

Storytelling, Language Shift, and Revitalization in a Transborder Community: “Tell It in Zapotec!”

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ABSTRACT In this article, I examine storytelling practices in a Zapotec transborder community formed by migration between Oaxaca, Mexico, and Los Angeles, California. Amid dual patterns of language shift away from Zapotec toward Spanish among community youth living on both sides of the U.S.–Mexico border, there is a growing gap between storytelling ideologies that tightly link storytelling to Zapotec language use and the practices of storytellers, who increasingly use Spanish. As a discursive genre that is linked to processes of cultural reproduction, storytelling has particular significance for understanding language shift in this community. In this article, I demonstrate how speakers’ ideologies about how stories should be told are shaped by a widespread preoccupation with cultural continuity amid the transformations brought on by local migration practices. The varied responses to this transformation within the community, which range from acceptance to cultural revitalization activism, reflect distinct but overlapping ideologies of discursive authenticity as well as the role of traditional heritage language practices in contemporary social life. [*Zapotec, migration, storytelling, language shift, language revitalization, community*]

RESUMEN En este artículo, investigo las prácticas de narrar historias en una comunidad Zapoteca a través de la frontera formada por migración entre Oaxaca, Méjico, y los Ángeles, California. Entre patrones duales del cambio de lenguaje que se aleja del Zapoteca hacia el español entre los jóvenes de la comunidad que viven a ambos lados de la frontera México-Estadounidense, hay una creciente brecha entre las ideologías de narrar historias que estrechamente relacionan narraciones de historias al uso del lenguaje Zapoteca y las prácticas de los cuentistas, quienes crecientemente usan español. Como un género discursivo que esta ligado a procesos de reproducción cultural, la narración de cuentos tiene particular significado para el entendimiento de los cambios del lenguaje en esta comunidad. En este artículo, demuestro que las ideologías de los contadores de historias sobre cómo las historias deben ser contadas están moldeadas por una preocupación extendida con continuidad cultural entre las transformaciones traídas por prácticas locales de migración. Las respuestas variadas a esta transformación dentro de la comunidad, las cuales oscilan entre la aceptación al activismo de revitalización cultural, reflejan ideologías distintas pero sobrepuestas de autenticidad discursiva así como el papel de prácticas de lenguaje del patrimonio tradicional en la vida social contemporánea. [*Zapoteca, migración, narración de historias, cambio del lenguaje, revitalización del lenguaje, comunidad*]

In this article, I explore storytelling practices in the rural village of San Juan Guelavía, located in the Tlacolula Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico. The village forms part of a multilingual transborder community (see Stephen 2007) created

by migration between Oaxaca and Los Angeles, California, as well as other metropolitan centers throughout Mexico. Owing to centuries of Spanish colonialism, enduring language-based discrimination in Mexico, rural to urban wage-labor

migration, and an increase in migration to the United States, this community is undergoing two mutually reinforcing patterns of language shift away from San Juan Guelavía Zapotec (SJGZ) toward the use of Spanish and English among youth on both sides of the border.¹ Amid these patterns of shift, there is a growing gap between a locally salient ideology that associates authentic storytelling with SJGZ and storytelling practices, which frequently incorporate Spanish.

Nine months into my research in Guelavía, I sat in the office of then–municipal president Javier Ortega.² In addition to his role as an elected official, Presidente Ortega is an anthropologist who studies his native Zapotec language and culture. He is deeply concerned about language shift among Guelavían youth, a process he traces back to the mid-1980s, when migration from Oaxaca to the United States increased dramatically.³ The use and vitality of SJGZ has long been threatened by Spanish dominance in the region, and more recently it has been exacerbated by the use of English among Guelavíans who migrate to the United States. In fact, Ortega and I met that day because I had been asked by locals to teach an English class precisely as he was trying to encourage local parents to send their children to a new Zapotec class being offered at the local *casa de cultura* (cultural center).

That class, which I observed, was conceived as part of a nascent revitalization program Ortega hoped to implement, entitled “Da’a bkuu, rut kaa rëni ditzaa do’o” [The niche where the Zapotec language can grow].⁴ The program goals were to foster the development of “cultural self-esteem” and balanced bilingualism among Guelavían youth through a multiphase process. First, Zapotec classes would be offered to provide youth with necessary linguistic knowledge. Second, youth would compile a corpus of local myths and stories and translate them into Zapotec scripts. Presidente Ortega described this process of translation as crucial for inculcating youth into essential Zapotec cultural concepts. Third, youth would perform these myths theatrically, and their voices would be played back in animated videos that could be used to teach other community youth in the future. His plan struck me as an innovative approach to revitalization, but it wasn’t until much later that I fully understood how his focus on stories related to the storytelling practices that I had been documenting in the Guelavían community.

Recent research in indigenous communities undergoing sociolinguistic transformations draws attention to the complexity of speakers’ language ideologies, the cultural logics by which people connect language to other spheres of social life. This work highlights the “cultural diversity of language beliefs and practices that have been substantively ignored or neglected” (Kroskrity and Field 2009:9). Likewise, in analyzing the performance and social circulation of stories within the broader context of language shift, I found that, although many Guelavíans espoused a conservative ideology linking traditional storytelling to SJGZ, in practice stories were often performed in Spanish. The design of Presidente

Ortega’s revitalization program described above is a reflection of this increasing phenomenon.

The varied responses within the community to this transformation index distinct ideologies of discursive authenticity as well as the role of traditional heritage-language practices in contemporary social life. As a discursive genre that is linked by Guelavíans to processes of cultural reproduction, storytelling has particular significance for understanding local language shift. Here I demonstrate how practices of regimentation in and around storytelling events are shaped by a pervasive preoccupation with cultural continuity amid widespread sociocultural transformation. With this article, I hope to further scholarly understandings of how ideological diversity impacts processes of cultural reproduction and to offer insights into the role of language in community maintenance in an era of heightened global mobility.

In attending closely to speakers’ divergent ideologies about the relationship between storytelling and language, I offer insights into the myriad ways that members of indigenous transborder communities continually adapt their sociolinguistic identities. The data I examine here point to the diverse manifestations of revitalization—in terms of Zapotec identity, cultural practices, worldview, and language—as they unfold across generations and borders, as well as the blurry line between “indigenous” and “non-indigenous” domains of knowledge and linguistic practice. Attention to the broader social and discursive contexts within which stories are told elucidates the complex dynamics of transborder multilingual communities, within which members of the same families and kin networks often experience dramatically different processes of linguistic and cultural socialization.

STORYTELLING AND NARRATIVE PRACTICE

The salience of storytelling as a verbal genre is not unique to the Guelavían community, as stories and storytelling are an important tool of socialization in many communities, often seen as possessing potent (re)productive power (see Basso 1984, 1996; Gonzales 2012; Kroskrity 1993, 2009). Across the ethnographic record, scholars have described the role of stories and folktales, or “oral literature” (see Bauman 1986), as a practice connected with the maintenance of cultural traditions, the teaching of moral frameworks, and the acquisition of cultural and communicative competence more broadly (see Briggs 1988; Heath 1984; Hymes 1981; Mannheim and Van Vleet 1998; Urban 1984). For example, Keith Basso (1984) depicts Western Apache views of storytelling as a form of “stalking,” used to pursue errant community members with messages of moral righteousness and culturally appropriate conduct with the goal of catalyzing personal transformation. Similarly, Paul Kroskrity (2009, 2012) describes the crucial role that stories play in perpetuating productive agricultural cycles and community maintenance among the Arizona Tewa.

Among scholars of language use in social life, a great deal of attention has been paid to the linguistic and contextual dimensions that distinguish formal storytelling as a genre from the personal experiential narratives that are embedded within ordinary daily conversation (see Bauman and Briggs 1990; Briggs and Bauman 1992; Ochs and Capps 1996, 2001). As such, the study of these expressive genres has often been carried out separately. Instead, I analyze talk in and around storytelling events, as well as talk about the stories themselves, across a range of social contexts, to demonstrate “the interrelationships linking the expressive forms individuals may employ in representing their lives to others” (Bauman 2004:83; see also Haviland 2005).⁵ The links between expressive forms that Guelavians deploy across interactional contexts tell a broader cultural story about language, authority, and community maintenance.

Guelavians’ reflexive talk about storytelling, or metapragmatic discourse, has “an inherently ‘framing,’ or ‘regimenting,’ or ‘stipulative’ character” (Silverstein 1993:33; see also Verschueren 2000). Such talk comprises “the story of how stories should be told” (Kroskrity 2012:130) and reveals a great deal about how storytelling is connected to other domains of social life. Within the broader category of metapragmatic discourse, scholars have delineated the concept of “generic regimentation” (Bauman 2004; see also Briggs 1993) to focus analytic attention on the dialectical relationship between specific speech events and the broader category with which they are associated (e.g., storytelling, ritual speech, joking, poetry). As particular stories are told and retold over time and by different tellers, they become semantically and pragmatically dense. They accrue and generate new forms of cultural, social, and linguistic significance while retaining their resemblance to previous tellings (see Bauman and Briggs 1990; Briggs and Bauman 1992; Irvine 1996; Mannheim and Van Fleet 1998; Silverstein and Urban 1996). Close attention to the ways that speakers create interdiscursive links between unfolding speech events and past events can reveal how “discursive productions may employ life experience as an expressive resource, using it to shape and present the social self in dialogue with others” (Bauman 2004:83). Drawing on these insights, I explore the links that storytellers, audience members, and community members construct between past and present stories as they strive to shape the future of the Guelavian community.

INDIGENOUS INTELLECTUALS AND NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGISTS

Amid what some have termed a “permanent identity crisis within sociocultural anthropology” (Sittón 2008:128), the enduring legacy of the discipline’s ties to colonial and imperialist projects, Latin American social scientists have pointed hopefully to “the emergence of an anthropology that is practiced and applied within the ethnic group or social unit itself . . . practiced by its own indigenous research subjects” (Sittón 2008:128). This is especially significant in Mexico,

where anthropological investigation was shaped by a close ideological and economic relationship with the postrevolutionary Mexican state (see Armstrong-Fumero 2011; Krotz 2006; Lomnitz 2001; Sittón 2008). Mexican anthropologists were largely educated urban elites who treated indigenous populations and communities as “internal others” (Krotz 2006:88) and whose research was predicated on “a geography of muteness” (Lomnitz 2001:283–284) that excluded indigenous intellectuals. As Mayan ethnolinguist Alonso Caamal stated:

Our dominators, by means of anthropological discourse, have reserved for themselves the almost exclusive right to speak for us. Only very recently have we begun to have access to this field of knowledge and to express our own word. [Caamal in Krotz 2006:106]

In some exceptional contexts, such as the Oaxacan isthmus, indigenous scholars have successfully “translat[ed] popular belief into a coherent ideology” (Royce 1993:83) and have been integral in sustaining a movement for isthmus Zapotec political and cultural autonomy for generations.

Anthropologists more broadly have begun to call attention to the increasing role of indigenous intellectuals within the discipline, and I hope to contribute with this article to this important emergent focus of study (see Jacobs-Huey 2002; Kroskrity and Nevins 2013; Rappaport 2005). Alongside the increasing role of indigenous scholars in Oaxaca and throughout Mexico has been an increasing engagement with indigenous literacies in communities throughout the region. As Carlos Montemayor writes:

At present we are experiencing a reemergence of the literary arts in [indigenous] languages and analysis of Indigenous cultures by the Indians themselves. This resurgence of Indigenous intellectuals and of writing in Indigenous languages represents one of the most profoundly important cultural events in Mexico at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. [Montemayor and Frischmann 2004:4]

For example, Donald Frischmann describes a program entitled “Continuity of the Yucatec Mayan Collective Memory” whose participants “transcribed [oral texts], translated them into Spanish, and published them in bilingual format” as a way to reclaim the practice of indigenous writing that was “erased from Indigenous linguistic consciousness” by five centuries of Spanish linguistic hegemony (Montemayor and Frischmann 2004:19, 20). In line with this trend, Presidente Ortega has been working with the Oaxacan-based CEDELIO (Centro de Estudios y Desarrollo de las Lenguas Indígenas de Oaxaca), which sponsors programs to train teachers, ethnolinguists, and speakers throughout the state to read and write in their native languages.⁶ Ortega’s program in San Juan Guelavía represents one locally specific example of how communities throughout Mexico are creatively engaging with the orthographic, textual, and audiovisual representations of their heritage languages as part of a broader strategy to promote cultural and linguistic revitalization.

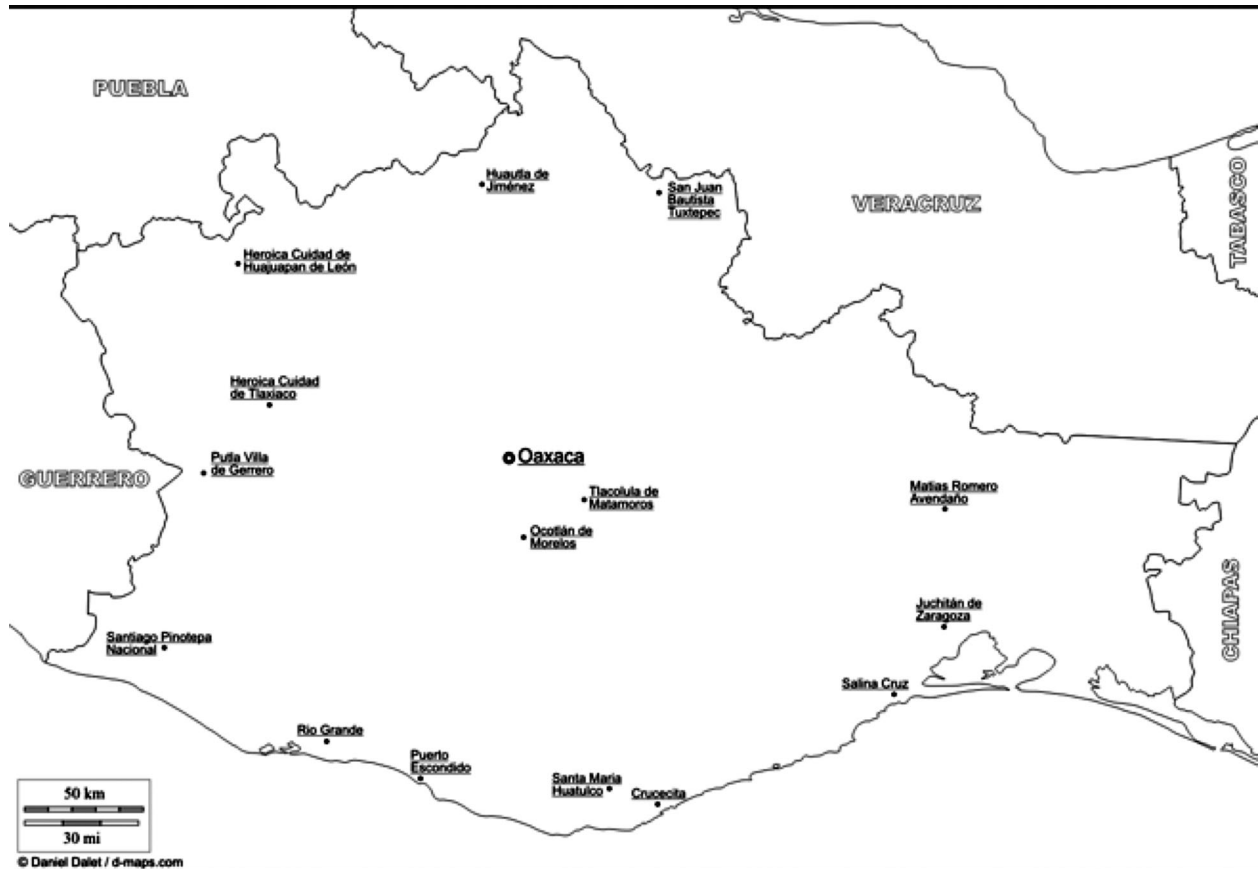


FIGURE 1. Oaxaca, Mexico. Map from: http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=28409&lang=en.

SAN JUAN GUELAVÍA, OAXACA

San Juan Guelavía (SJG), Oaxaca, is a rural municipality located in between Oaxaca City and Tlaxiocola de Matamoros in the most ethnically and linguistically diverse state in Mexico, where a large portion of the population is indigenous (see Barabas and Bartolomé 1986; Dennis 1987; Nader 1991; Stephen 2005; see Figure 1).⁷ According to the 2010 census, Guelavía was home to 3,047 residents. Though there are no accurate figures, it is reasonable to estimate that 1,500–2,000 Guelavían men, women, and children are living in and around the city of Los Angeles, CA, in addition to other long-established communities in Mexico City and Ensenada.⁸ The increasing pervasiveness of international migration has produced a “culture of migration” (Cohen 2004; see also Stephen 2007 and Wood 2008). The ubiquity of migration and the long-term separation of Guelavíans within Mexico from their kin in the United States shape Guelavíans’ talk about themselves and others, which often evinces a preoccupation with the maintenance of cultural continuity amid disjuncture and transformation.

Like many residents of the Tlaxiocola Valley, the Guelavíans with whom I worked are largely multilingual; many speak Spanish, one or more varieties of Zapotec, and English, all with varying degrees of fluency. Valley communities have had contact with Spanish speakers since the mid-1500s, and this prolonged period of linguistic contact

has impacted all of the varieties of Zapotec spoken in the region to varying degrees. While Spanish has long been part of the linguistic repertoires of Guelavíans, Spanish dominance and Spanish monolingualism are only widespread among Guelavíans ages 25 years and younger, meaning a shift away from the use of Zapotec among Guelavíans began to occur within the last two to three decades. According to the most recent comprehensive Mexican national census conducted in 2010, out of the total residents in San Juan Guelavía, 63 percent spoke an indigenous language (down from 70 percent on the 2005 census) and 27 percent were Spanish monolinguals. The 2005 INEGI census reported that there were 84 Zapotec monolinguals in SJG, though the 2010 census did not include this category. According to a report by the municipal government, the percentages of monolinguals in Zapotec and Spanish have flipped over the last 40 years. Within a 12-kilometer radius of Guelavía, there are communities with Zapotec use rates as high as 90 percent and others with rates as low as 24 percent.

These census figures resonate with the ethnographic literature on Oaxacan communities, which describes an extraordinary range in the relative vitality of Zapotecan languages (see Augsburg 2004; Pérez-Báez in press; Saynes-Vazquez 2002; Sicoli 2011). This diversity is reflective both of the geographic and social heterogeneity of the region and of the idiosyncratic nature of language contact

experiences and outcomes. Current literature on Zapotec language shift and revitalization suggests that the most crucial factors determining patterns of use are speakers' social networks and communities, as it is in their daily interactions that language shift and maintenance takes place. Mark Sicoli (2011) argues that community organization around parents' use of Zapotec with their children promotes language maintenance, while Gabriela Pérez-Báez (in press) shows that return migrants from Los Angeles who are Spanish-dominant can instigate language shift within their households back in Oaxaca. In the Oaxacan isthmus, Zapotec was emblematic of a regional movement to promote indigenous political autonomy and was used by prominent intellectuals, writers, and artists (see Augsburger 2004; Campbell 1994), though its vitality has waned in recent decades. Guelavians' Zapotec use has been affected by a confluence of factors, the most prominent being the widespread experience of linguistic oppression in schools among now-middle-age adults. An incorporationist political agenda dubbed *indigenismo* was designed to promote unification in the wake of the Mexican Revolution. This had an enduring impact on the shape of schooling in rural indigenous communities through often violently enforced, Spanish-only policies (see Heath 1972; Sicoli 2011). Schools and schooling have become an "implicit metadiscourse" (Webster 2010:39) about local language shift linked to the increasing use of Spanish in adult-child interactions throughout the community. This tendency is often exacerbated among Guelavians living in the United States, who experience social pressure to learn and use English in schools. All these factors have shaped the practice of storytelling within the Guelavian community, as well as emergent revitalization programming that seeks to harness the power of stories to reinvigorate the use of Zapotec among local youth.

METHODS

This article is based on two years of ethnographic research in San Juan Guelavía, Oaxaca, and Los Angeles, California, between 2008–09, shorter visits in subsequent years, and ongoing communications with research participants. It forms part of an ongoing investigation into the relationships among language, migration, and community, based on which I have suggested that the circulation of semiotic forms, shared patterns of narration, and reflexive forms of talk constitute a powerful medium of connectivity amid geographic dispersal and sociocultural transformation (see Falconi 2011).

Throughout my research, many people were critical of my penchant for recording ordinary conversations on mundane topics, characterized by the use of *zapoteco revuelto* (Zapotec mixed with Spanish), a widespread but devalued variety. I was often encouraged to attend events where I would be exposed to more valued speech genres associated with the use of *didxzac* (good or legitimate Zapotec), a respect register of SJGZ characterized by repetition, euphemism, and, in certain ritual contexts, the use of reverential kin terms (cf. Hill and Hill 1986; Kroskrity 1993, 2009, 2012). Prestigious speech genres, including storytelling and ritual speech,

are closely associated with elder males, who are typified as particularly skillful speakers of *didxzac* and deeply knowledgeable about local traditions. Women are not recognized as storytellers, although they frequently tell stories in the course of ordinary conversations that contain many of the same elements as formalized storytelling performances (e.g., references to supernatural events, interactions with animals and nonhuman entities). However, the women's tales were rarely framed as bounded, repeatable speech events; rather, they were understood as impromptu tales specific to the speaker and immediate context.

Storytelling among Guelavians is characterized by a generation-based participant structure in which older adult men tell stories to younger listeners, and it reflects the shift away from San Juan Guelavía Zapotec (SJGZ) toward Spanish in parent-child and adult-novice interactions throughout the community. On several occasions, I was invited to visit the homes of elder males to hear and record *didxiin* (anecdotes or stories) told in *didxza* (Zapotec). However, in contrast with ritual events (e.g., weddings, patron-saint festivals) during which Zapotec was the dominant ceremonial language, these events were shaped by a negotiation between tellers, who favored the use of Spanish, and other participants, who encouraged them to use Zapotec. The examples below were excerpted from storytelling performances that I recorded in which such negotiations over language choice shaped the structure of the unfolding performance.

REGIMENTATION IN PRACTICE

My first experience hearing stories in San Juan Guelavía was at the home of Carmela, who had invited me to come and hear her father Isidro's stories in SJGZ, which I was beginning to learn at the time. Isidro, a widower in his eighties, is bilingual in Spanish and SJGZ, like many adult Guelavians, but prefers Zapotec. He is venerated and respected in Guelavía for his public service as *alcalde* (council chairman). Among his family members, Isidro is recognized for his skillful use of Zapotec and his storytelling prowess. We sat together on the patio while Carmela bustled about preparing a meal for us, whereupon Isidro began his story in Spanish, with a preamble about a recent visit to his grandsons who live in Veracruz, Mexico, where he had performed another of his favorite stories. A moment later Carmela interrupted, asking me, "In Spanish or in Zapotec, how do you want it?" I responded that Isidro should tell the story in whatever way he chose. He returned to his story preamble, again in Spanish, "OK, first I am explaining to you in Spanish" (conversation with author, April 19, 2008), and then switched into Zapotec to begin the story itself.

About two months after meeting with Isidro and Carmela, I was invited by another local woman in her forties, Dominga, to hear her father-in-law Rodrigo tell stories in Zapotec. She had been present when I was visiting her aunt and recording some Zapotec conversations, after which she invited me to come to her home and record Rodrigo the following week. Once again, this invitation seemed to be

prompted in part by a desire on Dominga’s part for me to hear and record didxzac rather than mundane conversation. Rodrigo, in his late seventies when we met, preferred to use Zapotec in most familial interactions I observed. He was a well-known storyteller within his family, and several generations had been reared on his tales.

Shortly after I arrived, Rodrigo began to tell a story about a man who finds a snake trapped under a branch, and, like Isidro, he initiated this story in Spanish. Dominga responded to this by laughing nervously and then interjecting to ask, “Uhm but you will speak Zapotec to her,” repeating her question three times before Rodrigo responded, “Oh [in] Zapotec?” (conversation with author, June 8, 2010). He continued to narrate in Zapotec for a few minutes, after which he shifted back and forth frequently between Zapotec and Spanish, switching completely into Spanish by the story’s end. After a brief pause and some chatting, Rodrigo began to another tale in Spanish at the request of his wife Maruja, about the adventures of a princess and her suitor. This prompted Dominga to interrupt him again, more forcefully, as shown in boldface text in the following excerpt. In all examples, Spanish is marked by italic script, Zapotec is underlined, and the English translation appears in the right hand column:

Example 1. Recorded on June 8, 2010. (A = Author; R = Rodrigo; D = Dominga; M = Maruja)

R: <i>Habia habia una señora</i>	R: There was there was a woman
D: Idioma!	D: Zapotec!
R: <i>Tenia un chamaco</i>	R: She had a boy
D: Ditza rindiagbiu ditza rcazby güebiu	D: Zapotec listen you-formal she wants you to speak Zapotec
R: <i>No pero mejor a o <u>ditz</u>—mejor en idioma?</i>	R: No but better or Zap—better in Zapotec?
D: <i>Lo quieres en español o en idioma?</i>	D: Do you want it in Spanish or in Zapotec?
A: <i>Si mejor en idioma para que luego lo puedo escuchar y aprender mas</i>	A: Yes better in Zapotec so that later I can listen and learn more
M: <u>A guldi laaby lla</u>	M: Yes she has good reason then
R: <u>Nidote ni na tiby tiby mniny tiby cheen tiby nguieen ba gud xmambi</u>	R: First there was a a child a little boy a little man well they gave him to his grandmother

Once again, Dominga interrupted his tale, this time shouting “Zapotec!,” which Rodrigo ignored, and then again “Zapotec, listen you, she wants you to speak Zapotec!” This time he resisted Dominga’s urgent command until she asked me for

confirmation, whereupon I told him that it would help me in my efforts to learn Zapotec. Maruja jumped in at this point, confirming the legitimacy of my request by saying, “She has good reason then.” Finally, Rodrigo switched into Zapotec, continuing to switch frequently into Spanish throughout his tale.

In all of the storytelling sessions referenced above, female story framers displayed a strong preference for the use of Zapotec, whereas elder male tellers seemed to favor the use of Spanish. Initially, I thought that this preoccupation with language choice was the result of a tension between an ethos of linguistic accommodation on the part of the tellers, who knew I was a Zapotec language learner with greater fluency in Spanish, and the framers, who tried to regiment the story performances to align them with the prestigious discursive practice they had described to me. Given what I knew and had been told by Guelavians, I thought that Zapotec was the default language for storytelling.

In 1984, the linguist Ted Jones published a pamphlet of stories entitled *Anecdotas Narradas Por El Señor Pedro Hernandez* based on the performances of a Guelavían elder. The *Anecdotas* include many of the same stories I heard told by Isidrio and Rodrigo, as well as some that appear in Presidente Ortega’s revitalization program corpus, such as the origin story of the town. In communication with Jones about the process of collecting these stories, he assured me that Pedro had used Zapotec in all his stories. Additionally, it is important to reiterate that until the 1970s and 1980s, Spanish monolingualism was virtually nonexistent in the community. Jones’s account, together with local census data, confirmed that Zapotec was a—if not the—primary language for storytelling in the Guelavían community in the not-too-distant past. Carmela, Isidro’s daughter, also recalled for me the experience of hearing her father’s tales decades before when she was small child. As the primary audience for their stories, I tried to encourage both Isidro and Rodrigo to tell their stories in Zapotec, believing they would have done so with an audience of family or friends. Prior to the start of their stories, they were both conversing with family members in Zapotec, which further confirmed my sense that their use of Spanish with me was exceptional.

However, in my experiences the tellers displayed discomfort with the use of Zapotec throughout their story performances, often switching back into Spanish or repeating stories a second time in Spanish. In the process of transcribing these stories with a relative of Rodrigo named Dora, a young woman in her early twenties, she informed me that Rodrigo’s constant switching into Spanish was not exclusively an effort to accommodate to me. Rather, it was the result of his effort to translate stories that he ordinarily told in Spanish to young relatives and children (including Dora) into Zapotec for my benefit. Her view conflicted with what I had been told about storytelling but aligned with what I had observed: namely that Spanish was now dominant in what had been proffered by other community members as a prestigious form of Zapotec narration. In stories directed

toward me, a researcher interested in local sociolinguistic traditions, the gap between conservative ideals of authentic storytelling and innovative storytelling practices were brought into sharp relief.

“CARRYING IT HITHER” IN STORY PERFORMANCES

The stipulative character of audience members’ reactions to the use of Spanish in the story performances referenced above were motivated by conservative aesthetic ideals that emphasize the minimization of innovation and change while vaunting practices that “[speak] the past” (Kroskrity 1993, 2009). This perspective conflicts with the goals of storytellers to “carry it hither” (Kroskrity 1993, 2009) by creatively tailoring their performances to match the linguistic repertoires of young audience members. The use of Spanish by Guelavían storytellers is one among several strategies of carrying it hither that tellers draw on to engage youth with limited competency in Zapotec. In fact, all of the story performances I witnessed or was told about by storytellers were performed in Spanish.

Another strategy I observed in the story performances of Isidro and Rodrigo was the use of audience–protagonist parallelism, meaning the traits of the story’s protagonist often matched those of the primary audience member(s). For example, both Rodrigo and Isidro told me stories that featured young princesses, whose age and circumstances (young, unmarried, far from home and family) matched my own (at the time). Rodrigo explicitly compared me with the central character in his story, at one point referring to “a princess like you.” The story he told revolved around the attempts of a princess to escape her parents and to run off with a young boy with whom she had fallen in love. Toward the end of the story, Rodrigo returned to this connection between the character in the story world he had described and myself:

Example 2. Recorded on June 8, 2008. (A = Author; R = Rodrigo)

<p>R: <i>Tal como viene usted acaba ya si tiene usted papa mama por allí “mi hija porque hasta ahora?”</i></p> <p>A: <i>(laughing) si</i></p> <p>R: <i>“Es que yo me (safé) de un coyote” le dice usted</i></p> <p>All: <i>(laughing)</i></p>	<p>R: It’s just like you come here already if you have Dad and Mom over there “my daughter why has it been so long?”</p> <p>A: <i>(laughing) yes</i></p> <p>R: “It’s that I (escaped) from a coyote” you say to them</p> <p>All: <i>(laughing)</i></p>
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He compared the disappearance of the princess in the story to my presence in Guelavía far from my parents, depicting them as pleading “my daughter, why has it been so long?”

This was a question asked ubiquitously by Guelavían to censure others for not calling or visiting home as frequently as they should. He then jokingly suggested that I could excuse my long absence by pretending I had escaped from a *coyote*, or human trafficker, pointing to the salience of migration and border crossings within the Guelavían community.

Through parallelism and the use of Spanish, tellers can blur boundaries—boundaries between fiction and reality, as well as between the traditional past out of which these stories come and the present circumstances in which they are told. The use of these techniques exemplifies the ability of skilled verbal artists to “‘read’ the ‘real’ world in which their audiences live and thus to find the sorts of imaginary scenes and existential problems that will fit the experiences of their interlocutors” (see Briggs 1988:2). Rodrigo’s joking in Example 2 demonstrates this bridging of imagined and real spheres, accomplished through the humorous invocation of my own circumstances and by honing in on the “existential problem” of greatest salience to me as a researcher far from home and family. Using these strategies, both Rodrigo and Isidro were able to actively engage their audience members in a story world to which they could relate and within which they were more receptive to the underlying messages contained therein.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF DISCURSIVE AUTHORITY

Scholars of verbal art have pointed out that the balance between traditional generic protocol and audience engagement is “perhaps the most basic persistent problem confronted by students of oral literature” (Bauman 1986:78). The use of Spanish in a speech genre closely connected to Zapotec linguistic traditions reflects the ideological ambiguity of everyday life in this community amid language shift and heightened popular mobility, as well as the tensions undergirding processes of cultural reproduction in this context. Accordingly, while both Rodrigo and Isidro demonstrated a concern for audience engagement and contextual relevance, they also worked to mark their stories as authentic examples of a valued discursive tradition. I had originally conceived of the use of SJGZ as an essential requirement for legitimating a story as authentically traditional. However, these tellers used discursive techniques for creating a sense of authenticity that functioned independently of language, including third-party evaluations and embedded commentary about the form and origins of their stories. These strategies could arguably function to compensate for authenticity lost by the use of Spanish, but as both were widely known as respected Zapotec speakers, neither appeared to view Spanish use as problematic, despite being explicitly called upon (or yelled at) during their performances to “tell it in Zapotec.”

Additionally, both Isidro and Rodrigo, as men in their late seventies, had privileged grounding as tellers, which they indexed in the course of performances by explicitly referencing or implicitly invoking previous performances. For example, in the telling of his first tale, which he titled “Un Bien se Paga Mal” [A Good Deed Is Repaid with a Bad],

during which the protagonist encounters three successive animal friends, Rodrigo switched from his role as narrator to an external evaluative voice and commented on the form of the story itself, saying, “No matter what, it is always three friends.” He invoked a generic precedent to frame his unfolding story and in so doing aligned his performance with discursive traditions. This same story appeared in Jones’s 1984 *Anecdotas* (in Zapotec), and while the overarching plot was significantly different, the sequence of interactions with the three animal friends was nearly identical.

Isidro bolstered the authenticity of his tales by quoting others’ evaluations of his stories within his performances. For example, during a storytelling event I recorded, he opened with a narrative about his grandson Eduardo, whose parents migrated domestically to Veracruz, Mexico. He explained that Eduardo was very grateful that Isidro had told him a story (in Spanish), entitled “Grigorillo,” during a previous visit, because it helped him to win a prize in school:

Example 3. Recorded on April 19, 2008. (A = Author; I = Isidro)

<p>“Y cuando me tocó” dice . . . el maestro dice “Ahora Eduardo” dice “A donde sacastes ese cuento? Este si que nunca le he visto en ningún libro” “No maestro” dice “Yo lo no lo copie en el libro, eso lo contó mi abuelito . . . Vive este en Oaxaca, pero de vez en cuando viene a visita:rnos y cuenta y nos nos hace cuenta las leyendas que el sabía” “Y sabe más?” “Si” dice “Miren hermanos” dice “miren alumnos, este Eduardo sacó el primer lugar, de su cuento de su leyenda el va a quedar en primer lugar” y ganó una beca.</p>	<p>“And when it was my turn” he says . . . the teacher says “Now Eduardo” he says “Where did you get this story? This one I have never seen in any book,” “No teacher” he says “I did not copy it from the book, this one my grandpa told me . . . He lives uhm in Oaxaca, but sometimes he comes to visit us and he tells and he lets us us know the legends that he has known” “And does he know more?” “Yes” he says “Look brothers” he says “look students, this Eduardo won first place, for his story for his legend he will be in first place” and he won a scholarship.</p>
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In the excerpt shown here, Isidro described how Eduardo’s story submission was selected over all of the other student’s submissions because it was not taken from an ordinary storybook but was an authentic folktale passed down through oration. In addition, his status as a venerated grandfather hailing from Oaxaca, widely viewed in Mexico as a bastion of indigenous cultural traditions, bolstered the authenticity of the story still further.

Isidro used Eduardo’s report of the events surrounding the awarding of the story-prize to voice praise spoken on his own behalf that he wished to share, exemplifying the practice

of “spoken mediation . . . the relaying of spoken messages through an intermediary” (Bauman 2004:129). In the example shown above, Isidro, the master teller, drew on the evaluation of a high-status Spanish-speaking schoolteacher to affirm the value of indigenous storytelling traditions—an illuminating choice in the context of local language shift. He thus reinscribed the relations of domination and subordination between Spanish-speaking mestizos and speakers of indigenous languages that have motivated the shift away from SJGZ, both in the context of storytelling and more generally.

TRANSBORDER STORIES

It became apparent over time that Isidro used this meta-story not solely to validate his capacities as a storyteller but also to influence the behavior of his family members. Many months after I recorded the first of his stories, on the evening of his 78th birthday celebration, Isidro began to tell the same tale of “Grigorillo,” in Spanish, to his grandson Wilber, a Spanish-dominant youth in his late twenties. I had just returned to Guelavía from fieldwork in Los Angeles and was invited to attend and videotape the party so that it could be shared with family members back in L.A.

Just as Isidro launched his story, the phone rang. It was Wilber’s mother and father, Julia and Hernan, calling from Los Angeles to wish Isidro *feliz cumpleaños* (happy birthday). Isidro responded as follows:

Example 4. Recorded on January 18, 2009. (I = Isidro)⁹

<p>I: <i>Aquí estamos conviviendo, me me están felicitando</i> (laugh) . . . <i>aquí les estoy contando un cuento, pe:ro encantado están . . . del este Grigorillo . . . contando que el hijo de Paco, se llama Eduardo . . . le conte el cuento cuando yo iba por allá y cuando . . . su maestro de (todos . . .) los muchachos que saben un cuento . . . todos los que contaron pero eran de libros, era lo que aprendieron de libro, y luego . . .</i></p>	<p>I: Here we are spending time together, they they are congratulating me (laugh) . . . here I am telling them a story, h:ow fascinated they are . . . of uhm Grigorillo . . . (that same one that I told) the son of Paco, his name is Eduardo . . . I told him the story when I went over there and when . . . his teacher of (all . . .) the boys who know a story . . . all of them that they told but they were from books, they were what they had learned from books, and later . . .</p>
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In his report of the evening’s festivities, Isidro proclaimed, “Aquí estamos conviviendo, me están felicitando” [Here we are spending time together, they are celebrating me]. The verb *convivir* was used frequently among Guelavians on celebratory occasions that brought people together, both to describe this shared togetherness and to comment on its

importance for maintaining social ties. Isidro's explicit attention to the family gathering in progress and his own role as the *festejado* (celebrated one) keyed (see Goffman 1974) a particular framework for interpreting his subsequent utterances.

Following his mention of the story of "Grigorillo," Isidro launched into the very same metastory shown in Example 3, confirming its importance as a "narrative set piece" (Bauman 2004:84). The story functioned as a cohering tie between his stories, first-person narrations, and other communicative practices, linking them to an overarching narrative that affirmed his status as the venerated patriarch of the family. After invoking the story-prize anecdote and describing his rapt audience members as hanging on to his every word, Isidro launched into the second iteration of a speech on the value of *conviviendo* (spending time together) and *respeto* (respect) within the family. First addressed to those present at the party, the second version unfolded during this phone call for the sake of Isidro's absent progeny living in Los Angeles. He made this clear at the closing of his speech to Julia, announcing, "I say to you and to your sister Yadi," as Yadi was not on the phone, and he wanted to ensure she got the message. In fact, he later mentioned that the video that I was filming should be viewed as an archive of his words that the family could return to in the future to remind themselves of his crucially important message. In the context of his phone conversation to Julia, these messages were doubly potent, serving additionally as a reminder of the concerted efforts needed to maintain familial bonds with migrant kin across temporal and geographic distances.

Moments later, Wilber bolstered the authoritative grounding of this message by thanking Isidro for all he had done as "the head of this family," which he meant literally, going on to describe Isidro as the family's source of knowledge and understanding about the world. Recent scholarship suggests that "the reflexive project of the self . . . consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continually revised, biographical narratives" (Haviland 2005:81). Isidro's storytelling practices reflect the further insight that in old age "the textual self may settle, or congeal, into a kind of thematic fugue . . . more clearly reflected in the discourses of others than in one's own distinctive voice" (Haviland 2005:82). By tracing the repeated invocation of key themes in his own words and the words of others, one can begin to piece together Isidro's textual self and the source of his expressive power.

The above discussion has demonstrated how story performances are implicated in and tied to the larger communicative economies in which they are circulated. As they circulate, stories accrue and generate new forms of meaning when they are taken up and put to various uses by tellers, addressees, ratified and nonratified overhearers, and at times even by absentee parties. Explicit attention to these processes of circulation allows tellers to construct the traditional roots of stories even when they perform them in nontraditional ways. Thus, despite their increasing use of Spanish, storytellers were able to index the discursive au-

thority of their performances. Their language choices, in turn, facilitated the shift away from the use of Zapotec in storytelling events, bolstering the pattern of Spanish use by Guelavian adults in interactions with youth. In contrast, there were others I encountered during the course of my research who emphasized the importance of maintaining the linguistic integrity of traditional Zapotec storytelling practices to counter processes of language shift among local youth. It is to them that I now turn.

REVITALIZING NARRATIVES

The increasing disassociation of Zapotec with traditional storytelling illustrated by the examples above is a primary focus of Presidente Ortega's language revitalization program. Youth participants are intended to move through a multi-stage process of Zapotec language training and the translating of myths from Spanish into Zapotec scripts with the ultimate goal of performing these myths theatrically for broader circulation within the community. The plan revolves around the telling of stories as a way to reclaim indigenous linguistic traditions, shed the vestiges of Spanish imperialism, and reverse widespread language shift within the community. In the program literature, Ortega advocates the use of *didzxac*, the register spoken by venerated elders "that has its foundation in ancient Zapotec" and that is perceived to have fewer borrowings from Spanish than the Zapoteco *revuelto* spoken by many locals.

This aspect of Ortega's strategy fits with conventional approaches to language maintenance and revitalization, which are rooted in top-down models of expert and novice in which older speakers teach youth through storytelling and other means (see Kroskrity 2009; Meek 2007). Among Guelavians, storytelling is considered the domain of elder community members, even when told in Spanish. These participant roles and communicative patterns keep youth socially and linguistically distant from the use of their heritage language (cf. Meek 2007, 2010). However, while Ortega's program advocates a conservative process of regimentation that would restrict linguistic variation in storytelling, he simultaneously aims to expand rights of tellership to include youth as story performers. For youth to have the opportunity to translate and perform these stories in Zapotec is an inversion of the dynamics typical to many storytelling events. In this case, practices of generic regimentation associated with aesthetic conservatism (e.g., the realignment of storytelling with SJGZ) are bound up with an innovative agenda, the goal of which is to transform youth's relationship to Zapotec linguistic and cultural practices. In charging youth rather than venerated elders with the task of "speaking the past," the program offers a new strategy for "carrying it hither" (see Kroskrity 1993, 2009).

At the basis of this approach to revitalization is Ortega's expressed conviction that local stories constitute dense repositories of traditional knowledge, worldviews, and cosmological orientations. As an anthropologist recently charged with directing a group of Oaxacan scholars

associated with CEDELIO in a project entitled “Sistemización del Conocimiento Étnico” [The Systematization of Ethnic Knowledge], Ortega has drawn extensively on the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (personal communication, November 5, 2012). His revitalization curriculum is designed around the process of mythological analysis outlined in “The Story of Asdiwal” (Lévi-Strauss 1967:1–48), which parses myths into their “sequence” (or surface-level content) and their “schemata” (deeper, abstract planes of meaning that undergird the surface content). Based on Lévi-Strauss’ analytic division of mythic structure, Ortega outlined a multistep process of myth translation designed to reacquaint Guelavians with their cultural heritage:

Example 5. Excerpted from revitalization outline. (Author’s translation from Spanish)

The strategy consists of recopying, organizing, itemizing and systematizing a collection of our own myths of, we the Zapotecs, the myths that are still, even in Spanish, powerful and significant repositories containing ethical expressions that are contextualized in the natural-cultural framework. These myths are found inscribed in the frame called literature, in the form of stories, legends, fables, anecdotes that sublimate their meaning, through a process of collective-communal de-codification.

Citing Claude Lévi-Strauss:

The preceding analysis begins to establish a distinction between two aspects of the construction of myths, the sequences and the schemata. Sequences form the apparent content of myth; the chronological order in which things happen . . . meetings . . . intervention from the supernatural protector, birth . . . childhood . . . conflicts, etc. But these sequences are organized on planes at different levels (of abstraction) . . . [Its own line which is] horizontal and second by the contrapuntal schemata, which are vertical. Let us draw up an inventory for the present myth.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Geographic schemata | 4. Sociological schemata |
| 2. Cosmological schemata | 5. Techno-economic schemata |
| 3. Integration | 6. Global integration |

In this process of de-codification and systematization of our culture what will not approach one’s comprehension but that we learn at the same time is the Zapotec language, with a feeling and a signification.

Ortega has tailored this analytic program to fit the particulars of the Guelavians community context, as is evident in the way he frames the citation from Lévi-Strauss by mentioning “our own myths,” “we the Zapotecs,” and myths that “even in Spanish” are “powerful and significant repositories.” Ortega characterizes the process of recovering these myths as an almost archaeological process of excavating down through

layers of sublimation: in this case, the false exterior of literature, fables, and stories that have concealed their true power and significance.

While Lévi-Strauss’ structuralist analysis of indigenous American myths is a well-established part of the anthropological canon, the use of his analytic approach by an indigenous American scholar as a way to understand and reinvigorate indigenous sociolinguistic practices in his own community is an unusual flip of the script. However, given the increasing number of researchers and scholars hailing from communities that have historically been the focus of anthropological study, it is likely that Ortega’s program signals the growth of theoretical and methodological reappropriation among indigenous intellectuals. The use of Lévi-Strauss in the context of a language revitalization program is especially noteworthy in this regard, as Lévi-Strauss insisted that in contrast to poetry, which cannot be translated,

the mythical value of the myth remains preserved, even through the worst translation. Whatever our ignorance of the language and the culture of the people where it originated, a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader throughout the world. Its substance does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the story which it tells. It is language, functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at “taking off” from the linguistic ground on which it keeps rolling. [Lévi-Strauss 1955:430–431]

In a recent correspondence, Ortega further explained his use of Lévi-Strauss’ framework:

Example 6. Personal communication, November 15, 2012. (J. O. = Javier Ortega)

<i>J. O.: Llegamos a la comprensión de que existen estructuras de conocimiento subyacentes en las culturas heredadas del horizonte mesoamericano . . . En este caso lo importante de Strauss es que acepta la existencia de un sistema de conocimientos válidos aunque tiene otro sustento epistemológico.</i>	J. O.: we arrived at an understanding of the existence of structures of knowledge underlying the heritage cultures of the Mesoamerican horizon . . . In this case the important thing is that Strauss accepts the existence of a valid system of knowledge although he has a different epistemological grounding.
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In contrast with Lévi-Strauss, Ortega views the myths in his corpus as essentially bound up with language. The real wisdom and the true character of Zapotec indigeneity is best represented, and simultaneously found, in the local Zapotec language. While the knowledge contained within these stories and myths was effectively preserved through telling in Spanish, their essence can only be fully expressed and understood in Zapotec. He posits that the acquisition of Zapotec will occur almost beneath the level of consciousness, and it will do so simultaneously with an understanding of the

broader cultural and cosmological picture that will be pieced together through the translation of these potent myths.

The types of stories selected for use within the program reinforce the assertion that there are benefits to be gained by the community from the revelation of hidden realms of indigenous knowledge, the most important being the development of what Ortega terms “*una auto-estima cultural*” [cultural self-esteem]. This perspective is in striking contrast with the view expressed by Isidrio’s metastory in example 3: namely that outsiders’ affirmations of indigenous cultural traditions are highly valued and confer particular prestige. Most of the stories referenced in Ortega’s program literature are structured like fables with morals. The morals reinforce the heroic stoicism of the *campesino* (rural farmer or peasant) to whom, it is implied, members of the Guelavían community can relate on a fundamental level.

The most prominent are the allegorical episodes that comprise the epic conflict between the opossum and the coyote. These stories reaffirm the value of certain aspects of *campesino* life that have grown out of the necessity of poverty and the wisdom to be gleaned from archetypal conflict between the *campesino* and the Mestizo urbanite, who are represented by the humble opossum and the wily coyote, respectively. Below is an excerpt from the end of one such tale that was translated by youth in an early pilot version of the language revitalization program. Prior to this excerpt, the coyote has been threatening to eat the opossum. To evade capture, the opossum offers the coyote some of the juiciest *bzē* (prickly pear) that he has harvested from a nearby cactus but tells the coyote he must first close his eyes and open his mouth. This excerpt comes after the opossum has fed the coyote several ripe fruits, lulling him into a state of complacency:

Example 7. Taken from Presidente’s collection of translated myths.

Chiy btium choon bzē ni nagaa, ni mazru nu gēci, chiy raaipmē: “Beu, an . . . te kēti gaching laani bzloó, chiy garó blal ru’u” . . . bkuam iyunte bzēki, chi biaabēy laan gēni beu, per rbēllitia beu kēti xneez	And so the opossum prepared three prickly pears for the coyote, the biggest, greenest and spiniest, and then he said to him: “Coyote, now . . . close your eyes and open your mouth” . . . [and] he threw the three prickly pears right at the coyote’s throat, and the coyote did not follow him.
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At the end of the story, the moral is explicitly stated:

Thus, the little possum saved his infamous existence once again through the effective use of “what he had at hand,” demonstrating what ingenuity can accomplish in the face of force and power. [Author’s translation from program brochure]

This story’s motto—“ingenuity in the face of power”—can be read as a metonym for Zapotec language and culture, which has persisted in the face of centuries of oppression and cultural imperialism. In some ways, the escape of the opossum from the coyote’s clutches is parallel to the goal of Ortega’s program, which he envisions as a way to rescue his language and culture from extinction at the hands of the Spanish-speaking majority.

When read together, the collection of stories about the opossum and the coyote becomes a grand historical epic that repeats itself over and over across time and space. Thus, these stories acquire cosmological significance, the understanding of which can be acquired through detailed mythic analysis. Youth reading and translating these tales will be led through a series of increasingly complex Zapotec lessons about the mundane and sacred meanings contained within the myths. They begin with relevant vocabulary; in the case of example 6, they learn terms for body parts and animals (e.g., *ru’u* [mouth] and *bsloo* [eye], *beu* [coyote], *nguul beez* [possum]). They then move on to the more complex ethical and cosmological dimensions of the story, gleaned from the traits and actions of the principal characters within the stories—in so doing moving toward what Ortega calls the “discovery of the hidden message.” For example, while translating myths, youth are to be instructed in SJGZ terminology for naming the natural world, including the indigenous toponyms for surrounding landmarks and communities. This exercise is designed to promote the valuation of sacred places in the local landscape by teaching youth how their communities fit into the geographic organization of the ancient Zapotec empire, which, as Ortega explained to me, “*tenía otra lógica*” [had a different logic] reflective of cosmological understandings of the spatial relationship between the spiritual and the mundane (personal communication, October 26, 2012).

At the same time, many of the pedagogical techniques described in Ortega’s plan foster the development of metalinguistic and metapragmatic awareness in program participants. They receive instruction on the linguistic structure and meaning of SJGZ, as well as a reflexive understanding of the social, spiritual, and ideological power of language. According to the program literature, by proactively regimenting the genre of storytelling through the laborious process of translation, the parsing of mythic structures, and the crafting of story performances, Guelavíans can unlock the hidden wisdom of their ancestral origins, thus transforming their understanding of themselves and their heritage.¹⁰

CONCLUSIONS

Within the Guelavían community, language shift has brought about the loosening of generic boundaries in storytelling performances and a diversification in local ideologies about the right way to tell stories. The various uses of generic innovation and generic regimentation by storytellers, framers, audience, and revitalization planners are bound up with their distinct orientations regarding the importance of fidelity to the discursive past versus accommodation to the present

context. The in-the-moment exigencies of storytelling performances often lead tellers to embrace the use of Spanish, which some Guelavians perceive as an atypical language for the genre, and to draw on other strategies to imbue their stories with discursive authority (e.g., Isidro's metastory). Conversely, in the context of local revitalization efforts, the realignment of San Juan Guelavía Zapotec with the practice of storytelling is foregrounded as a strategy for rejuvenating imperiled linguistic and cultural traditions.

In this context, Spanish is conceived of as a vessel that has held and preserved this body of myths and stories over time but cannot express their true significance or hidden meanings. Those can only be unveiled through the use of SJGZ, the language in which they were conceived and passed down for generations. At the same time, I have demonstrated that, through the restructuring of participant roles advocated in the revitalization program, the practice of generic regimentation is put to use to further the innovative goal of expanding the involvement of youth in traditional storytelling. The practices of storytellers and revitalization activists exemplify two distinct responses to the same overarching question: How can Guelavians maintain cultural, linguistic, and moral traditions amid continuing social and linguistic marginalization and the widespread transformations brought about by transborder migration? Here, I have focused primarily on metapragmatic discourses in and around storytelling events because it is in these stories about storytelling that one can access the ideological threads that connect this particular discursive genre to the social life of the Guelavían community.

Debates have long pervaded indigenous communities throughout the Americas and those who study them regarding the relationship between nonindigenous and indigenous realms (of thought–behavior–language–culture). There are some who presume a clear delineation between them and others who favor discourses of hybridity and conceptualize so-called indigenous and nonindigenous realms as overlapping and mutually constitutive (see Chibnik 2003; Cook and Joo 1995; Stephen 2005). Those who espouse conventional dichotomies tend to exclude from consideration the possibility that indigenous communities could ever really “own” Spanish, English, or other colonial languages. The effects of such dichotomizing discourses can culminate in “cris[is] of authenticity” (Stephen 2005:266) as the community elders deemed experts in linguistic and cultural tradition approach old age and senescence. The assumed correlation between cultural transformation and loss can obscure the complex hybrid character of many contemporary indigenous communities in which indigenous and European languages coexist within the same or overlapping speech communities and are drawn on strategically by speakers across contexts (see Field 1998; Muehlmann 2008; Webster 2010). In addition, an exclusive focus on language shift and loss can divert analytic attention away from the ways that traditional cultural stances and forms of communication can be preserved and practiced in nonindigenous languages (see Kroskrity and Field 2009). In comparing and contrasting storytelling practices along-

side speakers' divergent ideologies about the relationship between storytelling and language, I have offered a new perspective on the challenges faced by communities undergoing language shift in maintaining traditional speech genres. These challenges have inspired the creation of multiple ways to “speak the past” into a present rife with the tensions, contradictions, and transformations that define life in an indigenous transborder community.

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NOTES

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1. SJGZ is an indigenous language of the Otomanguean linguistic stock, with connections to the pre-Colombian Zapotec empire that spanned the Oaxacan Valley.
2. All research participants referred to in this article have been given pseudonyms.
3. This increase is often correlated with the hyperinflation created by the Mexican economic crisis of 1982.
4. There is no standard orthography for SJGZ. I chose an amalgamation of two common local variants, so my transcriptions differ from the excerpts included from Presidente Ortega's program literature.
5. I engage in a more in-depth analysis of story texts themselves in an unpublished manuscript for an anthology on the topic of storytelling and narrative practice (under review).
6. Center for the Study and Development of the Indigenous Languages of Oaxaca.
7. The Mexican states of Oaxaca and Chiapas have the highest indigenous populations in the country, and Oaxaca is by far the most diverse, with 16 recognized ethnolinguistic groups, of which Zapotec is only one (see INEGI [<http://inegi.org.mx>]). Linguists argue that the number of mutually unintelligible languages in the region is much larger: for example, estimates of the number of distinct Zapotecan languages range between 20 and 60 (see Sicoli 2007; see also <http://sil.org>).
8. Most Guelavían migrants in Mexico and the United States work in the service industry.

9. It is worth noting that Isidro ordinarily spoke to Julia and Hernan in Zapotec, so his use of Spanish in this context suggests that he was speaking not just to them but also to Wilber and thus chose the language all of them shared in common.
10. The effects of Ortega's program within the community on the practice of storytelling, and the use of SJGZ more broadly, remain to be seen, as it is still very much in a nascent pilot phase. Its full implementation is contingent on local interest and limited available financial resources.

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