

## Interpreting language use in Ozelonacxtla, Puebla, Mexico

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Despite sharing many cultural, historical, and socioeconomic characteristics, Totonac communities have markedly distinct language use patterns and practices. Some communities have adopted the mainstream hegemonic discourse in Mexico that denigrates indigeneity and subsequently abandoned Totonac (Lam 2009). In other communities, such as Ozelonacxtla, an alternate discourse dominates that values multilingualism, and Totonac is widely spoken by the vast majority of the community. This variation across Totonac communities facing the same broad pressures to shift to Spanish demonstrates that current sociodemographic models of language shift lack significant predictive power. By examining not only sociodemographic factors, but also language ideology, this study seeks to determine whether and how language use in Ozelonacxtla is qualitatively different in nature from other Totonac communities. Interpreting language use in Ozelonacxtla is undertaken in the methodology of qualitative linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese 2015). Results show that Ozelonacxtla Totonac is currently used in almost all community and home domains; however some threats to continued sustainability are recognized. Three main language ideologies in Ozelonacxtla are identified: (i) language is an index of identity, (ii) language is important/useful, and (iii) Totonac should not be lost. These main discourses are used by speakers to explain, justify, and contest language use patterns and practices, and significant differences in ideology are found across Totonac communities with contrasting language use. This demonstrates the importance of examining ideology in order to accurately interpret language use and best position potential efforts to support language sustainability, documentation, and revitalization.

**1. Introduction**<sup>1</sup> The maintenance of minority and indigenous languages is of concern for many communities today that wish to preserve their languages. Their diverse traditional knowledge and cultures are often under threat from dominant, colonial societies (Hale 1992; Krauss 1992; Harrison 2007). Although there have been many attempts to reverse language shift, language maintenance and revitalization efforts are often unsuccessful (e.g., Carnie 1996; Lastra 2001; Nevins 2004; Cavanaugh 2006). These failures are frequently the result of conflicting or unclear assumptions about central concepts surrounding language use and sustainability. In particular, Whaley (2011) points out that actors often have conflicting understandings of the concepts

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“the language,” “the community,” and may disagree about identifying what kind of linguistic material should be documented, for what and whose purpose, and who should have control over what aspects of the project. These findings have implications for models of language shift, which currently tend to emphasize sociodemographic factors such as number and concentration of speakers, geography, institutional support, political context, etc. (e.g. Fishman 1991; Edwards 1992; Sasse 1992; Grenoble & Whaley 1998; Winford 2003; Appel & Muysken 2005; Edwards 2006). However, understanding the sociodemographic conditions is not enough, as it has proven in fact difficult to affect language shift or improve the outcomes of language revitalization and documentation efforts without having previously identified and examined the underlying assumptions and ideologies of stakeholders (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998). Along with the sociodemographic piece of the puzzle, it is also key to recognize that language sustainability is embedded in daily language use by speakers who are socially positioned. Identifying stakeholders, including experts, and consulting with them before initiating language revitalization or documentation projects also serves the practical purpose of targeting and maximizing the impact of the limited resources available for such projects.

The community under study is Ozelonacaxtla, a small rural village of approximately 1,350 people located in the highlands of the Sierra Norte of Puebla, Mexico, where the indigenous languages known as Totonac are spoken (INEGI 2010). Totonac languages belong to the Totonac-Tepehua language family spoken in east-central Mexico, with approximately 250,000 total speakers of Totonac languages (INEGI 2010). A distinct variety of Totonac is spoken in almost every community in this region, however the relationship between these varieties has not been well studied and this has resulted in the practice of researchers referring to each variety by the community name. Ozelonacaxtla Totonac<sup>2</sup> is the particular variety studied in this paper. Totonac languages can be broken into two main branches, Misantla and Central, with Central being further broken down into Northern, Lowland, and Sierra branches (Brown et al. 2011:334).<sup>3</sup> Ozelonacaxtla Totonac belongs to the Sierra branch, which has several varieties whose relationships are not well documented. As a result, it is unclear how many distinct languages exist within each branch of Totonac, including the Sierra branch, although speakers of Ozelonacaxtla Totonac understand Totonac varieties spoken in neighboring communities.

Nahuatl and Otomí are two other indigenous languages spoken in the Sierra Norte. Some groups of Nahuatl speakers migrated into the Sierra Norte, under pressure from the Aztec expansion that preceded the colonial period (Govers 2006). The municipality of Cuetzalan, a short distance to the southeast of Ozelonacaxtla, is a predominantly Nahuatl area. Nahuatl is historically a dominant and prestigious in-

<sup>2</sup>Although the term *Totonac* is used by linguists to describe the larger language family to which Ozelonacaxtla Totonac belongs, the community itself refers to their Totonac variety simply as *Totonac*. In this paper, references to Totonac refer to the specific Ozelonacaxtla Totonac variety, not the language family as a whole, following the practice of the community.

<sup>3</sup>The *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* [National Institute of Indigenous Languages] (INALI) of Mexico recognizes seven Totonac languages. However, scholars doing empirical work on Totonac subgroupings are unsure of the exact number of distinct, mutually unintelligible languages and estimates range from three to twenty (Brown et al. 2011).

indigenous language in Mexico, and most community names throughout the Sierra are Nahuatl in origin, including Ozelonacaxtla. However, currently the Nahuatl and Totonac have formed alliances that support local economic and cultural activities. Otomí is also spoken in the Sierra to a lesser extent than Nahuatl, though the greatest concentration of Otomí speakers is to the north of the Sierra (Lastra 2001). Exact numbers of speakers are unknown, partly due to the fact that the Mexican census does not distinguish between indigenous languages and only asks whether an indigenous language is spoken. This also makes multilingualism difficult to assess, however based on field observations, there is some intermarriage and multilingualism. Within Ozelonacaxtla, there are only a few individuals who are multilingual in Nahuatl or Otomí, and these individuals have generally migrated from nearby Nahuatl or Otomí communities.

In addition to the diversity of language varieties, linguistic practices and usage are also varied across Totonac communities (INALI 2008; Beck & Lam 2008; McGraw 2009). Some communities, like Ozelonacaxtla, appear to be maintaining their Totonac language, while others, for example Chicontla and Patla to the north, have almost entirely abandoned theirs in favor of Spanish, a result of having adopted mainstream hegemonic language ideologies that denigrate indigeneity (Beck & Lam 2008; Lam 2009; 2012; McGraw 2009). This paper shows that although sociodemographic factors are an important part of the model of language shift, they do not adequately explain differences in language use across Totonac communities that have many sociodemographic factors in common, nor can they clarify how stakeholders interpret language use in their communities. By focusing on the role of individual speakers themselves in co-constructing and interpreting language use, we can better understand language sustainability and shift and best position efforts to support threatened languages.

This paper interprets language use in Ozelonacaxtla and relates it to what is known about other Totonac communities, framed by the following questions:

- When and in what contexts are Totonac and Spanish used?
- What are the ideologies of speakers towards Totonac and Spanish? How do speakers themselves understand and explain their own and others' language use?
- Is Ozelonacaxtla qualitatively different from other Totonac communities? How can differences across communities be accounted for?

**2. Theoretical context** There are many sociodemographic factors that do not favor the continued maintenance of Mexico's indigenous languages. For example, most schooling, even "bilingual" schooling, is conducted in Spanish, and social and economic marginalization of indigenous people is widespread (Lastra 2001; Terborg et al. 2007; Beck & Lam 2008; McGraw 2010). Despite these socio-political and economic factors working against the sustainability of Mexico's indigenous languages,

it is not the case that they are all uniformly undergoing language shift to Spanish, and shift is difficult to predict without making a case study of a given community (Cifuentes & Moctezuma 2006). Some indigenous communities in Mexico and Guatemala have succumbed to Spanish and largely abandoned their languages. For example, Nahuatl speakers in Tlaxcala who hold ideologies of language purity disfavor the relexified form of Nahuatl currently spoken (Hill & Hill 1986). Otomí speakers in the states of Mexico and Tlaxcala (Lastra 2001) and Totonac speakers in Patla and Chicontla, Puebla have abandoned their languages after adopting mainstream hegemonic ideologies that denigrate indigeneity (Beck & Lam 2008; Lam 2009; 2012). In contrast, other communities have resisted or adapted to Spanish encroachment and have been maintaining their languages to varying degrees. For example, the Nahuatl of the Balsas region have strong “ethnolinguistic unity” demonstrated in the success of local resistance to a state-proposed dam, a strong local tourism economy, and local non-institutional forms of Nahuatl multimedia, all conditions that support the sustainability and revitalization of Nahuatl (Flores Farfán 2011:196). The Otomí of the Sierra of Puebla have established a robust paper-making economy and the accompanying sociolinguistic networks support the sustainability of Otomí (Lastra 2001). Finally, local Mayan-speaking linguists in Guatemala have worked to standardize and promote Mayan, forming an important force behind a recent cultural and linguistic revival (England 1998; 2003). The examples here show the wide range of community responses to the pressure to shift to Spanish, even across communities in the same language families. It is in fact difficult to know the extent of language shift across Mexico because of the lack of detailed ethnographic studies and the political manipulation of census data (Flores Farfán 2011).

The variation in language use across Mexican and nearby Guatemalan communities facing the same broad pressures to shift to Spanish also demonstrates that current models of language shift lack significant predictive power. The sociodemographic factors traditionally cited as main contributors (Edwards 1992; Sasse 1992; Grenoble & Whaley 1998; Fishman 2001; Winford 2003; Appel & Muysken 2005; Edwards 2006) do not adequately account for these unique community responses to the pressure to shift, a result of their distinct sets of beliefs and practices surrounding language use and social interaction (Kroskrity & Field 2009:3–4). Although it is true that sociodemographic pressures often result in the learning of the majority language, this does not necessarily entail the loss of the minority language, as stable bilingualism is a possible outcome (Fishman 1991; Dorian 1998). In order to explain the variation in language use across Totonac communities that share the pressure to shift to Spanish, it is therefore essential to consult with speakers themselves and understand how their ideologies shape their daily language use. In examining language ideologies, we are looking at speakers’ representations of the interface between their forms of speech and social worlds (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994; Woolard 1998:3). Language ideologies can exist either as explicitly articulated beliefs about language(s) or as implicit practices of language use (Kroskrity 2005:496). Ideologies are more than attitudes, since for example a desire to avoid using Totonac, or the converse to use more Totonac in new contexts, are likely rooted in beliefs about what speaking Totonac means. In

appealing to ideologies, linguistic ethnographers interpret the underlying *why* and *how* of speakers' discourses and practices that contribute to the sustainability of the language.

In their previous research on the Totonac communities of Chicontla and Patla, Beck & Lam (2008) and Lam (2009; 2010; 2012) explain language shift as the result of a specific combination of factors that includes both increased opportunities to use Spanish in daily life and, more importantly, the desire of speakers themselves to shift entirely to Spanish. Beck & Lam (2008) make the assertion that speakers of Totonac in the Upper Necaxa Valley are consciously choosing to “kill off” their language. Lam (2012:540) explains that speakers have adopted mainstream hegemonic ideologies of the Totonac language and indigenous identity that work in combination with increased Spanish education and economic integration with the majority society to result in the rapid loss of Totonac observed in Chicontla and Patla. Sociodemographic pressures together with speakers' interpretations of and interactions with their circumstances, their ideologies, result in not only the adoption of Spanish, but also the purposeful abandonment of Totonac (Beck & Lam 2008; Lam 2009; 2012).

There is a large body of research, mostly made up of case studies, that recognizes the importance of ideology in explaining language shift. For example, Perley (2011:121–148), following Denison (1977), describes how Maliseet speakers from the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick, Canada are committing “language suicide”. Speakers consciously make decisions to not participate in revitalization efforts and thereby “voluntary disembody” the language from potential speakers and contribute to its eventual death by “assisted suicide” (Perley 2011:139). Meek (2007) shows how Kaska language shift in Watson Lake, Yukon Territory, Canada is rooted in an ideological shift in which elders have lost some of their broader domains of authority (e.g. economic authority) and are now recognized as “experts” in Kaska culture and traditions, including language. The result has been the association of Kaska language competency, especially speaking, with age and social status. Further contributing to the perceived relationship is the practice of respect towards elders. Authority is exercised by Kaska elders when they speak Kaska with others; however they also exercise their authority by discouraging others from using Kaska with them or with one another. Children and youth are socialized to listen to elders, rather than to speak with them, a practice that further limits opportunities for learners to use the Kaska language in an ideal environment (Meek 2007:33–34). Language shift for both Maliseet and Kaska is thus the result of the language ideologies and practices of speakers themselves.

Like the previous research discussed here, the present study of Ozelonacaxtla acknowledges the crucial role of language ideology and ethnographic methods in interpreting language use. Although there are many linguistic ethnographies that draw attention to the role of ideology and the speakers themselves, these findings have not been consistently applied to either developing theory or directly to documentation and revitalization efforts. Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1998:63) brought attention to the crucial need for “prior ideological clarification” in order to best position lan-

guage revitalization efforts; however many efforts still fail because they ignore this very point and do not adequately address how speakers themselves understand their own language use (see for example Nevins 2004 on White Mountain Apache in Arizona and Cavanaugh 2006 on Bergamasco in Bergamo, Italy). It is hoped that this study will not only provide an additional case study emphasizing the role of ideology in language shift, sustainability, and revitalization, but will also make the case for applying these findings to models of language shift and sustainability.

Finally, the present study of Ozelonacaxtla, a community that has not undergone significant language shift to Spanish, provides important knowledge about Totonac language sustainability that can be directly applied to language documentation and revitalization efforts in Ozelonacaxtla and other Totonac communities, and indirectly applied in other minority ethnolinguistic communities in Mexico and America, improving the likelihood of success of these efforts. Importantly, examining communities with more sustainable language use or those that are not as far along in the process of language shift provides a counter to the “doom and gloom” discourse surrounding the urgent need to “save” “dying,” “priceless” languages. This metaphorical rhetoric that disembodies and objectifies “endangered” languages has dominated much recent academic writing in the field of language maintenance, shift, and revitalization (Hill 2002; Meek 2011; Perley 2011). Although it is difficult to entirely avoid this imagery when discussing language shift, it is important to be aware that this kind of talk about languages is not neutral, and we should be mindful of how it may be interpreted locally and ultimately affect language documentation and revitalization efforts.

**3. Methodology and analysis** The data presented were collected during two ethnographic field visits to Ozelonacaxtla made by the researcher in 2008 and 2010 for a total of three months of field work. Using a qualitative approach (Merriam 2009; Copland & Creese 2015), the researcher gathered data of different types in order to provide both a broad understanding of the community and region in general and a more targeted examination of language use and language ideologies. Participant observation of many different community events and social domains allows for an interpretation of language use in the community. Contexts that are observed include private homes, streets, plazas, the presidential office, the community library, the internet café, stores, schools, churches, surrounding *ranchos*,<sup>4</sup> and other villages. Field notes were taken every day in order to record how language was used in each situation observed. Details recorded include the people present and their relationship to one another, the purpose of the interaction, what languages were used by whom, the outcome of the interaction, and any possible effects the researcher may have had on the interaction.

In order to examine speakers’ language ideologies, qualitative interviews were conducted with 26 individuals and five couples ranging in age from 15–74 years. Participants make up a convenience sample that was chosen based on the social network

<sup>4</sup>Collections of small farms (hamlets) around a larger community.

of a personal contact from the community who was also the researcher's host (following the model of Hill & Hill 1986). The main criteria for selecting participants was that they be able to communicate in Spanish in order to participate in the interview, as the researcher is not fluent in Totonac. Participants' Spanish ability was not formally assessed, however there is a wide range of bilingualism evidenced in the interviews that shows a correlation to the participants' ages and level of education: older, less educated speakers speak noticeably less Spanish than younger, more educated speakers. According to the 2010 national census, 420 people (31.7%) of the population are monolingual Totonac speakers, though this is based on self-reporting which is not consistently reliable (INEGI 2010). No interviews with monolingual Totonac speakers were undertaken in this study, a potentially significant limitation as they are an important group of community members whose ideologies will also affect future language use. However, this project focuses on language ideologies and practices of bilingual speakers as they have the immediate ability to choose to use either language, unlike monolingual speakers whose language practices are restricted to Totonac. The interviews were conducted in the homes of participants using a small recording device placed on a table. Spanish was used to conduct the interviews because the researcher does not speak Totonac, as mentioned above, and because Spanish is the expected language to use with outsiders to the community. Interviews were semi-structured rather than questionnaire-style, in order to allow participants to more freely respond and thereby provide richer, more representative and inductive data. All participants were asked the same general questions, but the researcher allowed them to elaborate or explore any of the topics to the extent they wished, ask their own questions, and influence the direction of the interview. Key interview questions that target ideologies include:<sup>5</sup>

- How did you decide to speak Totonac or Spanish with your children?
- Should children learn to speak Spanish/Totonac? Why or why not?
- Who should teach Spanish/Totonac?
- Do you think classes should be taught in Spanish or in Totonac? Why?
- Do you like to speak Spanish/Totonac? Why or why not?
- Do you like speaking two languages? Why or why not?
- Do you think Spanish/Totonac is a good language? Why or why not?
- Do you think Spanish/Totonac is important? Why or why not?
- Do you think Totonac is in danger of being lost? Why or why not?

After data collection, interviews were transcribed and tagged by the researcher. Participants are identified in transcriptions by their initials (see Table 1 §4.3). NVivo qualitative data analysis software (QSR 2014) was then used to assist the researcher

<sup>5</sup>See Appendix for full interview script.

in identifying thematic patterns across interviews and field notes. Exchanges were also scrutinized carefully using a discourse analysis approach in order to identify competing, contested, and co-constructed ideologies (Gal 1998; Blommaert 2005; Laihonon 2008).

In addition to the qualitative observational and interview data, independently collected demographic data also was included. The demographic census data provided by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática* [National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Computer Science] (INEGI) (2010) and the detailed demographic report conducted by the local nurse in Ozelonacaxtla (Corona Hernández 2008) allow for some quantification of levels of education, bilingualism, and migration of the community. Taken together, the qualitative approach produces a detailed ethnography of language use in Ozelonacaxtla. The patterns and practices of language use apparent in the observational and demographic data of the community are presented first to give the broader context of the interview data that hone-in on discourses. Interview data are organized into three broad categories constituting main ideologies that are interpreted in multiple ways by participants: (i) language indexes identity, (ii) language is useful, and (iii) Totonac should not be lost. Together the context of language use and the discourses presented in the next two sections tell the story of language use in Ozelonacaxtla.

## 4. Background

**4.1 National Mexican context** In general, discrimination and marginalization of indigenous people is the norm in Mexico (Lastra 2001; Terborg et al. 2007; Beck & Lam 2008). Although there has been some official recognition of indigenous rights (constitutional reforms in 2001), these reforms are difficult to bring about, and it is not clear what they should look like in practice. Change may only come about if there is someone on the ground willing to do the work. Despite the official rhetoric that would say otherwise, indigeneity is not highly valued by most people in Mexico, as is readily apparent in the mainstream media where, for example, actors in indigenous dress are verbally and physically abused on televised comedy programs.

An important national ideology is apparent in the popular and institutionalized discourse of *salir adelante*, which means ‘to progress’, a discourse identified by Messing (2007) in her study of a community in Tlaxcala, a state that borders Puebla. In fact, the federal social assistance program that pays rural families to send their children to school is called *Progreso* ‘progress’, having previously been known as *Oportunidades* ‘opportunities.’ Success in life is conceptualized in terms of moving forward, achieving one’s goals, and improving one’s own and especially one’s children’s quality of life. The mainstream interpretation of this ideology blames indigeneity for any (perceived) lack of progress and has been termed *menosprecio* ‘contempt’ by Messing (2007). An alternate local interpretation of *salir adelante*, termed *pro-indígena* ‘pro-indigenous’ by Messing, contends that indigeneity has an important place in progress and that one can adapt indigeneity to the current circumstances, as has always been



done. The discourses of *salir adelante*, *menosprecio*, and *pro-indígena* are also apparent in the data from Ozelonacaxtla and help to frame the discussion below.

**4.2 Regional context of the Sierra Norte** Ozelonacaxtla, in the municipality of Huehuetla, is located in the Sierra Norte region of Puebla, where political engagement of the Totonac is relatively high. This engagement was manifested when the Totonac of the municipality of Huehuetla, through *La Organización Independiente Totonaca* [The Independent Totonac Organization] (OIT), formed the municipal government from 1989–1998 allied with the PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática* [Party of the Democratic Revolution]) (Maldonado Goti & Terven Salinas 2008:40). During this time, the communities in the municipality of Huehuetla gained many modern amenities including electricity, running water, and paved roads. Traditional Totonac social practices were strengthened through the inclusion of the *Concejo de Ancianos* [Council of Elders] in the municipal government, lending the Totonac language a degree of prestige (Maldonado Goti & Terven Salinas 2008:40).

After the Totonac lost control of the municipal government in 1998, conditions deteriorated, especially in the community of Huehuetla itself. For example, local judges were no longer chosen at community meetings, but rather designated by the municipal government. The police presence also increased, which resulted in more insecurity for the Totonac that included violence against women perpetrated by police (Maldonado Goti & Terven Salinas 2008:41–42). These conditions led the local Council of Elders and the OIT to pressure the State Justice Tribunal to allow for the creation of an indigenous court in Huehuetla. These efforts were successful, and in 2004 the Huehuetla indigenous court opened with a locally chosen indigenous judge (Maldonado Goti & Terven Salinas 2008:42).

The indigenous court handles many types of cases including domestic disputes, land and property disputes, and the use of natural resources, particularly the harvesting of trees by the Totonac who are often fined by the state police for cutting them down (Maldonado Goti & Terven Salinas 2008:55). Importantly, the court is seen as an invaluable success in the community because it has been able to resolve disputes not only between the Totonac themselves, but also between the Totonac and *mestizos* ‘people of mixed race’, municipal authorities, and the state of Puebla (Maldonado Goti & Terven Salinas 2008:58–59). Through the indigenous court, the Totonac of the region are able to directly participate in the legal defence of their rights and interests because the judge, a respected elder from a nearby Totonac community, speaks Totonac and understands Totonac customs. The court is an important example of recent local initiatives that shows a relatively high degree of engagement of the Totonac in local affairs.

Another form of institutional support for Totonac in the region is provided by *La Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla* [The Intercultural University of the State of Puebla] located in Huehuetla. *La Universidad Intercultural* (UIEP) offers several undergraduate programs, including one in language and culture that involves basic training in linguistics and literacy in indigenous languages (UIEP 2015). As UIEP opened in 2006, it is unclear what effect it will have on the generation of young

people who have recently graduated and currently attend, including a small number of youth from Ozelonacaxtla. However, the opportunity for young people to pursue post-secondary studies without having to move away from their communities is important, as education is often cited as a reason for leaving the community. The UIEP is also a meeting place where local Totonac young people can build and maintain relationships among themselves, as well as with Nahuatl and Otomí students from across the Sierra Norte region.

The radio station XECTZ located in nearby Cuetzalan, broadcasting in Totonac, Nahuatl, and Spanish, provides another form of support for Totonac. It operates under the program *Ecos Indígenas* [Indigenous Echos], a group of radio stations dedicated to preserving cultural diversity that are funded by the *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* [National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples] (CDI 2014). The XECTZ radio station operates 13 hours daily and broadcasts mostly local music (for example Huapango), talk shows, and news. Although a large portion of the content is for entertainment, the radio station also provides a forum for discussion of local issues in a medium that reaches 20 Totonac municipalities and 44 Nahuatl municipalities in the Sierra Norte region. Having an officially funded and recognized radio station lends some level of prestige to the languages used. The radio station may contribute to the atmosphere of cultural unity and general Totonac activism observed throughout the region surrounding Cuetzalan and Huehuetla.

Finally, the recent development and growth of a thriving eco-cultural tourism industry in the Sierra Norte region has provided a new source of income for some of the Totonac that is independent of the powerful *mestizo*-controlled commercial networks of the region. Importantly, this industry is embedded and invested in the Totonac culture of the region as activities are marketed to tourists as authentic ethnolinguistic experiences, creating a pragmatic, economic motivation to use Totonac. If Totonac is no longer spoken, and instead only Spanish or even English, this ethnolinguistic authenticity would be threatened. The situation thus promotes valorization of multilingualism in order to communicate with tourists (usually in Spanish) while also providing an authentic linguistic experience. The tourism industry also provides motivation and opportunities to maintain other traditions and forms of material culture, such as dress and hairstyles. As seen in the cases of Otomí and Nahuatl reviewed earlier in this article, local economic sustainability, sometimes in the form of a tourist industry, often accompanies language sustainability.

This regional context is important for explaining the language sustainability observed in Ozelonacaxtla. In the Sierra Norte region, the atmosphere of political and cultural engagement and awareness seems to support the continued use and vitality of Totonac throughout the region, including in Ozelonacaxtla. The current context supports Totonac by conferring a degree of prestige on the language and creating daily opportunities in new, modern domains to use the language outside of intimate interactions. This in turn likely has a positive effect on the way speakers view their language, providing further support for the sustainable use of Totonac. Although not everything is rosy, there is a strong local *pro-indígena* interpretation of *salir adelante*,

adapting Totonac life to circumstances, in contrast to the *menosprecio* ideology and abandonment of traditional languages that has been seen in other Mexican communities (Messing 2007; Lam 2009; 2012). The next section will focus in more detail on the local context of the community of Ozelonacaxtla itself.

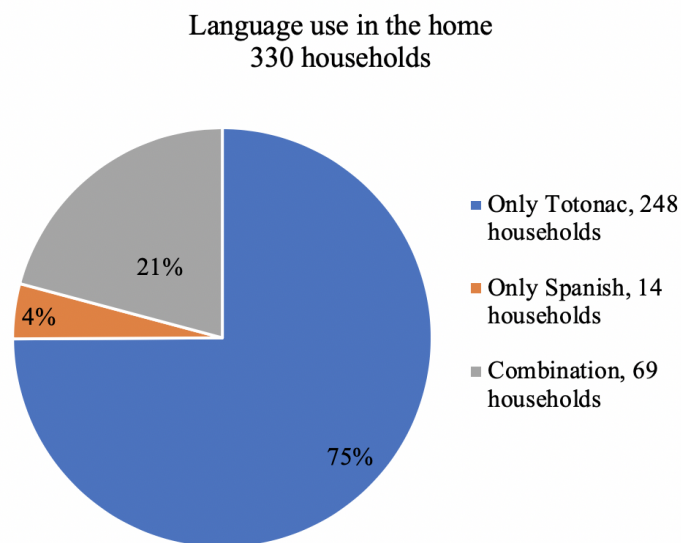
**4.3 Local context in Ozelonacaxtla** The description of language use in Ozelonacaxtla is based on participant observation recorded in field notes (McGraw 2010). Totonac is maintained in both private and public life in Ozelonacaxtla; most local business, public interactions in the street, plaza, stores, the Internet café, and community events, and announcements made over the community loud speakers are in Totonac. Children use Totonac while playing and interacting at home, in the street, and during recess at school. Ozelonacaxtla is a rural community with a subsistence-based economy, along with some agriculture and construction. There are very few *mestizos* living in Ozelonacaxtla, though in neighboring municipal seats such as Caxhuacan and Ixtepec there are many. This has limited the pressure to use Spanish in the local public sphere in the town. However, the *mestizos* hold regional control of commercial networks, and farmers from Ozelonacaxtla use Spanish when interacting with them. The OIT in Huehuetla operates as a regional Totonac farming collective that bypasses the *mestizo* network to get a better price for farmers' coffee, pepper, and vanilla.

Totonac is used in the local presidential office and for public village meetings. Ozelonacaxtla is an auxiliary branch of the municipality of Huehuetla, geographically isolated and somewhat politically independent from the municipal seat. As such, it is still governed by a locally elected President who is from Ozelonacaxtla, unlike most communities in the area that are governed by Spanish-speaking *mestizos*. Meetings are held in Totonac, and the President reports to the municipal seat of Huehuetla using Spanish. The status of Ozelonacaxtla as an auxiliary branch has allowed the community to continue using Totonac in the local political domain, unlike at the municipal, state, and national levels, which generally use Spanish. The exception to the use of Spanish in municipal government was during the period from 1989–1998 when the OIT alliance used both Totonac and Spanish.

Education is entirely in Spanish, with the exception of the preschool, and teachers generally discourage the use of Totonac. However, young people continue to use Totonac among themselves even while at school, as long as the teachers will tolerate it or when they can't hear it. During the yearly community festival, both Spanish and Totonac can be heard. Many Spanish speakers from outside Ozelonacaxtla come for the festival, and Totonac is spoken and seen written on signs during the festival. Church services, including Catholic mass and Jehovah's Witness services, are usually conducted in Spanish by priests or pastors who are not generally local to the community. The doctor and nurses are also from outside Ozelonacaxtla and so do not speak Totonac. A local woman is employed as a translator in the health clinic to enable communication with community members who are not proficient in Spanish. This summary describes how Totonac is used in private and most public contexts in Ozelonacaxtla while Spanish, on the other hand, has a prestigious institutional role

in church, schools, the health clinic, commerce, and when people travel or visit from outside the Sierra Norte region.

Some important domains of language use are discussed here in more detail. In the private home domain, Totonac is by far the dominant language in the vast majority of households. Figure 1, based on self-reported language use to the community nurse, shows that the exclusive language in 75% of households is Totonac, while it is used in conjunction with Spanish in an additional 21% of households, yielding 96% total or partial household use of Totonac in the home domain (Corona Hernández 2008; McGraw 2009). Most households that use Spanish do not do so to the exclusion of Totonac, as just 4%, or 14, of all 330 households in Ozelonacaxtla report using only Spanish at home. This would indicate that Totonac is currently the first language of almost all children in Ozelonacaxtla. Overall, Ozelonacaxtla Totonac enjoys relatively high vitality: between 6a “vigorous” and 6b “vulnerable” on Lewis and Simons’ Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) of Fishman’s original GIDS scale (Fishman 1991; Lewis and Simons 2010:110). The difference between these two levels is that in the vulnerable category, a significant number of parents have chosen to use the dominant language with their children. Ozelonacaxtla falls between these two categories. There are a few parents who have chosen to transmit only Spanish to their children at home; however they continue to encourage their children to learn Totonac, knowing they will learn it from the majority of Totonac dominant children in the community. Although there are few who have shifted to Spanish at home, this practice constitutes a potential threat because it may expand across more families, which will eventually mean fewer Totonac-speaking children in the community who can socialize their peers in the language.



**Figure 1.** Language use in the home (Corona Hernández 2008; McGraw 2009)

The Catholic Church in Ozelonacaxtla conducts services entirely in Spanish. This is in contrast to other Catholic churches in the region, for example the municipal seat of Huehuetla, that have local Totonac priests who give bilingual masses. The priests in Huehuetla have written hymns in Totonac, though these have not been adopted for use in Ozelonacaxtla as of yet because the current priest travels from Caxhuacan and is a Spanish monolingual *mestizo*. In the 1980's the bible was translated into a variety of Totonac from the neighbouring community of Zapotitlán de Méndez by the linguist Peter Aschmann from the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Totonac speaker Manuel Arenas (Steven 2011). However, there were only a limited number of copies distributed throughout the Sierra, and I was unable to locate a copy in use in Ozelonacaxtla. The Jehovah's Witness Church is more active in encouraging the use of Totonac, giving some bilingual services and using Totonac translations of their teaching materials, though again in a variety not spoken in Ozelonacaxtla. There are about 10 families (60 people) who regularly attend the Jehovah's Witness Church, and the influence in the region is marginal compared to the Catholic Church. One of the challenges of using Totonac for both churches is the low value placed on literacy in Totonac in Ozelonacaxtla, and the region as a whole, which is exacerbated by the use of texts that are written in varieties of Totonac that are not spoken in the community.

In the federally controlled education system, classes are taught in Spanish, except for the preschool, which claims to be bilingual. Preschool children are allowed to speak to each other in Totonac, however, since the goal is to prepare children for primary school, which is taught entirely in Spanish, very little Totonac is taught except perhaps isolated words in lists presented with their Spanish equivalent. This model of bilingual education is termed *subtractive bilingualism* because its purpose is to effectively replace the first language with the language used in school, rather than to support the development of both languages simultaneously (García 1991).

The teachers in all four schools in Ozelonacaxtla come overwhelmingly from Caxhuacan (a nearby municipal seat), and although they may know some Totonac or even speak it, they often will not admit it, let alone use it. There is a preference for hiring non-indigenous teachers in the schools, though not for lack of local candidates from Ozelonacaxtla. In his interview, JL tells how he graduated at the top of his class from the teachers' college in Caxhuacan. After putting his name forward to the director of the elementary school when they were looking for a new teacher for Ozelonacaxtla, he was told there were no positions available. Three months later the director had hired a Spanish-speaking *mestizo*. Although the individual hired likely had seniority within the teachers' union, the manner in which JL was denied an opportunity to be considered highlights the challenges faced by local indigenous teachers in securing positions in their own community, as there is a lack of Totonac control of education. There are many private schools in the region that have had more success as bilingual institutions, for example by employing local teachers and following a less subtractive model of bilingual education. However, the private bilingual schools are limited in reach and impact by the fact that they are not funded by the state, and in order to reach the target Totonac population they charge relatively low tuition, or none at all.

The federal school system and teachers play a significant role in transmitting mainstream hegemonic ideologies about indigeneity and the Totonac language to children and their parents. For example, some participants report having been insulted or punished by their teachers for speaking Totonac,<sup>6</sup> and parents are encouraged by teachers to use Spanish at home in place of Totonac, so that children will not be “confused”. Some children have been coerced into adopting western dress by being denied school privileges while wearing traditional dress or having been made an example of in front of the class. Despite this, Ozelonacaxtla families remain stubbornly resistant and have generally not taken teachers’ advice. Many speakers see a distinct division of domains of use for Spanish and Totonac: children will learn Spanish at school, and Totonac is spoken at home and elsewhere in Ozelonacaxtla. This division of domains of use is one of the characteristics of diglossia, a situation that can provide a measure of stability and sustainability in minority language communities such as Ozelonacaxtla (Fishman 1991:395).

The availability of education above primary levels has increased in recent decades in the region, providing both the means necessary to use Spanish and more opportunities to do so. However, it is important to note that the increasing levels of bilingualism do not directly cause language shift, as using Spanish does not necessarily mean not using Totonac, and sustainable bilingualism is a possible outcome (Dorian 1998). Although Spanish is necessary for participation in modern Mexican society, the abandonment of indigenous languages is not required for this participation to occur, since despite pressure to shift, speakers maintain control over what language(s) to use when in their own families and communities. Distinct domains of use for each language are currently maintained in Ozelonacaxtla and the majority of speakers desire their children to speak Totonac, use mostly Totonac with them, and are not motivated to use Spanish in family and community domains.

Apart from use in school and church services, Spanish is also necessary to travel outside the village. Totonac can be used to an extent in immediately neighboring villages, such as Caxhuacan, Ixtepec, and Huehuetla. However, in other Totonac communities, the variety of Totonac is not the same as in Ozelonacaxtla, or Nahuatl is spoken, and Spanish is then used as a lingua franca. As roads have been built over the past decades, the ability to travel has improved, and there has been increasing migration of young adults out of the community in search of work. According to the town nurse, a total of 145 people (10% of the total population) between the ages of 14 and 45 have left Ozelonacaxtla to settle and work in cities, for example Puebla, Mexico City, or the United States (Corona Hernández 2008).<sup>7</sup> Most families in Ozelonacaxtla work in their own fields or for *caciques* (*mestizo* land owners) for around CDN\$13 per day, and a few men work in house or road construction, though this is often short-term work that is prone to corruption. Economic motivation to

<sup>6</sup>This practice was more common in the past; however it still occurs in more covert ways.

<sup>7</sup>For those who have migrated, language maintenance is largely an individual and family matter as different families are usually from different communities who speak different varieties of Totonac (Lam, personal communication). There has been very little research conducted on Totonac groups outside their original communities.

migrate, especially for young people and young families, is strong because there are limited job opportunities in the Sierra Norte region.

Many families that relocate out of the community tend to no longer use Totonac among themselves, and when returning to the community to visit, they and their children usually prefer to speak Spanish, according to family members interviewed in this study. Most families that have left do not return to live in Ozelonacaxtla permanently, and there is no practical need for them to speak or transmit Totonac to their children. Family members state that young people who do return often do not want to speak Totonac and have effectively shifted to a non-indigenous identity, adopting the mainstream hegemonic *menosprecio* language ideologies they are embedded in outside of the community.

At the local level, the effect of migration on minority language communities can “create an intergenerational gap in [language] transmission” (Adegbiya 2001:307). Although about 10% of the population of Ozelonacaxtla has migrated, this does not seem to have had a large effect on language transmission to children or overall language sustainability in Ozelonacaxtla at present. However, if the trend towards the migration of young families grows and creates a larger transmission gap, or alternatively if more people who have migrated and have adopted *menosprecio* ideologies return to live in the village, the effect of migration on language use may become more significant.

In Ozelonacaxtla, Totonac is not just preferred, but necessitated in the home domain and in most other community interactions whenever monolingual adults are present, which is almost all the time. However, as the monolingual Totonac population ages and eventually passes on, the necessity of speaking Totonac will no longer exist, and bilinguals will have different opportunities for language use. It remains to be seen if Totonac language use, including in some institutional domains such as local government, will be sustained by the current and future generations of increasingly bilingual and mobile speakers. However, the existence of regional and local *pro-indígena* interpretations of *salir adelante* identified in this section provide some grounds for optimism.

Although the previous *etic*, largely sociodemographic account of language use is informative, and an important piece of the analysis of language shift and sustainability, an *emic* perspective can provide a more detailed look at arguably the most important actors in language shift: the speakers themselves. There remain important questions surrounding aspects of the *menosprecio* and *pro-indígena* discourses in Ozelonacaxtla that can only be answered by looking at the problem from the perspective of speakers. Which community members produce more *menosprecio* and *pro-indígena* discourses and why? Who are the speakers using Spanish in the home? How do speakers explain and understand their own and others' language use? The next section will set out to answer these questions by discussing participant data produced in face-to-face interviews with speakers.

## 5. Results: Ideologies in context

**5.1 Participant description** Some background information on participants is presented in Table 1, showing a breakdown of their initials, age, the number of children in the home, occupation, education, and self-reported language use in the home. The table shows that all participants declare using Totonac at home, except for JMG who uses exclusively Spanish with her children. Out of the 31 interviews conducted in separate households, there are 11 (35.5%) that use exclusively Totonac in the home, 10 (32.3%) that use more Totonac than Spanish, nine (29%) that use more Spanish than Totonac, and one (3.2%) that uses only Spanish at home. 30 out of 31 households (96.8%) regularly use at least some or more Totonac in the home with children. Table 1 shows that a large-scale shift to Spanish use in the home is not currently occurring in Ozelonacaxtla, since almost all bilingual parents report using both languages and not exclusively Spanish with their children at home. Participants' reports of language use in the home confirm the researcher's observations of local language use made in §4.2.

**Table 1.** Interview Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Number of children (ages where known)	Occupation	Education <sup>8</sup>	Where Spanish was learned	Language <sup>9</sup> use at home
JDH	15	M	0	student	secundaria	school	T
FPE	17	M	0	student	bachillerato (2nd year)	school	T
IGG	17	F	0	student	bachillerato (2nd year)	school, papá	T
JEP	17	F	0	student	bachillerato (2nd year)	school, Mexico City	T, S
EHE	18	F	0	student	bachillerato (1st year)	school	T
JMHG	18	M	0	student	bachillerato	school	T
FFR	20	F	3 (4, 2, 1)	single mom	secundaria	Puebla, school	T, S, Tz
HRG	21	F	2 (4, 3)	at home mom	primaria	school, siblings	T, S
AME	22	F	2 (3, 2)	single mom	secundaria	school	S, T
MHE	22	M	1 (4)	farmer, baker	bachillerato	school	T, S (some)
ESG <sup>10</sup>	21	F		at home mom	secundaria	school	
LGG	23	F	1 (2)	at home mom	bachillerato	school, Mexico City	S, T

<sup>8</sup>Primaria=primary/elementary school, secundaria= junior high school, bachillerato=high school; a listing indicates the participant completed that level of schooling unless followed by the number of years completed in brackets.

<sup>9</sup>T=Totonac, S=Spanish, Tz=Tzotzil; language listed first is the dominant language reported by interviewee.

<sup>10</sup>Couples are listed in the same cell with each individual on a separate line.



*Continued from previous page*

Participant	Age	Gender	Number of children (ages where known)	Occupation	Education	Where Spanish was learned	Language use at home
AHE	27	F	3 (4, 2, 1)	at home mom	secundaria	school	S, T
JGG	28	M	2 (5, 3)	janitor	bachillerato	school	T, S
JEE	28	M	3 (11, 8, 5)	bakers	secundaria	school, Puebla	S, T
FGG	29	F			primaria	school, Puebla	
GEG	29	F	2 (5, 3)	at home mom	primaria	school, Mexico City	T, S
CGG	29	F	1 (9)	at home mom	primaria	school, siblings	T, S
JHG	31	M	5 (12, 11, 6, 4, 2)	bakers	secundaria	school	T
REM	29	F			primaria (3rd year)	Puebla	
JMG	34	F	4 (16, 12, 8, 4)	at home mom	primaria	school, par- ents	S
VGN	35	F	5 (15, 12, 10, 7, 3)	at home mom	primaria	school	S, T
IHG	36	F	4 (17, 16, 15, 11)	store owner, single mom	secundaria (1st year)	Puebla	S, T
IHH	36	F	1 (8)	single mom, farmer	primaria	school	S, T
YHE	37	F	4 (17...4) <sup>11</sup>	at home mom	primaria	school	T
EMH	39	F	2 (12, 5)	at home mom, sells blouses	secundaria	Mexico City, school	S, T
MGG	40	F	1 (11)	at home mom	primaria (2nd year)	school	T, S
FEF	mid-40s	M	8 (18...1)	store owners, farmers	secundaria	school	T, S
EGE		F			primaria (5th year)	school	
EEG	45	F	2 (30, 27)	at home mom, sells sweets	primaria	Zacapo- axtla, school	S, T
JL	48	M	4 (19...8, 2)	farmers	primaria (2nd year)	school	T
JfHG	42	F			primaria	school	T
MSH	55	F	6 (37...31...)	at home mom	primaria (2nd year)	Puebla	T
GSE	56	M	3	farmer	primaria (2nd year)	Puebla	T
FHH	71	F	0	at home	primaria (2nd year)	Puebla	T
VVG	74	M	10	farmer	primaria (2nd year)	school	T, S

<sup>11</sup>... indicates that the ages of these children are not known.

Table 1 also shows that language use in the home appears to be somewhat dependent on age. The youngest and the oldest participants tend to be those who use only Totonac at home, while the middle-age parent group uses both languages at home. Older participants are more likely to be monolingual in Totonac, while the adolescents have not had families and therefore have also not made their own family language policies. It is parents who are making decisions about what language to use at home and are more likely to use both languages with their children. Participants generally state that they learned Spanish at school, echoing the observation made in §4.2 that school is the primary mode of Spanish transmission and that Totonac is usually the language used at home. In their interviews, many older participants attribute the increased Spanish use they have observed over the last decades in Ozelonacaxtla to the higher levels of schooling available, providing further anecdotal confirmation of increasing Spanish bilingualism.<sup>12</sup> The use of some Spanish in the home by a proportion of bilingual parents is important to highlight as it may indicate a possible change in how and where Spanish is transmitted to young speakers.

For the sake of length and clarity, only illustrative and representative excerpts are used in the discussion of ideologies. The interview data quoted does not include examples from every participant, and some participants provided particularly rich interviews and are quoted multiple times. However, each of the three ideologies explored in the next section is grounded in the entire body of interviews collected from the participants listed in Table 1.

**5.2 Ideologies** Speakers' language ideologies are identified through a constant comparative method (Merriam 2009) of inductive analysis using NVivo Software (QSR 2014) to group pieces of data into thematic categories. Themes are identified as consistent patterns across the data. Ideologies are interpreted through speakers' discourses, both within a single participant's interview and across participants using techniques from discourse analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000; Blommaert 2005; Bucholtz & Hall 2005). Only a rough quantitative weight is placed on how many participants express an ideology, or how often it appears, because it is impossible to say whether a participant has expressed all of their ideologies, or weighted and articulated them systematically, and without undue influence from factors such as the researcher's presence. Ideologies are identified, exemplified by interview excerpts, and discussed in terms of their relationship to language use in Ozelonacaxtla and the region.

Translation of interview excerpts from Spanish to English is by the author. Participants speak Spanish as a second language, and as a result occasionally non-standard Spanish expressions are used, which are preserved here. Participants are identified in quotes by their initials given in Table 1, while R represents the researcher.

<sup>12</sup>Television is broadcast in Spanish and spreads mainstream hegemonic ideologies; however it is not widely available in Ozelonacaxtla as television sets are expensive luxury items. There were about a dozen televisions in the community in 2010.

**5.2.1 Language indexes identity** Totonac is a symbol or marker of membership to the local community of Ozelonacaxtla, and as such it indexes an indigenous, rural identity. For example, participants say they speak Totonac because they are Totonac, and they are from the community where Totonac is spoken (JEP, JDH).

- (1) R: *¿Te gusta hablar el totonaco?* [Do you like to speak Totonac?]

JEP: *Sí, porque es, aquí nací, aquí estoy.* [Yes, because it's, I was born here, here I am.] (3/07/2010)

- (2) JDH: *[El totonaco] es importante para el pueblo, ...y es nuestra lengua de acá, del pueblo... Uhuh, nosotros.* [[Totonac] is important for the village, ...and it is our language here, of the village ... Uhuh, us.] (2/07/2010)

In addition to the local community, the Sierra Oriental region of Mexico is also perceived as Totonac and as the area where Totonac languages are spoken (JMHG).

- (3) R: *¿Crees que está bien que ya no se hable Totonac en otros pueblos?* [Do you think it's good that Totonac is not spoken in other villages?]

JMHG: *Pues creo que no. Porque es una Sierra Oriental, aquí hablan totonaco.* [Well I don't think so. Because it's a Sierra Oriental, we speak Totonac here.] (6/07/2010)

Family members that have left the region are expected to speak Totonac when they return to the community, indicating that language use and community membership are also indexed to location. The quote from MHE shows contrasting interpretations of the ideology that language indexes identity. The participant relays a *menosprecio* interpretation of Totonac, in referring to the concept of *vergüenza* 'shame' felt by returning family members, but frames this in a *pro-indígena* stance that questions the *menosprecio* interpretation.

- (4) R: *Cuando ve a sus hermanos ¿hablan en español o en totonaco?* [When you see your siblings (from the city) do you speak to them in Spanish or Totonac?]

MHE: *No, en el idioma. Bueno ...nosotros, bueno mis hermanos en el dialecto, en totonaco porque bueno yo les digo, ¿por qué me van a hablar el español si saben hablar nuestro idioma? ¿Por qué, por qué le tienen que dar vergüenza hablarme en totonaco? Pues, él lo sabe.* [No, in our language. Well ...we, well my siblings in dialect, in Totonac because well I tell them, why would they speak to me in Spanish if they know how to speak our language? Why, why should he be embarrassed to speak to me in Totonac? Well, he knows it.] (1/07/2010)

That Totonac is strongly indexed to geographical location is made explicit in participants remarks surrounding language use, especially by young people. ESG and MHE relate how their nieces and nephews who were born outside the village do not use Totonac with their Totonac-speaking parents and do not want to learn it when they come to Ozelonacaxtla to visit family. The fact that they were born and are living in a location outside the Sierra Oriental and that they do not speak Totonac nor want to learn it when they return to the community are marked characteristics that stand out in the otherwise locally born native Totonac-speaking community. Some of the youth, having moved with their families from the community in a pursuit to *salir adelante*, and no longer being indexed by the particular geographical location, do not perceive the utility of speaking Totonac, even if their parents still speak it to them. *Salir adelante* thus becomes linked to a shift to Spanish language use for a small group of community members from Ozelonacaxtla who have to resolve competing interpretations of *salir adelante*, one of which (*menosprecio*) does not allow for sustained bilingualism.

- (5) ESG: *Sus papás son de acá pero ...sus hijos nacieron en Puebla.* [Their parents are from here but ...their children were born in Puebla.]

MHE: *Y ya, y ellos no saben el dialecto de nosotros.* [And now they don't know our dialect.]

ESG: *O algunos sí lo saben pero les da pena hablarlo.* [Or some do know it but they are ashamed to speak it.] (1/07/2010)

This quote from MHE also shows that although Totonac indexes indigeneity and geographic origin, this indexing is interpreted in different ways as having both positive and negative connotations. The speaker is aware that some people feel *vergüenza* 'shame' of speaking Totonac or being identified as Totonac. Although the majority of Totonac people are proud of their origin and indigenous Totonac identity, and knowledge of the Totonac language is generally seen as enjoyable and a source of pride, in line with *pro-indígena*, there are also community members who are ashamed of indigeneity, echoing the mainstream ideology of *menosprecio*.

Contrasting discourses of *menosprecio* and *pro-indígena* are also seen in the following quote from JGG. He tells how teachers often deny their knowledge of Totonac, even though it is well-known in the region that they speak it, reflecting their adoption of *menosprecio* and their desire to avoid being indexed as Totonac or indigenous. JGG recasts shame from speaking Totonac back onto the teachers who he says are "denying their heritage", taking a *pro-indígena* stance that one should be proud of one's Totonac identity.

- (6) JGG: *Como ya son maestros, dicen que no, no saben hablar o que no entienden. Pero pues, realmente es una vergüenza porque todos somos indígenas aquí. Y decir que no entiendo, o decir que no, no puedo hablar, pues, estoy este, renegando a mi propia cultura. Yo siento así.* [Because they are now teachers, they say that

they don't know how to speak Totonac or that they don't understand. But well, really that's an embarrassment because we are all indigenous here. And to say that I don't understand, or to say that I can't speak, well I'm denying my own culture. That's how I feel.] (7/09/2008)

Shame surrounding being Totonac, and speaking Totonac, is a consistent theme reported by participants. Young people who avoid speaking Totonac are described by participants as being embarrassed about being Totonac. JEP explains these young people have a desire to not be indexed as indigenous and face possible discrimination. This *menosprecio* interpretation of young people's language use is rooted in the fear of being singled out or differentiated from the majority, mainstream community. Many of these young people (though not all) have moved away to a Spanish-speaking urban centre and returned to the community, or they have moved and are visiting from neighbouring villages such as Caxhuacan where language shift is already occurring with more widespread adoption of *menosprecio*. At the same time, JEP aligns with *pro-indígena* discourse, opining that young people should speak Totonac because it is something Totonac people have in common, indexing inclusion in the local community identity, in contrast to indexing exclusion from the national community. This quote further demonstrates how the indexing of local indigenous identity by speaking Totonac can be interpreted in multiple ways.

- (7) JEP: *Hay algunos que no quieren aprender [el totonaco] o tienen miedo de enfrentar de que digan que "es que son, habla el totonaco y es un indio" y todo eso, o sea el miedo que tienen. Yo creo es muy importante que también que lo aprendan porque igual todos tenemos [tononaco].* [There are some who don't want to learn [Totonac] or they are afraid to face it if someone says to them "they are, they speak Totonac and they are an *indio* 'peasant'" and all that, or because of the fear they have. I think it's very important that they also learn [Totonac] because all of us have it.] (3/07/2010)

When young people themselves are asked about their own language use, many of them explain their fear of discrimination, which is tied to *menosprecio* interpretations that index Totonac language use to an undesirable, i.e. "backwards", indigenous peasant lifestyle and identity. JDH, the youngest participant at 15, frames his use of Spanish with Totonac-speaking peers as a result of feelings of self-consciousness stemming from the desire to avoid discrimination by *mestizos* who might overhear them. Language use has been put in relief for young people because they are singled out for it.

- (8) R: *Y si están en Caxhuacan, ¿van a hablar español o en totonaco?* [And if you are in Caxhuacan will you speak in Spanish or in Totonac?]

JDH: *En español.* [In Spanish.]

R: *Aunque normalmente acá usan totonaco juntos.* [Even though here you normally use Totonac together.]

JDH: *Sí.* [Yes.]

R: *¿Y por qué lo cambian?* [And why do you switch?]

JDH: *Porque luego se burlan de ti.* [Because otherwise they will make fun of you.] (2/07/2010)

Other speakers think it is a good thing that some young people are abandoning Totonac, stating that being and speaking Totonac inhibits the advancement of the village, also adopting a *menosprecio* interpretation of language as identity. For example, JL believes it would be better to speak Spanish because the community of Ozelonacaxtla does not advance as long as people speak Totonac.

- (9) R: *¿Y usted piensa que es malo que los jóvenes contesten en español aunque, aunque saben totonaco?* [And do you think that it's bad that young people answer in Spanish even though they know Totonac?]

JL: *No, para mí yo digo está bien porque ya este, para qué, yo [creo que] no, no podemos avanzar aquí el, como digo no se avanza si seguimos hablando este, en totonaco.* [No, for me I say it's good because well, so that, I think we can't advance here, like I said, we can't get ahead if we keep speaking well, Totonac.] (5/07/2010)

In another instance, EMH describes Ozelonacaxtla as a forgotten community that no one wants to visit precisely because everyone speaks Totonac and dresses in traditional dress.

- (10) EMH: *Este pueblo está muy olvidado. Nadie, casi nadie lo visita. Ni hasta eso, ni el mismo gobernador de, del estado ha venido. No, ninguno estaba. Nada más cuando necesitan apoyo, que hay que votar por ellos. Entonces, sí.* [This village is very forgotten. Nobody, almost nobody visits. Not even, not even the governor of the state [of Puebla] has come. No, nobody was here. Only when they need your help, when they need you to vote for them. Then, they come.]

R: *¿Por qué cree que, que es así?* [Why do you think it's like that?]

EMH: *Es ...porque pues, aquí hablan puro totonaco. Y aparte a lo mejor este pues, por su manera de vestir.* [It's ...because well, here people speak only Totonac. And also probably because well, because of the way people dress [in traditional dress].] (8/09/2008)

Overall, the Totonac way of life and language is a source of pride for most speakers who are connected to Totonac land and community through their language. These speakers, coming from the *pro-indígena* stance, do not see Totonac as a barrier to *salir adelante*. However, it is also apparent that the *pro-indígena* stance is not universal and therefore cannot be taken for granted. The analysis shows that young Totonac speakers sometimes interpret Totonac language use and the Totonac identity as obstacles, rather than resources, to *salir adelante* and do not want to be identified as Totonac or indigenous. These young people have increasing opportunities to learn and use Spanish at local schools and in other aspects of their daily lives as Spanish-language technology becomes more available. Higher levels of education and the availability of technology also mean that young people have more exposure to mainstream *menosprecio* ideologies that are transmitted by teachers and through the mainstream media by people in positions of authority. The migration of Spanish-speaking *mestizos* to the area and Totonac families out of the community also creates more opportunities for the transmission of *menosprecio*.

Importantly, increasing bilingualism and Spanish use is not necessarily an indication of language shift, if multilingualism is valued and there is no accompanying decreasing use of Totonac (Fishman 1991; Dorian 1998). The perceptions of Totonac as traditional, with limited domains of use, and as responsible for the perceived lack of progress of the community, reflect the adoption of the mainstream *menosprecio* ideology by some speakers. For some, being Totonac is seen as the reason for the lack of opportunities in the region, while Spanish is seen as a way to escape the difficulties of the village and *salir adelante*. For these speakers, the only way forward is to not only speak Spanish, but to also abandon Totonac. However, the majority of participants have not adopted *menosprecio* and have a *pro-indígena* stance that sustains and adapts practices of Totonac ways of life. For these speakers, Spanish is also seen as important and necessary, but they do not believe it is necessary to also abandon Totonac in order to make progress. Totonac use is therefore sustainable for the foreseeable future, but the threat of *menosprecio* is present in the community. Through the careful analysis of interview discourse, the current dynamic interaction of *menosprecio* and *pro-indígena* ideologies in Ozelonacaxtla is made clearer.

**5.2.2 Language is important and useful** A second major theme within and across participants' interviews is the conception of language as a utility or a tool. Sometimes speakers choose to highlight this utility in a positive way, describing the functionality of a language, while in contrast others choose to highlight dysfunctionality. The ideology that language can be viewed as a tool is particularly important for sustainability since it shows how speakers are motivated to learn and teach their language because of its pragmatic value. For example, some participants such as AME think children should learn Totonac because it is necessary in order to communicate with older Totonac speakers who do not know Spanish.

- (11) R: *¿Cree que el totonaco es importante?* [Do you think Totonac is important?]

AME: *También es importante porque si ellos lo hablan, pero el abuelito no sabe, la abuelita no sabe hablar en español, pues el niño le puede hablar en totonaco.* [It's also important because if they speak it, but the grandparent doesn't know, the grandmother doesn't know how to speak Spanish, well the child can speak to her in Totonac.] (30/09/2008)

Related to the expectation that migrated community members speak Totonac when they return to Ozelonacaxtla, some participants feel that Totonac should be learned and taught even when speakers are no longer living in the region, for the purpose of communicating with monolingual Totonac speakers when they return or on the telephone. For example, JEP claims he would teach his children some Totonac even if his family were not living in Ozelonacaxtla, so that his children could communicate with their grandparents.

- (12) JEP: [...] *sí, dependiendo del lugar que me vaya a quedar porque si me quedo en la región, sí le aseguro que sí les diría o les hablaría [a mis hijos] más en totonaco y [poquito] español, pero si vas, si va a ser afuera de mi región yo creo que no por este ...no digamos el 100% pero sí tienen que forzosamente que aprender el 30 o el 40% de totonaco para que algún día que vengan a la comunidad sepan hablarlos, ya también con mis papás.* [Umm, yes depending on the place I end up because if I stay in the region I assure you I would speak to [my children] more in Totonac and some Spanish, but if I am outside my region I think because of that ...not 100% but they have to learn 30 or 40% Totonac so that one day when they come to the community they know how to speak it, with my parents.] (3/07/2010)

Knowledge of Totonac is valuable for communicating with elders, but knowledge of both Totonac and Spanish simultaneously is also viewed favorably by participants. Bilingualism is generally seen as an advantage rather than a disadvantage, at least outside the context of school where it is often discouraged because of the potential to “confuse” children. One advantage of bilingualism pointed out by ESG is that knowing both languages is helpful in order to translate between a Spanish speaker and a Totonac speaker, a common interaction in the region.

- (13) ESG: *Y hay personas que vienen de otros lugares y que les hablan acá entonces no, no escuchan. Y si alguien, una persona habla dos idiomas entonces le puede decir lo que está diciendo la otra persona. Si habla el español y la que habla totonaco no le entiende, entonces si viene alguien que habla dos idiomas entonces le puede explicar lo que está diciendo. O puede ayudar.* [And there are people who come from other places and they speak to them here and then they don't listen. And if someone, if a person speaks two languages then they can say what the other person is saying. If they speak Spanish and the person who speaks Totonac doesn't understand, then if someone comes who speaks



the two languages then they can explain what the person is saying. Or they can help.] (1/07/2010)

Similarly, GSE states that it is useful to know both languages because then he can communicate with both Totonac and Spanish speakers in different areas. Beliefs in the utility of not only Spanish or Totonac, but of knowledge of both languages simultaneously, seem to support the possibility of sustainable bilingualism and are consistent with a *pro-indígena* stance. These favorable ideas about bilingualism contrast with the mainstream *menosprecio* interpretation of language as utility that values exclusively the uses of Spanish, not of bilingualism.

- (14) GSE: *Pues este, yo digo son dos partes yo [a mí] me conviene. Habla español y habla el totonaco. Porque es más importante, sí. Si hablan viene una persona en totonaco pues va a contestar, y habla español pues también se puede. Por eso yo quiero dos idiomas así. Porque también si sale al otro lado sí, sí va a entender bien.* [Well um, I say they are two parts that benefit me, speaking Spanish and speaking Totonac. Because it's more important, yes. If they speak, a person comes in Totonac well, you can answer, and if they speak Spanish well, you can do that too. Because of this I want two languages like this. Because also if someone leaves for another place yes, yes they will understand well.] (6/07/2010)

Speakers also find it important to point out that Totonac has distinct uses from Spanish. For example, the participant JEE sees Totonac as more useful for expressing emotion than Spanish, which he describes as neutral. Again, this idea is not in line with *menosprecio*, that exclusively values the utility of Spanish, not of Totonac.

- (15) JEE: *Y hay personas ...[que] hablan en totonaco pero de otra forma muy amable, muy consentimientodarse el sentir como si fuera, el totonaco es como si fuera una mamá ...con mucho cariño ...cuando platica así con tu novio, con tu novia en totonaco, es un idioma muy muy maternal, muy seria, muy sincera ...Son sonidos que te penetran el sentimiento. Sí. Hay unos que hablan así en totonaco. Pero hay también personas que hablan en totonaco, pero como que te penetran, como odio. Y no es igual el español. El español es muy neutro. El totonaco es, es diferente.* [And there are people ...[that] speak Totonac in a very friendly way, [seeking] approval ...Even giving the feeling like, as if Totonac were like a mom ...with a lot of affection ...even when you speak with your boyfriend or girlfriend in Totonac, it's a very maternal language, very serious, very sincere. They're sounds that penetrate your feelings. Yes. There are those who speak like this in Totonac. But there are also those people who speak in Totonac but in a way that penetrates you with hate. And Spanish is not the same. Spanish is neutral. Totonac is different.] (4/09/2008)

Choosing to discuss a perceived dysfunctionality of Totonac that conforms along the lines of *menosprecio*, the same speaker JEE states that it is difficult to adapt To-

tonac to emerging communicative situations. He describes Totonac as a language for expressing superstitions, echoing the mainstream hegemonic ideology that Spanish is the language of “reason,” business, and modernity, while Totonac is more traditional, lower prestige, and “backwards.” His wife FGG echoes his statement. Excerpts (15) and (16) from JEE seem to contradict each other, an example of the complexity and multiplicity of language ideologies that exists even for the same speaker.

- (16) JEE: *Bueno, el totonaco aquí en San Juan [Ozelonacaxtla] es algo así como, no tiene mucha ampliación. No, no tiene mucha este, no se puede alargar mucho. Lo que es acerca de los números, acerca de, de, por ejemplo una conversación, no llega más que, este, más que, los animales, del este, de así como, supersticiones, algo así.* [Well, Totonac here in San Juan [Ozelonacaxtla] it's something like, it doesn't have a lot of extension. No, it doesn't have, it can't be extended much. When it comes to numbers, when it comes to, for example, a conversation, it doesn't get to more than, more than animals, like well, superstitions, something like that.]

FGG: *Supersticiones. Mucha creencia.* [Superstitions. A lot of beliefs.]  
(4/09/2008)

The utility of Spanish is also talked about by participants. Spanish use is tied to the national ideology of *salir adelante*, and as such it is seen as necessary in order to participate in broader society, given that government, education, media, and technology are mediated through Spanish, and Spanish is necessary for travel and work outside the region. JL and VVG state that learning Spanish is important in order to leave Ozelonacaxtla and get a job, do well in school, or to be able to use a computer.

- (17) JL: [...] *si más hablamos puro idioma de acá, no podemos salir. No, no podemos este, buscar un trabajo. Porque no te dicen en idioma de totonaco, ya este, hablan, hablan más que español.* [...] because if we only speak the language from here [Totonac] we can't leave. No, no we can't look for a job because they don't speak in the Totonac language, they speak in Spanish.] (5/07/2010)
- (18) VVG: *Pero es más, más importante español.* [But Spanish is more important.]

R: *¿Por qué?* [Why?]

VVG: *Porque así como por ejemplo este, quieres trabajar con el maestro debes también de enseñar al hijo. Sí. O para manejar computadora tiene uno que [saber]. Porque es, a donde van ya saben qué, qué cosa van a pedir. Trabajo o quieren reportar y se puede pedir lo que necesitan ellos.* [Because for example, you want to work with the teacher you must also teach the child [Spanish]. Yes. Or to work on a computer one must [know Spanish]. Because it's, where

they are going they already know what they are going to ask for. Working or reporting something and they can ask for what they need.] (30/06/2010)

MGG teaches her daughter Spanish because she wants her to understand classes at school and continue her studies, something MGG had personal difficulty with.

- (19) R: *¿Y por qué quería usted enseñarle español?* [And why did you want to teach her Spanish?]

MGG: *¿Por qué quiero para enseñarle español? Porque puede contestar en la escuela. Puede este, saber lo que dice el libro para leer. Sí. Porque viene el libro por español ...Pensaba así porque como yo no sé nada, o no, no que vaya mi hija así. Yo quiero que estudie.* [Why did I want to teach her Spanish? Because she can answer at school. She can well, know what the book says, in order to read. Yes. Because the book comes in Spanish ...I thought like this because I don't know anything, and I don't want my daughter to be like that. I want her to study.] (9/09/2008)

Not only speaking Spanish, but speaking it from a young age is also seen as important in order to speak Spanish more fluently. This belief may explain the use of Spanish at home with children in a few households in Ozelonacaxtla. For example, JEE, who uses Spanish at home with his two children, reports that he wants his daughter to learn Spanish in order to avoid the difficulties he and his wife faced learning Spanish as adults. This reasoning is not necessarily in conflict with a *pro-indígena* stance, as JEE does not imply that he does not want his children to also learn to speak Totonac, only that he wishes to help his children avoid the difficulties in learning Spanish that he faced as an adult.

- (20) R: *¿Y cuando tuvieron hijos qué pensaban de qué lengua usar con sus hijos? ¿O cómo decidieron?* [And when you had children, what did you think about which language to use with your children? Or how did you decide?]

JEE: *Pues este, cuando, cuando tuvimos este, la niña Angélica, pues lo primero que pensamos este, era hablarle en español. Porque tanto nos, se nos dificultaba a nosotros, este. Y le empezamos hablar en español. Y así que, que empezar así a conocer, a, a hablar.* [Well, when we had our daughter Angélica, well the first thing we thought was well, to speak to her in Spanish. Because it was so difficult for us [to learn Spanish]. And we started to speak to her in Spanish. And to begin to know it and to speak.] (4/09/2008)

In Ozelonacaxtla, Totonac and Spanish are seen as necessary for different purposes, highlighting the distinct domains of use for each language and the recognized pragmatic value currently placed on bilingualism, in line with *pro-indígena* rather than *menosprecio*, which deprecates the rural indigenous identity and language. As education and bilingualism in the younger generations increases, the monolingual

Totonac population passes on, and more *mestizos* move into the area, the opportunities and domains of use for Totonac and Spanish may be in flux. If language use changes, this means there are potential consequences for ideologies of the utility of language. For example, there may be a point in the future where speakers' beliefs about the necessity of Totonac for communicating with monolingual Totonac speakers may change, as bilingualism increases and monolinguals pass on. It remains to be seen how young people will interpret their unique opportunities, embracing either the current local majority *pro-indígena* view that values bilingualism, or eventually adopting the mainstream *menosprecio* ideology and abandoning Totonac.

**5.2.3 Totonac should not be lost** A third and final language ideology identified in this study is the conviction that Totonac should not be lost. Participants believe that it is important to sustain Totonac, though they reveal this belief in different ways. For example, FPE and JEP say that young people need to learn Totonac in order to continue the tradition of speaking like participants' ancestors and to ensure that it is not lost, a possibility most participants are generally aware of.

- (21) R: *¿Y crees que es importante que los jóvenes todavía aprendan el totonaco?*  
[And do you think it is important that young people still learn to speak Totonac?]

FPE: *Sí. Porque cada, cada día se va perdiendo más, que es la cultura, nuestra cultura. Casi ya no hablan el totonaco, si así los jóvenes que van creciendo pues ya les dicen español, casi ya no aprenden.* [Yes. Because every day it gets lost more, that which is our culture. They almost don't speak Totonac, if young people that are growing up are spoken to in Spanish, they will no longer learn [Totonac].]

R: *¿Crees que eso está mal?* [Do you think that is bad?]

FPE: *Sí, sí, ¿no? Creo que está perdiendo la tradición.* [Yes, yes, right? I think our traditions are being lost.] (6/07/2010)

- (22) JEP: *No me gustaría que se perdiera todo eso [el totonaco]. Porque es, son originarios este, el totonaco, por lo regular, este, en estas regiones se utiliza más porque aquí son los señores, los antepasados lo hablaron. Así que se pierde de la noche a la mañana no tanto pero pues, no nos gusta que se pierda todo eso.* [I wouldn't like it if all that [Totonac] were lost. Because it's, Totonac is original, normally in these regions Totonac is used more because here are the men, the ancestors who spoke it. That it were lost overnight no, but, well, we don't like that it could be lost.] (3/07/2010)

Ideas about how Totonac could best be supported include the assertion that only Totonac should be used at home, while Spanish should be taught at school (MHE). Totonac is primarily an oral language used at home and in the local community, while Spanish is the regional, national, institutionalized language. Speakers are aware of and reproduce these distinct domains of use of each language. They are also protective of Totonac in the home domain and are conscious of their important role in language transmission.

- (23) MHE: *Sí, pero nos dicen que, bueno a mí pues me dicen que le hable el dialecto [totonaco] [en casa] para que también ella sepa.* [Yes, but they tell us that, well they told me that I should speak to her in dialect [at home] so that she would also know.]

R: *¿Quién te dice?* [Who tells you?]

MHE: *Pues, mis hermanos. Porque mis hermanos, bueno sus hijos, pues ellos no saben el dialecto [totonaco] así bien bien, y si sabe, pues ella va a aprender en la escuela hablar español.* [Well, my brothers. Because my brothers, well their children, well they don't know dialect [Totonac] very well, and if she knows, well she will learn to speak Spanish at school.] (1/07/2010)

Some participants feel that Totonac, as well as Spanish, should be taught in school, in order to improve their knowledge of their language and thus support the sustainability of Totonac. Participants FPE and MHE point out that it would be a good thing to learn to read and write Totonac because they want to know more about their language and engage with textual materials in Totonac.

- (24) R: *¿Te gustaría si hubiera clases en totonaco?* [Would you like it if there were classes in Totonac?]

FPE: *También ...Para aprender este, así a escribir más, y hablarlo. Porque sí podemos hablar pero casi no podemos escribir.* [As well ...in order to write more and speak it. Because yes we can speak but we can hardly write it.] (6/07/2010)

- (25) MHE: *[...] nosotros hablamos el totonaco, pero no lo sabemos escribir una ortografía bien. Porque también hay algunos que llevan acento umm, pues nosotros nada más lo sabemos hablar ...Que te digan, no pues “Escribe eso”. Pues bueno, yo no sé escribirlo.* [Yes, yes it would be good because we speak Totonac but we don't know how to write it good orthography. Because there are also some [letters] that have an accent umm, well we only know how to speak it. If they say to you, well “Write this”. Well I don't know how to write it.]

R: *¿Pero les gustaría aprender?* [But would you like to learn?] MHE: *Sí, para saber cómo se escribe y ya si te preguntan “¿Cómo se escribe?” ya lo escribes y lo escribes bien.* [Yes in order to know how to write if they ask you “How do you write it?” then you write it and you write it well.]

R: *¿Y les gustaría poder leer en totonaco también?* [And would you like to be able to read in Totonac as well?]

MHE: *Sí. Hay pues, bueno yo digo que este, a veces ponen letreros allí o cuando vienen este, la gente a la feria, allí ponen no sé el, por decir así, el baile. Lo ponen en totonaco. Voy y no sé qué dice.* [Yes. Well I think that, sometimes they put up signs there and when people come to the festival they put up I don't know, the dance. They put it in Totonac. I go and I don't know what it says.] (1/07/2010)

Another participant, MSH, believes that by learning and improving one's Totonac through formal education, it would be less likely to be lost. Teaching Totonac in schools provides support for the use of the language in both the spoken and written modalities. It also confers prestige on the language, which is then perceived by both Totonac speakers and non-Totonac speakers.

- (26) R: *¿Usted piensa que estaría bien si hubiera clases en totonaco?* [Do you think it would be good if there were classes in Totonac?]

MSH: *Pues fíjate que sí para que, que no se olvide este idioma. Sí.* [Well you know yes so that this language would not be forgotten.] (06/07/2010)

Just as in the conflicting ideologies surrounding the usefulness of Totonac seen in the previous section, the multiplicity of ideologies is again revealed here. In contrast to the speakers that would like to see Totonac taught at school, there are also those that say Totonac should not be taught in school. Some participants (JDH, YHE, IHG) refer to the difficulty of reading and writing as a reason for not teaching Totonac at school, and both YHE and IHG go further and explain that part of the difficulty of reading and writing Totonac is an unfamiliarity with the written form of Totonac.

- (27) R: *¿Te gustaría que fuera en totonaco todas las clases? ¿O crees que es mejor en español?* [Would you like it if all classes were in Totonac? Or do you think it's better in Spanish?]

JDH: *Sí, es mejor. Porque es más difícil el totonaco.* [Yes, it's better. Because Totonac is more difficult.]

R: *¿Qué parte es más difícil?* [Which part is more difficult?]

JDH: *Escribirlo.* [Writing it.] (2/07/2010)

- (28) R: *¿Le gustaría aprender umm, leer el totonaco?* [Would you like to learn to read Totonac?]

YHE: *Pero casi no, no se puede el totonaco leer algunos no, no saben todas las letras que, que vino. Algunos sí, pero algunos no. Leen el español más, aprenden más.* [But Totonac almost can't be read some don't know all the letters that are there. Some yes, but some no. They read more Spanish, they learn more.] (2/07/2010)

- (29) IHG: *Nada más que yo creo que hay este, por ejemplo te dan un libro de totonaco es muy difícil de, de este, de descifrarlo, de decirlo. En cambio en español pues, puedes decir rápido. Pero en totonaco así en el libro, por ejemplo bueno, nos dan este los testigos de Jehová. Nos da libro ...le entiende uno [más] español que totonaco porque ahí viene unas cifras que ni le entiendes. Aunque sí sabes hablar este en totonaco.* [It's just that I think that there are well, for example they give you a book in Totonac, it's very difficult to decipher it, to say it. On the other hand, in Spanish well, you can say it quickly. But in Totonac in a book, for example well, the Jehovah's Witnesses give us one, they give us a book ...one understands Spanish more than Totonac because there are some characters that you don't understand, even though you speak well, Totonac.] (15/09/2008)

Contributing to this “difficulty” is the fact that there is no developed written standard for Ozelonacaxtla Totonac, and the Papantla or Huehuetla Totonac written standards are used to write Totonac (e.g. the Jehovah's Witness texts mentioned by IHG, isolated children's books, signs). There are significant phonological and lexical differences across these Totonac languages, and the use of a writing system not specifically developed for Ozelonacaxtla Totonac contributes to the speakers' task in interpreting these textual resources, and thus makes Totonac seem more difficult to read and write than Spanish. Alphabets and text are often influenced by Spanish orthography as well, reinforcing the idea that it is natural to write Spanish, which is generally accepted as the language of literacy. Indexing Spanish in the very act of writing Totonac recursively represents the hegemonic *menosprecio* relationship between Spanish and Totonac speakers (Irvine & Gal 1995).

There is concern about whether Totonac should be written at all and if it might lose something, or change in an undesirable way, by no longer being solely an oral language. Totonac has always been an oral language that is tied to its speaker, and writing is an act of separating the language from its speakers and the performative context of face-to-face interaction (Debenport 2015:35–36). This separation and objectification can result in a lack of control over how that information is distributed and used by others (Debenport 2010; 2015:35). As westerners and linguists, we often assume that a community will desire to write their language; however these beliefs

stem from our own underlying ideologies surrounding literacy, language documentation and revitalization, and “universal ownership” that may not be in line with those of the community (Hill 2002:121–123; Debenport 2010; 2015). Although literacy is seen as important in order to *salir adelante*, it is associated with Spanish schools, not generally Totonac. There are a few local teachers who have returned to Ozelonacaxtla and are tutoring some interested adults in Totonac orthography. If this effort were expanded to teach Totonac at school using a locally-based orthography, it might facilitate the development of Totonac literacy, and the language might not seem so “difficult”. Facilitating Totonac literacy may also help develop new uses for the language and confer prestige on it. Unfortunately, this seems unlikely in the public school system, as the community historically and currently has had little say in the curriculum or the selection of teachers.

The feeling of wariness about writing Totonac and the desire to protect Totonac may also be related to ideologies of language purity. The Spanish based orthography used to write Totonac may be perceived as corrupting the purity of Totonac. There is some borrowing of Spanish lexical items, and bilingual speakers in Ozelonacaxtla often use both Spanish and Totonac in the same conversation in a kind of code mixing. For example, when speaking Totonac, parents act as intergenerational translators between children and grandparents who have different proficiencies in Spanish and Totonac. However, not all community members feel it is a good thing that some speakers use Spanish elements while speaking Totonac. One couple, JEE and FGG, say that mixing Spanish with Totonac is not the proper way of speaking, and that doing so may even contribute to the eventual loss of Totonac in Ozelonacaxtla as Spanish encroaches on Totonac.

- (30) JEE: *Ahorita es como manejan mucho este, o sea, mezclan el totonaco y el español ...Hablan un pedacito en totonaco, y ahora un pedacito en español.* [Now it's like they use a lot, or, they mix Totonac and Spanish. They speak a bit in Totonac, and then a bit in Spanish.]

FGG: *Yo creo que ahorita está empezando por perderse ya el totonaco porque* [I think that now Totonac is beginning to be lost because]

JEE: [...] *Aunque aquí los que hablan en totonaco dicen “pero,” “porque,” “hasta.”* [Even though here those that speak in Totonac say “but,” “because,” “until.”]

FGG: *Uhuh. Palabras que mezclan en español con el totonaco.* [Uhuh. Words in Spanish that they mix with Totonac.]

JEE: *Y los que hablan realmente el totonaco aquí ya casi no existen.* [And those that really speak Totonac here they almost don't exist anymore.] (4/09/2008)



JEE further explains how he teaches his daughter not to use Spanish with her grandparents, who speak Totonac, unless they explicitly ask her to speak in Spanish.

- (31) JEE: *Como [sus abuelitos] siempre hablan en totonaco, les hablan en totonaco. Así le vamos diciendo como que este, nunca le contestes en español. Tienes que aprender hablar totonaco. Y siempre le vas, a menos que te diga tu abuelito “enséñame hablar en español”. Pero si él te lo está diciendo. Pero si no te lo está diciendo, tienes que contestarle en totonaco.* [[Her grandparents] always speak Totonac, they speak to [the children] in Totonac. We tell them well, never to answer them in Spanish. You have to learn to speak Totonac. And always, only if your grandpa says to you “teach me how to say it in Spanish”. But only if he is telling you that. If he is not telling you that, you have to answer him in Totonac.] (4/09/2008)

This is a kind of linguistic purism, or prescriptivism, where speakers do not view borrowing or code mixing in a positive way and highly value a perceived “pure” or “real” form of their language, (Thomas 1991:10–12; Debenport 2015:28–30). Speakers feel that Spanish is encroaching on and threatening the integrity of Totonac, an ideology that has been identified in many other indigenous communities in North and Latin America (e.g. Hill & Hill 1977; Barrett 2008; Debenport 2015). Although consistent with the *pro-indígena* desire to sustain Totonac, the appeal to preserve an “ideal” form of the language could have the unintended effect of inhibiting the development of new contexts of use for Totonac and limiting Totonac to the *menos-precio*-defined traditional, rural domains.

Just as some participants say that Totonac is under threat and something should be done about it, there are others who believe that Totonac will not or cannot disappear. These speakers are either not aware or do not believe that language loss is a possibility and that they have an important role in language transmission and sustainability. For example, REM assumes that since Totonac has always been learned by children in Ozelonacaxtla, it always will be, as they learn to speak it from birth.

- (32) REM: *Pero no creo que se le olvide, porque desde chiquito está aprendiendo hablar totonaco. Aunque estudie, que aprenda muchos este, idiomas, pero no creo que se, que se le olvide. Porque como, desde que nació, aprendió hablar en totonaco.* [But I don’t think that it will be forgotten, because they are learning it as children. Even if they study, if they learn a lot of languages, but I don’t think that they will forget it. Because since birth they learned to speak Totonac.] (3/07/2010)

Although REM’s statement is consistent with what is observed in Ozelonacaxtla, it may not always be the case that children have the opportunity to acquire Totonac as a first language, if parents and peers no longer choose to transmit it, or are no longer able to transmit it themselves, a progression that has been seen in other Totonac communities (Beck & Lam 2008; Lam 2009; 2012). Although most of the speakers cited here believe something should be done to prevent the loss of Totonac, REM shows

that this belief is not universal. It is also the case that the broader national and global rhetoric surrounding language use and language endangerment, the orientation of this study coming from a linguist, and the data (interviews) themselves has shaped the way Totonac has been framed and discussed as a language in “danger” and in need of “protection” and “support.” In general, whether speakers think Totonac is being lost or not, they want to use Totonac in the traditional domains of home and community and also in new, more prestigious institutional contexts such as schools.

**6. Discussion and conclusion: Interpreting language use in Ozelonacaxtla** The main findings of this study are that virtually all community members currently speak Totonac, transmission is robust, and there is a general desire to expand the use of Totonac in the future. Many local factors are currently working in favour of the sustainability of Totonac in Ozelonacaxtla, despite increasing bilingualism in Spanish and broad socio-economic and demographic pressures that favour the use of Spanish. For example, participants clearly perceive distinct roles for Totonac and Spanish in their community. Totonac is an important marker of identity to both Ozelonacaxtla and the region as a whole and is necessary in order to communicate with the many monolingual locals who do not speak Spanish. At the same time, Spanish is recognized as important in order to participate in broader Mexican society and to provide more opportunities for speakers and their children, in other words to *salir adelante*, or progress. Totonac people are generally proud of their language and their Totonac origin, despite some young people feeling embarrassed to speak Totonac. Parents and young people are aware of the role they play in transmitting Totonac to children, and some speakers also want to see Totonac taught at school. Political activism in the form of influence on government and the justice system at the municipal level, as well as cultural initiatives such as La Universidad Intercultural and the radio station XECTZ, seem to have a supportive effect on language use. This regional context of Totonac activism co-exists with the majority-held ideologies of *pro-indígena* found in Ozelonacaxtla, conditions that likely reinforce one another, but the relationship between the political and cultural engagement and language sustainability remains to be investigated in more detail. Overall, the observational and interview data indicate that Totonac language use is currently in a situation of relatively high sustainability. The current form of bilingualism and division of domains of use appears to be stable and speakers’ language ideologies generally support the continued development of Totonac language use. Thus, the current situation in Ozelonacaxtla can be characterized as between “vigorous” (level 6a) and “vulnerable” (level 6b) in Lewis & Simons’ EGIDS (2010:110) and at a level of sustainable orality in their Sustainable Use Model (2011:34).

Although Ozelonacaxtla is in a relatively stable position, some potential threats to sustainability and stability are identified that warrant a cross-classification as “vulnerable”: changes in language use by a few families who have begun to use Spanish in the home, and *menosprecio* interpretations of *salir adelante* that denigrate indigeneity and the Totonac language as too traditional, limited in expression, difficult to learn to write, or the reason for a lack of progress (Messing 2007). The fact that some families

have chosen to transmit Spanish, rather than Totonac, could signal a vulnerability to potential shift if this practice spreads. In addition, although the majority of speakers see no reason to abandon Totonac in order to *salir adelante*, consistent with the *pro-indígena* discourse identified by Messing (2007), a small minority has adopted the *menosprecio* interpretation of *salir adelante* that would see speakers abandon Totonac. These ideologies and practices constitute threats to continued sustainability, as has been demonstrated in the Totonac communities of Chicontla and Patla that are at a much more advanced stage of language shift and show more widespread ideologies of *menosprecio* (Lam 2009; 2012). The existence of *menosprecio* discourse in Ozelonacaxtla has the potential to push Totonac into a more unsustainable “threatened” position (level 6b) that can easily deteriorate or “tip” further into a situation of language shift in the future (Dorian 1986; Lewis & Simons 2011:32).

Importantly, these threats would not have been identified if discourse had not been carefully examined using an inductive interpretation of language use. By looking at speakers’ own perceptions of local and national discourses, a more nuanced interpretation of language use emerges. Moving forward in Ozelonacaxtla in applying the findings of this research, the potential to increase local influence and control of education, and working to establish a written standard for Ozelonacaxtla Totonac may help continue to expand its domains of use and contribute to its vitality. Focusing on improving the situation in local schools is essential since much of the *menosprecio* ideology originates from teachers, and the increasing availability of education means young people are spending more and more of their time at school. The assertion that language sustainability and revitalization can be and should be supported through the schools contrasts with the suggestion that improving the sustainability of Mexico’s indigenous languages can best be achieved outside the colonial education system (Flores Farfán 2011). Although hegemony has originated and is reproduced through the schools, it is for this very reason that their potentially important and powerful role in changing this reproduction should not be ignored.

Narrowing in on speakers’ own beliefs and practices, their language ideologies, can better explain why some communities maintain their language while others shift, even under the same broad cultural and socio-economic conditions. Other Totonac communities such as Chicontla and Patla have more widely adopted *menosprecio* ideologies towards Totonac, and as a result, many families do not teach Totonac to their children (Lam 2009; 2012). The language sustainability observed in Ozelonacaxtla, but not in Chicontla and Patla, can be attributed to the different local contexts in each community: most speakers in Ozelonacaxtla have not adopted *menosprecio* but rather maintain a *pro-indígena* stance that encourages the use of both Totonac and Spanish, in contrast to the widespread *menosprecio* found in Chicontla and Patla. Ozelonacaxtla is also situated in a more politically active regional context of Sierra Norte that does not exist in the Rio Necaxa Valley where the communities of Chicontla and Patla are located. Only by including both the qualitative ideological and regional differences and the demographic study of these communities can the differences between language use be explained. Seeking “prior ideological clarification” in order to more adequately explain language use, such as in this study, best positions

efforts to sustain, document, and revitalize languages and increases the likelihood of success (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998:63).

Current research is focused on continuing the comparative study of Totonac communities, including the municipal seat, Huehuetla. Specific aims are to examine the relationship and interaction between political activism and language sustainability and to take a purposeful look at the role of youth in language transmission and socialization of their peers.

Importantly, this research has attempted to provide a kind of broad counter to the kind of “expert rhetoric” so often found in the literature surrounding endangered languages and language shift (Hill 2002; Meek 2011). Most studies of language shift focus on communities that have already undergone significant language shift, however this paper argues that it is necessary to also examine language sustainability, as the knowledge gained from communities that have been successful in sustaining their languages can be applied to communities that are looking to improve their situations. For example, the pragmatic and economic value of Totonac created as a result of the recent developments in the area surrounding Ozelonacaxtla (some private Totonac schools, scholarships for Totonac-speaking students, growing ecocultural tourism industry) are concrete activities that can improve the vitality of minority languages. It is hoped that the knowledge from this case study of Ozelonacaxtla can be applied to other Totonac communities and indigenous communities in Mexico, Latin America, and North America.

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**Appendix: Interview script**

What is your name?

What is your year of birth?

Who lives here with you in your home?

Do you speak Spanish or Totonac with those who live here with you?

Do you have children? How old are they?

Do you speak Totonac or Spanish with your children?

How did you decide to speak Totonac or Spanish with your children?

Do your children speak Totonac or Spanish to each other?

What language do your children speak with their grandparents? Friends?

If you do not have children, do you wish to have children?

What language(s) do you want to speak to your children when you have children?

Should children learn to speak Spanish? Why or why not?

Should children learn to speak Totonac? Why or why not?

Who should be responsible for teaching Spanish? For teaching Totonac? Why?

What level of schooling have you completed?

Do/did you like school?

What languages do/did you speak at school?

What are/were your teachers like?

What language do/did you use with your classmates at school? During recess?

Do you think classes should be given in Spanish or in Totonac? Why?

Do you think the new Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla is good? Why or why not?

Do you listen to the local radio station XECTZ? Why or why not?

Do you speak Totonac or Spanish when you are at church? At the local store?

Do you speak Totonac or Spanish with your neighbors? In the streets? In the plaza?

What do you/your parents do for a living? What are your plans for the future?

Do you speak Totonac or Spanish when you are working?

Have you travelled outside of Ozelonacaxtla? For what purpose?

Do you speak Totonac or Spanish when you are outside of Ozelonacaxtla?

Do you participate in the local government? If so, do you use Totonac or Spanish?

Do you like to speak Spanish? Why or why not?

Do you like to speak Totonac? Why or why not?

Do you like being bilingual? Why or why not?

Do you think Spanish is a good language? Why or why not?

Do you think Totonac is a good language? Why or why not?

Do you think Spanish is important? Why or why not?

Do you think Totonac is important? Why or why not?

When you think of the Totonac/Spanish language, who comes to mind?

Have you had any negative experiences related to speaking either Totonac or Spanish?

Have you noticed any changes in the village since you were a child?

Have you noticed any changes in the way Spanish and Totonac are used in the village since you were a child?

Do you think Totonac is in danger of being lost? Why or why not?