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Language shift, language reclamation: The case of Nahuatl in Tuxpan, Jalisco, Mexico.

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Abstract

In this article, I describe the importance of sociolinguistic fieldwork, collect testimonies of what people think about Nahuatl, also known as Mexicano, in Tuxpan in southern Jalisco, Mexico, and examine the possible reasons for its substitution. I discuss the significance of one of the dialects of a Mesoamerican language becoming obsolescent. Thanks to the collective memory of the people of Tuxpan, who regardless of their age are aware that Nahuatl was once spoken there, the indigenous language has maintained a symbolic role that allows reclamation projects to take place.

Keywords: nahuatl, western nahuatl, language substitution, language loss, language reclamation.

Introduction

There are several terms used to refer to the situation when a language is no longer spoken or is used in reduced or intimate contexts, including "disappearing language," "endangered language," "obsolescent language," "vanishing language", and "dormant language." They all describe, with nuances emphasizing different aspects, the fact that a language has very few or no speakers at all. The situation has been studied by authors like Fishman (1991), Tsunoda (2006), Warner, Luna and Butler (2007), Nettle and Romaine (2000), Sasse (1992), and others.

Among the factors that cause speakers to substitute their language for another are migration to a larger city or a different country, ecological causes such as deforestation and soil erosion that occasionally compel people to leave their communities, invasion by another country, or even the "willingness" of people to leave their mother language behind.

In several of the situations studied by researchers, the idea of language "dispossession" is latent. Hinton points out that there are powerful causes that go beyond the community itself and its apparent "decision" to leave its language behind:

> Because the loss of indigenous languages is tied closely to the usurpation of indigenous lands, the destruction of indigenous habitats, and the involuntary incorporation of indigenous peoples into the larger society (generally into the lower-class margins of that society), language death has become part of a human rights struggle... Language choice is part of the right of indigenous peoples to their own land, to autonomy, and to cultural and economic self-determination (Hinton 4).

However, other studies avoid discussing external factors in language extinction or substitution, instead suggesting it is the decision of a linguistic community to cease transmitting the language to the following generation. Speakers commonly do not realize or want to admit that their language is falling into disuse and is in real danger of disappearing. Documenting what the community believes about its language and the majority language will most likely reveal that, although communities who have substituted their native language for another often share similar reasons, there are particularities also. Understanding these nuances provides us with a broader understanding of how a language might go into disuse, about the linguistic ideologies behind such a process, and hopefully,

how language loss can be prevented or even reversed.

Sasse considers that the study of language death should include three sets of data (9). The first one is the external setting (ES), which refers to extra-linguistic factors such as cultural, sociological, ethno-historical, economic, and other processes that create in a certain speech community pressures that force the community to give up its language. The second is the speech behavior (SB), which refers to the regular use of variables, domains of language and style, and attitudes towards variants of language, etc. He states that differences in the external setting will induce differences in the speech behavior. The third set of data is the changes in structure that a language might experience, such as changes in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. These are the structural consequences (SC) of language death. Sasse emphasizes that the study of language death involves all three areas of research (10), although they are studied by different professional researchers, the first one most likely by historians, anthropologists or sociologists, whereas the third one would be most likely studied by linguists, psycholinguists, etc.

In the case of the information collected from Tuxpan, it is possible to talk about the first set of data, the external setting, and roughly about the second, the speech behavior. It is not possible to describe the structural consequences of language death since the material collected in the twentieth century by Arreola (1934), Ruvalcaba (1935), Valiñas (1982), and myself (Yáñez Rosales 1988-1996) is very limited. However, it is possible to talk about the external setting in a more detailed manner.

Language reclamation and revitalization efforts have also been documented, although probably the only case that can really be referred to as successful revitalization is Hebrew in Israel (Fishman 291). Some authors also include Maaori in New Zealand (Tsunoda 19).[1] In order to distinguish the terms, I must cite a couple of definitions. Hinton poses two extreme possibilities of using “revitalization”:

> [It] refers to the development of programs that result in re-establishing a language which has ceased being the language of communication in the speech community and bringing it back into full use into all ways of life. This is what happened with Hebrew. “Revitalization” can also begin with a less extreme state of loss, such as that encountered in Irish or Navajo which are both still the first language of many children and are used in many homes as the language of communication, though both languages are losing ground. For these speech communities, revitalization would mean turning this decline around. (5)

Hinton includes under the second scenario the efforts that communities with no speakers at all make in order to accomplish very modest goals. Their objective may not be to reach the full revitalization of the language as with Hebrew but to maintain the language in some manner for particular reasons. This type of situation has been more recently called “language reclamation” (Pérez Báez et al. 13-14). The situation described in this article falls under this type of community efforts.

The information presented in the following pages is divided into four sections. First, general information about Tuxpan is provided. Second, I report on the interviews I carried out with three age groups of people in Tuxpan. The first group were born before 1920 and either grew up speaking Nahuatl as their first language or at least listened to it as children in a very close family environment. By the time I started fieldwork in Tuxpan in 1988, they were elders. The second group, born between 1921 and 1940, were in many cases the sons and daughters of the first group, whereas those in the third group are the grandchildren of the first. I also interviewed people who migrated to Tuxpan before 1960, considering that work at the paper mill (see below) started in the nineteen forties, and these immigrants witnessed (or provoked) the diminishing of the Nahuatl language. The main objective of the interviews was to find out how all four groups of people explain the reasons why Nahuatl ceased to be spoken in Tuxpan and the ideologies behind that process. The fieldwork was carried out from 1988 to 1996. In the third section, I report on the reclamation

efforts that are taking place among some young people who want to be able to speak Nahuatl, regardless of the fact that for them it will be a second language. In the fourth section, I discuss the information presented in light of what other researchers have found in similar context.

1. Fieldwork in Tuxpan, Jalisco

Tuxpan is located in the southern part of the state of Jalisco. A pre-Hispanic settlement, it was part of a major Nahua region that included southernmost Colima and neighboring towns such as Tamazula and Zapotlán. During the colonial period, it was administratively within New Spain, not within Nueva Galicia, as would be expected due to its location in the western part of Mexico.[2] In 2015, it had 34,535 inhabitants. [3]

Tuxpan has attracted the attention of several researchers. There are reports, articles, travel journals and other types of texts documenting different aspects of its daily life since at least the end of the nineteenth century. Lumholtz (331-348) spent four weeks there and registered some information about the town, its people and some of the social practices he witnessed. Later on, Macías and Rodríguez Gil (1910), De la Cerda Silva (1956), Dahlgren (1962), Schöndube Baumbach (1976) and Lameiras (1990), among others, documented different anthropological, historical and archaeological aspects of Tuxpan.

Regarding linguistic information, in 1580 it was recorded that Nahuatl was one of the languages spoken locally, although the names of two other languages were mentioned in the *Relación Geográfica:* "tiam" and "cochin" (Acuña 386). Nothing is really known about them. As years went by, no other language but Nahuatl was known to be spoken in Tuxpan.

Some of the aforementioned authors commented on or registered some lexical items of the Nahuatl variety spoken in Tuxpan, but the truth is that it was only barely documented in the twentieth century.[4] One of the salient linguistic traits for which Tuxpan Nahuatl is known is that where central Nahuatl exhibits *–tl* or /ƛ/, Tuxpan Nahuatl exhibits mostly *–l*. This is a characteristic commonly found in southern Jalisco and Colima Nahuatl.

On a different though related track, there have been articles and graduate theses that documented sociolinguistic aspects of Nahuatl and Spanish and the teaching of Nahuatl. Yáñez Rosales (1999), Yáñez Rosales et al. (2016), Rojas Arias (2004), and Vega Torres (2009) have focused on language displacement, language ideologies, language policy, and autonomous efforts to build a language reclamation agenda developed by self-organized groups of young men and women who, without the support of the State, believe in the importance of reclaiming their grandparents' mother tongue.

2. Sociolinguistic fieldwork: documenting Nahuatl substitution

I started fieldwork in 1988, about ten years after Valiñas went to Tuxpan and collected the linguistic data. By that time, the language had very few rememberers (Campbell and Muntzel 181) who could hardly maintain a conversation (Yáñez Rosales, in press). I was able to collect mainly fixed phrases and loose vocabulary. I met Balbina González, one of Valiñas' informants. I did not meet Paulina Bautista, the informant who provided Valiñas with examples of greetings (Valiñas, "El náhuatl en Jalisco, Colima y Michoacán" 57-62). When Valiñas and I collected the linguistic data, Nahuatl must have been in level 8b of the EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) proposed by *Ethnologue* (Simons and Fennig),[5] that is, "Nearly extinct. The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older." Simultaneously, I believe that the language was in level 9 of the scale, that is "Dormant. The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency" (Simons and Fennig).

The elders I interviewed remembered phrases in Nahuatl and some vocabulary, but the language had no communicative functions. It was not a language for conversation, or to do errands, buy things at the corner store, or ask for a bride's hand as it had been decades before. Regardless, the elders were eager to speak about life in Tuxpan when they grew up; that is, during the first decades of the twentieth

century. Therefore, I decided to try to reconstruct how Mexicano had been supplanted by Spanish during the twentieth century, according to their perspective. From 1988 to 1996, I interviewed approximately 150 people, attended numerous festivities in Tuxpan, and participated in the feasts they organize. The informants were divided into four groups:

- Generation #1, those born before 1920, who grew up speaking Mexicano as their first language or were in close contact with the language in their family environment;
- Generation #2, born between 1921-1940, that is, the sons and daughters of the first group;[6]
- Generation #3, born between 1941-1960, the granddaughters and grandsons of the first group;
- People who immigrated to Tuxpan before 1960.

After some time interviewing elders in Tuxpan, a very influential external factor in the process of language substitution became apparent: the presence of people alien to Tuxpan who ended up living there since approximately the middle of the 1940s. The *Compañía Industrial de Atenquique, Sociedad Anónima* (C.I.D.A.S.A), a paper mill, was established in 1946 in Atenquique, a small town thirteen kilometers from Tuxpan. People from surrounding states such as Aguascalientes, Colima, Michoacán, and even further, like Durango, were hired to work in several of the production sections of the paper mill. Many of them settled in Tuxpan. Soon "outsiders" were numerous, and from what the informants told me, they harassed the Indigenous people. Moreover, as industrial workers, they earned about ten times more than peasants, a fact that made Tuxpan people appear impoverished (Gabayet 64).[7] The fourth group I interviewed was people who arrived in Tuxpan before 1960 and, in their own particular way, became part of the community.

The way in which Tuxpan generations #1 and #2 explain language substitution has been reported in previous texts;[8] general comments about the opinions collected from the four groups I consulted have been included in the work by Yáñez Rosales et al. However, this is the first-time responses from all four groups have been collated. In the following paragraphs, I will provide a panorama of what such fieldwork revealed.

There are shared opinions among the first three groups of interviewees about the reasons that caused the substitution of Nahuatl for Spanish in Tuxpan, although there are some nuances. For example, generation #1 and #2 explain that "dying out causes" led to the substitution. Both groups stated that the speakers died or married a person who did not speak Nahuatl, so they ended up not transmitting it to their children. They also mentioned that many people went to live in a different city, which is also interpreted as a cause of the decrease in the number of speakers. A frequent analogy is made between language decline and the fact that the traditional *sabanilla*, a piece of woolen cloth that women wore as a long skirt, could no longer be bought since the person who used to make them in Tuxpan also died. Therefore, it seems that some forces that could have promoted the transmission of the language died, or they reached a terminal point in the cycle of Indigenous culture reproduction, language included.

Both groups also consider internal fractures among the group, but point to each other as responsible for the interruption of the line of language transmission. Generation #1 interviewees claim that the following generation "did not want" or "did not like" to speak/learn/continue the usage of Mexicano, that they were even ashamed of speaking it ("les dio vergüenza"), that whenever someone spoke Mexicano to one of their children, the child would respond "I do not understand," "Do not talk to me in that *ball* language" ("lengua bola," this is, "threadless", "tangled"). "What if you are calling me an ox or pig?" An interviewee told me, referring to herself:

> #1. "I did not learn to speak Mexicano because I did not want to. My husband and his entire family spoke Mexicano and I told them: 'You can say all you want… do whatever you want, but I won't speak Mexicano'. I didn't like it." (Yáñez Rosales, "Uso y desuso del náhuatl"128)[9]

Another lady, referring to both Nahuatl and Spanish, said:

> #2. "Look, it has a lot of little turns, it's confusing. Spanish is more straightforward. My tongue is not used to speaking Mexicano." (Yáñez Rosales, "Uso y desuso del náhuatl" 129)[10]

Alongside this perspective is the feeling that it takes longer to communicate in Mexicano. An old lady told me this about her nephew:

> #3. "'No', he said, 'because, gosh, my tongue gets tangled up and I cannot pronounce'. And no, he has not wanted (to speak). Neither has the girl [her niece]. She says: 'No, it takes me too long'. All right, no more, then!" (Yáñez Rosales, "Uso y desuso del náhuatl" 122).[11]

From these and other statements made by members of Generation #1, I believe that it is possible to talk about the "spread" or takeover of Mestizo society. The informants from this group identify a conflicting element that made them feel their Indigenous identity was severely threatened by people who migrated to Tuxpan to work in C.I.D.A.S.A. Mexicano speakers were stigmatized in their own hometown by outsiders. Little by little, Tuxpanecs were "thrown" to the outskirts of the town. Mestizo settlers, also called "quixtianos" ("Christians") or "fueranos" ("outsiders") by Tuxpan people, earned enough money to buy properties in the downtown area. Some people also became indebted to the newcomers and were unable to pay back their loans. They ended up leaving their homes. It was common to hear that "the Indians live on the other side of the railroad tracks."

Regarding the testimonies of Generation #2 members, some of them say that the elders should have taught their children to speak the language, that they were not interested in transmitting it, and that that is why it is no longer spoken.

Significantly, Generation #2 targets "the government" as responsible for not promoting Mexicano through the educational system. They say some subjects should have been taught through Mexicano, in the same way current junior high school students take English, and that the government should have been concerned with the maintenance of Mexicano. "School would have been a choice because sometimes teachers succeed in matters where parents do not", a woman told me.

Several of the Generation #2 interviewees believe there is a strong tie between the language of government and "civilization". A man told me that there are no more Mexicano speakers because Spanish is the language used by the government, and therefore it is the language of civilization. "How then could it have continued being spoken?" "Schooling is very civilized; they would not speak that language at school." "Those who spoke Mexicano did not go to school, that is why they spoke *that*." Another informant said: "There are *superior* words in Spanish. I have already learned Spanish and I can see I speak *better* now." "Modern studies are in Spanish. If I had a son, I would not speak Mexicano to him."

Almost none of the informants of Generation #2 consider the migration of outsiders to Tuxpan an influential force in the replacement of Mexicano. They assert that Mexicano had already been replaced by the time the number of outsiders notably increased. Some respondents reflect ambiguous feelings towards Mexicano, with comments saying the language was a "beautiful thing" and they are sorry they do not speak it anymore, while also making comments that indicate overt rejection. Referring to one of the elder women who used to greet a visitor in Nahuatl, a female informant asserted:

> #4 … "When they are going to elect a government official, they [the organizers of his visit] come looking for an *Indita* ["little female Indian"], but with an interpreter. The government likes *that*, they are amused by *that*. That is why it would have been nice [to continue speaking Mexicano], because people like doña Balbina *start speaking like chicken*, but I do not understand them."[12]

Generation #3 were divided in their opinions, with no clear tendency in what they consider

the main reason for the substitution of Nahuatl. In general, they consider Nahuatl "difficult to learn" and Spanish "easier". Another reason mentioned by the interviewees was that "times have changed," "Tuxpan (as a town) spread out," industries arrived in Tuxpan and the town "became modern." These comments relate Nahuatl to "the past," to a time long gone, and it is not only impossible but undesirable to "go back." One informant told me:

> #5. "My paternal grandfather spoke Mexicano. But I was never interested. [Before] there were people who visited him, they heard that he spoke the language. Now, it wouldn't do any good to know the language, right now only Spanish… People who arrived from other places didn't influence [the language substitution], people stopped talking [Mexicano] because *they started to wake up*. It is no longer important…"[13]

There is no agreement among members of Generation #3 about the influence that people who migrated to Tuxpan had in the substitution of Nahuatl. The informant above has a positive opinion of them, whereas the following one differs:

> #6 "My grandmother spoke [Nahuatl], and her sister too. But my mother did not… The new priests no longer wanted to go ask for the bride's hand [using Nahuatl]. It was important to maintain it… Outsiders did have an influence in the fact that it is no longer spoken. It was one of the main reasons. They would shout to them [indigenous people]: 'you bunch of barefoot Indians!', and they would start hiding from them. In the demonstrations, when they delivered a speech [in Nahuatl], they [the outsiders] would even start to shout and harass them: 'Do you really think that the people who come from other places are interested in listening to how people here speak?'"[14]

On the other hand, members of Generation #2 and #3 agree that "the government" did nothing to support Mexicano. They say there were no teachers who could encourage the learning of the language.

All three Tuxpan groups referred to the fact that Mestizo society "spread", but there are differences in how they say this occurred and the associated consequences. Some people said that Mexicano is a "difficult" language, that they required a "good memory," needed to "pay attention" in order to learn it, needed to "study" it, whereas other informants said that Mexicano lacks meaningfulness and usefulness. There is a detachment from the language in these statements; it is clear that interviewees are talking about a language that is no longer vital to the community and does not have any communicative function.

I have tried to reconstruct how the process of substitution of Nahuatl took place according to the three Tuxpan groups. Finally, I present the opinions of the people who moved to Tuxpan before 1960, so the narratives refer to the same period.

From the very beginning, this group confirmed what Generation #1 had told me. Their opinions of the Tuxpan people were in fact scornful, classist, and racist. A very common analogy was to refer to the skin color of Tuxpan people: "Indios chococos," "Indios chocoqueros". The *chococo* is a dark-skinned fish that used to be sold in Tuxpan and was caught in the Tecoman, Colima area.[15] To refer to a person from Tuxpan as "indio chocoquero" was a common insult. Another reference that outsiders used when talking about people from Tuxpan was that the *indiada*, the "horde" or "gang" of Indians, lived on the other side of the railroad tracks. A synonym of *indiada* was *naturalada*, "the horde of naturals," "the gang of natives." One informant told me:

> #7 "When I arrived [to live in Tuxpan] in 1953, I still heard people speak in Nahuatl. I know [some of the speakers]. There were very few *gente de razón,[16]* all the women wore *sabanilla* and were barefoot… I heard some of them speak in the street. So many people who came here from other places make fun of them, they laugh at them, and that is why they make them change the language. It would

> have been nice [that the Nahuatl language continued being spoken], and then again it wouldn't, because they are *already* used to [speaking Spanish]. There are *already* few persons [who speak Nahuatl], they *already* dress like us…"[17]

The three "already" uttered by the interviewee are suggestive of the linguistic ideologies these people portrayed. She believes that the goal, for the Tuxpan people, must have been to leave behind their Indigenous identity: to speak Spanish, dress in Mestizo clothes, wear shoes, and become uniform in language and clothing. Under such pressure, we can say that the townspeople were dispossessed of important symbols of their Tuxpan identity.

The lack of teaching in Mexicano was also mentioned by the outsider group, although more as a solution to my concern than as something that should have been implemented.

3. Nahuatl reclamation in Tuxpan.

In the 1980s, a group of people self-organized people, the *Tlayacanque* ("leaders"), led the first reclamation effort. The group hearkened back to a previous authority, the "Council of Elders." They went to the Secretaría de Educación Pública[18] 14 (S.E.P.) and requested Nahuatl-speaking teachers be sent to Tuxpan so that they could go from school to school teaching the language. They were concerned that Nahuatl was at serious risk of displacement, although by the time this request was formalized, it was only the elders, mainly rememberers, who were keepers of the language.

In 1988, S.E.P. sent a first group of three Nahuatl teachers from La Huasteca region.[19] They started classes at the Music School, located in the northern part of Tuxpan. The following school year, there were six teachers, so the whole elementary school staff was complete. It was the first "Bilingual-bicultural" school in Tuxpan. It was named *Kalmekak*, as the school for the Aztec nobility was called.

However, neither the *Tlayacanque* nor the S.E.P. authorities anticipated that people from Tuxpan would be sensitive to dialectal differences. People noticed that the Nahuatl spoken by the teachers was different from the "mera lengua mexicana" ("the true Mexican language"), that is, Tuxpan Nahuatl. This knowledge and reaction were completely unexpected. Tuxpan Nahuatl is indeed different from La Huasteca Nahuatl.[20] On the one hand, it revealed knowledge of the Mexicano language that was apparently underground. On the other hand, it revealed language loyalties in a broader sense as well as language purism. Very soon, the original intentions of the project were rejected. The townspeople's verdict was that the teachers did not know the "true" Mexican language, so it was no use sending children to that school if the purpose was to speak Mexicano.

Not only was open rejection exhibited, but also criticism. The teachers would only teach the national anthem to the students, the names of the colors, and a poem that children should recite on Mother's Day. Regardless of the fact that S.E.P. built a new building for the school and local teachers were hired in spite of the fact that they were not Nahuatl speakers, the *Kalmekak* remained incapable of teaching the language to the children. S.E.P. authorities provided teachers with textbooks written completely in Nahuatl, disregarding the fact that for Tuxpan children Nahuatl is a second language. S.E.P. also failed to adequately train the teachers, or to design a program for such a situation.

In 2000, under the label of "Intercultural bilingual education," which was S.E.P.'s new project, the *Acolmiztli* school was founded in the southern part of Tuxpan. It is staffed by Nahuatl-speaking teachers from La Huasteca as well. However, the director has been more successful in the role the school plays within Tuxpan. He has become involved with the town council and other local groups who organize cultural events. The townspeople's resistance to the presence of the teachers has diminished, too. After almost twenty years of work, the teachers have developed some materials for teaching Nahuatl as a second language. The result is a book for first and second grades, the *Noamoch tlen mexika tlajtoli*, published in 2016.[21] The Nahuatl variety used in the book is the one from La Huasteca.

In approximately 2004, a group of young activists, the *Yaoxocoyome Nahuatl,*[22] mainly

bachelor students, started a project with several ideas in mind. Their overall project aims to document Tuxpan culture, which they understand as history, "tradition" and "customs," food, and, importantly, the Nahuatl language. The students are very much aware of their Nahua ancestry. They have collected items such as pre-Hispanic pottery, traditional garments for women and men, and set up a local museum. The city council lent them a house that is right across the main plaza. At the same time, they have acquired classical Nahuatl books and started struggling to learn the language. In February of 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, they organized a Mother Tongue International Day celebration.

This is probably the most significant language reclamation event to have taken place in Tuxpan in recent years. Although Nahuatl was considered an indicator of deprivation, there is a vivid collective memory that acknowledges a Nahua sense of belonging. It allows and inspires different projects whose goals are to reclaim, and maybe revitalize, the language and culture.

It was mainly this group in the local arena, as part of the *Concejo Indígena de Gobierno* ("Indigenous Government Council"), who supported María de Jesús Patricio Martínez' recent effort to be registered as a candidate for the 2018 Mexican presidential election. *Marichuy*, a Tuxpan traditional medicine doctor, was unable to gather enough signatures to become a registered candidate.

4. Discussion

What happened in Tuxpan could be the story of many linguistic communities that lost their native language during the twentieth century. Of course, there are particularities. Not all Mexican towns where language substitution has taken place witnessed the arrival of an industry that brought immigration. More often, small towns have experienced high numbers of people leaving.

The way Tuxpan people call outsiders, *quixtianos*, and the way outsiders call Tuxpan people, *naturales*, immediately takes us back to colonial times. It is as if the colonial era had remained static, immutable. It was not the case that the outsiders had never met indigenous people, and that Tuxpan people had never met Mestizos. Notwithstanding, as if it were their first encounter, the conflict between the two groups was critical and it increased over three or four decades. Then it started to lessen at a very slow pace. Outsiders, after being left out of the numerous celebrations organized by Tuxpan people, decided to acquire images of the same saints so they could participate in their own way. This can be seen on San Sebastian's day (January 20th), the largest celebration in Tuxpan. At the same time that the three main images kept in townspeople's homes are taken to mass, other images of San Sebastian, of a smaller size and more similar to the one promoted by the church, are taken to mass too.[23] At the end, all the images go across the town and numerous groups of dancers go to every place where there is an image to acknowledge and legitimize each representation.

It is not easy to prove that the number of outsiders who moved to Tuxpan was high. In order to find out whether what the members of Generation #1 told me was true, I looked up the Municipal Civil Registrar in Tuxpan. I decided to take a two-year sample of every decade starting in 1901-1902; the last years consulted were 1961-1962. The birthplace of the child's parents is included in the records. The results were conclusive:

Table 1 Data from the Municipal Civil Registrar in Tuxpan, Jalisco. Children whose parents were from Tuxpan, and children whose parents were from other towns.

Year	Children born to parents from Tuxpan:	Children born to parents from other towns:
1901	229	87
1902	167	124
Total	**396**	**211**
1911	278	14
1912	264	22
Total	**542**	**36**
1921	282	41
1922	305	34
Total	**587**	**75**
1931	297	61
1932	271	47
Total	**568**	**108**
1941	368	15
1942	370	19
Total	**738**	**34**
1951	484	201
1952	441	197
Total	**925**	**398**
1961	558	334
1962	555	289
Total	**1113**	**623**
TOTALS:	**4869**	**1485**

As can be observed, there was a tremendous increase in births to parents from other towns in the 1951-1952 period, which corresponds with the years after C.I.D.A.S.A. started operating in 1946. Whereas Tuxpan families maintained a modest but steady growth rate, families who settled in Tuxpan showed an irregular increase pattern from 1901 to 1942, but in the following two decades, the increase went beyond a thousand percent compared with 1941-1942.

I have also consulted censuses from 1930 on for additional data:

Table 2 Population of Tuxpan, according to the national censuses:

1930	10,406
1940	10,837
1950	14,727
1960	19,026 [24]

The increase from 1930 to 1940 is less than 8%, whereas from 1940 to 1950 it is almost 39%. Although we do not have reliable numbers of how many people arrived to live in Tuxpan as a result of the paper mill or cement factory, it is a fact that people who had not been born in the town settled in Tuxpan. They made Tuxpan people feel like strangers in their own ancestral hometown. How and why outsiders were so successful in transmitting their linguistic ideologies of Spanish superiority, Spanish as a language suitable for expressing "civilization", putting pressure on people to use Mestizo-modern garments, and establishing an analogy with backwardness if one went barefoot or wore traditional garments, is a topic that deserves more discussion.

The townspeople's contact with Spanish and Spanish speakers had begun long before, and it had not been a smooth contact. José Lameiras (165-167) states that during the years the railroad tracks were set up (1889-1909), and the years of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), people in Tuxpan had experienced the arrival of all types of workers first, and soldiers from both sides later. They all went back and forth across the region demanding housing, food, and women. It was a harsh period for the people of Tuxpan. The agricultural land sharing program conducted by the post-revolutionary government met with the disapproval of the clergy, who believed that the townspeople had no right to request pieces of land that did not belong to them "legitimately". Regardless of what the Church said, there were Tuxpan men who applied for a plot (Lameiras 172-174). So by the 1940s, when C.I.D.A.S.A. started operating with workers from the surrounding states, Nahuatl was only used in intimate spaces by those born at the beginning of the century. Their children (generation #2) did not listen to much Nahuatl in their close family; they were very detached from the indigenous language.[25] This is the group I call Generation #1. Their attitudes towards Nahuatl and Spanish indicate that the school system had impinged on their identity to the point that they deliberately rejected the possibility of maintaining the language; they viewed it as a symbol of "the past" and "lack of civilization". One of the prejudices that came up during the fieldwork was the idea that Nahuatl from Tuxpan is an "incomplete" language. An interviewee stated:

#8 "I have been told that the language that was spoken here was not a complete language."

Dorian, in explaining how Western language ideologies have been constructed, observes that:

> In the more usual cases, the group that exercises military or political power over others will establish its own language as the language of governance in its contacts with those others. And when one speech form enjoys a favored position as the language of those who control obvious power positions (as administrators, governors, judicial officers, military officers, religious officials, major landholders, and so forth), it requires no great sagacity, but only common sense, to see that it's likely to be useful to acquire some knowledge of that language (4-5).

She then continues to explain how some European languages have become powerful symbols in the political and economic arena at the expense of regional or minority languages that might have an equally valuable literary or historical tradition.[26] She then cites the work of Joseph:

> Because the intrinsic worth of dialects and of their component elements and processes is well-nigh impossible to determine, language is highly susceptible to prestige transfer. Persons who are prestigious for quantifiable reasons, physical or material, are on this account emulated by the rest of the community. These others cannot obtain the physical or material resources which confer the prestige directly (at least they cannot obtain them easily or else no prestige would be associated with them). But prestige is transferred to attributes of the prestigious persons other than those on which their prestige is founded, and these prestigious-by-transfer attributes include things which others in the community may more easily imitate and acquire, if they so choose. Language is one of these (qtd. in Dorian 8).

In the case of Mexico – and this happened not only in Tuxpan – the national school system contributed to giving a very low value to indigenous languages, regarding them as symbols of backwardness. Moreover, following Joseph's reasoning, C.I.D.A.S.A. workers also contributed to such misconceptions since they projected themselves as successful workers due to their higher salaries and Mestizo identities. They constantly humiliated Tuxpan townspeople. So there was a transfer of prestige from the people to the language that raised the position of Spanish.

The Nahuatl dialect is another topic that deserves further discussion than is possible here. Material documentation of the Tuxpan dialect is scarce and not enough to attempt revitalizing the language or learning Nahuatl as a second language. There is documentation on other varieties of Nahuatl but not on the southern Jalisco dialect.[27] As mentioned, people in Tuxpan reacted against the La Huasteca schoolteachers because they did not speak "the true Mexican language." Not only was it considered different[28] but their Nahuatl also had many Spanish loans, a fact that, as Hill and Hill (442-444) demonstrated, is a strategy that allows the indigenous language to be updated and to maintain its communicative functions.

The teachers have gained some acceptance from Tuxpan parents, even though the dialect they teach in the two intercultural elementary schools is La Huasteca Nahuatl. On the other hand, the *Yaoxocoyome Nahuatl* are learning Central classical Nahuatl. Both tasks represent attainable and legitimate options. They represent valuable and noteworthy efforts. The symbolism such efforts imply is probably the most important achievement. The Nahuatl-speaking teachers provide a link between the terminal speaker generation (Sasse, 1992: 18), those who were born at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first two decades of the twentieth, and the children that have been taught La Huasteca Nahuatl, and the *Yaoxocoyome Nahuatl*, who have studied Central classical Nahuatl. The Nahuatl-speaking teachers have allowed the language to continue to live in Tuxpan. The positive symbolism of this is, in my opinion, undeniable.[29] At this point, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, I believe that the language is not in level 9 of the EGIDS, the "dormant" level, but in the level 9 of the alternative labels, which is "re-awakening"

(Simons and Fennig).

Conclusions

The extinction of a language is a multifactorial phenomenon. In countries colonized by expansionist nations, entire communities, their speakers, and their languages disappeared. In many cases, this occurred during the very first years or decades of colonization. Epidemics, abusive labor exploitation, the arrival of cattle and the seizure of territories became important allies in colonization. In other cases, being colonized was a process experienced by the community at a slower pace, perhaps due to its isolation from larger cities, or because the surrounding orography or other natural barriers protected the people, for some time, from a closer contact with outsiders.

Nahuatl, the language spoken in the Valley of Mexico in the sixteenth century by the Aztecs and in probably hundreds of small towns (both in present central Mexico and in faraway regions either as a first language, a second language, or as a lingua franca), has survived until the twenty-first century as the language that has the largest number of speakers in Mexico, with 1,725,620 speakers in 2015.[30] Along with Maya, Zapotec, Quechua, Tupí, and Guaraní, Nahuatl is one of the most studied languages of the Americas. In Mexico, the largest collection of colonial texts written in an indigenous language is in Nahuatl. It exhibits much variation, too. According to INALI, there are 30 dialects.[31] Considering this information, one might think that the continuation of the language is guaranteed, an assumption that is debatable.

So, if Nahuatl seems to be in such a healthy and vital state, what has been lost with the disappearance of Tuxpan Nahuatl?

Several researchers[32] have underscored what is lost when a language becomes extinct. The arguments go from the cultural and cognitive possibilities of the human mind to establish ways of knowing, to the impossibility of translating the beauty of poetry or mythology, due to the very fact that every language has its own grammatical, semantic and other resources to name and transmit knowledge. In the case of Tuxpan, what has become extinct is a dialect, not the entire language.

If we observe the process that took place in Tuxpan, there are factors that seem to be salient. Tuxpan remained somewhat isolated from contact with Spanish speakers during the colonial period since it was part of larger political units and the contact was somewhat indirect and delimited. The strongest contact with the colonial authorities was through the Church and its representatives.

After Mexico's War of Independence (1810-1821), Tuxpan got involved in political and economic events that brought about an aggressive contact with the "national society". The contact became worse by the end of the nineteenth century,[33] and during the twentieth Spanish speakers exerted all kinds of power over the townspeople of Tuxpan. Educational policies as well as the industrialization of southern Jalisco did their part in compelling people to leave their indigenous identity behind and become part of "the nation". They made Tuxpan townspeople think that speaking Nahuatl, dressing in their traditional garments, and being dark skinned were part of a devaluated way of being. Ceasing to speak Nahuatl seemed the easiest way to alleviate the burden. It is clear that in the decades following the Revolution, several communicative functions were already being performed in Spanish. The national school system and the issues related to applying for a plot of land were conducted in Spanish. Therefore, there were new communicative events that from the very start took place in Spanish.

As years went by, the adult generation realized that the loss of the language was in progress. It was in the early eighties that the *Tlayacanque* requested that Nahuatl-speaking teachers be brought to Tuxpan so that the language could be taught. Although this project did not yield the expected results immediately, there was an impulse from a different source that brought about changes in the youngsters' way of thinking: the Zapatista movement that began in Chiapas in 1994. Once the military phase of the uprising concluded,[34] the Zapatistas promoted meetings among different age groups of indigenous persons. One of the most important was the meetings of young men and women. In these meetings, the youth groups wore their

regional or traditional clothing and introduced themselves in their indigenous language. The meetings turned out to be a tremendous motivation for reclaiming the language. There was an interest not only in learning Nahuatl as a second language, but also in researching the language in general and variants in particular. The youngsters are aware that the dialect spoken by the intercultural-bilingual schoolteachers is different from the one the sixteenth-century poetry is written in, and both are different from the one their grandparents spoke. They have discussed the topic and regardless of the differences, they have developed a strategy to reclaim the language and other cultural assets. Their goal is clear: they want their indigenous identity back.

Going back to the question of what was lost with the disappearance of the Tuxpan dialect, I would say that, on the one hand, the right of the people to identify as a Nahua group in its entire sense was lost. In recent years, because being part of an indigenous group is sometimes translated as a benefit (economic resources, right to a scholarship or to be hired in a specific employment), people from Tuxpan have been short-changed (again) because they are not "true Indians" since they do not speak an indigenous language. In this case, they are compared with the Wixarika, a Uto-Aztecan group that has its dwellings in northern Jalisco, who wear beautiful and artistically crafted garments and, although they have fewer speakers, there is no doubt their language is very vital.[35] On top of this, considering that a dialect is historically and culturally tailored, the right to be different was lost. Phonemes, prosody, and lexicon were crafted day by day by the speech community, probably for hundreds of years. These and other features make the difference between dialects.

Hinton stated in 1998 that there was already pioneering work in the field of language revitalization. Twenty years later, the work being done is still pioneering, since there are no guidelines to follow if reversing language shift is the goal of the speech community. There are no guidelines because the circumstances in which a language ceased to be spoken differ from community to community, and the reasons for reclaiming or revitalizing the language are different, too. No matter what linguists do, there must be community involvement. It is the most important reason to bring a language back into use and hopefully revitalize it. As Grennoble and Whaley (x) have stated, the best reason for revitalizing a language is the one the speech community finds suitable.

Endnotes

[1] However, it must be noted that Maaori has been at risk but not in complete disuse. The "language nest" program started in the mid-1970s, when Maaori speakers were not elders yet: they were fifty and over (Tsunoda 19). I mention the age information because in Tuxpan the "terminal speaker generation" (Sasse 18) was probably born before the end of the nineteenth century, or in the first decades of the twentieth. By the time Valiñas (1979, 1982) and I arrived in Tuxpan, there were very few people who had grown up speaking Nahuatl as their first language.

[2] For more details on the colonial period of the region, see Gerhard (1986; 1993).

[3] See INEGI 2015, "Número de habitantes."

[4] See Arreola, 1934; Ruvalcaba, 1935; Valiñas 1982

[5] On the basis of Fishman's 1991 proposal, Lewis and Simons (2010), and Simons and Fennig (2018) have made adjustments to Fishman's scale. The scale has the following levels of vitality: 0 International; 1 National; 2 Provincial; 3 Wider Communication; 4 Educational; 5 Developing; 6a Vigorous; 6b Threatened; 7 Shifting; 8a Moribund; 8b Nearly Extinct; 9 Dormant; 10 Extinct. (See www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status).The authors have included three more levels that allow researchers to provide a more accurate description of the situation of the language. One of the three is particularly useful in this work: "9 Re-awakening. The ethnic community associated with a dormant language is working to establish more uses and more users for the language with the result that new L2 speakers are emerging". The topic will be developed in Section 3 of this article.

[6] Kinship was an important criterion for inclusion in this group, but year of birth was the strongest criterion.

[7] Gabayet's work is about the process of industrial development in the south of Jalisco. She studied CIDASA, and the TOLTECA cement factory. Industrial workers, who most frequently had been peasants just like the people from Tuxpan, developed an economic and material standard that left Tuxpan townspeople far behind. Very soon, CIDASA workers' homes had refrigerators, gas stoves and other appliances, as well as tiled floors, whereas other homes did not. In fact, houses with dirt floor were common in the eighties and nineties.

[8] See Yáñez Rosales 1994; 1999.

[9] Translation of: "Yo no me enseñé [a hablar mexicano] porque no quise. Mi esposo y toda su familia d[e] él

hablaban mexicano y yo les decía, 'digan todo lo que quieran… háganle como quieran, pero yo no hablo mexicano', a mí no me gustó."

[10] Translation of: "Mire, tiene muchas vueltitas, es revoltosito. El español es más derecho. La lengua no está acostumbrada a hablar en mexicano…"

[11] Translation of: 'No, dice, 'porque, ¡ay! se me enreda la lengua y no puedo pronunciar' y no, no ha querido [hablar mexicano]. La muchacha tampoco. Dice: 'no, me entretengo', ¡ah bueno, ya no pues!

[12] Translation of: "…cuando van a elegir un gobernante, vienen a buscar una indita pero con intérprete, al gobierno le gusta, lo enlevan con eso, por eso hubiera sido bonito, porque la gente como doña Balbina se agarran hablando como pollitos pero yo no les entiendo." The verb enlevar, often used in rural Spanish in Mexico, means "to be entertained," "to be distracted with," the idea being that while someone is distracted, he or she might get fooled or cheated.

[13] Translation of: "Mi abuelo paterno hablaba mexicano, pero yo nunca tuve el interés… Visitaban a mi abuelo, oían decir que él lo hablaba. Ahora, no serviría de nada saber esa lengua, orita el puro español… La gente que llegó de fuera no tuvo que ver, se dejó de hablar en que [sic] la gente se fue despertando. Ya no es de importancia…"

[14] Translation of: "Mi abuela hablaba y su hermana, pero mi mamá no... Los nuevos curas ya no quisieron ir a pedir la mano de las novias. Era muy importante que se conservara… Sí influyeron [los de fuera] en que se dejara de hablar, fue una de las causas principales, les decían "bola de indios patas rajadas" y se andaban escondiendo. En los mítines, cuando les decían un discurso, incluso empezaban a ofender, a gritar, "Ay, ¿a poco creen que [a] la gente de fuera le interesa oír como habla [la gente de aquí]?"

[15] Reyes Garza (49) states that it is caught in a fresh water lake, Alcuzagüe, in Colima; it is edible. It is also known as chococo prieto, an adjective that reaffirms its dark-colored skin.

[16] This expression is definitely a derogatory term that refers to non-Indigenous people as "superior". It can be translated as "reasoning people", "thinking people," whereas the opposite, in reference to Indigenous people, would be "non-reasoning," "non-thinking", which together with indiada, naturalada ("the naturals," "the natives"), derived from "manada," "herd," "pack," take us back to colonial times. They all give an idea of what the outsider group thought about the people from Tuxpan. The sabanilla is the long wool skirt that Tuxpan women used to wear. It was their traditional garment.

[17] Translation of: "Cuando llegué [a Tuxpan] en 1953, todavía me tocó oír hablar en mexicano. Conozco a la señorita Concha, doña Jesusita Villanueva, había muy poca gente de razón, todas eran de sabanilla y descalzas, las indígenas. A una que otra persona me tocó oír hablar en la calle. Tanta gente de fuera que ha venido, les hacen guasa, se ríen de ellas y por eso las hacen que cambien de idioma. Hubiera sido bonito y no, porque ya están acostumbradas. Las personas ya son pocas, ya visten igual a uno."

[18] The Mexican Ministry of Public Education.

[19] La Huasteca is a diverse and culturally rich region located in the states of San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, and Hidalgo.

[20] Valiñas ("El náhuatl actual" 61-67), recorded a conversation between Paulina Bautista from Tuxpan and Alfredo Ramírez from Xalitla, Guerrero. He wanted to assess intelligibility between the two dialects. After some initial hesitations from both speakers, the conversation was achieved. The point here is that Tuxpan Nahuatl is not so different from other dialects, although it does exhibit some traits that indicate a subdivision from Western Peripheral Nahuatl, one that indicates a southern Jalisco and Colima Nahuatl dialect. See Lastra 1986, Canger 1988.

[21] This achievement was possible after Agustín Vega Torres' work on stressing the importance of replacing the traditional translation method of teaching the language. It finally had an impact on the way teachers were working (see Vega Torres 2009).

[22] "Young Nahuatl warriors".

[23] The image of San Sebastián promoted by the church has short curly hair, whereas the three images kept in people's houses have long straight hair.

[24]https://www.uv.mx/apps/censos-conteos/1910/menu1910.htmlThe population for 1910 and 1920 is included in the "Cantón de Zapotlán", which was the geographically larger division at the time (See www.uv.mx/apps/censos-conteos/1910/menu1910.html). De la Cerda Silva considers that Tuxpan did not have more than 8000 people during the first two decades of the century (21).

[25] This could have been due to the policies of the school system, which in the decade of the twenties and early thirties, following the plan drafted by José Vasconcelos, the first Secretary of Education in the post-revolutionary period, promoted the "incorporation" of the indigenous peoples into the "nation" through a national school system (Heath 87).

[26] Schiffmann (166) refers to a similar case when talking about the language policy decisions in post-independence India, when the government chose to make Hindi the "national language," and disregarded Urdu, Bengali, and Tamil, although they had a longer literary history.

[27] This seems to be the opposite of the situation described by Warner, Luna and Butler (2007) regarding the Mutsun language of California. The language was well documented at the beginning of the twentieth century; however, there are spelling inconsistencies and the lexicon has been translated from Mutsun to Spanish and from Spanish to English, which makes semantics difficult to control.

[28] Besides lexical differences, Tuxpan people probably noticed an important phonological one: the Nahuatl dialect of Tuxpan has /l/, where other dialects have /tl/ and/or /t/. It corresponds to an important phoneme that can be found at the end of a word (as part of the absolutive suffix of nouns), in the middle (at the beginning of the syllable), or at the

beginning of the syllable and the word.

[29] See Hinton 2001 for a discussion about the decisions on what dialect to revitalize. She talks about the possibility of an amalgam of dialects when there are different dialects in contact. This is a possibility. It already happened in western Mexico, as it has been documented elsewhere (Yáñez Rosales and Schmidt-Riese, 2017).

[30] See INEGI 2015, "Hablantes de lengua indígena"

[31] INALI stands for "Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas."

[32] See Hale, 1998; Mithun, 1998; Nettle and Romaine, 2000.

[33] As was quoted above, for the historical facts prior to the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), I am following José Lameira's work (Lameiras 1990).

[34] This took place in the first half of 1994.

[35] The Wixarika language had 52,483 speakers in 2015. See INEGI 2015, "Hablantes de lengua indígena."

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