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One Nation, Many Borders:
Language and Identity in Mayan Guatemala and Mexico

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Senior Honors Thesis
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1. Introduction

In his 1492 grammar of the Spanish language, the first book of its kind, Antonin de Nebrija wrote, “Soon Your Majesty will have placed her yoke upon many barbarians who speak outlandish tongues. By this, your victory, these people shall stand in a new need; the need for the laws the victor owes to the vanquished, and the need for the language we shall bring with us” (Brown 1998c: 161). Written over five hundred years ago, these words speak not only to the power afforded to languages, but to the ability of language itself to create an identity for an entire group of people – by force, if necessary.

Anthropology has long been concerned with the ways in which individuals and communities conceive of their own identities, as the discipline itself moved in the 19th century from an ethnocentric Western perspective to a field that embraced cultural relativism. The subfield of linguistic anthropology is particularly apt for the study of identity construction; its concern with speech acts and language ideologies can shed light on the use of language as both a conscious and an unconscious way of expressing judgment on one’s own or others’ identities.

Today the descendants of de Nebrija’s “barbarians” in many Latin American countries stand in the position of defending themselves not only against centuries of European cultural and linguistic influence, but the need to use the Spanish language as well as their heritage languages. That Spanish is of critical importance for economic and often social gain cannot be understated, but its continually growing place in Latin America is a large factor contributing to the ongoing loss of indigenous languages and the changing ways in which indigenous peoples construct and conceive of their own identities. This thesis focuses specifically on Mayan communities in Guatemala and Mexico as case studies that illuminate some of the contemporary issues in language and construction of identities. Due to the use of both Spanish and Mayan languages in

many of these communities, bilingualism and code-switching play a significant part in this thesis, and so their significance is illuminated within the larger context of linguistic anthropology.

Despite centuries of oppression and discrimination, indigenous movements have recently begun to make significant progress in cultural and linguistic revitalization. In Guatemala, this has taken shape at least partially in the form of the Pan-Maya movement, a broad coalition of activists, organizations, and public intellectuals committed to achieving a number of goals related to Maya revitalization. Since the movement grew out of language revival organizations established in the 1970s and 1980s, it is intrinsically tied to the promotion of Mayan languages and to methods to increase fluency in them. Furthermore, in principal the movement is transnational, seeking to unite peoples across the boundaries of modern nation-states. Its emphasis on the inclusion of all Mayan languages and cultures has influenced the beginnings of Pan-Maya activism in the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico, a region with a similarly long legacy of Maya culture, language, and history.

The mere existence of a pan-indigenous movement for the Maya people illustrates the complexity that lies within the term “Maya.” While centuries of an imposed *indio* identity by colonizers and popular folkloric portrayals depict the culture and people as static and often primitive, wide amounts of variation exist both within Maya culture itself and within the people who identify as such. Language, as one of the essential features expressed by activists of possession of Maya identity, is an ideal tool for studying the ways in which that identity is expressed.

By examining the interplay between self-identification, language ideologies, and code choice in major Mayan regions of Guatemala and Mexico, I argue that the way language

influences Maya identity is highly dependent on the specific cultural and historical contexts in which the language has arisen. Furthermore, language ideologies and code choices demonstrate that there is no singular Maya identity or way of indicating a Maya identity, either within a specific Guatemalan or Mexican context or across national borders. That this plurality of identities can exist in addition to a movement designed to embrace all Mayas – that is, one that encourages similarity at the same time as it celebrates diversity – is important for its further suggestion that there is no one way to be “indigenous” or to be “Maya,” even when sharing a common language or a common set of experiences.

As countries that formed half of the extent of Maya culture in the pre-Columbian era, and that subsequently underwent similar processes of development with regard to the structure and scope of Spanish colonization, Guatemala and Mexico are well suited to a comparison of present-day Maya language and identity. Maya culture developed in the area comprising these modern-day countries as well as the area of Honduras and Belize in the formative period of 1200–300 BCE. What many contemporary sources view as characteristic Maya cultural elements, such as the development of complex astronomy, mathematics, and religion, developed over the next thousand years in the Classic period (300–900 CE) and the Post-Classic period (900–1200 CE) (Litka 2008: 5). Descendants of the Maya comprise a large portion of inhabitants of Guatemala and Mexico today, as part of larger overall indigenous populations. In Guatemala, indigenous populations comprise approximately 60 percent of the country, of which Mayas are by far the majority (Warren 1998: 8); indigenous groups in Mexico comprise 30 percent of the population (CIA World Factbook). Yucatec Maya is the second most widely used language among those groups, and it is spoken by more than 30 percent of the population of the Yucatán peninsula (Gabbert 2001: 460). In order to provide a more narrow discussion, I focus on areas

with the highest percentages of Mayan populations, specifically the western highlands of Guatemala and Mexico's Yucatán peninsula.

The commonly accepted scientific point of view states that the Mayan language family has its origins 4,000 years ago in a common Proto-Maya language (Warren 1998: 17). The language's homeland is postulated to have been in the Cuchumatanes Mountains of Guatemala, where its speakers lived as highly successful agriculturalists who first spread northward into the Petén region and the Yucatán and later expanded into eastern and southern Guatemala (Campbell 1997: 165). With these movements, the culture diversified into groups who spoke approximately 30 separate Mayan languages, some of which are still close enough in relationship to be mutually intelligible. These languages currently span an incredible range of vitality, from as few as 30 speakers in the case of Itzaj to the million speakers of both K'iche' and Yucatec Maya (England 2003: 733). There are additionally languages that have already gone extinct due to colonial contact, such as Choltí in Guatemala and Chicomuceltec in Chiapas, Mexico (Campbell 1997: 163). That the family includes languages with such a wide range of speakers is a testament to the distinct historical processes and environment surrounding each language.

Moreover, recent trends toward globalization have had strong influences in the presence of indigenous languages in many areas of the world; Guatemala and Mexico are no exception. Although language change and language death are not new phenomena, the 20th century saw the decline in native speakers of the majority of Mayan languages due to processes of language shift, as some children do not learn their parents' native language and become monolingual in Spanish. However, in many places in the Mayan world the process has begun to undergo a reversal, particularly with the advent of the Pan-Maya movement and specific linguistic revitalization projects. Since the majority of research in Guatemala and Mexico has focused on languages with

a large number of speakers, I will adopt a similar focus throughout this discussion, using primarily as examples the languages of K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Qeqchi in Guatemala, and Yucatec Maya in Mexico.

Understanding the links between language and culture in this context requires an understanding of a number of terms for Maya and non-Maya classification. Particularly, these terms include *ladino*, *Maya*, *indio*, and *mestizo*. *Ladino* refers to non-indigenous Guatemalans. *Maya* refers to indigenous people in both Guatemala and Mexico who either trace their descent from or identify with aspects of a common Maya culture originating in Central America, such as language, dress, or religious practices. *Indio* is a term that was introduced by the Spanish and was used historically in both Guatemala and Mexico to designate all of the indigenous peoples; it is still in use, but is now much less frequent and carries a strong pejorative sentiment within both countries. Finally, *mestizo* carries a range of meanings that depend strongly on the geographical and cultural context in which it is used. The term was used throughout the Spanish empire as one of the ethnic *castas*: these castes, as a group, constituted people of mixed European, Indian, and African descent (Smith 1990: 39). *Mestizos* were people of mixed Spanish and Indian descent (Gabbert 2004a: 18). The term itself comes from *mestizaje*, which is often employed in Mexican political discourse to as a “symbol of national cultural unity” (Hervik 1999: 52). However, in the Yucatán peninsula itself, it is used as a term of self-identification by people of Mayan descent who speak Yucatec Maya and share common cultural practices of dress, occupation, and religion (Hervik 1999: 52).

Each of the concepts outlined above will be crucial for the larger discussion about language and culture that I will develop throughout the course of this thesis, which is organized as follows. In section 2, I outline the main theoretical framework and introduce and define the

relevant concepts in linguistic anthropology that will guide my discussion, and I provide an overview of differing approaches to the concept of “Mayanism.” Specifically, I focus on the origins of “Mayanism” and the language family and the different ways in which indigenous and foreign scholars view claims to Maya identity. Section 3 is an analysis of two broad case studies from Guatemala and Mexico, concentrating on common identification terms and the processes by which language ideologies and code choice influence ethnic identification. In section 4, I compare the two case studies on a basis of three shared features: (i) identity construction, (ii) bilingualism (code choice) and language ideologies, and (iii) the Pan-Maya movement. Section 5 concludes my analysis and describes future research possibilities.

2. Background

In order to examine language data and processes in their own contexts, it is necessary to establish a framework that will guide and inform my analysis. In this section, I outline relevant concepts in linguistic anthropology that will be used to analyze specific situations in Guatemala and Mexico. I focus on language ideologies, semiotic relationships, and the processes by which they are created (2.1) and code-switching (2.2) in order to present major theories in the discipline and identify those that will be of use in later sections. Finally, I present an overview of the term “Maya” and “Mayanism” as a concept (2.3), focusing on the origins of the term and the culture as well as indigenous and foreign scholars’ approaches to the concept.

2.1. Semiotics and Language Ideologies

Language ideologies can be defined broadly as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Woolard 1998: 4). These often simultaneously take the form of an unconscious statement about a language or its speakers. Spanning related theoretical points of view from “language ideologies,”

“linguistic ideologies,” and “ideologies of language” – each of which corresponds to a particular nuance or area of focus – the term does not describe language alone, but links it to identity, morality, or epistemology (Woolard 1998: 3).

The semiotic relationships of iconicity, indexicality, and symbolism (Peirce 1955: 102) form the bases of language ideologies regardless of the specific cultural environment where such ideologies are manifested. *Icons* establish a relationship with objects on the basis of likeness or similarity. Portraits are therefore icons of their models, and roadmaps are icons of the area they represent. An *index* is related to an object “by virtue of being really affected by that Object” (Peirce 1955: 102). A weathervane is an index of the wind’s direction and smoke is an index of the existence of a fire. Words themselves can also be indexes – for example, a nickname often indexes, or shows the existence of, familiarity. Finally, *symbols* infer their relationship with objects “by virtue of law”: Peirce suggests that ordinary words and terms are symbols because they depend on convention and that “existents will conform to [them]” (Peirce 1955: 102). I return to these concepts in section 3, specifically stressing the use of iconization, indexicality, and erasure as factors influencing the production of Maya language ideologies.

Drawing on Peirce’s semiotic relationships, Gal and Irvine describe three key processes by which language ideologies are created: iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure. These can be applied to a variety of situations. *Iconization* attributes linguistic features to social images, as if the language itself were a direct representation of a group’s “nature” or “essence.” For example, in South Africa “click” consonants were adopted into the Nguni avoidance register – which speakers used to avoid pronouncing words that sounded similar to the name of a respected individual – from the Khoi language because they were initially seen as icons of foreignness, expressing sounds that did not exist in Nguni (Irvine and Gal 2000: 46). *Fractal recursivity*

stems from the projection of an opposition or tension existing at one social level onto a different level, where it may not exist or may have distinct repercussions. Gal and Irvine show an example of this process in the Nguni and Khoi case as well: the difference between Bantu (the language family of which Nguni is a part) and Khoi languages became the basis for the difference between social registers within Nguni itself. Finally, *erasure* “simplifies the sociolinguistic field” by rendering invisible actors or linguistic features that could otherwise complicate a belief (38). An example of this process can be found in the 19th century linguistic mapping of Africa, where colonial officials ignored the multilingualism that characterized many societies in eastern Africa in favor of identifying distinct linguistic populations (Irvine and Gal 2000: 54).

Woolard (1998) describes two general definitions of ideology that are particularly relevant to the study of language among Mayas in Mexico and Guatemala: that which is derived from or rooted in a particular social position, and that which involves ideas and discourse in “the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power” (7). The former is dependent on an individual’s point of view within a particular social group, and the latter arises from the existence of a dominant and subordinate division within a society. Modern Mayas have recently begun to establish greater ties to a well-defined Maya identity or community, which is a direct challenge to the long-established systems of power held by first Spanish colonizers and then the *mestizo* elite social classes – therefore, language ideologies that surface among this group involve both dimensions.

Language ideologies, by definition, do not exist in a vacuum – they are produced and circulated by participants in a society. Though they can form part of everyday speech and beliefs, they also actively contribute to wider social movements regarding the languages that they invoke. To examine their place in such movements, Anderson’s (1991) concept of imagined

communities is particularly relevant as a starting point: “The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). That is, although the level of person-to-person contact may be quite small within a group, there exist other factors that create the image of a larger community linked by shared beliefs or practices. Language is one of the most important factors in this context, not only for providing a national emblem, but for its ability to foster widespread communication. Anderson emphasizes the notion that languages themselves do not necessarily encourage construction of communities: “Print-language is what invents nationalism, not *a* particular language per-se” (134). Therefore, when a vernacular is supported by standardization, literacy, and print production, it supports solidarity between members of an imagined community. Yet Anderson’s definition is also problematic when it is applied to the question of imagined Maya communities: because the emphasis on print language presumes and depends on widespread literacy and development of one particular vernacular, it can create tensions between members in a society or social movement who have access to education and those who do not. This tension is underscored in a variety of places within the Pan-Maya movement and is returned to throughout this paper.

Imagined communities must first be established in order for their members to develop a need for recognition in a larger context. They exist as a basis for nationalist movements, which, although they arise from varying factors such as economic change or armed conflicts, are similar in their shared consciousness and goals for unity. Nationalism as a concept was a major factor in the creation of nation-states in the 19th century, drawing on the “perceived commonality” inherent in imagined communities (Fishman 1973: 6). Yet in addition to nationalism leading to the establishment of the modern countries of France, Germany, and Italy, as well as Mexico and

Guatemala, it can generate “state nationalities” that exist within, rather than separately from, states themselves. It is in this context that indigenous struggles for self-determination operate, for many do not seek the creation of a separate state, but rather national recognition of their community and its place in a pluriethnic state. The trend of autonomy, rather than sovereignty, has been emerging in indigenous communities around the world (Dean and Levi 2003). Furthermore, Fishman points to the fact that the degree of ethnic correspondence with newly formed political borders is usually quite low (38). This type of nationalism, then, also creates space for self-determination across nation-state boundaries, a crucial facet of pan-indigenous ideologies such as the pan-Maya movement.

A more specific, yet integral, part of nationalist movements involves those that seek recognition and standardization of a native language. Such social movements originate from the existence of languages that are not officially recognized in a particular country or context, and receive the support of native speakers who promote goals such as literacy and alphabet standardization. Often the languages represented have diminished in use due to the process of language shift, which Reynolds (2009) defines as “a phenomenon whereby a bilingual speech community can become monolingual when one of its languages becomes dominant due to the perceived social, economic, or political authority accorded its speakers” (224). This is the case in France, where the number of native speakers of Occitan has rapidly declined in the past few decades. Proponents of the language have recognized this change and have undertaken steps to revitalize its existence, encouraging alphabet standardization, widespread written communication, and developing materials for technological and educational use (Eckert 1983: 295).

Yet national language movements do not have such a simple path to success, even if common goals of linguistic revitalization are shared by all members of the movement. In order for a language to have written standardization and to be mutually intelligible among widespread groups of people, a specific variety of the language must be chosen. Since no language has just one variety, this can create tensions within the very ethnic community which is attempting to unite for a common purpose. Eckert describes this process in France within the region of Occitania: the variety spoken in the central area was selected as the most accessible and best representative of the region, though the variety differs from those spoken in the surrounding “periphery” areas. This process is a double-edged sword, because for a language movement to survive, it is necessary to promote a standard variety; indeed, it is essential for distributing written communication. However, Eckert notes that “... this process of regional standardization may very well be reminiscent of the kind of external oppression that the movement is designed to counteract” (289). Language movements must therefore constantly be balancing their needs for survival with their needs for connection with the often larger regional base, a large part of which may not even have access to the chosen variety.

The situation is not unique to France and Occitania: Anderson (1991) describes similar processes at work in Finland, and the same framework is applicable to Maya speakers in Guatemala and Mexico as well. The widespread distribution of such movements speaks to the larger problem of language endangerment in communities around the world. Estimates by linguists suggest that of the 5,000-6,700 languages spoken today, at least half will become extinct in the next century (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 7). Though these languages exist within a multitude of cultural, geographical, and political contexts, they are united by the fact that the

number of fluent speakers is steadily decreasing in the face of pressure to assimilate to a small number of dominant languages and cultures.

Within movements committed to preserving languages, not only are the factors and goals involved comparable between communities, but their inherent problems are as well. Eckert describes the theme of tension between local and expert speakers, who may be trained linguists, in the context of France and Occitania in her analysis of the “central” and “periphery” regions. Similar tensions are well illustrated by the debate surrounding the Achi language in the Guatemalan department of Baja Verapaz. Many of its fifteen thousand speakers assert that it is a separate language, although North American and Mayan linguists argue that it is a variety of K’iche’, due to mutual intelligibility and its short amount of separation time from other varieties of K’iche’ (French 2010: 67-69). Claims for Achi being a separate language are based on strong historical oral traditions that relate conflicts between the K’iche’s and the Achi community of Rabinal: the community had broken off from the K’iche’ kingdom in approximately 1300 CE and was still independent at the time of the Spanish conquest (England 2003: 739). Nikte’ Sis Iboy, a Maya linguist originally from Rabinal, recalls her reaction to other linguists’ judgments of Achi as the same language as K’iche’ as similar to someone saying, “You aren’t what you believe you are; you’re something else” (England 2003: 739). This scientific conclusion about language, then, has also drawn conclusions about other people’s identities that are not in accordance with their own beliefs.

French notes that this debate underscores the tension between the “science of language and the tradition of a community” (2010: 75). This invokes Eckert’s assertion that the “tailoring” of a language to be accessible to an educated, elite segment of the population will alienate other parts of the population both linguistically and politically (299). The Achi/K’iche’ debate serves

as just one example of the wider challenges presented in language movements: the often conflicting beliefs of linguists who present “scientific” classification of languages and native speakers with strong local and cultural affiliations.

2.2. Code Choice

Integral for a discussion of language movements and indigenous languages in a larger bilingual national context is an understanding of the phenomenon of code-switching. Code-switching is defined as “the alternate use of two languages or language varieties within a given stretch of discourse, presumably involving the prerequisite intention to switch languages” (Garzon 1998: 86). Utterances that involve this phenomenon show the same “discourse unity” as utterances in a single language; that is, words or phrases from different languages are generally joined together prosodically to form a single utterance (Myers-Scotton 1993: 2). Contemporary interest in code-switching as a research topic dates to the 1970s, with the advent of studying the phenomenon from a sociolinguistic point of view that described it as a skilled performance, rather than a haphazard mixture of languages (Myers-Scotton 1993: 46). There are at least two aspects to this practice: the underlying grammatical and mental structures involved in mixing two languages and the sociological implications of choosing one code over another.

In one of the widely accepted grammatical models of code-switching, Myers-Scotton (1993) refers to the two languages as the *matrix language* and the *embedded language*, and switching occurs when grammatical or lexical items from the embedded language are used within a larger frame formed by the matrix language (Myers-Scotton 1993: 4). Although the grammatical interaction between the languages involved in code-switching is not the subject of this discussion, it is important to acknowledge that the matrix language and the embedded language are not pre-established concepts: the matrix language is the “main language” and the

embedded language is the “lesser form” in a given discourse, but these two distinctions can switch from one to the other depending on the speakers and on the contexts in which the two languages are used (Myers-Scotton 1993: 125).

The intentions behind and effects of a speaker’s code-switching, rather than the unconscious grammatical factors at work, are particularly relevant for studying shifting identities in multilingual contexts. Myers-Scotton’s *markedness model* is therefore applicable as a theoretical basis. She states the possibility that “speakers have a sense of markedness regarding available linguistic codes for any interaction, but choose their codes based on the persona and/or relation with others which they wish to have in place” (Myers-Scotton 1993: 75). Thus, because different codes reflect the production of different identities or alternative types of the same identity, speakers will perform their identity differently depending on the context. Furthermore, speakers not only index their own identity when choosing a linguistic code, but also indicate their perceptions of others within the conversation (Myers-Scotton 1993: 111). For example, Myers-Scotton describes an instance from Nairobi, Kenya, where a conductor on a bus switches from Swahili to English when addressing a passenger:

(1)

- Conductor: Umelipa nauli ya basi?
'Have you paid the bus fare?'
- Young man: (No response.)
- Conductor: Unaenda wapi?
'Where are you going?'
- Young man: Nafika Jerusalem.
'I'm going to Jerusalem [housing estate].'
- Conductor: *You must always say clearly and loudly where you are going to alright, OK?*

(Myers-Scotton 1993: 134)

In this example, the conductor's switch to English indicates his own authority over passengers on the bus, but also shows that he perceives the well-dressed young man to be proficient in English.

The basic framework of code-switching that Myers-Scotton establishes is useful in a variety of contexts, and it will inform examples of code choice in Guatemala and Mexico that are discussed in section 3. Those examples include both marked and unmarked code-switching, which shows that the choice to use either Spanish or a Mayan language in place of the other is highly dependent on the context and the varying interactions of different speakers.

2.3. Mayanism

As mentioned in section 1, the Mayan language family is composed of approximately 30 languages with the vitality of each language varying widely, with some being extremely moribund (e.g. Itzaj, with less than 30 speakers), and some having close to a million speakers (England 2003: 733). Yet even the most numerous are experiencing language loss, as children increasingly learn Spanish as a first language. A number of factors contribute to this language shift, particularly the economic opportunities requiring competency in Spanish and negative language ideologies surrounding indigenous languages. Fluent adults often speak of their own memories of punishment for speaking a Mayan language in school (Barrett 2008; French 2010), experiences which contribute negatively to both their active production of the language and their willingness to pass on the same position to their children. Communities exist in various states of language loss, from those that are in relatively little danger of losing fluency to those that are part of a "shift generation" (Brown 1998b: 127). Members of a generation whose parents do not speak to them in their native language represent this shift or turning point: the behavior ultimately leads to a lack of fluency in that language and the loss of ability to productively communicate with it.

The strong climate of cultural reaffirmation in the Pan-Maya movement looks to reverse the process of language shift, and in pursuit of that goal many scholars look to the linguistic and cultural origins of the Maya. Both the origins of the word *Maya* – and therefore the origin of its use as an ethnicity identifier – and the languages that the group has spoken have significant cultural meaning.

The etymology of the term *Maya* dates to the Late Postclassic period in Yucatán (c. 1250-1450), where the city of Mayapán was the political and cultural capital of the northern area of the peninsula. By the time of the Spanish arrival in 1524, the city had been destroyed, yet *maya't'an* was known to the conquerors as the name of one of the languages in the region (Gabbert 2004a: 29). However, contemporaries presented conflicting opinions on the nature of the relation between the two: some derived the name of the city from the name of the language, while others asserted that the name of the language came from the city in which they lived. Gabbert (2004a) argues that the latter possibility is more likely, given that in sources from the period, groups of people were categorized by their political or kinship affiliations rather than linguistic criteria. Additionally, he shows that not all speakers of the language were described with the term. Although a “Maya” identity existed as far back as the 16th century, then, it certainly did not carry the same connotations then as it does now.

Reaching far earlier than the origins of the term “Maya,” however, is the origin – or supposed origin – of the Proto-Maya language. The *Popul Vuh*, a sacred Mayan text, includes a passage translated as, “one was our language when we came to Tulan,” with *Tulan* referring to an ancient pilgrimage site. Many Maya, both within and outside the Pan-Maya movement, use this as a metaphor for Proto-Maya (Fox Tree 2006: 133). Yet Fox Tree argues that the many migrations, linguistic fragmentation, and ways of defining language complicate this relation, so

that there is no concrete rationale for “one language” to mean Proto-Maya. Furthermore, ideologies promoted by some scholars within the Pan-Maya movement create links between Proto-Maya and current identity politics: they claim that speaking Proto-Maya suggested “an ancient awareness of Maya ethnolinguistic identity” (Fox Tree 2006: 137). Erasing or glossing over social contexts of the period allows activists to “Mayanize” the science of linguistics by assimilating it into Maya culture and suggesting that ancient Mayas classified their language in the same way that it is seen today. Yet Fox Tree shows that some interpretations about Mayan linguistic origins carry more similarities to beliefs held by rural, non-activist affiliated Mayas. For example, he describes instances in which rural Mayas identify language with political units, citing the response “How many *pueblos* are there in Guatemala?” to a question about the number of languages in the country. In addition, he cites instances where town residents label their language differently than linguists, such as residents of Uspanteko who claim to speak “Uspanteko” rather than K’iche’ or Sakapulteko, and residents of Santa María Visitación who speak “Visiteco” instead of Tz’utujil, Kaqchikel, or K’iche’ (Fox Tree 2006: 144).

Fox Tree compares these notions about modern languages to descriptions in colonial-era documents such as the *Título de Sacapulas*, which contains a list of languages that supposedly came from the one language in Tulan; notably, the authors refer to the languages by their geopolitical location. Furthermore, Fox Tree suggests that the term *language* was also used to denote human groups rather than simply speech varieties. He concludes, “Rather than being based on speech *per se*, language was likely tied closely to geopolitical criteria, such as alliances, notions of place, and dynastic histories” (Fox Tree 2006: 148). The criteria by which modern-day Mayas classify their languages, then, is highly dependent on their location and their level of involvement in cultural activism. Although the Pan-Maya movement has been a strong force in

revitalization, it is clear that beliefs regarding the origins of the languages and culture it seeks to protect are far from unified.

Together, these origin stories contribute to the idea of essentialism, an often disdained method of cultural explanation that makes “simplistic or universalizing assumptions about domination and uncritically assumes the possibilities or impossibilities of resistance based on a particular form of collective identity” (Fischer 1999: 473). An essentialist view of Maya culture promotes a “primordial quality intimately tied to certain symbolic clusters” (Fischer 1999: 475). Modern Maya culture seems to have two different ways to express this. Progressive Pan-Maya scholars actively promote an essentialist view in order to reaffirm the legitimacy and legacy of their culture, while other Mayas not involved in the movement also produce ideas that support this worldview. For example, the Jakalteq Maya anthropologist Victor Montejo writes of a Maya “macroculture”: “I am proposing the existence of a unique, base Maya culture, shared within the Maya region” (17). He elaborates that this shared culture has roots in the Classic era, given material and linguistic evidence, and that it still exists today. While this anthropologist and member of the Pan-Maya movement is conscious of the distinction between essentialist and constructivist thought, it is noteworthy that those not belonging to the movement also produce essentialist ideas. A religious specialist from Tecpán, Guatemala, described Maya resurgence after the 1980s violence in cyclical terms, referencing a common Mesoamerican cosmological concept: “The blood of [the people who died] went to earth and was consummated before God, right? This blood is their spirit, right? Thus our people have now won – and we remember how it was before” (Fischer 1999: 476). Fischer notes the importance of this moment, since the man calls on the cultural idea of a “cyclic continuation of a longstanding covenant between individuals and the vitalistic forces of the cosmos” to describe a historical event (476). That is,

he explains an event that occurred during his lifetime by drawing on a cultural concept viewed as implicitly Mayan due to its existence in a pre-Columbian worldview.

From these two examples, it is clear that essentialism exists on some level within very different sectors of Maya society. Directly related to Maya identity, however, is that which is more closely associated with Montejo's beliefs – a “strategic essentialism” forged by Maya scholars. Gayatri Spivak defines this concept as “a provisional recuperation and construction of cohesive identities in response to pressures from without to assimilate to dominant cultural paradigms” (Loewe 2010: 146). That is, it is the practice of emphasizing parts of Maya culture as continuous in order to defend against the loss or denigration of the culture. This widespread practice has been a source of conflict with North American anthropologists (Warren 1998, Fischer 1999), who often see constructivism as a helpful source of self-determination for both its recognition of identity as a continuing process as well as its power to reject folkloric, romanticized views of indigenous culture.

Yet after reactions by Maya scholars to a lecture on fallacies of “Indianness” – i.e., essentialism – Warren notes that “essentialism is a powerful rejection of the Ladino definition of Mayas as the negative or weaker other” (78). Fischer echoes this by creating the compromise of “Maya culture as a historically continuous construction that adapts to changing circumstances while remaining true to a perceived essence of Mayaness” (488). Changing views by North American anthropologists, then, suggest that increasing worth is given to Maya identity as determined by Mayas themselves. Fox Tree's critique of popular essentialist discourse, however, shows that tensions between groups of Maya are still present and relevant to continuing analysis of identity.

Despite essentialist, unifying discourses about “Mayanism,” this identity is created in different ways in different communities. In the following section, I use Guatemala and Mexico as points of comparison to describe distinct historical, cultural, and political factors in each area, all of which contribute to varying impressions of “Mayanism.”

3. Case Studies

In this section, I outline the specific historical and cultural contexts contributing to different constructions of “Maya” identity in Guatemala and Mexico, beginning in each case with a brief historical overview and moving to an analysis of the Pan-Maya movement, Maya self-identity, and linguistic code choice. Though ultimately my focus is on the ways in which groups of Mayas choose to construct and perform their own identities, in the introductory sections that trace the history of interactions with the Guatemalan and Mexican governments, there are many examples of the ways that groups other than the Maya have framed “Maya” as an identity. In the case of Guatemala, for example, both the Spanish colonizers and the Guatemalan government constructed an *indio* or Maya identity for their own purposes; by forming their own views of what it meant to be indigenous, each of these groups was able to justify their perceptions of, and actions against, indigenous communities. The recent rise of the Pan-Maya movement also exemplifies a way in which Maya identity is constructed for a specific purpose by a specific group of people, and it is this aspect – groups of Mayas themselves defining what being Maya means to them – that will be my primary focus.

3.1. Guatemala

In this section, I first provide an overview of Guatemalan history from the pre-Columbian era to the present, highlighting events relevant for a discussion of language and identity. Next, I

examine three key concepts: (i) the origins and evolution of the Pan-Maya movement, (ii) Maya identity, and (iii) practices of linguistic code choice.

3.1.1. Guatemalan Historical Context

Although many Mayanists today emphasize the continuity between modern Mayan culture and its ancient counterparts, in the centuries before the Spanish conquest, the Guatemalan highlands were divided into separate Maya kingdoms and did not necessarily share the same culture. The ancestors to the Maya who existed during the time of the conquest originated in the Late Preclassic (400 BCE to 300 CE) and Classic periods (300 CE to 900 CE), developing many features commonly associated with pre-Hispanic Maya culture, such as writing, advanced astronomical and mathematical knowledge, monumental architecture, and complex political structures (Demarest 2004: 15). During the Classic period, centers such as Tikal, Caracol, Palenque, and Coban grew in importance, building temples and palaces and participating in intensified trade (Demarest 107). Yet many of these great cities were abandoned in the ninth and tenth centuries, leading to the Postclassic period that lasted until colonization; though Postclassic centers were not as monumental as their Classic counterparts, they nonetheless involved the construction of sophisticated temples, ball courts, and altars (Demarest 284).

By 1250 CE, the K'iche', Poqomam, Tz'utujil, Mam, and Kaqchikel ruled parts of the highlands; over the next two centuries, shifting alliances and disputes resulted in constant warfare between the K'iche's and the Kaqchikels (Brown 1998a: 49). Taking advantage of this rivalry, Pedro de Alvarado welcomed the aid of the Kaqchikels in his conquest of other Maya kingdoms upon the Spanish arrival into the highlands in 1524. Yet demanding tribute payments brought about a Kaqchikel revolt against the Spaniards, ultimately leading to Kaqchikel surrender in 1530 (Brown 1998a: 50).

The colonial period involved many facets of Spanish colonization that were not unique to Guatemala, but were standard ways of creating and enforcing difference between indigenous and European populations. Indeed, most of the policies instated in Guatemala were also policies in the Yucatán and in other areas of New Spain. These policies produced many patterns of life that influenced modern Maya culture, primarily driven by the separation of society into the *república de españoles* and the *república de indios* (Patch 1993: 23). Within the *república de indios*, the colonizers attempted to organize the Maya into *reducciones*, nucleated towns built on a Spanish model designed to begin the process of Maya “civilization” (Brown 1998a: 53). These towns achieved varying degrees of success, as some Maya did leave to settle in outlying areas and re-establish scattered patterns of settlement similar to pre-conquest environments. Those living in the *reducciones*, however, found their ways of living severely disrupted. The population at the time identified itself as belonging to specific communities, not to a widespread “indigenous” population (Pebley et al 2005: 217; Garzon 1998; Smith 1990; Watanabe 1995). Tax, writing in 1937, describes the legacy of these specific allegiances with the claim, “... in many cases [languages] appear to refer to cultural and tribal groups, and one is left to infer that the Quiché, for example, are an ethnic entity with one definable culture and a political and social organization” (Tax 1937: 423). The *reducciones* did not take these previous allegiances or conflicts into account.

The colonial state also sought to “civilize” the Maya through economic integration. One of the earliest systems was the *encomienda*, in which the state granted to a private individual the right to demand tribute from a sector of the population (Patch 1993: 28). Systems such as these became one of the most important ways to subjugate the Maya population after Indian slavery

was established in approximately 1550 (Smith 1990: 38), while still gaining substantial benefit such as tribute payments or manual labor.

In addition to physical and economic resettlement, the Spanish were highly concerned with cultural development and integration. Colonial language policies often prioritized Spanish teaching by missionaries, with varying levels of success. Indeed, the first group of friars acting as missionaries in *reducciones* found it more convenient to Christianize the Maya through teaching in Maya languages: “For reasons of expediency, they simply overlooked the royal decrees governing language relations” (Richards and Richards 1996: 208). Though the Church did encourage friars’ proficiency in local languages, by the mid-17th century it embarked on a Castilianization effort of “unprecedented proportions,” mandating Mayas to adopt Spanish surnames, prohibiting those who did not learn Spanish from adopting Spanish dress and riding a saddled horse, and requiring that all courts and official recitations be conducted in Spanish (Richards and Richards 209). Additionally, in the 1690s a series of edicts were issued mandating officials from both the Church and the Crown to comply with Spanish instruction laws (Brown 1998a: 57). Attempts at Castilianization policies persisted throughout colonialism and after independence, but fragmented bureaucratic infrastructure and lack of formal public education in the highlands led to a lack of support for their implementation. Thus, monolingualism in Mayan languages continued to be typical until the latter half of the 20th century (Richards and Richards 210).

After independence from Spain in 1821, the Guatemalan state alternated between conservative and liberal heads of state, beginning with the conservative Rafael Carrera. Maya communities often supported conservative leaders, who tended to take a more hands-off approach to the indigenous majority and whose politics did not promote radical economic or

landholding transformations. However, with the rise of liberal leaders such as Justo Rufino Barrios in the late nineteenth century, the Maya were once again involved in bitter conflicts with the state. Barrios' government instated reforms that resulted in expropriation of Maya land and forced labor on coffee plantations, beginning a cycle of liberal governments lasting until the 1940s (Smith 1990: 85). At this time, Maya communities experienced a brief period of revitalization – the “Ten Years of Spring” – that saw indigenous mayors elected in highland towns and efforts to improve local living conditions and schooling (Montejo 2005: 114-115). Ultimately, however, the democratically elected government of Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown in 1954 by a U.S.-sponsored coup; this laid the conditions for decades of military dictatorships and a 36-year civil war.

Although the civil war, which began with rebellions in the 1960s, was officially waged between a guerrilla movement and the Guatemalan government, Maya communities became involved to an unfortunate and extreme degree. The army was intent on capturing “subversives” that might be guerrillas or guerrilla sympathizers – originally targeting students, labor leaders, and teachers, among other groups – yet extended these attacks to Maya communities in the mid-1970s (Montejo 2005: 116). The worst of the violence peaked during the early 1980s, when many areas were subject to massacres under the scorched earth policies of General Efraín Ríos Montt. Denouncing indigenous areas as the source of rebel soldiers and subversive ideologies – by famously speaking of “taking the water away from the fish,” the water being the Maya and the fish being the rebels – Ríos Montt and his partners in command attempted to justify their destruction of entire villages and communities (Sanford 2004: 154). Under this thinly veiled excuse, the government carried out policies eventually judged as genocide – first by the Guatemalan Historical Clarification Commission in 2004 – against the ethnic groups that made

up the majority of the Guatemalan population. Locally known as “la violencia,” the war officially ended with the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, but experiences like state-sponsored terror and flight to refugee camps in Mexico have colored Maya experiences until the present day. Organized resistance to state-sponsored development projects, such as gold mines or dams that ultimately displace communities, often has strong links to memories of war-era violence; the current political climate shows that tensions are far from over.¹

In the midst of the extreme violence in the western highlands, the 1980s gave rise to a climate of cultural revitalization known variously as the “Pan-Maya movement,” the “Maya movement,” or “Mayanism” (England 2003: 734). The movement had its roots in the struggle for language revitalization, a process begun in 1972 with the collaboration of North American and Maya linguists. A group of volunteers either trained in linguistics or possessing experience in Guatemala helped to organize the Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín (PLFM), an organization that provided linguistics training to Mayas themselves (French 2010: 54). Out of this new generation of Maya linguists came the creation of the Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG) in 1984, an entirely Maya-run organization that produced materials and tactics for the promotion of these languages in everyday speech. Among other projects, the ALMG was responsible for standardizing a number of alphabets and changing previous orthography derived from Spanish and judged by linguists from the PLFM to be “irrational” for Mayan languages (French 2010: 56, 58). For example, the PLFM argued that each phoneme (sound) should be written with a single corresponding form, rather than a phoneme being

¹ The most recent presidential elections are one indication of this: in late 2011, Otto Pérez Molina, a former commanding officer in the military during the 1980s and one of many ex-military officers implicated in accounts of torture and disappearance, was elected president; he has publicly stated that he does not believe the Guatemalan government is responsible for genocide.

represented by more than one character, such as the Spanish *c*, *qu*, and *k* for the phoneme /k/ (French 2010: 56). Devoting resources to language revitalization influenced the promotion of other aspects of Maya culture, a process that was catalyzed by the fierce repression of the war. As members of pro-Maya groups witnessed and experienced violence and marginalization, the creation of a social movement became much more urgent.

As a broad definition, the movement emphasizes a common, global Maya identity regardless of linguistic group or geographical location. The founders conceived it as a cultural, not specifically political, set of ideas, given the volatile climate of the 1980s. By concentrating on “seemingly more benign” areas of political action, they were able to largely escape repression by a government that equated culture with folklore (England 2003: 734). Even so, the collective Pan-Maya consciousness involves traits that are often necessarily political, such as the recognition of cultural diversity within the Guatemalan nation-state, a wider role for indigenous politics, re-examination of economic inequalities, and a wider promotion of cultural resources such as education and literacy materials (Warren 1998: 36). Specifically, stated goals include language revitalization and literacy training, the revitalization of Maya cultural and historical texts, the production of “culturally inclusive” school textbooks, the revitalization of Maya leadership such as elders and shamans, and the distribution of a discourse of indigenous rights (Warren 1998: 39).

Given the broad nature of these goals, it is not surprising that the movement encompasses participants from many diverse areas. Many leaders and public intellectuals have had access to higher education in the United States, but there is also widespread support among younger teachers, students, and development workers (Warren 1998: 22). It is interesting to note that although the movement has grown in a variety of directions since its beginnings in language

revitalization, language still plays a major – and often unconscious – role. Montejo states that “Pan-Mayanism is the recognition of the different ways in which the Mayan linguistic groups have contributed to the maintenance and continuous transformation of Maya culture” (33). The choice of “linguistic” rather than “ethnic” groups in this quote suggests that language continues to inform the ways in which Mayas denote cultural belonging, a notion that is vital for further analysis of Maya identity.

3.1.2. Perspectives on Maya Culture, Language, and Identity in Guatemala

The complicated politics of Maya identity begin as early as Spanish colonialism, since the Spanish obsession with ethnic and racial categories was a system imposed upon the continents without concern for or understanding of the systems already in place. The colonial government’s implementation of the distinct *república de españoles* and *república de indios* placed all Maya in one category as “indios,” effectively attempting to erase any differences between communities and ethnic groups. The *reducciones* exacerbated this policy, since Maya from across the region were grouped together without regard for differences. Furthermore, while a pan-“indio” identity was imposed from above, at the time of the conquest, Maya people did not identify themselves as part of a larger indigenous or Maya population: “Since colonial times, affiliation with a rural community rather than ‘Indigenesness’ per se has been the central focus of Indigenous identity” (Pebley et al 2005: 217). Strong ties to individual communities, then, made the forced “indio” distinction an even stranger phenomenon than it might have been otherwise.

In Guatemala, the identifier “indio” has persisted among ladinos, yet its use differs from that of the colonial period: rather than being widely used as an identification term for all indigenous people, it has gained a strong pejorative sense. An urban ladina woman commented

in an interview with Choi, “When my kids were growing up, whenever they spilt some food on the table and their clothes, I said, ‘What are you doing? Do you want to be *indio*?’ Then they stopped doing that” (Choi 2003: 46). Montejo acknowledges that *indio* is a problematic term when he asserts, “I believe that the racist attacks in Guatemala are against ‘Indians’ and not against the Maya” (2005: 12). That is, he suggests that racial prejudice is primarily directed at the historically constructed category of *indio* – and the negative connotations it carries – rather than the Maya specifically.

Continued use of the term *indio* in discourse emphasizes the divide between a Europeanized ladino population and an indigenous Maya population, even though, as Montejo stresses, both groups have mixed with each other since the very beginning of the conquest. Disagreement over accurate ways of representing and talking about Maya identity, from a ladino point of view, is therefore an ongoing process. Hale’s study of the Maya movement through a ladino perspective – conducted in Chimaltenango, a western Guatemala city with a population that is approximately 80 percent Mayan – highlights the fact that many ladinos have negative views of the indigenous majority. For example, one informant, a middle-class elementary school teacher, asserted, “There are no authentic Mayas. Now, why don’t they just call themselves indígena?” (Hale 2006: 153). By asserting that there are no *authentic* Mayas, the quote invalidates any contemporary claims to Maya identity and attempts to remove the meaningful label in favor of a simple “indigenous” category. In casual speech from ladinos, terms of identity within the study include “indio,” “indígena,” and “Maya,” further illustrating the notion that the “indio” identifier has given way to a variety of terms with subtle differences.

Since a widespread “indigenous” category did not exist until the colonial period – and with it the necessity of “indigeneity” as a concept in itself – identity terms were naturally varied

before the Spanish arrival. Referring once again to the assertion by Pebley et al (2005), the tendency to identify by community or geographical area overrode any other designation. Indeed, this tendency may have been exacerbated by Spanish subjugation: “Smith claims that the Mayans responded to their class condition with an organizational form – the Indian community – which made it possible for them to isolate themselves from the Spanish and therefore resist assimilation” (Choi 2003: 41). This categorization on the basis of specific communities persisted after Guatemalan independence from Spain in 1821, and by the turn of the 20th century, self-identification by community or *municipio* was still the most significant factor for Mayas (Adams 1990: 152).

Present-day self-identification among Maya communities in Guatemala manifests itself in a number of ways. Particularly relevant are the two extremes of outright denial of indigenous identity and conscious Maya promotion, though these exist within a larger continuum of self-identification. A Maya working in Guatemala City reported, “One [Indian politician] said, ‘My family is Indian, but not me.’ One man said, ‘no, I am not Indian’” (Choi 2003: 54). “Indian” qualifiers in these sentiments included a lack of a college degree or the use of indigenous dress; therefore, the two men quoted did not necessarily use the same criteria to define their lack of Indian-ness. By using different criteria, different people are thus able to position themselves and their close relatives in quite distinct ways, though the criteria for Maya identity typically falls under more rural qualities such as poverty and a lack of higher education. In a similar fashion, some Maya who do identify as indigenous suggest an association with “rural” Maya and authenticity: Choi argues that “rural Maya is ideologically constructed as authentic Maya” (2003: 151). Even with regard to Maya activists, some point to others as more legitimate: “Mayas often... say that their own parents and grandparents were the ‘real activists,’ even if those elders

were illiterate peasants in remote rural communities” (Fox Tree 2006: 143). In this assertion, simply living a typical rural life that includes agriculture and wearing traditional clothing is believed to represent a “real” Maya identity that resists ladino hegemony. Therefore, rejection of Maya identity can occur in more than one way: by outwardly stating that one is not “Indian” at all and by affording others a *more* legitimate identity. Notably, the statement “no, I am not Indian” indicates not only a rejection of indigeneity, but also the rejection of pan-Maya consciousness.

On the other hand, deliberately identifying as “Maya” reflects a more overtly political affiliation, often relating to the Pan-Maya movement. “We consciously call ourselves Maya,” affirms Montejo, noting that a desire to be labeled this way is an important component of this identity for most: “...they want to be called Maya, and their link to the ancient Maya legitimizes this desire” (68). A political affiliation alone is not necessarily an indication of “Mayaness,” however, given the stance of the politician quoted above who explicitly denied a Maya identity. There is also an intricate link to language, for, as England (2003) notes, “Many Mayas find it difficult to conceive of people who are Maya but do not speak the language” (735). Although ongoing language shift means that more and more people are not acquiring fluency in indigenous languages, this statement makes it clear that linguistic competency is still an important indicator of identity for the Maya. The use of K’iche’ in a political meeting in Momostenango illustrates this: “The only thing I would ask is that [the pre-mayoral candidate] greet us in our own language,” asks a member of the same party (Choi 2003: 29). In order to legitimize the candidate’s membership as Maya, he must demonstrate his familiarity with K’iche’, which he does by not simply greeting the audience, but by giving a short speech marked by extensive Spanish-K’iche’ code-switching. Producing more than a simple greeting in the language suggests

that the candidate wished to prove his oratorical competency. Identifying as Maya or as a member of a specific polity are not mutually exclusive, however; Enrique Sam Colop, a Maya scholar, identifies first as K'iche', then Maya, then as a man from Cantel, and finally as Guatemalan (Maxwell 2006: 199).

Indeed, the link between language ability and identity even reflects pre-colonial conceptions of group membership in some areas. When asked about the number of Mayan languages, rural Maya informants sometimes responded with the question, "How many pueblos are there in Guatemala?" (Fox Tree 2006: 144). This answer suggests that belonging to a certain geographical identity would naturally be linked with a similar linguistic identity, showing a strong association between language and area of origin. The belief is not without tension, for within the affirmation of "Mayaness" or indigeneity there can also be strong local ties, such as the current debate within the Rabinal community, as discussed above in section 2.1. Yet there are also scholars who emphasize the need for a fluid conception of identity, acknowledging dialect and cultural divergence; in their eyes, linguistic differences among Maya languages show distinct ways of expressing the same identity (England 2003: 740). Crucially, then, even with the advent of the Pan-Maya movement, individual beliefs on the degree and manner of representing Maya identity do not converge on a single idea. Language, a major determinant, can both create further separation and engender a broader notion of solidarity.

This notion of solidarity can also be extended to relations between Mayas and ladinos. Montejo argues that "Maya-centrism can be negative if we don't admit that the ladinos themselves, as 'Guatemaltecos' ... also have a part of their blood that is Maya and that they share this identity" (2005: 7). Interestingly, the reverse is also true: ladinos find themselves grappling with not only the problem of how to represent the Maya, but how to represent

themselves. Hale describes a debate within the house of an informant in Chimaltenango in 2005, during which one of the women insisted on remaining “ladina” even as her husband and son argued for the adoption of a “mestizo” identity (2006: 9). Since “mestizo” implies racial mixture, this is a significant change. There are a variety of reasons for the recent rise of this term in Guatemala, including the desire for an egalitarian, “race-blind” society; the sentiment of not fitting within the “Indian-ladino binary”; or an expression of Maya solidarity and desire to connect with indigenous ancestry (Hale 2006: 169).

Other, unrelated, statements express the ideas that both groups should look toward a mixture of identities. Montejo asserts that “The Maya need not be completely enclosed in their Mayaness, but can work to promote actions for unity and solidarity with their ladino counterparts” (2005: 134). Even without specifically addressing actions that could enforce this, the statement is important for its implied acknowledgment that the Maya movement seeks equal representation on a national level. Expressing willingness for a fluid definition of what is considered “Maya,” an informant in Momostenango said, “What’s more important is one’s internal thought. Some ladinos know the Mayan calendar and try to learn K’iche’, then they can be Maya too” (Choi 2003: 61). Implicit in this statement is the idea that Maya identity is a product of cultural and linguistic awareness rather than racial and ethnic origins. In this woman’s statement and in ideas about “real” and “contemporary” Maya, beliefs about identity are expressed in a direct manner. However, examining patterns of language use is another way to discover such beliefs, for they often reveal indirect notions of how and where identity should be expressed.

3.1.3. Language Ideologies and Bilingualism in Guatemala

From a generalized ladino perspective, ideologies about Mayan languages in Guatemala tend to emphasize their negative qualities. The writer of a column in *La Hora* newspaper in 1990 remarked, “These languages are ‘stuck in the middle of the 16th century and are *relatively poor* in expressing contexts and present values. There are many languages, and they are not mutually intelligible. ... this is a *dangerous political game against national unity and is also bad for the destiny of our Indians*” (Warren 1998: 137). By invoking the colonial time period, the speaker places the languages in a historical, unchanging context that makes them unable to function in the contemporary era. Additionally, equating the many, not mutually intelligible languages to a danger to “national unity” reflects the political climate of the time of the editorial’s appearance, suggesting that the indigenous population is, either consciously or unconsciously, separating the Guatemalan state.

Negative ideologies have persisted among ladinos to the present day. *Lengua*, similar to the pejorative *indio* identifier, is a term commonly used to describe Mayan languages. Literally meaning “tongue” in Spanish, the term alone carries a more derogatory and less official sense than *idioma* (language). Yet the implicit negative judgment is used with explicit ideologies as well. A ladina informant of anthropologist Jinsook Choi, who lives in Antigua, a primarily ladino city, told her that, “I heard that Indians have three organs to produce *lengua*: mouth, nose, and throat. ... I wonder how they can do it, it’s strange,” and, “*Lengua* doesn’t even have grammar” (Choi 2003: 47). These two ideologies characterize Mayan languages, and therefore the people who speak them, as abnormal and lacking a coherent explanation. Stating that the languages also lack grammar – and therefore structure – places them further out of the realm of familiarity and suggests a primitive connotation. That these statements are more than individual anecdotes is

illustrated in the assertion by Barrett, who cites a wealth of other sources on Guatemalan history and current affairs: “The prevailing language ideology in Guatemala has long denigrated indigenous languages” (2008: 276).

In addition to language ideologies produced from ladinos, however, there are also judgments expressed by Mayas about their own languages. England argues that these fall into two categories: “those that address the position of Mayan languages in relation to Spanish and those that have to do with situations and identities that are internal to the Mayan language communities” (England 2003: 738). That is, ideologies in the former category tend to make value judgments about the relative worth of Mayan languages or Spanish, while those in the latter category often connect Mayan languages to specific Maya cultural values.

Falling into the first category, Choi states from her study of language in Momostenango, “Many Momostecos believe that Spanish marks ‘more educated people, urban, commercial occupation, higher status,’ whereas K’iche’ indicates ‘uneducated, illiterate, rural, women, lower status’” (2003: 76). She also remarks that key words used to judge the value of K’iche’ are “backwards,” “antiquated,” and “the past” (Choi 2003: 76). These emphasize Choi’s argument that indigenous tradition is heavily associated with Mayan languages, whereas its counterpoint, modernity, is commonly associated with Spanish. French encountered similar comments while doing fieldwork in Chimaltenango: “Well, Spanish, is more, more, how should I say, modern, right?” (French 2010: 89) This response was from a teenage clerk in a bookstore who was asked the question, “What communities speak Kaqchikel in the Chimaltenango department?”² She was not asked to comment on Spanish at all, but her response shows that she immediately links Spanish and Kaqchikel and presumes the researcher will understand the close relationship. Yet

² Guatemala is divided politically into 22 separate departments (Garzon et al 1998: xv).

not all ideologies contrasting Mayan languages with Spanish are negative, even when comparing the two languages. In Momostenango, bilingualism is highly valued due to its benefits in the labor market: “The two languages are important for work” (Choi 2003: 77). Access to both languages allows Momostecos to compete for jobs in the merchant sector and with government census projects that require contact with many different communities.

Ideologies pertaining to the status of Mayan languages within indigenous communities appear in both positive and negative forms as well. In some cases, negative judgments are expressed not as pejorative thoughts about the languages themselves, but as feelings of shame or guilt about language ability. Numerous informants from Choi’s research spoke of being “ashamed” and “embarrassed” of speaking K’iche’ due to their limited competency (Choi 2003: 81). This shame implies that the speakers feel embarrassed at making errors in their speech, but it also suggests a deeper level of meaning – that because they belong to a Maya community, they should be able to communicate well in its language.

Contrasting directly with the negative ideology of “lengua” requiring extra organs that produce strange sounds is the belief that Mayan languages have fewer harsh sounds and connotations: “It doesn’t hurt your feelings when you are scolded in K’iche’. K’iche’ is softer than Spanish” (Choi 2003: 116). A related idea equates K’iche’ with a poetic way of speaking, capable of transforming simple concepts like waking up in the morning into a lyrical description of the interaction between a person and nature. Therefore, Choi argues that “K’iche’ is an icon that evokes an image of nature and respect” (2003: 124). Since Peirce’s definition of the icon relates concepts on the basis of their likeness or similarity, this means that for these speakers, the poetic, “soft” nature of K’iche’ is similar to respectful discourse and the natural environment. In

these informants' speech, K'iche' has undergone the process of iconization (see section 2.1) to represent these two values.

The cultural revitalization promoted by the Pan-Maya movement encourages positive ideologies such as these in order to relate the languages to a positive cultural identity. An informant working in Chimaltenango expressed similar positive thoughts about the relationship between language and culture: "... the language carries the culture, and if we want to be successful people, we also have to have our own culture" (French 2010: 105). Another man remarked on the recent efforts to officialize Mayan languages, "I consider it an honor that they may officialize it" (French 2010: 107). By associating Mayan languages with Mayan culture, and stating that the recognition of both is a positive goal, these speakers link language and culture by an indexical relationship. Stating that "the language carries the culture," for example, emphasizes that the language and culture are strongly affected by, and dependent on, each other's presence. Similarly, considering language officialization to be an "honor" evokes the idea that Mayan languages both deserve and are worthy of the status of official languages. Together, then, these ideologies construct indigenous languages as an icon of positive values like nature and respect, as well as using them to index positive values like a renewed culture and an official status in Guatemala.

In her own discussion of language ideologies, Choi quotes Schieffelin and Doucet (1998) by remarking, "There is rarely a single ideology of language" (2003: 158). This is illustrated even in the brief overview of Mayan ideologies discussed above; beliefs range from the negative to the positive, connecting Spanish and Mayan languages as well as separating them. Rather than simply serving as an index of the cultural and societal worth, however, language ideologies are actively involved in creating and defining identity: i.e., they inform an individual's choice of

which linguistic code to use. Code-switching and code choice are therefore major indicators of identity because they can reveal the language ideologies behind those choices.

3.1.4. Code Choice in Guatemala

Code choice and code-switching can be used to perform language ideologies and to indicate identity in a variety of manners, depending on the situation, the actors involved, the political and cultural context, and the speech situation. Choi emphasizes the ability of code-switching to both maintain and create boundaries between the self and the other (2003: 91), which is key when discussing an environment, like Guatemala, in which identity is often described as a binary: describing the self as “ladino” necessarily invokes the existence of an opposing “Maya” definition. Particularly relevant for this discussion are the use of code-switching to index boundaries between an in-group and an out-group, as well as the deliberate lack or avoidance of code-switching to index these boundaries. Naturally, the simple act of choosing to speak in a Mayan language in the presence of ladinos or Mayas who are not competent in the language creates boundaries between the groups. Yet code-switching is also used to establish boundaries between bilingual speakers, reflecting different social indicators such as formality and respect, familiarity, and most importantly, identity.

In her study of language use in Momostenango, Choi gives a number of examples of code-switching in various contexts. One example comes from a conversation between an old woman in a hospital, who is a patient; the nurse; and the nurse’s assistant. Their conversation shows the way in which K’iche’ can be used to index formality or respect: the nurse greets and speaks to the old woman in K’iche’, yet switches to Spanish to communicate with her assistant even though the assistant is bilingual (2003: 71). The code choice reflects the language ideologies discussed above that associate Mayan languages with tradition and the past, combined

with the knowledge that many older Maya men and women have higher linguistic competency in their native language than in Spanish.

On the other hand, Mayan languages can index familiarity and determine members of the speaker's in-group. The following exchange takes place in a store, where M is purchasing a bottle of soda from A, the store owner.

(2)

1. M: cuanto es?

M: how much is it?

2. A: 12 Quetzales

A: 12 quetzal.

(M is looking in her wallet, but there is no small change, but only a Q100 bill)

3. A: no tiene sencillo?

A: so you don't have change?

4. M: no, (looking for changes for a few seconds) entonces, (smiling at him)

M: no.

5. *kintoj chuweq? ...*

So,

I will pay you tomorrow?

6. A: ah... ta bueno.

A: ah... OK.

(Choi 2003: 94)

In this situation, because M and A are already familiar with each other, M's code-switch into K'iche' indicates that she wishes to invoke this relationship: because she needs to ask a favor from him, she switches to a code that would not be accessible to simply anyone. Using K'iche' in this situation reinforces the fact that M and A share a Mayan identity as well as an understanding that this identity places them in a close relationship.

Finally, code-switching is often used to establish, reaffirm, or obscure Mayan identity, either in the face of ladinos or in the presence of other Mayas. Warren (1998) points to two separate instances of deliberate code-switching to index identity. During the civil war, any indication of Mayan identity was considered suspicious due to the government's association of Mayas with the guerrilla movement. An informant described the strategic switch to Spanish during a worship service when one of the participants noticed that the service was under

surveillance: “[A girl] wrote a quick note so that [the preacher] would understand what was happening ... he immediately switched to Spanish so that everyone would know” (Warren 1998: 95). Since the audience had been listening to and expecting a service in Maya, the sudden switch to Spanish served to denote an important change: in this situation, drawing on Myers-Scotton’s markedness model of code-switching, Maya is the unmarked and Spanish is the marked code. Warren notes how the code-switching made the service accessible to outsiders – either ladinos or other indigenous groups that may have made up the civil patrols conducting surveillance. In this case, code-switching served less to completely obscure Mayan identity than to obscure its public performance. Warren describes another situation during the civil war that manifests itself in the opposite way, yet is also intricately tied to the idea of public performance. A representative addressing the Guatemalan National Congress in 1975 was said to have “lapsed” into his native language, and was immediately called to order for not speaking in Spanish; the national press reported the episode and the story was still known over two decades later (Warren 1998: 195). By publicizing the incident, the press reinforced the notion that speaking a Mayan language in an official context was inappropriate, creating further possibilities for situations similar to that of the worship service.

However, Choi refers to a situation in which the speaker explicitly performs his identity as a Maya through code-switching, which illustrates the opposing perspective. During the same political meeting described above, a premayoral candidate’s speech relies heavily on code-switching to stress the importance of community and of a commitment to Guatemala. The following examples are important due to the use of K’iche’ words to emphasize the notion of community:

(3)

...
2. Este momento es historico porque
3. nuevamente *chanim kaqab'an* seguir,
4. *kaqabanok* que *qatat y qanan xbanok*

...
10. *qech k'o meb'aa'*.
11. *qech k'oli na taj* escuela
12. *k'oli na taj* identidad.
13. Lo más importante es que
14. *kaqab'an* seguir

...
This moment is historic because
right now we are going to newly continue,
we are doing what our ancestors did.

...
we are poor,
we don't have schools,
((we)) don't have our identity.
The most important thing is that
we continue

(Choi 2003: 131)

The speaker stresses the words “we” by speaking in K’iche’, which emphasizes the notion that although he is talking about Guatemala as a state, he is also discussing a smaller group of Maya people. Also, lines 10-12 are examples of grammatical parallelism and repetition, which are often used in K’iche’ ritual speech (Choi 2003: 131). Therefore, the candidate uses code-switching to both perform his own identity and invoke his participation in a larger Mayan community.

Though by nature code-switching can be unmarked – that is, it can be the regular framework for conversation between a group of people (Myers-Scotton 1993: 119) – a deliberate lack of code-switching can also index an association with a Mayan identity. Collins’ study of Mam speakers (2005) analyzes the way in which less-educated speakers routinely switch to Spanish, whereas those with more education typically do not. He argues that a large portion of the group with more education is composed of Mam teachers, whose lack of code-switching suggests a desire to “purify” the language (Collins 2005: 239). “Mam teachers [claim] that to codeswitch is to buy into the idea that Mam cannot be used to articulate complex ideas, philosophies, and technologies,” he states (255), which is supported by evidence from

interviews: 68 percent of teachers said that code-switching was “bad,” while nearly 70 percent of other respondents, including trainees and less-educated speakers, said that it was “good” or that it did not make a difference (253). He presents two possible explanations for the overwhelming tendency to avoid the practice: training opportunities and role responsibilities. As Mam progress in their schooling, he argues, they come to see the Mayan situation as one caused by oppression, injustice, and restricted options; the opportunity for higher education and *concientización* (raising of consciousness) offers manners of counteracting these processes. Additionally, many teachers see their role as being a model for students and community members and, as a part of that model, are responsible for promoting a better way of life. Avoiding code-switching in this role avoids, from their perspective, “capitulation to the oppressors” (Collins 2005: 259-260). From this point of view, then, speaking Mam without the use of Spanish is a way of maintaining Maya culture and Mayan languages separate from their Spanish counterparts.

In a similar practice, some activists encourage creating neologisms from Mayan languages as a way to remove Spanish loan words (Choi 2003: 143). In fact, the practice occurs regularly in workshops supported by the ALMG (Academica de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala), which strives to create new words for use in all “related languages,” that is, the words are usually constructed from roots with cognate forms across many languages (Barrett 2008: 281). One way in which workshops attempt to minimize Spanish influence in their creation of new words is by the study of colonial documents written in Mayan languages, which offer records of the languages at a time when they had undergone the least amount of contact with Spanish (Barrett 2008: 281). This practice minimizes overlooking loanwords or lesser known Spanish influence on grammar, which is critical: since some loans may have entered Mayan languages centuries before ALMG members were born, they could unconsciously omit such loans from their lists of

Spanish words, thus representing the process of erasure. The process therefore allows members of organizations like ALMG to study the way Mayan grammar operated in the first years after colonization and use that knowledge to piece together neologisms for common Spanish words. Additionally, neologisms are created for modern Spanish words that may not have a long history of use within Mayan languages. For example, a proposed K'iche' neologism for the Spanish *quinceañera*, a traditional birthday celebration for 15-year-old girls, is *k'uljolajujab'*:

(4)

kul+jolajuj+job
receive+fifteen+years

(Barrett 2008: 282)

The new word therefore conveys the same meaning as *quinceañera* but avoids any Spanish roots or patterns. Thus, both the practices of avoiding code-switching and actively creating new Mayan words seek to affirm Mayan identity as inherently separate from Spanish culture, even after hundreds of years of cohabitation.

Code-switching establishes or reaffirms the boundaries between groups of people or between communities, often by putting into practice language ideologies that link beliefs about a people to the language they speak. In doing so, speakers define both themselves and others, establishing identities that may differ and alternate depending on the speaker and the situation. In Guatemala, the fact that code-switching can indicate much more than one identity or ideology is well illustrated by the ability of Mayan languages to indicate formality, familiarity, or an explicit ethnic identity, in addition to the recent efforts by some Maya to define themselves as indigenous through a conscious lack of code-switching. Furthermore, by using the processes of iconization and indexicality, Mayas draw on more than strictly linguistic concepts to form opinions about this identity. Merely choosing to speak a Mayan language, then, is not necessarily proof of one's

ethnic identity or the authenticity of one's identity: the location, audience, interaction with Spanish, and speaker's own consciousness are integral parts of "Mayaness."

3.2. Mexico

Following the construction of section 3.1., in this section, I first outline the history of the Yucatán peninsula from the pre-Columbian era to the present. Many features of Spanish colonialism were similar across all of Mexico; however, I focus on events specific to the Yucatán. I then examine the same three concepts: (i) the origins and evolution of the Pan-Maya movement, (ii) Maya identity, and (iii) practices of linguistic code choice.

3.2.1. Mexican Historical Context

Conditions in Mexico's Yucatán peninsula caused a distinct historical and colonial pattern from that of Guatemala, despite the close proximity of the two Maya areas. Although the peninsula was culturally and linguistically homogenous to a "great extent" at the time of the Spanish conquest (Gabbert 2001: 464), independent polities made up the political framework. Maya society was organized into noble, commoner, and slave classes, with the additional social communities of the *chi'bal* and the *kah*. Members of the same *chi'bal* shared the same patronym – occasionally across class lines – even though they did not necessarily reside in the same regional community, or *kah* (Patch 1993: 6). The scattered alliances and locations of the peninsula's estimated 300,000 residents at the time of the Spanish arrival in 1527 caused difficulties for the conquerors, who took two decades to subdue the population (Patch 1993: 9). Contributing to this lengthy process – the conquest was quite slow relative to that of Tenochtitlán in central Mexico, which occurred from 1519 to 1521 – was Yucatán's relative isolation from the rest of the Spanish empire, which was concentrated in central Mexico and Peru. Lack of silver deposits like those found in highland Mexico, along with difficult ecological conditions and

stony soil, made the usual economic and agricultural transactions put into place by the Spanish empire nearly impossible. However, it is precisely because the region could not support normal Spanish modes of production that other economic institutions, such as the *encomienda* (explained in section 3.1.1.) and the *repartimiento*, lasted from the late sixteenth century into the late eighteenth century (Gabbert 2004a: 13).

The *repartimiento* consisted largely of forced advance of credit to indigenous communities in exchange for manufactured items and, though it existed throughout the Spanish empire, became indispensable to the eventual commercial success of the peripheral Yucatán. Its purpose was to integrate the indigenous population into the colonial economy, especially as items such as textiles grew in demand (Patch 2003: 31). Additionally, as in Guatemala, the Maya population was drawn into not only economic structures, but social structures as well: the Spanish established the dual system of the *república de españoles* and the *república de indios*, which divided society into privileged Spaniards and repressed Mayas, after ending the most violent parts of the conquest in approximately 1547 (Gabbert 2001: 465). This certainly established an overarching political and social society, yet Maya social structure did not disappear completely due in part to the official recognition of the indigenous nobility. The nobility were referred to as *hidalgos* and were given privileges on par with the lower Spanish nobility, which allowed them to be exempt from tribute and forced labor (Gabbert 2001: 466). This recognition shows that the Spanish acknowledged the complexity of Maya society to an extent, choosing to reinforce notions of class that also existed in their own society. Both the acknowledgment of the nobility and the extraction of manufactured goods through the *repartimiento* were in fact reasons for cultural persistence throughout colonialism, for they were facets of Maya society that the Spanish maintained for their own gains (Patch 1993: 92).

Specifically, this differed from Spanish policy in Guatemala due to the long dependence in Yucatán on the *repartimiento* as a system of economic dominance. Though the system existed in Guatemala as well, it was not nearly as central; Yucatán's sparse ability for agricultural production demanded the creation of other methods to foster economic development.

In addition to the persistence of economic and social structures, a major difference from Guatemala – and from the rest of the colonies in the New World – was the pattern of language use in the peninsula. Although the Maya were clearly subordinate to Spaniards and those who were considered *mestizos*, it was their language, rather than Spanish, that dominated in the early years of colonialism. “More than a lingua franca, [Yucatec] Maya was the primary language of all the colony's native-born inhabitants of every caste,” notes Farriss (Gabbert 2001: 468). This therefore shows that the Maya language did not only belong to those who were specifically identified as *indios*, but was spoken by *mestizos*, *mulattos*, and Africans as well. Even as late as 1839, the American traveler John L. Stephens noticed that “many of the white people [in the peninsula] could not speak Spanish” (Gabbert 2001: 469). In studying the effect of language on contemporary Maya identity, the persistence of indigenous language during the troublesome years of colonialism points to both the important tenacity of Yucatec Maya and its ability to serve as a widespread mode of communication.

Following Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, one of the major events defining and shaping Maya communities in Yucatán was the lengthy Caste War, spanning the years 1847 to 1901. A result of land disputes over commercial sugar production and corn cultivation by peasants, it eventually dissolved into a “bloody frontier war” in the southeastern portion of the peninsula (Gabbert 2001: 470). It is popularly seen as either a symbol of indigenous resistance or a Maya uprising: the contemporary government depicted the conflict as a “race war” waged by

rebel *indios* in order to gain support from the rest of the population, portraying the rebels as barbarians resistant to progress (Gabbert 2004b: 91, 100). However, many scholars note that there was both a large portion of passive Mayas in the northwest and a substantial *mestizo* presence among the rebels. Referring to themselves as *cristianoob* (Christians), *otsilob* (poor people), or *masewalob* (common people), the rebels clearly did not identify as specifically Maya or indigenous (Gabbert 2004b: 54). Yet even though the conflict was not divided by possession of indigenous identity, the split that occurred among Mayas caused differences with crucial implications for modern claims to identity. A portion of rebels who agreed to a peace treaty with the government in 1853 gained the distinction of *sublevados pacíficos del sur* (“peaceful southerners”) while the rebels who retreated to the southeast were known as *sublevados bravos* (“wild rebels”) (Gabbert 2004b: 57). The descendants of these two groups continue to distinguish themselves today, both in linguistic acts of self-identification and in religious practices. Although comparable to the Guatemalan civil war, as both conflicts intricately involved the Maya peasantry yet were much more complex than “racial” uprisings, the fact that the Caste War occurred in the 19th century makes it a historical, not a modern, event. That is, the conditions arising from the war eventually led to the adoption of different terms of Maya self-identification that still persist today, whereas in Guatemala, the violence of the 1980s acted as a motivation and a catalyst for changes in Maya identification.

The Pan-Maya movement in Mexico bears some resemblance to the one found in Guatemala, but the two countries’ histories result in substantial differences. The most important question concerns whether or not a comparable movement actually exists in Yucatán, given that the Pan-Maya movement as it is widely known was born in Guatemala and conceived by Mayas with strong ties to their own regional history – for example, Kaqchikel Mayas make up a large

part of the intellectual and activist base (French 2010: 77). Yet there is evidence for a similar, albeit less unified and defined, consciousness in the Yucatán. Montejo, for example, relates its beginnings to the experience of Guatemalan displaced Mayas in Mexican refugee camps in the 1980s, who created solidarity among a wide range of ethnic groups. Although many from these groups would ultimately return to Guatemala to become the Pan-Maya base, the connections were not in vain: “The positive ethnic relationships in the refugee camps also extended to the Mexican Maya with whom the refugees had contact” (Montejo 2005: 29). Mexican Maya groups assisted in humanitarian aid for the refugees, but the connections resulted in further aid as well. In the “pan-Maya ethnic identity” that surfaced, Guatemalan groups contributed to economic as well as cultural development by picking coffee and relearning lost weaving techniques (Montejo 2005: 30). These connections therefore show a potential for strengthening transnational ethnic solidarity in both the Guatemalan and Mexican Maya communities and provide a possible basis for the Maya movement to emerge in a larger context.

Indeed, although he notes that Yucatán is often thought of as “peripheral” to Maya political movements, Allan Burns makes a strong case for the beginnings of Pan-Maya consciousness in cities such as Mérida. He cites the Caste War, Governor Carrillo Puerto’s nationalistic reforms in the late 19th century, and a more fluid Maya identity as conditions that engendered this sensibility in the region. Burns’ experience teaching a Mayan grammar class to bilingual teachers led him to identify four major features of the emerging movement in the Yucatán: locally developed literature, such as bilingual teaching materials called *Let’s learn Maya* and books about Mayan discourse; symbols used to define Maya culture, like the use of the ancient Mayan calendar; the authority of teachers as Pan-Maya activists; and the movement’s interactions between heterogeneity – the belief in Maya culture as multifaceted and

complimentary – and uniformity – the belief in Maya culture as a uniform and “equally shared” set of values (Burns 1998: 381-386). However, some scholars dismiss the possibility that all Maya could be combined into one ethnic movement: “[the Caste War] hindered any tendencies towards the development of a Maya ethnic community encompassing all speakers of the language that might have existed on the peninsula” (Gabbert 2004b: 92). In this view, the divisions created by the *sublevados pacíficos del sur* and the *sublevados bravos* forestall widespread Pan-Maya sensibilities. Yet, it is clear from Burns’ research and experiences that some areas of the Yucatán are home to a movement with striking similarities to that of Guatemala. For this version of the Pan-Maya movement to truly encompass Mayas across the Yucatán, it would necessitate a serious challenge of divisions between current ethnic communities created by the Caste War.

3.2.2. Perspectives on Maya Culture, Language, and Identity in Mexico

Indigenous self-identity manifested itself in similar ways to Guatemala in the Yucatán peninsula before the Spanish arrival, since there was no common “Indian” or “Maya” identity. Gabbert argues that the indigenous community-based identity also persisted to some extent after the Spanish arrival: “Indian self-identity in the colonial period was based on the community (*cah*) and the patronym group (*chibal*)... there was no consciousness of a kind that embraced the entire Indian population in Yucatán” (Gabbert 2001: 467).³ As in Guatemala, the *indio* designator became a common term both for Spanish identification of the indigenous population and for indigenous self-identification. However, it is important to note that many self-identification terms referred to social, rather than ethnic, categories, including the terms *indio*

³ The spelling discrepancy between *cah* and *kah*, and *chibal* and *chi'bal*, reflects a difference in orthographic traditions by foreign scholars resulting from a lack of standardized spelling in the colonial period.

and *masewal*⁴ (Gabbert 2001: 467). In particular, *masewal* referred to “poor people, commoners, or peasants,” which included both *indios* and Spanish non-*indios* (Hervik 1999: 39). Though the Spanish were obsessed with ethnic classification, particularly the names of offspring produced from differing ethnic groups (refer to section 1 for a brief explanation of the colonial Spanish caste system), during the same time period the indigenous population was identifying itself quite differently. However, while ethnic grouping and social class were used to separate *indio* from non-*indio*, fluency in Yucatec Mayan was not used as an indicator of Maya self-identity during the colonial period: “[The Maya language] was too widely spread to be suitable as a distinguishing trait between Indians and non-Indians” (Gabbert 2004a: 70). That is, since individuals across all *castas* were native speakers of the language – Mayas as well as non-Mayas – it was not possible to group populations based on Yucatec Maya competency.

During the colonial period, the term *mestizo* was used in similar ways as elsewhere in the Spanish empire, denoting a mixture of indigenous and European ethnicities. However, by the end of the colonial period in 1821 – and therefore certainly by the beginning of the Caste War (1847-1901) – the term *mestizo* had lost its relevance, giving way yet again to social distinctions such as dress, occupation, and surname (Hervik 1999: 39). Its lack of use during the majority of the 19th century allowed it to be attached to a new social and ethnic category at the close of the Caste War.

Although most historians place its official end in the early 20th century, the Caste War has had incredible significance in determining indigenous identities up until the present day. The rebels themselves identified as *indio* and *masewal* (Gabbert 2001: 471), though, as noted above,

⁴ *Masewal* is derived from the Nahuatl *macehualli*, and was used before the conquest to mean poor people or plebeians (Hervik 1999: 55-56).

these terms generally referred to social class. Since many current historians understand the Caste War to be a class conflict much more than the racial war or Indian uprising that it has been framed as in the past, it is logical to assume that non-indigenous rebels could be included in these broad social categories. Yet it is the end of the Caste War that determined not only indigenous classification at the time, but also terms of identification that persist today in the Yucatán peninsula. As discussed above, the peace treaty signed in 1853 was the result of an agreement between a number of rebel leaders and representatives of the Mexican government. The *sublevados pacíficos del sur*, as they were labeled in the document, were formally distinguished from the *sublevados bravos* who continued to fight sporadically with the government until 1901 (Hervik 1999: 44).

Rather than continuing the use of *indio* and *masewal*, the “pacified” rebels began to call themselves *mestizos*. Hervik argues, “This can be seen as a linguistic act that served to consolidate their dissociation from those rebels who kept up resistance” (Hervik 1999: 44). It was therefore the rebel group, who were distinguished primarily by their participation in a particular cultural and religious movement (the Cult of the Talking Cross), who continued the use of the term *masewal*. This religious cult began in 1850 in the state of Quintana Roo and provided the desperate rebels with both motivation and the development of new military and social structures that incorporated different local groups, such as Chinese laborers from Belize, black lumbermen, and ladino prisoners (Gabbert 2004b: 104). Though by the late 19th century both the *mestizos* and the *masewales* were distinguished by their use of the Yucatec Maya language – and were contrasted with the *gente de vestido*, who represented the non-indigenous population (Hervik 1999: 47) – the separations between them were evident to contemporaries.

Due to this splintering of loyalties between Maya-speaking groups, Gabbert and Restall argue that the Caste War hindered rather than helped the creation of a Maya self-identity. In particular, the split “reflected the fact that the discourse of the rebels was not built upon the kind of ethnopolitical ideas that have underpinned the late-20th century ethnogenesis in Guatemala” (Restall 2004: 81). Similarly, Gabbert (2004b: 105) points out that because the war made the rebels the enemy of the entire population, including “Maya speakers, Ladinos, Indians, and vecinos,” there was little opportunity for a specific Maya identity to be forged on the side of the non-rebels. The most important results of the war, then, are the linguistic distinctions that brought about *mestizo* as a major identifier of Maya speakers.

As a major contrast to the split between ladinos and indios or Mayas in Guatemala, contemporary self-identification in Yucatán is a much more fluid and complex concept. “No clear-cut term exists to denote Maya-speakers and their descendants,” Gabbert asserts (2001: 480). Indeed, lower-class Maya speakers tend to prefer the terms *mestizo*, *mayero* (Maya speaker), *campesino* (peasant), *gente del pueblo* (townspeople), or *otsilmak* (poor people). This multiplicity is evident in many other bodies of work (Armstrong-Fumero 2009, Loewe 2010) and suggests a clear tendency toward social class as an identifier that is still relevant. The term *mayero* is another important indicator of the lack of a polarized Maya/non-Maya identity: it refers to the preference to speak Maya in everyday interactions, not necessarily to the speaker’s choice of a Maya identity (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 362). Even within these distinctions, class is an important separating factor between different levels of identity. *Mestizos finos* and *mestizos de categoría*, for example – both invented terms by anthropologists – both represent wealthy *mestizos* who are distinguished by European clothing and higher education (Hervik 1999: 98). These *mestizos* differ from a similar class of *catrines* (Hervik 1999, Loewe 2010) by their

tendency to uphold “pure” Mayan traditions, such as language, religion, and dress; *catrines* are *mestizos* who wear exclusively European dress. Despite the extensive range of possibilities for identification, however, Hervik stresses that in Oxkutzcab, a municipio near the city of Mérida, many terms are simply variations on a singular identity: “Oxkutzcapeños perceive themselves as carrying a single cultural identity with different faces” (Hervik 1999: 108). This assertion suggests that underlying similarities such as community loyalty or competence in the Yucatec Maya language provide the basis for this identity, even though “Maya” as a term is not widely employed.

Still, the existence of a Pan-Maya movement in Yucatán necessitates some form of Maya consciousness. The term is most frequently used by an educated middle class of Maya speakers, whom Gabbert (2001: 476) identifies as “rural teachers, development workers, [or] employees of the National Indigenist Institute.” Similar to the structure of the Maya movement in Guatemala, members of this middle class are the most readily involved in the notion of pan-Maya ethnicity. Yet this situation is by no means definite: Gabbert stresses that “What there is of a pan-Yucatec Mayan ethnicity today is still ethnic consciousness in the making” (2001: 480). His statement suggests the possibility of a more widespread ethnic consciousness as pan-Maya sentiments continue to develop, but also cautions that it is by no means an identity embraced by all members of the population. For example, he cites the lack of “Maya” as a common identifier due to its semantic link with *indio* (482): since all Mayas were once considered to be *indios*, which is now a highly negative term, Mayas themselves tend to avoid the possibility of invoking negative prejudices. As the Pan-Maya movement gains more moment, however, it is possible that use of the term will spread further than urban intellectual groups.

As a concept, Maya identity in Yucatán is often described in relation to Guatemala. Notably, some scholars assert that identity and ethnicity in the region are much more fluid and that their boundaries do not automatically define “Maya” and “non-Maya” (Burns 1998, Castañeda 2004). The varied ethnic and social categories described above reflect this, as well as the fact that in Yucatán, a comprehensive identity to oppose “Maya” – such as the ladino class in Guatemala – does not exist. Indeed, “ethnicity is not polarized in Yucatán,” but is instead a “malleable and fluid substance” (Castañeda 2004: 52). Yet because use of Yucatec Maya is a common trait among all of these identities, it is still quite relevant for an analysis of indigenous and Maya identity. In the following section, I describe common language ideologies among *yucatecos* and the ways in which these ideologies influence the production and the type of Maya language in use, both of which bring to light further conclusions about Maya identity.

3.2.3. Language Ideologies and Bilingualism in Mexico

In a situation that is again similar to Guatemala, among Spanish speaking *yucatecos* there is a standard widespread negative ideology associated with the Yucatec Maya language: “[The language] is still associated with misery, backwardness and the poor life of the peasantry by the Spanish-speaking public” (Gabbert 2001: 475). This is a strong contrast to the late 19th century, where, as discussed in section 3.2.1, Maya was the native language for indigenous and non-indigenous groups and did not carry such a social stigma. One reason for this gradual change is the emergence in the 1940s of an economic boom and the expansion of the state bureaucracy, which led to increasing public education in rural areas. Primary instruction thus began in Spanish, which diminished the perceived usefulness and range of Maya (Gabbert 2001: 474).

Yet there are also instances of positive ideologies from the Spanish-speaking public, particularly the Mexican government. For example, an article from *Por Esto!*, a newspaper in

Yucatán, described the practice of singing the national anthem in the Mayan language in schools as an effort at “intercultural education” (Cru 2010: 44). However, because this practice is fostered by the government rather than implemented by Mayas themselves, Cru sees it as an “essential building block to reinforce the national Mexican identity” (47). The language does index a positive ideology, then, but it is a positive ideology that reinforces the folkloric “national identity” of Yucatec Maya rather than one associated with speakers of the language themselves.

A more encouraging sign of widespread positive ideologies is the value placed on true bilingual education. Since the 1970s, a number of organizations have been involved in the promotion of native language instruction and literacy. These organizations have made “significant strides” at local levels, although the level of achievement at the national level is less certain because Spanish-language instruction is still considered a priority (Litka 2004: 37-38). However, recent legislative achievements such as the 2003 Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which officially recognized indigenous languages as national languages, suggest that this attitude may be changing in some respects.

Marking a difference from language ideologies from Spanish speakers, attitudes from Maya speakers tend to focus on differences between varieties of Mayan rather than the position of the language relative to Spanish. One variety, variously defined as “Imaginary” Maya, *hach maya* (“real Maya”), or “pure” Maya, reflects similar sentiments in Guatemala that promote a language free from Spanish influence, code-switching, and loanwords. Armstrong-Fumero (2009: 362) defines this practice as “a style of languaging that tends to constitute ‘good’ Maya as a speech form that is parallel to and yet autonomous from the dominant Spanish language.” He stresses important features such as the excision of calques and loan words, as well as an emphasis on purism, which contribute to an “idealized” language. It is from this idealism that the

term “imaginary” results, because this form of speech is constructed rather than encountered on a day-to-day basis. In addition to being seen as a “pure” form of the language, because it is free from Spanish influence, proponents also describe it as “real” or “legitimate” – supposing that it is closer to the variety spoken by Maya before the Spanish conquest. This ideology is demonstrated in the belief by some that Spanish borrowings like *pero* (“but”) and *entonces* (“then”) are evidence of how Maya “has become mixed” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 367). However, Armstrong-Fumero notes that there is evidence that these borrowings have been common in Yucatec Maya for centuries; this is therefore an example of both iconization and indexicality. The common words *pero* and *entonces* are implicitly labeled as icons of Spanish influence on Maya, which then index the trend of code-switching and of mixing the Mayan and Spanish languages.

Armstrong-Fumero cites the example of a Maya man’s opinion that the religious texts he and members of his congregation were composing should be expressed in this manner: “It should be in the legitimate Maya language. It cannot be in the Maya of Pisté or in the Maya of [the village of] San Francisco, because these are dialects” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 368). Gabbert (2001) and Pfeiler (1998) offer definitions that highlight the language ideologies encountered in “pure” Yucatec; for example, “The ordinary speech of lower-class Maya-speakers... is denigrated as polluted, degenerate and of inferior value... [they] would be required to laboriously learn the ‘real,’ ‘true’ Maya created by intellectuals” (Gabbert 2001: 479). Pfeiler acknowledges that this ordinary version can be defined as “mixed or corrupted by Spanish” as well (Pfeiler 1998: 131). Because there is no standardized way of referring to these two codes, I will use the terms “purist code” and “standard code” in my own discussion in order to minimize confusion.

Therefore, there are two dominant language ideologies at work: one that establishes *hach maya* as a pure form of Yucatec Maya, placing its speakers in a positive, “legitimate” light, and one that stigmatizes ordinary Yucatec Maya speech for its use of Spanish. The distinction is not unique to Yucatec Maya within the Mexican state, of course; speakers of Mexicano (Nahuatl) are also confronted with *legítimo mexicano* (Hill and Hill 1986: 98). Hill and Hill, in their study of the Mexicano language in the Malinche Volcano area of central Mexico, term this the “purist code,” in opposition to the “power code” colored by the inclusion of Spanish. In their discussion, this code likely derives its power from origins in the colonial period, where materials from Spanish could be used within Mexicano to express elevation, seriousness, importance, and potency of speakers due to indigenous communities’ lack of access to Spanish society. Contemporary uses of the power code are seen in senior and wealthy men, and among instances of argumentation, where a speaker may switch to Spanish to “clinch” an argument (Hill and Hill 1986: 102-104). Though similar, then, the situations are not identical due to the fact that ordinary Yucatec Maya speech carries little power with its use of Spanish. The ideology that associates the language with lower classes still serves to position Spanish as the true “power code.”

Language ideologies associated with the two codes within Yucatec Maya also have strong implications when they are applied within the burgeoning Pan-Maya movement. Berkley describes a situation where the purist code creates conflict during a Mayan language class for adults, taught by a female teacher and attended by both male and female students. As part of the Pan-Maya movement, the course emphasized the purist code and the teacher made an effort to avoid Spanish code-switching, which conflicted directly with the language practices of the older men. As rural Mayas who traditionally represented the seat of authority within the community, these men were accustomed to the power their ordinary speech carried; the purist code’s modern

emphasis and the female teacher in charge therefore caused a point of contention. Berkley points out that “the language ideologies in play had negative potentials,” because while the purist code devalued local language, the standard variety diminished the importance of speech from women and youth (Berkley 2001: 363).⁵ In addition to the ideologies specifically indexing beliefs about the two codes, then, the varieties also index traditional notions of authority and modern notions of equality. This conflict is representative of the larger tensions, ongoing within the Maya movement, between local Maya knowledge and urban Maya intellectuals.

3.2.4. Code Choice in Mexico

Code choice among bilingual Mayas in Yucatán relates directly to the language ideologies propagated by the purist and standard codes. In some ways, these practices are similar to those in Guatemala; for example, the practice of a deliberate lack of code-switching from Maya into Spanish in order to index a Mayan identity. In the language course attended by Berkley, which was discussed above, the teacher explicitly discouraged code-switching and she corrected students if they produced a Spanish word with a Mayan equivalent (Berkley 2001: 354). However, the teacher herself did not always adhere to this rule, once employing a Spanish loan in her own speech even as she corrected a student. In the following example, she corrects the student’s use of *sèervir* (to make use of) and uses the loan *liugar* (place) to explain the correction:

⁵ In this article, Berkley uses “standard” to refer to the Pan-Maya purist code and *hach Maya* to refer to the ordinary speech of rural Mayas. However, because the majority of references to *hach maya* use it to indicate the purist code, I follow this practice as standard.

(5)

koʔosʔ ʔutsʔkintkh um pʔeʔeh cʔaʔn,
tinwuʔuyah waʔah tuʔusʔ. Tuʔusʔ
tatsʔiʔbtah miʔis. Keh aʔake, le
miʔis, kuservih. Koʔosʔ tsʔaiku-lugar
servileʔ, kukʔabʔeʔetcʔahal.

Let's fix one little thing I heard
somewhere. Where you wrote,
“cat,” it says, “that cat is useful.”
Let's put in the place of (<Sp.) “is
useful” (<Sp.), “is needed” (<M.)

(Berkley 2001: 354)

The example above is another instance that illustrates processes that aid in the creation of language ideologies described by Irvine and Gal (see section 2.1), specifically erasure. Here, the teacher is either unconscious of, or ignoring, the fact that she has used a Spanish loanword to correct a student for also using a loanword. This suggests that to her, the loan *lùugar* may not register as a non-Mayan word: she has effectively erased the fact that its original form comes from Spanish. Furthermore, her authoritative position as a teacher allows her to correct the student while continuing to make the same error.

The process of removing loanwords is aided by the invention of new words in Maya – neologisms – that replace not only technical words in Spanish, but common loans as well. For example, the Spanish word *pero* (“but”) is common in standard speech, but many Maya authors replace it with *chen baʔaleʔ* (“the thing is”), a less-common term. The practice occurs in official communication as well as literature: the Maya version of the 2003 law of linguistic rights translates “Federal Government of Mexico” as *u jaalachil noj luʔum méejiko* (literally “The rulership of the great land of Mexico”), rather than the Spanish borrowing *féederasion* or *péederasion* that most Maya speakers use (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 366). Deliberately choosing the purist code over the standard tendency to code-switch, speakers both indicate a public Maya identity and separate themselves from other Maya speakers. Armstrong-Fumero (2009: 366) points out in his discussion of neologisms that some, like the “Federal Government of Mexico”

translation, would be “utterly unfamiliar” even to monolingual speakers of Yucatec Maya. He further illustrates this concept with an anecdote from fieldwork in Yucatán: after watching a television news broadcast delivered in Yucatec Maya, where Spanish borrowings were “replaced with carefully wrought neologisms,” his informant asked, “That’s the real Maya, isn’t it? I don’t understand it” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 361).

As a contrast to purist code practices and “Imaginary Maya,” Armstrong-Fumero explores the use of what he terms “Deep Maya,” which “uses practices such as punning and code switching to exploit a range of phonological ambiguities that exist at the interstices of Spanish and Maya” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 362). The speakers of this variety are usually members of the rural lower classes, who have competency in both languages and can draw on them equally. Armstrong-Fumero recounts a number of jokes involving foreign anthropologists, claimed to be based on real events, in the communities of Xcalakoop and Pisté. In one, an anthropologist was sharing a meal with villagers and found an unfamiliar object that he presumed to be green squash in his bowl; a boy noticed that this was actually a *much* (in Yucatec Maya, a type of frog) and said, “Ts’ul, le ba’al ka jaantik **much!**” (“Ts’ul (foreigner), that thing that you are eating is a **much!**”) Misunderstanding the Mayan phrase, the anthropologist replied in Spanish, “Es mucho para tí pero muy poco para mí” (“It is **much** for you but very little for me”), and proceeded to eat the frog (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 363). These jokes depended on the bilingualism of their listeners in order for their humor to be apparent, and demonstrate the ways in which rural Mayas can skillfully navigate both codes. Armstrong-Fumero describes a similar situation in the town of Pisté, wherein his production of the obsolete term *uj*, for moon (as opposed to *lúunaj*, a borrowing from the Spanish *luna*), elicits a reaction of surprise and is subsequently turned into a

joke at his expense: a friend deliberately mispronounces a phrase including *lúunaj* and causes the author to unknowingly produce a Mayan insult (2009: 363).

In his discussion of Deep Maya, Armstrong-Fumero stresses that its production does not indicate a more legitimate Maya identity. “It is not the use of Maya instead of Spanish that is the crux of the identity expressed... but, rather, the way in which the mayero’s wit can exploit the ambiguities that emerge in dialogue between the two languages” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 364). In fact, many of these same Maya make statements that legitimate the purist code: “And thanks to what the anthropologists say, we know that Maya is important... and that it has a grammar. ... The way we speak it has become very mixed” (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 367). Yet in having the ability to negotiate multiple codes, in addition to the ability to mix them to produce anecdotes and jokes, the speakers are producing their own version of indigenous identity.

Public performance of Mayan identity can be found, therefore, in a variety of linguistic practices. Both speakers of the purist code and the standard code produce varieties of Yucatec Maya that, depending on interpretation, index an indigenous identity. Different ways of speaking, however, do not necessarily occur in separate physical spaces. Speakers of the purist code can use this practice in their own communities and retain ties to both rural and urban conceptions of Mayanism; Hervik terms these people “local mayanists.” “In addition to being an integrated part of local culture,” he argues, “they have acquired further knowledge of the history and culture of the Maya people from literary sources and from interactions with national and international mayanists” (Hervik 1998: 102). While these local mayanists live in and retain strong ties to rural communities, as is normally the case with speakers of the standard code, they also strongly promote the use of traditional dress and rituals. Crucially, they use aspects of the purist code: while most Mayas switch to Spanish numbers after four, they count purely in Mayan

(Hervik 1998: 103). As with self-identification in Yucatán, the boundaries that delineate language use seem to be more fluid here as well. Though an urban intellectual sector clearly exists and is actively involved in creating a purist code, this code is found in rural communities and slips into the standard code are found among Pan-Mayanists.

3.3. Interim Conclusion

This section has focused on specific events in Guatemala and Mexico through a brief examination of both countries' histories, as well as analyses of the Pan-Maya movement, terms of identification, and language ideologies and bilingualism in the two countries. I have drawn on parallel situations, actors, and processes in each country in order to establish what I judge to be the most important factors involved in the creation and framing of Maya identity. Particularly, this section has shown the rich history and complexity inherent in contemporary Maya identity formation and has highlighted some of the ways that language works to reinforce identity. Where appropriate, I have acknowledged salient similarities and differences between the two contexts; the following sections will compare and contrast them with a greater level of detail.

4. Analysis and Comparisons of Case Studies

In this section, I will draw conclusions about the interactions between, and influences of, language and identity in Guatemala and Mexico. I focus primarily on three issues: the Pan-Maya movement (4.1), identity construction and self-identification (4.2), and language ideologies and bilingualism (4.3).

4.1. Pan-Mayanism

As discussed in 3.1.1 and 3.2.1, the Pan-Maya movement is a broad movement of cultural revitalization that emphasizes a common Maya identity, regardless of linguistic affiliation or geographical location. In Guatemala, the movement's goals include language revitalization and

literacy training, the revitalization of Maya cultural and historical texts, the production of culturally inclusive school textbooks, the revitalization of traditional Maya leadership, and the promotion of a discourse of indigenous rights. In Burns' (1998) discussion of the Pan-Maya movement in Yucatán, he emphasizes features that are similar to the Guatemalan model, particularly the importance of producing books both in Maya languages and about Mayan grammar; differences between "orthodox" and "heterodox," or more rural or more educated, ideas about language and culture; and the important role of education in furthering Mayan language fluency (Burns 1998: 388). It is clear, then, that similar methods used to promote Maya identity exist in both contexts.

However, the movements differ on a number of important levels, beginning with their origins. The Maya movement in Guatemala grew out of the climate of language revitalization in the 1970s and 1980s, beginning with the creation of groups led by foreign anthropologists that trained Mayas in linguistics; ultimately this led to the creation of groups by Mayas themselves, such as the Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala. Burns suggests that in the Yucatán, the movement also has its origins in language education, yet grew from a different focus: government-sponsored bilingual education programs in the 1950s promoted education in Maya during primary school, and the movement emerged as teachers requested advanced courses in linguistics and pedagogy (Burns 1998: 382). He asserts that "Pan-Mayanism in Yucatán ... came of age in the 1990s as bilingual teachers left the isolation of primary school classrooms and became a highly visible part of the university" (Burns 1998: 382). The movement's genesis therefore may have been more multifaceted in Guatemala, as proponents of language education and revitalization were influenced by both the civil war and by foreign anthropologists.

At the same time, Montejo (2005) proposes that during the 1980s, the contact between Guatemalan refugees and Mayas in Mexico encouraged a “pan-Maya ethnic identity” and further developed Pan-Maya sentiments among both groups (30). From this viewpoint, it is plausible to trace the development of the movement and the interaction between activists in both countries in an integrated manner: though the movements originated organically and from different factors, contact between the two groups allowed for an exchange of ideas. Furthermore, if Pan-Mayanism truly did “come of age” in the 1990s in the Yucatán, it occurred a decade after contact with Guatemalan Mayas, which suggests that diffusion between the two groups did impact the Mexican movement to some degree. It is also not necessary for there to be physical contact between the two groups in order for Guatemalan ideas to impact Mexico; the amount of foreign scholarship and attention focused on the Pan-Maya movement in the past three decades would provide Mexican activists with an ample amount of information about the goals and methods of the movement.

The areas of the movement’s development also differ between Guatemala and the Yucatán, due in large part to geographical factors, which have influenced the way in which participants communicate with each other and with the rest of the population. The majority of Mayas in Guatemala are concentrated in the mountainous western highlands, and communication with more urban centers of the country is often complicated by a lack of usable roads and other infrastructure. In the relatively flat Yucatán, Burns argues, communication problems are of lesser concern: roads are well-established between urban centers like Mérida and the rest of the peninsula, and therefore differences between urban and rural areas are not as pronounced (Burns 1998: 381). Also informing Burns’ argument is the fact that the Maya of the Yucatán are much

more linguistically homogenous than those of Guatemala; therefore, access to systems of communication as well as communication itself is potentially easier.

Although the Maya movement is most often studied in a singular context – and generally that context is within Guatemala – the spread of Mayas across multiple countries begs the question of its viability as a truly international movement that embraces all Maya cultures. While the movements have similar methods and goals, tensions and conflicts apparent in both countries make a truly “pan” movement quite difficult even within the countries themselves. The distinctions between rural communities and the typically urban, educated middle class are large obstacles to linguistic standardization and unification. Sections 2.1, 2.3, and 3.2 include examples of these obstacles: the debate over how to name the Achi language in the Guatemalan community in Rabinal, the inconsistencies between local and popular conceptions of Mayan language origins, and a rural Maya woman’s inability to understand the “real Maya” language of a newscaster. Activists explicitly encourage the persistence of Mayan diversity – Montejo, for example, states that “There are different ways of being Maya,” (2005: 83), elaborating in another instance,

Pan-Mayanism is the recognition of the different ways in which the Mayan linguistic groups have contributed to the maintenance and continuous transformation of Maya culture. Maya cultural diversity should be seen as an advantage for the continuity of the basic Maya culture and not as an obstacle (33).

Another example of the recognition of this diversity can be found in a text by Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil, a prominent Maya activist and scholar, in a discussion of the rights and goals of the movement: “The nations of the Maya people are fragmented by the current political-administrative divisions within and between the Guatemalan, Mexican, Belizian, and Honduran states” (Cojtí Cuxil 21: 1996). This statement, interestingly, suggests that if political and

administrative divisions between the nation-states did not exist, the Maya could be easily integrated into one nation.

However, there is a substantial difference between citing diversity as an advantage to Pan-Mayanism and truly integrating the perspectives from each community and each country into a singular movement. There would need to be extensive erasure in distinctions between identity and language use in order for specific pan-Maya goals to be adopted by all communities. For example, in the following sections I compare Maya attitudes toward identity and language, highlighting the multitude of terms for self-identification in both countries and the variation between purist and standard codes. In both of these areas, there are substantial differences among Maya populations that are based on region, education, and personal preference. Although some of this diversity is clearly valued by the Maya movement, differing opinions about language standardization, or identification based on Maya identity or region of origin, are those that would likely be obstacles to a completely integrated Pan-Maya movement.

Even if these differences were surmounted within Guatemala and the Yucatán independently, the same processes would need to happen again for cooperation to occur between both nation-states. Because Maya identity is a product of specific Guatemalan and Mexican historical and cultural contexts in addition to Maya contexts, this could prove to be difficult. Castañeda (2004), for example, differentiates the two due to their relationship with the state: “The peoples of Yucatan have a dramatically different history of conquest, colonization, independence, and incorporation into a larger nation-state. In other words, these are peoples with a different relationship to the world than those “Maya” of ... Guatemala” (38). I argue that this last sentence is key in a comparison of ethnic identity: establishing a Maya identity involves acknowledging much more than simply Mayan culture and language. Self-identification and

code choice are two important themes that involve broader social contexts even as they index Maya identity, and after a discussion of their differences within Guatemala and Mexico, I return to the question of the Pan-Maya movement's ability to integrate these differences into one association.

4.2. Identity

Sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.2 discussed major differences in identification terms used by Mayas in Guatemala and Mexico. In particular, I established that in Guatemala, many fewer terms exist to denote identity: non-indigenous people are grouped into one category of *ladino*, while Mayas identify by terms that include both *Maya* and *indígena*, in addition to more specific, regional-based classifications. The example of Sam Colop, cited in 3.1.2, is an illustration of regional classification: he first gives his identity as K'iche' before elaborating that he also identifies as Maya. In the Yucatán, however, identity cannot be so easily divided into indigenous and not indigenous; a compilation of identification terms would include *mestizo*, *mayero*, *catrín*, and *mestizo elevado*, which all specifically relate to one's indigenous identity and use of traditional cultural elements such as dress and language. These differ from yet another class of terms relating specifically to social class and wealth: *campesinos*, *los pobres*, *otsilmak*, *masewal*.

A number of scholars base this difference on the fluidity of identity in Yucatán, which affects not only identification with Maya culture, but with the Mexican state as well: "In the Yucatán, the term *mestizo* has given a wider cultural space for people to switch between identities of indigenous people and identities of the Mexican mainstream" (Burns 1998: 380). This analysis implies that because *mestizo* has different connotations in the majority of Latin American contexts, even within the Yucatán it allows indigenous people to occupy more than the specific "Indian" space that might be indexed by terms like *Maya* and *indio*. Fluidity also works

to enhance the kinds of Maya identity and the possibility of belonging to a certain category: Burns argues, “In Yucatán it is much more important to understand the content of Maya culture than to be concerned about whether someone is born with it or not” (1998: 386). Here, he uses the example of a *yucateco* primary school teacher who learned Maya through university courses and was participating in a Mayan grammar course. Although she was the only non-native speaker in the class, “her contributions to the course . . . were afforded the same legitimacy as those of native speakers” (Burns 1998: 386). However, examples of the importance of learning Maya culture rather than being born into it can be found in Guatemala as well: “Some ladinos know the Mayan calendar and try to learn K’iche’, then they can be Maya too” (Choi 2003: 61). Choi explains that in this quote, her informant is rejecting the “rigid binary” between Mayas and non-Mayas that is usually characterized by purist discourses surrounding Maya authenticity in Guatemala. The fact that she qualifies this quote as worthy of being recognized *because* of its rejection of the identity binary, however, shows that it is outside the norm: if these sentiments were widespread, it would not be necessary to point to them as specific examples of difference.

Hervik (1999) and Gabbert (2004a) both cite the Caste War as a major explanation of the linguistic differences surrounding Maya self-identification in the Yucatán, especially when compared to Guatemala. In section 3.2.1, my discussion focused on the history of the Yucatán and the circumstances that led to *mestizo* as a way to define a Maya speaker in the early 20th century. The peace accords signed in 1901 gave rise to the use of *mestizo* by Mayas, which has persisted as method of identification for over a century. In the Yucatán, then, one explanation of this fluidity is the existence of a longer history of having multiple ways of identifying. The decisive act of choosing *mestizo* to index a Maya identity did not completely replace other terms; instead, it contributed to the ongoing development of ethnic and social class diversity. This is

especially evident in the separations that existed during the same time period, between the newly established *mestizos* and the rebels who continued to identify as *masewales*. In Guatemala, however, there was no similar act or event that created different Maya identities – indeed, the government’s tendency to treat all Maya communities as similar and as the source of subversive activity during the civil war may have contributed even more to the Maya/ladino binary.

However, there is also a question regarding the extent to which this extensive range of categories is used throughout the Yucatán. Hervik (1998) mentions that the term *mestizo fino* – similar to *mestizo elevado* and used to reference a culturally conservative, upper class *mestizo* – was created by scholars for classification purposes, and is not actually used in everyday conversation. Although all other ethnic categories discussed in this thesis *are* typically used in speech by *yucatecos*, situations such as this suggest that there are also instances where foreign anthropologists create categories to represent pre-existing subtleties in identity, thus creating the group as a separate entity with the act of naming it.

Though the majority of Maya identities in Guatemala and Mexico are contingent on their cultural and historical contexts, one important similarity is the tendency to identify with social class, rather than ethnic, categories. French (2010), for example, analyzes discourse from Mayas in Chimaltenango who refer to themselves as *nosotros los pobres* (we poor people). This is similar to the use of the terms *otsilmak*, *masewal*, and *campesino* in the Yucatán. In both places, then, identity is not always bound to proficiency in a Mayan language or use of Maya cultural elements like religion and dress, even if these terms may themselves index Maya culture.

The components of a Maya identity in Guatemala and Mexico, therefore, are largely dependent on each context. It is necessary for foreign anthropologists and members of the Maya movement to use the word “Maya” to denote an entire range of identities and cultural practices,

but as these identities are examined within their own communities and their own historical backgrounds, it is clear that there are strong differences in the means of discussing and asserting a contemporary Maya identity.

4.3. Bilingualism and Language Ideologies in Mexico

There are undeniable similarities in the ways in which people choose, utilize, and employ language to describe Mayan identity in Mexico and Guatemala; however, examinations of many other indigenous communities in postcolonial societies reveal similar features. The existence of a purist code and a standard code, for example, is not limited to Mayan languages: my comparison with the “purist code” and the “power code” of Hill and Hill’s (1986) study of Mexicano shows that it is a practice that exists in other regions of Mexico as well. The language ideologies that stigmatize Mayan languages are similarly replicated in indigenous communities around the world, many of whom are also engaged in language revitalization movements, as I highlighted in section 2.1 with a discussion of France and Occitania.

The treatment of indigenous populations by the Spanish, similar in its basic policies and attitudes across the entire Spanish empire, is a major reason for the existence of widespread ideologies negative toward Mayan languages in Guatemala and Mexico. In both areas, Mayan languages have often been treated as “dialects” and “tongues” rather than separate languages in their own right. Additionally, the languages themselves can index a negative Mayan identity that proponents of these language ideologies disseminate. For example, French (2010) describes an instance where the Kaqchikel language suggests, to the speaker, many more images than simply the Maya people who speak that language. A monolingual Spanish woman from Chimaltenango commented on others’ use of Kaqchikel: “Bueno, muchas [personas van a hablar Kaqchikel] porque los que son de aldea no dejan de vivir así.” (“Well, many [people will still speak

Kaqchikel] because those who are from the remote rural areas don't stop living like that") (94). French describes how the example shows that Kaqchikel acts as a "multiplex sign": it encodes an entire way of life that is practiced in small, remote rural areas, which is characterized as simple and antiquated. Similarly, when Gabbert (2001: 475) comments that "The Yucatec Maya language is still associated with misery, backwardness and the poor life of the peasantry by the Spanish-speaking public," he shows that the language indexes much more than the qualities of the speakers themselves. From the perspective of many monolingual Spanish speakers, then, Mayan languages are associated with the entire lives of the Maya or the peasantry – often lives that are characterized by undesirable, unfortunate features.

Similarly, language ideologies relating to code choice influenced the creation of a purist code and a standard code in both regions. Armstrong-Fumero (2009) and Collins (2005) show that in Mexico and Guatemala, respectively, Maya language teachers tend to avoid code-switching due to their belief that speaking a Mayan language free from Spanish loanwords and influence is the correct way to possess or perform a Maya identity. In each of these situations, Spanish words in Mayan speech are icons of both foreignness and oppression. Furthermore, speakers' use of Spanish code-switching – that is, their use of the standard code – indexes "capitulation to the oppressors" and the belief that Spanish words are used to express concepts that do not exist in Maya (Collins 2005: 255, 259). Not only does the standard code express, to some, submission to Spanish-speakers and post-conquest, postcolonial Spanish culture, but it also can be seen as a threat to the continuity of Mayan languages for its use of Spanish words that could theoretically be expressed in Mayan as well (Armstrong-Fumero 2009: 366). For this reason, speakers of the purist code in both regions rely on neologisms to replace longstanding Spanish borrowings as well as newer, modern words such as technological terms.

An examination of the literature on code choice in both Guatemala and Mexico reveals more academic material on code-switching between Mayan languages and Spanish in Guatemala, and a larger emphasis on categories of identity in the Yucatán. A possible explanation for this disparity is the attention and involvement, since the 1970s, of foreign anthropologists with the Guatemalan Pan-Maya movement. The weight that the movement has placed, and continues to place, on linguistic revitalization projects for multiple Maya languages within the country could therefore have led foreign anthropologists to place particular focus on the interaction between these languages and Spanish. Additionally, the linguistic homogeneity of the Yucatán relative to Guatemala – that is, speakers of languages other than Spanish speak mainly Yucatec Maya, rather than one or more of Guatemala’s 21 Mayan languages – and the peninsula’s history of fluid boundaries between Mayan and Spanish speakers could discourage the study of code-switching. Nonetheless, these conclusions are highly speculative; it is equally plausible that scholarly differences between the areas could have arisen from a number of unrelated factors.

What is certain, however, is that identity and the social positions indexed by its expression are treated in quite different ways among groups of Maya. In Guatemala, language is used to index a number of different social positions, situations, and identities, which I describe in detail in 3.1.3 and 3.1.4. From fieldwork in Momostenango, Choi shows how the use of either Spanish or a Mayan language can indicate boundaries between the self and others, invoke either familiarity or respect, and publicly present a Maya or non-Maya identity to others. It is possible that this is because identity itself is polarized, falling generally within the categories of Maya or ladino. Because this polarity lends itself so well to divisions between Mayan languages on one side, and Spanish on the other, language choice can be used to express subtleties within that

identity. This is not to disregard, however, the multiple identities that exist even within the 21 language communities in Guatemala. There are clear differences among Maya communities within the country – for example, the Achi/K'iche' debate referred to in section 2.1 shows that even though both languages are in the Mayan family, community members have strong ties to regional identities for historical and political reasons. Seen on this more specific level, then, identity is much more complex than “Maya” or “not Maya,” although the language that one speaks still plays a key role in self-identification.

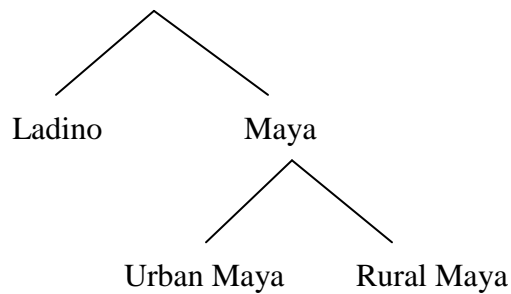
In Mexico, however, a variety of factors seem to index social positions and situations much more so than language choice. Armstrong-Fumero (2009) and Hervik (1998), primarily, illustrate this assortment of factors with their discussions of *mestizos*, *catrines*, *mestizos elevados*, and *mayeros*, along with terms denoting social class: dress, social class and wealth, and region are the major factors that contribute to a person's possession of a certain identity. Therefore, because identity is a substantially fluid concept in the Yucatán, language may not be used as a primary tool to express subtleties within this identity: they are usually explicitly expressed by other means. Furthermore, because language has not historically been the most widely used manner of indicating identity in the region, this could also influence its lesser use as a tool today. This is not to say that language has played no role in self-definition, but its widespread past use by both indigenous and non-indigenous *yucatecos* means that it has not been linked *only* to the concept of indigeneity or Mayanism. Burns' (1998) assertion that “the term *mestizo* has given a wider cultural space for people to switch between identities of indigenous people and identities of the Mexican mainstream” (380), initially referenced in section 4.2, serves to support this argument. By using terms of identification that have a wide range of meanings, using code choice to generate a wide range of meanings may be less of a necessity.

However, although language and code choice may not be used in the same manner in the Yucatán, this does not mean that code-switching in Guatemala is necessarily more indicative of a Maya identity. Rather, I mean to argue that Maya identities can be expressed in fundamentally different ways: monolingualism, code-switching, cultural practices, and self-identification as Maya are all equally valid and are legitimized by individuals' own beliefs of their participation in Maya culture.

The differences in both self-identification and in language use in Guatemala and Mexico, as a product of their development in specific historical and cultural contexts, further complicate the question of a true Pan-Maya movement. I have shown that Maya self-identity draws its differences mainly from the distinction between a polarized and fluid concept of identity, which has its origins in historical circumstances such as the Caste War in addition to a long history of colonialism. Therefore, the ways in which language is used to portray identity are also highly dependent on the context in which identity is performed: specifically, my discussion highlighted the myriad ways that Mayan languages in Guatemala are used to index notions of familiarity, respect, and Maya identity, while language in the Yucatán is not necessarily used in a similar manner. This contrast suggests that “Mayaness” is not just about speaking a Mayan language: just as language can index many different ways of being Maya, a variety of other cultural practices exist to index a Maya identity as well.

The conflicts discussed at length in section 4.1 between local Maya knowledge and “expert” Maya linguist knowledge are a final hallmark of the differences that exist in Maya language use and Maya representations of identity. Choi (2003) represents perceived linguistic, cultural, and societal differences between these groups as part of a similar difference between Guatemalan ladinos and Mayas in general, using the following diagram:

(6) Fractal recursivity in Guatemalan society (Choi 2003: 153)



This diagram makes use of fractal recursivity to project differences between ladinos and Mayas onto differences within Mayas themselves. As defined by Irvine and Gal (see 2.1), fractal recursivity is a process that creates language ideologies by the projection of an opposition or tension existing at one social level onto a different level. Here, the opposition between ladino and Maya – traditionally marked by a history of colonialism and racism – is recursively projected onto Maya society. Choi notes how the left side of the diagram is marked by privilege, power, and modernity, while the right side can be used to represent a “primitive,” pre-modern group of people. Thus, ladinos have benefited from the qualities indexed by the left side of the diagram, but urban Mayas who have had access to higher education and belong to a higher social class may also set themselves apart from rural, poorer Mayas. This division further supports the notion that Maya society in Guatemala, although often represented as a binary categorization of Maya vs. ladino, cannot be simply categorized by “Maya” or “not Maya” and contains many complex levels. Such divisions of society, also evident in the Yucatán, emerge as particularly relevant during analyses of the Pan-Maya movement.

Also important to mention in a discussion of Choi’s diagram, as part of a broader issue within Guatemala and Mexico, is the erasure of social diversity among ladinos. In his 2006 ethnography of the Maya movement through ladino eyes, Hale notes that ladinos occupy a wide range of social positions, yet this diversity is often simplified or glossed over in studies that

focus on diversity among the Maya. Hale states that with the rise of questions about Maya identity, discussions of ladino identity have also grown. A Sunday magazine feature of a 1996 issue of the *Siglo XXI*, one of Guatemala's major newspapers, posed the question: "Y en medio de tanta discusión étnica, ¿qué es realmente un ladino?" ("Amid so much ethnic discussion, what really is a ladino?") (Hale 2006: 16). This ambiguity is similarly reflected in the status of non-Maya *yucatecos* in Mexico: "Since Mayas are *mestizos* and non-Maya *mestizos* are Mexicans, this leaves open the term of identifying the non-Maya Yucatecos" (Castañeda 2004: 53). Castañeda further complicates this issue by noting that *blanco* ("white") has become a default term used by anthropologists to describe non-Maya *yucatecos* and to refer to earlier racial-ethnic relations, although it does not commonly enter into contemporary public discourse; the term *yucateco* itself is more frequently used for self-identification, even though Mayas may use the term for self-identification as well. Portraying non-Maya people as homogenous may be a helpful practice in order to focus more fully on Maya identity, but as these brief examples indicate, non-indigenous identities are by no means fixed or without their own diversity. Just as there are multiple "Maya" identities, there are multiple "ladino" and "yucateco" identities.

Although it presents a simplified picture, then, Choi's diagram is a reminder of the multiple levels of society that exist within the Guatemalan state, the Mexican state, and the many indigenous communities in both countries – and, more specifically, the projection of tensions between Mayas and ladinos onto Maya society itself. The ways in which Maya people choose to use Mayan languages and Spanish in order to navigate these complex levels, asserting or disregarding a specific kind of identity, are part of an ongoing process of experiencing the results of thousands of years of historical and cultural development.

4.4. Further Considerations

Two additional concerns are relevant to this discussion: biases found in texts written by Mayas active within the Pan-Maya movement, and the recent successes, in both Mexico and Guatemala, of laws recognizing the value of indigenous languages.

First, anthropologist Victor Montejo (2005), in a chapter on the history of Maya leadership in Guatemala, asserts that “No Spaniard would condescend to learn Maya” during the colonial period (110). Taken on its own, his assertion may gain authority due to his status as both an anthropologist and a Maya man; indeed, his book is dedicated in many places to promoting and justifying the Maya movement. Yet while it is true that the Spanish and the Maya were primarily linguistically separate during this period, many Spaniards, especially friars, did learn and become fluent in Mayan languages (see 3.1.1). This statement holds even less true in the Yucatán, where Yucatec Maya was the primary language of both Mayas and many Spaniards and *mestizos* until the 18th century (see 3.2.1). This assertion is therefore unsupported by the facts, and presumes an even social greater separation between the Spanish and Maya than probably existed.

Cojtí Cuxil (1998) outlines a number of colonialist beliefs regarding the ethnic hegemony of ladinos, the need for a linguistically homogenous Guatemalan state, and the presence of Maya cultures as a cause of the underdevelopment of the country. He then states, “All Ladinos believe in these dogmas, which are almost five hundred years old” (22). This statement is problematic for two reasons: first, it presumes that all of the ladinos in the country – at least forty percent of Guatemala’s population – believe in extreme racist ideologies; second, it presumes that those who believe in these ideologies have not changed their views for the past five centuries and are no different from 16th century Spanish colonizers. From Hale’s (2006) discussion of the Maya

movement through ladino eyes, it is clear that racist discourses persist among some ladinos, but it is equally evident that not all ladinos share these perspectives. Although these are just two instances, they speak to Montejo's own assertion that "The Maya need not be completely enclosed in their Mayaness, but can work to promote actions for unity and solidarity with their ladino counterparts" (2005: 134): in order to promote this unity and solidarity, careful consideration of possible biases among Maya activists should also be included and counteracted.

Second, in 2003, similar laws were passed in both Mexico and Guatemala regarding the national status of indigenous languages. The Guatemalan version was termed the "Law of National Languages," which recognized indigenous languages as "essential parts of national identity" that deserved to be promoted, yet re-affirmed Spanish as the only official language of the country (England 2003: 734). The Mexican "Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples," however, stated that indigenous languages were national languages with equal validity as Spanish and affirmed the rights of speakers of these languages to use them in legal contexts (Cámara de Diputados de la Legislatura de México 2003: 1-2). Spanish has long been the *de facto* official language of Mexico, yet the government has never passed legislation that affirms this; giving indigenous languages and Spanish equal validity is therefore comparable to making each of these languages an official language. Although the Guatemalan law still places indigenous languages, and therefore Mayan languages, in a subordinate position relative to Spanish, both laws speak to the ability of the governments of both countries to reconsider their positions and beliefs about speakers of indigenous languages. Seen within the context of the Maya movement, the laws suggest that eventual officialization may be possible in Guatemala as well, which has the potential to encourage equality on a number of other levels of society.

Taken together, then, these additional considerations imply that there are still improvements to be made to indigenous and non-indigenous relations from multiple angles. Since Maya, Guatemalan, and Mexican cultures are constantly in the processes of changing, developing, and overlapping, this is not surprising: as each area continues to evolve, so will the beliefs and experiences of people within these countries. In particular, with the continued growth of the Pan-Maya movement and of the number of Mayas obtaining higher education in urban areas of both countries, interaction between Mayas and non-indigenous people will grow as well. Recognition of Maya activists' biases is therefore a crucial part of forging solidarity and a true national, in addition to ethnic, identity. Steps taken to promote the well-being and potentially official status of indigenous languages are similarly important for attaining equity and for representing all members of society. Finally, these considerations reinforce the fact that Maya cultures exist within the Guatemalan and Mexican states at the same time as some members advocate for pan-indigeneity. Even as the Pan-Maya movement grows, measures that support equality of all peoples within each state may be equally important.

5. Conclusion

As a way of expressing the role of language ideologies and the separations that are created within and outside Maya cultures, Choi states, "Discovering others is a process of self-constitution" (2003: 153). That is, the process of describing people and situations outside the "self" results in discovering and examining one's own labels or categories, and describing the self logically results in creating "others" as well. These practices bring about a multitude of ideas, perceptions, and beliefs, particularly when a society such as Guatemala or the Yucatán peninsula is composed of so many diverse peoples; furthermore, these practices are highly dependent on the society in which the "self" and the "others" are found. Using the discipline of

linguistic anthropology as a lens through which to analyze identity involves the study of how language is used and discussed in its own contexts. Studying common language ideologies and language practices can therefore shed light on how language is used to represent and construct identity.

Maya peoples living in Guatemala and Mexico have historically been subjected to others' interpretations and judgments of their identities, but they have recently begun to circulate a more widespread distribution of their own ideologies and opinions regarding identity and political desires, under the banner of Pan-Mayanism. Briefly tracing the experiences of Maya populations in each country from the pre-colonial period to the present provided the necessary context in this discussion for a comparative study of language and identity, concepts which are both united and made problematic within the Pan-Maya movement.

Specifically, I have argued that since "Maya" as an identity is a product of social and cultural construction, and as such is highly dependent upon individual behaviors and beliefs, language use and code choice does not affect Maya identity in a consistent way across national borders. Though there are similarities in the way Maya identity is constructed and treated in Guatemala and Mexico, the different historical, cultural, and political environments that ultimately produced these identities serve to differentiate them more than to unify them. Correspondingly, language use is also a product of historical, cultural, and political factors, and therefore it does not act on and influence identity in the same way in different cultural contexts.

Although parts of this discussion have been clearly and necessarily rooted in historical events, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of communities and people mentioned are contemporary, and that there can be no final word regarding these issues: they continue to develop and to be relevant today. Two recent developments in particular will likely have wide-

reaching implications for the future: (i) the 2003 laws in both Guatemala and Mexico regarding the national status of Mayan languages and (ii) the many revitalization programs that seek to foster proficiency in Mayan languages and to reverse the processes of language shift and language death. As Spanish and Mayan languages continue to follow separate trajectories in purist codes, and more conjoined paths in standard codes, their changing uses may also contribute to changes in the way identities are created; therefore, future anthropological research could focus on further documentation and analysis of these processes. A quote from Hale (2006) illustrates the necessity for continued efforts to understand changes within Guatemalan and Mexican society: “To think of identity itself as the end of [political struggles] is to take identity politics as a given, rather than to probe critically its effects” (17). These effects, in addition to identity politics itself, deserve further examination.

Neither self-identification nor language are static concepts, and the myriad ways in which they interact and influence each other, on a number of different scales, will continue to be present and significant for the Mayas in the future – they will never truly be settled. Although Antonin de Nebrija’s foreboding 1492 statement linking language with the right to govern reaffirmed the Spanish empire’s possession of powerful tools and ideologies, many of which persisted for centuries, the past 30 years have been witness to an extraordinary rise of Maya self-determination and revitalization. In this most recent chapter of cultural and linguistic transformation, it is the Maya people themselves who reaffirm the right to speak about their culture, their identities, and their future, regardless of the languages in which these notions are expressed.

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