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Multilingual Policies put into Practice: *Co-participative Educational Workshops* **in Mexico**

Abstract

In a national context where the language rights of indigenous people have been recognized constitutionally since 2003, we deal with the following questions: How can bilingual education programmes in Mexico be clearly defined and applied? And what exactly are the final objectives of a bilingual education programme? We shall address the issue of the potential forms and contents of bilingual education from the standpoint of our experience working with schoolteachers, in co-participative educational workshops in two multilingual areas in Central and South-Eastern Mexico, from 2009 to 2012. Indeed, the multidimensional use of native languages and knowledge through workshops held in a number of Mexican languages, in which the participants produce texts and drawings in their native languages, directly raises pedagogical issues on language planning in the classroom,.

The dominant model for Bilingual & Intercultural Education (BIE) in Mexico today corresponds to a model of *incorporation* through *subtractive bilingualism*: teaching in the native language, switching then to Spanish in order to teach the official pedagogical contents, and in detriment of language and culture specificities. Our work suggests that BIE could represent a constructive, empowering alternative, adapted to local community contexts, yet steering away from the segregationist model of education.

Keywords: education, applied linguistics, indigenous languages, language planning, reflexivity, agency.

1. Language planning: realization and implementation in a Mexican context

This article reflects upon and demonstrates how Language Planning may be applied to Mexican indigenous languages, based on both theory and history but also upon experience gained via a set of alternative educational workshops held with Nahuatl, Mazatec, and Ténck schoolteachers and their pupils and/or the teachers and students of pedagogical institutions and universities[1], over the last three years (2009-2012). We will thus discuss the theoretical foundations of language policies/language planning, suggesting a critical thinking model of bilingual education adaptable to every sociolinguistic context.

The dominant model of Language Planning in Mexico, as within other national contexts, still follows the initial conception expressed by Haugen as "the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance or writers and speakers in a non-homogenous speech community" (1966-1972, p. 161). It is then limited to a linear process of linguistic codification and standardization. In other words, *writing* is the priority of language planning in many contexts, including oral cultures, as shown within the Mexican context (Avilés González, *in press*). The National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI), one of the most important institutions for language policy in the country, assumes this direction (INALI, 2009). Questions of power, prestige, the societal functions of the language and other sociolinguistic aspects associated with *status planning* and *language uses* are often excluded from the institutional language planning agenda. Due more often than not to inertia, the links with the societal, political and economic factors that surround language vitality are quite simply neglected.

In contrast with this model, in different sociolinguistic contexts, history suggests that language planning -the application of language policies- is more complex than electing a codification system, compiling a dictionary or describing a grammar (see among others Fishman, 2006; Ninyoles, 1971-1997; Calvet, 1999). As Fishman suggests (1991, 2006), the latter are components of *corpus planning*, which in turn is part of an altogether different level of linguistic intervention (along with status planning, and with government and civil initiatives). The main goal of this kind of intervention is to *normalize* a language's practices; not only to establish norms of writing, but also to unravel diglossic situations rendering *normal* a language-in-culture, as Ninyoles says "situar-la en peu d'igualtat amb unes altres cultures, en un mateix pla" (1997, p. 115, author's translation: make it equal with other cultures, putting it on the same level).

Within this framework normalization efforts are not necessarily submitted or linked to government initiatives. Even if the government bodies prove useful for acknowledging language policies and linguistic rights, in some cases they block language normalization, generating for example, circles of intellectual *caciques* (i.e. local power-wielding authorities.) that monopolize linguistic capital (see Bourdieu, 2001), as well as physical and economical resources (Flores Farfán, 2009:40; Flores Farfán & Córdova, 2012, p. 103). For this reason, citizen and community initiatives, commitment and actions to reverse language minorisation, *community-based efforts*, remain crucial to the normalization process, ensuring intergenerational language transmission and thus language vitality (Fishman, 1991, p. 82).

In Mexico community-based alternatives exist and are being realized and implemented by indigenous organizations, speakers, elementary school teachers and academics (see among others Flores Farfán, 2005; Bertely, 2006; Avilés González and Flores Farfán, 2010). In this vein, our work has focused particularly on Nahuatl, Otomanguean and Mayan languages up to now. Among other research activities we have developed the *Native Literacy and Grammar Workshops (NLGW)* based on a set of experimental projects, such as the *Crossed Narratives* and the *Imaginary Homelands* workshops. As we will see, the ethnomethodology applied in these workshops shows that the transition orality-literacy-orality in indigenous languages is, and could be, flowing continuously during teaching

activities. The *Crossed Narratives* workshop, whose aim is to uncover some of the cultural crossovers created by languages and cultures in contact, is one of the first steps towards a comprehensive method for using native languages in the classroom. The workshop entitled *Imaginary Homelands* broadens the scope going one step further towards modelling the forms and contents of native settings in articulation with universal settings. This workshop aims at generating teaching materials on local history and geography, with a critical position on the environmental and socio-economic issues the community might face today (cf. Solis & Solano, 2006; Lazos & Paré, 2000) or have faced in the past (e.g. Boege, 1988; McMahon, 1971).

This kind of workshop results in the production of teaching materials with, for and by speakers of indigenous languages, but it also results in a certain type of reflexion with discussion on the pedagogical goals of BIE. Encouraging teachers to create and apply educational tools and programmes adjusted to local contexts, where the local languages have a crucial role, is also a way of articulating language policies and planning. Beyond the usual debate of general school contents versus specific community contents, the function of BIE in the communities thus becomes how to re-appropriate educational contents, promoting the very function of school in the way of Freire (Freire, 1967). As such, we examine what contents school could be expected to provide as a vector of socialization for indigenous children and/or students. All these resources point towards an important insight for applied linguistics: linguistic planning leads to forms of emancipation or self-empowerment, reminding us of what Nelson Goodman called *Ways of Worldmaking* (Goodman, 1978). Moreover, these techniques rely strongly on community empowerment. The methodology and reflexive attitude towards EBI implemented in these workshops has spread within networks of schoolteachers and educational institutions independently of the official policies coming from above. The training of schoolteachers in co-participative educational workshops on *Crossed Narratives* and *Imaginary Homelands*, as we will demonstrate in the next section, also implicates the sociolinguist in a wide array of situations in rural and urban schools, in close collaboration with the grass root organizations that endeavour to develop alternative ways of rehabilitating and revitalizing native Mexican languages, at the intersection of practices at both the macro and micro levels of society.

2. Atomism and divisionism as *default* language management

One of the problems with only the *de jure* recognition of linguistic rights, without sustained language planning, and especially without training schoolteachers and users in the theory and practice of the literate *koinés* (= local conventions of writing, more or less adopted by all)[2] of native languages, is that it leads to atomism within the general use of literacy, and divisionism at the micropolitical level (i.e. in bilingual or in "Indigenous Primary Schools"). We will take Mazatec as a concrete example here. Disputes over the standard variety, even in terms of codification only and strict localism (i.e. writing according to the Huautla or to the Jalapa spelling conventions), make any margin of discussion very tight. The only model the schoolteachers have in common is the grammar of Spanish: they know how to conjugate verbs in Spanish, how to find the lexical root, and how many inflectional classes – or conjugations – there are. They have no idea how many tone classes there are in Mazatec, nor do they recognize the structure of stems and lexical roots, or how many inflectional classes of verbs there are, let alone be capable of explaining how inalienable nouns have inflectional patterns for subject possessive agreement isomorphic to the verb's inflectional paradigms (i.e. verbs are conjugated with the same suffixes or enclitics and tone patterns as possessed nouns). When, during literacy workshops, Mazatec schoolteachers present to their colleagues texts they have written in Mazatec intended for use in school, we uncover an embarrassing phenomenon: they are unable to read each other's writing. Either due to spelling, segmentation, or some other categorisation process, the reader is incapable of deciphering the text in front of him/her. In general, schoolteachers have few opportunities to read texts any longer than a few lines in Mazatec. The SEP (the Mexican Ministry of Education) textbooks, the official handbooks for various Mazatec *koinés* (such as Huautla, San Pedro, Jalapa de Díaz, San Miguel Soyaltepec), are hardly ever used for more than a couple of classes for writing odd words, usually in relation with objects, and without any strategic plan for additive bilingual education. Although the SEP textbooks are packed full of texts and exercises and despite their adequacy for the main diatopic varieties of Mazatec, as local *koinés* their impact is almost invisible. The main

reason for this rejection is that they have been elaborated by a small and distant group of experts as standard tokens of what Bilingual & Intercultural Education should be, however the cultural and linguistic contents are so unspecific and irrelevant to local conditions, that the schoolteachers generally drop the book after only a few experimental classes. This phenomenon occurs, with its own linguistic specificities, in almost all the Mexican indigenous schools including Nahuatl and Ténck communities.

In this context, understanding that the Mexican indigenous communities require more adequate materials adapted to current teaching needs, we asked ourselves the following question: how can we produce a method based on *agency* and *self-empowerment* for and with schoolteachers? The Native Literacy and Grammar Workshops (NLGW) answer this need as their sessions are open and adaptable to any Meso-American language: they gather together between ten and ninety speakers or users of one or more native languages[3], for writing sessions of two to three days (or four to six half days), where the participants write, draw, translate, convert into didactic drills, and present their production.

Why should linguists work on "endangered" or "vulnerable" languages? First, because these languages are part of a wider repertory, which is ecologically profitable to the population: varieties of indigenous languages convey social links and pertain to the cohesion of the local society that risks being atomized by an inegalitarian economy. Second, because it is an ethical commitment to his/her work, that a linguist, in describing any language, should provide the community at will with the data he/she has elicited locally. The publication of academic papers is one of the many ways to fulfil this prerequisite of *restitution*. Third, there is a demand at the local level. Fourth, we consider that ideological relativity applies to Language Planning (LP): LP as such is neither good nor bad, depending on the context and/or the phase that national construction is at. LP is good as a means, not as a finality *per se*. It belongs to a wider class of policies sustaining inner diversity in societies. Diglossy is no more a fatality than any other psychosocial construct, and as a relative context, embedded in space and time, it may be turned around like many other ideological schemes (Ninyoles, 1997): it may become as obsolete as any other moral convention (see Appiah 2010).

In the case of languages of the Lower Papaloapam, for example, there is a demand for a qualitative bilingual shift, i.e. to switch from subtractive to additive bilingualism, and this demand emerges from a well organized sector of the civil society – the schoolteachers. In this context, participation in the process of the shift, from subtractive to additive bilingualism, is a good opportunity for linguists to grasp in *real time* how language management works, as a social but also as a technical process. The Native Literacy and Grammar Workshops (NLGW) have allowed us to do just this by becoming a part of the process. We shall therefore, in the next section, look at how the ALMaz team manages to associate descriptive fieldwork with participation in local language planning, with that sector of the population desiring to engage in the bilingual shift process.

3. The ALMaz project as a complex practice

The work reported here and accomplished in the Mazatec region is associated with the ALMaz project (*Atlas Lingüístico Mazateco*): revisiting both Kirk's and Gudschinsky's data (Kirk, 1966; Gudschinsky, 1958), eliciting cognate sets and lists of paradigms from verbal inflection (see Léonard & al. 2012), depositing databases and digital recordings of Mazatec dialects, and organizing voluntary sessions of literacy and grammar workshops for the schoolteachers, in coordination with government and nongovernment organisations. The Native Literacy and Grammar Workshops (NLGW) produce on average a booklet of 30-60 pages of texts, lexical and grammatical data and didactic proposals, gathered within two or three days of participation. All the participants are directly involved: they write, translate, make lists of words and grammar rules, and propose pedagogical recommendations for the classroom in debate sessions with presentations by each group. All texts, drawings, tables, figures, sketches and guidelines produced during the session are duly documented (digital photographs, video and audio file), and copied directly onto a computer or external hard drive, after the sessions. The materials are transcribed and ordered according to specific metafiles, within the EM2 operation in the EFL Labex, Paris.[4] The first step of the Native Literacy and Grammar Workshop is "Easy Grammar" creativity

sessions. One example of these is the writing of prosopopeas, in which various groups of schoolteachers write the story of an animal or a thing, in various person subject agreements (*I am a squirrel, I eat nuts and I climb trees*; *we are squirrels, we eat nuts and we climb trees*, etc.). Everyone enjoys this drill, consisting of the description of an animal and its way of life, from a physical description to its actions and its habitat, and then changing the person subject, or the tense (in Mazatec, aspect rather than tense). This first step has always proved extremely productive for a soft approach to TAMV (Tense-Aspect-Mode-Voice) and argument agreement. In Mazatec, the verbal inflectional system being quite complex, the same short texts of 10-15 lines are converted from subject agreement first person singular to second person singular and first person plural inclusive or exclusive, then in the neutral aspect (i.e. present, or habitual), in the completive (remote past) and the incompletive (future), thereby producing seven versions of the same text, for three TAMV paradigms, and three persons. This very simple and modest exercise makes it possible to identify pronouns, verbal roots and stems, and basic processes for TAMV contrasts (especially prefixation, via preverbation, as far as Mazatec is concerned).

The second step of NLGW is called *Imaginary Homelands* and was inspired by Italo Calvino's *Le Città Invisibili* (Calvino, 1972). The Italian writer fancied a book of tales describing invisible or imaginary cities, each one standing for an archetype of what symbols, death, life, memory or society may mean. The novel can be read not only as a book of tales, but rather as a theoretical essay on urbanism, of the metaphorical type. In the NLGW framework, groups of schoolteachers imagine both the worst and the best sides of a local dilemma, such as the water supply, pollution, migration, acculturation or language shift. One poster will describe the bright side, or brightest possible, while another set of texts and figures will project how the situation could worsen, or even end up out of control. The former text is called the *utopic* version, the latter, the *dystopic* version. This task requires stylistic flexibility in the native language, as the writer will have to describe his or her community through a dialectic argument, between the best and the worst of a social or environmental issue. The aim of this exercise is to encourage reflexion on solidarity and sustainable development within the community. The texts, with their sketches and drills, are extremely dense constructs, expressed and analyzed in the native language, and based on challenges the local community faces every day. As a concrete example, in one of those

pedagogical units (a utopic text, a dystopic version and a synthesis along with guidelines for the classroom), created in Jalapa de Díaz in august 2010, water (*nandá*) is the dilemma: in the utopic text, the author praises water for making everything beautiful and fresh all around. She imagines her town, Jalapa de Díaz, as being immersed in water (like Venise). It states that water flows down from the mountain and the caves to soak the land and feed the people. The image of rain and freshness is associated with the colour of the water from the nearby dam, and with the deepest layers beneath the earth: "you, dear well dwelling deep down inside the earth, as fresh and sweet as honey and milk". So the text goes: water is what unites all living creatures on earth, flowing downhill to quench the thirst of people, etc. This is the bright side of the story: the utopic version. In sharp contrast to this bucolic view, comes the dystopia: where there was plenty of water, now every single speck of earth is as dry as a stone. There is no place to wash or swim, no place to flee from the heat of the sun; no more waterfalls, no more merry streams flowing down from the hills across the fields; nothing glimmering and transparent anymore; no more wells to get water to drink. All that remains has become dirty and dark because the people did not care enough for it. The water has dried up, as have the lives of the people, under the burning sun. Causality has a name: people. One of the next steps for the discussion would be to find out who could have made such a thing happen to their own home town or village, why, how and when. Of course, the unfair economic distribution of resources and wealth is the main cause of this phenomenon, but the question is also about how the local community could reverse this victimisation and their own vulnerability, in order to achieve protagonism and self-government. The chain of causality will be carefully studied following comments about the systematic degradation of the water supply in the municipality or in the neighbourhood.

For the teachers, the main function of the native language at school could well be that of an instrument of socio-political awareness and social criticism. Social sciences, such as history and geography should or could be taught in the language, using maps and sketches, encouraging pupils to interview elders to gather further information. The Commonality school (see Meyer & Maldonado, 2010; Maldonado, 2000), has undoubtedly made its way deep into the discourse and ideology of schoolteachers in the state of Oaxaca, probably through labour unions, such as the section 22. The *Imaginary Homelands* sessions have unexpected and encouraging results: schoolteachers dare to express their opinion more

straightforwardly, they identify the plights and challenges their community is facing, and they find a way not only of saying it in their native language, but also of writing it and reading it over and over again. In these sessions, we also work on how to interact with the pupils when implementing this kind of pedagogy of the immersive type – as discourse and narratives switch to the native language, instead of Spanish, which would otherwise have been the only medium of communication. The classes taught with this method and the genuinely local texts and sketches become in fact sessions of *consulta*, i.e. participative democracy. Nevertheless, the success of the method is dependent on the motivation and the disposition of the schoolteachers. Although we cannot guarantee that the NLGW methods and tools are regularly used in actual school teaching by former workshop participants, we have been able to note concretely that NLGW has had an impact in Oaxaca, and more specifically in the Mazatec area, after three years of intensive cooperation with many organisations, both official and/or informal, during the period 2010-13. Many participants have repeated in their own school area the same process with colleagues, or pupils and/or their parents. Transmission of the methodology has entered into a chain, which also makes the methodology more flexible and creative.

During fieldwork realized in 2012, the ALMaz team contributed to the reinforcement of this chain by returning the materials collected to communities, but also by holding approximately ten sets of NLGW in the Mazatec and Nahuatl area. Among others, these were held in the San Jerónimo Tecóatl, Agua de Tinta and Tepetitlán communities, where children and monolingual indigenous language speakers participated. These speakers displayed different degrees of literacy (including illiteracy), which again shows that illiteracy is not necessarily a handicap for the creation of pedagogical materials (as it is so often conceived by language planners). The ethnomethodological approach applied in this workshop whereby the participants share their competence and knowledge implies therefore that oral competence in the indigenous language is the most precious skill for NLGW, raising the status of these languages to the same level as Spanish. Monolingual indigenous speakers are invited to think, imagine and talk about their community, in their indigenous language, whereas teachers write and contribute to recreate *in situ* these stories and their subsequent pedagogical materials. In Tepetitlán, for example, a Nahuatl schoolgirl overcame her fear of participating in school activities, by creating, telling and writing

stories in her native language. In this way, through a community-based effort, NLGW contributes to the development of pedagogical contents adapted to sociolinguistic contexts, flowing in a continuum of orality-literacy-orality. This experience allows us to confirm that writing is not the *goal,* but rather a *tool* of language normalization, and that the "embarrassing phenomenon" encountered above must not become a handicap either.

The third step of NLGW involves narratives and mythology: the "Sol y Luna" (or "Sun and Moon") sessions. On the basis of a native version of the Meso-American *Sol y Luna* mythological motive, groups of schoolteachers write their own version of the tale in the local dialect or *koiné*. They also index concepts of cultural anthropology in the text they produce, in order to prepare a simultaneous critical analysis of the narrative by examining at what extent an ancient narrative may still be up to date, in so far as one can interpret its potential correlates with the world of today. The *Sol y Luna* myth works as a semiotic matrix: this story of two orphans born from a parrot's eggs, brother and sister, the Sun and the Moon, who are sheltered by an old witch whose lover is a forest deer, and who then become rebels and murder their father-in-law, is one of the best one can find to illustrate ordinary human fate – a story of treachery and hardship, but also a kind of epic parody, full of paradoxes. The *Sol y Luna* sessions are planned as an exercise of hermeneutics, on the basis of narratives of the mythological genre – there is a partial crossover with the *Crossed Narratives* Workshop (see below). The grid, adapted from Boege (1998: 92-93), in the table below, works as an analytical tool that can be used to extract relevant information from any local narrative of the *Sol y Luna* type. If applied to such a text, the grid should be used when picking out themes related to solidarity networks and systems of regional geopolitics (in column A), and themes related to the ordering of group identity (in column B). Column A is then broken down into the intervening psychosocial factors relating to alliance networks. A1: *primary prerequisites of loyalty*, includes issues such as how people get access to land; how and with whom they marry (*kinship relations*); other types of kinship relations and *compadrazgo* (moral relations), which strengthen ties between allied families; and also the council of elders. The next section A2: *social order prerequisites*, includes the distribution of tasks between men and women or between any other sub-groups (i.e. *functional distribution*); the repartition of unpaid community work (*tequio*); and the *patrilocal/matrilocal* polarity related to dwelling and inheritance. Other efficient ways of

controlling people and resources, after domestic power, have to do with either mastering social rituals, ordering time and space, being a member of a specific cast of elders or experienced people, or through violence, fear or guilt, or betrayal. The ordering of identity in column B can be divided up into *cultural geography* (B1) and *systems of production* (B2). The categories of this grid are applicable to a wide array of narratives, and can be converted into pedagogical tools for the teaching of the language or with the language, in accordance with the desire to switch from subtractive to additive bilingualism.

A. Alliances (solidarity networks)	B. Identity
1. Primary prerequisites of loyalty	**1. Cultural geography**
Access to land	Toponymy Sacred or Holy Places
Kinship relations	Handling of Natural Elements
Compadrazgo	Discourse about Origins (Etiology)
Council of the Elders	
2. Social Order Prerequisites	**2. Products, systems of production**
Functional Distribution (Collective Work, Labour Redistribution)	Maize
Patrilocality	Milpa
Matrilocality	Coffee
Handling of Time (Calendar)	Sugar Cane
Handling of Rites and Ceremonies	Cattle

Violence, fear and guilt	Fishery and Hunting
Betrayal	Food processing
3. Transactions and Systems of exchange	
Reciprocity	
Market	

Source: from Boege, Eckart 1988: p.92-93, adapted.

In the workshop, all the categories of the table above are to be translated into the native language of the teachers, so that they can project these concepts onto their own version of the *Sol y Luna* tale. The conceptual output may be very different in the native language, but this is precisely the desired effect; it acts as a reflexive tool for intercultural debate. The goal of this activity is to engender an analytic attitude toward the contents of any narrative or native myth being used as a pedagogical tool in the classroom.

We will take the Mazatec workshop session as a case-study, where the Sol y Luna myth was analysed. In section A1 the characters have variable access to the crop field (milpa), and there are lots of taboos and paradoxes connected to the *primary prerequisites of loyalty* (Moreno, 2008: p.35-60) as far as reproductive strength and the fertility of women are concerned: the orphans were born from two parrot eggs, coveted by two young girls, who abandon them to the stream. Even *compadrazgo* (moral ties) and the council of elders are subtly hinted at in the tale. As for social order prerequisites (A2), in the Mazatec version of *Sol y Luna*, matrilocality turns out to be a real dilemma, as the two orphans eventually leave the home of their mother-in-law, in order to live on their own in nature, before rising to the sky to become the Sun and the Moon. The handling of time, of rites and ceremonies, as well as violence, fear and guilt or treachery (as in the grid above), are among the tactics of the characters in the tale. As for A3 *sociocultural analysis*, reciprocity is omnipresent in this version, since revenge is the main motive of the protagonists. As for column B, the Mazatec version of the *Sol y Luna* tale is abundant with mythological geography or, better

said, epic topology and etiology of hills, caves and springs. Most of the tale has to do with the Meso-American milpa system, composed of maize, beans, chilli and gourds: the tale mentions many symbolic details linked with rituals involved in the culture and processing of maize. In a different tale such as the story of the founding of the village, then section B2 *Products, systems of production* may contain more information for the *colonial*, or the *commercial* systems of production, such as coffee, sugar cane, or cattle. After explaining how this grid can be used, and after giving advice on a systematic translation of each concept of the Boege matrix, the writing session begins. Schoolteachers alone or with their pupils or even taking advice from parents attending the workshop, write the local version of the tale. Each group is asked to discuss how the concepts of the Boege matrix can be applied to the text it has just produced, and how they will prepare this material for school. When presenting their work, in Mazatec (or other native language) and Spanish, each team makes a critical analysis of the paradoxes and situations met in the myth. This is one of the differences of this method from standard teaching methods where tradition implies folklore only and teaching is usually only done in Spanish. The Boege grid does not only make the process of identifying the key notions and facts within any text from the oral repertory of "folk literature": the mere task of translating these concepts into Mazatec, Nahuatl or Mixtec is already a reflexive challenge. Not only a terminological one: factors sustaining to the burden of stigma (Goffman, 1963) associated with indigenous languages rise to the surface in translation. The reason why the NLGW sessions start with Easy Grammar, and end with a phase that can be called "Difficult Myth", is due to the underlying complexity of the myth which could easily be lost if such a grid was not used.

As briefly mentioned earlier, the *Difficult Myth* module of NLGW is linked to another project on traditional tales entitled *Crossed Narratives*. Indeed, Soly y Luna or *Difficult Myth* was inspired by this initial project and so it finds its place within the NLGW project.

4. The *Crossed Narratives* project

As we suggested in the introduction, the *Crossed Narratives* workshop is one of the first steps towards a comprehensive method for using native languages in the classroom. This workshop is based on the premise that cultures in contact are influenced by or borrow from each other, and that these cultural mergers might be useful in the elaboration of genuine educational materials on and within the native languages used in the classroom.

It was implemented as an experimental project with schoolteachers in the region of Oaxaca (speaking Mazatec, Zapotec and Mixe, among others) and in the Huasteca region in 2009 and 2010. Our aim was to apply this method in areas displaying a structural convergence of languages. The Huasteca region of central Mexico was the perfect place to start with three indigenous languages of three different families in contact; Nahuatl (a Uto-Aztec language), Tének (a Mayan language also known as Huastec/Wastek or Teenek) and Pame (or Northern Pame, of the Otomanguean family). Varying degrees of bilingualism/plurilingualism converge, featuring speakers of Spanish and Nahuatl, for example or Nahuatl and Tének, or all of the above.

The project concentrates on the diversity of sociolinguistic repertories and language contact, using narratives long or short – from riddles and proverbs to traditional tales and legends, myths and beliefs – as vectors of corpus.

The workshop sessions unite speakers of one or more minority language, mastered at diverse degrees, who are incited to reproduce narratives of oral tradition, encouraged by lists of motives attested in the region (for example, see Peñalosa (1996) for Mayan narrative motives). The participants work in small groups each representing one language, or one language variant. There may be more groups representing Tének, for example, than Pame simply because there is a larger population of Tének speakers. One important point to clarify among the participants is the decision on whether to produce materials in the local variant of the learners or particular school they will be used in, or whether they should use an accepted "norm" (or whether both should be done). Each working group must make that decision according to what suits their specific situation and how and where they plan to use these materials. One of the advantages of this workshop module is its flexibility as a pedagogical tool. All too often we hear of contexts where the bilingual schoolteacher

posted at the bilingual school is indeed bilingual, but simply not in the same indigenous language as the schoolchildren he/she has been sent to teach. The *Crossed Narratives* workshop allows the teacher to use his/her own cultural motives in order to create a link with those of the pupils. Even though the languages may be very different, the cultural motives may be similar, and these may be used as the basis for the creation of intercultural pedagogy. Each group receives a *different* list of narrative motives prepared in advance by the facilitator and identifies one belonging to the participants' repertory. The group prepares a poster representing the narrative selected in a written and/or drawn form and then prepares a list of proposals of educational activities related to this narrative. All is drawn and written in the indigenous language where possible, including the educational activities proposed. Each group then presents its text, illustrations and pedagogical recommendations before the assembly while being simultaneously recorded on film. The presentations are made first in the minority language then in Spanish for the other groups of variants/languages. The idea is that the original version is in the indigenous language and the Spanish version is a translation of this rather than the contrary.

In the case where the narrative is identified by the speaker of a different language or variant as also belonging to his/her repertory then this person is asked to orally recount this other version before the whole group again whilst being filmed. It may be the case that a number of versions of the narrative exist differing at varying degrees. The groups then selects another known motive from the list or switches lists with another group for another round of narratives.

The one aspect of these workshops that constantly holds the attention of the participants is the co-elaboration of *pedagogical recommendations* (or "pautas pedagógicas"). As mentioned briefly above, these are devised, discussed and developed group by group, then put to the general assembly following the presentation of the narrative, ultimately expressing how the contents of the texts and illustrations produced *could* be best put to use. The same texts/illustrations may be used in various different ways according to the age or level of the learner concerned. It is necessary to be sure that the participants understand that we are talking about recommendations, options or possibilities rather than rules to be systematically applied. They usually find this idea quite disconcerting to begin with, and in every workshop, this is the activity that not only provokes the most interest, but also reveals

the most gaps, requiring the most efforts in terms of debate, elaboration, and articulation. It involves constant research and reflexivity, taking into account differences between variants and adapting to the changes. Corcuff (2007) defines reflexivity as critical reflexion or constant rethinking of one's categories of analysis, and the adequacy of one's hypotheses and theories in continuous interaction with the context they define. At the start of this reflexion, the traditional pedagogical goals are given, such as "teaching reading and writing to young children", leading eventually onto "understanding the value of indigenous traditions"; then as the participants realize how powerful a tool they can themselves create and develop based upon this simple repertoire of narratives, they become much more adventurous and may offer up recommendations pertaining to local geography, to botany, to biology and even to physics, sociology, or philosophy.

Another advantage of this type of workshop is the large quantities of texts produced over a short period of time as well as the oral/video recordings that serve to both document the workshops and the narratives heard within them and provide another educational tool. Again, as in the case of every NLGW session, digital copies of everything produced are left with the participating communities. The work of several months of preparation of teaching material can be achieved within just a few days with the participation of a large group of teachers or trainers permanently in contact with the educational realities of the field, and with materials closer to the real needs of the learners. If the material is not directly publishable at the end of the workshops, it is at least recorded, filmed, photographed and digitalized, and can be revised, added to and eventually published without a great deal more effort. Widespread access to the internet now provides an easy and inexpensive means of publication and allows immediate (re)distribution of the work realized during the workshop sessions. The participants, in coordination with other local and regional teachers, can review and complete the materials. Year after year, they will be able to hold further writing workshops based on the same method in order to continue to develop and improve the materials produced.

In this particular case, however, as well as providing a methodology that can be re-applied in any native cultural setting, our objective is to encourage reflexion upon how and what they want to teach using their native language and to give them confidence in their ability

to create new tools, thereby empowering the community itself. The aim of the workshops is not so much the production of schoolbooks as the development of a debate on what alternative pedagogy could be applied, encouraging reflexion or reflexivity (see Hervik, 2003 for a discussion on the concept of reflexivity in relation with the Yucatec Maya). The workshops are in effect an invitation to think, consider and question the function of BIE in the communities and how to re-appropriate educational contents.

5. Three steps, from Easy Grammar to Difficult Myth: from complex to simple practice

Whereas complexity associates many objects on many coordinates and hierarchies, to reach the equilibrium of a system, simplicity makes packets of such systems in order to reach easy goals: the only thing that stops systems from becoming chaos is that simplicity has the final word over complexity. Even the application of the NLGW methodology can be described as a complex process, which has finally reached a simple articulation, across three basic components: Easy Grammar (EG), Imaginary Homelands (IH) & Difficult Myth (DM).

The three steps of NLGW (EG, IH & DM) are the result of nearly 15 years' practice, in the realm of literacy workshops in native languages of Meso-America, in Mexico and Guatemala. The first NLGW sessions were a little more awkward: we would ask for riddles, or for objective descriptions of the community, in order to teach history and geography with texts in the native language (see Léonard, 2001). Unfortunately, riddles turned out to foster only short range activities of vocabulary and spelling, while descriptions of communities often ended up being the copy of the official story, with no creative commitment from the schoolteachers themselves. Instead, the *Imaginary Homelands* and the *Sol y Luna* sessions open up access to a bewildering amount of fresh, critical and powerful narratives. They avoid routine, they challenge attitudes of resignation

in the face of stigma, such as acceptation, victimisation, segregation (cf. Goffman, *op. cit.*), and they question essentialism, since the literary workshop protocol, with its dialectic method and its analytical grid of socio-cultural factors, compels the participants not to take anything for granted. NLGW has engineered a methodology for reflexive participative sessions of literacy in native languages. It is part of a wider attempt, by the IUF Meso-American project team, to make linguistic projects impact on language planning *in situ*, as a form of restitution to the population of speakers. The main goal of this component of the ALMaz project was to compensate for a serious deficit in the training of native schoolteachers: the lack of theory and practice of written Mazatec, Nahuatl, or Ténék (among many others). Moreover, the NLGW methodology insists on formally training native schoolteachers in the analysis of their language, even as far as holding sessions of comparative phonology and dialectology (see Léonard, 2010).

6. Conclusion

One of the striking results of the ALMaz project is that we are able to see that working at the grass-roots level with the appropriate protocol (NLGW), with funds allowing regular and frequent visits to the area by highly trained linguists or anthropologists to hold NLGW sessions, organise congresses and meetings on the future of bilingual and intercultural education, does make a difference, when compared with ordinary linguistic documentation and revitalization. In fact, language management does not require enormous amounts of funds to get started. The main prerequisite is to have a sector of the linguistic community desirable of a qualitative language shift, as we have already mentioned earlier: from subtractive to additive bilingualism. In this case, the *gremio magisterial*, or the Oaxacan schoolteachers are willing to participate – in spite of much repression and humiliation (see Sotelo Marbán, 2008). The second prerequisite is the ability to find appropriate technical solutions to local dilemmas. Theoretical and descriptive linguistics have such tools. The third prerequisite adds one more constraint: the technical solution must be adopted by the community making the demand. It must not be

paternalistic: it should rely on a shift in *knowhow*, from the linguist to the most advanced sector in native language literacy. How can the most active, but also the most distressed sector in terms of qualifications, regain a margin of action in Language Planning, if the participants do not have formal command of their native languages?

NLGW not only results in concrete, viable, authentic materials for educating children, but also results in the reflexivity so badly needed for the re-appropriation of the contents and in order to question the very function of bilingual intercultural education, thereby leading to the empowerment of the communities involved. One may question even the notion of school as an institution dedicated to the integration and education of children in order to shape the individual citizens of a nation; in order to shape free-thinking, responsible citizens who are well integrated at all the different levels of a multicultural society.

These workshop modules are polyvalent and multidisciplinary, adaptable to almost all situations where there are languages in contact. They enable the teaching of a language directly in the language concerned, and certain modules (*Crossed Narratives; Difficult Myth*) even rely on the contact between languages and cultures, thereby adding value to this contact.

In conclusion, Language Planning is simplest and most effective when it comprises the restitution of the functions and status of linguistic practices through the creativity, reflexivity, knowhow and agency of speakers.

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Appendice

Metadata:

Utopic version (in Mazatec)	Dystopic version (in Mazatec)
Nankii ntá nijuo *Nankii ntá nijuo nkuu nte má tuxi tsjo tsi tjín ntá nijuo xi nenguye tente ´nankí tsjotjin, nanki skjian xi tuxí tsjootjín.* *Jintá naxi xi tí nibajen nja', nja´, xinkúu ndjio nja' xi tjin tixa naxi nkjún.* *Kuixi tsitse su sun ngayje nanki ntá xjo, taa ngayje chu, xuta, ko ngayje nixi tjín batenta nchán ko ti nakjen. Xinkuu nku tsi'xa xi tsi'kjen nju.* *Abatsjo tsi tjín ntá nijuo, nchán xinkuu tsi 'ndjio xi bixuntu nkjia ba' tsi'ndjio xi nibaara ndjio mjiján, as'ie mangujin ko nta tinchantí.* *Nta tixa xi tinchaya kintee 'ta nanki xi 'fi xutandaxjo ábandara ataa m'i ti'me kjintiá, kataa nta nijuo xi batsín i xinkuu nsjen ko*	*Nanki xi nku nistjin kikin nanki ntá ; nku nanki xi mánga kixinchantu ntá nijua tu mámjera ko tu má kjin'ná sakúna ntá nijua xi binguya xuta ko ntá nijua xi'fi.* *Tonga nde ja mita tjin nixi ba'mi ntá nijuo á ja kixiya ntá nijua má nku nistjin kjia tsinguya ntixi nde já mitatjin má kuinguyaaná ko ntá xunka xi fanki fa'ma ijin nju ko ntá naxi xi nibajen xinkúu nku tsi'xa á ja mitatjin ntá xi mangujinko ntáje.* *Ámita tjin ntá tixa xi siina xi batsin nchan xinkúu tsindjo ko ntá finchantí xi tjin kue?* *Mi'kjuaa tu ntá ye' kumaa ntá nijuo mikjua kixiyaa ntó ataa mi kumaa kuakuntá xuta ko mi kumaa kikun nixi kisee.*

xinkuu nta chiki, xi batsín tsjoo xuta xinkuu chinko ntá si. Ji nta xunka xi tibitjanki tibitjame kinte naxi ko xi tinibajen ijin ñjachó ko ijin nju xi tibee ngaye nganti nga sti xi ti tsuntonjiin batjin.	*Nde mitatjin ntó ko tufi tufi ti'mje xuta taa nubó tuxi in sje ko in tsi'chhjan ná taa mita ba'a tsi'.*
Ko xintuu ko ji nta tinchantí xi mji chjii yjee tu ma nemani ni'yee, nkja basenkjin xuta.	

Utopic version (in Spanish)	Dystopic version (in Spanish)
El lugar de las aguas	El lugar en donde había abundante agua. Agua que se encontraba en cualquier espacio, y dondequiera uno caminaba, encontraba agua para bañarse la gente y para tomar.
El lugar de las abundantes aguas que bañas a la hermosa ciudad de Jalapa, la ciudad fresca y hermosa.	
Tu cascada que bajas del cerro, brillosa y cristalina como perla hallada en las cuevas, que engalanas y llenas la ciudad de Jalapa. Y así todo ser vivo lo alimentas, lo refrescas como la brisa a la milpa.	Ahora ya no hay agua ¿Porqué se ha secado? El agua donde algún día los niños y las personas se bañaban. Hoy ya no hay agua para bañarse. Ya no hay arroyuelos donde pasan por los montes y por las milpas. Las cascadas desaparecieron. Las cascadas que bajaban como cristalinas ya no existen.
Qué abundancia de agua, fría como el granizo que cae en el cielo azul para unirse con la presa.	
Tu pozo que vives desde lo más profundo de	¿Porque no existen los pozos donde se

la tierra, fresca y dulce como la miel y la leche, sacias la sed del mazateco que no sufre ni muere por que tu lo alimentas, así como al cerdo le gusta el charco.

Tu arroyuelo que bajas de las montañas cruzando ríos y montes acariciando y regalando amor a chicos y grandes.

Así como tú laguna, que eres amador de todos y que haces de tu casa cualquier espacio que encuentras para contemplarte la gente.

tomaba agua?

(…)

¿Porque ahora el agua es negra? El agua se ha secado porque la gente no la supo cuidar, y no supo valorar lo que tenia.

Ahora, ya no hay agua.

El agua se fue muriendo así como también la gente: uno por uno, porque ya no había agua para tomar, y el sol (…) calentaba, y ya no había lluvia.