Collaboration in the Context of Teaching, Scholarship, and Language Revitalization: Experience from the Chatino Language Documentation Project

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We describe our own experience of linguist-community collaboration over the last ten years in our Chatino Language Documentation Project, focused on the Chatino languages (Otomanguean; Oaxaca, Mexico). We relate episodes in the emergence and evolution of the collaboration between ourselves, and of the collaboration among ourselves and the Chatino communities with which we have worked. Our experience has several special features. First, our own collaboration began as native Chatino-speaking Ph.D. student and her teacher in a program focused on training speakers of Latin American indigenous languages in linguistics and anthropology, and developed into a larger collaboration among students and faculty where the student had a major leadership role. Second, our approach was documentary-descriptive and comparative, but it was also socially engaged or 'activist,', in that we sought to promote interest, awareness, and respect for the Chatino languages, to teach and support Chatino literacy, and to preserve and offer access to spoken Chatino, especially traditional verbal art. Our approach had synergies with local interests in writing and in honoring traditional speech ways, but it also led to conflicts over our roles as social actors, and the traditionally activist roles of indigenous teachers. Third, we experienced plasticity in the collaborative roles we played. Between ourselves, we were student and teacher, but also initiator and follower as we became engaged in revitalization. At the same time, the native speaker linguist found herself occupying a range of positions along a continuum from "insider" to "outsider" respect to her own community.

0. INTRODUCTION.[1] Most systematic language documentation projects are initiated by linguists. Linguists, whether or not we are native speakers of the languages we document,

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organize these projects around our disciplinary agendas: text collection, dictionary making, grammar writing, and perhaps also language preservation, language teaching, or the pursuit of historical, typological, or theoretical questions. A growing literature, mostly also by linguists, examines how such documentation projects can fit with the agendas and goals of speakers of the languages they study; and of heritage speakers, group-, nation-, or tribal-members, local authorities, local schools, and other language stakeholders (we are especially influenced by discussions in Wilkins 1992, England 1992, Dobrin 2008; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009, and Rice 2011, and the other articles in this volume, among others). How, in short, can linguists engage in documentation that is genuinely collaborative?

It can be hard to generalize. There are differences among researchers themselves, their research agendas and goals, and their relationships to the community; differences among speakers and other local stakeholders and their ideas and visions for their linguistic heritages; and differences in the communicative roles or niches that languages may fill for their speakers. And any of these differences may respond to larger patterns and conditions holding in the region, nation-state, or even continent in which a language is spoken, as Franchetto & Rice (this volume) clearly shows. We therefore see a need for detailed, reflective studies of collaboration in particular cases.

To that end, we offer this description and consideration of our own experience over the last ten years in our Chatino Language Documentation Project. We write as two people with two voices and our own perspectives. Emiliana Cruz writes as a Chatino speaker and community member who began documenting Chatino languages as a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin, and continues to do so as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts. Tony Woodbury writes as a Professor of Linguistics at Texas who became involved in the documentation of Chatino languages through working with Emiliana, and who co-founded with her the Chatino Language Documentation Project, which eventually involved six other Texas graduate students, including Emiliana's sister Hilaria Cruz. Accordingly, following this introduction, our presentation will be dialogic and discursive, heading each of our parts with "**Emiliana:**" and "**Tony:**", respectively.

We will proceed chronologically, relating episodes in the emergence and evolution of the collaboration between ourselves, and of the collaboration among ourselves and the Chatino communities with which we have worked. We will finish by extracting what we see as the main features and themes of our situation to inspire comparison with other such situations around the world, and to encourage the development of a more general understanding of linguist-community collaboration.

A special feature of our work has been our interest in doing language documentation and description alongside, and as a part of, trying to support and preserve Chatino. This strongly affects our community collaboration, which is based not only around scholarly inquiry, but also social, cultural, and political engagement. In this sense, we seek common cause with what Florey et al. (2009) call *language activists*, which they define as persons 'who focus (...) energetic action towards {preserving and promoting linguistic diversity / supporting language rights}'. Indeed, we take on that role ourselves. At the same time, we are so strongly aware of the multiplicity of agendas and 'activisms' within (and beyond) the Chatino communities that we prefer simply to characterize ourselves as 'engaged in Chati

no language preservation and support', and, likewise, to describe the activisms of others in specific terms. This allows us, we hope, to say more about the nature of our collaborations.

0.1 THE CHATINOS AND THEIR LANGUAGES. The Chatinos are subsistence farmers and pastoralists who traditionally inhabit two mountainous districts of Oaxaca, Mexico, that lie between the valley of Oaxaca and the Pacific coast, shown in Figure 1. The Chatino population in 2008 was about 50,000.

Linguistically, Chatino is a shallow language group coordinate with Zapotec in the Zapotecan family of Otomanguean (Kaufman 1993, Upson & Longacre 1965), as shown in Table 1. Over half of contemporary Chatinos are speakers of 17 or so distinct local varieties of Chatino, many of which are mutually unintelligible. The varieties are named for the localities in which they are spoken and vary considerably with respect to their populations and vitality (see further discussion in Cruz & Woodbury 2014). Almost a century ago, Franz Boas (1913:78) reported a few hours conversation with a Chatino man named Ezéquiel Vázquez, who recognized that these village language varieties could be classified into three main "dialects" (which we consider distinct languages): Zenzontepec Chatino, Tataltepec Chatino, and all the rest, which we call Eastern Chatino. Campbell (2013) sustains the Vázquez-Boas classification by demonstrating, based on shared innovations, that all the Eastern Chatino varieties form a distinct genetic unit (but he leaves flat the considerable diversity that it contains). He furthermore shows that Eastern
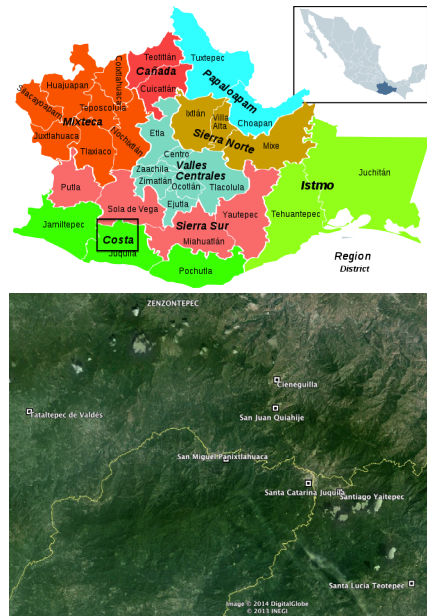

Figure 1. District map of Oaxaca, Mexico (above), with detail showing the Chatino region and locations in it of major places mentioned in this article (below). Sources: Wikipedia 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oaxaca_regions_and_districts.svg; and Google Earth 7.1. 2014. http://www.google.com/earth/index.html [Viewed 2 February, 2014].)

Chatino and Tataltepec Chatino form a proper subgroup, Coastal Chatino, that is coordinate with Zenzontepec Chatino, the family's farthest outlier.

- Otomanguean (Many subfamilies)
    - Zapotecan
        - Zapotec (Many varieties)
        - Chatino
            - Zenzontepec Chatino [ISO 639-3 czn] (ZEN)
            - Coastal Chatino
                - Tataltepec Chatino [cta] (TAT)
                - Eastern Chatino
                    - San Juan Quiahije Eastern Chatino [ctp] (SJQ)
                    - Santiago Yaitepec Eastern Chatino [ctp] (YAI)
                    - San Marcos Zacatepec Eastern Chatino [ctz] (ZAC)
                    - Santa Lucía Teotepec Eastern Chatino [cya] (TEO)
                    - Santa María Yolotepec Eastern Chatino [cly] (YOL)
                    - San Miguel Panixtlahuaca Eastern Chatino [ctp] (PAN)
                    - (About 9 others)

TABLE 1. *The Chatino languages: External and internal relationships* (Reproduced from Cruz & Woodbury 2014)

1. EMILIANA'S BEGINNING.

EMILIANA: Our Chatino Language Documentation project began in 2003, which was when Tony and I started exploring my own variety of Chatino—San Juan Quiahije Eastern Chatino—as part of my Ph.D. Program at the University of Texas at Austin.

My goal in going to graduate school was to train Chatino speakers to write and document their languages. I think I've accomplished that together with Tony, my sister Hilaria, who also joined the Texas program, and other Texas graduate students; and we've met many challenges while dealing with local and national politics. There's been a lot of collaboration—among ourselves, the researchers; and also within my community. But collaboration is complex when many actors are involved, and when scholarship is joined together with language support and preservation, as it has been for us. As we learned and hope to show, language preservation, engagement, and activism can be conceived in many different ways. Likewise, the notion of *community* is complex. There is no one, single *Chatino community*: there are many municipalities and towns, speaking different Chatino varieties (see Table 1). Among them there can be a sense of community but there can also be divisions. Likewise, each person's sense of belonging can be different. In my own case, sometimes I am a community insider and at other times I am an outsider, because I left my village when I was young, but I came back with my parents during holidays. I still speak Chatino and can communicate with everybody there. For the last ten years, during the summers, I have returned home to do research, something that an ordinary citizen does not do. People see that I pay people for elicitation, I bring fancy equipment for recordings, I invite

outsiders to the community, and I have a visa to the United States. So, people can have many contradictory ideas about my position in the community, they often wonder and discuss what exactly I do for a living and their ideas become a source of gossip. I report to the authorities about my projects and they usually accept and give their support, but behind my back some would say that I make my living by selling the Chatino language to the world. However, I find there are some positive aspects of working at home – I get to meet younger generations of the community and I get to teach them, which gives me a great satisfaction. In any case, we hope all these many complexities come out in our stories.

But let me tell my story from the beginning. My community where I was born is called Cieneguilla, San Juan Quiahije, Oaxaca, Mexico, shown in Figure 2.

My father was Tomás Cruz. He was a leader, a journalist, a unifier of the Chatinos, and an activist in the sense that he tried to raise people's awareness of their social, political, and cultural conditions as a way to bring about change. At the age of seven, I left my village in search of better educational opportunities in Oaxaca City, where I learned Spanish. When I was 18, my father was killed by assassins employed by coffee and cattle interests in Santa Catarina Juquila, the regional commercial center in Chatino country. He had written several articles about their local activities. Figure 3 shows a memorial to him in Cieneguilla's village square.

FIGURE 2. Cieneguilla, San Juan Quiahije, Oaxaca, Mexico (Photo by Tony)

FIGURE 3. Memorial to Emiliana's father, Tomás Cruz Lorenzo (1950-1989), in Cieneguilla's village square (Photo by Tony)

Some time after his death, I moved to the United States, where I learned English and attended college and graduate school.

When I decided to go to graduate school, I already had a lot of experience traveling in the Chatino region. At a young age, I traveled to many Chatino villages with my father. I went along with him to local meetings, to prisons, and to different traditional ceremonies. My father had passion for his work as an activist and peace maker among Chatino people in a period of violence and economic pressure. I didn't fully appreciate it at the time; only later, I realized that he had a tremendous commitment to social justice for indigenous people. My father influenced me greatly; I have always wanted to do something for "my community". That was what motivated me to do community based projects.

The importance and benefits of using Chatino or another native language as a medium of instruction might be apparent to linguists, but not to many other people, including indigenous people, teachers, religious leaders, and Spanish speakers. Indigenous people, having not seen native languages used in a formal educational setting, often believe that their languages are incomplete and lack words to explain subjects such as math, literature, and history. Recognizing the importance of using native languages in classrooms, I wanted to see Chatino, not just Spanish, used to instruct Chatinos. I decided to make that my goal. There are benefits to teaching a child in his or her native language. One is the self-confidence and pride that the child will develop through native-language instruction. Another is compliance with Mexican constitutional obligations pertaining to indigenous languages. Dozens of indigenous languages are spoken in Mexico, the majority of them endangered. The Mexican constitution strives to protect these languages. All citizens are entitled to an

education in their native language, and to an interpreter in legal and medical situations, but unfortunately these rights are rarely claimed or enforced. In most locales where indigenous languages are spoken, Spanish is the language of instruction, and residents do not raise objections. This is the case throughout the Chatino region. As a result, the child will believe that the Chatino language (or another indigenous language) is ill-suited for educational uses, is less prestigious than Spanish, and cannot be analyzed or written. This may have a detrimental impact on the child's education and future. For example, in Quiahije, many children will not finish middle school and only a few people will attend college for a variety of cultural and linguistic reasons. It is clear to me that when a child receives education in his native language, s/he will better comprehend the materials presented in the classroom than if education is in a language s/he does not know well.

In 1989, I applied for a job as a bilingual teacher in my home state of Oaxaca. I was sent by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) to attend a training course for aspiring teachers in indigenous communities. I felt that the course did not prepare me for the task, as the instructors lacked the linguistic background to teach us how to offer instruction in indigenous languages. The training lasted just three months, at which point graduates were dispersed to their assigned communities. Seeing these deficiencies, I concluded that I needed more education, particularly linguistic training, to support indigenous languages and bilingual education.

And so I started my graduate studies in linguistic anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin in 2002, hoping eventually to make pedagogical grammars for teachers who teach Chatino children.

2. TONY'S BEGINNING.

TONY: Here is how it started for me. Around 2001 we recruited Nora England at the University of Texas at Austin, where she founded for us a Center for Indigenous Language of Latin America (CILLA). She dedicated it to offering doctoral training in linguistics and related disciplines to speakers of Latin American languages (see Woodbury & England 2006 for an account). Her idea was that our resources and efforts were best spent supporting students, rather than directly on research. Funding for non-traditional students from abroad is generally hard to come by; whereas research funding can be obtained from many sources. Moreover, the research projects initiated by indigenous students may be of particular value and interest. We also felt very strongly that the training should be at the doctoral level, so as to be a centerpiece of our graduate program and not a side effort. Emiliana was one of the first to join, in Fall, 2002, as a doctoral student in Anthropology.

At that point, I'd recently become department chair, was excited about Nora's new Center, and had taken a Spanish class in case I could help out. When Emiliana arrived, I asked to work with her on her language, San Juan Quiahije Eastern Chatino. It seemed like a wonderful teaching and learning opportunity.

I must say the first thing that struck me—meeting Emiliana, her sister Hilaria, and later people in Chatino country—was their strong interest in writing Chatino as a part of supporting and teaching it. They'd been told that Chatino was a mere "dialect," unwritten and perhaps even unwritable. Even for someone who didn't believe this, the amazing *tonal* complexity of these languages made writing them a real challenge. This challenge oriented our earliest work—we concentrated first on writing and solving the tonal system of Emili-

ana's Chatino (see Cruz & Woodbury 2014 for an account), and it became the focus of our first paper together, on Chatino tone (Cruz & Woodbury 2006). I felt we were a good fit for each other—her interest in writing coincided well with my own sense that phonology should come first. And our work made me eager to accept Emiliana's invitation that first summer to go to Chatino country and help her teach some of what we had learned.

3. OUR FIRST COLLABORATIONS IN THE CHATINO REGION.

EMILIANA: In my first year of graduate school I took basic linguistics courses. With Tony and others, I tried to apply the practical orthography of Jeffrey Rasch's (2002) doctoral dissertation on Santiago Yaitepec Eastern Chatino to my variety. We did our best to figure out the tones of my variety so that we could write them. At that point, I felt empowered to change the world of Chatino language education. I was full of energy and offered my services to anyone who wanted to learn about Chatino.

I was also interested in collaborating with linguists in Oaxaca. In March, 2003, I visited the Center for the Study and Development of the Indigenous Languages of Oaxaca (known as CEDELIO, its Spanish initials) and they invited me, along with several Chatino teachers, to attend a language workshop for teachers. I attended the workshop. Alfonso Merino Pérez, then the head of the bilingual department for schools in the Chatino region, led the Chatino group. He had created materials in Zenzontepec Chatino, his own language. He was pleased that I was studying Chatino and he told me that he was interested in holding a workshop on Chatino later that year.

Soon after, I received his invitation to that workshop, to be held in June, 2003. He also invited four teachers representing a cross-section of the Chatino languages. I was very excited about the opportunity to work with the teachers, since they are the ones who work directly with children in the classroom. I had often seen indigenous teachers promoting folklore performances and indigenous culture inside and outside of schools. Having seen this, I naïvely thought that they would be eager to integrate language instruction into their curricula, but I assumed that a lack of linguistic training had prevented them from doing so in the past. I thought that all that was needed was some training. I hadn't considered that the teachers might prefer not to integrate language instruction in their programs and to continue, instead, with folklore programs. I also thought that indigenous teachers would be capable of promoting Chatino in the Chatino communities as well as in the local schools even though in many cases, they were assigned to communities whose Chatino variety they did not understand well or at all. I hoped that linguists and teachers could collaborate in creating pedagogical materials for Chatino. I had no clear idea of what I was going to discuss with the Chatino teachers; my hope was to combine our efforts, and I thought that this hope was going to materialize.

In this first meeting with the teachers, I was ready to work. But things did not turn out the way I planned; doing language work with the teachers was more political and complicated than I expected.

I invited along two other people: my sister Hilaria, who later also joined the program at Texas; and Tony. My sister is also a speaker of Chatino, so the two of us might count as community members; but neither of us had lived in the community for a while. And Tony was as foreign as they get: a gringo who had barely even been to Mexico; and an English speaker just learning Spanish. We gathered in Santa Lucía Teotepec, a major mountain-top

Chatino village that had suffered severe violence from the late 1950s to '70s. After that, Teotepec was stripped of its political status in favor of a nearby larger village with coffee and cattle interests.

The community and the local school gave us a great welcome. Children marched and did traditional dances, and one little boy recited a poem in Chatino, as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

I was very excited about all of the welcoming shows. They gave me even more energy to work on the Chatino language. After the big show, we, Merino, and the other four teachers went into a classroom to work.

We introduced ourselves and talked about what motivations brought us to them. Then some of the teachers that Merino brought, started to question us:

1. Who invited you? And who invited Tony?
2. Where is your official invitation?
3. What is your party affiliation?
4. Why did you abandon us before, Emiliana? (They knew that I had started training as a teacher some years earlier.)

We answered as well as possible, but they were not satisfied with our answers. We did start to work a bit off and on (Figure 6). But the discussion soon turned back to questioning us. They did not want to work with us and they requested to have a meeting with Merino's boss, the regional supervisor.

FIGURE 4. Our welcome to Santa Lucía Teotepec, June, 2003, by an assembly of students and teachers in the town square. Behind the students facing the camera are (l-r) Emiliana, Tony, Hilaria, school official Prof. Roberto Mijangos Martínez, one of the Teotepec authorities, and behind him Alfonso Merino Pérez, organizer of the workshop. (Photo by Carlos Cruz)

FIGURE 5. Poetry recitation in Chatino by Luis Fernando Zorilla Vázquez, age about 6, Santa Lucía Teotepec (Photo by Carlos Cruz)

FIGURE 6. Teachers Cándido Domínguez, Gilberto Ramírez Gutiérrez, and Alfonso Merino Pérez (l-r), comparing independent pronouns in four Chatino varieties. (Photo by Carlos Cruz)

FIGURE 7. Emiliana and Alfonso Merino on the sidelines, as the other teachers, standing outside the school, discuss among themselves. (Photo by Carlos Cruz)

After two days during which we had not worked (see Figure 7), the regional supervisor arrived in Teotepec and they had a meeting to decide if it would be legitimate for them to work with us. In the end, the majority voted to not work with us.

Feeling defeated, we went to the local authorities to thank them for their hospitality. Unlike the teachers, the authorities were happy that we had visited their village, because we had come from far away to work on the Chatino language. They told us that they had planned a feast to thank us (including the teachers) for working hard during our stay in their village.

That evening, many members of the community gathered to prepare the feast. Women cooked corn to make tortillas, men cut wood for the fire, and there were two cute goats waiting to be killed and prepared. The people in Teotepec worked hard to make the event the best it could be. The next day, the day of the feast, we ate very well. We ate goat meat and drank mezcal with the teachers and the local authorities, shown in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8. Fiesta at Teotepec. Emiliana and Tony (l-r, facing the camera) are seated at the table of the village authorities. (Photo by Carlos Cruz)

During the party I remember observing the teachers. I was really upset. As I watched them eating and drinking mezcal, I could not stop thinking about the two goats that were killed for the party, and thinking, those poor goats shouldn't have died after we had barely done any work!

The whole workshop with the teachers was very political—they really seemed to like that. I saw them interacting cheerfully with each other and the authorities; they even gave speeches on the importance of language promotion. We left the village disappointed, and the teachers maybe felt like winners in the battle against foreigners.

I mentioned that when I was thinking about working with teachers, I thought of them as having the role of indigenous promoters to support the local people: that is, as activists themselves. There is a long history to this idea. After the Mexican Revolution, beginning in the 1920s, there were many government-led efforts to teach indigenous people in our own communities, as Heath (1972) has discussed at length. The overall goal was to build a more unified Mexican nation-state through assimilation and "Castillianization" of indigenous people; but at different times, indigenous languages were supported to greater or lesser extents. In 1951, the National Indigenous Institute (INI) was created. This was an important period for indigenous languages because it was at this time that government assimilation projects started to succeed. It seemed that the way to get indigenous Mexicans to speak Spanish was by involving community leaders. As Olivia Pineda (1993) describes, bilingual

indigenous people—even adolescents—were hired as *promotores indígenas* 'indigenous promoters' to implement bilingual education projects in their own communities and act as links between two cultures. A formal bureaucratic-administrative structure in charge of promoting education emerged. The program had a strong impact on indigenous communities, causing language loss. It also established teachers, Pineda argues, as what she terms *caciques culturales* 'cultural chiefs or bosses', in charge of cultural issues, at least on behalf of the government. This included language, even if they were not in a position to preserve and promote indigenous languages.

In Oaxaca today, teachers work under three separate authorities: the Secretaría de Educación Pública, their union, and the individual municipalities. Teachers have little professional autonomy. They claim that they may not create their own curricula nor establish long-term educational goals. But in my opinion they could assert their autonomy, and use indigenous languages in classrooms, if they wanted to. There are cases of teachers working in indigenous languages in other parts of Mexico, but not yet in the Chatino region. The one area in which they do have some autonomy is in promoting culture. For example, in the districts where they work, teachers organize sporting events; they organize dance events that feed into *La Guelaguetza*, a pageant of regional indigenous folk dances held each summer in Oaxaca City; and they are charged with translating the Mexican national anthem from the Spanish to local languages. Even so, it is a highly nationalistic construction of indigenous culture.

Although teachers feel that it is their role to oversee cultural activity, a role which many local people support, the situation is in some ways awkward. They are also tasked with saving local languages, but are given little appropriate training.[2] Moreover, even *maestros bilingües* (bilingual teachers) often do not speak the language of the communities in which they work, since school assignments are constantly changing. On top of that, they are paid a low salary, and yet they are expected to drop everything during the school year to go to rallies in support of their union during yearly strike actions that may last a month or more.

But our story suggests there is also something more. As noted, there has been significant resistance on the parts of teachers even when they do speak the local language, and in such a context, there can also be resistance to collaboration with researchers who want to study, document, and revitalize the local languages. The resistance can be amplified when the researcher is an outsider or (as in my case) a semi-outsider who no longer lives in the community. We connect this with the strong nationalism that is encouraged in the schools, and, perhaps, with the anti-colonial politics of the teacher's union.

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[2] A Spanish linguistic team, working with local people on behalf of district schools, divided Chatino into four 'varieties', corresponding to the three languages shown in Table 1, but dividing Eastern Chatino into two groups. For each of the four varieties they defined, they proposed an orthography, but the orthographies lacked consistent tonal marking (López Castañeda et al. 1990). The work was widely implemented and teachers using it met with some success when the material corresponded to community speech. However the (relatively arbitrary) two-way division of Eastern Chatino was not sufficient to account for its internal diversity, and led to a grouping together, for teaching purposes, of village varieties for which there was often low mutual intelligibility. Consequently, many teachers and communities ended up with materials that didn't correspond with what they spoke.

I began to see that teachers are important to language revitalization in Chatino communities, but to stop regarding them as essential. I decided only to work with people who are interested and not to impose anything on anyone, especially on teachers who have a lot of other work to do.[3] And I was not interested in getting involved in teachers' politics. In the end this led me to rethink how I was going to do language documentation and work on the revitalization of Chatino. My new strategy was to work directly with local elected authorities and with young people.

4. GROWTH OF OUR PROJECT.

TONY: One lesson that I took from Emiliana's *modus operandi* was that one must constantly seek contacts and connections with new people who might have interests, and especially energy, for language promotion, preservation and documentation; and that each person must think flexibly and realistically about what they can and can't contribute given their training and background. In this context, a further goal took shape alongside our work in phonological description: documenting Chatino natural discourse. It began in San Juan Quiahije. We recorded people in all kinds of settings. These were mostly private collaborations, but they sometimes had a public, more official side. Of very great interest locally is the ritual oratory used by the authorities on public occasions. On the last day of 2004, Hilaria, Emiliana's sister, made a recording of a midnight New Year ceremony in San Juan Quiahije for the changing of traditional community authorities. She recorded it because she felt such oratory was 'beautiful Chatino' and was poetically, spiritually, and culturally profound. Indeed, once she had transcribed her recordings, she realized that it was an example of classic Mesoamerican "canonical" parallelism (Fox 1977, Bright 1990) and was just the tip of the iceberg in a whole sea of ritual and everyday poetic practices (H. Cruz 2014). Figure 9 shows Hilaria recording the same ceremony three years later.

FIGURE 9. Hilaria (arrow) recording oratory in the ceremonial changing of the authorities, San Juan Quiahije, New Years eve, 2007-8 (Photo by G. B. Stevens)

[3] We nevertheless continued an off-and-on relationship with Alfonso Merino: he strongly supported our colleague Eric Campbell's dictionary and grammar work on Zenzontepec Chatino; but opposed our training of Eastern Chatino young people who teach literacy to adults in our 'normalization' workshops (see Sec. 6), accusing them to their boss of not using the orthography established by the schools and of recognizing 'micro-regional' varieties within the northern half of Eastern Chatino (see footnote 2).

To understand the sometimes esoteric language of the speeches, Hilaria collaborated with individual speakers so that she could present written transcriptions of these orations with Spanish translations. Hilaria also analyzed the rhetorical forms; and I was excited to see that her work provided a framework for us in analyzing other speech, even conversation, which is infused with elements of the same formal rhetoric. Moreover her recordings as well as her transcriptions were received with widespread interest in San Juan Quiahije and opened up an important ongoing basis for collaboration. And transcribing and translating this material became one focus of writing activity by our usually much younger trainees (Figure 10). Again, we felt there was a fit between our scholarly focus as linguists and our language preservation efforts.

We received funding in 2007 from the Endangered Language Documentation Programme just as we were adding four non-Chatino graduate students to our research group[4] and extending our work to the various other Chatino languages and varieties. Their collaborations developed in many of the same ways that ours did—by visits and close contact with the authorities; by teaching writing; by recording with people who were interested; and—with many variations—by training community linguists: usually teenagers, but sometimes people as old as their 70s.

In the course of this expansion, we also found ourselves getting an increasingly rich comparative-historical perspective on Chatino phonology, morphology, and lexicon (Campbell & Cruz 2009, Campbell 2013, Campbell & Woodbury 2010). And as we will describe in Sec. 6, this was another aspect of our scholarly work that ended up feeding into our preservationist efforts, this time in collaboration with the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI), who promoted workshops to "normalize" writing within small language groups like Chatino. Namely, it was possible to "normalize" the writing system on the basis of our reconstructions of proto-Chatino segments and tones.

FIGURE 10. Araceli Cruz Cruz and Alma Cruz Zurita doing text transcription, Cieneguilla, June, 2008 (Photo by Emiliana)

[4] Stéphanie Villard began working in 2006 in San Marcos Zacatepec; Justin McIntosh in 2007 in Santa Lucía Teotepec; Ryan Sullivant in 2008 in Tataltepec de Valdés; and Eric Campbell, who began work on Zenzontepec Chatino in 2007 under the auspices of Terry Kaufman's Project for the Documentation of the Languages in Latin America in 2006, began working with us in 2007. In addition, we were joined by two senior scholars, the late Thom Smith Stark in 2005, and Jeff Rasch in 2007.

5. COLLABORATION IN YOUR HOME TERRITORY.

EMILIANA: As I said, my new strategy was to work directly with local authorities and young people. I decided to begin with my home village and then move on to other villages. At my home in Cieneguilla, things went very smoothly when we first started working there. I worked with the permission of the local elected authorities beginning in 2004. Each time I visited my village (or any other village) I would go to the public office where the authorities presided, and asked permission to work in the community. I would ask the authorities to make an announcement over the village loudspeaker that we would be giving Chatino classes. The workshops were open to the public. The people who came were children from as young as 5 years old, to young people 15 years old or even older.[5] Sometimes their parents got involved too. In Cieneguilla and most other places I have worked, these children were native Chatino speakers and my emphasis was on literacy. I also would teach young people who teach literacy to adults as part of a federal program (to be discussed later), since they are the ones who work closely with parents and grandparents. The authorities and the community welcomed the project. Although I had not lived in the community since I was a child and wasn't exactly an "insider", I also was not treated like an "outsider", and my family and other people were all happy to be recorded. Every summer I taught young people and participated in meetings to talk about the importance of language documentation. Hilaria, Tony, and soon more graduate students joined me.

But even working in your home community can also bring about some issues, and things are not always easy. In 2007 I got caught in the middle of a local conflict and had to participate. My family is from the village of San Juan Quiahije. But in the late 60s my father founded a new village nearby, Cieneguilla. Some people criticized him for this, saying he created a division. San Juan remains the main village, but Cieneguilla (where I was born) started to want its economic and political independence from San Juan. Before I was caught in the conflict I had worked in both villages, and the authorities from both villages had been supportive of my project. It was summer, and I was there doing fieldwork. As part of a protest against the authorities of San Juan Quiahije, the people of Cieneguilla decided to block a main road that connects Oaxaca City to the coast, shown in Figure 11.

The authorities asked me to translate their petition into English and to video-record the rally. I did, even though I wanted to stay out of it. I was afraid that by going to the rally and helping the people of Cieneguilla, there would be negative consequences, especially for my relationship with San Juan.

But in the end, San Juan did not care about my participation in the rally. They regarded my participation as normal for a researcher who likes to record any event possible.

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[5] A day in the life of a child in San Juan Quiahije is divided between leisure, school, household chores, and communal duties, but within that basic framework, children come and go as they please. Their participation in the workshops was voluntary, enthusiastic, and not instigated by their parents.

FIGURE 11: Highway blockade by citizens of Cieneguilla, Cerro El Vidrio, Juquila, June, 2007. The sign calls on San Juan Quiahije to share municipal operating funds with Cieneguilla, saying: "CIENEGUILLA, QUIAHIJE DEMANDS!! AN IMMEDIATE SOLUTION REGARDING (LEGAL) SECTIONS 28 AND 33. 547 DAYS OF STRUGGLE WITHOUT RECEIVING A PENNY" (Photo by Emiliana)

Over time, we have found that the governments of San Juan and of Cieneguilla have sometimes been interested in language revitalization, and at other times not interested. For example, from 2010-2013, the president of San Juan was a teacher who attended some of the workshops Tony and I held; he supported our work during his presidency. The current president, whose term is 2014-2017, is also a teacher, but he has not shown interest in the promotion of Chatino. A similar thing happened in Cieneguilla. The first administration we encountered, which lasted ten years, was supportive of our work, while the current one is not. In fact, they usually want things in Spanish, and even in English. The first thing they did on taking office was to remove a sign in Chatino that had been raised by the previous administration at the entrance to the village. They replaced it with a Spanish one. In a meeting in Cieneguilla to discuss the issue, some residents requested that the Chatino sign be restored, but the new administration prevailed. It is difficult to explain the roots of such complexities of working on language revitalization in these communities – historical legacies, local politics, and linguistic and cultural misconceptions are probably all at play.

Nevertheless, the authorities in San Juan and Cieneguilla have always allowed me to work there. And they like it that our language revitalization project concentrates on training

young people to study their own language. And this has also been our experience in nearly all of the other Chatino communities in which we have worked.

6. SOME LATER COLLABORATIONS.

TONY: Now, at the time of this writing, I feel things have come a long way. Our language promotion efforts are still centered on community-level teaching, as Emiliana just described. But it has led into some key new institutional relationships which have extended its reach and impact. In the summers of 2012 and 2013, with the support of the Mexican federal government's National Institute for Indigenous Languages (known by its Spanish initials, INALI), and the support of the privately-funded San Pablo Academic and Cultural Center in Oaxaca City, Emiliana organized a *Workshop on Tone for speaker-linguists of Otomanguean languages,* with 50 students, and with faculty from Mexico and the US (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12. Workshop on Tone for speaker-linguists of Otomanguean languages, Oaxaca City, June, 2012 (Photo by Gibrán Morales)

At the 2012 workshop, there were about ten Chatinos. They were mainly young workers for the Chatino area office of the National Institute for Adult Education (known by its Spanish initials, INEA), which pays young people to teach literacy and other skills to older adults. INEA wanted the young workers to be able to read and write different Chatino varieties, since their adult clients are often monolingual in Chatino.

In the Workshop they learned to work as linguists to hear, analyze, and write different Chatino varieties, including the tonal systems.

We then took the Chatino group with us while we made village visits. They participated in fieldwork with us (Figure 13), and learned to approach their own as well as other Chatino varieties.

FIGURE 13. Emiliana and trainees Jesús Matus Matus, Gema Galgani Cruz Cruz, María Cortés Justo, Gladys Cruz Canseco, and Natalia Salinas Cruz doing field work on the local Chatino variety in Santa María Yolotepec, June, 2012 (Photo by Gibrán Morales)

These activities led the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (INALI), together with the adult education program and several local municipality presidents, to ask us to give workshops to normalize the practical Chatino orthography—including its treatment of tone—to allow for interoperability among the various Eastern Chatino varieties, as described in Cruz & Woodbury (2014). As already noted, this was part of a broader effort by INALI to "normalize" the writing of varieties within groups of closely related indigenous languages such as the Chatino languages. But it also presented us with a problem. Several different orthographies were already in use, and the last thing we wanted to do was to dictate to anyone how exactly they should write Chatino: e.g., in these orthographies, vowel nasalization is written either with diaeresis <¨> above the vowel or an <n> after the vowel, and we had no desire to dictate which to use, or even to promote uniformity. Instead, we chose to "normalize" in a more abstract way, by showing the segments and tones of Chatino as we had reconstructed them, showing their developments in the various Chatino varieties, then teaching students to read other dialects on the basis of knowledge of these correspondences (and the fairly trivial differences among orthographies). For tone—which had been mostly ignored in extant orthographies—the effect of this approach to normalization was profound. Since a given proto-Chatino tone might be low in one variety, rising in another, and falling in another, we simply gave each cognate set a label (a, b, c,...), to be written at the end of each word with a hyphen; and then taught students to know what these sets sounded like in their own varieties. That way, when a speaker of a different dialect la-

bels a word as "-g", you simply pronounce it with your own tonal reflex of tonal cognate set "g" and are likely to recognize the word. In all, I was thrilled to see our comparative historical work feeding right back into language preservation and a sense of Chatino unification.

The first such workshop took place in March, 2013, in the municipality of San Miguel Panixtlahuaca, which supported it together with INALI (Figure 14). These workshops were advertised widely and offered room and board for all speakers who explained their interest and who committed to complete the full week of activities.

FIGURE 14. Welcoming ceremony in San Miguel Panixtlahuaca for the first workshop on the normalization of writing in Eastern Chatino. The meeting included (l-r) an adult education representative (speaking), Emiliana, Tony, three municipal presidents, and INALI representatives, March, 2013 (Photo by Gibrán Morales)

The ceremony included speeches by three municipal presidents. I was especially happy that two of them were former teachers whom we'd worked with before and who were interested in studying Chatino. And the third president represented Juquila, the largely non-Chatino regional center that had such strained relations with Chatinos in the past. There were twenty speaker-participants in the normalization workshop, which lasted seven days. We felt a strong sense of accomplishment in having ultimately brought together teachers, local authorities, and federal agencies around the promotion of Chatino.

Emiliana: Let me return to the theme of working with teachers. Over time, we have gained the trust of some teachers. They have invited us to give workshops, and have joined us in

our own workshops. The most recent instances were in Summer, 2013 in Santos Reyes Nopala, long the center of linguistic activity by *maestros bilingües* (Figure 15). The workshop was well attended and teachers were eager to learn about Chatino and our work. Though people are becoming more aware of us, we constantly have to negotiate with different parties. We let them know that we propose to train indigenous Chatino speakers to document their own languages, and to give them the linguistic tools to determine a writing system in conjunction with teachers and other speakers. Teachers have been more open to working with us once they know about our approach.

FIGURE 15. Emiliana (at center, with hands on child's shoulders), her student-trainees, and *maestros bilingües* at the third workshop on normalization of Chatino in Santos Reyes Nopala

Together with our co-workers, we have been able to do documentary work on all three Chatino languages, and within Eastern Chatino, many of its local varieties. Speakers have been generous and hospitable to us. We continue to find people who are eager to tell us about their culture. We have been able to assemble a large linguistic corpus over the last ten years and have trained many people in different aspects of language documentation.

In retrospect, it has been our preservation work that has been the harder part: proposing practical orthographies, training speakers as language promoters, and working with community members, local authorities, teachers, and institutions. Orthography is nearly always a political question, as Tony already mentioned, because different parties may disagree on how to write the language. These parties may vary depending on the region and even locale. In 2003, we were naïve to think that we could automatically help teachers to accomplish their role as *maestros bilingües* simply by providing linguistic expertise about Chatino. Teachers continued to criticize us after 2003, but as noted, we decided to work

in Chatino communities without them, choosing instead to collaborate with individuals, local authorities, and other institutions. Eventually some teachers joined us, and through them, other teachers learned about our work. We for our part had to learn and accept that teachers were activists in their own right and they feel they have to protect their professional autonomy from governmental and other outside interference. We have tried to show them that we are not there to question their role, and that we want to support their bilingual education work.

As we said in the introduction, there are many 'activisms'. In addition to the teachers and schools, there are governmental entities, political parties, and religious institutions who are responsible for overseeing the well-being of their communities and do (or purport to do) what they consider to be beneficial for the people. There are even individuals who are not affiliated with any formal institution but are actively engaged in their communities or in the region by collaborating with the people to improve the quality of their lives. In my case I started ten years ago to teach young people to document and to write their native Chatino languages, which identifies me as a person who is concerned about the status of the Chatino languages, but many people associate me with United States, even though I am from Quiahije and I often get funding for my projects from the National Institute of Indigenous languages (INALI). Over the years I have learned to work with various individuals and institutions that are interested in learning about Chatino and at the same time, I have tried to maintain neutrality toward local issues, but often this is difficult because I have many relatives in my hometown. I now think it will take a long time before the education system incorporates indigenous languages in their academic curriculum. Still, it's heartening that there are now more and more young people promoting Chatino in their communities.

7. CONCLUSION. We end—now speaking together, with one voice—with some general thoughts on our situation, which has had several special features which we wish to highlight as themes.

The first is the relationship between graduate training and language documentation. While it is common for linguist-graduate students to do field work, in this case the context was our Texas program for training indigenous Latin American students to document their own languages; and it quickly developed into a larger collaboration among students and faculty where students (Emiliana and Hilaria) had a major leadership role.

A second feature has been our approach, which we can characterize as combining scholarship with social and cultural engagement. Our scholarship has been *documentary-descriptive* in the sense that we have sought to record language and language use in its sociocultural setting; and develop analyses of lexico-grammatical systems at least sufficient for adequately transcribing, translating, and annotating what we have recorded. And it has been *comparative* in that we were interested in working with all of the Chatino languages in our description- and corpus-building, and to use comparative linguistics as a framework for more insightful description.

These scholarly approaches have enabled, and been enabled by, our social and cultural engagement or *activism*. For us the strength of this interdependence has been striking, and it may contribute to our sense that 'language activism' has character all its own, different from other kinds of politically-engaged scholarship (Hale 2006, Low & Merry 2010).

Our goal has been to promote interest, awareness, and respect for the Chatino languages through, and alongside, language documentation; to support Chatino literacy in communities and in the schools on the basis of our descriptive and comparative analyses; and to preserve and offer access to spoken Chatino, especially verbal art. We believe that in doing so, we contribute to the cultural, social, and political well-being of Chatino communities and to a sense of common Chatino unity, both of which had been themes in the work of Tomás Cruz Lorenzo, Emiliana's father. As linguists this belief comes to us rather easily. But we came to appreciate that it is highly debated both within and beyond Chatino communities; and even among those who concede an important role for language maintenance, there is not always a consensus about how to proceed with it.

A third feature concerns local visions and aspirations for Chatino, part of what is sometimes termed 'language ideology' (Woolard & Schieffiin 1994). We noted that a high value is placed on indigenous language literacy in the Chatino region and throughout Oaxaca more generally. And we noted very high levels of appreciation and interest in Chatino verbal art, especially oratory and prayers involving classic Meso-American parallelism. These interests played to our strengths *as* documentary linguists and suggested ways for us to be useful. In retrospect, the fit was a good one.

A fourth feature has been one of method or modality. Much of the time, we found ourselves teaching, whether in our Chatino-group seminars in Texas, in local workshops, classes, or training sessions. We found that many of our linguistic as well as 'political' insights arose during teaching, no matter how repetitive it may have been.

A final feature has been the plasticity of collaborative roles that we have experienced. And we feel we directly owe this plasticity to a setting—relatively little discussed in the literature—where Ph.D. training of native speaker linguists is front-and-center. Tony has in some contexts been the teacher but in other contexts the pupil. Meanwhile Emiliana has been both a community member and a linguist. And as a community member, moreover, she has found herself occupying a range of positions along a continuum from "insider" to "outsider": as a Chatino speaker and resident since childhood on the one hand, but on the other hand as a foreign-affiliated researcher no longer living locally full-time.

A reviewer asked us, in connection with our roles, who we are responsible to in this language work. The honest answer, we think, is largely to ourselves; but within two broad contexts. In an academic context—as a student in Emiliana's case, as professors in both our cases now, and as grantees—we found ourselves strongly supported and approved of for combining scholarship with preservation work but not strongly monitored in the latter. And in the second context, that of Chatino communities, we likewise largely guided our own activities and made our own choices and alliances. This owes in part to our "insider/outsider" status; but it may be another sense in which our 'activism' differs from activist scholarship in anthropology, which may align and collaborate with specific social movements and factions (see again Hale 2006) rather than making its own 'movement'. Nevertheless, we felt responsible most of all to our students, our collaborators, and speakers who shared our interest and enthusiam for language promotion and preservation. We are grateful for the freedom and autonomy we have been accorded in both these context. And we hope we have shown the advantages (and perhaps some disadvantages) to this role plasticity in our collaboration, our scholarship, and our work to promote Chatino.

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