandi to promote sales of the book in England, using the proceeds to distribute the book for free in Huehuetla. Students at the *Colegio Paulo Freire* have been using the book with their siblings and parents at home as a literacy teaching tool, facilitated by a talking pen that reads the story

aloud (Brandi 2018: 254).[27] The UIEP stocks the book, and some students at the university distribute and use the book in community literacy outreach in the language and culture program (Brandi 2018: 115). Brandi points out the value of this project on a symbolic level that gives community members control of a means of text production using a new technology. These actions counter the ideology that Totonac, and Indigenous languages more generally, are not suited for use with technology and are not modern or forward looking, as opposed to Spanish, which is (Brandi 2018: 255). This is another example of creative syncretism, as diverse participants came together to create a new language resource and new language and literacy practices for the community. An evaluation of how the children's book project has affected Totonac literacy and language use, or attitudes towards these, will be informative for this and future projects.

One thing that both independent high schools, *Colegio Paulo Freire* and CESIK, have in common is that they teach a significant portion of content in Spanish. Both principals, Barrios and Paulo, comment that this is not necessarily a choice, rather a practical systemic limitation. Both schools aim to prepare their students to apply to and get accepted by universities, meaning they have to teach some state curriculum content. The published resources for teaching this content are exclusively in Spanish and both Paulo and Barrios mention that these topics are taught in Spanish as a result. This lack of curriculum in Totonac is the same barrier to teaching in Totonac that Joaquina identified in her Indigenous preschool *Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz* discussed in §6.2.1. Joaquina says that she remedies this as best she can by creating materials herself where possible and when she has resources to do so (Oct.24/16). There is currently some Totonac curriculum available; for example, the *Programa de Lengua Tutunakú* prepared by the Department of Indigenous Education in collaboration with Totonac academics (2018). However, these resources are mostly for the preschool and primary levels, and the creation of more upper-level content in Totonac is sorely needed.

As I observed in CESIK, in *Colegio Paulo Freire* the teachers and students exploit and reproduce both essentialist and syncretic language ideologies. Barrios and the teachers use syncretic ideology in their teaching practices as they teach Totonac as a subject and also use

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[27] The talking pen, as described by Brandi (p.c.; 2018) is an electronic stylus with a built-in speaker. Users who cannot read written Totonac can use the pen to scan a code on each page, and locally recorded Totonac speakers are heard narrating the story.

Totonac to teach some curriculum. This act positions Totonac as a language of education on par with Spanish. The literacy projects in Totonac, Spanish, and English, like the children's book, also promote the syncretic ideology that Totonac is associated with technology and is not on a lower linguistic level than Spanish and English. Even the very fact that the principal and some of instructors at the school are not Totonac yet participate in the project of serving the Totonac community and promoting Totonac language and culture, demonstrates the underlying belief that identity is constructed through ongoing practice and action, and is not dependent on a person's ethnicity or first language. These beliefs and accompanying actions draw on and reproduce a syncretic language ideology that does not presume natural, essential ethnolinguistic categories of Totonac and *mestizo*. In this way of thinking, the category Totonac becomes less meaningful as an ethnolinguistic category. Instead, the relevant category is based on ideology and action, or whether and how a person contributes to the local Totonac community. Despite this strong syncretic atmosphere, the school does not go so far as to claim that the ethnic and linguistic categories do not exist or are not relevant. For example, the origin of both the independent schools recognizes the relevance of a category distinct from *mestizos*, whether that is based on ethnicity and culture in categories like Totonac and Indigenous, or based on practicing community solidarity. CESIK was originally positioned by the OIT as an alternative to *mestizo* politics, and *Colegio Paulo Freire* is grounded in a pedagogy that acknowledges oppression, in this case that exerted by *mestizos*. Barrios also made comments to me that contrast his school against the schools controlled by and attended by the *caciques* (*mestizo* landowners) that marginalize and exclude Totonac (Dec.8/16). There is therefore a tension between acknowledging the essentialist categories that continue to exist in the systems in which Totonac people are embedded, and the work of the community to protect itself, grow, and repair the harm caused by essentialist *menosprecio* through the sustenance of a way of life that is grounded in community solidarity. Language is a central part of this project through the education provided at the independent schools that explicitly teach Totonac culture, language, and practices that promote community solidarity, alongside Spanish.

Colegio Paulo Freire along with CESIK are two independent schools that actively serve the Totonac community. This is achieved through a combination of tools: a model of the school itself as a community aimed to serve, the local curriculum, and active community outreach and collaboration with allies. The schools remain small in scope in comparison to the state schools;

however, the use of a syncretic ideology appears to be making some progress in promoting Totonac language use in the educational and community literacy contexts. This creative activity encourages respect and pride in Totonac language, which means people see more value and vitality in the Totonac language. Syncretic ideology is also evident because the institutions do not eliminate Spanish but teach students how to use it as leverage in economic and legal contexts. The school is therefore promoting Totonac language vitality through multiple avenues: teaching knowledge of the language in class, practicing the language in new contexts both in and outside class, and positioning the language in ways that counter essentialist *menosprecio*.

6.2.5 Essentialist and syncretic ideologies in education

The analysis of the education system reveals that both essentialist and syncretic language ideologies are not only present but also interact with each other at schools in the language ideological assemblage. All of the schools are grounded in the ideology of *salir adelante*, since education is promoted and viewed as a mechanism for socioeconomic advancement. Spanish is naturalized as the language of education and continues to be centred in this context. *Menosprecio* is apparent in some teachers' negative attitudes towards Totonac students and in some teachers' and even Totonac parents' attitudes towards the place (or lack thereof) of Huehuetla Totonac language in education (for example, teachers in the primary schools and some parents in the Indigenous preschool). While *salir adelante* dominates in the education system and prioritizes Spanish, bilingual and intercultural education programs have created some space for Huehuetla Totonac at school. Teaching about Totonac culture and allowing students to get credit for work completed in Totonac are important first steps to accept and promote multilingualism and shift to an ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria.* However, as the teachers in the intercultural programs are typically not Totonac, the program is delivered through a *mestizo* lens. There are a few exceptions in the Indigenous preschool, the *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla*, and the independent high schools where some instructors are Totonac. Some of these teachers are creating new syncretic practices as they carve out new spaces for Totonac language and create their own materials, which is significant given the essentialist framing of the education system in which they are working. The ideological framing in the intercultural programs also positions international languages, especially English, as important for an intercultural education. The inclusion of international languages is justified on the basis that these languages help students get good jobs in the interconnected national and international markets, which reinforces the ideology

of *salir adelante*. The intercultural program therefore does not prioritize the Huehuetla Totonac language, which must compete with international languages that have vast teaching and curriculum resources readily available. Totonac also remains compartmentalized to its own subject and is not used as the language of instruction, even where it has a presence in the intercultural or bilingual programs, which illustrates an essentialist belief that the languages need to be kept separate. There are two independent high schools (CESIK and *Colegio Paulo Freire*) that are using Totonac alongside Spanish in a more balanced way in the classroom. These schools have classes and activities that are designed to serve students, their families, and the broader community and have created much of their own curriculum that incorporates aspects of both Spanish and Totonac language and culture, reflecting a creative syncretic ideology. The teachers and students code-switch between the languages and have created some new collaborative Totonac literacy materials with their families. These schools remain small but offer a glimpse at what could be possible for the Huehuetla Totonac language in education if *solidaridad comunitaria* is adopted as a guiding ideology in more schools.

6.3 Family and community language socialization

The third context of the linguistic ecology I examine is the family and community, specifically focusing on how the process of language socialization transmits language ideologies that affect the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac. Language socialization is an area of inquiry in linguistic anthropology that emerged out of the need to look beyond the acquisition of linguistic structures (the grammar of languages), but also at the learning of culturally specific ways of behaving as people become competent speakers and members of their communities (Ochs and Schieffelin 2012; Schieffelin and Kulick 2004). Language socialization is fundamentally a contextual, culturally specific, and ideological process, which means it is important to consider for understanding language sustainability and shift, which are also ideological processes (Guardado 2018; Schieffelin and Kulick 2004). Language vitality and sustainability over time are intertwined with the transmission and acquisition of both linguistic structure and language practices in order to maintain a language (Fishman 1991). I therefore use the concept of transmission to refer to both the acquisition of language structure (grammar) and socialization into particular practices and ideologies. To better understand language vitality, it is therefore important to look closely at learners of Totonac and how they are learning not only about language structure, but about patterns of use and underlying language ideologies. Several

personal accounts of language socialization experiences are discussed here to explore how people learn language ideologies.

I explore several examples of people's experiences of multilingual language socialization, first in the family contexts in §6.3.1, and then in community contexts in §6.3.2. Findings show that multilingual language socialization practices are grounded in syncretic language ideologies, while essentialist *menosprecio* ideology contributes to people choosing not to socialize others into Totonac. Language socialization and specifically the learning and reproduction of language ideologies are ongoing, dynamic, interactional processes. In addition, the examples discussed illustrate how language socialization and transmission are not simple transfers of knowledge from older speakers to children acquiring their first language, but are co-constructed social processes that are ideologically mediated. Better understanding the nature of transmission, which is recognized by all models of language endangerment and vitality (see §2.1) and which is enacted in relationship with other people, is therefore important for developing the assessment and the theorization of language endangerment and vitality.

6.3.1 Learning language ideologies through family language socialization

This section looks at language ideologies held by parents, children, and youth related to language use in the family. The discussion focuses on language socialization, in particular on how people perceive their own socialization and how they perceive how they are socializing people in their families. I asked people in interviews about their memories of language learning and use as children and youth, aiming to get at their accounts of this period of language socialization and their interpretations of the language ideologies they were exposed to. Language socialization in the family plays a role in how people learn the patterns of the social use of Totonac language. For example, it may not be enough for parents to speak Totonac to their children in order for those children to use Totonac if ideologies that favour the use of Totonac are not also transmitted to them. The family and the home are important in language transmission and socialization especially because Totonac is marginalized in many other contexts and because the home context is often one of the last contexts of use remaining in language endangerment contexts. This means that studying language socialization patterns, especially through relationships involving children, are particularly important for understanding language vitality (Meek 2019). As pointed out in §6.2, in the state-funded schools Totonac occupies a marginal position when compared to Spanish, even in the bilingual and intercultural programs. The

exception to this may be the centring of Totonac in the independent high schools CESIK and *Colegio Paulo Freire*. Since Totonac is not being learned by children at school to any significant extent, this suggests that other contexts provide more opportunities for them to learn Totonac, for example, in their families and with their peers. Family members and siblings are in an influential position to engage with young children on a daily basis, with the potential to affect the use of Totonac and instill language ideologies that in turn affect language vitality. Although children are young, they are highly aware of the ways they are rewarded or punished for particular linguistic practices. Children are embedded in ideological contexts, just as adults are, and they are not simply passive absorbers of what their parents do. Some of the examples I discuss demonstrate that children are active agents who can access and use language ideologies while engaging in their own linguistic practices.

The first example I discuss shows a family that socialized their child to use both Spanish and Totonac in a balanced way that positions both languages as parallel to each other. In this excerpt from Sol (47 years old), she talks about raising her daughter Regina to speak both Totonac and Spanish. Sol's recollection of language teaching suggests that she used a strategy of parallelism when socializing Regina as a child into bilingualism, stating *"si sabe la mama, pues que le enseñe las dos [lenguas] al mismo tiempo. Se puede. Así aprendió mi hija."* "if the mother knows, well then she should teach both [languages] at the same time. It can be done. That is how my daughter learned."

18) Sol Nov.6/16

1	R:	*¿Qué piensa de los otros niños del pueblo, piensa que deben de aprender el*
2		*totonaco?*
3	Sol:	*Deben de aprender. Yo les digo a las mamás que tienen que aprender totonaco y*
4		*español.*
5	R:	*Sí.*
6	Sol:	*Los dos, sí se puede enseñar los dos al mismo tiempo.*
7	R:	*Sí claro.*
8	Sol:	*Sí se puede.*
9	R:	*Sí claro.*
10	Sol:	*Sí se puede.*
11	R:	*¿Y quién debe tener la responsabilidad de enseñar el totonaco?*
12	Sol:	*Es la mamá la que está en casa.*
13	R:	*Sí.*
14	Sol:	*Es la mamá.*
15	R:	*¿Y de enseñar el español?*

16 Sol: *Pues igual. Si sabe la mamá, pues que le enseñe las dos al mismo tiempo. Se puede.*
17 *Así aprendió mi hija. Mhm.*
18 R: *Entonces ¿le hablaba a su hija también en español?*
19 Sol: *Español y totonaco. Sí. Los dos aprendió. Empezó a hablar así los dos.*
20 R: *Sí.*
21 Sol: *La mamá decía "se fue" "alh"*
22 R: *Mhm.*
23 Sol: *Así lo que te dicen en español y totonaco porque así le enseñé*. (laughs)
24 R: *¿Una mezcla?*
25 Sol: *Ajá.*
26 R: *Sí.*
27 Sol: *Le decía en totonaco y español la misma palabra.*
28 R: *Mm. Ok.*

1 R: What do you think about other children in the town, do you think they should learn
2 Totonac?
3 Sol: They should learn. I tell the mothers that they have to learn Totonac and Spanish.
4 R: Yes.
5 Sol: Both, yes both can be taught at the same time.
6 R: Yes, for sure.
7 Sol: Yes, they can be.
8 R: Yes, for sure.
9 Sol: Yes, they can be.
10 R: And who should have the responsibility of teaching Totonac?
11 Sol: It's the mother who is at home.
12 R: Yes.
13 Sol: It's the mother.
14 R: And for teaching Spanish?
15 Sol: Well, the same. If the mother knows, well then, she should teach both at the same
16 time. It can be done. That is how my daughter learned. Mhm.
17 R: So, you spoke to your daughter in Spanish as well?
18 Sol: Spanish and Totonac. Yes. She learned both. She learned to speak like that, both.
19 R: Yes.
20 Sol: The mom said "she left" *"alh"*
21 R: Mhm.
22 Sol: Like that, they speak in Spanish and Totonac because that is how I taught her.
23 (laughs)
24 R: A mix?
25 Sol: Uhuh.
26 R: Yes.
27 Sol: I would say the same words to her in Totonac and Spanish.
28 R: Mm. Ok.

Sol not only describes how she speaks both languages with her daughter (line 15–17) but also says that she encourages other parents, particularly mothers, to do the same. This teaching and

practicing bilingualism is in contrast to other parents who, like Lupe discusses below, gave up efforts to teach Totonac at home. Sol's use of both Totonac and Spanish with her daughter and her comments about it reflect a syncretic ideology because she recognizes the value of both languages as important for the daily lives of her children and the people she knows. This case shows that it is possible for families to maintain bilingual practices that allow the learning of both Totonac and Spanish.

Significantly, Sol's use of both languages with her daughter did not result in language shift to Spanish for her daughter. This is a result of the ideological context, where the underlying syncretic ideology provided by Sol and her partner presumes a linguistic equality as opposed to the essentialist *menosprecio* belief in a "natural" superiority of Spanish. This belief in linguistic equality is articulated by Sol's daughter Regina (18 years old) who says that she uses Totonac and Spanish in a "50/50" division (Nov.6/16). As an adult, Regina says that she continues to actively seek out knowledge of Totonac by asking her parents about the meanings of words. Regina tells me that her parents helped to motivate her and instill this interest, saying that they tried to *"inculcarnos esa ideología que no nos de pena hablar el totonaco"* "inculcate in us the ideology that we not be ashamed of speaking Totonac." This statement demonstrates an awareness of the underlying ideological component that affects people's linguistic decisions. In her statement, Regina also clearly contradicts essentialist *menosprecio* ideology that positions Totonac as backwards and shameful. This example illustrates the power of parents' language socialization to transmit not only knowledge of the language itself, but also the underlying language ideologies that affect their children's language practices. In this case we see a successful example of a family that has transmitted syncretic ideologies of linguistic equality and multilingualism, rather than essentialist ideologies of linguistic hierarchy and monolingualism (see Lam 2020 for an example of the transmission of negative essentialist ideologies in the Totonac communities of Chicontla and Patla). In addition, the example of Sol and Regina shows that use of Spanish at home does not in itself necessarily lead to language shift, since the underlying ideology through which Spanish is practiced affects the linguistic ecology in the family and it is possible for parents to transmit both Spanish and Totonac in a way that values both languages. In such syncretic language socialization contexts, children, such as Regina, are more likely to acquire and maintain bilingual language practices and ideologies that support the

use of Totonac. Closer study of ongoing language socialization practices could reveal more details about parents' and children's' creative uses of language in relationships such as this one.

In contrast to the syncretic approach to language socialization observed between Sol and Regina, the case of Ernesto illustrates a situation where children were socialized into Spanish first and then parents attempted to teach Totonac. Ernesto (18 years old) is a student at the *bachillerato* who described himself as a non-speaker of Totonac, while his parents are speakers of Totonac and Nahuatl. I interviewed him at the school, and on a later date I went to his home where I interviewed his mother. His case is an example of a youth who has not acquired Totonac (or Nahuatl), despite having parents that speak both languages. I ask him more about his childhood growing up and how he and his family use language.

19) Ernesto Nov.10/16

1	R:	*¿Y por qué piensas que tus padres no te enseñaron hablar el totonaco?*
2	Ernesto:	*Es que cuando yo estaba chiquito, este, mi mamá nos empezaba hablar. Pero es*
3		*que hay unas palabras que son muy chistosas, cómo se dicen muy chistosas y por*
4		*eso yo me empezaba a reír con mi hermano. Y mi mamá no le gustó y ya no nos*
5		*enseñó. Y también como íbamos en una escuela de Lipuntahuaca en el kínder, ahí*
6		*también enseñaban en la primaria, también enseñaban totonaco. Pero nosotros*
7		*nos tuvieron que cambiar aquí a Huehuetla, y ya aquí ya, ya no hablan totonaco,*
8		*ya no enseñan totonaco en la primaria. Y por eso ya no lo aprendí. Nada más con*
9		*algunas palabras que me iba escuchando…*
10	R:	*¿Quieres que aprendan el totonaco (tus hijos)?*
11	Ernesto:	*Sí, me gustaría que aprendieran porque es muy importante. Siento que esa lengua*
12		*ha, este, ha ido agarrando mucho, ¿cómo le diré? Mucho espacio aquí porque*
13		*hay mucha gente que habla y como la mayoría de las comunidades hablan esa*
14		*lengua pues, así se puede uno comunicar con ellos…*
15	R:	*Y ¿quieres que aprendan el español?*
16	Ernesto:	*Sí, porque así se puede uno comunicar con la gente porque la mayoría del centro*
17		*habla español. Nada más en unas comunidades es donde más prevalece más el*
18		*totonaco. La lengua totonaca…*
19	R:	*¿Piensas que está bien que hablen el totonaco?*
20	Ernesto:	*Sí, yo pienso que sí, porque ellos no se avergüenzan de esa lengua y me gusta*
21		*escucharlos aunque no sé hablar, pero me gusta escucharlo y saber que ellos*
22		*siguen su lengua o practican su lengua, siguen hablando en su lengua.*
23	R:	*Está bien.*
24	Ernesto:	*Sí.*
25	R:	*Y ¿piensas que debe de haber clases en totonaco?*
26	Ernesto:	*Yo pienso que sí porque para poder comunicarnos con nuestros compañeros o*
27		*algunas personas.*
28	R:	*Mhm.*
29	Ernesto:	*Mhm.*

1 R: And why do you think your parents didn't teach you to speak Totonac?
2 Ernesto: Well, when I was little, my mom started to speak it to us. But there are some
3 words that are funny, like they are said in a funny way, and because of that I
4 started to laugh with my brother. And my mom didn't like this, and she stopped
5 teaching us. And as well, we went to a school in Lipuntahuaca for kindergarten,
6 and there they also taught Totonac in the primary school. But we had to move
7 here to Huehuetla, and here they don't speak Totonac anymore, they don't teach
8 Totonac anymore in the primary school. And that is why I didn't learn anymore.
9 Only a few words that I would hear…
10 R: Do you want your children to learn Totonac?
11 Ernesto: Yes, I would like them to learn Totonac because it's important. I feel like that
12 language has been gathering a lot of, how do I say it, a lot of space here because
13 there are a lot of people that speak it, and as the majority of the communities
14 speak that language, well, this way you can speak with them…
15 R: And do you want them to learn Spanish?
16 Ernesto: Yes, because that way you can communicate with people because the majority of
17 people in the centre speak Spanish. Only in the communities is where Totonac is
18 more prevalent. The Totonac language.
19 R: Do you think it's good that they speak Totonac?
20 Ernesto: Yes, I think so because they are not ashamed of the language and I like to listen to
21 them. Even though I don't know how to speak, but I like to listen to it and know
22 that they continue their language, or practicing their language, they continue
23 speaking in their language.
24 R: That's good.
25 Ernesto: Yes.
26 R: And do you think there should be classes in Totonac?
27 Ernesto: I think so because, so that we are able to communicate with our peers or some
28 people.
29 R: Mhm.
30 Ernesto: Mhm.

Ernesto remembers his mom speaking to him and his siblings in Totonac (lines 2–4). He says that some Totonac words are "funny," later providing the example of Totonac *chichí* that means "dog" but sounds like a Spanish word for "tit." This behaviour reflects an essentialist *menosprecio* ideology since Ernesto is making fun of Totonac through how it sounds in relation to Spanish, which ideologically marks Totonac and naturalizes Spanish. This is similar to the example of teaching Totonac through a Spanish linguistic and conceptual frame discussed in §6.2.1. Ernesto says that his laughing had the effect of discouraging his mom from continuing to speak Totonac to him (lines 4–5), which is how he explains why his mother did not teach him Totonac. However, based on both interviews with Ernesto and his mother Lupe (49 years old), she may have started teaching Ernesto a little bit of Totonac after he had already learned

Spanish. This change for the child would have created a situation where Totonac was marked and in a position to be compared to his existing and thus ideologically naturalized knowledge of Spanish that was taught to him at home and reinforced at school.

When I asked Lupe during my interview with her about how they as parents had decided on what language(s) to use with their children, Lupe replied that she attempted to teach her children Totonac, but that they were resistant:

20) Lupe Nov.19/16

> *Desde chiquitos yo les enseñaba, pero pues ellos lo tomaban a juegos, empezaban a reír. Y nunca me pusieron cuidado o caso de que aprendieran el, el idioma. Me gusta mucho pero este, ellos no le echaban ganas y me desesperaron y ya no les enseñé.*
>
> Since they were little I taught them, but well they took it as a game, they started to laugh. And they never cared or paid attention in order to learn the language. I like it, but well, they didn't put in the effort and I got tired and then I didn't teach them anymore.

While Lupe claims to have taught them Totonac from a young age, the main language at home was and continues to be Spanish. Lupe corroborates Ernesto's account, saying eventually she gave up trying to teach Totonac because of the children's resistant attitude. Given that socialization is an interactive process, resistance can be difficult to overcome over time without persistence, and parents have many other concerns and issues to deal with as well. Parents in the Totonac communities of Chicontla and Patla describe the same pattern of child resistance, even outright blaming the children and downplaying the role of parents in language socialization (Lam 2020: 173–174). Lupe says that her children regret what happened now but place the responsibility on her: *Y ahorita ya se arrepienten. Me dicen «Mami, nos hubieras enseñado.»* "And now they regret it. They say to me, 'Mommy, you should have taught us.'" While children certainly do not carry all the responsibility for the vitality and maintenance of Totonac, this example shows that both youth and their parents are aware that children play an active role in learning and using Totonac, and it also shows that even young children have language ideologies and that their linguistic choices are also analyzed by speakers. Although both Ernesto and his mother report that he had a negative attitude towards learning Totonac as a child, this appears to have changed as he got older, as he now claims that he wants his children to speak Totonac (lines 10–11) and that there should be classes in Totonac (lines 25–28). Ernesto's language ideologies have thus seemed to change over time, from essentialist *menosprecio* shown through outward

mocking of the language as a child, to a now more syncretic belief shown through a respect for and desire to learn the language as a young adult.

In another multilingual family, a different pattern of language socialization is observed from what is seen in Ernesto's family. In this case, Totonac was transmitted to the older children, but not transmitted to the youngest children. Alex (23 years old) is the youngest of five siblings and he claims his mother and older siblings speak Totonac, but instead chose to speak Spanish with him.

21) Alex Nov.1/16

> *En mi caso mi mamá hablaba totonaco, pero, pues, habla totonaco, pero mis hermanos cuando estaban y yo estaba chiquito, pues ellos me hablaban en español. Nunca me hablaban en totonaco y mi mamá casi no, casi también no me hablaba en totonaco.*
>
> In my case my mom spoke Totonac, but, well, she speaks Totonac, but my siblings when I was little, well, they spoke to me in Spanish. They never spoke to me in Totonac, and my mom hardly at all, my mom didn't speak to me either in Totonac.

In Alex's case, his family did not socialize him into Totonac use, despite their ability to do so. Alex also tells me that his mother speaks Totonac to his older siblings, and his siblings use both Spanish and Totonac with each other, but none of them use Totonac with Alex. Alex's mother has different language practices with her older children than with Alex. The older siblings also have a role in socializing the younger children, as they get older and if their parents have more children. In some cases, siblings may even play a larger role than parents, especially for younger siblings in large families where their older siblings may be more involved in the care of the younger ones. Alex says that he learned some Totonac simply by listening to his siblings, mom, and other people speak. For example, he would assist his mother to sell produce and soaps in the market and his mom would speak to many people in Totonac, exposing Alex to some Totonac and facilitating a degree of mostly passive knowledge. Alex is a second language learner of Totonac and he tells me that he has started to practice with his Totonac-speaking friends, asking them questions. Both essentialist and syncretic ideologies are observed here. The Spanish monolingual language socialization practices of Alex's siblings and mother stem from essentialist ideologies. On the other hand, exposure to Totonac in other contexts has led Alex himself to express beliefs that reflect a more syncretic ideology, as he shows an active interest in bilingualism as a young adult. This case illustrates the dynamic nature of language socialization

as children move in and out of the different contexts in their lives and learn a range of language practices and ideologies.

These examples illustrate the highly dynamic nature of language socialization, as well as the agentive role of children, youth, and parents who engage in an ongoing interactive linguistic exchange as children learn their languages and their language ideologies. Understanding how both language structures and language ideologies are interactionally constructed, transmitted, and used, particularly by considering the agency and responsibility of children themselves, as well as those who socialize them, can help us more effectively support people to learn and use the language, thus contributing to language vitality. In addition to the family, the community also socializes children into language practices and ideologies. Since socialization is the mechanism of transmission of language and language ideologies, this provides evidence that supports the conceptualization of language vitality as relational because socialization is carried out through social relationships. The topic of language socialization in community, outside the context of the home and immediate family, is taken up in more detail next.

6.3.2 Learning language ideologies through community language socialization

While the home is often viewed as the core context in which language socialization occurs, language and language ideologies are also transmitted and learned in community contexts. Here I discuss the role of *compadrazgo* as an important socioeconomic system that provides ongoing opportunities for language socialization in a community context beyond the immediate family. The central plaza and some workplaces in the town of Huehuetla are also discussed. Both essentialist and syncretic ideologies are apparent in these community contexts in which learners are embedded as they are socialized. Studying language use and ideologies outside the home context can inform the understanding of language vitality because it gives a fuller picture of how and where socialization occurs.

The *compadrazgo* system of socioeconomic networks is an important contributor to community language socialization. *Compadrazgo* is a system of socioeconomic networks established when parents choose godparents for their children. This is a strategic step in supporting the child and their families because *compadres* are expected to provide regular economic gifts and facilitate social connections as the child grows up. The *compadrazgo* system has shaped the social relationships and language socialization opportunities and practices between Totonac people, and between Totonacs and *mestizos*. This is made even more relevant

because the practice of choosing *compadres* has undergone changes that have affected these social networks and therefore the language socialization that occurs in those networks. As discussed in the historical background in §3.2, Totonac people would choose other Totonac people as *compadres* or sometimes the Catholic priest, simply because that is who lived in Huehuetla (Smith 2004a). However, when more *mestizos* settled in the region after the Revolution in 1910, some Totonac parents would seek out the wealthy *mestizos* (Govers 2006:109–110). These Spanish-speaking *mestizos* would speak Spanish with their *compadres* and encourage them to speak Spanish with their children, a relationship based on a hierarchical essentialist *menosprecio* ideology. More recently, as the socioeconomic integration of Huehuetla has accelerated in the latter half of the 20th Century, more Totonac people are choosing other Totonacs in the community as *compadres*, rather than *mestizos.* Migration and the changing local economy have motivated some parents to choose Totonac family members and friends who are employed in Huehuetla, such as Joaquina, or who live and work in the city (such as Carla's adult children who are *compadres* to several families in Huehuetla). When parents choose Totonac-speaking *compadres*, such as Joaquina, this exposes their children to more Totonac language socialization because these *compadres* often speak to each other and to their godchildren in Totonac. I observed Joaquina do this with her *compadres* and her godchildren throughout my field visit. Joaquina assisted me in finding people to interview, mostly drawing on her network of *compadres* because I told her I wanted to speak with bilingual people, and her *compadres* generally speak Totonac. Thus, *compadrazgo* significantly affected the structure of field work in this study. She joked with me about the number of *compadres* she has, greeting many people in Totonac as we walked through Huehuetla as *comadre* or *compadre*. Even a small number of economically well-off Totonac-speaking people in Huehuetla can have a significant influence on language socialization if they have a large *compadrazgo* network, like Joaquina. Because *compadrazgo* is a long-term relationship, the potential influence on language practices and ideologies should be recognized and studied further. As children and their families establish *compadrazgo* relationships with other Totonac people, this creates opportunities for socialization into Totonac language use and socialization into a syncretic language ideology of respect for Totonac, without necessarily excluding Spanish. These changing patterns of *compadrazgo* that are creating socioeconomic relationships between Totonacs are disrupting the socioeconomic control and dominance of the *mestizos* in the region (Govers 2006). Through this process, an

ideological association between Totonac language and socioeconomic progress is created and reinforced, contributing to the reproduction of the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria.* This in turn contradicts the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* that associates Totonac with backwardness and poverty.

The second context I will talk about is the general public domain of the streets and plaza. Although the home is typically assumed to be the context where languages are transmitted, people can learn language structures, usage patterns, and language ideologies in other interactions, including in public contexts. Joaquina is an example of a person who learned how to speak Totonac from her peers outside the home, rather than with her parents in their home, and she is keenly aware that knowledge of the Totonac language does not necessarily come from having Totonac-speaking parents. Joaquina's claim to Totonac is very personal and represents a significant amount of conscious effort and motivation in order to learn Totonac as a youth in public contexts. Here Joaquina explains how she learned to speak Totonac:

22) Joaquina Oct.24/16

> *Y con ellos [niños vecinos] apren-, iba yo a jugar y yo no me entendía con ellos…Ellos hablaban en totonaco. Entonces este, eh, nació en mí esa inquietud o sea, de aprender. Y todas las noches yo le preguntaba a mi papá y "¿cómo se dice y qué significa?"… me fui a estudiar para maestra y este, cuando ingresé al servicio llegué a una comunidad…[y] de los 25 niños que tenía, solamente dos niños hablaban español. Todos hablaban totonaco. Entonces, también el interés mío por aprender.*
>
> And with them [neighbour children] I learned, I would go and play, and I didn't understand them…They spoke Totonac. So then, eh, this unease was born in me to, well, to learn. And every night I asked my dad "how do you say this and what does it mean?"…I went to study to be a teacher, and when I entered service I went to a community…and of the 25 children I had, only two spoke Spanish. They all spoke Totonac. So, also [I had] my own interest in learning.

Joaquina describes how her father became a source of metalinguistic knowledge but did not use Totonac with her. She also notes the importance of personal motivation in her language learning, as knowledge of Totonac became something that Joaquina needed as she started to pursue her role in Indigenous education. This echoes the discussion in the previous section about children at home, showing that learners, in this case young adults, have agency in what they do with the linguistic input they get. This evidence also supports the claim that language socialization can and does occur outside the traditionally cited intergenerational context of the home domain. They may even actively seek out language learning opportunities, as Joaquina has done. Actively

seeking out Totonac language learning opportunities is grounded in a syncretic ideology that not only sees value in Totonac for its communicative and heritage value, but its potential to further her career and ambition to help Totonac children, in Joaquina's case. Joaquina could have chosen to exclusively use Spanish in the class of Totonac-speaking children she references in her interview above. Instead, she made the choice to value their knowledge of Totonac language, rather than position them as ignorant for not knowing Spanish, as would be expected from an essentialist *menosprecio* perspective. Joaquina's active pursuit of Totonac knowledge in a community context and her application of this knowledge to her career contradicts essentialist *menosprecio* ideology that marginalizes Totonac in public and in the context of education.

The next context I will talk about here is new workplaces, especially in the centre of Huehuetla. This is a context that is associated with Spanish use, but that has recently been changing as Totonacs have found new space for themselves in some businesses and jobs in which their knowledge of Totonac is a sought-after asset. As people interact with Totonac speakers who use the language in their workplaces, this important and prestigious social context becomes associated with Totonac, creating opportunities for the development of new language forms for the new contexts and the transmission of ideologies that disrupt essentialist *menosprecio* ideology. I return to Regina, who is an example of multilingualism for other potential speakers. Regina uses Totonac in a range of contexts in Huehuetla, often alongside Spanish, including at home, at work in the veterinary clinic, at school, and in other contexts with her peers. At work, many of her clients come in from the *rancherías*, which are small rural settlements, to get medicines for their livestock. Some of these clients speak more Totonac than Spanish, and they actively seek out the clinic where Regina works because she is able to serve them in Totonac. Although the clinic is owned by *mestizos*, their approach to language in business is more ideologically syncretic than essentialist, allowing and even encouraging the use of Totonac, alongside Spanish, in order to grow their client base. Their motivation is not necessarily out of a respect for the language so much as because it makes business sense, and this may change if more people in the municipality learn Spanish from a young age. At the same time, Regina has noticed that some *mestizo* people from the centre, such as her employers, have even learned basic Totonac expressions related to greetings, buying, and selling. This is a significant observation, as it illustrates how *mestizos* have altered their language behaviour over time. Before 1954 when the first primary school provided a larger portion of Totonac people

with the opportunity to learn Spanish as children, *mestizos* may have had to learn some Totonac out of necessity. However, since most Totonac people now have at least some primary education in Spanish, this is less of a necessity and most *mestizos* do not want to learn any Totonac anymore, believing in the essentialist ideology of the linguistic superiority of Spanish. This example in Regina's workplace shows that not all *mestizos* embrace essentialist *menosprecio* to the same degree, as her bosses use some Totonac even though they have no need to themselves, having hired Regina. This example shows use of Totonac in the new workplaces that is socializing other people to accept and use Totonac in this context, even some *mestizos*.

In this section, the importance of considering language socialization in community contexts outside the home is shown through several examples that illustrate how people actively seek out social interactions in order to learn or teach language structures, practices, and ideologies. *Compadrazgo* social networks, and community contexts such as peer groups in the street or plaza and the workplace, are all important sites where language socialization occurs and the workings of language ideologies are at play and apparent. The essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* that Spanish is the natural public language is in tension with syncretic ideologies that position Totonac as valuable for public communication. Children, youth, adults, and second language learners all actively engage in the interactive processes of language use through which language socialization occurs. This approach recognizes that language transmission, the learning of both language structures and ideologies, is a life-long process of socialization that occurs across social contexts, not limited to parent-child dyadic interactions (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a). Recognizing and studying a range of language socializing contexts outside the home helps us to know more about the local language ecology and how people understand the roles and importance of the languages they speak. This ideological analysis and understanding of the transmission of language and language ideologies allows us to better assess language vitality in Huehuetla. This is made possible through understanding the relational character of language vitality and identifying specific sites and strategies through which people can be supported to use Totonac language.

6.4 Conclusion: *Solidaridad comunitaria* and the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac

Language ideologies in three aspects of the language ecology of Huehuetla are discussed in this chapter: the *Kakiwín tutunakú* ecotourism business, the education system, and language socialization. I show that particular syncretic language ideologies of *negociar categorías* and

solidaridad comunitaria are present where I also find more people using Totonac or talking about Totonac in creative, respectful ways. This suggests that the syncretic language ideologies are supporting people to use their language by both creating new opportunities to use the language and spreading ideologies that valorize the language. Syncretic ideologies and practices overlap, merge, or mix the two main identities of Totonac and *mestizo*, including normalizing multilingualism, such as in the tourism business. Significantly, there is often a central element of creativity where I find syncretic ideologies: people create new patterns of language use as they use the language in new domains, and they create new combinations of practices from both Totonac and *mestizo* identity categories as they work to build balance within many contexts that have historically positioned Spanish and *mestizos* as superior to Totonac and Totonac people. *Solidaridad comunitaria* also counters the denigration of the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* by promoting respect. These effects of syncretic ideologies are important for language vitality because they allow people to leverage all their linguistic resources, supporting them to fully engage with people in the complex linguistic ecology in often new and creative ways. Essentialist ideologies underlie the identity categories that are at play in Huehuetla. People make ideological indices between Totonac and farming, manual labour, living in poverty, being uneducated, and practicing Totonac culture. Other essentialist ideological indices are created between Spanish, education, government, and social and economic progress. At the same time, there are people who operate through more or less syncretic language ideologies and who view Totonac as an integral part of daily life. Some creative new business endeavors are generating an association between Totonac and progress. The *Kakiwín tutunakú* business uses linguistic and semiotic indices of Totonac identity in its advertising, both in order to authenticate their business and also position Totonac people as successful entrepreneurs and teachers, which is a newly created role that did not exist before. The way Totonac people are pictured interacting as equals with their guests reframes expectations about who Totonac people are. The syncretic ideology used by the business owners does not necessarily deny the existence of the essentialist categories of Totonac and *mestizo,* but contends that these categories can be overlapped, merged, and contested in multiple creative ways. In fact, people in *Kakiwín tutunakú* continue to exploit essentialist categories because their guests are familiar with them. People use syncretic ideologies alongside essentialist ones as they draw on multilingual resources and a range of practices in order to position identity categories in new ways that challenge the perception that

their definitions are fixed and impermeable. As the hosts draw on multilingual resources in both their advertising, and the activities they lead their guests in, the understanding of what kind of language Totonac is and who Totonac people are is (re)created on the hosts' terms. The ecotourism business practices syncretic community solidarity by treating their guests as learners of local cultural practices, and by building socioeconomic networks between women and their families in the local Totonac community. These syncretic ideologies and practices that I observed in Huehuetla demonstrate what Perley has called "emergent language vitalities" (2011), and more recently "Indigenous translocality" and "Indigenous cosmogonies," which are "emergent world-making relations" (2020: 977–979). The multiple ways in which people are creating new roles for themselves and new roles and uses for their language shows how they are actively engaged in creating circumstances that allow for their own cultural continuity, not through stagnation, but through their transformation in a dynamic context.

People also use both essentialist and syncretic ideologies in the education system. The centring of Spanish in the state-funded schools is grounded in essentialist beliefs about the "natural" superiority of Spanish for this role. Intercultural schools engage with essentialist ideologies by separating Spanish and Totonac, and compartmentalizing Totonac into its own dedicated subject, and continuing to use Spanish as the main language of instruction. However, some people in the intercultural programs also draw on syncretic ways of thinking and acting through the inclusion of Totonac language in the classroom where Spanish has predominated, and allowing Totonac students and instructors a role in teaching Totonac language. These syncretic practices counter essentialist *menosprecio* ideologies that exclude Totonac language from education and Totonac people from the role of teachers. In independent schools, we see another example of a syncretic ideological strategy. Teachers recognize that learning Spanish is necessary and has educational value, but they do not accept the essentialist *menosprecio* belief that Totonac does not also belong in the education system. In addition, teachers see the teaching of Spanish as not only useful for learning things, but also for equipping students to be able to protect themselves. Knowledge of Spanish, and teaching about how Mexican law (which is written in Spanish) applies to Indigenous people, is an important tool that provides Totonac people with a means to avoid exploitation by *mestizos.* The independent schools also aim to instill a sense of pride in local language and cultural practices that counters essentialist *menosprecio* beliefs that Totonac is associated with social problems such as poverty. The

community outreach undertaken in the independent schools puts the syncretic ideology *solidaridad comunitaria* into practice, as students learn that they can make a difference for the Totonac community.

The final context discussed in the chapter is language socialization. The transmission and learning of language ideologies occurs through complex semiotic processes during language socialization. A few case studies highlight the agency of learners in the socialization process, and the way people's social interactions create opportunities for ideological reproduction and transformation. Choosing Totonac *compadres,* rather than *mestizos,* creates a new ideological association between Totonac language and socioeconomic progress, contributing to the reproduction of the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria.* This in turn contradicts the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* that associates Totonac with poverty. Children may express the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* at a young age, since *menosprecio* is widely present and implicit in many situations; however, some examples discussed illustrate that children's ideologies can also change to become more syncretic as they are socialized over time. Totonac people who seek out opportunities to learn the language also demonstrate an underlying ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* that disrupts the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* because they are motivated, and this conveys the message that the language is important and worth the effort to learn, even as an adult. Language socialization is therefore a key relational process that affects language vitality, since it affects both the acquisition of language structure and the learning of practices and ideologies that directly affect language use. This has implications for models of language vitality that can be improved by considering the dynamic, relational, and non-linear nature of language socialization. Because language socialization is the mechanism by which language is acquired and language ideologies are learned, these learning processes are also not linear; however, understanding the transmission and learning of language ideologies is important for assessing and supporting language vitality. All three ecological contexts discussed in this chapter—ecotourism, education, and socialization in family and community contexts—demonstrate how Totonac people exploit both essentialist and syncretic language ideologies in dynamic and creative ways. Language vitality, the relationship between people and their language(s) that is affected by language ideologies, is bolstered when people create or are offered an alternative to the essentialist ideology of *menosprecio* that is grounded in a sense of respect for oneself and the community, what I have called s*olidaridad comunitaria.* This is a

syncretic ideology that does not necessarily assume that the essentialist categories of Totonac and *mestizo* do not exist. Instead, this syncretic ideology allows people to draw strategically from the essentialist categories for the symbolic construction of identity categories in different contexts, while encouraging the redefinition of these same essentialist categories around attitudes and practices, rather than stable categories. Although *solidaridad comunitaria* is about more than language, language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac is supported by this ideology because it allows for summative multilingualism and does not demand monolingualism in Totonac. This makes room for a range of kinds of speakers and learners of Totonac to be community members or engage with the community in new and creative ways, such as in the ecotourism, education, and language socialization contexts presented in this chapter as evidence. This positive participation and engagement with the language and the community is defined around learners' attitude, rather than their ethnicity or their knowledge of the language. Language vitality is grounded in these relational ideological patterns because they create positive associations with the language, position Totonac people as experts, and encourage anyone interested to learn and support the language and the community.

7 Discussion and conclusion: Applying the essentialist-syncretic language ideological assemblage to the theorization of language vitality

In this dissertation I examine people's language ideologies and where and how they enact these ideologies in the linguistic ecology of the community of Huehuetla, Puebla, Mexico. The main research question I answer is how people's language ideologies and their enaction in the linguistic ecology are related to the language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac. Using ethnographic methods, I study language ideologies by examining people's discourses about their own and others' use of Huehuetla Totonac and Spanish, as well as their language practices, in several contexts across the linguistic ecology, including homes, schools, businesses, and public spaces. I find that language vitality is relational, based on people's relationships to each other and their language(s). These relationships are dependent on how people perceive and interpret themselves, other people, and their own and others' language use, a process which is grounded in language ideologies. This interpretation of language vitality centres people, and suggests that the factors identified in existing models of language vitality, in particular intergenerational transmission, are therefore also dependent on people's relationships and ideologies. I identify language ideologies in Huehuetla by analyzing semiotic processes and I find specific ideologies that support people to use Huehuetla Totonac. I use my findings about the dynamic relationship between people, language ideologies, and language use to define language vitality in Huehuetla around syncretic language ideologies. I also use these findings to theorize language vitality more broadly: language vitality has a central ideological component through which language is practiced and interpreted, taking on meaning as people engage with each other and their language(s) in the linguistic ecology.

7.1 The language ideological assemblage and the role of *solidaridad comunitaria*

My analysis shows that syncretic ideologies are central to language vitality in Huehuetla because they normalize the use of Huehuetla Totonac and multilingualism in Huehuetla Totonac and Spanish. While essentialist ideologies define languages and groups as discrete and bounded identity categories that promote monolingualism in either Totonac or Spanish, syncretic ideologies do not presume that identity categories have strict boundaries and allow for creative combinations of features and practices associated with different identities. Syncretic ideologies promote respect for Totonac people, culture, and language, and they also counter some

essentialist ideologies that motivate language shift. This creates a dynamic situation where essentialist and syncretic ideologies are interacting and creating tensions as they play off each other: syncretic ideologies that blur category boundaries and normalize summative multilingualism counter the idealistically defined categories promoted by essentialist ideologies. The dialectical relationship between essentialist and syncretic ideologies can be represented in a figure made of intersecting circles (see Chapter 5 Figure 6). The syncretic ideology allows for merging, overlapping, and combinations (syncretism) of the essentialist categories of Totonac and *mestizo* identities (*mestizos* are Spanish speakers who do not identify as Indigenous, but have some Indigenous ancestry). Syncretic ideologies reflect a more flexible and summative way of interpreting identity through practice and performance, rather than as bounded, natural, and exclusive essentialist categories. Essentialist ideologies (*menosprecio* "denigration" and *salir adelante* "to get ahead") affect language use in Huehuetla, and some of them work to motivate language shift to Spanish. Syncretic ideologies (*negociar categorías* "to negotiate categories" and *solidaridad comunitaria* "community solidarity") reinforce a favourable perception of Huehuetla Totonac and summative multilingualism, which motivates and supports people to use the language. My analysis of Huehuetla reveals that the syncretic ideologies of *negociar categorías* and *solidaridad comunitaria* are central to the vitality of Huehuetla Totonac because they promote multilingualism and counter the pressure to shift to Spanish promoted by the essentialist ideologies of *menosprecio* and *salir adelante*. The presence of *solidaridad comunitaria* in several contexts in the linguistic ecology where people are using Totonac, sometimes in new and creative ways (such in the creation of new businesses connected to Totonac language use), demonstrates the importance of syncretic ideologies for creating new positive relationships people and their language, thereby supporting language vitality.

In order to identify language ideologies, I analyze semiotic processes in the discourses and practices of community members, developing the framework of essentialist and syncretic ideologies to describe how their beliefs and behaviours index two main types of language ideologies, essentialist and syncretic. My classification of language ideologies into essentialist and syncretic types allows greater insight into how different language ideologies are related to each other in a complex language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018). Essentialist ideologies naturalize the link between identity and language: people who hold essentialist ideologies assume that Totonac people speak (only) Totonac and *mestizo* people speak (only)

Spanish, contributing to the formation of the identity categories of this language ideological assemblage. The ideology of *menosprecio* positions Huehuetla Totonac as a language, or a "dialect," of the past that is linguistically and socially inferior, and even a source of shame. In contrast, Spanish is positioned as a superior and modern language that is the legitimate language of the nation of Mexico. *Menosprecio* is pervasive and subconscious, as is evident in how some Totonac speakers defer to Spanish and may accept the belief that Huehuetla Totonac is not a language of the future or a language that can help their children get ahead. The ideology of *salir adelante* "to get ahead" centers socioeconomic progress as a key value. The interaction of *menosprecio* and *salir adelante* naturalizes the associations between Spanish and socioeconomic progress and Huehuetla Totonac and poverty. These ideologies may motivate people to learn Spanish and simultaneously leave behind Totonac.

I also find that people who hold syncretic ideologies do not deny the existence of identity categories, and in fact they make reference to the categories of Totonac and *mestizo* as they blend or merge these categories on the ideological plane. Unlike essentialist ideologies, syncretic ideologies do not presume that identity categories are naturally bounded, and they are more sensitive to the ongoing and dynamic linguistic choices people are making in their social interactions. *Negociar categorías* is an ideology that reflects people's dynamic navigation of the linguistic ecology. An essentialist perspective does not capture the complexities of life for people living in a multicultural and multilingual community, and from a syncretic perspective, categories can have fluid boundaries or overlap as they are constructed through the processes of social practice and the creation and maintenance of relationships. Through the syncretic ideologies in Huehuetla, Totonac group membership is defined through an ideology and practice of service and respect enacted through relationships in the community that normalizes multilingualism. Service is the foundation of the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria*, and it is demonstrated through showing respect, maintaining social networks, performing official roles and duties, and participating in community-run or independent organizations and schools. Many relationships between Totonac speaking people are maintained through these activities, supporting their continued use of Totonac. People who hold the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* believe that when others speak Totonac to you, speaking back to them in Totonac is important for showing respect if the person being addressed also speaks Totonac. The expectation to show respect through speaking Totonac has the effect of challenging Totonac

speakers who are shifting to Spanish, denaturalizing their choice to not speak Totonac to Totonac people. *Solidaridad comunitaria* also normalizes multilingualism, since it centers community and individual well-being through the use of all available linguistic resources. This means that Totonac people who are monolingual Spanish speakers due to the lack of an opportunity to learn Totonac (for example, having migrated as children) are not automatically excluded from the community because they do not speak Totonac. The normalization of multilingualism also means that Spanish is used strategically to further community interests, such as in business and legal contexts, and this use of Spanish is not seen as a problem for Totonac community membership because it is grounded in an ideology that supports the community.

The combinations and interactions of essentialist and syncretic language ideologies that form the essentialist-syncretic language ideological assemblage can be seen in several contexts in the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla: ecotourism, education, and language socialization. The *Kakiwín tutunakú* ecotourism business demonstrates a multilingual endeavor that positions Huehuetla Totonac as a socioeconomic resource, allows outsiders to learn about Totonac culture from Totonac people in a mutually respectful way, and is providing income to a large group of Totonac women and their families. Teaching Totonac in this context is significant because it presumes that Totonac should be taught to outsiders and it positions Totonac people as experts in relation to their guests. In their advertisements and activities there is a new and creative syncretic multilingualism and a coexistence of Totonac hosts and their outsider guests that index *solidaridad comunitaria*. There are several new and creative combinations of Totonac people and outsiders, and Totonac and Spanish language that illustrate how syncretic ideologies allow for the transformation of identity categories. At the same time, identity and language are essentialized as the authors authenticate the business as Totonac through the use of Totonac language and other semiotic resources that index Totonac culture to their potential guests. Because it is a business, *Kakiwín tutunakú* also draws on the essentialist ideology of *salir adelante*, but by creating new associations between Huehuetla Totonac and socioeconomic progress, it also denaturalizes the exclusive connection of Spanish to *salir adelante* by countering the *menosprecio* association between Totonac and poverty. Therefore, the essentialist ideologies are creatively redefined as they interact with syncretic ideologies through people's creation and development of new relationships between themselves and their language(s).

The analysis of the education system also shows interactions between essentialist and syncretic language ideologies. The schools are founded on the ideology of *salir adelante*, since education is promoted and viewed as a mechanism for socioeconomic advancement. Spanish is naturalized as the language of education and continues to be centred in this context. *Menosprecio* is apparent in some teachers' negative attitudes towards Totonac students and in some teachers' and even Totonac parents' attitudes towards the place (or lack thereof) of Huehuetla Totonac language in education. While *salir adelante* dominates education and prioritizes Spanish, bilingual and intercultural education programs have created some space for Huehuetla Totonac at school, and many individual teachers are creating their own materials and lessons that incorporate Totonac. Teaching about Totonac culture and allowing students to get credit for work completed in Totonac are first steps to accepting and promoting multilingualism and shifting to an ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria.* However, as the teachers in the intercultural programs are typically not part of the Totonac community, the program is delivered through a *mestizo* lens. There are a few exceptions in the Indigenous preschool, the *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla*, and the independent high schools where some instructors are Totonac community members. The ideological framing in the intercultural programs also positions international languages, especially English, as important for an intercultural education. The inclusion of international languages is justified on the basis that these languages help students get good jobs in the interconnected national and international markets, which reinforces the ideology of *salir adelante*. The program therefore does not prioritize the Huehuetla Totonac language, which must compete with international languages that have vast teaching and curriculum resources readily available. Totonac also remains compartmentalized to its own subject and is not used as the language of instruction, even where it has a presence in the intercultural or bilingual programs, which illustrates the belief that the languages need to be kept separate. In contrast, there are two independent high schools (CESIK and *Colegio Paulo Freire*) that are using Totonac alongside Spanish in a more balanced way in the classroom. These schools have classes and activities that are designed to serve students, their families, and the broader community. The teachers and students code-switch between the languages and have created some new collaborative Totonac literacy materials with their families. These schools remain small but offer a glimpse at what could be possible for the Huehuetla Totonac language in education if *solidaridad comunitaria* is adopted as a guiding ideology in more schools.

Language socialization is the final context in the linguistic ecology that illustrates the language ideological assemblage in Huehuetla. In the context of family language socialization, there are some parents who teach Spanish to their children and also do not teach them Totonac, justifying this through discourses that index *salir adelante* and *menosprecio* ideologies. The young adult child I spoke with from one of these families invokes *menosprecio* as well, saying that they did not want to learn as a child because the Totonac words are "funny" and sound like Spanish slang words. Their parents also claim that as young children, these youth did not want to learn and actively asked their parents to speak only Spanish to them. Now as youth, most wish their parents would have taught them to speak Totonac as they have gradually begun to have more respect for their language, and they are currently making an effort to learn. This pattern shows how *salir adelante* and *menosprecio* motivate language shift in family language socialization, as some parents and children naturalize speaking Spanish and position Totonac as marked. On the other hand, there are Totonac parents who have taken a more syncretic approach with their young children, making a conscious effort to teach their children both languages at home, using a range of multilingual practices. Through the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria,* these parents promote multilingualism and an attitude of respect towards Huehuetla Totonac and Totonac people. The young adult children in these families talk about the importance of multilingualism for showing respect to all potential interlocutors. In addition, some young people are now finding socioeconomic advantages to speaking Totonac, indexing *salir adelante* ideology to Totonac and thus disrupting *menosprecio.* In community language socialization contexts, changes in the social network of *compadrazgo* (godparenting) are also affecting language socialization patterns in Huehuetla. As more Totonac people migrate and successfully diversify their income, they are more desirable as godparents because they have more economic resources to support their godchildren. This creates more opportunities for *compadrazgo* relationships to be carried out in Huehuetla Totonac, exposing children to the language. If people choose to continue to speak Totonac in their social networks, this can intersect with *salir adelante* ideology and create a new association between socioeconomic progress and speaking Totonac that disrupts *menosprecio* and instead contributes to the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria*. There are also some Totonac adults who hold the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* but do not yet speak the language. These adults are seeking out opportunities to learn Totonac in the community outside their immediate families. They view Huehuetla Totonac

as important for meeting their personal and social goals to build and maintain relationships in their community and are continuing the process of language socialization and learning in their adult lives. The examples show the agency and creativity of people in the process of language socialization as they are creating and developing new types of relationships or developing new multilingual linguistic dynamics in existing relationships. This context of language socialization is central to language vitality because it provides opportunities for learning the language for a range of learners, as well as opportunities for learning the ideologies that support continued language use in the community.

The analysis of language vitality in Huehuetla shows that essentialist and syncretic ideologies are used by people in complex ways that form a dynamic language ideological assemblage. This assemblage can be approximated by a figure made of intersecting circles, with the two categories of Totonac and *mestizo* identity categories being manifested through the diverse syncretic combinations of the dimensions of identity and community, as seen in Figure 6. In essentialist ideology, these categories are conceptualized as naturally bounded and mutually exclusive without overlapping. This is observed in the separation of Totonac and Spanish in schools, and the social and political divisions associated with Totonac and *mestizo* people in Huehuetla. This means that people who practice any kind of mixing, merging, or overlapping of Totonac or *mestizo* features can be perceived or construed as inauthentic and problematic from an essentialist perspective. In contrast, in syncretic ideology, the identity categories of Totonac and *mestizo,* along with their features, are conceptualized as flexible and dynamic. People who hold syncretic ideologies do not deny that the categories exist, and they may also draw on essentialist ideologies at times, such as when representing their culture and community to outsiders in the ecotourism business. However, they do not view *mestizo* and Totonac as exclusive and may combine and merge features from these categories without this being perceived or construed as inauthentic, so long as it is done with respect. For example, people may practice multilingualism, mix Totonac and Western styles of dress, and have multiple mixed sources of income such as traditional farming and a job in town or the city. In fact, the merging or blurring of boundaries characteristic of syncretic ideologies is seen by those who hold these ideologies as an act of community solidarity that supports the ongoing sustainability of the Totonac community. Totonac people are engaging in these creative practices in order to position themselves and their languages as they prefer. My analysis shows that together the essentialist

and syncretic ideologies exist in a dialectical relationship and interact with each other to produce a dynamic tension: syncretic ideologies function by challenging and blurring the boundaries set up by essentialist ideologies; and essentialist ideologies work to reestablish these boundaries and delegitimize or deauthenticate the merging or overlapping set up by syncretic ideologies. Through this interaction of ideologies, people construct their identities as individuals and community members.

These ideological processes are used strategically and creatively on a contextual basis to present a particular interpretation of identity of a person or group. This is seen in the Totonac women who run the *Kakiwín Tutunakú* tourism business. These women simultaneously draw on the essentialization of Totonac identity with language, dress, and food to authenticate their business to outsiders, while at the same time they draw on the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* and reject the sociocultural hierarchy of *menosprecio* as they position themselves as teachers and as equals with their guests (see §6.1). We can also see this strategic exploitation of the language ideological assemblage in the context of schools, where teachers in the public system must work within the essentialist constraints of the government curriculum, and yet some hold the ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* and are successful in supporting Totonac language use by students in their classrooms to varying degrees. In the independent schools, *solidaridad comunitaria* is the central ideology; however, identity and language are essentialized where it is useful for teaching; for example, when teaching about Indigenous rights (see §6.2). Finally, in the context of language socialization, people recognize that language and identity have an important connection; however, similar to the other examples, people who hold *solidaridad comunitaria* ideologies also reject *menosprecio* and the denigration of Totonac language in favour of Spanish. This has the result that their socialization practices are more multilingual, which is supportive of language vitality (see §6.3).

7.2 Language vitality of Huehuetla Totonac and implications for the practical assessment of language vitality

The relationships between syncretic and essentialist ideologies have an impact on how people practice and perceive speaking Totonac. *Solidaridad comunitaria* normalizes multilingualism and the coexistence of Totonac and *mestizo* people, which is central to language vitality in Huehuetla. People need both Totonac and Spanish because of the complex linguistic ecology in Huehuetla: multilingualism enables speaking with all potential interlocutors in

Huehuetla, participating in Totonac culture, and showing respect to Totonac speakers, as well as engaging in Spanish-speaking institutions that directly affect people's lives (e.g. education, politics, law). My study shows that language vitality is supported by the syncretic ideology of *solidaridad comunitaria* and is therefore dependent on the underlying essentialist-syncretic ideological assemblage through which language is interpreted and takes on meaning in people's daily lives in Huehuetla. This means that in order to assess vitality, it is necessary to assess language ideologies. Since ethnographic research is necessary in order to analyze language ideologies, this has impacts on how language vitality, to which ideologies are central, is practically assessed.

Language vitality assessment tools can be modified based on the findings of this study. To demonstrate this, I will show first the assessment of vitality of Huehuetla Totonac using the existing EGIDS, and then I will show how this would change if this model were to include a careful assessment of ideology and its central role. In my assessment using the EGIDS, Huehuetla Totonac is at a level 6b "threatened," since all generations currently use Totonac but there are some conditions that undermine "sustainable use" (Lewis and Simons 2010) (see Chapter 2 for discussion). For example, there are some ideologies that undermine, or threaten, language use and transmission, such as *menosprecio,* especially in combination with *salir adelante* that privileges Spanish. At the same time, Huehuetla Totonac also has some features of level 5, the fact that it is written and there are more Totonac authors than in the past. It is difficult to definitively place the dynamic sociolinguistic situation of a community on a hierarchical quantitative scale. My ethnographic results reveal why this difficult, by exploring in more granular detail the emergent vitalities in Huehuetla, such as local education and literacy development, local businesses that center language, and dynamic language socialization contexts that I identify in Huehuetla. Emergent contexts where we can observe language vitality, such as use in local schools and business, are not clearly indicated on the EGIDS vitality scale, meaning these important factors may be overlooked, leading to the underestimation of language vitality.

In addition, my work shows the importance of considering how language ideologies are enacted and reflected in the linguistic ecology. While the UNESCO (2003) scale includes aspects of the linguistic ecology, such as policy, the existing assessment tools do not consider how ideologies and the linguistic ecology interact. I suggest that the assessment of vitality should prioritize language ideologies and the interaction of ideologies with the linguistic ecology. For

example, the emergence and enaction of syncretic ideologies is connected to changes in the linguistic ecology of Huehuetla that have enabled speakers to create new opportunities for using Totonac. The efficient and comparative assessment of vitality could be achieved through the development of an interview and observation tool. It should include interview questions that target syncretic ideologies and directions for observing how the language ideologies are related to the embeddedness of people in the linguistic ecology. Some example questions could be: What do you think about teaching your children both languages? If you teach your children both languages, how do you do this? How are people using the language and how can people continue to use the language? Are you or other people using the language in new situations that you did not in the past? Directions for observing how this is connected to the use of both languages in the community can be included. It is important to compare the discursive interview results with observations of actual use as some people may make statements that do not align with their actual behaviour. If this is not done, it could lead to an overestimation of language vitality because it is not enough to just have a positive ideology, there must also be enaction of the ideology that impacts and supports language practices (such as implementation in the tourism business in Huehuetla). In order to carry out the assessment of language vitality, local community members could be recruited to do the interview research. This could potentially be conducted by Totonac students through the UIEP, CESIK, and Escuela Paulo Freire. These local actors are well-positioned to assess language ideologies and their enaction in the linguistic ecology on an ongoing basis. Students could be provided training in their language revitalization classes at the UIEP on how to use the survey tool to assess language ideologies and how to use their knowledge of community to interpret the survey through an informed understanding of the linguistic ecology. The training could include detailed examples of identifying and elucidating language ideologies and interpreting them through an analysis of the linguistic ecology; for example, from this current research. The challenge with this would be make the survey flexible and the tool kit responsive enough to local circumstances, and to train users to apply the tool kit in a similar way so that results would be comparable across contexts. However, I believe that tapping into local knowledge of the community is a good way to more efficiently assess language ideologies and language vitality, and is similar to work done by Davis in her Chickasaw community (2018).

The recognition of the role of the language ideological assemblage is important because it allows for the fact that people who are not speakers or potential speakers can affect language vitality since they may be members of the local community or otherwise contribute to the linguistic ecology and the language ideological assemblage. My analysis also shows the practical and theoretical importance of ethnographic studies for discerning particular language ideological patterns that are central to language vitality, echoing calls for ethnographic study made by linguistic anthropologists (Granadillo and Orcutt-Gachiri 2011). Speakers' own ideologies and analyses of the language situation in their community is evidence that points to the role of syncretic ideologies in language vitality: language vitality is embedded in people's relationships to each other and their language(s) that allow for flexibility and creativity. These relationships emerge and are developed and maintained as people engage in the linguistic ecology through the language ideological assemblage. Language transmission is the most often cited component of language vitality in existing models. In my study, language transmission is shown to occur in this complex linguistic ecology through the processes of language socialization that are grounded in the language ideological assemblage of the community. This aligns with the theorization of language socialization by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a; 1986b), who point out that transmission is not simply a process of younger users duplicating ideologies and practices of older users, but rather children and youth are active participants in the interactive, intersubjective process of transmission and social reproduction. In language endangerment contexts, intergenerational transmission is rendered more visible because remaining speakers may be older and young people and children may not be (considered) speakers. My study of Huehuetla shows examples of language transmission outside the traditionally cited context of parents transmitting language to children in the home, illustrating that language transmission is not exclusively intergenerational. There are several other studies that provide similar evidence of the agency of learners and of language transmission between children, in peer groups, and between adults in a range of contexts in the community (de León 1998; Henne-Ochoa and Bauman 2015; McCarty, Romero-Little, and Zepeda 2006; McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol, and Zepeda 2009; Lee 2009; McEwan-Fujita 2013; Meek 2016; Lieven 1994; Suslak 2009). I also show that the language ideological assemblage directly affects language socialization and therefore language transmission. Language ideologies are therefore central to language transmission, language vitality, and the long-term sustainability of the language.

Understanding language vitality as the relationships between people and their languages (Perley 2011) as enacted in the linguistic ecology, recognizes the centrality of language ideologies in both people's language choices and in how these choices are embedded in context. According to Roche (2017), language vitality indicates sustainability, and I would add that language vitality actually constitutes sustainability as people enact the ideologies and practices that support vitality over time. People reinforce and circulate language ideologies as they interact with each other, and other actors and institutions in the linguistic ecology. The enaction of these ideologies in the linguistic ecology is mediated through discourse, which includes forms of symbolic expression such as language, art, clothing, food, and behaviour. The enaction of these ideologies is also mediated by the social, economic, and political structures that shape people's movements and interactions, such as migration, local and regional business, education systems, and local and national policies. A key contribution I make to the study of linguistic ecology is identifying recursive reproductions of the language ideological assemblage within the linguistic ecology. I show that *menosprecio* in combination with *salir adelante* appear recursively across scales in the linguistic ecology: in national policy towards Indigenous people, education policy that privileges Spanish, local teaching practices in state run schools, local economic practices that marginalize Totonac people, and in family language policy. I also show that *solidaridad comunitaria* appears recursively: in the *Organización Independiente Totonaca* "Independent Totonac Organization" (OIT), the independent school CESIK run by the OIT, in the practice of individual teachers in state-run schools, the emergence of creative linguistic practices of local Totonac businesses that promote Totonac, and in some families' and individuals' language policy. Language vitality is the relationship between people and their language(s), mediated through language ideologies that are enacted through discourse and language use in the linguistic ecology. The study of language vitality must therefore consider how people's ideologies and language use are enacted in the linguistic ecology of their communities.

7.3 Implications for the theorization of language vitality

The findings of this study also have implications for the theoretical concept of language vitality more broadly. As noted in Chapter 2, current models of language endangerment such as Fishman (Fishman 1991, 2001), Krauss (1992, 2007), UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003), Ethnologue (Lewis and Simons 2010, 2016), and the Endangered Languages Project (Lee and Van Way 2016), acknowledge the role of language ideology in

language vitality. However, the results of this study provide evidence that language ideology is more central to language vitality than these models would suggest.

The ongoing development of new contexts of use that reconstrue the interpretation of speaking and being Totonac are an example of what Perley calls "emergent vitalities" (2011), and more recently "translocalities" (2020). Following and combining work by Hansen (n.d.), Roche (2017), Perley (2011, 2020), and Davis (2018), I define language vitality as the sociopolitical role of language, interpreted as a relational understanding of the language in the context of the local linguistic ecology. Perley's and Davis' understanding of language vitality as the relationships between people and language(s) has been applied in the study of Huehuetla to reveal the nuances of how language vitality is dependent on people and their ongoing dynamic interactions with each other and their languages in the linguistic ecology. Language ideologies are central to how people maintain existing language practices and also create new practices that constitute the emergent language vitalities and "alternative futures" that allow community members the choice of "language life" (Perley 2011: 7–10). In the case of Huehuetla, community members who have chosen language life have syncretic language ideologies and practices that are contributing to new uses of Totonac and emergent vitalities.

While the essentialist-syncretic ideological assemblage discussed in this dissertation is specific to Huehuetla, I believe that it is highly likely that similar dynamic interactions between essentialist and syncretic ideologies are at play in other endangered language contexts that share similar linguistic ecologies, such as colonization and marginalization. As I identified in my study, this dynamic is characterized by discourses that index essentialist ideologies and hierarchies of languages and groups, as well as discourses that index syncretic ideologies that blur, contest, and merge the boundaries of essentialist concepts and hierarchical orders. This does not necessarily mean there is an outright rejection of essentialist ideologies, because they are at work in many systems in which community members must engage (schools, politics), and they are actually useful sometimes (representation to outsiders). However, an essentialist-syncretic language ideological assemblage is characterized by community members' awareness of essentialist ideologies and their categories, and their manipulation of those categories in solidarity with the community as they practice a summative multilingualism. It will be important to look for correlations between syncretic language ideologies and emergent language vitalities in order to provide further evidence for this hypothesis. It is also important to acknowledge that

language ideologies are dynamic and may change how they operate over time and may operate differently in different communities. While I suspect the same language ideologies that I find in Huehuetla are at play in other communities, there are certainly also differences in terms of the dynamic interactions of people, their language ideologies, and their embeddedness in the specific local linguistic ecology. Studying these differences can further inform and refine the findings of the present study of Huehuetla and shed light on how syncretic and essentialist ideologies operate across a range of situations.

7.4 Study limitations and future directions

The most significant limitation of this study is that I did not collect more extensive and naturalistic observations of language use. This is needed to confirm and further study the relationship between the presence of syncretic ideologies, language use, and continued maintenance of Huehuetla Totonac. This confirmation would then provide further evidence for the central role of language ideologies, and especially syncretic language ideologies, in language vitality in Huehuetla. Another limitation is that there are groups in the community who I have not spoken with in depth. One group with whom I have had more limited conversations are *mestizos*. While I do include a few examples of conversations with some *mestizos* (for example, Hector in Chapter 5), further exploration of their perspectives would contextualize my findings and improve the understanding of the current and emerging relationships between *mestizos* and Totonac people. Another group I need to speak with more is Totonac people who live in outlying areas beyond the town of Huehuetla itself. The only other community in the municipality I have studied is Ozelonacaxlta, though I have been to Lipuntahuaca and some of the neighboring municipalities, including Caxhuacan and Ixtepec. Understanding how people in the multiple communities in the municipality interact with people in Huehuetla can help determine how widespread the syncretic ideology is in the broader Totonac community. A third group who can shed further light on the language ideologies central to language vitality are Totonac people who have less knowledge of Spanish, including those with no or almost no Spanish and those with passive knowledge of Spanish. These Totonac people have an important perspective on multilingualism as they observe its increase in their community and its effect on Totonac language use. Because I did not conduct interviews in Totonac, I am not able to explore the relationship between Totonac discourse and language ideologies as expressed in Totonac. The perspectives offered in the Totonac language are likely distinct from those emerging in the

Spanish language, and this could further define syncretic and essentialist language ideologies in Huehuetla. Comparing the same individual in both languages would also be potentially informative. The limitations of using only Spanish cannot be avoided without a longer field visit that includes learning Totonac as a main objective. Another possible way to use Totonac in the interviews would be to have someone who speaks Totonac conduct and translate the interviews for me. For this study I did not choose this option because of time constraints that limited my ability to find and train a Totonac-speaking assistant. Having interviews in both languages and with more than one interviewer could help show how language choice plays a role in interviewing and further reveal ideologies in more light. I address this specific limitation in more detail in Chapter 4. Finally, while I believe that syncretic and essentialist ideologies are likely at play in other communities, my conclusions about the applicability of findings to other communities are limited by the fact that my research is case study. More comparative work is needed to confirm and refine these conclusions.

The limitations I have laid out here are also connected to the more general limitation of the short field visit of three months. This limitation means I had less time to establish relationships and develop the analysis while in the field. My previous fieldwork in Ozelonacaxtla of six months provides a foundation on which I have been able to build. However, more time in the field, learning the language, and speaking with a wider range of people from more communities will help clarify many of these and other questions that remain, as well as provide further evidence for the conceptualization of language vitality as relational and for the development and application of the planned assessment tool discussed above in §7.3.

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Appendix A: Interview script

Spanish:

¿Cómo se llama?
¿En qué año nació?
¿Quién vive con usted?
¿Tiene hijos? ¿Cuántos años tienen?
¿Qué lengua habla con sus hijos? ¿Qué lengua habla con otros miembros de su familia?
¿Cómo decidió qué lengua hablar con sus hijos? ¿entre otros miembros de la familia?
¿Qué lengua hablan sus hijos entre sí? ¿con sus abuelos? ¿con sus amigos?
(Si no tiene hijos) ¿Qué lengua(s) quiere hablar con sus hijos, si después los tiene?
¿Qué lengua(s) deben aprender a hablar los niños del pueblo? ¿Por qué?
¿Quién debe de tener la responsabilidad de enseñar español? ¿De enseñar el totonaco? ¿Por qué?
¿Cómo aprendió hablar el español?
¿Cómo aprendió hablar el totonaco?
¿Qué nivel de escuela acabó?
¿Qué le gusta/gustó o no le gusta/gustó de la escuela?
¿Qué lengua(s) habla/hablaba en la escuela?
¿Cómo son/eran sus maestros?
¿Qué lengua(s) habla/hablaba con sus amigos en la escuela? ¿Durante el receso?
¿Las clases se deben dar en totonaco? ¿Por qué?
¿Cómo se ha cambiado Huehuetla por La Universidad Intercultural?
¿Cómo se ha cambiado Huehuetla por la prepa indígena CESIK?
¿Qué tipo de programas tiene la estación de radio XECTZ?
¿Qué lengua(s) habla en la iglesia? ¿El padre habla totonaco?
¿Qué lengua(s) habla en la tienda cuando va de compras?
¿Qué lengua(s) habla con sus vecinos? ¿En la calle? ¿En el centro? ¿En la plaza?
¿Qué lenguas habla en el tianguis los domingos?
¿Qué trabajo tiene usted/tienen sus padres? ¿Qué trabajo le gustaría tener?
¿Qué lengua(s) habla en su trabajo?
¿Para qué ha viajado fuera de Huehuetla?
¿Qué lengua(s) habla cuando está fuera de Huehuetla?
¿Qué lengua(s) hablan durante reuniones políticas del pueblo?
¿Cómo es la política aquí? ¿Es justa?
¿Cómo compara la política ahora con la política cuando tenía control la OIT?
¿Cómo ha cambiado Huehuetla por el juzgado indígena?
¿Qué papel tiene la OIT en Huehuetla, qué más hace? ¿Qué piensa de la OIT?
¿Qué cambios ha notado en el pueblo desde que era niño/a?
¿Cuál lengua, español o totonaco, le gusta hablar más? ¿Por qué?
¿Qué piensa de ser bilingüe? ¿Qué le gusta/no le gusta de ser bilingüe?
¿Cómo es (bueno) el español? ¿Cómo es (bueno) el totonaco?
¿Cuál lengua es más importante para ti? ¿Para el pueblo? ¿Por qué?
Cuando piensa en el totonaco/español, ¿qué/quién viene a la mente?
¿Qué experiencias memorables ha tenido por hablar español/totonaco?
¿Qué cambios ha notado en cómo se usa español/totonaco desde que era niño/a?

¿Cómo se podría perder el totonaco en Huehuetla?
¿Qué peligros enfrenta el totonaco?
¿Qué pasaría si el totonaco se pierde?
¿Qué piensa de otros pueblos donde ya no se habla el totonaco?

English translation:

What is your name?
What is your year of birth?
Who lives here with you in your home?
Do you have children? How old are they?
What language do you speak with your children? Other family members?
How did you decide to speak Totonac or Spanish with your children? Other family members?
What language do your children speak to each other?
What language do your children speak with their grandparents? Friends?
If you do not have children, how many children would you like to have in the future?
What language(s) do you want to speak to your children when you have children?
What language(s) should children learn to speak? Why?
Who should be responsible for teaching Spanish? For teaching Totonac? Why?
What level of schooling have you completed?
What did you like/not like about school?
What languages do/did you speak at school?
What are/were your teachers like?
What language do/did you use with your classmates at school? During recess?
Should classes be given in Spanish or in Totonac? Why?
How has the Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla changed Huehuetla?
What sort of programming is on the local radio station XECTZ?
What language do you speak when you are at church? At the local store?
What language do you speak with your neighbors? In the streets? In the plaza?
What do you/your parents do for a living? What are your plans for work in the future?
What language do you speak when you are working?
For what purpose have you traveled outside of Huehuetla?
What language do you speak when you are outside of Huehuetla?
What language do you speak during local government meetings?
How has the local Indigenous court changed Huehuetla?
What language is spoken in the Indigenous court?
Which language do you like to speak more? Why?
Do you like being bilingual? Why or why not?
How is Spanish/Totonac a good language?
Which language is more important? Why?
When you think of the Totonac/Spanish language, who/what comes to mind?
What memorable experiences have you had related to speaking either Totonac or Spanish?
Have you noticed any changes in the Huehuetla since you were a child?
Have you noticed any changes in the way Spanish and Totonac are used since you were a child?
Do you think Totonac is in danger of being lost? Why or why not?
What would happen if Totonac were lost?
What do you think about other villages where Totonac is no longer spoken?

Appendix B: Table of interviews

Name or Pseudonym	Date	Length	Year of birth	Age (2016)	Gender	Dress	Children	Present during interview	Occupation	Education	Language at home
Camila and Guillermo	12-07	0:26:25	1936 (C); 1960 (G)	80 (C), 56 (G)	F (C), M (G)	W	multiple (65…40) (C); 2 (26, 21) (G)	Camila, Guillermo, neighbor	sells food outside her house	none (C), secundaria (G)	T, S (C); S (G)
Enrique	11-08	0:30:13	1938	78	M	T	1 (±45)	Enrique, Benjamin (son), wife, Joaquina	merchant	none	T
Sol	11-06	0:23:39	1969	47	F	T	1 (18)	Sol, Joaquina	housewife/rep for CDI	secondary	T, S
Clara	12-03	0:25:17	1957	59	F	W	10 (43...21)	Clara, Joaquina	housewife, sells verdura	none	T, S
Benjamin	11-08	0:41:06	1968	48	M	W	2 (??)	Benjamin, family members enter and leave	bilingual education teacher	Masters	T, S
Magdalena	12-03	0:24:08	1970	46	F	W	2 (16, 13)	Magdalena, Joaquina	housewife	prim 5	S
Juana	11-28	0:17:43	1977	39	F	W	2 (19, 18)	Juana, Joaquina	sells tamales	none	S
Gloria	11-03	0:37:17	1983	33	F	W	2 (2, 5)	Gloria, my and Gloria's children	housewife/worker with niños totonacos	high school 3 yrs	T, S
Fernanda	12-13	0:34:10	1964	52	W	W	2 (32, 27)	Fernanda	sells food in the centre	prim	S, some T
Josef	10-29	1:04:38	1953	63	M	W	2 (35, 36)	Josef, wife (back room), a few customers for brief periods	teacher/store owner/OIT official	uni	S
Sergio	11-29	1:07:25	1960	56	M	W	2 (5, 1)	Sergio, my and Sergio's children	farmer	uni 2 yrs	S, some T
Joaquina	10-24	0:51:11	1974	42	F	W	2 (6, 17)	Joaquina, my and Joaquina's children	Director and teacher at Indigenous preschool	Masters	S, some T
Rosa	11-28	0:28:06	1988	28	F	W	2 (9, 5)	Rosa, my and Rosa's children	housewife, teacher	uni	S
Enoc	12-07	0:34:22	1977	39	M	T	3 (13, 12, 1)	Enoc	makes and sells sandals	secondary 1 yr	T
Hector	11-27	1:00:23	1971	45	M	W	3 (21, 12, 6)	Hector, wife, father, children of Hector	coffee merchant and rancher	uni	S
Lupe	11-19	0:21:40	1967	49	F	W	3 (22, 19, 18)	Lupe, Joaquina, Lupe's child	housewife	secondary	S, some T
Delia	11-10	0:23:24	1981	35	F	W	3 (5, 8, 12)	Delia	housewife, cleaning for a local woman	prim	T, S
Carmen	11-04	0:37:14	1979	37	F	W	3 (6, 12, 19)	Carmen	cleaning/cooking at daycare	secondary	S

Name or Pseudonym	Date	Length	Year of birth	Age (2016)	Gender	Dress	Children	Present during interview	Occupation	Education	Language at home
Julia	11-06	0:16:13	1969	47	F	W	4 (14, 18, 20, 28)	Julia, Joaquina	housewife	none	S, T
Luna	11-30	0:16:42	1982	34	F	W	4 (15, 13, 8, 3)	Luna, primary school Director, some students	housewife	prim 3 yrs	T, N, S
Jorge	11-07	0:47:59	1949	67	M	W	4 (23…38)	Jorge, a few customers for brief periods	shop owner/healer	uni 2 yrs	S
David	12-08	0:30:26	1955	61	M	W	5 (32, 30, 28, 25, 22)	David, my partner	retired professor, sells herbalife	uni	S
Elizabeth	11-15	0:18:24	1965	51	F	W	5 (32…23)	Elizabeth, her children and grandchildren, Joaquina	meat merchant	none	S
Marco	11-09	0:48:17	1942	74	M	T	6 (	Marco, wife, Joaquina	construction	prim 2 yrs	T
Carla	11-06	0:38:26	1946	70	F	T	8 (32...50)	Carla, Joaquina	traditional midwife	none	T
Alex	11-01	0:44:23	1993	23	M	W		Alex, a few customers for brief periods	student/shop merchant	uni	S
Regina	11-06	0:56:06	1999	17	F	W		Regina, Joaquina	student/shop merchant at vet	high school 2.5 yrs	T, S
Luz	11-09	0:23:51	1999	17	F	W		Luz	student	high school 2 yrs	S
Patricia	11-09	0:20:06	2000	16	F	W		Patricia	student	high school 2 yrs	S
Katarina	11-10	0:14:08	1999	17	F	W		Katarina	student	high school 2.5 yrs	S, some T
Ernesto	11-10	0:18:54	1998	18	M	W		Ernesto	student	high school 2.5 yrs	S, T, N
Jaime	11-10	0:22:27	1998	18	M	W		Jaime	student	high school 2.5 yrs	S, N, T
María	11-10	0:25:35	1999	17	F	W		María	student	high school 2.5 yrs	S, T
Ricardo	11-10	0:24:32	1998	18	M	W		Ricardo	student	high school 2.5 yrs	S
Blanca	11-15	0:21:32	1998	18	F	W		Blanca	student	uni 0.5 yr	S
Antonio	11-15	0:32:37	1995	21	M	W		Antonio	student	uni 2 yrs	T
Daniela	11-15	0:35:06	1996	20	F	W		Daniela	student	uni 2 yrs	T, S
Ester	11-15	0:22:10	1994	22	F	W		Ester	student	uni 2 yrs	T, S
Felipe	11-16	0:30:26	1993	23	M	W		Felipe	student	uni	T, S
Mateo	11-16	0:20:12	1994	22	M	W		Mateo	student	uni	T
Mariel	11-18	0:28:44	1997	19	F	W		Mariel	student, helps mom sell flowers	uni	S

Name or Pseudonym	Date	Length	Year of birth	Age (2016)	Gender	Dress	Children	Present during interview	Occupation	Education	Language at home
Juan	11-22	0:26:16	1999	17	M	W		Juan	student	high school 2.5 yrs	S
Alejandra	11-22	0:20:45	1999	17	M	W		Alejandra	student		S
Bella	11-22	0:25:56	2000	16	F	W		Bella	student		T, S
Pedro	11-22	0:20:05	1999	17	M	W		Pedro	student	high school 1.5 yrs	T, some S
José	11-22	0:15:02	1998	18	M	W		Jose	student	high school 1.5 yrs	S
Esme	11-22	0:21:18	2000	16	F	W		Esme	student		T, some S
Damien	11-30	0:30:53	1995	21	M	W		Damien, a few customers for brief periods	student, works in stationary store		S
Ariana	12-06	0:23:02	1980	36	F	W		Ariana	cleaning/cooking	prim 4	S, T
Paulo	10-15	1:00:41	1985	31	M	W	expecting	Paulo	Director at CESIK	Masters 1 yr	S, N, learning T
The following three interviews where not recorded and instead fieldnotes were taken											
Padre	10-27	--	1956	60	M	W		preferred a written format	Padre of the Catholic Church	uni	T, S
Eduardo	12-08	--	1960	56	M	W		Eduardo, a few students for brief periods	Director of Paulo Freire school	Masters	S
Juez	10-06	--	1952	64	M	T		Juez, court secretary	Indigenous Court judge	prim 2	T, S