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Language Attitudes and Opportunities for Speaking a Minority Language
What Lies Ahead for Ozelonacaxtla Totonac?

by

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Abstract

The present research describes the sociolinguistic situation in the minority indigenous community of San Juan Ozelonacaxtla in the state of Puebla, Mexico. Both Ozelonacaxtla Totonac and Spanish are spoken in the speech community. However, some bilingual parents use only Spanish in the home, ceasing the transmission of their native language to their children and placing the community in the early stages of language shift.

Spanish is seen as the language of opportunity in the context of recent and significant social, political, educational, and economic changes in San Juan Ozelonacaxtla. Parents claim they teach their children Spanish because it is more useful than Ozelonacaxtla Totonac, it enables their children to avoid discrimination associated with speaking an indigenous language, it is necessary for their children to do well in school, and it allows for more economic mobility. These factors are accelerating the integration of the community into majority Mexican society.

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1.1 Majority and Minority Group Interactions

Language has long been associated with culture and identity. It encodes the social and cultural beliefs and norms of groups of people, and it shapes individual development. It contributes to both social and individual identity. When a person speaks using a certain language, they are in effect claiming membership in, or identity with the group, or speech community, that uses said language. One of the most salient aspects of identity is language because it is one of the first things you observe about a person. It may reveal something about where they come from, what they believe, and to what group they belong. Speakers of one language often choose to use a different language or variety as a means to add or change their membership in various speech communities, and to ultimately change their identity(s).

Some languages, like English and Spanish for example, enjoy social and economic prestige in today's global world. Majority languages such as these are used across broad contexts and by diverse groups of speakers, which allows them to develop and expand. They are certainly not in a threatened position. Native speakers of global, majority languages often take advantage of this stability and flexibility enjoyed by their languages. The linguistic identities they possess as members of these speech communities are generally not discriminated against. They are naïve to the fact that many other people face difficult challenges or are excluded from the benefits of a global, or even national community, if they do not

speak one of these world languages as their first language. For speakers of languages like English, the role that language plays in speakers' lives and in shaping identity may not be understood in the same way as by speakers of minority languages. In order to participate fully in society, speakers of minority or indigenous languages are often obliged to learn a second language and are still denied their democratic right to be represented and served in their country in their own native tongue, a right that speakers of global majority languages often take for granted.

In response to the un-balanced relationship between minority and majority groups, speakers of minority languages may seek access to the benefits of the majority linguistic group with which they interact in society. Some may modify their linguistic behaviour by learning the majority language in order to gain access to these benefits. When speakers learn a new language, several outcomes are possible. They may become bilingual, using both languages in different contexts in a stable system of diglossia that allows for a degree of minority language maintenance. Speakers may alternatively shift their linguistic habits entirely from their native language to the majority language, which entails the abandonment and loss of their first language. Many different factors can play a part in the complex, dynamic relationship between majority and minority language groups. For example, one who speaks a minority language might not be able to get a job, go to school, or participate in politics by simply knowing the majority language. Other factors like style of dress, hairstyle, and accent may play a role in how minority group members can gain access to the advantages of the majority population.

However, language is one salient aspect of identity that may play a key role in the dynamic between majority and minority groups. Speakers of the majority language may discriminate against speakers of the minority language in an attempt to protect their economically or politically superior position. Discrimination can have negative effects on a speech community because it socially and psychologically stigmatizes individuals who identify with the group and creates feelings and expectations of fear around outwardly expressing one's identity to the group. Discrimination may be the result of prescriptive attitudes about what is good in a culture or society, and what threatens it (Milroy & Milroy, 1998). Milroy and Milroy (p. 2) point out that

> although discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender, or social class is not now publicly acceptable, it appears that discrimination on linguistic grounds *is* publicly acceptable, even though linguistic differences may themselves be associated with ethnic, religious, and class differences.

These factors can create an environment that is hostile towards the development, maintenance, and survival of the minority language. If someone desires to change their life circumstances, which are attached to their identity, a change in language may be perceived to serve that purpose.

The process of "identity shift" on a social or cultural (group) level may be affected by the pressures and discrimination originating from majority groups directed towards others to assimilate to the accepted standard, often "national" identity. Modern nation states tend to seek unity and uniformity over diversity in

their member populations. Dorian (1998) claims that a western policy of creating cultural and linguistic unity has dominated colonial politics and management, a fact that has shaped many colonial countries in the same way. This policy of cultural unity has often encouraged the management of education and politics in a way that minimizes the opportunities and benefits of speaking a minority language, and maximizes those of speaking a majority language.

It has been said that the process of (linguistic) assimilation is a part of globalization and is linked to the endangerment of many languages in the world today (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Globalization as a new "imperialism" has been linked in research to many of today's major world problems. For example, the growing divide between the rich and poor, and pollution and damage to the natural world are both negative results of capitalist or imperialist expansion of western nations (Hale, 1992; Krauss, 1992; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Harrison, 2007). Along with the economic and biological effects of globalization, there are also cultural effects, a natural result of human interaction. Language shift may be one of the cultural effects of globalization processes that tend to create identities across increasingly broad domains, and limit or denounce the value of identity in the "restricted" local domain. Though globalization may be an accurate label, and even a source for the processes of identity shift and assimilation, it does not explain how language shift actually occurs.

1.2 Language Change and Language Shift

In order to understand the process of language shift, the dynamic character of language needs to be more thoroughly examined. Although language may be

valued as a way of enacting or changing individual and group identity, the essence of what (a) language is cannot always be easily or clearly defined. This issue is illustrated by the recurring problem of drawing distinctions between languages and dialects. Complicating this further is the fact that languages and cultures are constantly changing at individual and social levels. Linguistic change is a natural and ongoing process and is considered an inherent property of language. This is attested by the existence of entire subfields of linguistics that are devoted to the study of language change, namely historical linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Linguistic change or variation may manifest itself in many different ways. For example, Labov, in his early study on linguistic variation (1966), found that phonological variation occurred within the same language, English in New York, and that this variation was clearly linked to the social class of speakers. Other linguistic changes may take various forms that are the result of linguistic interference from a different language. This type of change due to language contact can include extensive borrowing, syntactic modifications, and even whole scale abandonment of one linguistic system for another, resulting in language death. Language shift occurs in a social context then, as a result of language contact, and may be the symptom of a more broadly enacted process of identity assimilation that is encouraged by cultural, economic and social pressures placed on a speech community by the majority. These pressures may not be easily ignored or altered.

Linguistic change can also be better understood when the communicative functions of language are taken into account and examined in more detail. There

are many linguists and non-linguists who look at language as a social tool, as the product of human interaction and the need to communicate. Discourse studies is the branch of linguistics that describes the purposes of human communication. Behind speech acts are the intentions and objectives of speakers to achieve specific goals. The understanding of language as a communicative tool is developed by linguists such as Hymes (1972) with his SPEAKING model of language that highlights the "ends" or "purposes" of speech as crucial in forming discourse. When seen this way, language is an ever-changing human creation that responds to the needs and purposes of speakers in a given situation. If this is true, then this character of language casts doubt on the belief that language is an entity that should, or indeed can be, preserved or "saved". It serves the needs of the people who use it; as their needs change, so will their language. Language death, from this point of view, may simply be a natural outcome of the development of a speech community in a particular linguistic, social and political context (Ladefoged, 1992). All languages exist in these contexts and cannot be separated as independent from the living human beings that create and change language every moment they enact it. Language shift leading to death can be seen as a sub-type of linguistic change, as one of many possible and natural linguistic outcomes to language contact as a speech community adapts to its circumstances. After all, language death is not a new phenomenon, as illustrated by the many languages that have become extinct in the past, especially indigenous languages. In addition, new linguistic diversity and new languages are created as old ones are lost, for example creoles. Some linguists would claim that the natural process of language

change should not and cannot be effectively counteracted, at least not by linguists (Ladefoged, 1992).

If language is always in a state of constant change or transformation, and language death is only an example of linguistic change, what then can or should be done about languages that are facing this fate? Some linguists argue that language death in the modern world has reached staggering proportions that have never previously been seen (Fishman, 1991; Hale, 1992; Krauss, 1992). About 3000 of the world's approximately 6000 languages are dying or endangered (Krauss, 1992). According to these linguists, the strongest mandate for the discipline of linguistics today is the documentation and preservation of all the world's languages. Language death is seen as an epidemic that must be fought against in order to preserve the great amount of human knowledge and diversity that is represented by the many dying or endangered languages in the world today. These languages contribute a large proportion of the variety and diversity in human languages, diversity that is the very substance of the discipline of linguistics. Though it may be argued that language death is a natural and unavoidable process, this thesis takes the position that efforts to save threatened languages are legitimately made on the grounds that they contribute extensively to the diversity of human knowledge. If these languages are lost, so to will be a vast repository of knowledge, understanding of the world, and linguistic data that may shed light on the capacities of the human brain, the mechanisms of human interaction, and the possibilities and mysteries that can exist in natural language.

All languages are part of our collective human cultural heritage that all people have a right to (Nettle & Romaine, 2000).

In addition to the scientific value and collective heritage of the many endangered languages spoken in the world today, these languages are also important in their local contexts. For indigenous groups, language may be especially crucial for the preservation of local group identity. Fishman (2001, p. 5) argues that

> … a traditionally associated language is more than just a tool of communication for its culture. Such a language can mean much more to its ethnoculture than just languages in general or than the language capacity with which all humans are endowed. Such a language is often viewed as a very specific gift, a marker of identity and specific responsibility *vis-à-vis* future generations.

The importance of language for minority communities is even more poignantly highlighted by the fact that these communities often speak languages that do not have a written tradition to support their survival. Language may be more important for these cultures as a marker of in-group identity and the passing on of culture as pointed out by Fishman (2001), but its survival is also less certain, since it may depend solely on intergenerational oral transmission. This means that for these speech communities, language death can occur very rapidly, even over one generation, if parents decide to teach their children only the majority language.

For members of many indigenous speech communities language is not simply a means to communicate, it perpetuates a way of life. Language can

encode the social and family structure within the community, traditional medical knowledge, group history, a rich classification of biological life in the indigenous area that is often more accurate or complete than the classifications of western science (especially in more isolated areas), and it is a strong symbol of community unity and group identity. The meaning of a minority language for its speech community is often influenced by the fact that it is spoken in a language contact situation alongside the majority language and competes with that language. This thesis therefore also takes the position that the preservation of local languages is warranted by the potentially vast cultural value held by such languages for their speech communities. To lose the language may change the way of life of the speech community and cause the loss of the many types of knowledge encoded in that language (Hale, 1992; Krauss, 1992; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Harrison, 2007). The loss of not just language, but also way of life, is especially rampant in modern contexts of contact that entail changes to the political, economic, social and technological aspects of speech communities (Beck, personal communication). Furthermore, the situations in which many minority groups find themselves, under intense pressures to assimilate to the majority culture in order to gain access to what that culture has to offer, are almost always imposed externally upon the minority group. This is hardly an example of a natural process, as linguistic and cultural change under these circumstances is a result or symptom of the much more broadly applied pressures of socialization, nationalization or globalization that are external and often difficult for minority groups to avoid. Even if groups maintained their languages,

it is unlikely that they would be able to avoid all assimilatory effects of globalization. However, language is one aspect of culture that can be maintained even when other aspects are altered, and many minority groups around the world have adapted a modern lifestyle while still maintaining their traditional languages. Language, due to its adaptable character, has the capacity to adjust to and incorporate changes to a community's way of life.

1.3 Language Attitudes and Language Shift

Within the local community context it is difficult to unravel the complex fabric of communal shift from a minority language to a dominant, majority language. Many factors have been shown to contribute to this process in unlimited combinations or degrees, depending on the specific speech community. Edwards' (1992) typology of minority language situations gives at least 33 potential aspects of investigation that should be considered in detail when studying a minority speech community, though he goes on to state that the specific situation, strength, and role of factors will be different for each community. Edwards mentions the role of history, politics, geography, education, economics, and psychology (among others) as possible contributing factors to language maintenance or shift. The role of psychological factors is especially difficult to measure but has been shown to greatly affect the language behaviours of speakers in a given speech community (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977; Allard & Landry, 1992; Dorian, 1981; Lam, 2009). Psychological factors can include speakers' attitudes and perceptions they hold about language in general and the different languages that are spoken in or around the speech community. What role do linguistic attitudes

and beliefs play in language shift or maintenance? How does one go about determining what these subjective and abstract ideas are, and measure them? How do linguistic attitudes interact and affect other factors and processes in identity shift? Allard and Landry (1992) provide a useful description of *ethnolinguistic vitality*, which encompasses the linguistic attitudes and beliefs speakers hold about their language. Ethnolinguistic vitality operates at the sociological and psychological level of the community and incorporates the demographic, political, economic and cultural capital that is associated with a language. The unbalanced relationships between majority and minority languages and speech communities influence the formation of linguistic attitudes held by speakers and affect how these attitudes are manifested in people's actions.

More specifically, ethnolinguistic vitality represents the beliefs speakers have about their language in terms of how they speak it and use it, how the language relates to other languages spoken in and around the community, how useful their language is in achieving personal and collective goals, and how the language contributes to a social or group identity. Fishman (2001) claims that in minority speech communities, unity and group identity may actually be centered upon the use of the minority language. A high ethnolinguistic vitality will likely include positive attitudes and encouragement towards using the minority language in different contexts or domains of use within the community. These are collective feelings and beliefs about language that influence the linguistic decisions made by individual speakers in specific contexts. For example, the different attitudes held by all speakers in a communicative exchange may play a

large role in whether or not a speaker uses the minority language when a monolingual speaker of the majority language is present. The actions taken on the parts of individual speakers will ultimately contribute to language maintenance or language shift in a given speech community. Therefore, the feelings and beliefs behind these decisions, the collective ethnolinguistic vitality of a language, is important in the study of language shift. The role of socially held attitudes is difficult to uncover, however, since attitudes may be subtle, deep-rooted and can come from different levels of society.

Ethnolinguistic vitality may also include beliefs about how a language should be supported or developed. For example, do speakers wish to pursue education in the minority language? Are there radio or television programs in the language and what do speakers think of these programs? Do speakers want to see their language used in new or different contexts? More often than not, minority speech communities face weak ethnolinguistic vitalities that favour the use of the majority language in prestigious contexts at the cost of minority languages. Low ethnolinguistic vitalities may be partly the result of the negative perceptions of minority cultures, languages and identities held by speakers of the majority languages.

In addition to the beliefs that make up the socio-psychological backdrop behind linguistic actions, the characteristics of the communities themselves, the context in which these actions are carried out, also have a significant role. The opportunity to learn and speak majority languages has been increasing in many minority speech communities around the world. This may be due to decreasing

isolation of communities, more schooling, increased ability and incentive to migrate, capitalist economic expansion in the area, or a combination of these and other factors that are often out of the control of the speech community. This paper will argue that the combination of weak ethnolinguistic vitality and increasing opportunities to use the majority language is a recipe for language shift.

1.4 Language Shift in the Mexican Context

It has been shown that minority linguistic communities face many direct, subtle, external, and internal challenges for the maintenance of their identities, cultures and languages. These challenges may be the result of unequal balance of economic, demographic, cultural, social, psychological and political capital that exists between majority and minority groups. One telling illustration of the un-equal power balance found surrounding many minority language groups in the world are indigenous communities in Mexico. Many of these small rural towns suffer poverty, marginalization and discrimination similar to that experienced today by other indigenous or minority groups across North and South America and around the world, often in colonial countries. When these conditions are combined with the underlying negative perceptions and stigmatization of indigenous identity that exist in the Mexican and global contexts, a change of identity through assimilation to the majority may be sought after by members of indigenous groups. The conditions of economic, social and psychological discrimination and disadvantage facing a speaker's indigenous identity can be potentially escaped if they assimilate to the majority. This combination of practical and psychological factors may be responsible for some speakers'

decisions to stop speaking the minority language altogether and shift to the majority language.

To shed light on the issues outlined above and to discover more about how language shift occurs, the present study examines a minority linguistic community in Mexico where an indigenous minority language, Ozelonacaxtla Totonac, and the majority language, Spanish, are both spoken. Ozelonacaxtla Totonac is part of the family of Totonac-Tepehua languages, spoken in the states of Puebla, Veracruz, and Hidalgo in east-central Mexico (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Distribution of Totonac-Tepehua languages in Mexico (Beck, 2009).

There are about 215, 000 speakers of Totonac languages living in mostly rural and small-town settings in the mountainous, subtropical region of east-central Mexico (INEGI, 2005). Recently, many rapid and extreme changes in the political, economic, and social structures of Totonac communities have occurred. In some speech communities in the region, many parents would now rather teach their children Spanish than their native Totonac languages. Knowledge of Spanish is perceived as helping provide children with more opportunities to get better-

paying jobs and escape poverty. In addition, Totonac languages are viewed in a negative light by both outsiders and members of the communities themselves, perceived as being tied to a stigmatized peasant existence (Lam, 2009; see also Chapters 4 and 5). The unparalleled social changes in combination with the negative perceptions of indigenous cultures that have been present in Mexico for almost 500 years since colonization, are key to explaining the current state of the Totonac languages, and may be revealing as to how the process of language shift develops and unfolds.

In this study, the economic, demographic, political, social and psychological aspects of the changing circumstances are considered in a sociolinguistic description of the language situation in one speech community. *San Juan Ozelonacaxtla* is a relatively isolated rural town of between 1,350 and 1,500 people in the state of Puebla, Mexico (low figure: Corona Hernández, 2008; high figure: INEGI, 2005). Forthwith, the town itself will be referred to as *San Juan*, while the Totonac language spoken in San Juan will be called *Ozelonacaxtla Totonac*, abbreviated below as OT. This practice will keep the distinction transparent between the overall Totonac language family and the specific Totonac language spoken in San Juan. However, people in San Juan refer to their language simply as "Totonac". The name *Ozelonacaxtla* means "cave of the little tiger" in the Nahuatl language, which is also spoken in and around the region. This name illustrates the presence and influence of other indigenous groups on Totonac life and culture. The Nahuatl name has been combined with the name of the patron saint of the town, *San Juan*, which was assigned by the

Spanish in the 16th Century. Having a combined name is a concrete example of the coexistence of both indigenous and Spanish influences in the area, as most towns in the region share similar naming patterns.

San Juan is located about 300 km north of the city of Puebla, close to the border with Veracruz in the municipality of Huehuetla (see Figure 2). The village of San Juan is also pictured in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Location of San Juan Ozelonacaxtla.

Figure 3: The village of San Juan Ozelonacaxtla. The Catholic Church is the dominating central structure.

The community of San Juan is in the initial stages of language shift from their own language, OT, to the prestigious majority language, Spanish. Most children in San Juan are still learning the indigenous language as their first language but are also exposed to the majority language from a young age. However, some bilingual parents are choosing to transmit only Spanish, rather than OT, or both OT and Spanish. Understanding how and why bilingual parents in San Juan communicate with their children using either OT or Spanish as the language of child rearing will shed light on the current state of language use in San Juan. This particular speech community is important to study because it is in the initial stages of language shift and can potentially shed more light on how language shift begins. OT in San Juan has not yet reached the final stages of language shift at which the minority language is no longer transmitted to children. Dorian (1981) identifies a "tipping point" in language shift when parents no longer pass on their language to their children. After this point, the language usually dies out in one or two generations. The "tipping point" in language shift is connected with children and the home domain, since a large part of intergenerational transmission occurs within the family (Fishman, 1991). Transmission also occurs between one's peers and in the community, but the home domain plays a large role. Intergenerational transmission will produce the next generation of competent adult native speakers of any language. Once language transmission to the next generation ceases, a language does not usually have a good prognosis for survival since new young speakers are not being produced who will carry on their linguistic traditions (Fishman, 1991). What

happens before the "tipping point" is reached, the building up stage that results in one generation deciding not to transmit the language, is therefore critical to study because it must influence parents' ultimate choice. The complex interaction between the minority and majority languages, speakers' attitudes, and other more practical factors like economics, can be investigated while the process of language shift is actually underway. Knowing what factors build up to the "tipping point" that has been observed in other Totonac communities (Lam, 2009) may help prevent or slow language shift and potential loss in San Juan and other minority speech communities that are struggling to maintain their languages and ways of life against the overwhelming pressures of majority societies. This research can enlighten any maintenance or Reversing Language Shift (RLS) efforts that might be eventually undertaken in the area (Fishman, 1991).

Specific comments from parents in the interviews in this study reveal important information about the reasons why they choose to use one language over the other, contextualized in the current circumstances found in San Juan. Many of the participants in this study mention that major changes in the economy and political organization of the community, new patterns of migration, and the almost exclusive use of Spanish in local schools have influenced their daily linguistic choices and language behaviours, and ultimately the transmission of their language to the next generation. Participants link these factors to the decreased opportunities to use OT in everyday life, or the limited domains of use for OT, which have been taken over by Spanish. According to Edwards (2006), active domains of use are important for the maintenance of a language, and a

pattern of decline in opportunities to use a language may cause socio-psychological effects experienced as language attitudes. For example, some speakers in San Juan and in other Totonac communities see their languages as less useful than Spanish and make a conscious decision to use Spanish with their children even though it is their second language (Beck & Lam, 2008). By studying the contexts that call for the use of Spanish and OT in combination with what parents say about using language with their children, a picture of San Juan before it reaches the "tipping point" will be sketched.

The research draws on two basic types of qualitative data: ethnographic field notes describing the contexts of language use in as much detail as possible, and audio-recorded interviews with residents of San Juan who speak both OT and Spanish. Interviews focus on eliciting speakers' attitudes towards OT and Spanish and their understanding and perceptions of the reasons behind the linguistic change that is occurring in their families and community. The interview data from individual participants is coordinated with observations from field notes in order to understand more completely the broader context of the situation and pinpoint specific and relevant factors that are affecting the linguistic decisions of speakers. The sociolinguistic case study of San Juan will show how the negative perceptions of indigenous culture and identity in Mexico that have been present since colonization have only recently combined with extreme changes in the community which favour, or have created more opportunities for the use of Spanish. This combination has initiated a shift in the domains of use away from OT and towards Spanish, which is occurring at different stages in other Totonac

communities. In some villages the shift from the Totonac language to Spanish is already complete, while in others it has resulted in apparent stable bilingualism (Lam, 2009). A comparison across different Totonac communities, furthered by this project, will reveal important contrastive factors between situations of language loss and language maintenance that may explain how and why language contact manifests itself and produces different outcomes across diverse contexts.

The purpose of this research in the broadest sense is to better understand the human processes that occur during language contact and to examine in detail the various factors that influence cultural and linguistic relationships between disparate groups of people within the same national and social context. The study of minority speech communities provides important empirical information about how language shift or maintenance occurs that may be useful to diverse parties. For example, governments and policy makers can become better informed about the situations they make policy about, and members of minority or indigenous speech communities may become more informed and involved in the maintenance of their own languages. Forces that are external to the community can influence the processes of language shift and death, but the actual point of change is ultimately the *speakers themselves* who decide to stop transmitting the language. If language shift originates from inside the community, then it seems reasonable to assume that language maintenance or revitalization will as well. This has particular relevance in Mexico where more successful language revitalization and maintenance efforts seem to come from within the communities, not from an external source such as government (Lastra, 2001). In fact, the Mexican

government has tended to produce much rhetoric and very few practical or effective results in terms of supporting and developing its many indigenous communities, even recently (Terborg, García Landa & Moore, 2007). With this in mind, the present study has implications not only for other indigenous communities and language planning and policy in Mexico, but for other countries and colonial contexts as well, such as Canada, where minority language groups are also struggling to maintain their languages, cultures and unique local identities.

Chapter 2
Research Context: Dynamics of Minority Linguistic Communities

The discussion in greater detail of other research on minority languages will make the results of this study more clear and better understood. Several case studies of language shift and extinction in minority communities will now be examined in order to contextualize the present study in the research on minority language maintenance and loss, and to provide some grounds for broader comparison and generalization.

Here in Canada, there are many linguistic minorities that face challenges as a result of factors that favour the use of English. For example, the indigenous languages spoken in western and northern Canada such as Dene, Cree, and Inuktitut exist in competition with English. Many more indigenous languages in Canada have already disappeared, for example the Pentlatch language of the Salish language family that was spoken on Vancouver Island up until its extinction in the 1940's (Lewis, 2009). The forced learning of English in residential schools and the discrimination of indigenous cultures and languages by English-speaking Canadians have played a role in the extinction of many of Canada's indigenous languages. Some children were seriously abused and punished by teachers for speaking their native language. The patterns of abuse and exploitation of Canada's indigenous populations is mirrored in other colonial contexts throughout the world, including Mexico, where indigenous peoples are still viewed as "backwards" and in need of civilizing. In fact, the colonial histories and government policies of Canada and Mexico have many parallels,

though Mexico has been much slower to implement policy and planning, for example in education. This is partly due to the geographical inaccessibility of many of its populations and to corruption in administration (Terborg et al, 2007). These factors have left rural Mexican communities undisturbed and even ignored, perhaps to their benefit, until recently. As a result, language shift in Mexico in many communities is a new development. It is hoped that the lessons that have been learned in similar contexts, like Canada for example, may be applied in Mexico and other regions that find themselves at an earlier stage.

In addition to the loss of indigenous languages in Canada, French also exists in a threatened position in many minority communities outside of Quebec, despite the fact that it enjoys official language status. Mougeon and Beniak's (1994) study of minority French communities in Ontario is particularly revealing in regards to levels of ethnolinguistic vitality and the corresponding rate or degree of language shift in four of these communities. They find that in communities with less institutional support for French (no use of French in schools), and those that are more integrated into English Canadian culture (more use of English in the community/public context) show lower perceived value of the French language (ethnolinguistic vitality). These communities exhibit more complete and/or faster rates of language shift to English. The shift to English is also attributed to economic factors and the growing pattern of out-marriage, or mixed English-French families, in which only one language, overwhelmingly English, is chosen for use in the home. Mougeon and Beniak conclude that institutional support is not the only factor involved in language maintenance. Without use in the home

and other domains, use at school will not guarantee survival of a language, even if it is viable and stable elsewhere in the world. This case also illustrates how communities can become increasingly vulnerable to language shift when they are more integrated into mainstream society. Currently, many indigenous Mexican communities are experiencing changes that are integrating them more, whether by choice or not, into the Spanish-speaking majority *mestizo* (mixed indigenous and Spanish) culture.

Another well-documented case of language shift is that of Scottish Gaelic speakers' shift to English in Scotland. In her discussion of language shift, Dorian (1981) examines numerous factors that have contributed to the loss of a Scottish Gaelic dialect in northeast Scotland. Amongst these she stresses historical factors, especially the displacement of the Gaelic population from the highlands to the coast when their lands were taken from them. The Scottish aristocracy hoped to disperse the Gaelic population with the aim to destroy their culture. Initially their plans were foiled as the Gaelic people adapted and created a new life and culture for themselves, uniting under the economic niche that had been created for them as fishermen along the northeast coast of Scotland. In the last century however, the fishing industry has declined and the one uniting factor they had left, their fisher identity, has disappeared. Dorian links these changes to the recent language loss in these communities.

In addition to outright attempts to displace the Gaelic people, Dorian claims that attitudes towards the Gaelic population have been consistently derogatory, characterized by an elite English-speaking Scottish population that

looks down their noses at their own cultural heritage as they increasingly turn to the south (England) as a model of cultural and social identity. These long-term negative attitudes towards the Gaelic population created the backdrop for the gradual abandonment of Scottish Gaelic. In fact, Dorian found many of the same negative perceptions towards the fisherman identity that are also present in North and South America towards indigenous peoples, for example "backwardness". The Gaelic speaking fishers are not a visible minority but are born into the group and the Gaelic language has become for them, and for larger Scottish society, a symbol of the fisher identity. In the absence of other markers of identity, language became the strongest symbol of membership to the fisher group and was therefore the most stigmatized aspect of their identity. If a fisher wishes to change identities, the easiest way to do so is to stop speaking Scottish Gaelic. Many aspects of this case parallel the circumstances in Mexico where indigenous peoples and *mestizos* are not separated by many visible physical characteristics, but rather by cultural ones: dress, hairstyle, occupation, lifestyle and language. In Mexico, and throughout Latin America, one only needs to cut their hair, put on western clothes, move to the city and speak Spanish to make a seemingly complete transition to the positively viewed *mestizo* identity.

As mentioned in section 1.4, Dorian uses the term "linguistic tip" to describe how factors gradually build up over time until a "tipping point" is finally reached when the language is suddenly no longer passed on to children. When this happens the language dies out in one or a few generations, as was the case with Scottish Gaelic. Later, Dorian expands on this idea, describing how the "tipping

point" may occur when the opportunities to learn the majority language increase significantly and combine with the ever-present negative perceptions towards the minority language (1998). In the context of Scotland, the last exclusive context of use of Scottish Gaelic was lost when the fishing industry declined. At the same time as this development, more and more English-speaking people began to move to the region, while Gaelic speakers moved away or found other jobs where knowledge of English was a prerequisite. Without the uniting and defining fishing industry in their speech communities, Scottish Gaelic had no chance of survival against the strong negative perceptions it had always faced as speakers were absorbed into larger English-speaking Scottish society.

In Mexico, the same negative perceptions of indigenous cultures have been present since colonization. This persistent psychological and socially discriminatory backdrop creates a similar situation as that found in Scotland. As soon as economic and social factors build up enough to cause significant changes in the social structure of a speech community, and more opportunities to speak the dominant majority language develop, the underlying negative attitudes of the larger society may finally gain enough foothold to outweigh any perceived benefits of speaking the minority language. Speakers of OT may succumb to these overwhelming pressures to speak Spanish that have increased considerably in recent times as a result of the many changes that have occurred in the region.

In the Mexican context, little research has been done on the maintenance and loss of minority languages, though many linguistic descriptions and grammars have been written. For example Hill and Hill (1977, 1986) examine the

linguistic process of relexification in language shift from Nahuatl, spoken in central Mexico, to Spanish. Though this is not a sociolinguistic study, the authors do examine social factors that play a role in speakers' choices to use either Spanish or Nahuatl or both (code-switching) that have affected the relexification of Nahuatl. Changes in how community membership and solidarity are defined are important factors in how speakers view both languages in their communities. Hill and Hill claim that speakers have redefined Nahuatl as a marker of a subordinate identity and are even ashamed to speak their language (1986).

Only a few sociolinguistic studies of some indigenous speech communities have been conducted in Mexico. England (1998) looks at Mayan efforts towards language loss reversal in southern Mexico and Guatemala, Lastra (2001) discusses the social processes of language shift from Otomí to Spanish in various communities in central Mexico, and Lam (2009) examines two Totonac communities in the Upper Necaxa Valley of Puebla. However, there have been few empirical studies of the lesser-known indigenous languages, neither of a linguistic nor a sociolinguistic nature, and almost no comparative studies across these languages or between different speech communities of the same language. A look at the few sociolinguistic studies that have been carried out in Mexico warrants discussion to further contextualize the present study.

In the case of Mayan, there are many positive aspects to report concerning language loss reversal efforts. It is useful to note a few characteristics of the situation that have seemed to encourage the use of Mayan languages against the same overwhelming pressure of Spanish that is still threatening so many other

indigenous languages in Mexico, Central America and South America. Mayan languages have enjoyed significant restoration to their linguistic status and the indigenous group as a whole has experienced a certain level of self-initiated cultural revival, though there is still much progress to be made from many points of view. Beginning in the 1980's, following the conflict between the Guatemalan government and its indigenous populations, many Mayans began attending university and rediscovering their heritage. Principal to this process was the study of original literature written in Mayan hieroglyphics, much of which had been destroyed by colonists in the past. The outcome has been a cultural movement dedicated to the reestablishment of the diminishing Mayan identity, with language as one powerful and central means used to help achieve this lofty goal (England, 1998).

The Academy of Mayan Languages was established in Guatemala in 1991 as one concrete product of the revival. It represents the only government-funded Mayan institution that is entirely run by Mayans at all levels of administration, planning and implementation. The Academy has developed a standard alphabet to be used for all Mayan language varieties included under its jurisdiction, and has allocated considerable efforts and funds to the development of a modern Mayan literature and education system with some standardized and published materials. The awareness of the linguistic and cultural issues faced by Mayans and their efforts to establish institutional support for their languages represent a relatively high level of ethnolinguistic vitality in the Mayan context. This has allowed Mayans to stabilize the position of their languages and even increase the domains

of use for Mayan languages. These efforts have contributed to the improved perception of Mayan languages by both Mayans themselves and outsiders to their culture. However, considerable and daunting obstacles are still faced by members of the Mayan speech communities (England, 1998).

Some groups, who are identified *linguistically* as speaking Mayan varieties, refuse to be included under the jurisdiction of the Academy because they do not consider themselves to be ethnically Mayan; the question of identity again becomes ethnolinguistically entwined. Many Mayans also criticize the Academy for being overly involved in all aspects of Mayan life, including agriculture and politics, and argue that it ignores its original purpose to focus specifically on language. The Academy faces difficult issues concerning how to administer limited funds and support all the varieties of Mayan that are under their direction. However, the Academy of Mayan Languages represents one of the first efforts originating from *within* a minority community in this part of the world to take initiative and administer their own efforts towards RLS. They have as their goal to promote not only the Mayan languages, but also the Mayan indigenous heritage and identity as a whole that has so often been denied them by greater *ladino* society (the term for mixed indigenous and Spanish peoples in Guatemala). In this example, the discussion already made is reflected and reinforced: the external imposition of linguistic goals is usually ineffective, and the support of a dying or endangered language will necessarily entail that many other aspects of the minority group's culture be supported alongside their language. There must be some internal desire, will, or pride in the indigenous identity that acts as the force

behind speakers' efforts in RLS. People will fight for what they want, but someone else, an outsider to the group, fighting on a group's behalf is not likely to have much success without the support and backing of the community, which can be difficult to gain.

Lastra (2001) examines the overall case of Otomí in central Mexico and adds to the limited body of sociolinguistic research carried out in this area of the world. In her paper on the recent language maintenance efforts of Otomí, Lastra concludes that language attitudes have played the most influential role in speakers' shift to Spanish. She traces these attitudes back to before the conquest of Mexico, when Nahuatl-speaking Aztecs subordinated many indigenous groups in Mesoamerica into the dominion of their Triple Alliance. After the arrival of the Spanish *conquistadores* the Aztecs passed on their own negative perceptions and stories about the people they dominated, which also included the Totonac. These ideas only reinforced the European perception of indigenous peoples as savage and uncivilized. In current national curricula, students learn about the great historical Aztec and Mayan cultures but actually know little about the other indigenous cultures that make up an important part of Mexico today. This fact reflects the general disregard for these indigenous groups and their role in Mexico that has existed since colonization and continued throughout independence up to the present. Many of the lesser-known indigenous groups were also urbanized and as equally technologically advanced as the Aztecs and Mayans. Lastra claims that negative perception of the indigenous identity persists in all levels of Mexican society, even, and perhaps most importantly, amongst members of the Otomí

group themselves. The same internal negative perception has also been found by Lam (2009) in her study of Totonac communities. When parents themselves look down on their own language, even if they do speak it to their children, they also pass along the degrading and weakening attitudes towards the language, which may be one of the root causes of language shift.

Schooling in Spanish has also contributed significantly to language shift for the Otomí. Lastra points out that this is not necessarily because of the teaching of Spanish, or the non-teaching of Otomí, but because the school experience perpetuates negative attitudes towards indigenous culture and identity. Most rural teachers are not from the community where they teach. Due to poor administration and organization teachers often do not speak the local language even if they are bilingual, knowing Spanish and a different indigenous variety or language that is spoken elsewhere. Teachers in rural schools usually have little training and until recently there have been few programs to improve this situation. The result has been frustrated and unenthusiastic teachers from outside the communities who pass on their negative feelings to students and the community in general. Some researchers argue that education in rural Mexico represents a policy that encourages the absorption of indigenous populations into mainstream society. Schooling is in reality a process of "Castilianisation disguised as the teaching of literacy that promotes an asymmetric bilingualism that gradually eliminates aboriginal languages" (Terborg et al, 2007, p. 203).

Lastra, in addition to discussing the role of negative attitudes, presents some promising and hopeful endeavours on the part of a few communities where

language revitalization efforts for Otomí have been undertaken. Some communities have established language academies to work on a more universally accepted alphabet of Otomí, to develop school texts, and to distribute cultural material, much like the work done by the Mayan Academy. However, most of these efforts are of limited influence since they are independent and not supported by the government. Further frustrating the endeavours, any materials that are developed for use in the schools must be approved by the educational administration in Mexico, and this process is often long and arduous and ultimately limits local control and initiative. These efforts have also been restricted to only a few communities and are mostly based on the development of the language for use solely in schools and do not address other domains of use. As pointed out by Mougeon and Beniak (1994), schooling in the language will not necessarily guarantee successful transmission or maintenance. Without use in the domain of the home, where the essential intergenerational transmission recognized by Fishman (1991) really occurs, these efforts may only be fruitful over the short term, with the documentation of the language as the ultimate result. For language transmission to continue successfully in the home, the learning and speaking of the language must still be seen as useful and necessary in daily life. This perception generates a positive ethnolinguistic vitality that outweighs the perceived benefits of speaking the majority language in the speech community. Unfortunately, this is not usually found in the Mexican arena where indigenous communities suffer the bombardment of negative attitudes towards their identity in so many contexts in their lives. Maintenance efforts in Mexico have often been

fruitless as they are severely limited in scope and effect, often originate external to the community, and do not address the underlying ideology and attitudes that significantly influence speakers' behaviours.

The failure of external efforts to reverse language shift and maintain minority languages is also illustrated by the case study of the Quechua language in Peru. In this South American context, many things were similar to the situation found in Mexico. For example, the Spanish *conquistadores* had the same oppressive governing practices and possessed the same perceptions about indigenous groups throughout their colonies. Quechua in Peru is a language that shares many of the same characteristics as other indigenous languages throughout America. For example, speech communities are often of similar size and many languages are represented by diverse dialects that can sometimes be considered as separate languages. There are many varieties within the Quechua language group; however, much of the variety that used to exist has disappeared because many communities were absorbed into mainstream Spanish culture in Peru.

During the colonial period in Peru and even after independence in 1821, one of the main goals of the Spanish crown, for all of its colonies, was the Christianization of indigenous populations. Initially Spanish was used in this process, but monks soon found that it was faster and easier to use the most common indigenous language, Quechua, to spread their message. This came as a result of the successful use of Swahili in Africa for the same purpose. Eventually however, newly arriving Spaniards, who did not speak Quechua, began to complain to the Spanish government because the "creole" monks (those who had

been born in Peru) had an unfair advantage over newcomers. The Spanish government made it official policy to use Spanish once again in the imposition of their culture and religion on the indigenous populations of Peru. With this return to using Spanish in indigenous education, the discrimination of language and other things indigenous was fortified and continues up into the present day (Bratt Paulston, 1992; Adelaar, 1991).

Later in the 1970's the Peruvian government took it upon itself to rally its people in a unified effort aimed at reviving its dying heritage and creating a Peruvian national identity. In 1972 the Peruvian government passed the Bilingual Education Act, which was political in nature. The main goals of the act were to unite the various factions of the Peruvian population around the recognition of its diversity while at the same time promoting Spanish as the common language in order to instil a feeling of nationalism (Bratt Paulston, 1992). Quechua was declared an official language in 1975; however, the recognition of different dialects of Quechua, some of which could be considered separate languages, did not accurately reflect the reality of the linguistic situation. Twenty-seven dialects were recognized by the government, an action that excluded some groups and did not acknowledge the two main branches of Quechua that exist linguistically. The government's lack of consultation with the communities involved and poor understanding of the linguistic situation resulted in the arbitrary protection of some dialects of Quechua and not of others. The Bilingual Education Act did nothing to change negative attitudes towards Quechua, and the situation remained largely unaltered, except that the government had acknowledged the existence and

use of Quechua. Not much else has been done to support minority language use in Peru and the situation today is much the same as it was 30 years ago: the process of assimilation of indigenous peoples into *mestizo* culture has not been curbed or reversed (Bratt Paulston, 1992; Adelaar, 1991).

Similarly, when compared to the situation described in Mexico, the failure of support for minority linguistic communities in Peru is intertwined with the overall stigmatized indigenous identity. The majority population in Peru is *mestizo*, meaning that the Indian identity is characterized mostly by language, dress and lifestyle, rather than visible, physical characteristics. All it takes to abandon this marginalized and unappreciated identity is to change your hairstyle, the way you dress, and learn Spanish. Until larger overarching attitudes are dealt with, this process of assimilation is unlikely to be curbed by merely recognizing the existence of linguistic diversity through rhetorical policies.

The same disadvantaged situation afflicting the Quechua, Mayan and Otomí minorities has also been found in Totonac communities in Mexico. Lam (2009) studies two Totonac communities, Chicontla and Patla, located in the Upper Necaxa Valley of Puebla. Lam finds that these two communities have largely shifted to Spanish and show a significant intergenerational gap between grandparents' and grandchildren's knowledge of Totonac. Lam finds that negative perceptions of indigenous cultures in Mexico have acted to encourage the learning of Spanish. When a speaker does not know Spanish, they are often "singled out and marginalised" by non-indigenous Mexicans (Lam, 2009, p. 225). This has led to the tendency of Totonac speakers to use Spanish amongst themselves,

especially in public, in order to avoid the stigma associated with being indigenous. Spanish is their second language, so this behaviour is quite unnatural. Lam also finds that new schools in the speech communities have given the present generation of parents the sufficient proficiency in Spanish to use it with their children. Parents recognize the importance of succeeding in school and use Spanish with their children to enable their educational success. Teachers also overtly discourage the use of Totonac by children and pass on the (misguided) idea that bilingualism in Totonac and Spanish is harmful and will confuse children. Lam further identifies changes in the local economy that have contributed to language shift. The new importance of a cash-based economy has caused the development and integration of the speech communities into majority Mexican society. There are more outsiders in the region who have come to establish coffee plantations or processing plants where the Totonac now often work. As a result, the need for Spanish has increased since these *mestizos,* many of whom have settled permanently, do not know Totonac. The development of roads in the area has also enabled the Totonac to travel more easily, further necessitating the need for Spanish because Upper Necaxa Totonac is not spoken outside the valley. Since the downturn in the coffee market in the 1990's, increasing numbers of Totonac leave their hometowns to look for work elsewhere, which requires knowledge of Spanish. All together, when the negative attitudes towards indigenous cultures that permeate virtually all aspects of Mexican society are combined with government policies that promote the learning of the majority language, increasing numbers of Spanish-speaking *mestizos* in the area, and the

economic need to leave the speech community, it is not surprising that many Totonac speakers are swept away by the perceived benefits of and need for speaking Spanish. Lam (2009, pp. 231-232) states that

> The proximate cause of the shift to Spanish – the straw that broke the Totonac language's back – are the new social and economic conditions in the last forty years that have greatly increased access to and the communicative need for the majority language. What has changed is not the desire to speak Spanish but the opportunity to do so (Dorian, 1998; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998, p. 53).

Both Dorian (1981; 1998) and Lam (2009) identify increased opportunity to use the majority language, combined with negative attitudes towards the minority language, as circumstances present at the "tipping point". The study of the speech community of San Juan is important because it provides a picture of a similar Totonac community that is potentially at an earlier stage in the same process found by Lam. Investigating the build-up process and the formation of linguistic attitudes and beliefs that are behind parents' decisions across different communities with similar political, economic, and cultural contexts provides more generalizeable and useful information. The present investigation constitutes one such comparable case study.

The occurrence of language shift and death has been well documented historically and geographically. The type of language shift that occurs rapidly after reaching the "tipping point" is not unusual, as illustrated by the case studies of Dorian (1981) and Lam (2009). However, the complex processes from the

build-up stage to the "tipping point" that are behind this type of language loss have not been examined, especially not in Mexico. What is needed are more studies of communities in the process of language shift, including a broadly contextualized ethnographic description of the conditions and pressures faced by speakers in communities undergoing language shift. Many studies have been done of languages that are already dead or that are in the final stages of language loss. Research that examines all stages of language shift is needed to understand this process more fully, and the present research will fill part of that gap. Also useful would be more comparative studies of different speech communities in the same area that share similar cultural, socioeconomic and political contexts. In particular, amongst the Totonac people in Mexico, some communities seem to show more resistance to language shift than others, even when they share the same broad cultural and political characteristics. What is different about these communities? Why have some abandoned their Totonac languages and others not? Studying these different situations using a descriptive ethnographic methodology could reveal important information about the community characteristics or circumstances, as well as the collective and personal beliefs and attitudes that seem to contribute so much to the processes of language maintenance or loss.

Lam (2009) stresses the importance of language attitudes in the build-up towards "linguistic tip". She found that both the larger Mexican community and indigenous groups alike view indigenous culture and characteristics as "backwards," a view that is applied to many aspects of indigenous life and

culture, including language use. She further concludes that the pressure to abandon their indigenous language is not only external (coming from the majority language) but more importantly, *internal*: speakers of the indigenous language themselves choose to abandon it, for reasons which are the subject of the present study. Lam's findings mirror the claims made by Lastra (2001) that the *internal* negative perceptions of their culture held by the Otomí people themselves have contributed significantly to language loss. The situation in San Juan reinforces the conclusions found in other sociolinguistic work in Mexico and provides comparable information about the build-up stages of language shift that may enlighten any maintenance efforts in the future.

Chapter 3
Methodology: Ethnography and Interviews

After some 500 years of contact with the Spanish language, some indigenous communities in Mexico are only recently succumbing to pressures to abandon their languages. The sociolinguistic studies discussed in the previous Chapter testify to the recent language shift that is plaguing other indigenous communities (Lam, 2009; Beck & Lam, 2008; Lastra, 2001). The purpose of this study will be to identify what factors have contributed to this sudden change, after such an extended period of relative stability. By examining one particular speech community in detail that is at the beginning of this process, and later comparing across other Totonac communities, more relevant, accurate and generalizable information can be obtained. Understanding more completely how language shift has occurred in some communities and not others can help those who wish to take action against language shift in Totonac communities and other indigenous or minority communities in Mexico, Latin America, and around the world.

3.1 Typology and Development of Methodology

In order to examine this issue, the researcher lived in San Juan with a host family for six weeks and carried out a detailed ethnographic study of the speech community. The methodology for this sociolinguistic analysis is drawn from Edwards' (1992) typology of minority linguistic situations. Edwards claims that a typology like his "…could be used to inform and guide relevant policies" both within the community itself and in more external or national contexts (p. 38). In building his typology, Edwards considers other previously developed typologies

of minority communities. The first he considers is White's (1987) geographical typology of minority languages, which characterizes communities based on their uniqueness to an area, the geographical relationship between groups of speakers, and the degree of unity or "cohesion" amongst speakers. Edwards considers the geographical dimension important because it can drastically affect the circumstances a community finds itself in. For example, geographical factors can affect the amount of contact a language has with other languages and the "strength" of the speech community as a unified group. Secondly, Edwards examines the work of Foster (1980) who suggests that history, economics, and subjective elements should be considered. Edwards stresses the need to include the analysis of feelings and attitudes, which was first pointed out by Giles et al (1977) in their development of the idea of ethnolinguistic vitality, and later expanded upon Allard and Landry (1992). Edwards points out that "demographic, status and institutional support factors are seen to contribute to the survivability of an ethnolinguistic group," according to the theories of ethnolinguistic vitality (1992, p. 45).

Building from Haugen (1972) and Haarmann (1986), Edwards furthers his own typology to include ecological variables: those variables that "describe and illuminate the interactions among languages and their environments" (p. 42). Some of these factors include relationships between the group and the state, institutional support, the language-identity relationship, and characteristics of the contact between languages. Edwards claims these are important because they can more accurately describe the context in which the minority community and their

language exist. Improving the faults in vague terminology and the incompleteness of the factors that are presented by these different theories, Edwards presents his own, more complete typology of minority language situations. According to him, the new typology combines the positive characteristics of previous work: it encompasses all the dimensions identified in the older typologies, simplifies terminology, and provides a more comprehensive assessment of factors that can play a role in minority situations. Edwards therefore puts forward the following dimensions as important to consider in any detailed and complete description of a minority speech community.

Two separate categorizations of factors are presented that should be considered in all possible combinations when using Edwards' typology. The first categorization simply presents 11 major academic points of view: demography, sociology, linguistics, psychology, history, politics/law/government, geography, education, religion, economics and media. The second group of factors includes three broad variables that represent the different aspects of a speech act: speaker, language and setting. When these two dimensions are combined, a list of 33 aspects or points of consideration is generated. For example, demographic aspects of the speaker, language and setting should all be considered separately in the description of a speech community. Though every community will vary, and Edwards admits that this list is not exhaustive or exclusive of other possibly relevant factors, his typology is a well-developed attempt to provide a systematic examination tool for minority linguistic communities.

Some of the most relevant questions from Edward's typology shape important aspects of the present study. The following questions were drawn from Edward's list as the primary research questions:

1. How and with what language(s) do parents interact with their children?
2. If they use Spanish in the home, how did they arrive at this decision?
3. What are speakers' attitudes about the language(s) they and their children speak?
4. How do children communicate amongst themselves?
5. To what extent and in what context(s) is each language used with children, both in the family and in the broader community context(s)?
6. What can this reveal about the maintenance or loss of the minority language?
7. What economic and social factors in the community are affecting language use?

3.2 Data Collection

These questions shaped both aspects of data collection in this study: ethnographic field notes based on observations during the six-week stay; and 16 audio-recorded interviews with parents who are members of the community of San Juan. Face-to-face interviews provide more candid and richly contextualized information than other methodologies or field notes could produce alone. Interviews were performed in Spanish, not in speakers' native language, Ozelonacaxtla Totonac. There are some limitations to performing the interviews in Spanish, namely that the presence and role of the researcher as an outsider may affect responses, and Spanish is the second language of all participants, including the researcher. This may cause participants to hold back in their responses to the researcher. People in the region have faced discrimination and have been severely taken advantage of in the past by Spanish-speaking outsiders. Because of this, suspicion on the part of participants is to be expected and is unavoidable in a

situation with a researcher who is white and does not speak OT. However, there are also important reasons to use Spanish and not OT in this specific context of research. Speakers of OT do not use their language with outsiders, so communication in Spanish is more accepted and natural in a research situation such as this. Members of San Juan expect to speak Spanish with anyone they don't know who dresses in western clothing, and especially with someone who does not visibly belong to their group. One participant mentions how he uses a person's way of dressing as the determining factor in his decisions of whether to use Spanish or OT with an unknown interlocutor (J-O, 07/09/2008). Furthermore, participants are often reluctant to open up about their personal experiences and give honest opinions when someone who *is* a part of their ethnolinguistic group interviews them. A local graduate student from the area, Jorge Tino Antonio, shared his difficulties speaking with people about language use in his own nearby community, Olintla. Ironically, he stated that being an outsider was probably the most advantageous position in this situation. He had faced considerable resistance from participants as an insider to the group he interviewed. Some participants told him "Why are you asking me this? You already know, you are from here!" (Tino Antonio, personal communication). His experience illustrates that the position of the researcher in the present study is acceptable and possibly more revealing than the position of an insider, even though an insider is presumably more connected to the situation. The dichotomy of *insider* vs. *outsider* to a community under study is interesting and deserves more investigation, but it is clear that the researcher's

position in San Juan, though limited in some ways by her identity, may be the best possible scenario to achieve the research objectives of the study.

In the selection of participants for interviews, the assistance of a member of San Juan, Gabriela Roman Lobato, was utilized. The researcher was limited by time constraints, and her status as an outsider meant it was more problematic to find participants; therefore it was essential to have the help of an insider to the community. Roman Lobato helped select participants based on the criteria that they be bilingual and speak at least some Spanish in the home. Considering that the research is interested in the process of language shift, only those people using Spanish in the home were sought out for interviews, since they represent those speakers who are leading the shift. Hill and Hill (1986) call this type of participant base a *convenience sample*, since the selection of participants is dependent upon and limited by the social network of the assistant from San Juan. However, as Hill and Hill (1986) and Lam (2009) have found, this type of sample can still be revealing and provide reliable information.

Gabriela Roman Lobato is not only a member of San Juan, but also a trained linguist. Her position and training help verify the validity of the speakers' comments and behaviours and minimize bias caused by the presence of the researcher as much as possible. This is because the assistant's involvement in the research makes the interview situation more natural than if the researcher had tried to solicit interviews independently, since the assistant is a well-known and respected community member. As part of her role, Roman Lobato introduced the researcher and explained the project to potential participants in their native

language, OT. An interview was then set up for a later date if the person agreed to participate. Introducing the research, which occurred on a different day before the actual interview, further allowed for the avoidance of some of the initial effects of the observer's paradox resulting from the researcher's presence as an outsider. More extensive integration in the community that would have limited this effect to a greater extent was not possible considering the relatively short time available. During the introduction, oral consent to record the conversation was also obtained, explaining what the recording device was and why the researcher wished to record. It was necessary to obtain consent orally because many participants are not completely literate and because they will not willingly sign a piece of paper. This is a result of the fact that outsiders have taken advantage of community members in the past, for example by having them sign papers that legally enabled the outsiders to exploit indigenous-owned land.

Questions in the interviews were usually general, attempting to encourage the participants to speak freely about many aspects of their lives. All participants undoubtedly touched on relevant linguistic and cultural issues, even when not overtly questioned. The following is a list of questions that were always asked in some form in all the interviews:

1. What is your name, age, and occupation?
2. Whom do you live with? What is your family like?
3. What languages do you speak?
4. Did you go to school? If so, in what language(s) were you taught? What was your experience like?
5. When/where/with whom do you usually speak Spanish?
6. When/where/with whom do you usually speak OT?
7. What language do you use with your parents? Grandparents?
8. What language do you use with your children (if applicable)? Why?
9. How do you feel about OT? Spanish?

10. How do outsiders react when you speak OT? Spanish?
11. Why do you think Spanish is being spoken in San Juan and in other towns?
12. Has your community changed since you were young? How has this affected your life?

Question 8 is considered the key research question in determining speakers' motivations for using OT or Spanish as the language of child rearing. The interviews were conducted in the most natural and relaxed manner possible. Normal conversation was mimicked as closely as was feasible, and therefore the structure of the interviews was minimal. Participants were allowed to speak openly about whatever they felt was important or relevant concerning their lives and experiences in San Juan. The guiding research questions listed above assisted in keeping the interviews on track and in eliciting specific information when appropriate. This strategy supplies a rich base of information about what is going on in the community because it is not wholly shaped by previously constructed and restricting questions. Rather, this qualitative methodology encourages and captures the natural flow of thought and reasoning on the issues discussed in interviews, which allows for more genuine opinions and attitudes to be expressed. More of the complexities of the process of language shift are revealed by connecting directly to the people, parents, who are the key to intergenerational transmission in the most critical and vital domain of use, the home. The freedom of response offered by this method gives a more intimate look into the lives of speakers who are ultimately the instigators of language, culture and identity shift. The benefits of these qualitative methods outweigh those of more structured questionnaires or defined interview procedures for the purposes of the present

research. Other more structured methods might obscure to a greater extent the true nature of subtle language attitudes and perceptions that are key contributing factors in the situation.

The last part of data collection in addition to notes and interviews consisted of quantitative data on the community. The source for these data is the town nurse, María Corona Hernández, who stays with the host family in San Juan when she is there (she lives in Puebla). The nurse performs her own biannual health surveys of the town in which she records age, health conditions, births, deaths and even migration of family members. Interestingly, her counts are always different that those of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information (INEGI). Corona Hernández' comparisons show that INEGI tends to inflate levels of population, literacy and bilingualism while they tend to deflate levels of mortality, migration and poverty. Her data are trusted more than those of INEGI and are used in this study. Though she is not a member of the community, she is well known and respected by all, while INEGI census workers are outsiders passing through. The quantitative data collected from her will place all of the information gathered in notes and interviews in their complete local context.

3.3 Data Analysis and Description of Participants

After returning to Canada, interviews were transcribed and relevant comments made by participants concerning the research questions were identified and compared. This allowed for commonly cited reasons and factors to surface, and these threads illuminate the understanding of the situation in San Juan held by interviewees. Transcription was done in a manner that reflected the content of

interviews, rather than the details and intricacies of conversations. The purpose of this study was not conversation analysis, so some nuances of speech were ignored in the transcription process. Considering the amount of data involved (about 20 hours of interviews) and the purpose of analysis, comparing participants' comments, this method seemed to be the most efficient and focused for the task at hand.

Interviews average 73 minutes in length and include many broad topics, some of which are irrelevant to the research. Participants range in age from 20 to 71, with a median age of 29, and all but the oldest participant are parents. Information from the participant who is not a parent is included in the analysis because she provides important information about how San Juan has changed over her lifetime. Table 1 (organized by age) presents the code names that participants are assigned in the presentation of findings that follows, as well as important background information regarding the participants of this study and their interviews. Some contextual information is included to provide the reader with a better understanding of particular speakers' comments to highlight the impact and importance of the factors that will be discussed in the next Chapters.

When Table 1 is examined, a few general observations can be made. All but two participants are female, partly due to the fact that it was difficult to solicit interviews with men as they were often working. Only seven participants have any type of income and most of the jobs they have are limited to selling goods they have made. Nine participants have some level of primary school education, six have secondary school education, and only two have completed high school.

Significantly, all but one have traded in their traditional clothing for western styles.

The last column describing language use with children is the most important and revealing. Ten participants use only or mostly Spanish with their children. Of these parents, there are four who have parents (the children's grandparents) that only use OT with their grandchildren (L-O, V-O, C-O and P-O). This demonstrates a clear generational difference in language use for these four families, since children use only Spanish with parents but OT with grandparents. Overall, it is clear that grandparents speak more OT to their grandchildren than parents. All but one set of grandparents (A-O) speak OT to their grandchildren, illustrating that the use of Spanish as the language of child rearing is largely a phenomenon of the current generation of parents in these families.

Code	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education	Dress	Children		Lg. use with children	
						M	F	P	GP
Y-O	F	20	single mom	Sec	W	4	2, 1	OT, S, (Tz)	OT
B-O	F	21	at home mom	Prim	W		3, 4	OT, S	OT, S
L-O	F	22	single mom	Sec	W	2	3	S	OT
V-O	F	23	at home mom	Bach	W		2	S	OT
G-O	F	27	at home mom	Sec	W	1, 2, 4		S, OT	S, OT
J-O	M	28	janitor	Bach	W	5	3	OT, S	OT
WS-O	W: M / S: F	W: 28 / S: 29	bread makers	W: Sec / S: Prim	W	8, 5	11	S	OT, S
T-O	F	29	at home mom	Prim	W	5	3	OT, S	OT
A-O	F	34	at home mom	Prim	W	8, 12	4, 16	S	S
E-O	F	35	at home mom	Prim	W	7, 12, 15	3, 10	S	S, OT
M-O	F	36	store owner, single mom	Sec-1	W	16, 17	11, 15	S	OT, S
C-O	F	36	single mom, agriculture	Prim	W	8		S	OT
Q-O	F	39	at home mom, sells blouses	Sec	W		5, 12	S	OT, S
Z-O	F	40	at home mom	Prim-2	T		11	OT, S	OT
P-O	F	45	at home mom, sells sweets	Prim	W		30, 27	S	OT
I-O	F	71	at home	Prim-2	W	none		N/A	

Table 1: Characteristics of Interview Participants.

Legend for Table 1

Code: Randomly assigned to protect participant identity. **Gender:** M=male, F=female. **Age:** In years. **Occupation:** Describes how participants spend their days.
Education: Prim=primaria (primary, 6 years), Sec=secundaria (junior high, 3 years), Bach=bachillerato (high school, 3 years); numbers indicate years completed of designated
school, no number means the participant completed all years of schooling for designated level.
Dress: W=western dress, T=traditional dress. **Children:** listed under appropriate gender column by age.
Language use with children: P=parents (the actual participants), GP=grandparents, S=Spanish, OT=Ozelonacaxtla Totonac, Tz=Tzotzil (other indigenous language). When more
than one language is listed in a column, both languages are used, and the order of letters indicates the relative amount each is used (S, OT= Spanish used more than OT).

Before presenting the specific findings of interviews it is necessary to begin with a brief history of San Juan. This history will serve to contextualize the current linguistic situation found in San Juan. A description of life in San Juan today is given next in order to further contextualize participants' comments and illuminate the backdrop behind their attitudes, revealing external factors affecting their decisions. Common threads across the interviews are then extracted and compared to create a well-informed picture of how parents see the increased use of Spanish in their community, finally allowing for some conclusions to be made about the state of language shift in San Juan.

Chapter 4
External Factors in Language Shift

4.1 Brief History of San Juan

The history of San Juan can shed light on how the relationship between the majority and minority languages has developed. This history can be broken down into three overall stages: the period before the arrival of Cortes and the conquest of Mexico (up to 1518), the period during the colonial rule of the Spanish crown until Mexican independence (1518 to 1821), and the period after independence up to the present day (1821 on). Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the following sections is taken from Terborg et al (2007) and the Government of Puebla (2005).

4.1.1 Before the Conquest

Up until the arrival of Cortes in 1518, as many as 200 indigenous Amerindian languages were spoken throughout Mesoamerica. In the region of northern Puebla and Veracruz the Totonac people carried out their daily lives and had many interactions with other indigenous groups in the area. Where the Totonac people originally came from, before their arrival to central Mexico, is not well known. Some claim that the name "Totonac" means *coming from the sun* or *people of the hot lands,* suggesting that they were given this name, perhaps by the Aztecs, because they inhabited the hot coastal region of the Gulf (Garrido Cruz, 2008; Troiani, 2007). Regardless of their origin, the Totonac had lived in the region of east-central Mexico for centuries before the Spanish arrived. The Totonac were subsistence farmers, cultivating corn, chilli peppers, squash and

beans. Some Totonac were bilingual in other languages that were spoken in the area, for example Nahuatl and Otomí, which was a useful skill for trading and diplomatic purposes between tribes. At the point when Cortes arrived, the Totonac had fallen under the political domination of the Aztecs and their Triple Alliance, whose centre of power was located in Tenochtitlán, what is now Mexico City. The Aztec dominion had taken control of many smaller, less powerful groups in the central Mesoamerican region. Totonac groups were forced to pay economic tribute to the Aztecs. This often made it difficult for the Totonac to feed their own people when large amounts of crops had to be set aside to pay tribute, which in turn caused feelings of contention and rivalry between the powerful Aztecs and subordinated indigenous groups. These conditions set the stage for the arrival of Cortes and the Spanish conquest of Mesoamerica.

4.1.2 The Colonial Period

After the conquest ended around 1521, the Spanish Crown proceeded to establish itself in its new territories, having centers in cities like Puebla, Mexico City and Guadalajara. With the newly acquired territories came the need to govern the numerous local peoples, if control was to be maintained. The Spanish proceeded to implement various policies and plans in order to "civilize" the "savage" indigenous peoples through a process of Christianization and Castilianisation (the spreading of Spanish). Monks arrived in remote mountain villages with the mandate to start a church, teach the community Spanish, and ultimately convert them to Christianity. However, with such a lot of work to do, and being only one man in each community, the monks rarely achieved the

effective teaching of Spanish. Often times, priests would learn the local languages because it was simply more practical and seemed to produce more results as far as conversion to Christianity was concerned. This reflected what was concurrently happening in other areas of Spanish colonial America, such as with the Quechua people in Peru. Here monks experienced the same practical difficulties in trying to spread and encourage the use of Spanish. As a result, the Spanish crown generally tolerated the practice of learning the indigenous languages in order to further the conversion of locals to Christianity in their New World colonies.

The factors in effect during the colonial period in Mexico did not allow Spanish to gain much ground as a vernacular spoken language for the majority of the indigenous communities in Mexico. Many towns were geographically isolated from the new European presence in Mexico, which was concentrated at colonial centers, what are now Mexico's biggest central cities. Spanish had no real relevance in indigenous communities at this point. There were no contexts for its use, except for the limited artificial contexts created by priests in the churches they established. However, Spanish did become and still remains the language of government, religion, education, business and prestige in New Spain, and it also became more important for smaller communities around colonial centers as they were gradually integrated into the growing cash-based economy centered around Mexico City.

The actual arrival of the Spanish to the area that is now the municipality of Huehuetla was around 1550. They found a small Totonac town, which was renamed as San Salvador Huehuetla in 1574 when the Spanish redistributed land

to the first permanent Spanish-speaking settlers in the town. From here they reached out to surrounding rural areas, including San Juan, where a Catholic Church was built sometime in the 1600's (exact date not known). However, few outsiders have actually settled in the rural areas surrounding bigger centers, preferring to live in towns that are municipal seats, such as Huehuetla. Due to this tendency, contact between Spanish and indigenous peoples was initially limited to the religious aspect. Even this did not constitute a total conversion to Christianity by the inhabitants, but rather a combination of their traditional beliefs and Catholic rituals. Some traditional Totonac religious practices were simply altered to contain Catholic images and practiced in the church building, but continued to express the same personal and cultural meaning to Totonac people as they always had. Some participants testify in their interviews that these mixed practices still occur in San Juan today (W-O, 04/09/2008; S-O, 04/09/2008). It can be said that to a great extent, the Spanish language during this time did not penetrate the Totonac way of life or thought, as Totonac culture and customs were still performed in and centered around Totonac languages. The presence of a Christian influence did not challenge much about their culture or how they perceived themselves and their traditional roles in their communities. Other religious groups arrived in New Spain during and after the colonial period and established followings in many indigenous communities in the Sierra Norte area. In San Juan alone there are currently three different churches: the Catholic church established in the 17th Century, a Baptist church and a Jehovah's Witness church, both having arrived much more recently.

Other than the establishment of churches and explorations of some of its territories, the policies of the Spanish Crown had few cultural effects on the indigenous populations of Mexico and this situation remained relatively stable throughout the history of New Spain. Not until independence from Spain was achieved in 1821, when the nation of Mexico was born, did the political, social and cultural situation begin to change in more significant and permanent ways that reverberated in all levels of society.

4.1.3 After Mexican Independence

When Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, the need for unity within the new state was seen as of unparalleled importance by the Mexican government. After separating from Spain, speaking Spanish became a symbol of the new national Mexican identity, as the ruling class was made up of Spanish-speaking creoles and *mestizos*. The government adopted a one-nation, one-language policy and set out to further its goals through the establishment of primary schools in remote areas of the country. Education and the knowledge of Spanish were seen as the keys to creating a unified Mexican people. The newly established schools were state-run by a central educational body in Mexico City, now called the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP). Teachers were recruited from all over Mexico, even internationally, and were sent out to remote communities. Many of these early schools could only offer the first two or three years of primary school due to lack or mismanagement of resources, including teaching staff, text books and funds. Three years of education was also considered

sufficient to learn basic Spanish, which was the ultimate goal: teaching the Spanish language to all Mexican people (Terborg et al, 2007).

In San Juan the primary school was first established in the early 1900's with a two-year program. Some older community members still remember going to this school in its early years, though not all children attended, as some parents did not see the need for schooling because it took away from the normal daily activities of the family, and school supplies were and still are costly and often difficult to acquire. The primary program in San Juan was expanded to the full six-year program only in the 1950's. The 1960's, 70's and 80's saw the establishment of the first preschools followed by secondary schools throughout the municipality of Huehuetla. In San Juan, a three-year preschool program was first offered in the 1960's and in 1980 the government built a *telesecundaria*, a junior high school, which broadcasts lessons from a satellite television signal originating in a major center, for example Puebla or Mexico City. Students watch lessons on television and are then led by a teacher in activities and reinforcement of the material presented. The *telesecundaria* program, which was initiated nationally in 1968, was seen as a quick solution to the chronic lack of trained instructors needed to staff new schools. A lack of other resources and effective administration has plagued the government's educational plans. Finally, in 2000 the Mexican government built a high school, making it possible for the first time to get a complete basic education in San Juan. All of these schools have only ever operated with curricula that are entirely in Spanish. The preschool is the only partial exception, which offers what can be classified as a transitory bilingual

program (García, 1991). This school begins children's education by teaching more or less equal amounts in Spanish and a variety of Totonac during the beginning of the first year, gradually using more and more Spanish in subsequent years. The ultimate goal of the preschool is to be teaching everything in Spanish by the end of three years in order to facilitate students' learning at all higher levels of study, where Spanish is used exclusively. Since the establishment of schools in the area, the speech community of San Juan has been exposed to formal education almost entirely in Spanish. Bilingual instruction is given in a different Totonac language than OT, is extremely limited and is used merely as a bridge towards the teaching and learning of Spanish.

Since independence, the Mexican government overall has paid little attention to linguistic issues or to the development of sound cultural policies when dealing with its indigenous populations. However, the spread of Spanish has been a strong mandate both before and after independence, even if for different reasons. The Mexican government has also faced unexpected obstacles to the furtherance of this goal. When seen in the light of the overwhelming context of political and cultural change, instability, and complexity in Mexico that has continued since independence, the current situation can be better understood. For example, continuous territorial conflict with the United States to the north, the invasion by the French with the help of conservative political leaders in 1862, and the long and oppressive regime of Diaz that led to the Mexican Revolution in 1911 have all contributed to a situation of instability that has resulted in the inability to focus effectively on domestic planning. This fact has been positive for

many communities since government planning has tended to encourage the spread of Spanish. However, negative attitudes towards indigenous populations have consistently existed, and governments in the 20th Century have been more stable and have paid more attention to the rural communities that were ignored in the past (Terborg et al, 2007). Most recent action on the part of the government still encourages the spread of Spanish and the integration of communities into majority society. There have been some recent changes in the Mexican Constitution regarding indigenous rights and representation; however, it is unclear if this rhetorical action will see fruitful, effective and positively received results, considering the non-action, stagnation and discriminatory nature of other Mexican policies in the past. The newly revised Article 2 of the Mexican Constitution states that

> it is the right of every Mexican to communicate in the language of which they are a speaker, without restrictions in the public or private environment, in all social, economic, political, cultural, or religious activities and any other type of activity (2003, p. 3; author's translation).

Though this is law, it is not represented in reality by any program or enforcement. This continuous prejudice and discrimination, along with the recent establishment of schools that promote Spanish and other new developments in Mexico, have changed the situation for speakers of Totonac languages. The role of Spanish in San Juan and other Totonac communities has grown as a result of the increasing importance of a cash-based economy, in place of subsistence farming. Speakers

perceive improved access to the apparent economic and social opportunities associated with Spanish if they learn to speak that language. Desire or motivation to speak Spanish, as well as increased opportunities through schooling to learn it, have therefore contributed to recent linguistic change and development in San Juan.

The basic history of the speech community summarized here allows for a better understanding of the observations made by the researcher during the field visit. In section 4.2, external factors that were observed as affecting the current linguistic situation in San Juan are presented. Information from all data sources is included: field notes, interviews and statistical resources, in order to describe life in San Juan today. The description is divided into relevant themes or factors drawn from the Edwards' typology, focusing on key aspects of community life, domains of use for Spanish and OT, and changes to the economic, political and social characteristics of San Juan. This section will contextualize the language attitudes expressed by participants in their interviews that are discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2 San Juan Today: Factors in the Present State of Things

A picture of the daily circumstances and conditions that a member of San Juan would normally face is illustrated here, as it was seen during the researcher's stay from September to October 2008. In order to provide a well-rounded image of life in the speech community the following aspects are discussed: living conditions and the daily life of a typical family, geographical position and interaction with other communities, political position and change, government

programs, economic change and migration, education, the role of religion and institutional support for OT.

4.2.1 Daily Family Life and Living Conditions

As stated previously, there are at least 1,350 people living in San Juan today. The community is made up of approximately 330 families or households with an average of six to seven people, and sometimes as many as 12, living in each household. Within a given household there may be up to four generations living together. An intergenerational living pattern is typical of Totonac families, as once a couple marries they traditionally go to live with the husband's parents. In households consisting of multiple generations, the process of language transmission is more complex, because not only parents but also many other relatives are directly involved in the upbringing of children. Some parents mention that they see value in knowing Totonac for its role in communication with grandparents, or for its heritage and cultural value. The participant E-O (18/09/2008) answers the question "Is Totonac important?" by responding "Well, so that the children don't forget it, how their grandparents speak". L-O (30/09/2008) echoes this belief, stating that OT is important "because if their grandma doesn't know how to speak in Spanish, well, the child can speak to her in Totonac." Grandparents are one of the strongest links to the traditional Totonac identity for children and young people in San Juan. They may play an important role in the family unit and in socializing children. However, parents usually maintain primary control in the upbringing of their children in intergenerational households.

The distribution of language use in the home by household is illustrated in Table 2. It is apparent from these data that OT is still the only language of the home in San Juan for the vast majority of speakers (75% of households). In fact, a very small proportion (4%) of families use only Spanish. Despite this, it is important to remember that the use of Spanish in the home is a new development in San Juan, beginning with the current generation of parents. The trend may grow and gain momentum in the future, now that it has started. Other families may follow suit, especially if prominent members of the community begin to use Spanish in the home and if Spanish continues to gain domains of use. This pattern has been exemplified by similar situations in different speech communities in the Sierra Norte (Lam, 2009), across Mexico, and around the world.

Language Use in the Home
330 families

21%
69 families

4%
14 families

75%
248 families

☐ Only Ozelonacaxtla Totonac
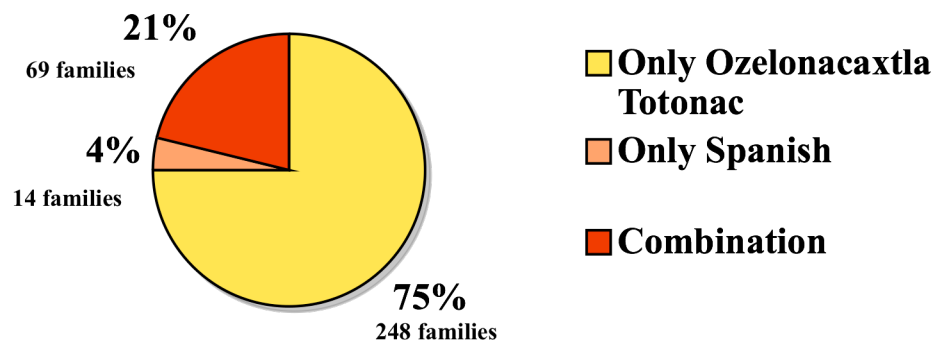
☐ Only Spanish

■ Combination

Table 2: Language use in the home (Corona Hernández, 2008).

In the homes of the participants who have switched to only or mostly Spanish, it was found that young children use more Spanish than OT with each other, based on the researcher's direct observations during interviews. In public, however, most young children (younger than six years, before entering primary school) still play together using OT. Some parents who teach Spanish at home assume that their children will learn OT from their peers, which does occur at present. However, this may not always be the case. Parents in the bilingual homes that were observed tend to use more Spanish than OT overall, resulting in an unequal bilingual home environment for these families that favours Spanish. This specific observation could have been influenced by the researcher's presence, since some speakers would assume that their use of Spanish was being measured and targeted. The expectation that the researcher would desire to hear Spanish illustrates the prestige held by the majority language, as perceived by speakers themselves. Beck and Lam (2008) and Lam (2009) also found that speakers of Upper Necaxa Totonac feel shame in expressing their identity as *gente de calzón* 'people of indigenous dress' in the presence of *gente de razón* 'rational people'. Spanish speakers and outsiders are perceived as part of the latter group. Though these terms were not directly observed by the researcher in San Juan, they are used in many indigenous communities in the region (Beck & Lam, 2008; Tino Antonio, 2005; Garrido Cruz, 2008). OT in the homes of participants is often restricted to use with grandparents, which means once that generation is gone, these households will most likely only speak Spanish. The data in Tables 1 and 2 are more telling when the linguistic roles of different generations are taken into

account. Just because OT is still spoken at home in most families does not mean that these speakers do not know or use any Spanish. Most members of San Juan now know at least some Spanish, only they remain more comfortable with OT for the present.

The amount of bilingualism in San Juan is also revealing for the state of language use. Tables 3 and 4 show the levels of schooling and bilingualism in the speech community, which are key aspects in minority linguistic situations and have important roles in the daily lives and decisions of speakers. This information is presented along with the overall population distribution of San Juan in Table 5 to give a complete picture of the speech community.
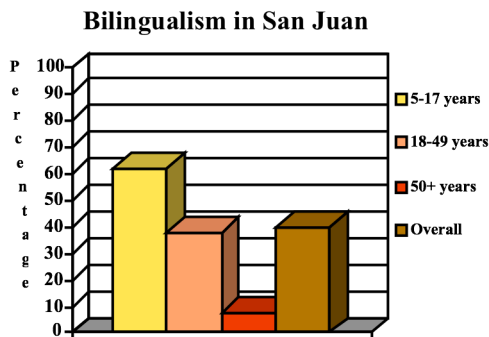

Table 3: Levels of bilingualism by age group
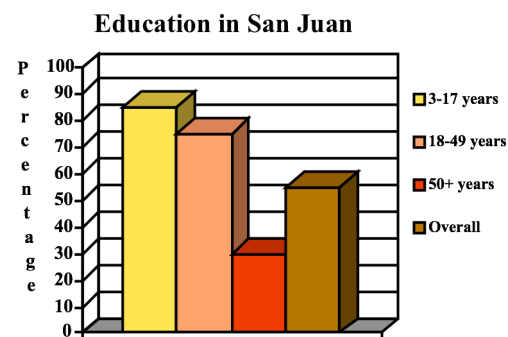(Corona Hernández, 2008).

Table 4: Levels of education by age group
(Corona Hernández, 2008).
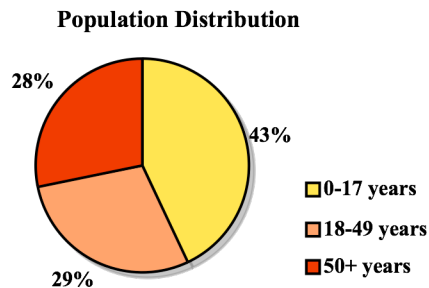
Table 5: Population distribution by age group (Corona Hernández, 2008).

The youngest age groups are slightly different in these tables. Bilingualism in Table 3 is measured from five years on, since children younger than five were not counted as proficient speakers as they are still learning their first language(s). Table 3 clearly shows that levels of bilingualism increase as the age groups get younger. The group over the age of 49 is only 9% bilingual, while the youngest group between the ages of five and 17 is about 63% bilingual. Some factor, or set of factors, has changed or come into play in the last generations that has influenced the number of people who speak and understand Spanish. Table 4 measures levels of education beginning at three years, when children enter preschool. The level of education for the youngest group represents the proportion of school-age children between three and 17 years old who currently attend school, which is about 85%. The levels of education for the other two age groups reflect the percentage that have at least three years of primary education (enough to enable them with basic communicative skills in Spanish). Only 30% of the group over 49 has completed three years of primary school, while about 75% of the group between 18 and 49 has this amount of education. When Tables 3 and 4 are compared, a general pattern of correlation between the amount of schooling and bilingualism across age groups is apparent. The youngest age groups have the most education, partly because the amount of schooling available has increased substantially over the past 40 years or so, and they are also the most bilingual. Though schooling cannot be said to be a direct cause, or the only cause, of increasing bilingualism, there is a strong relationship. The type of schooling

offered, rather than just the amount available, may play a role, since the schools are operated in Spanish and their goal is the teaching of the majority language.

The data illustrate with statistical information what participants voice in their interviews. When asked if the village has changed since they were children, many participants agree that the use of Spanish has increased. This is especially true of those participants between 20 and 50 years of age, the current generation of parents. For this reason, the changes experienced by these speakers throughout their lifetime are examined throughout this Chapter. These developments are located in the right timeframe to have contributed to the recent decisions parents have made concerning their use of OT and Spanish with their children. To understand more about families in San Juan, their daily activities and responsibilities will be described. The circumstances faced by members of this community have a direct bearing on language use because the positive or negative experiences they have, and the results they get when using either Spanish or OT in daily life, contribute to their opinions and decisions about language and culture.

The typical day for a mother includes grinding corn to make their staple tortillas, preparing meals and caring for children. Men work in the fields and carry firewood back from the forest so that meals can be prepared. Some families grow corn, tomatoes, beans and coffee for personal consumption, if they are lucky enough to have their own plot of land. Usually however, most families have to buy food from stores in San Juan. Many do not own any land, or they do not have enough for a garden or crops with sufficient capacity to sustain their families. Others have converted the land they own to cultivate and harvest only one single

crop, like corn or coffee. These crops are sold to other members of the community who dry it, treat it, or transport it to other centers where it is further treated or sold. Within the community of San Juan itself, there are 10 small stores with a limited availability of goods. Stores offer some fresh produce, rice, beans, occasionally pork and chicken, machine-pressed tortillas, as well as commercialized goods like pop, potato chips, candy, toilet paper, soap, tequila, *aguaardiente* (a strong sugarcane liquor) and cigarettes. Fresh milk is not available, and so it is brought in Tetra-pak containers and given out to children in preschool and primary school as part of a social services program of the national government called *Oportunidades* 'Opportunities', which was implemented in 2000 (Secretaría de Desarollo Social, 2000). This program is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.4.

Most women still make tortillas by hand. Some have chickens at home, which are rarely butchered but rather kept as laying hens. Only a few families own livestock or working animals, like horses or donkeys, which they use to help haul wood and bundles or sacks of harvested coffee and corn. The daily diet consists of tortillas, eggs, some type of broth or soup (made with corn, vegetables, and maybe chicken or pork a few times a week) and rice or beans, always served with weak coffee. There is some variety in the produce that is eaten as part of the Totonac diet. A year-round growing season brings different fruits and vegetables like bananas (over 16 varieties), squash, cabbage, oranges and limes, mangos, melon, avocados and other tropical fruits. Bread is expensive, so corn and rice are the chief grains eaten. There are, however, many different ways of preparing corn,

and the Totonac community possesses a rich variety of traditional cooking practices and dishes, at least for those who can afford to buy different items as they become available with the seasons. The diet of the more poverty stricken members of the population is restricted to tortillas, beans and salsa. One participant speaks of the hardship she has had to face in order to feed her family. She reports that sometimes there is hardly anything to take to her husband for lunch while he is working in the fields: "I take him a chilli-taco, nothing else. What else is there? A tortilla with salsa, nothing more" (Z-O, 09/09/2008). The level of poverty is reflected in the fact that many people are only able to eat once a day. Extreme poverty and malnutrition still exist in San Juan, despite interventions on the part of the government to improve living conditions and overall quality of life.

Some families, since the intervention of the Mexican government in the 1970's and 80's, live in homes constructed from concrete blocks or stones fitted together with cement. Roofs are made of cement, wooden slats, terracotta tiles, or *cartón* (creosote treated cardboard). Other families on the edges of the town live in wooden slatted huts. A few even have roofs made of palm leaves, following traditional building techniques that were only left behind in the last 30 years. Most homes are small, divided into a cooking space and a sleeping space, and have dirt floors. Very few families have the resources to purchase modern amenities like stoves, television sets, telephones and radios that have recently become available with the expansion of roads and markets into the area. In the whole of San Juan, there are approximately five television sets, 30 radios and only

five landline telephones, all of which have been acquired in the past 25 years (estimations of Roman Lobato, personal communication). Since stoves are also extremely rare, cooking is done over an open fire which is kept burning all day in the kitchen area. About 60% of households currently have electricity, and much fewer have running water and drainage systems (Corona Hernández, 2008). All water is boiled before drinking, according to the stipulations laid out by the health component of the *Oportunidades* program. This infrastructure and these programs have been under development by the Mexican government since the 1980's and are still underway. The area suffers frequent interruptions of electrical service and much of the new infrastructure, for example roads and water systems, is poorly or incompletely installed. This is often due to mismanagement of resources and corruption at both local and central levels of the projects.

The previous discussion reveals that the level of poverty is extreme for many members of the community of San Juan, relative to other community members who do not struggle to feed their families and even own modern amenities. The level of poverty of even the wealthiest community members may be perceived as extreme because more people are travelling to the cities and comparing their rural lifestyle with the modern, westernized, urban, Spanish-speaking population. This poverty is associated with the indigenous peasant identity, mostly defined by overt characteristics of Totonac culture, like speaking OT or dressing in traditional clothing. Negative attitudes towards the Totonac identity and OT language are consistently expressed by both members of the Spanish-speaking majority group and speakers of OT themselves. *Mestizos* often

claim that indigenous peoples are poor because it is their natural state, not because
they are victims of the social system.

In addition to the daily living conditions described above, the people of
San Juan face other challenges to their way of life. One characteristic of the
community that had served to protect them up until recent times will be discussed
in detail next. The isolated geographic position of the Sierra Norte of Puebla has
left many indigenous communities relatively untouched and unchanged by the
majority culture. This condition of isolation protected San Juan for more than four
centuries from the process of cultural assimilation. Recent developments of
roadways to support vehicle traffic into the area was initiated around 40 years
ago, resulting in the decrease of the isolation of communities in the Sierra Norte.

4.2.2 Geographic Position and Neighbouring Communities

Roads into San Juan are poorly maintained and suffer frequent closures
due to the flooding and mud slides caused by seasonal rains. Road materials are
usually of poor quality and are hard-pressed to stand up to the increasing amount
of motor vehicle traffic in the area. Some roads are paved, but this is a recent
improvement of the last 10 years or so. The majority of vehicles are owned by
mestizos living in other neighbouring communities who bring goods in their
trucks to sell in San Juan. The few local men who do own trucks make it their
business to shuttle people around the region on market days, or to festivals in
other communities for a small fee of about five pesos (50 cents Canadian). There
are also some official shuttle services in the region that connect San Juan to the
municipality of Huehuetla and to larger towns where other bus connections can be

made to major urban centers. In general, however, people walk where they need to go since most don't have vehicles and they may not have extra money to pay for transportation. Outside interaction for most members of San Juan is therefore usually limited to the two closest communities in the vicinity: Caxhuacan and Ixtepec. As part of this research, short field trips were made to some of the communities around San Juan. Observations and field notes of surrounding communities were taken as part of this process, which are used for the general purposes of contextualizing and comparing San Juan. Figure 4 illustrates in detail the region where the research was conducted.
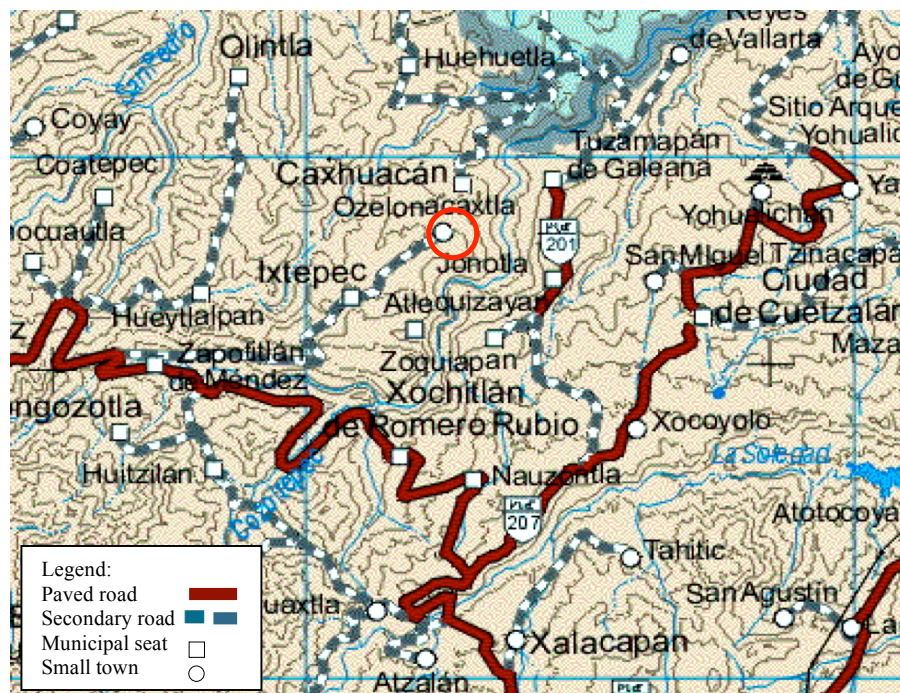

Figure 4: Map of immediate region around San Juan Ozelonacaxtla (highlighted by the red circle) showing neighbouring communities (Maps of Mexico, 2009).

Caxhuacan is the closest community, just on the other side of the valley to the north. It is possible to walk to Caxhuacan in about 45 minutes to an hour. Caxhuacan is the seat of another municipality, and as such it is much larger than

San Juan. There are about 3,550 people living in Caxhuacan, and that number again live around the actual town (INEGI, 2005). It is more developed, and has more amenities and a much larger *mestizo* and outsider contribution to the population than San Juan. Based on observations and information provided by residents of Caxhuacan, their town used to be a purely Totonac village. That has changed significantly in the last generations.

Interestingly, the Totonac people of Caxhuacan who still maintain their indigenous identity through language and dress actually live on the outskirts of the community, in a sort of ring around the center. *Mestizos* originating from outside the Sierra Norte region, along with many Totonac who have chosen to abandon the traditional form of speech and dress, live in the center of Caxhuacan. They also hold the highest and most prestigious positions as teachers, lawyers, store owners and land owners who exploit their indigenous compatriots for their labour in order to support the new cash economy. Totonac are restricted to living outside the center partly because the cost of living is higher in the center, and also because they are directly excluded from economic advancement that would enable them to take advantage of the new lifestyle, at least so long as they cling to their indigenous identity.

In reality, the line between identity as *mestizo* and Totonac is not clear and may be different for different people. Anyone who speaks Spanish without a notable accent and dresses in western style clothing can claim to be *mestizo*. Many people in Caxhuacan commented that some Totonac deny knowledge of their language, even when it is well known in the community that their parents

raised them in the variety of Totonac spoken in Caxhuacan. Currently, Caxhuacan Totonac is rarely spoken outside the home domain or the areas of the town where Totonac have been allowed to reside as a group. Language is still one of the clearest, most salient markers of identity to the Totonac ethnolinguistic group. Clothing style is one other salient symbol of ascription to an identity in this context. Style of dress is easier to modify than language, since you only need to change your clothes, not learn a whole new communication system to make the conversion. Those that do make a change in language are therefore more seriously committed to the switch to the *mestizo* identity. When a shift such as this occurs in a community that is so close to San Juan, the precarious position of language maintenance in the region is highlighted.

People from San Juan visit Caxhuacan to go to market, to see family and friends that live there, or just to walk around and pass the time. In their interviews, almost all participants from San Juan claim that they use Spanish in Caxhuacan, at least at first, until they have deciphered to which identity their interlocutor prescribes. Style of dress is a clue, and one man from San Juan made an interesting comment about his strategy for deciding which language to use in Caxhuacan and other communities in the region: he would look at peoples' shoes. If the person went barefoot, or used *huaraches* (leather and rubber sandals), or the cheap, mass produced plastic shoes readily available at markets, he would know that he could use Totonac with his interlocutor. On the other hand, if the person wore closed-toed shoes, runners, or more expensive-looking footwear, he would use Spanish (J-O, 07/09/2008).

It is apparent that the process of shift away from the traditional Totonac way of life is much further along in Caxhuacan than in San Juan. They are one another's closest neighbours, there is regular interaction between them, and they also share many historical and developmental similarities. What could be the difference that has resulted in language shift in Caxhuacan but not in San Juan? Membership to San Juan, control of who is allowed to move into the town, is still controlled by the Totonac, and outsiders generally do not live there. W-O (04/09/2008) relays that the community has even kicked out *mestizos* who had settled there for disrupting the normal routine or challenging local customs. Cultural ownership of the community is still in the hands of the Totonac, even if they no longer possess political or economic control (see sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.5). In Caxhuacan, however, the Totonac people now live as the outsiders. The relationship between the communities of San Juan and Caxhuacan is really an extension of the conflict between the *mestizo* and Totonac identities that has already manifested itself in Caxhuacan. For example, almost all teachers in San Juan come from Caxhuacan and they transmit their negative ideas to students. Young people also used to travel to Caxhuacan to continue their studies before more schools were built in San Juan. Most teachers in these rural regions have not completed their education and teach in San Juan as part of their practicum only because the "better" placements in Caxhuacan have been taken. Some participants stated that teachers from Caxhuacan looked down on them, insulted them, and took advantage of them (J-O, 07/09/2008; Q-O, 08/09/2008; Z-O, 09/09/2008; I-O, 01/10/2008; C-O, 21/09/2008). The participant J-O actually tried to become a

teacher himself after graduating from *la preparatoria* (high school) in Caxhuacan. When he petitioned the primary school principal, who is from Caxhuacan, he was told there were no opportunities for new teachers. Three months later, J-O found out that the principal had brought a new teacher from Caxhuacan to teach in San Juan, one of the principal's *mestizo* friends. This is one clear example of the opportunities that are repeatedly denied to people from San Juan, or to people who still prescribe to their traditional identity, even when all else is equal.

The other major center close to San Juan is Ixtepec, which is about twice as far away to the south. There is regular interaction with Ixtepec because the biggest market in the region is located here and held all day every Saturday. Many people from different indigenous groups in the region, as well as *mestizos*, come to this market. On any market day, it is possible to see as many as 15 different-colored *fajas*, the woven belts often worn as part of the traditional Totonac clothing. Women wear white *naguas* (skirt) and an embroidered blouse, and men don white *calzones* (wrap around pants) and shirts, all of which is made of cotton. A different colored *faja* worn with this clothing represents membership to a different Totonac village. In the aisles of the market of Ixtepec it is possible to hear the many different regional varieties of Totonac, as well as other indigenous languages like Tepehua, Nahuatl and Otomí. However, many merchants are *mestizos* and outsiders who travel from market to market all over the Sierra and may have limited (if any) knowledge of the various languages and dialects that are spoken. As a result, a large portion of the business transactions in the market of Ixtepec are actually performed in Spanish. Spanish still serves as the lingua

franca in Mexico, a role it has had for the duration of its colonial and independent histories which has facilitated its spread.

Ixtepec is also a municipal seat and is relatively large. Unlike Caxhuacan, however, it has not succumbed as much to the cultural shift that seems rampant in the region. In Ixtepec, many young people still dress in the traditional manner, a much larger proportion than in Caxhuacan and even San Juan. All participants except one have abandoned traditional dress in San Juan and very few young people (under 30) were observed during the field visit who maintained the custom. Based on observations, it is estimated that about 35% of the population retains traditional dress, and the vast majority of this group is over 50 years of age. In contrast, at least 75% of the people observed in Ixtepec dressed in traditional clothing. The market in Ixtepec is a hub for the meeting of many Totonac and other indigenous peoples. Spanish may be used as a lingua franca, but there are still many who come in groups and speak amongst themselves in their respective languages. In this market, the incredible mixture of peoples and cultures in the area is represented. Many traditional Totonac and other indigenous items are bought, traded or sold here, and the management of the market is at least partly under the control of the Ixtepec Totonac themselves.

On the other hand, there are also many new and cheaper items that come from urban centers and factories and that compete with the handcrafted work of locals. For example, in the past, women would weave their own cotton fabric to make traditional clothing, but now machine-woven fabrics are brought to market from the cities. The typical sandals made of leather straps, *huaraches*, used to be

made and traded exclusively by locals for locals. Now most people buy cheap, factory-made plastic shoes. The fact is that these mass-produced goods can be brought into the region for less money than what it takes local people to make them. People have become more and more conscious of every cent they make and spend, as the conditions of poverty have not much improved in the region, and have even been worsened by the strengthening foothold of the cash-economy. Many outside merchants have taken advantage of these conditions and bring cheap goods from urban areas, a pattern that has degraded the character of the local markets and previously self-sustaining economy (see section 4.2.5).

People from San Juan go to Caxhuacan and Ixtepec regularly because there is no market in San Juan. If clothing, shoes, school supplies, cooking utensils, or other household goods are needed, one must go to another community to buy them. In fact, the participant Y-O states that if she could change anything in the town, it would be to have a market in San Juan (19/09/2008). Regular interaction between San Juan, Caxhuacan and Ixtepec is therefore inevitable and cannot be completely avoided. This fact is important because in both these nearby communities there is use of Spanish. In Caxhuacan, this occurs mainly because the transition to the *mestizo* identity is much further along than in San Juan. In Ixtepec, this is due to the high level of economic activity that precludes the use of Spanish as a lingua franca, because the many regional languages represented may not be mutually intelligible. As people from San Juan interact extensively with these two towns, perceptions and ideas from these speech communities may be passed on to speakers from San Juan. The negative attitudes towards the

indigenous identity that exist especially in Caxhuacan, are readily expressed to the people of San Juan and may be brought back to the community. That being said, San Juan has shown considerable resistance to the language and culture shift that has occurred in other towns that are so geographically and culturally similar. In addition to its small size and the lack of *mestizos* living in San Juan, the previous political situation of the speech community has also allowed for the maintenance of OT in San Juan longer than for Totonac languages in the municipal seats.

4.2.3 Political Position and Change

Interestingly, there is actually less travel between San Juan and Huehuetla, the seat of the municipality to which San Juan belongs. This is partly due to the long distance between the two towns; about 30 km of winding mountain road that is so rough it does not appear on the map in Figure 4 (p. 72). Most interaction between San Juan and Huehuetla is a result of students coming and going from the new university that opened there in 2006, or public officials from different levels of government travelling on business. In fact, San Juan is an auxiliary branch to the municipality of Huehuetla and is located separate from the municipal seat (see Figure 2, p. 16). The village of San Juan has its own complete governing body that operates subordinate to, and is considered a part of, the municipality of Huehuetla. This characteristic is important because it has allowed San Juan to maintain a higher level of independence from the larger communities around it than might otherwise have been possible without this local governing body. More independence from outside influences means that fewer of the attitudes and conditions that seem to accelerate language shift have been

transmitted in San Juan, at least not as fast as has occurred in other nearby communities. That being said, San Juan is an island surrounded by larger economic centers that are consistently transmitting negative signals towards the culture and language represented by the Totonac, and denying the importance of traditional roles in the region. Resistance to these forces for a community that is in such a surrounded position may only put off the process of assimilation at work in the region.

Though its political status and position may still benefit San Juan, it is important to point out that the political organization of the town has been radically changed in the last 30 years. Before the 1980's members of San Juan did not participate actively in national politics. A few local community leaders were responsible for all interactions with Huehuetla and the leaders were selected based on a long tradition of community service that was interactive and participatory. All young men were required to do two years of community service once they turned 16. The boys were responsible for maintaining communal buildings like the church, town hall, library, and the office of the mayor. After two years, some boys would leave the central organization to work in the fields as farmers, while others would continue on permanently in service to the community for their entire adult life, seeking to eventually gain positions of leadership. It was from this group of men that the town mayor and his secretaries were chosen. The mayor was responsible for organizing the community service work of the rest of the men in the town. He would hold regular meetings in which the conditions of San Juan would be discussed and plans for cleaning and maintenance were arranged. A few

times a year, he would arrange what are known as *faenas*. A *faena* included such activities as cleaning the streets after the rainy season, making repairs on communal buildings, maintaining pathways in the forests by cutting away overgrowth with machetes, and harvesting communal crops of corn or coffee that were used to support the local government. *Faenas* were even organized for the cultivation and harvest of cotton, and the weaving and sewing of traditional local clothing, *naguas* and *calzones*. Nowadays, everyone is responsible for their own clothing, and it is bought ready-made or sewn from fabric bought at markets rather than made by hand. *Faenas* were an integral part of local culture. According to some participants (W-O, 04/09/2008; I-O, 01/10/2008; P-O, 20/09/2008), it was because of these events, combined with the system of long-term stable community service, that members of San Juan trusted their leaders and had a sense of common purpose and direction. Leaders were men that actively participated and were well known and respected members of the community. *Faenas* may have allowed for a better understanding and appreciation of the uses and maintenance of communal property that further strengthened the social fabric and understanding of roles in the community. The system of *faenas* operated independently from the government in Huehuetla, and was undisturbed so long as the mayor reported to and obeyed orders from the municipal seat.

After the 1980's, this communal responsibility and care for the community fell out of practice. This may be partly due to the new economic system (see section 4.2.5), since people now began to work for money and did not want to take time off to work in the *faenas*. This was also found in the Totonac

communities of Chicontla and Patla (Beck, personal communication). The local political system suffered many substantial changes during this period, the most important of which included a new system for the election of local leaders. Town leaders were newly required by the government to be active members of national political parties. This severely disrupted the traditional organization of San Juan, as any man who knew Spanish could join a party and run for mayor, without ever having completed any community service. In addition, men who were not from San Juan, but from Huehuetla, began to vie for the position of mayor. One even gained the title undemocratically when his colleagues in Huehuetla installed him as mayor without having held an election in San Juan. Some participants remember this event bitterly, claiming the town's problems really began when this happened around the year 1995. P-O states regretfully "You could live well before, it was calm…but everything started [because] they did things covertly" (20/09/2008).

Since the end of the community service system, it has become more difficult for San Juan to maintain many aspects of the traditional Totonac lifestyle. No one organizes *faenas* and the contexts for thinking and acting as a united group no longer exist or are weakening, circumstances that are catalysts to local social change. People have become focused on their individual lives and homes since their traditional centralized organization has been completely displaced. The community has lost some of its unifying characteristics, which may cause some people to disorientate themselves from the communal Totonac identity that previously determined life in San Juan. Because of the changes in

their relationships and interactions as members of the ethnolinguistic community, some speakers may even redefine what it means to identify as Totonac. When this occurs, it is not unusual that language shift emerges as a part of the shifting identity, due to the complex connection that exists between language and identity. Since *faenas* have been abandoned, the physical conditions of San Juan have also degraded, resulting in dirty streets, run-down buildings, and the disappearance of paths in the jungle that have become impassable. I-O, the oldest participant, speaks with regret about the change in the work ethic of townspeople and remembers how they used to build homes together: "… between everyone they would build a house … between everyone they would then work again … they would return the favour … now nobody wants to do anything" (01/10/2008).

4.2.4 Government Programs

The national Mexican government became more concerned about its rural and indigenous communities beginning in the 1980's, illustrated by this new requirement that leaders belong to national parties. The new interest, whereas Mexico had previously ignored these populations, can be partly understood as a response to pressure from other "first world" countries and organizations like UNESCO to improve living conditions and education in the *pueblos* (towns) of rural Mexico. The actions of the Mexican government might have been taken in an attempt to boost the image of Mexico abroad (Terborg et al, 2007). As a part of this new initiative, the Mexican government established the *Oportunidades* program in 2000. The mandate of the program is to assist disadvantaged or marginalized families by offsetting the cost of schooling and providing health

care. *Oportunidades* offers scholarships to children to complete their education up to the high school level. Payments are made to parents, usually in the name of the mother in an attempt to "empower women," according to the government (Secretaría de Desarollo Social, 2000). Unfortunately however, funds are not always used by parents for their designated purpose to support children's education and may be spent in numerous other ways, with alcohol being one of these. Men retain their traditional power in the family regardless of to whom the payments are made, and they decide how the money is spent. If children do not go to school, the government eventually ceases payments. The town nurse works under the *Oportunidades* program, helping to provide health care at home and in the clinic (built in 1998). She also assists in distributing the payments for the program and ensures that children are attending school and getting their regular health checkups.

Various participants make comments concerning the ineffectiveness of *Oportunidades*. Instead of supplementing parents' incomes, the payments often replace them (I-O, 01/10/2008; P-O, 20/09/2008; Q-O, 08/09/2008). Many parents simply choose not to work at all once they receive government aid and use the money to cover living expenses for the family. P-O testifies that

> when it's time to harvest coffee, now nobody wants to go and help
> … now nobody wants to work … Everybody used to go to help but
> now they say "it's going to rain, I'm going to fall, I'm going to get
> dirty" (20/09/2008).

Q-O echoes P-O's statements:

With the program *Oportunidades*, now almost nobody wants to help anyone else working in the fields. Now they are only there waiting to get their money. It's like the federal government has made them lazy and they only wait for the two months to pass when the next payment will arrive (08/09/2008).

The effectiveness of the *Oportunidades* program comes into further question because Q-O reveals that funds are not always distributed fairly to the most disadvantaged families. "Some people even have land … and these same people receive money … it annoys me that people can be so ambitious and not let others have a chance … those that really need it" (08/09/2008). According to Q-O, some families have also been taken off the program for not attending regular meetings, not maintaining the cleanliness of their homes up to the nurse's standards, or for not sending their children faithfully to school. These families however, are usually the ones that struggle the most to meet their daily needs. Without the government support they are left even more disadvantaged than before the program was implemented, because other families continue to receive support. They are not generally assisted by others in the town, at least not to the same extent as in the past, because with the change in social structure of San Juan the sense of communal responsibility as a town has weakened (W-O, 04/09/2008; I-O, 01/10/2008; P-O, 20/09/2008). Identity is now mostly felt at the individual, family, and national levels as speakers look outward, disregarding or not perceiving the value held by their local ethnolinguistic identity, represented by OT. Speakers perceive that real economic and social opportunities do not come

from the government program that ironically holds the name *Oportunidades*, but rather from speaking Spanish, which enables them to get better jobs.

Other programs from the national government are officially claimed to help or develop the town, but unfortunately they have not had many positive outcomes as seen from the position of community members. With its agricultural policies in the past, the government has encouraged the purchase of indigenous-owned land by large landowners for the development of cash crops, especially coffee. As part of their support for these endeavours, the government began to send chemical fertilizers into the region. In her interview, I-O remembers how "everyone began to plant [corn and coffee] and they started to send chemicals … it's pure business that the government is doing … they're bringing [things], but according to me they're not helping" (01/10/2008). I-O also reminisces about the natural environment she had enjoyed as a child that has since changed for the worse. She remembers going out daily with her mother to look for wild produce and medicines but "because of the chemicals that the government sends, everything is running out." Other members of the village report that in their lifetime the way of life has completely shifted away from being self-sustaining. The current lifestyle, the product of recent changes and development, now produces garbage, pollution, economic disadvantage, apathetic feelings and false hopes for improvement. Traditional life could also be difficult, however, because of lack of medicines, crop failures, famine and violence. Some of this has been improved upon, for example the availability of healthcare, but many of the same problems still exist along with new ones highlighted in this discussion.

The ineffectiveness of government policies and poor quality of the infrastructure and programs implemented in a half-hearted and disconnected attempt to improve life in San Juan has resulted in the negative perception of involvement on the part of the government. These conditions send the message that people from San Juan are second-class citizens who don't deserve the same types of programs or funding that are in place elsewhere, for example in urban centers, or in bigger and more well-known indigenous or rural communities. Even some Totonac communities receive more support than San Juan: the tourist industry in Cuetzalan has blossomed and benefited the community with initiatives and development coming from government sources. Perhaps tourism is one way for these small communities to participate in the economy on a national level while still enabling the maintenance of many aspects of their culture, since that is what tourists come to see. Government involvement has served to integrate San Juan into the national cash-economy, but the community has yet to benefit from this action. If anything, intervention in San Juan has only resulted in changes to the traditional lifestyle and obstacles to language maintenance. The negative conditions of poverty and disadvantage in San Juan are consistently (and wrongly) associated with the "backwards" indigenous identity, including speaking OT.

4.2.5 Economic Change and Migration

Another result of the current situation in San Juan has been the migration of many of its young people, who leave the community seeking to escape the conditions highlighted in the previous sections. Integration in the cash-based

economy effectively occurred for San Juan in the mid 1980's as a result of initiatives on the part of the government to establish more agricultural plantations. Most privately owned land that belonged to locals was sold to land owners and developed into coffee or corn plantations. Previously independent local farmers now had to work on these plantations, getting paid between 30 and 50 pesos ($3 to 5 Canadian) per day depending on how much crop they brought in and the current market prices. People began to lay claim to whatever natural growing produce existed near their homes, where in the past a person could pick whatever was growing without reserve or worry that they were trespassing on someone's property. Services provided were now expected to be paid for in cash, rather than with the exchange of another service. All of a sudden people needed money to live, and to get that money they had to work for those who had it, the new landowners. The coffee industry boomed until a flooded market and deregulation of international coffee prices caused the crash of the coffee market in the late 1980's and 90's, the brunt of which was born by local farmers (Fridell, 2007). Since this time, the local economy has not recovered and there are no new opportunities for work. Even those who still work consistently in every harvest of the year struggle to make ends meet because they are victims of the severely deflated coffee prices. There are no alternatives to working in the fields, unless you own or make something else that you can sell in the village, or in neighbouring communities, as a few of the participants do. Almost everyone in San Juan works in agriculture except a lucky few who have inherited a store or been able to develop their own small business selling clothing, sweets, tortillas, or

bread. A few men work in construction, helping build the new style of housing using cement and sometimes stones that are cut right out of the hills.

The economic situation in San Juan is difficult, even with the apparent support of the *Oportunidades* program, and many young people leave San Juan in search of work elsewhere. As more people begin to travel and see the lifestyle in urban centers, they may seek a higher standard of living than that which can be provided by the limited agricultural work found in San Juan. Almost all of the interviewees in this study had spent some time working in Puebla or Mexico City, and many had family members that moved to the cities permanently to make their lives elsewhere, where more opportunities for better paying jobs are available. In the past, people simply exchanged their services, and everyone therefore had an important role in the daily functioning of the community, even women and children. With the new cash economy, this system of interdependence has fallen apart and many are left with no means to participate actively in the new economic system that purposely excludes them. The result is a community that lacks clearly defined roles. The lack of economic opportunity in San Juan contributes to the maintenance of the relative state of poverty of the population that stays, and to the continued migration of young people looking for better circumstances. All these factors create a situation that is not conducive to language maintenance because in order to function outside the domains of the village, knowledge of Spanish is required. As more people begin travelling and migrating permanently, they will learn Spanish.

Corona Hernández, the town nurse, commented that "San Juan is a ghost town" when she passed along the data she had collected on migration. She reported that 145 people between the ages of 14 and 45 had migrated to urban centers over the past ten years, more than one tenth of the total population in 2008 (1,350). The numbers are surprising considering the small population of the town, and speak to the real lack of economic opportunity in San Juan. The speakers who migrate are bilingual in Spanish and will likely raise their families in a Spanish-speaking environment. Participants echo what the numbers state clearly: many young people leave San Juan once they finish school. If they don't leave, their only option is to get married, start a family and work in the fields. Anyone looking for more opportunities in a different, better-paying job must leave San Juan, and that means knowing Spanish.

The domain of use for the Totonac languages is restricted to their respective villages, since Totonac varieties spoken in different towns may not be mutually intelligible. Some couples who had married across villages used Spanish together because their different Totonac(s) "can't be translated well, there are words that can't be pronounced" (A-O, 21/09/2008). This situation illustrates firstly the limited domain of use of OT, a language that will disappear if its only context of use, the village of San Juan, disappears or is assimilated. Secondly, it shows the extensive domain of use of Spanish, which is the lingua franca of the entire country. The survival of OT in San Juan is threatened by the migration of many of its young people, not just to cities, but also to surrounding Totonac

communities where speaking Spanish is also the accepted, easiest, and safest communicative strategy when interacting with unknown interlocutors.

Significantly, and to their economic disadvantage, those Totonac who migrate but do not shift entirely to the *mestizo* identity do not find much better work than in San Juan. They are usually restricted to janitorial or factory work and they are often denied higher-paying opportunities by the government or people from more affluent towns. Some *mestizos* even claim that it is because of their inherent characteristics as indigenous that these people fail to gain better positions, when in reality they are victims of the racial discrimination of the majority Spanish-speaking *mestizos* acting to maintain social and economic stratification (Terborg et al, 2007). Indigenous groups in Mexico face a vicious circle of discrimination that is tied to their ethnolinguistic identity, and it is felt whether they are at home in the village or in the big city. If the attitudes of society are not changed, it is unlikely that any language planning will have a lasting positive effect and the resulting shift to Spanish will probably continue for many indigenous speech communities.

Young people often leave only to work at first, but many stay and raise their families in the communities they move to. Once they have moved out of San Juan, these parents are even more likely to shift completely to the *mestizo* identity, and very rarely speak OT to their children. Almost all participants who have relatives with children living outside of San Juan testify to this new pattern of acculturation for those people who have left San Juan. Someone returns with his or her family to the village to visit their relatives and the shift of identity is

quite apparent. The whole family dresses in western clothing and speaks Spanish. Parents will usually still speak OT with grandparents, but children will stick to Spanish. Significantly, those people who return to San Juan after migrating often have a new awareness of the low prestige that is held by their language and their indigenous identity. Outside the relative safety of San Juan, the discrimination and disadvantage faced in purely *mestizo* contexts can be very difficult to bear and may create stronger feelings about language. V-O states that people who have returned simply "don't want to speak in Totonac anymore, it embarrasses them. They already went to Mexico City and there they speak Spanish. Now coming back here they don't like Totonac anymore" (15/09/2008).

W-O makes an interesting comment regarding the young people who have returned from being in the city. He observes that they not only speak Spanish, but a different "hipper" variety that is ruder and is characterized by an urban, slang vocabulary and different intonation. W-O continues, drawing a comparison between these "confused" young people and the literary character of Don Quijote:

> It happens to them like Don Quijote, a person who reads so many magazines that they now imagine themselves like one of the people from the magazine, the young people watch movies and they put themselves in that character. They don't make their own personality, they borrow one. That is how they act. (04/09/2008)

The astute observation made by W-O provides a good picture of how individuals, especially young people, can be affected by their surroundings and are keenly aware of social attitudes about *what* they should be like and *who* they should be.

Because of this awareness, they may face strong desires to assimilate to the most positively valued and advantageous identity.

4.2.6 Education

In addition to needing Spanish for working outside of San Juan, if a young person wishes to go to university, they must also know Spanish. The role of school becomes more important as parents have seen that learning Spanish creates better job opportunities for their children outside of the limitations experienced in San Juan. In the past, many parents did not send their children to school because it was too costly, and children were more useful for the family working in the fields or helping out at home. Nowadays, many parents look ahead at the possibility of getting work for their children in the city, and teach them Spanish in order to increase the available opportunities for their children. Parents see a new value in sending their children to school to learn Spanish and in using it more at home so they don't have an accent as adults. Though there is nothing wrong with this practice when parents also teach OT, if they decide to only teach Spanish it will contribute to language shift. As was illustrated in Tables 3 and 4 (p. 65), the speakers in San Juan under 50, that have had more access to education, are also the most bilingual. For the first time, the current generation of parents is equipped with the skills to actually *use* Spanish in their homes, likely because they have more schooling and more interactions with the higher numbers of Spanish speaking outsiders in the area. The new schools have reinforced the perceived importance of education and the government initiated *Oportunidades* program that makes payments to families when children attend school. When this is

combined with parents' perceptions that Spanish will provide their children with more opportunities than OT, it is no wonder that more and more young people attend school, complete their basic education, and even go on to university.

Schools and teachers also play a primary role in the transmission of attitudes and social expectations. The schools are a powerful link between the people of San Juan, the Mexican government, and larger Mexican society. Education also places San Juan in a position relative to the rest of Mexico because more than the curriculum is taught and learned by children as they attend the schools. Teachers pass on their negative perceptions of indigenous culture to students and present their biased understanding of how indigenous people fit into Mexican society. There are four schools in San Juan: a bilingual preschool (three years from age three to five), a federal primary school (six years from age six to 12), a 'tele'-secondary school (three years from age 13 to 15) and a high school (three years from age 15 to 17). Most teachers in San Juan come from Caxhuacan: only two of the 15 teachers are from other Totonac villages, which highlights the influence teachers from Caxhuacan have over education in San Juan.

Classrooms in all these schools were observed as part of this research project. Based on these observations, it is apparent that many teachers are not happy about teaching in San Juan. They see their position as temporary, a beginning phase in their careers before they are transferred to another "better" location, which is often much farther away from Caxhuacan than San Juan. Teachers express their disdain for the OT language. The principal of the secondary school expresses assertively how he feels about OT: "Most students

speak Totonac and we can't seem to get it out of them, that is the problem we have here" (personal communication). The same principal asked permission to speak his variety of Totonac in the presence of the researcher during a class that was observed. The principal explained that sometimes he uses Totonac to explain or clarify difficult concepts, but that he feels Totonac should not be used to teach. The researcher may have created an environment in which the principal felt uncomfortable speaking Totonac, illustrating how teachers are aware of outsiders who might look down on indigenous culture. The principal felt he had to give a warning because Totonac was out of its normal context, it doesn't belong in the classroom and to speak Totonac at school is an exception that is rarely made. Students also made comments to the researcher regarding their use of Spanish and OT in the schools. Teachers generally encourage Spanish and discourage OT.

The higher-level schools in San Juan have also recently undergone a new direction in the curriculum. To further complicate the linguistic and cultural issues that young people face, the national government has instituted a new program of English as a second language. A language that has no contexts of use save in urban and tourist centers in Mexico has managed to gain a foothold in this tiny isolated community. English as an international, prestigious language and the language of tourism, one of Mexico's primary industries, has managed to take even more prestige away from the local language, OT. Much value is placed on international, majority languages that are esteemed for bringing economic prosperity into the country that further benefits *mestizo* society. Little regard is

given to indigenous languages in Mexico, that are rather shoved aside to give way for the teaching of foreign languages.

One last recent development has improved the educational options available for the people of San Juan. In 2006, the government of the state of Puebla opened a new intercultural university in Huehuetla. Before the university opened, young people had to move away from home to major centers in order to continue studying, which was extremely costly. Few students were lucky enough to have a family member to lodge with in the town or city where a university was located. It is now more economically feasible for young people to continue their higher education, since they no longer have to move away from home. The Mexican government has also offered some students scholarships to offset the cost of continuing their studies at this university.

The Intercultural University of the State of Puebla offers two undergraduate programs: one in sustainable development, farming techniques, and technology; and one in linguistics and indigenous languages and cultures of the region. Both are four-year, nationally accredited programs. All classes are given in Spanish, since the university accepts students from any indigenous or *mestizo* background, and Spanish again serves as the lingua franca. The linguistics program includes classes in linguistics, history and grammars of some of the indigenous languages of the area. The last two years of the program are devoted to linguistic fieldwork carried out by students in their own communities. Conducting this research is particularly positive because it motivates students to care and become involved in what goes on in their own towns. Local students are

insiders to their communities who gain training and a newly instilled awareness about relevant linguistic and cultural issues. These members of the speech community may become key players in any conscious organized actions for language maintenance or RLS efforts that are carried out in the future.

The university does not offer other programs yet, but the availability of this level of education without having to move to an urban center is a positive development for the entire region. There are still relatively few students, however, since travelling costs can reach 30 pesos per day, all the money that some men make in one day's work in the fields. However, the existence of the school allows for potentially more possibilities for young people without having to migrate, and it creates a legitimized context outside of the town for students to ascribe to and be proud of their indigenous heritage. If schooling programs can be further developed in a positive way that challenges negative perceptions of local culture and encourages students to become involved and take responsibility for their own communities, there exists a strong potential that OT could endure for generations to come. University education was already proven a strong catalyst to cultural revival in the similar circumstances faced by Mayans that is described above in Chapter 2.

4.2.7 The Role of Religion

There are three churches in San Juan: a Catholic Church, a Baptist Church and a Jehovah's Witness Temple. The Catholic Church has played the largest role in the history and development of the community. The spread and practice of Catholicism was the first context of use created for the use of Spanish throughout

Mexico and the Spanish colonies. The Catholic Church was also the only means of contact between isolated rural areas and central national governments located in the urban centers. In the beginning, residents of San Juan were converted and it was expected that they attend church and abandon their traditional religious practices. The use of Spanish was restricted to the religious domain because *padres* (priests) found it difficult to spread the language any further than community leaders, and leaders did not use Spanish with their people. The role of the Catholic Church was limited in colonial times to establishing a permanent link between San Juan and the outside world.

Presently, the majority of the population still claims to be Catholic. Catholicism has had a comparable role as the Spanish language in forming the national Mexican identity since independence. However, many people who claim to be Catholic are not actively practicing. Of those who do practice, a lot actually mix traditional Totonac customs and beliefs about traditional gods or spirits of nature with Catholic practices and images. The Church has not altered the character of the community in any greater way, though it still plays an active role since the *padre* (who travels from Caxhuacan) performs most weddings and funerals. All church functions and practices are performed in Spanish. The *padre* still allows for the performance of traditional *danzas* (dances), though this custom has severely diminished over the past 20 years or so. In other more populous towns, like the Totonac center of Papantla in Veracruz, it is possible to hear mass given in a Totonac language, at least occasionally.

The second church in San Juan is the Jehovah's Witness Temple. Some 40 adults regularly attend this church, and it has only existed in San Juan for a generation. One participant, Q-O (08/09/2008), is an active member and gives many interesting comments about the role of the Temple in the community. She insists that the Jehovah's Witness Temple holds as one of its mandates the preservation and revitalization of traditional culture and language. In fact, the effective encouragement of Totonac traditions by the Temple is limited to language. Members of the temple witness and explain to their neighbours that traditional religious beliefs are wrong, and none of the church members dress in traditional *naguas* or *calzones*. Following tradition is only supported so long as it does not contradict the Temple's beliefs. The Jehovah's Witnesses mandate the use of speaker's native language in order to try and reach people more effectively. The Temple uses two religious handbooks, one in Spanish and one in a different Totonac language than the OT spoken in San Juan. Participants testify that the Totonac handbook is difficult to read and necessitates the use of the Spanish copy to make a comparison that facilitates and ensures understanding. Some services are given in the indigenous language. Though the use of OT and other Totonac varieties by the Jehovah's Witness Temple may lend the languages a limited amount of prestige, the Catholic Church holds the vast majority of religious prestige in the community.

The third and final church in San Juan is the Baptist Church, which has the smallest religious role, partly because it was founded only 20 years ago. There are more attendees to this church than to the Jehovah's Witness Temple, but they are

less active in spreading their beliefs and do not hold the same weight or position as the Catholic Church. Some services are given in OT in the Baptist Church, though it is usually a mixture of OT and Spanish. Without use of OT in the Catholic Church, the positive effect from use in the other churches is minimal since they have much smaller congregations and no historical role in the development of the community.

4.2.8 Institutional Support For Ozelonacaxtla Totonac

The last aspect that should be considered to give a complete picture of the state of the community is institutional support, which includes the resources that have been developed in Totonac languages that support their use in an official way. As mentioned earlier, teachers do not usually use Totonac languages because they hold negative attitudes towards these languages. There are also practical issues that play a role in the non-use of OT in the schools, because little educational material has been developed in OT, especially at the higher levels. The material that does exist is limited to the preschool level. Further complicating the issue for the development of materials is the lack of agreement over how a written system for the Totonac languages should be developed. Some varieties of Totonac already have a written form, thanks to the work of other interested individuals or groups, for example the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The only linguistic work on communities in the municipality of Huehuetla is found in the work of Troiani (2007). There is little concordance and written forms represent a single variety that is interpreted and adapted to other varieties with varying degrees of success. The many phonological differences across Totonac

communities make it difficult to create orthography for new varieties that will accurately represent the sound systems. There may be symbols that do not have matching phones (sounds) in the second variety, or phones that have no corresponding symbols. This makes reading and pronunciation difficult when OT is written in Totonac alphabets that really represent different languages. For this reason, few people in San Juan know how to read in a Totonac language.

Despite these difficulties, there is a small number of indigenous Totonac, a few students and academics, who have begun to study their own language in more detail and take a serious interest in the development of a literature in Totonac. Most of these people are from other regions far away from San Juan and speak a different Totonac language. Nevertheless, as some people become more interested in the linguistic aspect of their common Totonac culture and begin to write in their languages, they create a new context of use for Totonac languages and instil a sense of legitimacy and prestige on their language by writing it. They also further the documentation and preservation of Totonac languages and create more serious recognition for themselves and their common ethnolinguistic identity. Many Totonac in San Juan, however, are not even aware that this has occurred, and the majority that do know are not interested and do not see much value in the endeavour. "Books should be written in Spanish, not in Totonac" (Y-O, 19/09/2008). Considering the difficulties many people deal with in everyday life to simply meet their basic needs, it is no wonder that learning how to read and write in Totonac would be low on their list of priorities.

The local government uses OT in meetings held in San Juan, but leaders must also be bilingual because meetings in Huehuetla are conducted in Spanish. Most other town meetings within San Juan are also still held in OT, and it remains the functional first language of the majority of the population. A system of loud speakers is used to spread news and announcements throughout the town. There are three different members of the community who make announcements over the loud speakers concerning the availability of foodstuffs in the stores, news about meetings for the *Oportunidades* program, and school messages. All these announcements are made in OT, with the exception of those for the schools, upon the insistence of the teachers that they be given first in Spanish and then in OT. Teachers will announce in Spanish and then pass off the microphone to the owner of the speaker to announce in OT, even though the teachers are Totonac themselves and know how to speak a variety of Totonac. Overall, however, speakers still use OT in the public domain within San Juan. All communal and official issues and activities are still enacted in OT within the speech community, providing speakers with ownership over the affairs of their town, since OT is used in local linguistic functions that involve all community members. Almost all members of the speech community of San Juan are local Totonac, unlike the large *mestizo* populations of bigger towns like Caxhuacan and Ixtepec. However, if the spread of people, attitudes and language continues from these larger centers, the linguistic role of Spanish will increase.

In the town of Cuetzalan, about two hours away by car, there is a regional indigenous radio station. Programming consists of local and national news,

cultural discussions and readings, and some children's stories broadcast in a Totonac language, as well as in Nahuatl, Otomí and Spanish. The existence of the radio station has a positive influence on indigenous communities in the region because it provides them with a means to hear about events and festivals, become informed on relevant political and cultural issues, and connect to other indigenous groups and prominent leaders, both nationally and locally. Other media, like television, magazines and the Internet exist almost exclusively in Spanish. Numerous families own television sets and programming often serves to spread negative perceptions of indigenous people and encourages assimilation to the mainstream dominant culture. Language that is used in many programs is derogatory, and comedies especially mock traditional indigenous clothing and the stereotypical accent of a speaker when his or her Spanish is influenced by *dialecto* (the term used in Mexican Spanish to refer to indigenous languages). Over the course of a year of steady observation of Mexican television made by the researcher, a good understanding of the negative messages sent by national television programs was gathered.

4.3 Summary: The Role of External Factors

The factors discussed above contribute to the formation and transmission of language attitudes. The OT language faces many challenges for its survival and development based on the aspects taken into consideration from Edwards' typology (1992). Without use in contexts like the schools, churches, and political arenas, OT holds a position of limited status and prestige in competition with Spanish. These are the most prestigious domains of use for a language, and since

OT is not used there, it may send a negative message about the language. Some parents, when asked if they would like to see OT used in the schools replied "Why would I want that, then they [my children] wouldn't learn Spanish" (Y-O 19/09/2008). Speakers feel that OT is not as valuable as Spanish because of the restrictions in domains of use for OT. Spanish is the forward moving, progressive language while OT is antiquated and tied to the image of peasant life. As has been illustrated by other researchers (Giles et al, 1977; Allard & Landry, 1992; Dorian, 1981; Lam, 2009), attitudes can have a subtle but powerful role in minority linguistic situations. They are created and reinforced by circumstances and environments that produce negative experiences associated with using OT. All of this adds up to one thing: low ethnolinguistic vitality for OT in San Juan.

In order to validate the conclusions already drawn, discover more about language attitudes and the situation faced by speakers, and make any predictions or recommendations, it is important to examine the comments and opinions of the speakers who have already shifted to Spanish in their homes. Chapter 5 examines the internal attitudes that affect these parents' decisions about language use.

Chapter 5
Internal Factors in Language Shift: Reasons Cited for Choosing
Spanish

An analysis of the key research question is conducted in this chapter, based on participants' responses to *How or why did you decide to use Spanish with your children?* Answers from parents isolate their opinions about using Spanish and OT. This subjective assessment of reality ultimately determines in which direction their lives and community will go, linguistically and culturally. The opinions expressed in interviews represent part of the current ethnolinguistic vitality that exists for OT, at least for the participants of this study. Comments made in interviews reinforce the researcher's observations by providing firsthand witness to the factors described in Chapter 4. Participants discuss how they interpret the current situation (external factors) and how they arrive at the daily linguistic decisions that are ultimately responsible for language maintenance or loss. Both the external factors and internal attitudes provide data that show how San Juan is at an early stage in language shift, building up to the "tipping point".

Table 6 presents participants' responses to the most important research question: *How or why did you decide to use Spanish with your children?* Because of the nature of the open-ended question, data in the table may not represent an exclusive list of factors that participants could consider relevant in their decisions about language. Some of the factors identified as relevant by the researcher (see Chapter 4), are not touched upon by interviewees. Every speaker's perceptions and weighting of factors can vary. Even though some of the reasons listed by participants may not actually be linguistically or culturally true, it has been shown

that people's perceptions have a large impact on their behaviour, regardless of the truth of their beliefs (Giles et al, 1977). In addition, the number of times a reason is mentioned is not included in the analysis because it cannot be concluded that frequency of mention correlates to the actual strength of a factor's role for a specific participant or in the overall situation. Based on this rationale, the factors cited by participants are presented in no particular order of importance, but rather in a manner tying them together in a unified picture that captures the forces at play for individual speakers and in the community at large.

Reason
1. Spanish is more useful and better/Ozelonacaxtla Totonac is restricted
2. To avoid discrimination/disadvantage suffered for not knowing Spanish
3. Use in school/attitudes and pressures of teachers
4. For travel/migration/to get jobs outside of agriculture

Table 6: How or why did you decide to use Spanish in the home?

Each of these reasons will be examined in turn, using excerpts from interviews to exemplify how people from San Juan see the roles of Spanish and OT in their community. Understanding the current linguistic choices made by parents in the home domain will reveal more about language shift and may be crucial information needed for any efforts to change the nature of these choices. A well-informed assessment can be used to help develop the most effective means of action that might be taken against the encroachment of Spanish in the future.

5.1 Spanish is More Useful/Ozelonacaxtla Totonac is Restricted

Participants claim they teach Spanish to their children because it is more useful than OT. Since Spanish is employed in more contexts than OT (see Chapter 4) it is more useful across a variety of circumstances. Any language has the power to change and adapt to the needs of its speakers, so linguistically, the belief that one language is inherently more useful than another is unfounded. However, many speakers do seem to believe this, and Spanish is therefore seen as better than OT. Evaluative beliefs such as this are tied to the ethnolinguistic vitality of the language: perceptions about a language, where it should be spoken, how it should be viewed and why it should be valued. For example, if a speaker has aspirations for a different type of job than working in the fields, or for getting an education, knowing Spanish can make these desires a reality for them. OT cannot be used to achieve all speakers' objectives in life, and they do not expect to get much for knowing it. Some believe that it cannot be used in more prestigious domains of use and feel that OT is restricted, stuck, and antiquated. W-O (04/09/2008) expresses this sentiment when asked to describe his language.

Totonac here in San Juan … it can't be used to talk about a lot of things. Totonac has to change as well … to be able to move forward because it's as if it were a car that was stuck that can't go forward nor backward.

W-O also mentions his dislike of how young people mix OT and Spanish. For him, no one now speaks what he regards as the "pure" form of OT and he lectures his children about mixing the two languages. W-O claims that mixing of

any type, whether it be code-switching or merely borrowing, is undesirable because it prevents the learning of either proper Spanish or proper OT (04/09/2008). According to his wife, S-O (04/09/2008), the new phenomena of code-switching and borrowing are signs that OT is going to disappear. In fact, other researchers have found that code-switching and borrowing can have linguistic and structural effects on a language that may constitute the partial loss of some characteristics of the language (Winford, 2003). This does not entail language shift, however, it may contribute to the process and may be perceived negatively by speakers. Though the researcher does not know OT, exposure to the language during the field visit was extensive and regular. During observations, the use of Spanish loan words in OT could be clearly heard in the speech of many speakers. The words *porque* (because), *pero* (but), *entonces* (then), *para que* (so that) and *por eso* (because of), amongst others, are regularly heard in the OT speech of members of San Juan. The development of increasing bilingualism, code-switching and borrowing may represent a grammatical infringement of Spanish on OT at a linguistic level independent of the psychological and social aspects of language shift that are the subjects of this paper. Linguistic changes may also influence speakers' perceptions of their language. If OT seems to need some features of Spanish to function more "easily" (as described by speakers), this may translate the idea that Spanish expresses things better or more efficiently than OT.

It can be argued that borrowing is a type of inherent linguistic change or adaptation that occurs in all languages as a result of language contact, which is

unavoidable in today's globalized world. For example, English uses many borrowings that do not threaten its "Englishness" for speakers and may be viewed as a positive expansion of the language that reflects how English is expanding over the world. However, for a language like OT that still exists only within its original geographical context of use (it is not expanding), influence from Spanish may be seen negatively, indicating the weakness and limited communicative ability of the OT language. Even though this phenomenon may be the same linguistic process at work, it is viewed by speakers in a different light depending on the characteristics of the situation and the receiving speech community.

Other participants claim that they would rather see other world languages like English before they would like to see their own language, OT, taught in the schools. The social and economic value of majority languages like Spanish and English (which does not have a local context of use) outweighs the cultural value of OT for many speakers. When answering the question "Do you think it is good that Totonac is spoken here in San Juan?" the participant Y-O (19/09/2008) answers "No, I think it's good that Spanish is spoken, and when we learn to speak in other manners of speech, like how you speak [in English], it will be better."

Totonac languages are also viewed as more complicated and more difficult to learn than Spanish, especially in their written forms because writing systems from different Totonac languages are used. M-O (15/09/2008) received one of the Totonac books from the Jehovah's Witness Temple and she mentions her struggles with reading it:

> … even though you speak [a Totonac language], for example I
>
> speak [Ozelonacaxtla] Totonac, but I can't decipher what it says
>
> there … on the other hand for example, the book in Spanish, well,
>
> a person understands that more or less.

As mentioned above, this may be tied to the lack of institutional support for this variety of Totonac, since little linguistic work has been done to develop and spread an OT alphabet and teach people to read and write it. However, many speakers do not see the value in learning to read or write in Totonac languages. Time is better spent doing other things. OT has always been an oral language, while Spanish has always been a written language and the language of education. Many speakers question why this would need to change or doubt if it could.

Also tying into the theme that OT is more restricted than Spanish are the beliefs that OT is not a real language, but rather only a dialect. Linguistically speaking, OT is a full-fledged language. However, most people in Mexico call any indigenous language a *dialecto*. The researcher spoke with some people on the streets of Puebla and Mexico City about the present investigation, and when the Totonac languages were mentioned, people would often say, "Oh, you mean you were studying dialect." The use of the term *dialecto* to describe indigenous languages as "inferior" ways of speaking has existed in Mexican Spanish since colonization. Though this is linguistically incorrect terminology, *mestizos* insist that indigenous languages are in fact dialects and deny the derogatory meaning expressed by using that word to describe a language. For many centuries, the Spanish-speaking *mestizos* have referred to indigenous languages in this way in

an attempt to reserve prestige for the Spanish language and identity, and to reinforce the idea that indigenous cultures are inferior. All this is done to maintain the elevated position that Spanish has made for itself as a part of Mexican culture and national identity. Naturally, those that have power do not wish to lose it, and so they will do what it takes to protect, justify and legitimize their power, even when that means degrading another population within their sphere of influence. This has occurred all over the colonial world, where European languages threaten the positions and survival of many indigenous languages in a similar atmosphere of attitudes as that found in Mexico (Dorian, 1998). Because of this negative attitude that has permeated Mexican society for so long, some OT speakers themselves refer to their own language as a dialect. S-O (04/09/2008) for example, after having been asked what languages her parents speak, states that they know Spanish and *dialecto*, referring to OT.

Statements and beliefs such as those discussed here are tied to negative attitudes towards all aspects of the Totonac culture, not just language. Members of the majority Spanish-speaking society have always told speakers of indigenous languages that their cultures are "backwards" and "useless." Some speakers in San Juan may have come to believe this after constant exposure to these ideas from larger society. Negative perceptions of a minority culture that are held by a majority group are often adopted by the minority group itself, a tendency found by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum (1960). In interviews, speakers themselves use these words without provocation or linguistic triggers, and are not

reporting second hand what others (outsiders) believe or have said. When asked, "Do you want your children to know both languages?" Y-O responds

> No, I would like them to speak in Spanish, not Totonac … it's ok that they know Totonac but when they go away to work, they won't know how to speak very well in Spanish … if someone speaks, they won't know what to answer, they're going to speak *backwards*. Sometimes people laugh when one speaks *backwards* and doesn't know how to speak Spanish (19/09/2008).

Y-O reveals her belief that speaking Spanish is normal, while speaking OT is not. This comment further illustrates how people from San Juan wish to avoid the discrimination and ridicule that is so often expressed towards them and their indigenous identity.

5.2 Avoid Discrimination/Disadvantage for Not Knowing Spanish

The code-switching behaviour from OT to Spanish already mentioned may also be influenced by the desire to avoid discrimination. Speakers of OT may not wish to reveal to outsiders their knowledge of an indigenous language, or their ascription to an indigenous identity because of negative experiences they, or people they know, have had. T-O says "… Spanish speakers make fun of us when we speak in Totonac" (02/09/2008). Even the Spanish that many older Totonac people have learned as adults has caused them discrimination because speakers' accents reveal their true origins: rural, poverty-stricken indigenous communities. Therefore, their switch to Spanish did not completely hide their identity as indigenous persons. One woman said that she had been called "an Indian in

disguise" when she went to Mexico City because of her accent when speaking in Spanish. Many parents, hoping to give their children better experiences, wish to teach their children Spanish from a young age in order to avoid the same negative experiences that they had. W-O (04/09/2008) states that when he was a young man, someone from Mexico City visited San Juan and asked him something in Spanish. He understood what was asked but did not know enough Spanish to answer the man. He describes how he felt for not being able to respond: "I felt weird, I didn't feel normal." He continues to describe his experience when he went to work in Mexico City: "In the city they speak differently, almost totally different from the way I'm speaking right now, you speak that way in the city and they look at you strangely because it sounds different." This simple fact reveals that the local Spanish in San Juan also has low prestige and helps to explain why parents who can now speak Spanish want their children to learn it from a young age and attend school to learn "proper" Spanish. Knowing Spanish brings many benefits with it, including the avoidance of discrimination. Again illustrated here are the underpinning perceptions and attitudes towards the indigenous identity that shape parents' behaviour towards language.

Other words heard in casual conversation used to describe the indigenous peoples in Mexican Spanish are derogatory and insulting, for example *sucio* (dirty), *flojo* (lazy), *tonto* (stupid) and *burro* (donkey). Participants testify in their interviews to being the target of these words. J-O (07/09/2008) mentions how teachers from Caxhuacan, who are actually Totonac themselves that now deny their heritage, call the children in the school *burros*:

> Sometimes the teachers insult the children deeply, sometimes they even call them donkeys … but well, donkeys are important too, because imagine if the children already knew everything, there would be no teachers, they wouldn't have a job.

He goes on to mention how the teachers not only verbally insult children, but they also discourage the use of OT outright. J-O even overheard the principal of the primary school say that OT needed to disappear. He also remembers a personal incident involving a teacher that seemed unjust to him. J-O is a caretaker in the secondary school, but he also works in the fields quite often. One day he was walking home from work past the school where his son attends, when a teacher saw him pass by. The teacher insulted J-O by saying that he was a "dirty Indian". J-O expresses how ugly this experience was for him, considering that the teacher taught his own son, and he and his wife had had face-to-face meetings with the teacher about their son. He explains how working in the fields is a dirty job, but this does not mean that a person is inherently dirty or does not bathe after working. Furthermore, a teaching job does not entail physical labour that gets a person dirty, but teachers eat because of those who do work in the fields. It is also not the fault of J-O that he has to work in the fields and is not a teacher himself, since he is qualified but was denied the opportunity to teach (see section 4.2.2, p. 76). J-O's wife (T-O) actually brought lunch to this teacher, which makes the experience even more bitter, considering the teacher has a job because of his son, and eats lunch because of his wife. This situation is also significant because the teacher is from Caxhuacan, a Totonac herself who has chosen to deny her

heritage, illustrating the extent of negative attitudes that exist in the school system and right within the Totonac territory and people.

As part of his schooling, J-O attended the high school in Caxhuacan because the high school had not yet been built in San Juan. When he was there, he was again victim of the superior attitudes of fellow Totonac students who were natives to Caxhuacan. "They called us "the childish ones" and "the smelly ones," just because we were from San Juan." It seems that people from San Juan face constant ridicule even from their own neighbours who share their Totonac heritage. Those Totonac who have shifted to the *mestizo* identity often look down their noses at those who have not shifted. This factor is shocking in some regards, and the differences between the towns might be compared in more detail to reveal factors that could be responsible for the dramatic differences in attitude found across such a small geographic and cultural distance. Experiences like these contribute to parents' concerns for their children, hoping that by using Spanish they will help their children avoid the degrading experiences of discrimination they have experienced as a result of speaking OT or being indigenous.

Most *mestizos*, outsiders to indigenous culture, are not very well informed about the cultures that exist in modern day Mexico. National curricula teach about the Mayans and Aztecs of the past, but have little to say about the modern contributions of these famous and other lesser-known groups, like the Totonac, to Mexican culture. When the researcher was explaining her project to a woman from Guadalajara, she asked "And how does Totonac sound?" Without even waiting for a reply, she continued, "I imagine it sounds ugly." This comment

reflects the negative attitudes people have, to the extent that they jump to conclusions or make assumptions about indigenous culture without knowing anything about it, in order to make it fit into their idea of the social order. Indigenous peoples are also ridiculed in the modern media. They are often the brunt of televised racial jokes, using much the same vocabulary against them as that described above. A negative message from the media only serves to perpetuate the problem and reinforce the status quo positions of the *mestizo* and indigenous identities in Mexican culture.

The avoidance of discrimination is a strong catalyst for parents' linguistic choices. Parents naturally want to equip their children with the skills needed to improve their life experiences. Since larger society does not show any signs of changing prevalent attitudes, parents feel they have the responsibility and opportunity to improve how their children will be viewed and treated by teaching the majority language to their children at home.

5.3 Use in Schools/Attitudes and Pressures of Teachers

Most parents in San Juan also want their children to do well in school. As mentioned before, schooling is seen as giving students more opportunities, for example to get better paying jobs and escape the cycle of poverty that has stricken the town since the conversion to a cash economy. Economic opportunities are extremely restricted in San Juan, and to get a job outside of San Juan, knowledge of Spanish is a prerequisite. The domain of use of OT is restricted to the community, so when speakers think outside their community, Spanish must come to mind. Schools provide one of the strongest means for children to learn Spanish,

the skill that can take them out of San Juan. Literacy, which is the aspect of language that is not taught in the home, but rather at school, is especially important for getting a higher education and a better-paying job. Education and knowledge of Spanish is perceived as crucial for improving one's station in life. Participants talk about how schools in San Juan influence their use of Spanish in the home. Some simply state that they want their children to be able to communicate at school. Teaching Spanish at home is one way to give children a head start at school.

Schooling is also found to have importance in other aspects of community life. The schools organize craft sales and cultural performances and celebrations that have otherwise been left behind. For example, the performance of *danzas* and making costumes for these traditional cultural dances, and the weaving of the traditional *fajas*, are now taught as a course in the secondary school called, interestingly, "technologies." In the secondary school the teachers have also begun a new practice: students are now required to wear their traditional *naguas* or *calzones* every Friday. The origin of this new tradition was bitterly relayed to me by one of the students herself. In school one day, teachers were showing a historical religious object, a Catholic image of the Virgin Mary who was dressed in *naguas*. Some of the students began to laugh at the figure, making fun of the way it was dressed. Teachers interpreted this as disrespectful and came up with a suitable punishment: making students dress in traditional clothing once a week. Teachers do not follow their own rule and wear the clothing as well, they are too good for that, according to the girl who passed along this story. She stated that she

did not like wearing traditional clothing and that it was unfair that the teachers did not also have to dress that way, especially since they are all also Totonac in origin and essentially act in the same disrespectful way towards the Totonac language and identity as the young people had done. In fact, the young people most likely learned their behaviours and attitudes from the very teachers who punished them for it. The schools send a mixed message about the value of different aspects of the indigenous culture, trying to cover up the underlying negative attitudes with gestures at cultural preservation that don't even scratch the surface of the issues.

Many participants testify to their experiences in school and the way teachers actively discourage the use of OT. M-O (15/09/2008) states that in schools, "only Spanish is used and not Totonac. There are even times when they prohibit Totonac." Some students were physically punished for speaking in OT. W-O (04/09/2008) remembers his experience as a child in the primary school: "We spoke only Totonac before, and they even punished us at school for speaking Totonac … they would grab a stick in case anyone spoke it." And G-O (09/092008) states:

> when I went to secondary school they insisted that we speak in
> Spanish, that now we weren't allowed to speak in Totonac, not
> anymore. That's what they told us. It's okay on the one hand [to
> speak Spanish], but in our homes we spoke in Totonac.

Young OT speakers face conflicting situations, as teachers pass on their negative perceptions to the next child-rearing generation. Even if not all young people completely absorb these attitudes, some do, and those that do are more likely to

use Spanish with their children in the home domain and ultimately accelerate communal language shift.

Schooling in San Juan is a kind of double-edged sword. It apparently provides the forward social and economic momentum, the opportunities that all parents tend to seek for their children in society, but it is also a mechanism by which their culture is being attacked. Using Spanish in the schools lends prestige to the majority language, and teachers pass on their superior attitudes to their pupils. Schools teach that Spanish is associated with money, modernism, development, or western "improvements" in quality of life (stoves, cars, phones), while OT is associated with a limited rural, peasant lifestyle. At the same time, many speakers view schooling positively, because through school children learn Spanish from a young age and get the advantage of not having an accent as an adult. Attending schools and going as far in education as possible are new values held by the current generation of bilingual parents that now has the ability to readily integrate their children into the mainstream educational and cultural system. Though there is nothing inherently wrong with education or with learning Spanish and seeking the benefits of knowing the majority language, a serious problem emerges when speakers decide to transmit only Spanish and abandon OT. If this pattern spreads to more speakers in San Juan, language death may be the ultimate result.

5.4 Travel and Migration/Get Jobs Outside of Agriculture

The last factor mentioned by participants in their interviews that is behind their choice to use Spanish with their children is for the purposes of travel and

migration outside of San Juan. The contexts of use for OT are restricted to within the town itself. Once a person considers leaving San Juan any distance, even to the closest neighbouring town, Spanish dominates contexts of communication and interaction. Outside of the Sierra Norte, Spanish is the only language that can be used successfully to negotiate communicative objectives. Even though there are many other indigenous and immigrant languages spoken throughout Mexico, Spanish remains the lingua franca that dominates almost all communication across these diverse ethnic boundaries.

Anything that would take someone out of San Juan encourages and even requires the use of Spanish. There are also many reasons why someone would want or need to leave San Juan. There are no markets in San Juan, so when many things are needed, someone must go to a neighbouring town on market day. There are limited jobs in San Juan, so many young people leave once they have finished school to look for work elsewhere, often going to live with relatives in more urban centers. Many families have been separated for this very reason. Some husbands live in the city while the rest of their families remain in San Juan. Other young people permanently settle in the cities they move to and raise their families there, converting completely from their rural indigenous heritage to the mainstream dominant *mestizo* identity. Family members that remain in San Juan travel in order to visit the relatives that have moved away, and this travel requires knowledge of Spanish. Participants that have brothers and sisters are often the only siblings of their families that have chosen to stay in San Juan.

The expectation that children will want to travel for school or work is held by many ambitious parents in the speech community of San Juan who are simply looking out for their children's future, at least from their perspective. These are the parents who choose to use Spanish with their children in the home, in order to give them a head start at school, get a good job and avoid discrimination. Learning Spanish gives them the most social and economic opportunities possible. When asked why they use Spanish at home, many participants responded that it was necessary "because eventually they will have to go away to work and they must know Spanish [to do that]" (Y-O, 19/09/2008).

One participant mentions that knowing Spanish is important so that they can speak with outsiders who come to the town. Z-O (09/09/2008) states: "Someone comes who isn't from here, well, then I will ask them in Spanish, so that they can answer. What do they want, what do they want to ask? Where they're going, who they're looking for, so they can answer." She feels that Spanish is important to be able to speak with people who are not from San Juan. If someone does not know Spanish, they will not be able to interact with outsiders. Therefore knowing OT *and* Spanish is valued because it opens up more options and communicative possibilities with more people, not just for migration out of San Juan, but also for interaction with the increasing number of travellers to the village. It is seen as courteous to speak to a person in their own language, and speakers of OT know that outsiders will not know OT. Knowledge of Spanish is necessary to maintain the communicative courtesy that speakers ascribe to in interactions with outsiders. This has become increasingly important in the recent

past, as the community has been opened up more to external influences. The courtesy is sometimes taken one step further, and a group of Totonac may switch to Spanish, everyone's second language, when a known non-Totonac is within earshot of the group. It is seen as rude to speak a language in front of someone who does not understand it, regardless of whether the context is within or outside of San Juan. Also, speakers feel shame at speaking *dialecto* in front of *gente de razón*. Since interactions with outsiders have increased in frequency as of late, the importance of knowing Spanish has also increased as a result of the fact that speakers desire to communicate with outsiders effectively and without feeling stigmatized. It is never expected that a Spanish speaker cater to an indigenous speaker by speaking the minority language, but always the other way around, again illustrating the unequal balance of power between the majority and minority language groups, and how speakers are acting to avoid the discrimination so often aimed at them.

In order to bring together all the information presented thus far, a broader discussion will now follow. This will serve to solidify the conclusions already drawn here and provide some grounds for generalizations and future actions that could be taken by the various parties implicated in the situation. The limitations of the present research methodology and possibilities for further research will also be discussed.

Chapter 6
Discussion: Building Up to the "Tipping Point"

6.1 The State of Language Shift in San Juan

The new circumstances faced by the people of San Juan and the language attitudes they hold about Spanish and OT are highlighted in the Chapters 4 and 5. These factors have caused an alteration in the situations, or contexts, in which both Spanish and OT can be and are expected to be used. New political, social and cultural developments have come into play in the past 40 years that are on a scale previously unseen by the speech community of San Juan. These circumstances have combined with external pressure to assimilate, illustrated in the negative perceptions of indigenous culture held by mainstream Mexican society since colonization. They also face internal pressures from the negative attitudes of Totonac-origin teachers and *mestizos* that have been adopted by members of the community themselves. Recent changes have altered the social organization of San Juan and caused at least the partial loss of the communal identity that was held by the group in the past. The current generation of parents also possesses a new ability to speak Spanish with more proficiency, due to the increase in schooling in the area and government programs to support and further education. For the first time, parents have the ability to teach their children Spanish, and do so in response to the pressures coming at them from economic, social and psychological levels. The specific combination of factors illustrated in San Juan may explain why the shift is only beginning to develop in the current generation.

The overall experience of speaking Spanish is generally positive for those parents who choose to use it with their children. These children possess the social and economic mobility and opportunity that was denied to their parents because they did not know Spanish as their first language. It is important to note however, that there is not only a local linguistic issue at stake, but a national cultural one. In societies there is often a contradiction or struggle between things rural and things urban. In Mexico, this has been exacerbated by the struggle between indigenous and *mestizo* identities, a pattern that has shaped Mexican culture and development since the conquest. The Spanish kept economic and cultural control centralized in urban centers, and in order to keep their privileged positions, they expressed strong superior attitudes towards the indigenous populations, which are still apparent in the present day situation.

After such a long time in this disadvantaged social position, it is not unusual that the indigenous groups themselves have adopted the negative attitudes of the Spanish-speaking majority. Many other researchers have found the same pattern of the adopting of majority attitudes towards the minority, by the minority group itself (Lambert et al, 1960). Dorian (1981) states that "minority groups are known all too often and easily to adopt majority attitudes towards themselves, even when these are hostile, in the absence of countervailing forces," which is what happened for Scottish Gaelic. Lastra (2001) and Lam (2009) also emphasize the role of internal attitudes in parent's decisions to stop transmitting Otomí and Totonac languages. However, it is important to emphasize that these attitudes do not originate in the speakers themselves, but are adopted by them after enduring a

long period living under the domination of the *mestizos*. The internal attitudes may be ultimately responsible for parents' decisions, but they originate from external sources.

The backdrop of external and internal negative perception of indigenous culture (psychological factors) is not enough to cause language shift on its own. As mentioned above, the indigenous population has been in contact with the Spanish language for 500 years, so why is shift only happening now? The key to explaining the situation is the increase in opportunities to learn and use Spanish. Because of the increase in schooling available, and the newly developed communication links with the outside *mestizo* world (roads, vehicles, televisions, radios and more travel), parents are better speakers of Spanish and more keenly aware of the disparity that exists between their community and the rest of Mexican society. As parents become more comfortable in their own abilities in Spanish, they can capably pass on this beneficial knowledge to their children. Once speakers know Spanish, they can make the shift complete, abandoning OT and the discrimination that comes with it. Considering that they are constantly being bombarded with messages telling them that to do better in life, they must leave behind OT and adopt Spanish, parents cannot be blamed for wanting to give children the skills and knowledge that will open up economic and social opportunities for them that OT cannot (currently) offer.

The conditions found in San Juan translate to relatively low ethnolinguistic vitality for OT, on both objective and subjective counts. Speakers face the reality of discrimination and challenges placed on them by the majority,

but they also possess negative attitudes and perceptions of reality themselves. Now the opportunities for using Spanish have become more frequent than those for using OT, and Spanish is now more effective in achieving some life goals, like getting work. It is not unexpected, considering these circumstances, that the parents who now have reasonable abilities in Spanish choose to teach it to their children. Furthermore, parents who do *not* teach Spanish to their children may not be acting out of linguistic loyalty to OT, or because they don't want to speak in Spanish, but rather because they may not have had the opportunity or ability to learn and teach Spanish. Full schooling has only recently become available in San Juan and almost all adults that know Spanish have learned it as a second language. However, because of the many recent changes in the community, a portion of the present generation of parents not only has the desire to transmit Spanish, but more importantly, the necessary linguistic bilingual ability.

Many families in San Juan are in situations of extreme poverty, and one cannot criticize parents' decisions to teach Spanish, looking down from a theoretically oriented position about the preservation of culture, when these families are trying to preserve their very lives and existence. It is perhaps to be expected that they do not take into consideration such matters as the preservation of their culture, because of the many hardships they face. The avoidance of these difficulties is the priority, rather than the development of their community and ethnolinguistic identity that they have been able to take advantage of up until recent times. Parents who know Spanish attempt to provide their children with the most useful linguistic tools for perceived social and economic mobility, or in

other words, to give them as many opportunities as possible as early as possible. Significantly, some parents now choose to use Spanish to raise their children even though it is their second language, which is important because it implies a conscious decision (Edwards, 2006; Beck & Lam, 2008).

One of the functions of language is to achieve an objective, if language is viewed as performative, ie. as speech-acts that require human interaction. Communication is necessary in order to achieve a social objective, and language is the tool that facilitates the achievement of this objective. From this point of view, language is *useful* for its speakers because it assists them in accomplishing their goals. In the speech community of San Juan, the increasing opportunities to use Spanish for the achievement of important objectives in life have consequently decreased the number and type of opportunities available to use OT to achieve the same objectives. Since the opportunities to use OT have decreased, speakers consciously or unconsciously see their language as less useful and OT no longer has as much value as a communicative tool. OT can no longer obtain the same quantity and/or quality of objectives as 40 years ago before the current situation began to develop.

The same situation is found by Lam (2009) in her assessment of the Totonac communities of Chicontla and Patla. The apparent benefits of speaking the majority language that have always existed, social and economic mobility, are suddenly within reach as a generation gains the ability to speak the majority language. Lam identifies negative perceptions of indigenous culture, more Spanish education, and the new cash-based economy as factors contributing to

language shift. These are the very same circumstances that are identified in the previous two chapters as affecting current language use in San Juan.

Despite these observations, it cannot be concluded that complete language shift will be the ultimate outcome in San Juan. Only a limited number of speakers have made a total shift to Spanish and all children are still learning OT, even if only from their peers or grandparents. San Juan is in a position before the "tipping point" and it is uncertain how things will proceed. This means language maintenance is still a possibility.

6.2 What Lies Ahead for Ozelonacaxtla Totonac?

The situation and conditions described here are factors that contribute to the build-up process before "linguistic tip" occurs (Dorian, 1981; 1986). Though the "tipping point" has not yet been reached in San Juan, the conditions that have brought it about in other Totonac communities already exist. The "tipping point" has been reached for some individual speakers, those who now make a conscious choice to use only Spanish with their children. If conditions do not change and continue in the direction that has been described in this paper, it is likely that other parents will make the choice to use Spanish in the home. Language shift can occur over a short time, if many parents make the choice to switch within the same generation. Each family that shifts will threaten the maintenance of OT in San Juan, as the community moves one family at a time closer to the "tipping point."

Importantly, the teaching and learning of Spanish is not in and of itself the real problem. It is unfounded and unfair to claim that the community should not

learn Spanish at all. A stable system of bilingualism is probably the ideal situation that would allow for the maintenance of the minority language, while at the same time lending speakers access to the benefits of speaking Spanish. The process of language shift begins when parents decide to transmit *only* Spanish, and in doing so abandon OT all together. As discussed earlier, 10 participants in this study have chosen to use solely Spanish with their children. Beck and Lam (2008) claim that speakers of Upper Necaxa Totonac choose to abandon their language in an act of linguistic suicide. While San Juan may not have reached this point yet, some parents have taken the first steps in that direction. Members of the majority also continue to stigmatize bilingual speakers if it is found out that one knows an indigenous language. Speakers may feel that whole-scale shift to Spanish is a tangible way to escape the discrimination and marginalization that is attached to the indigenous identity.

The mother of the researcher's assistant, when she learned more about the purposes of the present study, commented with confidence "Oh, Totonac will never die, they will never stop speaking it here," illustrating her expectations for the language. This may be a short-sighted perception, as Lam (2009) finds that speakers fail to see the consequences their actions will have on the future of the language. Since language shift occurs rapidly and the tip can be sudden (Dorian, 1986; Lam, 2009) the very speakers who initiate the shift often look regretfully on the generation of their grandchildren, who have since become dominant in the majority language and left behind the minority language.

Lam (2009) also finds that speakers in Chicontla and Patla perceive bilingualism itself as negative. Teachers in these communities transmit the unfounded idea that bilingualism in Upper Necaxa Totonac and Spanish will confuse children and ultimately cause problems for their learning of Spanish. This belief was not observed in San Juan, though the fact that it was not overtly expressed does not mean that it is not held by some speakers. However, it seems that stable bilingualism, the ideal situation in these communities, would not be viewed negatively by speakers in San Juan and language planning that would encourage this state of affairs has the potential to succeed. There is still the possibility that OT can be fortified and made resistant to pressures to abandon it that have taken their toll in other similar communities and circumstances.

So what can or should be done in San Juan, if anything? Some propositions are put forward here that might direct the speech community of San Juan to a position of security and fortification against the factors that are building up to the "tipping point" of language shift. If the internal pride of the Totonac people can be regained through the instilment of positive attitudes and a new sense of cultural worth; if attitudes of the majority *mestizo* group can be changed to create, understand and accept the role of indigenous culture in Mexico; and if more opportunities were available for the advancement, development and encouragement of local culture, perhaps Ozelonacaxtla Totonac would never reach the "tipping point". It remains unclear how these daunting challenges can be conquered for a community in the precarious position of cultural loss that so

many others have succumbed to, a fate that plagues the minority populations of nations all over the world.

It will be useful to recall the case studies of RLS efforts and minority linguistic communities discussed in Chapter 2. Some languages that have faced similar situations and circumstances as Totonac languages have shown remarkable resistance to the pressures to succumb to language shift. What is different about these speech communities that has enabled them to pull through? One of the main characteristics is a sense of unity and common positive purpose. The transmission of language and attitudes is a social affair, taking place in the family and the community. A community that has common goals and a strong sense of identity has the backdrop for the maintenance of its culture. People who feel united and strong, rather than disadvantaged, by their shared cultural characteristics, like language, are more likely to take initiative and action to preserve and transmit these features to their children.

The case study of Mayan discussed earlier illustrates how a sense of common unity can achieve great things in the face of adversity that threatens a culture. The Mayans share many similarities with Totonac speech communities. Mayan is a family of indigenous languages that are geographically distributed over a large area, straddling the border between Mexico and Guatemala. Some groups belong to the Mayan ethnolinguistic group by linguistic standards, but deny identity as Mayan. Once again the complexity of linguistic and cultural identity is illustrated; nothing is cut and dry when people are involved, notwithstanding the standards and definitions set out by academics. The Mayan

community faces the same cultural discriminations and economic disadvantage as other indigenous groups in the region, including the Totonac. Remarkably, even with so much psychological and cultural force working against revitalization efforts, the Mayan community has been successful on many fronts in combating and even reversing some of the effects of language shift. England (1998) found that efforts to preserve the language originated in a cultural revolution of the Mayan people during the 1980's and 90's. A keen new awareness of the situation and value for their culture was developed as young Mayans were trained in top universities and became advocates in their own communities. They brought awareness to issues, worked to spread attitudes of pride and positive feelings towards their culture both within and between different Mayan speech communities, and eventually created an independent but centrally organized body that was fully controlled by Mayans. Importantly, the Academy and other initiatives originated from within the Mayan community itself. It was Mayans taking action on behalf of themselves and future generations of Mayans that resulted in the successes that were achieved: the development of a modern Mayan literature, the establishment of a (mostly) unified Mayan alphabet, more bilingual schools and Mayan educational materials, and the encouragement of a positive image of their culture both internally and externally. With these successes, feelings of independence, effectiveness and empowerment of the Mayan community were achieved without intervention on the part of the government.

Many good lessons can be learned from the Mayan case. One important thing to note is that when a language is in a threatened position, it is usually a sign

that other aspects of the ethno-identity are as well. For example, the traditional housing pattern, agricultural practices, customs, dress and political organization may be under pressure from the same forces that are threatening language. The negative attitudes of a majority group towards an indigenous culture contribute to causing the many changes for the minority group, from language shift to vast migration to the loss of traditional lands. The most effective strategies to reverse language shift will therefore address not only linguistic symptoms, but also the underlying attitudes and circumstances responsible for all the changes that are experienced by a community. Perhaps the most important thing to be learned from the Mayan case is that a community that is facing defeat in the fight against language shift can turn the situation around when they take initiative for themselves. The group must become aware and agree that there is a problem that needs addressing; otherwise efforts from the side of the government will not likely be effective. Once a community decides that something must be done, the role of the linguist is to assist and advise those that are looking for help and direction in any actions they take against the threat of absorption into majority culture. This may be in the areas of linguistic development and the training of in-group members so that work can be done by people from within the speech community.

One thing is clear: efforts to preserve language and culture must come from *within* the community to ensure success and long-term viability for more than just one generation. This was been found by Lastra (2001) in the Otomí communities she has studied in central Mexico, and by Adelaar (1991) in Peru

where government efforts were not effective in either maintenance or reversal. For both Otomí and Quechua, efforts to revive the languages have been restricted to the educational setting and are hampered by the interference and red tape of the government. When efforts come from external sources, the positions of the groups involved do not really change and attitudes remain the same. The majority group that is making the effort, out of guilt perhaps for the destruction it has already done to the culture, remains in control of resources and how development and implementation of the maintenance plan is carried out. They retain all the power over the minority group they had before, power that helped put the community in the disadvantaged position that brought about the language shift in the first place. The minority remains as the recipients to what the majority has to offer, which has usually been negative and even destructive in the past. Much intervention by the majority in minority communities has not helped at all in terms of long-term, sustainable benefits. Often times, the benefits of these developments go straight to the pockets of members of the majority population, and the minority group remains in a position of being taken advantage of. Even if the majority group were to reach out with good intentions, the minority group, having been taken advantage of by many programs and initiatives that were disguised positively in the past, may not see a genuine honest gesture, dooming outside intervention to failure. Members of the minority group are suspicious of and defensive towards the actions of the majority towards them, and rightly so. It comes as no surprise that so many of the language maintenance or revitalization efforts of this type have not succeeded: they lack faith in the intentions of the external efforts, and

there is no unified feeling of internal community support and purpose for the initiatives. Without the support and involvement of the speakers that are implicated as the actors in the achievement of maintenance goals, the external efforts will be limited in their success. At the most, government initiatives may achieve documentation of the language or slow language shift for a generation, if they do not involve community members.

These examples illustrate the complexity of the issues involved in language maintenance or in what Fishman calls Reversing Language Shift (1991). The general conclusion that arises is that if any actions are taken, they should be carefully considered. Studies like the present research help provide the information that a community may need to make a well-informed *internal* effort of language planning that will have the highest possible chance of success.

Edwards (2006) writes on the roles researchers take in sociolinguistic investigations. According to him, this type of research and language maintenance efforts on the part of outsiders can be understood as an action of "empowerment." When an outsider, the government or a linguist for example, takes action in or on a speech community, there are some interesting ethical and ideological issues that become relevant. Historically, governments have often taken advantage of minority groups, and all action on the part of this body may be interpreted as negative because of past experience. The group knows that the intentions of the government are really for the benefit of the majority, and they usually receive second-rate service and negative experiences with the representatives of the official body. For these reasons, when someone from the outside comes to a

community that faces these conditions, like San Juan, it can be difficult to break through the feelings of distrust and suspicion towards the outsider. The role of the government in situations of this sort becomes ideologically opaque. The majority does not have the right to return to the community what they have already stolen, disguising it as a gift in the form of some sort of program or infrastructural development that is being proposed by the government. It is hypocritical to simply acknowledge the wrong that was done in the discrimination of a culture, and then offer a program that is supposed to fix everything without addressing the attitudes that are the real root of the problem. It is the same force that took away that now tries to give, covering up, justifying and perpetuating negative attitudes towards the minority group. According to Edwards, this "empowering" action does nothing to change the status of the community as inferior and only serves to maintain the same unequal balance of power that is responsible for their negative experiences. Real change in the balance of power necessitates changing how the minority groups and majority groups see one another as members of a national society. When the majority "gives" power to the minority, it does not really change the relationship or status of the groups involved, and will therefore act to maintain the status quo. The minority must take power for themselves, and the majority must recognize them for it.

Language revitalization efforts are most effective when they originate from within the community, when the speakers themselves assume or take power and the act of empowerment is self-generated. When communities are consulted it is not clear that they always want their language to be preserved or saved (Lastra,

2001; Lam, 2009). Outsider involvement, even on the part of independent linguists, can be perceived negatively. Many linguists arrive with the goal to save the language and with the assumption that the community will want the same as well. The members of the speech community itself often do not see the situation in the same way. Their own language may be something they are stigmatized for, and lofty arguments about preserving the language for theoretical reasons may be brushed aside as people face more immediate economic and practical concerns.

Differences in perspective and attitude towards language are difficult to align or alter, but it is crucial for the goals of the linguist and the community to coincide if Reversing Language Shift is to be successful (Fishman, 1991; Lastra, 2001). In order to change the attitude of the majority and minority groups, some linguists provide education about the importance of maintaining language because of its potential power in preserving group unity and identity, but this brings with it some ethical concerns. Giving advice about language has gone one step over the line of objectivity. Here the linguist is no longer just describing, but has some critical objective they are trying to forward. The linguist is acting on ideological grounds in this case, because he or she is furthering the goals of a third party prerogative external to the community that appreciates its language for purposes of study rather than use. In order to halt the process of language shift, the linguist attempts to change the point of view speakers have about their situation and their language(s). The role of the linguist in language loss and maintenance situations is ethically and ideologically charged, which places limitations on how language maintenance research is used and interpreted. Linguists represent only one

perspective coming from an academic source that does not have to face the circumstances found in the speech community. It may be unfair to expect speakers to see from the linguist's point of view, when this does not align with their understanding of the situation, the difficulties they face, and the best choices for their children. If a community does not desire to act against language shift, the linguist's role should perhaps be limited to the documentation of the language. These theoretical issues underlie the uses and interpretations of this research, but it is hoped that the information gathered here might be eventually used by community members themselves in an act of internally motivated empowerment.

6.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The main limitation of the methodology of this research is the restricted sample of participants that are not representative of all types of speakers in the community. The sample group in this study is in reality a small cross-section of a particular part of the population of San Juan. Participants are drawn from the assistant's social network and they only represent bilinguals who transmit Spanish in the home. This is partly due to time constraints in the gathering of interviews during the relatively short field visit. The researcher does not speak OT and so interviews were also limited by this practical reason to those speakers who knew Spanish. To further develop the present research, more interviews from a broader participant base should be gathered. A second assessment drawing upon more representative interviews coming from speakers who are bilingual but do not transmit Spanish, and from those who are monolingual in Spanish or OT, may more accurately predict how the present circumstances will interact to produce the

future linguistic situation. A diachronically contextualized understanding of the process of language shift can further assist any efforts that might be made.

The majority of the population of San Juan is currently monolingual in OT. These speakers also play a large role in the language transmission process and hold their own attitudes about Spanish and OT that were not examined in the present study. They will ultimately contribute to the situation that may or may not lead to "linguistic tip." The decisions of these parents and their children, as the next generation of potentially shifting parents, are crucial in determining the fate of OT. Examining this group of speakers will reveal more about how language shift emerges and how stable bilingualism can be effectively encouraged in San Juan. Interviews with this segment of the population would be more difficult because translation is necessary. However, the same assistant who helped in the gathering of the data for this study could also help in translation during a subsequent field visit.

Interviews with members of San Juan who are bilingual but choose not to transmit Spanish to their children will also broaden the interview base and they may be important to study. These speakers, even though they have the ability to teach Spanish to their children, still choose to use only OT. What is it that sways some bilingual speakers towards teaching Spanish, but others towards teaching OT? If those people leading the shift, those examined in this research, can be compared to those who are still maintaining their language, important differences in how speakers arrive at their linguistic decisions might emerge.

The nature of the data gathered in subsequent field visits should also be expanded upon in order to verify and support the findings of this research. For example, although Fishman claims that the home domain is crucial for language maintenance (1991), other researchers point to the importance of the community in determining how speakers act, for example Milroy (2002). The social networks of speakers, made up of extended family members, peers and community leaders also contribute to the ethnolinguistic vitality experienced in San Juan and to speakers' linguistic decisions. Gathering more information about participants' linguistic interactions outside of the home will allow for a better understanding of the situation.

Finally, more work could be done in the outlying regions of the area in which residents of San Juan interact and travel. Understanding more about how the community relates culturally and politically with the other speech communities and Totonac groups in the area will reveal in more detail the role of external influences in defining a social pattern in San Juan. Knowledge of the roles of all players in the situation is key to developing any effective strategies intended to change that situation, and the more Totonac communities that are studied, the better understood their situation will be. It is hoped that the researcher will make other trips in the future to the same speech community in order to continue the investigation into the process of language shift in the Sierra Norte. Will the "tipping point" be reached in San Juan? Only a return trip can provide the valuable information about how the speech community will proceed and what can or should be done.

Part of the ultimate goals of this study are to contribute to the training of members of San Juan, so that any actions that do come about have a better chance of success. This research is meant to provide objective information about the community that may lend some internal empowerment for members of this speech community. All interview transcriptions will be made available in the town library, and eventually this thesis will be translated into Spanish to make it available to those people for whom it is meant to serve. In the more immediate future, work may be completed with Dr. Yvonne Lam, drawing comparisons across the three Totonac communities that have now been studied using the same sociolinguistic methodology and qualitative interviews. Collaboration and comparison may produce more generalizable results. Plans also exist to study other Totonac communities that have not yet been examined at all.

Chapter 7
Conclusion: Opportunities and Language Use

This paper has presented the detailed description of a small indigenous speech community in Mexico, San Juan. It has been illustrated in the discussion that the psychological aspect of the situation of language shift is crucial to consider in an accurate description of a speech community or an informed maintenance or RLS initiative. If the attitudes of people towards each other do not change, it is unlikely that the types of interactions that characterize their relationship will change. Altering one's way of thinking is an effective means of changing one's actions. If the ethnolinguistic vitality of the language is weak and the language is perceived negatively, efforts in maintenance or RLS should be focused on these aspects of the linguistic situation. Too often efforts are targeted at the more obvious linguistic or structural changes to the language that are also results of language contact. Only trying to improve the visible aspects of the language situation, like education for example, has proven to be unsuccessful in stemming language shift. For language maintenance and stable bilingualism to emerge, the communication of a new point of view to the internal and external players is necessary in order to eliminate the powerful negative experiences associated with speaking minority languages.

In the linguistic situation of San Juan, the shift from OT to Spanish has been compounded and encouraged by the way life opportunities have been so closely attached to language use. Though no language is inherently capable of offering more opportunities than any other language, a condition of social

marginalization has been tied specifically to language use in Mexico, as a means to express and maintain social relationships between minority and majority groups. If groups from either side of situations, like the one found in San Juan, can be included as part of a positive social change, new attitudes about the role of language and linguistic diversity in modern nation states could result. Acceptance and appreciation for how diversity contributes to the richness of Mexican culture has been more accepted in other cultural domains, like gastronomy and art for example, so it does not seem impossible for appreciation of linguistic diversity to exist. If the dominant society can embrace all the richness of its contributing minority cultures, a new level of acceptance could allow the country to move forward in many positive ways. Instead of assimilating and molding people out of cultures and habits that are not understood, modern nations should provide for and encourage the human variety that is an inherent part of our experience and that cannot be avoided. Instead of fighting, controlling, or trying to erase or deny the existence of diversity, which causes many negative effects (some of which are shown above), people should try to understand and embrace it, allowing equal opportunities for all. In the end, more positive results will be produced for all those involved because it entails working together against the conflict and discrimination that ultimately hurts all human beings. Why not embrace the benefits of the broad knowledge and experience possessed by members of the world's diverse ethnolinguistic groups?

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