

Multiple ideologies and competing discourses: Language shift in Tlaxcala, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

This article argues for an account of language shift that focuses on ideological conflicts and competing discourses of language, identity, and progress in Tlaxcala, Mexico. The study is based on ethnographic research on patterns of language use, ideology, and boundary differentiation in several Mexicano (Nahuatl)-speaking communities in the Malintzi region of Central Mexico. Metadiscursive practices consisting of three discourses that have local, regional, and national expressions are analyzed: the pro-development metadiscourse of *salir adelante*, ‘forging ahead’ and improving one’s socio-economic position; the discourse of *menosprecio*, denigration of indigenous identity; and the *pro-indígena* or pro-indigenous discourse that promotes a positive attitude toward indigenous identity. Analysis of these discourses offers an understanding of the semiotic resources speakers employ as they orient toward and against particular identities that are both “traditional” and “modern,” as they respond to changing social and economic circumstances. It is concluded that a focus on individuals and communities, through ethnography and discourse analysis, is of critical importance to understanding how and why speakers shift their ideologies and their languages. (Language shift, linguistic ideology, identity, discourse analysis, metadiscursive processes, Mexicano/Nahuatl, Tlaxcala, Mexico)

INTRODUCTION: ETHNOGRAPHY, LANGUAGE AND MODERNITY

For residents of Mexicano (Nahua) communities in the Malintzi¹ region of the state of Tlaxcala in the nation-state of Mexico, the challenge of the contemporary *Weltanschauung* is indeed as Giddens 1991 has described:

In conditions of late modernity, we live ‘in the world’ in a different sense from previous eras of history. Everyone still continues to live a local life, and the constraints of the body ensure that all individuals, at every moment, are contextually situated in time and space. Yet the transformations of place, and the intrusion of distance into local activities, combined with the centrality of

mediated experience, radically change what ‘the world’ actually is. This is so both on the level of the ‘phenomenal world’ of the individual and the general universe of social activity within which collective social life is enacted. Although everyone lives a local life, phenomenal worlds for the most part are truly global. (1991:187–88)

Living local life in Tlaxcala has changed over the past several decades. This article focuses on the interplay of competing ideologies in the “phenomenal” and “general” worlds Giddens discusses, as they surface in local discourses of language, identity, and modernity.² To mark the first month of the millennium in Contla – the heart of the local textile industry – the newly elected municipal president installed the county’s first traffic light at the center of this head town. Coincidentally, telephone service was extended up to the most remote parts of the highest-elevation towns in the county (whose requests had previously gone unfulfilled), and the first Internet café of the region opened up at the same time. These three simultaneous changes in infrastructure and telecommunications symbolically ushered in the millennium that itself was a global iconic event marking, for many, the technologically “modern era.” In Contla, locals commented on the political significance of these events, particularly since the elected municipal president was the first person to hold that position as a resident of one of the remote towns of the county, a town that is locally considered as “more indigenous,” and where Mexicano language use is perceived and observed as more constant than in the other county towns. As Giddens points out, it is at the phenomenal, subjective level of the self that individuals – and, I would add, families – come to engage with and understand the tribulations of social change.

My goal in this essay is to describe just how these residents understand modernity in their very particular, Tlaxcalan and Mexican sociocultural and socioeconomic ways. I argue that understanding local and national discourses concerned with modernity, as they play out in particular interactions involving particular individuals, helps us see how pressures toward language shift and possibilities for language maintenance emerge out of competing discourses that come together in individuals and families. Attention to metadiscursive practices (Bauman & Briggs 2000) and the semiotics of boundary differentiation (Irvine & Gal 2000) serves to explain the phenomenon of language shift from the perspective of individuals, as they come to terms with the interplay of Giddens’s social worlds. Ethnography, coupled with discourse analysis that studies multiple ideologies competing for primacy in daily life, offers a means of explaining complex language change situations, where specific families may include individuals who have a range of different linguistic/communicative competences and performances.

We must first consider how social changes cause speakers to reevaluate their self-concepts in relation to their social world. Students of language contact and shift have been moving toward more particularistic models in considering how speakers incorporate social change into their lives, and in recognizing that this

perspective must play a role in shaping and assimilating language change. Gal 1979 has suggested that it is not social changes themselves – such as colonialism, industrialization, or migration – that motivate or explain linguistic change culminating in obsolescence, but rather that the focus should be on HOW the social change itself affects how speakers USE their languages in different contexts. To this Kulick has added a key question: “Why and how do people come to interpret their lives in such a way that they abandon one of their languages?” (Kulick 1992:9). Large-scale changes in various aspects of social life, including industrialization and globalization, have very real local-level effects (Joseph & Nugent 1994), ultimately causing speakers to reevaluate their self-concepts in relation to their social world. My work shows that the three focal points of this sociocultural change are language, identity, and economics. Ideologies of language, identity, and conceptions of modernity are the components of cultural change itself, affecting individuals’ interpretations of their lives in such a way that they change their communicative and socialization practices. Thomason & Kaufman 1988 have shown that despite the regularity of language change, formerly accepted by linguists, language shift itself cannot be explained as motivated through linguistic explanation alone, but instead demands external explanations. Picking up on this idea, Irvine & Gal 2000 point out that we must focus on the social reasons for shift – in particular, on linguistic boundaries that cause changes in the “sociolinguistic field and the consequent reconfiguring of its varieties” (2000:77), and that this be done through analysis of semiotic processes.

Indeed, language shift and loss must be viewed as a fundamentally social process in which individuals react to social changes that in turn affect their linguistic ideologies, language use, and social identities (Gal 1979, Kroskrity 1993). In the past, linguistic analyses have too often privileged the structural effects of language shift (cf. chapters in Dorian 1989; Thomason & Kaufman 1988) rather than actual speakers (and their ideologies) as agents in the sociolinguistic situation in which language contact and loss take place (Woolard 1989). Mufwene (2004:219) sees language shift as part of speakers’ “adaptive responses to changing socioeconomic conditions,” and argues that we should be as much concerned with the birth of new varieties as with the potential death of existing languages. Building on analyses that privilege the social causes of language shift (Gal 1979, Kulick 1992, Hill 1993), I stress the need for close attention to the ideological dimension in these sociolinguistic situations.

IDEOLOGIES OF RESPECT AND PURISM

The most salient language ideology in the Malintzi region of Tlaxcala is one that Hill & Hill 1986 have described at length – the ideology of “*legítimo Mexicano*” ‘legitimate Mexicano’, in which speakers’ purist attitudes encourage speech that is completely Mexicano, without any trace of its syncretic elements whose source is the Spanish language (see also Flores Farfán 1999). There is a discourse of nos-

talgia about earlier times, which includes greater use of this type of legitimate Mexicano (Hill 1998), and the ideology that the language spoken today is inferior to that which was spoken in the past because Spanish has been mixed in. *Legítimo Mexicano* can best be understood as “unmixed” speech. Hill & Hill 1986 make the case that speakers in the Malintzi region have survived years of cultural and political infiltration by integrating elements of Spanish into their Mexicano speech. They describe Mexicano as syncretic speech (which is an alternative to some views of “mixed languages”), reflecting and honoring the linguistic purism the researchers found in these communities. The syncretic Mexicano includes Spanish loan words and grammatical constructions; most often these are prepositions and conjunctions, for instance *de* ‘of, from’ and *que* ‘that’, but they also includes numbers, and various lexical items in a Spanish that has been adapted to Mexicano grammar. My own view is that the role of “respect” in social relations in the Malintzi region is so strong that speakers of Mexicano see themselves as exhibiting great respect for their languages and their ancestors by not wanting this language to be “tainted.”

Flores Farfán 2003, building on Hill & Hill’s (1986) analysis of purism in this region, suggests that “the expression of rank is often a function of purism” (2003:306) – that the achievement of high rank can be attempted through heightened purist attitudes. I observed instances of Mexicano oratory being prized in a restricted public context in one region.

However, as Hill 2004 has suggested, indigenous languages such as Mexicano are becoming “disauthenticated.” That is, Aztec ruins may be lauded, and Nahuatl may be proudly inscribed on historical buildings in Mexico City, while the actual speakers of the language are locked in a “struggle for authenticity, which is actively denied to subaltern groups” (Hill 2004:4). In the same way, Mexicano speakers in the Malintzi region may call for respect for *legítimo Mexicano*, the legitimate variety, but then choose not to speak their modern-day syncretic version of Mexicano to their children. Ideological struggle is inherent in both local structure and practice. Competing ideas about authenticity of code and identity are addressed discursively as people draw on the circulating discourses (Foucault 1972, 1978; Bauman & Briggs 2000) that I will call *menosprecio*, *pro-indígena*, and *salir adelante*. Tlaxcalans borrow from competing micro-discourses of indigeness, national Mexican identity, and economics – *menosprecio* and *pro-indígena* – as they respond to the dominant metadiscourse of “modernity” and socioeconomic development – *salir adelante*.

CENTRIPETAL AND CENTRIFUGAL FORCES: COMPETING DISCOURSES

Salir adelante

In Tlaxcala, local residents take up ideological struggles over identity, language, and economics in everyday talk about social change, which is organized through

three predominant discourses. All speakers of Spanish in Mexico (and much of developing Latin America) tap into the hegemonic *salir adelante*³ discourse in one form or another. Variants of this discourse are heard throughout developing nations in Latin America; in Venezuelan Spanish, for instance, *salir adelante* is termed *salir pa'lante* (Hortensia Caballero-Arias, p.c.).

In Mexico, as part of a national ideology concerned with developing Mexico into a “modern,” “first world” nation, the discourse of *salir adelante* has national, regional and local expressions. Entities of the Mexican government, primarily educational (discussed below) but including infrastructures such as the electric company, promulgate elements of this discourse in their slogans, for example electricity “*Para el Progreso de la Nación*” ‘for the progress of the nation’. In the past decade, Contla has seen the industrialization of its artisan-based textile industry, and a desire for “modern” goods has accompanied the surge of factory-based employment. Language shift is advanced in Malintzi towns in the state of Tlaxcala. Most residents over age 40 understand or speak Mexicano, although there is much variation among families. A local version of standard Spanish is spoken, and among Mexicano-dominant bilinguals (primarily older people) the influence of the Mexicano phonetic system is readily observable.

To achieve desired personal and economic progress, many indigenous people in Tlaxcala believe that the past must be shed and a new order embraced. Schools have appeared around Tlaxcala and elsewhere in Mexico, advertising computer and English classes, which basically offer up schooling in the “tools” of modernity – technology and the dominant language of the Internet; these tools are described in advertisements as paving the way to a better future – toward *salir adelante*.

I began to ask some of my interviewees to explain what was meant locally by *salir adelante*, after hearing it used a great deal. Here are some definitions they provided:

- (1) *Salir adelante, para mi salir adelante es este, LLEGAR a, a ESTAR MEJOR en el sentido de subsistencia. Porque lo podemos aplicar en diferentes contextos ¿no? Por ejemplo, salir adelante en el trabajo, es ir venciendo los obstáculos que tienes. Lo mismo en nuestra vida, salir adelante es SUPERAR algunas carencias, algunos obstáculos que tiene uno. Así como le decía, de chiquitos nosotros vivimos en el rancho, sin luz eléctrica, sin carreteras, nada de la tecnología. Vivimos con agua de manantial, cuando era . . . traer leña, y bueno, nosotros como niños andábamos con guaraches. Bueno, estaban los zapatos rotos pero ya traíamos zapatos ¿no? Esa era una gran diferencia. Por ejemplo hasta hace un año, cuando íbamos al pueblo de donde yo soy nos íbamos en autobús. Pero no, hoy ya podemos ir en nuestro propio carro. Eso es salir adelante, DEJAR ALGUNAS SITUACIONES ATRÁS, MEJORAR LAS COSAS, ya sea en el trabajo o en otras cosas. Eso es para mí salir adelante.*

‘*Salir adelante*, for me *salir adelante* is um, TO ARRIVE at, TO BE BETTER in the sense of subsistence. Because we can apply it in different contexts, no? For example, *salir adelante* at work, is to go on conquering the obstacles that you have. The same in our life, *salir adelante* is TO OVERCOME some deficiencies, some obstacles that one has. Just as I was telling you, as children we lived on the ranch, without electric light, without highways, not a trace of technology. We lived with spring water, when it was . . . to bring wood, and

well, we as children would walk around with *guaraches* [sandals] That was a big difference. For example up until a year ago, when we went to the town where I am from we went by bus. But no, today now we can go in our own car. That is *salir adelante*, TO LEAVE SOME SITUATIONS BEHIND, TO BETTER THINGS, be it at work or in other things. That for me is *salir adelante*.'

- (2) *Pues salir adelante se maneja mucho en este país! [risa] Como estamos en, se puede decir que en un estado crítico, difícil por la situación económica, por las situaciones que se dan a nivel país, los sucesos que pasan y todo eso. Entonces eeeh, pues salir adelante para nosotros sería LOGRAR LO QUE TÚ TE HAS PROPUESTO. Por ejemplo ahorita, mi salir adelante sería que mis hijos logren sus objetivos. Como mujer pues LLEGAR a ciertas metas, pero ya como mujer. Eso es salir adelante.*

'Well *salir adelante* is used a lot in this country! [laughter] Since we are in, one can say that we are in a critical state, difficult because of the economic situation, because of the situations that occur at the country [national] level, the events that happen and all that. Therefore eeeh, well *salir adelante* for us would be TO REACH [THE GOAL] THAT WHICH YOU HAVE PROPOSED YOURSELF. For example now, my *salir adelante* would be that my children reach their objectives. As a woman well I can ARRIVE AT [achieving] certain goals, but [that is] as a woman. That is *salir adelante*.'

These descriptions of *salir adelante* involve creating a better life today that is juxtaposed with a life in the past that was more difficult, both socioeconomically and personally. The lexicon used in these elicited definitions of *salir adelante* and in recorded naturally occurring speech features verbs of motion, action, and change that are reminiscent of Hannerz's (1995) concept of cultural flow.

Menosprecio and pro-indígena

The dominant discourse of *salir adelante* is approached in Malintzi Spanish speech through two distinct and competing discourses, each of which indexes particular ideological stances (cf. Philips 1998a, Silverstein 1979) – that of *menosprecio* 'under-appreciation, denigration', and the pro-indigenous *pro-indígena* discourse (local usage). One of these two orientations tends to dominate the other in Malintzi residents' talk, but because identity, language, and racism is an area of great ambivalence and complexity (cf. Hill 1993), the discourses intermingle as well as dominating each other in different contexts, even for the same individual. The discourse of *menosprecio* 'under-appreciation' marks the denigration of indigenous identity and language, while that of *pro-indígena* 'pro-indigenous' seeks to promote a positive attitude toward indigenous people by countering the racist ideological basis of the hegemonic *menosprecio* stance. *Menosprecio* and *pro-indígena* ideological stances surface through these discourses as competing responses to the discourse of *salir adelante*. *Salir adelante* discourse, further described below, is produced by all Tlaxcalans to varying degrees; the most elaborated forms of this discursive system (Hill 1998) are produced by the upper-class businessmen of Contla, predominantly owners of the local textile factories, but their factory workers (of both genders) also produce this talk about "getting ahead." *Menosprecio* discourse, denigrating comments about local language and identity, can be explicitly produced by all people in this region but is particularly vocalized by the upper classes, or by anyone who has internalized racist atti-

tudes, reproduced from outside their community (Messing 2003b). Indigenous people have been viewed as “savages” by some members of the dominant classes in Mexico, as Lomnitz 2001 points out in his essay on “Modes of citizenship in Mexico,” and indeed such symbolic violence has led to today’s denigrating ideologies.

I found that producers of the *pro-indígena* discourse – consisting of positive comments that interrogate the hegemonic stance of *menosprecio* – are usually teachers, local historians, and folklorists (by vocation or hobby), and may or may not be university-educated; many in this heterogeneous group are quite aware of their use of this discourse as a part of consciousness raising, to call into question the anti-indigenous sentiment among producers of *menosprecio* discourse. This interplay between positive and negative attitudes toward indigenosity is parallel to the interplay between a “discourse of nostalgia” (that is, respectful of older, purer forms of Mexicano that do not contain Spanish) and its counterdiscourse that Hill 1998 describes.

Among the many Contla residents, there is a reticence to speak Mexicano outside intimate settings such as family or close spheres of acquaintance (i.e., with age-mates or *compadres*, fictive kin relationships). Unless Tlaxcalans know me, there are laughter and embarrassed, sidelong glances when the language is mentioned during a conversation in Spanish. To insult each other, I have heard children accuse classmates of being “from Zacatlan,” a town that they say is full of “Indians, speaking with accents, who are barefoot, and poor.” For many, to be a speaker of Mexicano, an inability to speak “proper” Spanish, and evidence of poverty are markers of being *indígena* that contrast with a goal of *salir adelante*. *Menosprecio* discourse is produced by Malintzi speakers, in Spanish conversation, to denigrate the local identity and/or language. Any resident of this region might produce this discourse, with the exception of speakers who are trying to fight local racism and do so by adopting a *pro-indígena* stance, surfacing in *pro-indígena* discourse.⁴

An interviewee described local discrimination and *menosprecio* as a matter of language, but also of class:

- (3) *Pienso que la causa primordial [de desplazamiento] es la falta de uso, y además la discriminación que sufre uno en, en las ciudades o con la gente que tiene dinero, entonces el hablar una lengua en México, la lengua indígena es, es estar marcado. Como digamos etiquetado, de ser un, un ser de menor valor porque esa es la concepción que tienen los, la gente que no habla una lengua indígena tienen esa idea, de que los hablamos una lengua de algún pueblo [X], somos inferiores. Y bueno eso pues hace que no, que no lo use uno, en diferente contexto al que uno es originario.*

‘I think that the primordial cause [of language shift] is the lack of use, and furthermore the discrimination that one suffers in, in the cities and with the people who have money, so that speaking a language in Mexico, indigenous language is, is to be marked. As if let’s stay labeled, of being a, a being of less value because that is the conception that they have the, the people who don’t speak an indigenous language have this idea, that those of us

who speak a language from some town [X], we are inferior. And well that causes us not, not to use it, in a different context than the one from which one originates.'

This instance of *menosprecio* discourse conflates lower class with indigeness and expresses a devaluing or disauthentication of that which is indigenous. This lived ideology leads to restricted use of Mexicano in non-intimate/familiar contexts, as this person points out. The contesting discourse that interrogates this *menosprecio* ideological stance is that of *pro-indígena*.

Thus, to address Gal & Kulick's questions adequately, regarding how individuals internalize social change to the point that it affects their ways of speaking, we need to understand the opposing ideological forces that are present in this and other indigenous communities in Mexico. Bakhtinian centripetal and centrifugal forces are in play (Bakhtin 1981) as available ideologies in support of, and against, particular ideologies of indigeness (*menosprecio* and *pro-indígena*) surface in local talk about *salir adelante*. Individuals in the Malintzi region feel the competing forces through mixed and ambivalent attitudes towards language socialization, in which ideologies of Nahuatl purism, local identity and notions of modernity are consistently multiple. "Speakers confront heteroglossia," Hill 1993 writes. This Bakhtinian heteroglossia consists of multiple codes – languages and dialects, and syncretic speech – but also of identities that are constructed as local, state (Tlaxcala), national (Mexico), and/or global, and of identities that are marked by social class, skin color, and gender. Through everyday speech, speakers calling upon the *pro-indígena* discourse attempt to interrogate and invert the stigma that is associated by many with indigeneity, and to refocus local ideology of Malintzi identity as a marker of prestige rather than backwardness.

LINGUISTIC BOUNDARIES AND SEMIOTIC PROCESSES

Mexicano as the ancestral language is imbued with the symbolism of Mexicano identity, and it can be called upon through language use as an icon of the speakers of the local language (Irvine & Gal 2000). In Mexico, the ability to speak an Indian language is the primary social marker of an indigenous identity, marked by outsiders as different from a Mexican-*mestizo* identity. Dark skin color and clothing that is perceived as indigenous and somehow "traditional," coupled with economic status, play important roles as external markers of indigeness in central Mexico.

Recent work by Gal 1998 and Irvine & Gal 2000 highlights the consequences of shifting ideologies of linguistic differentiation for individuals in communities where change in patterns of use is taking place. They call for a shift from focusing on speech communities to attention to social boundary making where such differentiation is ideologically mediated. Consider:

In exploring ideologies of linguistic differentiation, we are concerned not only with the ideologies' structure but also, and especially, with their consequences.

First, we explore how participants' ideologies concerning boundaries and differences may contribute to language change. (Irvine & Gal 2000:36–37)

Much insight on Mexicano language shift can be gained from Irvine & Gal's identified semiotic processes, which they argue operate worldwide. Applying their ideas to this social situation, through *menosprecio* discourse we see both ICONIZATION (through which a language serves as a symbol of a people) and ERASURE of local language and identity, as well as the RECURSIVE nature of locally internalized racism. Because social identity, rather than being a received category, is a lived experience that is felt at the margins between one identity and another (Barth 1969), attention to these borders⁵ will elucidate the ideologically polysemous (Philips 1998a) situation.

METHODS: ETHNOGRAPHY AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The identified discourses surfaced in everyday conversation during ethnographic research. During 17 months, over several phases of ethnographic research between 1996 and 2002 and in 2004, I lived in San Bernardino Contla (cf. Nutini 1968), a semi-rural county (*municipio*) of multiple towns with approximately 35,000 residents. Mexicano here has been largely replaced by Spanish except among the older generation, although great variation in use and understanding of the language can be observed. I compared the Contla context with that of the geographically remote town of San Isidro Buensuceso (population 5,000) where children are still being socialized IN and THROUGH both languages (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986) and where language maintenance is much stronger than in Contla (Nava Nava 2003). Mexicano language use in this secondary context was more likely to be both a "power code" and a "solidarity code" (Hill & Hill 1986), which was markedly different from the towns in Contla county, in which a tendency to limit Mexicano usage to private and intimate, familial contexts was most common (Messing 2003a).

The decreased use of Mexicano in public/non-intimate contexts in Contla also correlated with the industrialization of the local textile industry over the past few decades. The economic shift from a peasant subsistence and artisan textile industry has increased the desire for manufactured goods and Western clothing and has been accompanied by the reduction of contexts of use of the language (Messing 2003a). This has not been matched in the small, high-elevation community of San Isidro, which does not have equivalent factory labor opportunities.

I originally began a study that sought to compare the San Isidro and Contla regions. After preliminary fieldwork, I found a marked cultural difference between the San Isidro Buensuceso/San Miguel Canoa region (where Hill & Hill concentrated their primary efforts) and the region of San Bernardino Contla county, which I found to have a great deal of variation internal to the community.

I then focused greater time on a study of the Contla county towns, with comparisons drawn from fieldwork in San Isidro.

The discourse samples in this paper are taken from my data corpus of 90 audio hours and 10 video hours of recordings, including socially occurring speech and 36 formal interviews. In addition to conducting a general ethnography of communication in the two regions, schooling offered a key discursive site where local ideologies surface and can be studied, through an institution that is national, regional, and local, and one in which the use of Mexicano could be discussed more openly with local residents (families, students and teachers). Metapragmatic commentary among townspeople (teachers, students, and visiting family members) and discussion of indigenous identity were highly “reportable” (Linde 1981) in this context. Observations alternated between the two towns, including two schools in the Indigenous Education division (the National Directorate of Indigenous Education, DGEI) (cf. Messing & Rockwell 2006) and focused on actual use of each language in different contexts. Events observed included life-cycle (weddings, communions), ritual-cycle (saints’ days), and school events (conferences, rallies, local and statewide meetings, parades). A native bilingual French/English speaker fluent in Spanish, I acquired a working knowledge of Nahuatl in the classroom and field.

Attention to identity and ideology in my research is predicated on the idea that a person’s “linguistic presentation of self” (Gal 1979:13) and culture itself are emergent in discourse (Sherzer 1987, Urban 1991, Mannheim & Tedlock 1995, Bucholtz & Hall 1996, Philips 2000). The analysis of “naturally occurring” and elicited recorded speech offers great insight into ideological diversity; ideologies are formed, played out, and also contested in and through actual language use (Hill 1995, Philips 1998a, 2004, Schieffelin et al. 1998), and it is through this analysis of discourse that one begins to see the ideological stances regarding indigenosity, and the language use of Mexicano in Contla, which struggle for primacy in attempts to meet the real economic needs of forging ahead, of *salir adelante*.

Current linguistic anthropological thinking on the organization and emergence of ideologies and individual stance taking in discourse, and the reception and production of multiple discourses (Kroskrity 2000, Philips 1998a), owes much to Foucault’s (1972, 1978) attention to speech that is authorized and legitimated and that which is not. The three discourses I identify are closely interconnected and form a part of speakers’ metadiscursive practices (Bauman & Briggs 2000), which highlights the capacity of discourses to both represent and regulate other discourses. Similar work by critical discourse analysts (cf. Fairclough 1992) focuses on rendering explicit the otherwise implicit ideologies that surface in such discourses, but without ethnography. Bauman & Briggs (2000:143) seek to “create a sort of unholy alliance between the empiricist and critical approaches to discourse analysis” through their work on metapragmatic discourses (see also Silverstein & Urban 1996).

If hegemony is indeed a *LIVED process* (Williams 1977), then explanations of dominant and contesting discourses must be studied through “on-the-ground” ethnography, analysis of socially occurring speech, coupled with follow-up interviewing. I argue that we must understand how circulating meta- and micro-discourses shape the talk of particular individuals, in order to understand the social causes of language shift. The examples that follow will show how locals combine and draw on these discourses; they have been chosen because they are representative of the extent to which the three discourses combine and reflect local multiple ideologies informing a qualitative understanding of language shift.

To highlight the range of ways in which the three discourses can combine, in this analysis I have chosen to mark the three discourses in the text through special formatting, as follows:

<i>Salir adelante</i> discourse	SMALL CAPS
<i>Menosprecio</i> discourse	<u>underlining</u>
<i>Pro-indígena</i> discourse	boldface
Inaudible utterance	[X]

My aim here is to offer ethnographic examples of the ways in which speakers and semi-/quasi-/pseudo-speakers⁶ of Mexicano relate notions of language and identity to modernity as it is conceived of locally, and as they view themselves as part of a state, a nation, and the world.

CORES, PERIPHERIES AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Consider an informant’s perspective as a septuagenarian from a small Contla county town on the upper slopes of the Malintzi mountain; he explains that dominant Mexicano speakers like him are on the fringes:

- (4) *ti . . . pueblerinos,* *ti . . . ti-cateh, orillas*
 ‘we . . . [are] small town folk,’⁷ ‘we . . . we are [on the] fringes’

This example exhibits the characteristics of syncretic speech (cf. Hill & Hill 1986). The subject pronoun and verb *ti* and *ti-cateh* are Mexicano items, and *pueblerinos* and *orillas* are lexical loans from Spanish, particular to this region’s variety of syncretic Mexicano. In the longer stretch of discourse from which this example is taken, the speaker illustrates the unequal relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Tlaxcala and Mexico and reproduces it in the way that he describes identities in the Contla county, thus iconically mapping local identities onto sections of the county that are marked as “more” or “less” indigenous. The speaker’s self-perception as being “on the fringes” of society is at once about being indigenous, poor (without land), and speaking an accented Spanish, and he offers us an example of fractal recursivity (Irvine & Gal 2000, cf. Messing 2003b); this recursivity consists of the projection of an opposition between discrimination felt by indigenous Tlaxcalans from outside communities, which is then reproduced by many Malintzi residents WITHIN their

own communities. This example allows us to better understand how discrimination is reproduced and internalized by local individuals, and reproduced in the ideologically multiple discourses.

The historical and political economic roots of the national Mexican discourse of *salir adelante* and its Tlaxcalan-Malintzi versions of *salir adelante*, *menosprecio*, and *pro-indígena* discourses become evident as we focus attention on contemporary cultural politics and economic realities in Mexico. In Tlaxcala and Mexico, as well as in other parts of the world where indigenous communities are living with the legacy of colonialism, the contemporary social world is replete with vestiges of political, economic, religious, and linguistic subjugation to colonial domination. Hill 1991 and Urban & Sherzer 1991 point out the importance of shifting anthropological study of indigenous communities from ethnographic studies of communities as isolated social entities to a recognition of state intervention into these communities and the constant communication, migration, and exchange between them (cf. Silverstein 1998).

The Mexican anthropologists Aguirre Beltrán 1967 and Bonfil Batalla have written extensively about cultural politics that help us understand the roots of the discourse of *salir adelante*. Bonfil Batalla's book *México profundo: Una civilización negada* (Deep Mexico: A negated civilization; 1994 [1987]) posits that Mexico is deeply divided between its postcolonial centers of power and an indigenous nation whose roots are lauded but in current reality ignored. Although Bonfil Batalla does ignore the constant interconnections between the two worlds he describes and the potential existence of at least three or four or more "Mexicos," his emphasis on the gulf between rural and urban, between indigenous and *mestizo* cultural spaces in Mexico is productive. Consider, for instance, the following nationalist version of *salir adelante*:

The recent history of Mexico, that of the last five hundred years, is the history of the permanent confrontation between those attempting to direct the country toward the path of Western civilization and those, rooted in Mesoamerican forms of life, who resist. (Bonfil Batalla 1996:xvi)

For Bonfil Batalla, there is a constant conflict between the *México profundo* 'deep Mexico' and the "imaginary Mexico." The discourse of *salir adelante* is the discourse of this Westernizing project, which has undergone semantic extension in popular culture, coming to have a wider meaning in Mexico and in Tlaxcala – that of forging ahead and improving one's socioeconomic situation. However, in Bonfil Batalla's core/periphery view, the indigenous communities' part of "deep Mexico" is merely left to resist. Recent anthropological scholarship has shown that local communities, in Mexico and elsewhere, do more than simply resist; rather, they BOTH resist nation-state policies and incorporate them into local life. As we shift to locally based, ethnographic understandings of identity, recall the Tlaxcalan discourse of *menosprecio* and the response of *pro-indígena* in light of the following statement from Bonfil Batalla:

Thus, the diverse national visions used to organize Mexican society during different periods since independence have all been created within a Western framework. In none of them has the reality of the *México profundo* had a place. Instead, it has been viewed only as a symbol of backwardness and an obstacle to be overcome. (Bonfil Batalla 1996:xvi–xvii)

This sense of “deep Mexico” as described by Bonfil Batalla captures the cultural climate that I have experienced in urban mestizo Mexico and offers us a sense of how the experience of Tlaxcalans, as Mexican citizens and descendants of the Tlaxcalans who sided with Cortés in fighting the Aztecs, have multiple sociohistorical realities that can be called upon to inform social identity. Many anthropologists may find a core/periphery perspective overly simplistic, but it is clear that such a perspective is a lived reality for some locals, such as my interviewee quoted above, who feels he lives “on the margins.” Among Malintzi locals there is an awareness of what urbanite mestizos often think and say about their rural/indigenous-language communities in the regional peripheries of Mexico. The awareness of perceived mestizo sentiments of “Indian backwardness,” in what urbanites refer to as *las comunidades* ‘the communities’, and racism itself are recursively reproduced WITHIN Malintzi towns (Messing 2003b), and this fuels the *menosprecio* discourse. Most members of the dominant classes, mainly located in centers of power in Mexico, have not recognized but rather have promoted an erasure (Irvine & Gal 2000) of “deep Mexico’s” populations; a history of *indigenismo* does maintain a presence in the capital, however, including the recent creation of the National Institute of Indigenous Languages.

The cultural politics I have discussed here surfaced to general public recognition in Mexico with the surprise 1994 Zapatista uprising (see Collier 1994). The goal of the uprising was and is to call into question the hegemony of the state and its lack of recognition of the exploitation of the poorest, most economically exploited state in Mexico – Chiapas, exploited for its wealth of natural resources and home to a large indigenous population. The primary goal is to force the government to make substantive political and legal changes by calling attention to the erasure that has been central to the dominant ideology. An important ideological consequence of the consciousness-raising effects of the Zapatista resistance is the uniting of members of indigenous communities from all over Mexico to create a pan-Indian movement that has grown since 1994; its ideology is paralleled in Tlaxcalan *pro-indígena* discourses.

Zapatista delegations have traveled throughout indigenous communities, making stops in towns like San Bernardino Contla, to ask for support and to spread the word of their experiences with their struggle; in 1999 one such delegation came through Contla and was met by local political activists and politically involved teachers. In the areas I observed, the effects of these visits have been varied and are as ideologically multiple as local ideologies of language. In a less visible way, teachers who dedicate substantial personal time to writing language

revitalization materials are challenging the government's nationalized educational system on several levels (Messing & Rockwell 2006).

The space between "deep Mexico" and "imaginary Mexico" is composed of cultural, economic, and political disequilibriums that lend themselves to tensions that surface in meta-discursive practices of *salir adelante*. We see in this the interplay of what in Tlaxcala are discourses of *menosprecio* and *pro-indígena*. The following excerpt from an interview with a 26-year-old Contla resident illustrates how regional and global perspectives are associated with language.

- (5) Siiiif. *Bueno hay gente que a lo mejor se averguenzan de que sus padres hablan el náhuatl. Porque piensan que es para gente que no está civilizada. Entonces pues a mí me gusta que la gente que habla náhuatl pues que la hablen, o sea, si se quieren expresar que se expresen. O sea, no es de que les recrimino o que esté discriminando mi lengua, no, al contrario. Y además de que se sigue hablando, ¿no? [...]*

Como que LA GENERACIÓN X, ya como que lo sentimos más. Con eso de que viene ... ¿cómo te diré? Las modas más bien del extranjero, que son los gringos, entonces como que valoramos más lo que tienen ellos que lo que nosotros tenemos, nos olvidamos de lo que tenemos, pensamos que eso es cosa para nacos ¿no? O sea la gente que no se ha civilizado. Tú vas por ejemplo ... o por ejemplo, yo lo hablo a veces, como que ven mal que una gente que vive por allá arriba, o sea que están cerca de los cerros, o sea, piensan que es una gente que no está civilizada. Los que viven en el centro son los que tienen la ... vaya los que están más civilizados y tienen más contacto con la ciudad ¿no?

'Yeeees. Well there are people that most likely become ashamed that their parents speak Nahuatl. Because they think that it is for people that are not civilized. **So well I myself like that people who speak Nahuatl well that they speak it, that is, if they want to express themselves then let them express themselves. That is, it isn't that I blame them or that I am discriminating against my language, no, on the contrary. And furthermore it should continue being spoken, no?** [...]

It's like GENERATION X, like we now feel it more. With that, it comes from ... How should I tell you? The styles mostly from foreign places, which are the gringo [American] ones, so like we value more what they have than what we have, we forget what we have, we think that that is something for *nacos*⁸ [low class; crass] no? That is, the people that haven't become civilized. You go for example ... or for example, **I speak it [Mexicano] sometimes**, so like they look down on a person who lives up there [=up the mountain], that is that they are close to the hills, that is, they think that it is a person that is not civilized. The ones who live in the center are the ones who have the ... [that is], those who are more civilized and have more contact with the city, no?'

Thus, for this young woman *menosprecio* associated with lower-class people, markedly indigenous, who are 'not civilized'. The appearance in this sample of lexical items that mark identity, such as *Generation X*⁹ and *gringo* illustrates the effects of global culture on local Malintzi residents, and the use of *naco* is a marker of perceived lower-class crassness. The indexical *por allá arriba*, referring to Mexicano speakers who live 'up there on the mountain', also marks a locally salient identity. By understanding the roots of the divisions that exist in the Mexican, Tlaxcalan, and Malintzi public spheres, and how marking the so-

cial territory between “deep Mexico” and “imaginary Mexico,” “down the mountain” and “up the mountain,” illustrates a mutual mistrust and a deep racism toward indigenous communities, we can better understand how this racism has been internalized, surfacing in recursive discourses of opposition in the towns in Contla from within and between indigenous communities themselves.

CONVERGENCE OF CIRCULATING DISCOURSES

The production of a *pro-indígena* discourse plays the role of contesting *menosprecio* by offering an alternative ideological stance to the dominant one, and it offers the possibility of being “modern” while accepting the heritage language and identity. This discourse is produced by only certain Malintzi residents who wish to counter the hegemonic *menosprecio* stance and refocus local identity as a marker of prestige rather than denigration. Behind this discourse is an ideological stance of resistance, which seeks to offer an alternative view to the dominating *menosprecio*. Some schoolteachers or other locals who are interested in the continued usage of Mexicano, as well as local language promoters (Messing & Rockwell 2006) and “Reversing Language Shifters” (Fishman 1991, 2001), often assume this ideological stance. Others who espouse a *pro-indígena* ideology may do so through their interest in the promotion of local history, poetry, art (including textiles handmade by craftspeople), and legends; some do so through work with the formal cultural institutions called Casa de Cultura ‘House of Culture’, while others do so in daily conversation, by saying (either in Mexicano or in Spanish) that maintaining the ancestral language is something that people should work toward.

In the following speech excerpt, the three discourses converge within the same segment, taken from recordings of a teacher-training course in the indigenous education system of Tlaxcala. The course, of which Fernando was the primary leader, has very clear ideological intentions, which at times compete with the intentions of the national education system (Secretaría de Educación Pública or SEP, the umbrella unit in charge of the Directorate General of Indigenous Education or DGEI). The DGEI has prepared the training materials and protocol intended for use at all indigenous schools in the Mexican Republic. This is a clear example of dialectics between agency and structure, as well as multiple local conceptions of identity. Fernando espouses a very strong *pro-indígena* ideological stance that comes through very clearly in the discourse below, based on his desire to raise his participants’ consciousness so that they will be proud of (a *pro-indígena* stance) rather than denigrate their indigenous roots and language (a *menosprecio* stance). In this way he attempts a reframing of the dominant discourse’s ideological stance, which advocates achieving progress (*salir adelante*) through a *menosprecio* stance. The attempt at social reproduction thus begins with the training of teachers, who in turn train students, and for Fernando these aspiring teachers are to be socialized as *trabajadores*

dores de la educación 'educational workers' in such a way that they will themselves espouse a *pro-indígena* ideology through their teaching.

Metapragmatic talk abounds on Mexicano in relation to Spanish, to Mexicanness and indigenouslyness, and to modernity. The dominant discourse here is that of *salir adelante*, while *menosprecio* and *pro-indígena* ideological stances are consciously called upon to interrogate the primacy of *menosprecio*. In introducing data from a teacher training workshop, it is important to keep in mind that education in Mexico has been infused with an almost magical quality (Vaughan 1997) in the national project of what is talked about as *salir adelante*, of increasing economic development. Speaker positions of domination and subordination within communities and with relation to the nation-state become apparent. *Salir adelante* as a discourse here is strategically coupled with *pro-indígena* discourse, as the leaders suggest that one can advance socioeconomically and do it in a way that is consistent with local, indigenous ways of life, including the maintenance and transmission of the Mexicano language. This is a proposed change by these Tlaxcalan organic intellectuals (in the Gramscian sense, coming from the local communities rather than urban centers), from a *menosprecio* orientation to one that is *pro-indígena*.⁹ The speaker's discussion of a government education plan below offers examples, both implicit and explicit, of the importance of local people's input in local schooling; he questions the government's goals and offers an alternative based on his experience seeing what an unquestioned national education plan can do.

- (6) *Este ... pero ... pues yo creo que vamos a trabajar con ustedes en ese sentido, de que nos olvidemos un poquito de ... de que el indígena no sirve. Porque alguna de ustedes debe de pensar de esa manera y yo lo considero así.*

Eh, lo considero así porque ya tene ..., imagínense 29 años de experiencia, de trabajar en la, en zonas indígenas. Cuando me inicié como trabajador, hace, estoy hablando de hace 29 años, de 1970, iba yo a las comunidades, y me ... me decían algunos padres de familia: "yo te traigo a m'hijo para que aprenda el Castellano, no para que le hables en lengua indígena. No, tienes que enseñarle el Castellano." Incluso ..., erróneamente ..., digo erróneamente porque ya a través del tiempo nos vamos dando cuenta de otras realidades. Erróneamente se había creado por los años de 1975, un Plan Nacional de Castellанизación. Eso no llegó aquí a Tlaxcala. Yo estuve como Supervisor de Castellанизación. Y fue un un "Gran Plan" [said with sarcasm], pero un Gran Plan para exterminar las lenguas indígenas. [...]

Mmm. Nos poníamos a trabajar, LES ENSEÑ ... TENÍAMOS CURSOS, COMO ÉSTE QUE VAMOS A TENER, DONDE SE LES ENSEÑABA MÁS O MENOS LO BÁSICO PARA QUE FUERAN A CASTELLANIZAR. Pero traía como consecuencia, eso que les digo: El exterminio de las lenguas indígenas [said with emphasis]. De ahí a que actualmente, mmm, actualmente mucha gente piensa ya, tal vez nosotros hayamos sembrado eso también - con ese plan nacional de Castellанизación.

Actualmente mucha gente piensa ... que no este ... no quiere, bueno que, no debe hablar la lengua indígena.

Les platicaré de un anécdota de un niño. Ahí en la casa, siempre iba . . . iba . . . cada vez que estaba yo allí en el rancho - digo rancho yo a mi pueblito - pues que sé yo, tendrá como 1800 habitantes, ahí apartado de [XX]. Siempre se iba allá a la casa conmigo y se pone a platicar, estoy haciendo alguna cosa, arrancando alguna hierba, él se iba conmigo a . . . ayudar.

[Interruption]

Sí, les decía [...] y ahí me anda ayudando el chamaquito. Y yo le hablo en lengua indígena, hable y hable en lengua indígena, eh . . . [pause]. Y me, en eso me cae, me dice: "No me hables eso." Así, así, me dijo: "No me hables eso." "Ah," le digo, "¿Por qué?" [He replies:] "Yo no sé." ¡Si no lo voy a conocer! Desde niño este, hablaba el . . . el . . . allá hablamos el totonaco. [He repeats, mimicking the boy's voice:] "No me hables eso, yo no sé de eso pues." "Ah bueno," ah, yo le seguí hablando . . . en la lengua materna, en la lengua indígena, y sin darse cuenta, más!

‘Um . . . but . . . well **I think that we are going to work with you all in this sense, that we should forget a bit about . . . that the indigenous [person] is useless. Because some [one] of you must think in this way and I consider it like this.** Eh, I consider it like this because I have . . . , imagine 29 years of experience, of working in the, in indigenous zones. When I began as a worker, it’s been, I’m talking about 29 years ago, of 1970, I went to the communities, and they used to say to me, some parents: “I bring you my child so that s/he should learn Spanish, not so that you speak to him in indigenous language. No, you have to teach him/her Spanish.” Also . . . , **mistakenly . . . , I say mistakenly because over time we start realizing other realities.**

Erroneously it had been created around the year of 1975, a National Plan of Castilianization. That did not arrive here to Tlaxcala. I was a Supervisor of Castilianization [in another state]. And it was a “Grand Plan” [said with sarcasm], but a Grand Plan to exterminate the indigenous languages. [. . .]

Mmm. We used to get to work, teaching them . . . WE TAUGHT THEM COURSES, LIKE THIS ONE THAT WE’RE GOING TO HAVE, WHERE THEY WERE TAUGHT MORE OR LESS THE BASICS SO THAT THEY COULD GO AND CASTILIANIZE. **But it brought as a consequence, that is what I tell you: The extermination of indigenous languages [said with emphasis].** From there to that today, mmm, today many people now think, maybe we have planted [idea] that too – with that national plan of Castilianization.

Today many people think . . . that um . . . they don’t want, well, that, they shouldn’t speak the indigenous language.

I will tell you an anecdote about a child. There at home, he would always go . . . go . . . each time that I was there at the ranch [hometown] – I say ranch about my town – well what do I know, it has about 1800 residents, there apart from [XX]. He always went there to my house with me and started talking, I was doing some thing, pulling up some plant, he went with me to . . . help.

[Interruption]

Yes, I was telling you [. . .] and there the guy was helping me out. And I spoke to him in indigenous language, talking and talking in indigenous language, eh . . . [pause]. And on that he jumps on me, he tells me: “Don’t talk that to me.” That way, that way, he told me: “Don’t talk *that* to me.” “Ah,” I say to him, “Why not?” [He replies:] “I don’t know.” As if I am not going to know him! Since he was a little kid, he used to talk the the . . . there we speak Totonaco. [He repeats, mimicking the boy’s voice:] “Don’t talk *that* to me, I don’t

know about *that*, well.” “Ah, well,” ah, **I continued speaking . . . in the mother tongue, in the indigenous language**, and without realizing it!’

Fernando here reproduces a *menosprecio* discourse to show how it is in conflict with his preferred *pro-indígena* discourse. In this account, by raising an instance of ideological conflict that he has observed in the local community, he effectively “models” this conflict, but he offers an alternative stance to the dominant anti-indigenous one. This discussion of the educational system in Mexico, and his mention of the original training he received as a *Castilianizer*, charged with bringing Spanish to indigenous communities, frames his criticism of the educational system within and through a *salir adelante* discourse. That is, for Fernando, an extreme *menosprecio* stance has been institutionalized in educational (post-revolutionary) language policies that promote Spanish, and in his words, will ultimately lead to ‘the extermination of indigenous languages’.

The speaker’s shift in ideological stance from a *menosprecio* orientation that was unconscious to what is from his perspective a more enlightened, *pro-indígena* stance contrasts with the boy in his narrative who went from knowing and using his ‘mother tongue’ of Totonaco to negating that knowledge with someone he knew well. The didactic purpose of this tale is clear, given the context of the teacher training; the ultimate goal of Fernando’s discussion is to give the aspiring teachers his perspective through explicit talk about locally available ideologies of language and indigenous identity, and to train them to espouse a *pro-indígena* stance, in case they did not do so prior to applying for jobs as indigenous educators. In an interview Fernando communicated to me his disdain for teachers who obtained jobs through the indigenous education division but, once in their posts, were uninterested in using or teaching the local language in their classes (Messing 2003a).

The fact that Fernando is a speaker of Totonaco and originally from a neighboring state, rather than a local Mexicano-speaking community, is interesting to note. As part of Tlaxcala’s indigenous education division, the head of this training program uses the term “indigenous language,” rather than “Mexicano-speaking.” This term, *lengua indígena*, is culturally accepted as a social identity term, and particularly common in the in the world of education. Fernando has lived in Tlaxcala for years, and through this discourse he highlights the cultural similarities over the differences between his experiences and those of the local aspiring teachers. This excerpt exemplifies the dynamic nature of ideological stances, which can change over time.

CONCLUSIONS

I have suggested that in the sociolinguistic situation in the Malintzi region of the Mexican state of Tlaxcala, language is related to identity and socioeconomic progress, whereby indigenous identities are, paradoxically, both denigrated and promoted in local discourses. Ideologies of language in Contla are intertwined

with related themes of identity and indigenous Mexicanoness, or Tlaxcaltecanness. The intersection of language and identity is where people constantly shift and rework their view of their lives as residents of Contla, remembering their past but conscious of ever-present socioeconomic struggles, as they imagine their futures and how they wish them to be. The study of semiotic processes and linguistic differentiation through analysis of meta- and micro-discourses helps us understand more specifically how language shift operates.

My data have suggested that language shift is as much an individual phenomenon as a family- and community-level one, and this variability opens up the possibility of change in the process of shift, or potential for “tip back” (Messing 2005). This paper has shown that everyday speech is often organized into particular discourses that are voiced, called upon, contested, or silenced; multiple discourses can themselves be interconnected and form part of speakers’ meta-discursive practices. This article has also provided an illustration of the importance of ideological multiplicity in discourse. The use of discourse analysis in conjunction with ethnography can offer insight on the type of social change that cultural anthropologists study, but often without much attention to specific interactional instances.

The meta-discourse of *salir adelante* along with its two local counterparts should be studied in other ethnographic contexts undergoing language shift. Further research should be undertaken regarding the similarity and differences among discourses across contexts of language shift, in particular how modernizing meta-discourses surface around the globe, and how indigenous communities address internal and external social changes through changes in practice. Recommendations for further research include the investigation of similarities between sociolinguistic situations that include both an indigenous and a colonial language, to describe further how they differ from other types of language shift.

NOTES

¹ I wish to clarify my use of the Mexicano place name “Malintzi” rather than the Spanish version “Malinche,” which predominates in the ethnographic literature (Nutini 1968, Nutini & Isaac 1974, Hill & Hill 1986): The name refers to the volcanic mountain on and around which the traditionally Mexicano-speaking community lives, straddling the two states of Tlaxcala and Puebla. My choice of one of the contemporary Mexicano renditions of the original name Mactlalucuyetl (still appearing on some maps) follows local usage by my key informants, and many townspeople during the period of research of the late 1990s and early 2000s. In written discourse *Malintzin* is common, but the nasal final is dropped in local oral speech.

² Two preliminary versions of this article were presented at: the Language/Ethnography Symposium in Honor of Susan Philips at University of Arizona, and at an AAA session I organized on Language, Discourse and Racism, both in 2004. For support of field research and data analysis I thank the Fulbright Commission, Spencer Foundation, University of Arizona, and University of South Florida. For many conversations helpful to this analysis, and general support during fieldwork in Mexico, I would like to thank José Antonio Flores Farfán, Elsie Rockwell, Refugio Nava Nava, Ramos Rosales Flores, Nieves Ahuantzi Calderon, Desiderio Lopez Marcos, and the late Daniel Nugent. I am grateful to Susan Philips, Jane Hill, Norma González, Elizabeth Mertz and Michael Silverstein for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this work. I am grateful to Hortensia

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³ “Western discourse on modernity,” Gaonkar (2001:15) points out, “is a shifting, hybrid configuration consisting of different, often conflicting, theories, norms, historical experiences, utopic fantasies, and ideological commitments . . . Each version casts a different light on modernity.” For Bauman & Briggs 2003, studies of modernity must place language squarely at the center, with attention to notions of “tradition” left out of other studies (cf. Latour 1993).

⁴ The ways in which racism surfaces discursively is a topic of much recent academic interest (cf. Hill 1993, 1995; Van Dijk 1994), as part of a larger attempt to address the linguistic and discursive elements of social inequality (Philips 2003).

⁵ The ambivalence and mixed feelings observed in the Malintzi region illustrate the importance that Bhabha 1994 and González 1992, 2001 have placed on attending to affective sites, or what Rosaldo 1989 refers to as “cultural border zones.” Such affective sites constitute the junctures of social categories of ethnicity, race, class, and gender that are clearly affected by social change.

⁶ It is necessary to distinguish between types of speakers. In the Malintzi region many people are semi- (Dorian 1977) or quasi (pseudo)-speakers (Flores Farfán 1999) and have passive communicative competence. My research revealed a notable disparity between perceived competence in Mexicano and actual ability (Messing 2003a).

⁷ Note that this translation is appropriate for the variant of Mexicano that is spoken in this region.

⁸ The term *naco* carries very strong weight in conversation, and the context of its use determines its meaning entirely. Loosely translated, it means a backward, small-town nerd, but it indexes someone from a lower class and/or from a small-town setting who is uncouth or somehow not “savvy.” How “savvy” is construed varies on the speech context, depending on the speakers and on their cultural, ethnic, class, and regional environment. It is always meant as an insult, and in this case, her use of the term is an element of a *menosprecio* discourse that she is describing. This particular use of the term was not one that I came across very often. It is thought that this term may be derived from the word *Totonaco* – the name of an indigenous group and its language in central Mexico (including Tlaxcala). The deep roots of discriminatory feeling and classism that created and popularized this term, which is akin to an ethnic slur, are clear in her discourse.

⁹ Tlaxcalan organic intellectuals who advance a *pro-indígena* stance, or indigenous orientation, through their work with the indigenous education division are different from but related to urban Central Mexican intellectuals in their experiences with rural life. See Friedlander 1975 for a description of Mexico City urban *pro-indígena* intellectuals that is still apt today.

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