Indigenous Language Revitalization in Mexico:

Uncovering the Key to Success in Chiapas

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: The Puzzle

Mexico is currently one of the most multilingual countries in the world. As of 2023, it ranked eighth in the world in linguistic diversity (Torkington, 2023). Driving these statistics are the indigenous populations that reside in all regions of Mexico. Given the country's linguistic diversity, Mexico has not declared a national language, despite Spanish being the most commonly spoken language in the country and the language that the federal government utilizes. Dell'Amore reports that of the 143 indigenous languages currently spoken in Mexico, 60, or 42%, are currently at risk of extinction (Dell'Amore, 2014). Overall, these statistics demonstrate the need to understand what is currently driving this language shift, or a societal transition to a dominant language that endangers indigenous languages in the country, and any possible methods to reverse it.

Since 1964 and the introduction of bilingual education (Spanish and an indigenous language), Mexico has implemented policies to reverse the language shift. From granting rights to indigenous people to speak and revitalize their languages to policies focused on expanding indigenous languages, the efforts are visible, but the impacts have been highly variable. This is the central puzzle this thesis will address.

First, it is important to define indigenous language revitalization policies to better understand what specific policies this study will address. According to Hinton, "language revitalization' refers to the development of programs that result in re-establishing a language which has ceased being the language of communication in the speech community and bringing it back into full use in all walks of life" (Hinton 2001, 5). This definition is broad but widely accepted among other experts in linguistics and others who research the field. For the purposes

of this study, this definition is sufficient to analyze the existing policies in Mexico and their impact on indigenous languages in Chiapas and Yucatán.

One of the main policies this thesis will analyze is the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights, *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*, enacted by the Mexican Congress on March 13, 2003. Resulting from an emergent social movement for indigenous rights, the Zapatista movement of the early 1990s, this law aimed to provide basic linguistic rights and protections for indigenous people and their languages throughout Mexico.

For the first time in Mexican history, this legislation codified protections for indigenous people to speak their languages, ensured their access to primary bilingual education, and created an organization to enforce and implement provisions of the law. None of the previous laws regarding linguistic rights for indigenous people in Mexico, including the 1964 mandate to introduce bilingual education and the 1993 General Law on Education, had these codified protections, guarantees of bilingual education access, or robust mechanisms of implementation (*General Law on Education*, *Art. 7,* 1993). Specifically, the 1993 General Law on Education mentions this in Article 7 in stating that it intended to "[p]romote the medium of the teaching and knowledge of the plural linguistic status of the nation and the respect of the linguistic rights of indigenous communities" [Translated] (*General Law on Education*, *Art. 7,* 1993). It continues by stating that "[t]he speakers of indigenous languages will have access to education in their language and Spanish." [Translated] (*General Law on Education*, *Art. 7,* 1993).

Despite these promises, the law did not specify how these goals would be achieved. Such vagueness was a major criticism of all legislation previous to the 2003 General Law, and especially the 1993 legislation, as the above quotes are the only mention of indigenous people and their languages in the entire document (*General Law on Education*, *Art. 7,* 1993).

Another clear goal of the 2003 General Law was to engage in indigenous language revitalization efforts, primarily through access to bilingual education, that would be directed by the National Institution of Indigenous Languages (NIIL) established at the time the law was enacted. This institution was given a legal mandate to monitor and establish opportunities for indigenous people to revitalize their language in education and society. The organization itself would decide what opportunities it would provide, but the law states that it would be in the realm of bilingual education (Article 14, *General Law for Indigenous Language Rights*, 2003). By establishing such an organization and with the 2003 General Law, the Mexican government codified in law its commitment to place indigenous languages on the same legal standing as Spanish (Pellicer, Cifuentes, and Herrera, 2006, 150) and further its commitment to making Mexico a multicultural country.

Specifically, the NIIL was tasked with providing multiple forms and resources (broadly) for indigenous language education to be facilitated throughout the country (for all education levels and purposes) and promoting indigenous language integration into Mexican society (*General Law for Indigenous Language Rights*, 2003). They were even tasked to work with INEGI, or the National Institution of Statistics and Geography (the institution in charge of creating and collecting the census data), on developing better methodologies of recording indigenous language speakers nationwide (Article 14 (h), *General Law for Indigenous Language Rights*, 2003). This legislation, specifically with the creation of the NIIL, differed from earlier policies that lacked a robust mechanism of enforcement and leadership in creating these resources.

Despite the *2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights* establishing a uniform national policy for indigenous language revitalization in Mexico, as well as establishing a

national institute for implementing this legislation, this policy had widely varying impacts. For example, the state of Chiapas saw a 2.75% increase in the proportion of indigenous language speakers (above the age of 5) from 2005-2020, while the state of Yucatán saw a decline of 8.16% in the proportion of indigenous language speakers (above the age of 5) from 2005-2020 (INEGI, n.d.).

The specific puzzle this thesis will investigate is why, following the enactment of this legislation, the state of Chiapas saw a significant increase in indigenous language speakers while the state of Yucatán saw a significant decline. What explains these divergent impacts of this uniform national level legislation? Specifically, what explains the apparent success of language revitalization efforts in Chiapas compared to Yucatán? To begin to understand this puzzle requires a more in-depth comparative historical analysis of indigenous language revitalization efforts in each of these states.

1.2: The Research Question

What explains why indigenous language revitalization efforts have been successful in Chiapas, yet have failed in Yucatán?

After first addressing the importance of indigenous language revitalization efforts and indigenous language preservation, this study will next review dominant explanations in the scholarship that help us understand the conditions under which we would expect language revitalization efforts to succeed or fail. Based on this scholarship, the study identifies migration, urbanization, community-led initiatives, and bilingual education that will be investigated through an in-depth comparative historical analysis of the two case studies: Chiapas and Yucatán. Ultimately, the central argument of the thesis is that if either community-led initiatives, bilingual education, or a new variable introduced by this thesis- political mobilization- occur or/are

included in indigenous linguistic policies, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers is expected to increase. An increased proportion of indigenous language speakers is utilized to measure the success of indigenous language revitalization policies since absolute numbers of speakers is a poor reflection of the percentage of the population in either state that speaks an indigenous language.

1.3: Research Question Relevance

Language is an essential aspect of communication, culture, and identity for all communities, and it is no different for indigenous languages. However, many indigenous languages are currently being threatened by transitions into dominant languages. The UN predicts that 90-95% of indigenous languages will be critically endangered or extinct by 2100 (UN, 2019). These numbers are alarming because the possibility of losing these languages implies the loss of knowledge, traditions, and cultures that are transmitted from generation to generation through communication. With the loss of a language, a historical connection to that culture and identity is severed. Once that connection is severed, it is difficult to regain.

Additionally, Mexico and many other countries have committed to legal obligations to support indigenous languages and provide resources to prevent their extinction. For instance, Mexico voted for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) in 2007, demonstrating their commitment to their indigenous communities at the global level. Specifically, the declaration mentions the linguistic rights of indigenous people in Articles 13, 14, and 16 (UNDRIP, 2007). In Article 13, the UNDRIP states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages… to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons" (UNDRIP, Art.

13(1), 2007). While broad, the goals of this article establish the responsibility of Mexico to engage in indigenous language revitalization policies.

Regarding Article 14, the UNDRIP goes further: "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning" (UNDRIP, Art. 14(1), 2007). This first provision under Article 14 demonstrates the obligation of the Mexican federal government to provide educational access to indigenous people and allow them to lead these efforts. The third provision of Article 14 the UNDRIP states, "States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language" (UNDRIP, Art. 14(2), 2007). This second provision reinforces the importance of language education for indigenous children specifically and countries' commitment to provide it.

Finally, Article 16 mentions how indigenous language rights are further applicable to media. The first provision of this article states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination" (UNDRIP, Art. 16(1), 2007). Overall, these articles demonstrate the specific commitments made by countries that voted in favor of this declaration and why they feel obliged to uphold those commitments, given they were made on the international stage.

1.4: Thesis Overview

Following the introduction, chapter two will review the scholarly literature that seeks to explain why language revitalization efforts succeed or fail. Chapter three will dive into the history of indigenous language revitalization policies in Chiapas and Yucatán. Chapter four will

evaluate the explanations from chapter two in the context of each of the two main case studies: Chiapas and Yucatán. Chapter five will discuss and analyze the findings of this study. Chapter six will investigate the origins of the Zapatista movement and its relevance to the research question. Finally, the seventh chapter will examine the limitations of the study and provide suggestions for future policy and research in this area.

CHAPTER 2: DOMINANT EXPLANATIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION POLICIES

What explains why some indigenous language revitalization efforts succeed while others fail? The scholarship surrounding this issue forwards a few variables that can contribute to answering the research question. These variables include urbanization, community-led initiatives, and bilingual education. Yet, the confounding variable of migration must also be considered when approaching the research question, since if the confounding variable is actually what impacts the proportion of indigenous language speakers in Chiapas and Yucatán, then the other variables do not answer the research question.

2.1: The Confounding Variable of Migration

The confounding variable necessary to address is indigenous migration. If a significant number of indigenous speakers migrate from a state/region, this could explain the decline of indigenous language speakers, and if significant numbers of indigenous language speakers migrate into a region, this would explain an increase. Thus, this study must rule out the confounding variable of migration before proceeding with testing other variables identified by the scholarship.

2.2: Urbanization

Scholars in this section argue that urbanization negatively affects indigenous language speakers, and if a particular urban location experiences more levels of migration, then they are expected to have lower levels of indigenous language speakers.

Yoshioka (2010) argues that rural-urban migration, or urbanization, contributes to indigenous language loss throughout both Mexico and Guatemala. There are two avenues by which this occurs. First, urban areas encourage the use of the Spanish language since it is required to interact with the socioeconomic terrain (Yoshioka 2010, 11). Secondly, those who are likely to migrate to an urban area are those of a higher socioeconomic position (Yoshioka 2010, 11). These assertions are both supported by the finding that there is a lower proportion of indigenous speakers in urban areas in comparison to rural areas in both Mexico and Guatemala (Yoshioka 2010). To achieve this finding, Yoshioka (2010) utilized census data from both Mexico and Guatemala to determine the correlation between both variables.

Mohammad (2023) agrees with the notions forwarded by Yoshioka (2010) and applies this reasoning to the loss of heritage languages in India. Looking deeper at what occurs during migration to cause language shifts within these populations, this scholar utilizes surveys (of unknown size and response rate) of the population to support their findings. They forward three key aspects of why urbanization leads to language shift in India. These three aspects are: "Language Dominance and its Influence," "Generational Shift and Language Adaptation," and "Access to Education and Language Learning Resources" (Mohammad 2023).

First, regarding language dominance and its influence, urban areas have rigid social structures that promote the dominant language, discouraging indigenous language use (Mohammad, 2023, 3). Second, regarding generational shift and language adaptation, younger

generations are discouraged from learning the heritage language when they observe that the dominant language is perceived to be more "valuable" in society (Mohammad, 2023, 3). Absent younger generations learning the language, it becomes difficult to engage in language transmission, essential to maintaining the vitality of a language. Lastly, regarding access to education and language learning resources, if a heritage population does not have access to didactic materials or classes in the heritage language, then language transmission becomes even more difficult (Mohammad 2023, 4). All of these factors contribute to his assertion that migration negatively impacts the use of heritage languages.

As implied by these two scholars, urbanization has an overall negative effect on the proportion of indigenous language speakers. Thus, the thesis forwarded by these scholars in the context of the research question is as follows:

H_1: If urbanization levels increase, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers is expected to decrease

When considering which factors in indigenous language revitalization policies produce increased levels of indigenous language speakers, scholars can be categorized into two variables: community-led initiatives and bilingual education. The first to be discussed is community-led initiatives, then bilingual education.

2.3: Community-Led Initiatives

Community-led initiatives in the context of indigenous language revitalization broadly refer to initiatives led by indigenous communities to revitalize their languages (Mohammad 2023, Wiltshire, Bird, and Hardwick 2022). In his discussion of migration and its impacts on heritage languages in India, Mohammad (2023) recommends that community-led initiatives be pursued to mitigate language shift and promote language transmission (Mohammed 2023, 788).

While his discussion of this is limited, scholars Wiltshire, Bird, and Hardwick (2022) further support this assertion.

Scholars Wiltshire, Bird, and Hardwick (2022) conducted a study by creating a code to analyze 125 pieces of literature in the field of indigenous language revitalization from 1989-2021 (Witlshire, Bird, and Hardwick 2022). By interviewing 30 scholars in the field of indigenous language revitalization, they drew out thirteen factors that they considered important (Wiltshire, Bird, and Hardwick 2022). One of these factors was community control of language planning, as this could allow for indigenous communities to not only be involved in the development of their languages but also for their goals to be more realistic and achievable (Wiltshire, Bird, and Hardwick 2022). While community control of language planning is the exact term these scholars use, it is, in essence, the same as community-led initiatives. Wiltshire, Bird, and Hardwick (2022) found strong evidence that this was an important factor when running the code for this study. The hypothesis from this variable is as follows:

H_2: If indigenous language revitalization policies promote community control of language planning, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers is expected to increase

2.4: Bilingual Education

Hamel (2008) argues that increasing a new method of bilingual education is essential to promote indigenous languages in Mexico (Hamel 2008). While he claims that bilingual education is the best form of revitalizing indigenous languages, there are issues with the current model that he highlights. Hamel argues that the current form of bilingual education in Mexico forwards "a systematic mismatch…between the sociocultural, linguistic, and educational needs of the indigenous student population on the one hand, and the curriculum, materials, and language use at school on the other" (Hamel 2008, 305-306). Additionally, the current model of

bilingual education promotes the transition to Spanish after the indigenous language is used in primary school (Hamel 2008, 305). Yoshioka (2010) similarly argues that children who engage in primary bilingual education are less likely to retain the indigenous language compared to children of monolingual parents (Yoshioka 2010).

To combat this issue, Hamel argues that bilingual education led by indigenous people will resolve this "systematic mismatch," encouraging indigenous communities to assess their own needs and develop bilingual education programs that will best serve those needs (Hamel 2008).

An example of such a resolution would be the P'urhepecha program in Michoacan. In this program, begun around 1995, two indigenous teachers shifted the previous bilingual curriculum into one that centered on P'urhepecha as the first language (Hamel 2017, 404). All subjects and social interactions were taught in P'urhepecha, while Spanish was only integrated into the curriculum as a second language (Hamel 2017, 404). The result was higher test scores after achieving literacy in an indigenous language as their first language, in comparison to those who learned how to read and write in Spanish first (Hamel 2017). This proves that this program has had success in the educational sphere and likely improved the number of speakers of P'urhepecha overall. These findings provide a foundation for testing this variable.

The hypothesis forwarded by this variable is as follows:

H_3: If indigenous language revitalization policies increase bilingual education led by indigenous communities, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers is expected to increase

2.5: Theory and Argument

This thesis will argue that hypotheses two and three answer the research question, indicating that bilingual education (when it is led by indigenous communities) and

community-led initiatives are important factors that determine the success of indigenous language revitalization policies, consistent with the present literature.

However, this thesis will also forward an original hypothesis supported by the historical background of Chiapas and Yucatán. The variable involved is that of political mobilization and how this impacts the implementation of indigenous language revitalization policies. In essence, the hypothesis is as follows:

H$_4$: If indigenous language revitalization policies are implemented in a location where political mobilization has occurred, and that mobilization aimed to increase indigenous rights, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers is expected to increase

While similar to the community-led initiatives variable, "political mobilization" as a variable is narrowed to indicate community-led initiatives that result in a political action, specifically legislation, that can improve the proportion of indigenous language speakers. The foundation for this hypothesis is the 1994 Zapatista movement that was led by the indigenous people in Chiapas. The goals of the movement and how they materialized into positive impacts for the proportion of indigenous language speakers will be discussed in chapters five and six in more depth. Yet, the movement broadly advocated for indigenous peoples' rights and how explicitly they should be upheld, being inclusive of linguistic rights for indigenous people in Mexico. However, to understand the modern form of indigenous revitalization policies, the history of linguistic policies and policies that have impacted indigenous communities must be reviewed. This will occur in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION POLICIES IN MEXICO

The history of indigenous language revitalization in Mexico is predated by a series of assimilation policies that can be traced before the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), but only those after the revolution are necessary to paint the picture of how modern indigenous language revitalization policies arose.

3.1: 1930-1970

Increasingly robust assimilationist policies occurred during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). During his administration, he created the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DAI) in 1936, which established "regional indigenous congresses" tasked with dealing with the concerns of indigenous communities and "giving them a voice" (Muñoz, 2016). Although they seemed to give a platform for indigenous people to express their concerns, they aimed to integrate indigenous people into the governance system of the federal government, undermining indigenous forms of governance (Muñoz, 2016). These congresses failed to achieve the desired goal. These efforts peaked in 1940 when the International Interamerican Indigenist Congress was held in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán (Muñoz, 2016).

During this congressional session, in which both U.S. and Mexican delegates were present, the main topic of discussion was the strengthening of the *indigenismo* movement (Muñoz, 2016). They aimed to establish a robust system of assimilation, one that could "speed up" the process and produce "model Mexican citizens." The result of this session was the creation of the Interamerican Indigenist Institute (III), which was tasked with carrying out the wishes of the "Inter-American Indian Conferences" (UN, 1940). Furthermore, it would be in charge of making reports on:

        a) Scientific investigations in regard to Indian problems;

        b) Legislation, jurisprudence and administration of Indian communities;

        c) Activities of any institutions interested in such groups;

        d) Material of all kinds utilizable by the Governments as a basis for development of policies looking to economic and social improvement of living standards among Indian communities;

        e) Recommendations made by the Indians themselves in regard to any matters of concern to their people. (UN, 1940).

Beyond these reports, the III was obligated to publish its findings in a magazine, manage funds, and facilitate cooperation with other organizations and the government (UN, 1940). Overall, this organization seemed to give importance to the voices and thoughts of indigenous communities while simultaneously assimilating them into the federal form of governance. Through this assimilation, indigenous people would likely lose access to their languages, given the interactions that would occur between them and this organization, which would likely happen in Spanish.

Given the varied results of these programs, the success rate of the DAI was called into question. Ultimately, the DAI was shut down early in the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946-1952), although some politicians insisted that he replace the DAI with another organization with similar goals (Muñoz, 2016). As a result of this pressure, the National Indigenist Institute (INI) was established in 1949. The goal of this institution would be to carry out similar tasks to the DAI but with more robust mechanisms to achieve said goals. For example, INI was helped by the Indigenist Coordinating Centers (CCI) (regional INI offices that were liaisons between the federal government and indigenous communities) in more remote areas of Mexico, carried out throughout the 1950s (Muñoz, 2016). Some efforts were also carried out in the 1960s. In response to these efforts, some indigenous communities retaliated.

Examples of said communities include the Mazahua and the Wixáritari, from Temascalcingo and Jalisco, respectively (Muñoz, 2016). Both communities sought to challenge

the government for their lands to prevent them from intruding further with their culture and identity (Muñoz, 2016). Many of these retaliations occurred simultaneously with the introduction of CCI programs in the 1950s and 60s (Muñoz, 2016). Overall, despite the overwhelming *indigenismo* efforts conducted by the INI and CCI, there were indigenous communities that actively retaliated against these efforts to preserve their culture. However, these efforts (by indigenous communities) were insufficient to reverse the declining use of indigenous languages occurring throughout the country.

Meanwhile, in 1964, the government approved the introduction of bilingual education in the nation. Heading the diffusion of bilingual education would be the Secretary of Public Education (SEP), and the National Service of Cultural Promotion and Bilingual Teachers (SNPCMB) was created to aid it. The SNPCMB would be in charge of establishing these programs in intercultural regions, focusing on indigenous communities (Dominguez, n.d.). Specifically, the SNPCMB was tasked with obtaining bilingual teachers for these programs and implementing bilingual education strategies in schools (Dominguez, n.d.). These programs crafted the beginning of bilingual education in Mexico, shifting previous positions of forcing castellanization in education to indigenous children.

3.2: 1970-2020

Despite attempts from indigenous communities to retaliate against CCI programs in their neighborhoods, these programs continued into the 1970s. The magnitude of these programs reached a considerable amount in the late 1970s. For example, "the number of CCIs increased by almost 500 percent, expanding to fifty-eight coordinating centers claiming to serve almost 2.5 million indigenous peoples by 1976" (Muñoz, 2016). This demonstrates the extent and reach of

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the CCI programs, all of which impacted the ability of indigenous communities to resist the assimilation that was forwarded by these programs.

In 1978, the General Direction of Indigenous Education (DGEI) was created and would function as a sector of the SEP. Their main goal was to facilitate the formation and function of bicultural-bilingual education, a concept that the Mexican government favored to present themselves as a "bicultural" nation. As a start, the DGEI would head three programs: two at different educational levels and one at "shelter schools" (similar to boarding schools). One of the programs was to be held for preschool while the other would be held during primary school.

The program at the preschool level would help develop skills to improve indigenous language speaking while also beginning to teach Spanish (Peralta 2008, 40). At this stage, while children could still speak their native language, Spanish was beginning to be taught, which could hinder the ability of these children to retain their indigenous language in the future. Continuing to the primary level (K-6), indigenous languages would take on a transitionary role, a mechanism to help teach the children Spanish and other educational content (Peralta 2008, 40). The bicultural aspect of the "bicultural-bilingual" program would also begin to appear during this phase. The focus was to share and teach indigenous community values and demonstrate how they are integrated throughout course materials/lessons.

However, issues with this particular aspect of the primary school program arose due to the balance in teaching indigenous languages and culture. Given the mixture of backgrounds of the children in these primary schools, deciding what indigenous language to teach was a struggle for the teachers. Additionally, these teachers were not given the support or materials needed to effectively teach any indigenous language (Fregoso, 2021). Combined, they set the stage for a majority of these teachers to either ignore teaching indigenous languages in school or teach them

very poorly. Instead, they would focus on teaching the "bicultural" aspect of the program, which was easier than dealing with all the issues of the "bilingual" aspect (Fregoso, 2021).

Conversely, the programs in "shelter schools" appeared to be more thought out. Notably, it allowed for the inclusion of indigenous teachers in the educative process as they would train at universities that specialized in giving licenses to indigenous teachers (under a specific program designed to encourage indigenous language teaching) and later have them teach at schools that utilized the "bilingual-bicultural" model (Peralta 2008, 41). While it seemed like a positive step towards indigenous language revitalization, this model was heavily criticized. Some of the main criticisms of this policy include how superficial and rushed it was (Fregoso, 2021). Despite the grievances outlined by some, this model was utilized throughout the 80s.

As mentioned in the introduction, in 1993, the General Law on Education was implemented. With this law, the Mexican government expressed its direct support for indigenous languages, which had been lacking up to this point. Given the broadness of the statement, the law did not specify further how this would be explicitly implemented. Such broadness was a major criticism of this law since this was the only mention of indigenous people and their languages in the entire document. Yet, some saw it as a foundation for further inclusion of similar rights in later years.

As a direct result of this law, the Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) model was established in 1997. In essence, the IBE was a series of strategies utilized to promote the multiculturality of Mexico combined with bilingual education. This model hoped to be an improvement on the previous one in the realms of specificity and depth. One such strategy included developing preschool and primary school curriculum standards, encompassing the forwarding of educational materials, teacher training, and modifying principles and objectives

(Morales, 2023). This was also inclusive of the introduction of indigenous language and culture classes in primary schools.

Another strategy included strengthening the research in the field of indigenous language education (Morales, 2023), which could be used to constantly update the program. This implies that the IBE program would be versatile and improve itself consistently, something that previous models failed to do. Specifically, research was concentrated on innovation techniques, conceptual frameworks, and program evaluation (Morales, 2023). All of these focuses demonstrate the moldability of the program, which was essential for it to be fluid, a necessary aspect to reach their goal of improving indigenous language education.

One final strategy of the IBE program was the establishment of assistance programs for indigenous children. Assistance, broadly, with anything these children needed, such as meals, transportation, accommodations, and scholarships (Morales, 2023). This is another unique aspect of the IBE program in comparison to previous models. IBE ensured the accessibility of education for indigenous children to better test their language education strategies in the classroom. Thus, if successful, more children could learn indigenous languages in IBE schools, producing a more functional language education program. As a result of assistance programs such as this, the IBE program also hoped to strengthen its ties to the communities it served (Morales, 2023). If the ties were strengthened, then it could encourage the communities and schools to work together to expand indigenous language and culture knowledge.

With this increased attention to indigenous issues, more robust rights were needed to protect and revitalize their cultures and languages. The single sentence that guaranteed education rights for indigenous people in the 1997 General Law on Education was useful in influencing the creation of the IBE program. However, the IBE program demonstrated the need for even further

protections, as up until that point, there were no other attributed rights for indigenous people and their languages, which the IBE wanted to forward. This, combined with the Zapatista movement that occurred during the 90s asking for these rights, laid the foundation for the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights.

The following years allowed for the continuation of IBE programs with the security of the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights. However, global attention to indigenous language issues in 2019 provided by the UN (by declaring 2019 the UN International Year of Indignenous Languages) has increased the perception of prioritizing language diversity in Mexico. Future efforts seem hopeful in reversing language shifts, building on the existing IBE model, and changing attitudes toward the preservation of indigenous languages and culture in Mexico.

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES

In this chapter, the puzzle will be explored more in-depth in the context of the case studies of Chiapas and Yucatán. The first section will discuss Chiapas and the recent period of language revitalization and why this is worthy of exploration. The second subsection will examine the case of Yucatán to better highlight why Chiapas is such a unique case. Comparing both will draw out the best response to the research question since these two states exist at opposing levels of proportions of indigenous language speakers.

4.1: The Apparent "Success" of Chiapas

Chiapas is a rural agrarian state located at the southern border between Mexico and Guatemala. After the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), Chiapas had 89,213 indigenous language speakers (INEGI, ND). The terrain that encapsulates Chiapas is difficult to navigate

and leads to indigenous communities existing in isolation (Sanchez, 2023). This isolation aids these communities in maintaining their culture and traditions, all of which are transmitted through language, keeping them vibrant throughout the years.

As indigenous language revitalization policies were introduced, Chiapas reflected similar trends as other Mexican states in response to their implementation. Divergence and the increase in the proportion of indigenous language speakers occurred after the year 2000 (see Figure 1 below).

Proportion of people that can speak an indigenous language in Chiapas from 1895-2020
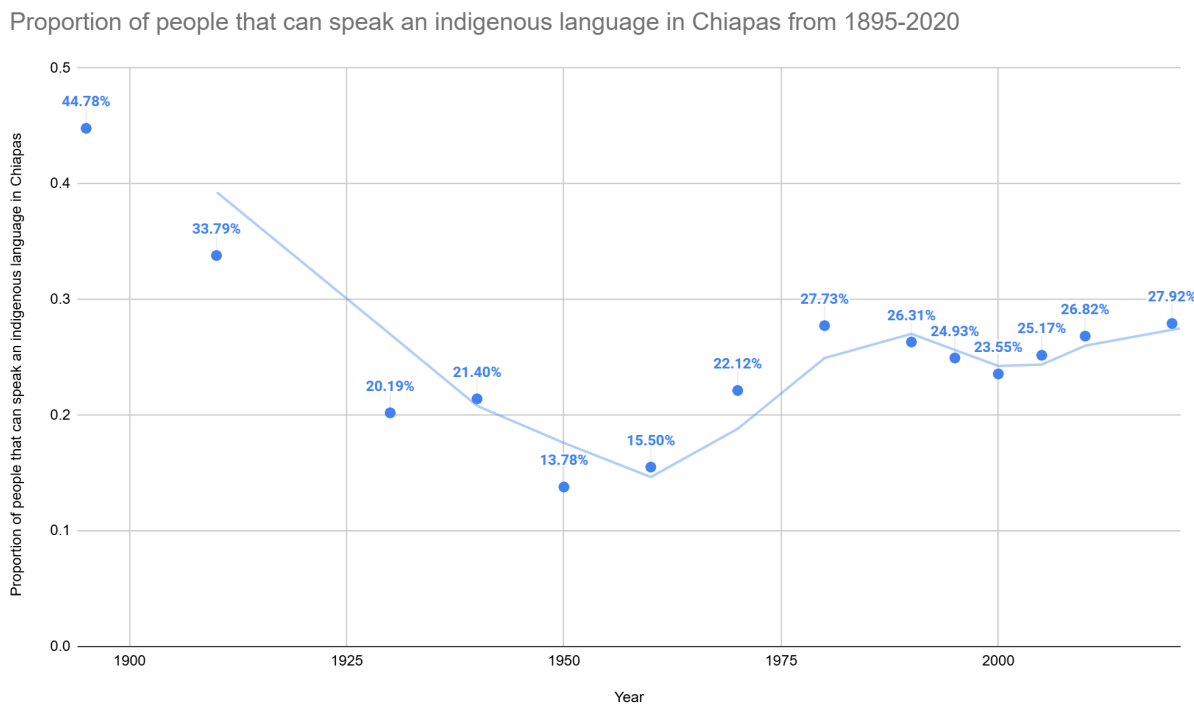
(Raw Data: INEGI, n.d.; Graphs and Proportion Creation: Chanay, 2025).

Figure 1

In 1964, when bilingual education was introduced in Mexico, both Chiapas and Yucatán were experiencing an increase in the proportion of indigenous language speakers (see Figure 2 below). However, as time went on, indigenous people in Chiapas saw the need to mobilize in

order to access more rights. This materialized into the 1994 Zapatista movement, led by the indigenous people of Chiapas. Chapter six will discuss the movement more specifically, but this instance of political mobilization is something that Yucatán did not engage in, pointing to one of the differences between it and Chiapas.

Achieving an increasing proportion of indigenous language speakers, when many indigenous languages in Mexico are at risk of extinction (Dell'Amore, 2024), demonstrates why Chiapas is a worthy case study to include in this study.

4.2: The Opposing Fate of Yucatán

Yucatán is a Mexican state located on the cusp of the Yucatán Peninsula, facing the Gulf of Mexico. After the Mexican Revolution, Yucatán had 129,119 indigenous language speakers (INEGI, ND). The number of speakers in the state of Yucatán is average in the country, which makes it beneficial for the case study. It not only has statistically significant data on the number of indigenous language speakers, but it is also a good representation of the condition of a majority of Mexican states concerning the levels of indigenous language speakers.

Proportion of people who can speak an indigenous language in Yucatán from 1895-2020
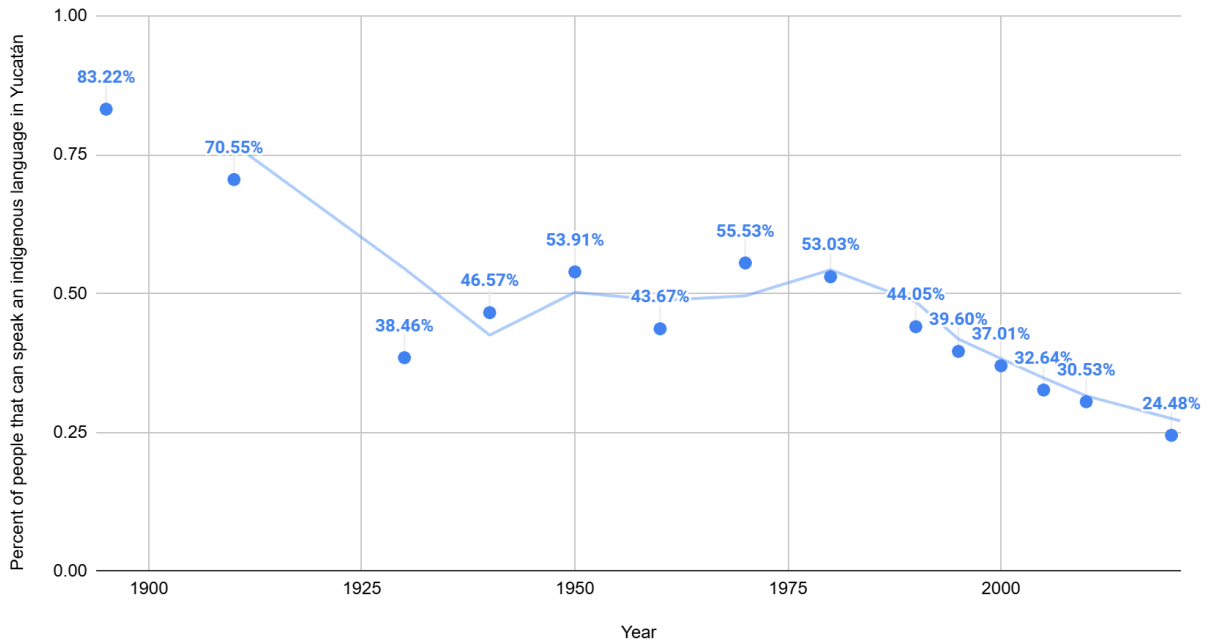
(Raw Data: INEGI, n.d.; Graphs and Proportion Creation: Chanay, 2025)

Figure 2

Given the historical background of Yucatán, it seems as if there have not been any significant movements that sought to increase indigenous rights for the state and nation overall. In this aspect, it differs from Chiapas, which can indicate that "political mobilization" could be a variable that indicates whether an indigenous language revitalization policy will succeed in a given Mexican state. A similar logic can be utilized when analyzing Yucatán's geography, as it is notably more accessible than Chiapas, or at the very least, the access to indigenous communities in Yucatán is significantly higher than in Chiapas. This could indicate that Yucatán was more susceptible to early assimilationist policies since its terrain was easier to access.

However, the continued decline of indigenous language speakers in Yucatán demonstrates that it is a justified case study, especially when considering that the decline in the proportion of

indigenous language speakers is larger than the increase of the proportion of indigenous language speakers in Chiapas.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will discuss all of the variables drawn out from the scholarship and analyze whether they are adequate responses to the research question.

5.1: Migration

To test the migration variable, data from the Mexican census from 1950-1960 was collected. After collecting this data, proportions were calculated to determine whether or not this variable was worth exploring further in both Chiapas and Yucatán. As the data below proves, the proportions of migration in both Chiapas and Yucatán are not statistically significant enough to be considered further as a strong answer to the research question.

Migration in Chiapas from 1950-2020

Year	Population in Chiapas	#	Population from a different Mexican state	Population from a different country	Proportion of migration from another Mexican state	Proportion of migration from a different country
1950	907,026		21,262	7,128	0.0234414449	0.007858650138
1960	1,210,870		49,905	7,125	0.04121416833	0.005884198964
1970	1,569,053		35,541	2,752	0.0226512425	0.001753924182
1980	2,084,717		77,886	2,318	0.03736046667	0.001111901519
1990	3,210,496		107,030	50,067	0.03333752791	0.0155947866
2000	3,920,892		122,451	171,328	0.03123039349	0.04369617934
2010	4,796,580		140,135	32,868	0.02921560779	0.006852382322
2020	5,543,828		174,961	60,418	0.03155960106	0.01089824576

(Raw Data: INEGI, n.d.; Table: Chanay, 2025)

Figure 3

As figure three shows, the migration data found in the Mexican census is disaggregated between those in the population that migrated from a different country and those that migrated from a different Mexican state. Looking at the data of the proportion of migration from another Mexican state, it never goes above an estimated 0.037 in 1980. Similarly, when looking at the proportion of migration from a different country it does not go above an estimated 0.044 in 2000. Converting these into percentages, it is clear that both of these proportions are less than 5%, the necessary threshold to be statistically significant. Since less than five percent of the population in Chiapas are migrants, this cannot explain why Chiapas has been experiencing a period of indigenous language revitalization. A similar conclusion can be drawn when looking at the migration data from Yucatán.

Migration in Yucatán from 1950-2020

Year	# Population in Yucatan	# Population from a different Mexican state	Population from a different country	Proportion from a different Mexican state	Proportion from a different country
1950	516,899	7,992	1,416	0.01546143444	0.002739413309
1960	614,049	13,015	1,026	0.02119537692	0.001670876428
1970	758,355	15,370	869	0.0202675528	0.001145901326
1980	1,063,733	44,349	1,281	0.04169185312	0.001204249563
1990	1,362,940	74,617	8,662	0.05474709085	0.006355378813
2000	1,658,210	113,140	15,671	0.06823020003	0.009450552101
2010	1,955,577	156,210	6,951	0.07987923769	0.003554449659
2020	2,320,898	269,765	15,405	0.116233027	0.00663751703

(Raw Data: INEGI, n.d.; Table: Chanay, 2025)

Figure 4

As figure four highlights, the proportion of people who have migrated to Yucatán from a different Mexican state is steadily increasing but peaks at about 0.12 in 2020. This could be considered statistically significant, but this is only true from 2000 to 2020. Given that indigenous

revitalization policies began in 1964, if the proportion was not statistically significant for this period, then it is likely it cannot answer the research question.

Observing the proportion of migration from a different country in Yucatán, it is clear that none of the data is statistically significant. The highest value in this proportion data is 0.0095 in 2000. Similar to the proportions of migration from a different Mexican state in Chiapas, this variable lacks the statistical weight to contribute to a solid answer to the research question.

Overall, the proportion of the population that are migrants in both Chiapas and Yucatán is statistically insignificant and thus cannot contribute to an answer to the research question.

Yet, it is also necessary to forward the limitations of the data and the findings presented in this section. First, it is important to mention that the Mexican census has issues when collecting migration data. Accounting for temporary migration (Yoshioka 2010, 13) and simply getting responses from all people living in Mexico contribute to this issue. More accurate migration data could change the results. However, until that is available, this is the best data available to address this variable.

5.2: Urbanization, tested with the Human Development Index

The next variable that will be analyzed is urbanization. However, the Mexican census does not have data available on the levels of urbanization necessary to test this variable. Yet, this study will utilize the Human Development Index (HDI) data from Campos-Vazquez et al. (2017) to test the urbanization variable, given that it is included in their formulation of HDI. The HDI data was the best data to use when testing this variable, given that the urbanization data these scholars collected was not disaggregated by state.

The Human Development Index "is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a

decent standard of living" (UNDP, n.d.) For this variable, this thesis draws its conclusions by examining the data provided by Campos-Vazquez et al. (2017). These scholars calculated the HDI of Mexico from 1895-2010 utilizing a formula of their own, adjusting to the data they had available. They use the formula below as a basis for their formula:

$$HDI = Health^{1/3} \cdot Education^{1/3} \cdot Income^{1/3}$$

The formula itself is a reflection of how HDI has been calculated since 2010, and the adjustments made will be noted. Additionally, the explanations for each adjustment will be noted afterward. The following table demonstrates the adjusted estimates for each variable:

Table 1 Components of HDI as in UNDP (2010) and variables used in the study

Subindex	UNDP (2010)	Our estimation
Income	GDP per capita	Urbanization rate
Education	Enrollment rate of individuals older than 15 years	Enrollment rate of individuals older than 15 years
	Literacy rate in individuals aged 6–24 years	Literacy rate in individuals aged 6–12 years
Health	Life expectancy rate	Physicians per 10,000 inhabitants relative to 35 (physicians in Switzerland in 2001)

(Campos-Vazquez et al. 2017)

Figure 5

For the subindex of income, Campos-Vazquez et al. (2017) use urbanization rates instead for two primary reasons. First, they argue that urbanization is correlated to economic development and that this correlation can be equated to increases in GDP per capita (Campos-Vazquez et al. 2017, 96). Second, they note that urbanization data, especially disaggregated, was easier to find than that of GDP per capita (Campos-Vazquez et al. 2017, 96). Combined, this reasoning justifies their use of urbanization as a good estimator to replace GDP per capita in the income subindex.

Concerning the education subindex, there weren't too many changes made to it. The enrollment sub-variable was maintained the same, and the only change was made to the age range in the literacy rate sub-variable. The upper bound was changed to 12 years, and while Campos-Vazquez et al. (2017) don't give specific reasons for why they do this, it can be argued that its impact would be ultimately negligible to the final results.

Regarding the health subindex, Campos-Vasquez et al. (2017) chose to measure this through the number of physicians available for every 10,000 inhabitants. They claim that this is a better measure of health than life expectancy. Specifically, they argue that an increased number of physicians has a positive influence on the overall health of the population (Campos-Vazquez et al. 2017, 95). Given the correlation they present, they finish adjusting this variable by making it relative to 35, which is the number of physicians in Switzerland per 10,000 inhabitants in 2001, which was the country with the highest life expectancy (Campos-Vazquez et al. 2017, 95). Combined, this finalized the adjustments made to the original 2010 HDI formula.

The following maps contain the findings of Campos-Vazquez et al. (2017). In these maps, the darker the color, the higher their HDI. For reference, Chiapas is the southernmost state at the border with Guatemala, whereas Yucatán is located at the tip of the Yucatán Peninsula, pointing towards the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, the full data ranges from 1895-2010, but only the years after 1940 will be displayed to highlight the data relevant to the research question.

Levels of HDI Across Mexico from 1940-2010
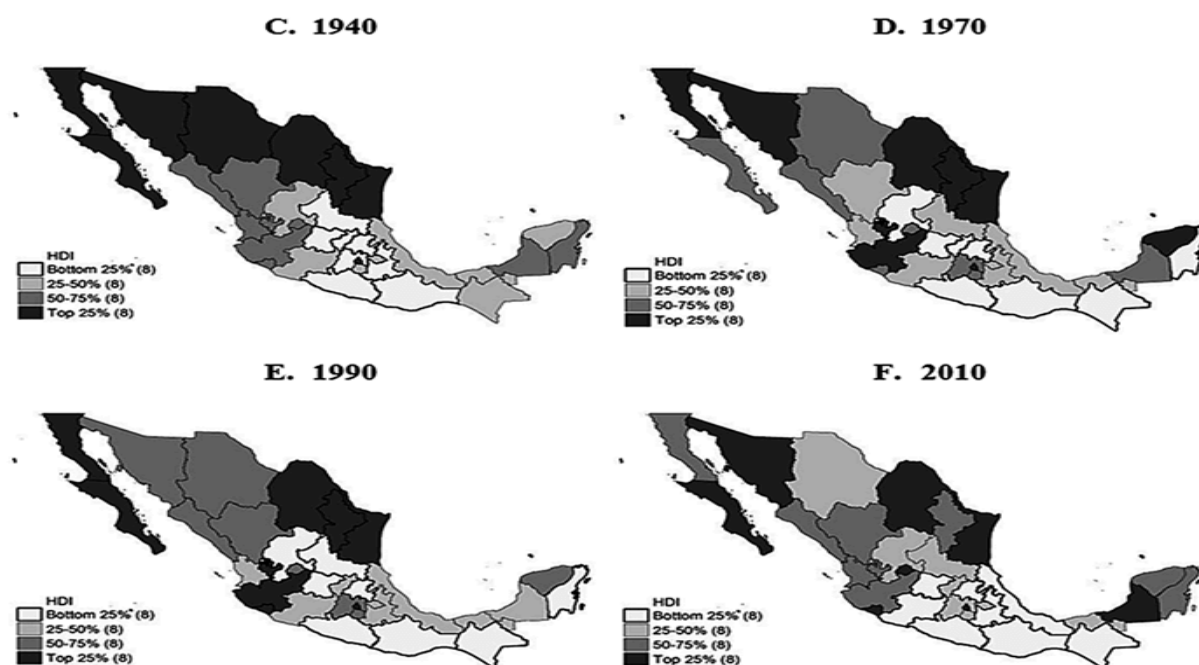
(Campos-Vazquez et al. 2017)

Figure 6

When looking at the maps after 1960, it is clear that the levels in both Chiapas and Yucatán are maintained relatively the same. Notably, Chiapas remained the same color from 1970-2010, representing how it is in the bottom 25% of HDI levels in Mexico. The hypothesis claimed that levels of HDI would indicate a high level of indigenous language speakers. At first glance, it appears that Chiapas is consistent with the hypothesis made, but it is not. Looking more closely at the period directly before the 1990s, there was a steady decline that started in 1980. According to the hypothesis, the level of development is expected to rise, but that is not reflected in the data.

For Yucatán, the hypothesis becomes even more disproven. Starting from 1970 to 1990, Yucatán experienced a decline in development. If the hypothesis answered the research question, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers in Yucatán would be expected to increase slightly. However, that increase does not happen, rather, it starts a period of decline in the

proportion of indigenous language speakers in the state. Even when looking more down the timeline, the decline seems to sharpen after the 2000s, while the level of development does not change. This indicates that the first hypothesis does not hold for Yucatán either.

Overall, the hypothesis is disproven by the data presented by Campos-Vazquez et al. (2017). In both case studies, the level of development appears not to correlate with the proportion of indigenous language speakers. With every fluctuation in the proportion of indigenous language speakers, the level of HDI remains the same. Since the levels remain the same, this variable cannot be an answer to the research question.

In this section, there are a few limitations to the data. Firstly, there are limitations to the effectiveness of the Campos-Vazquez et al. (2017) data since it relies on formulaic calculations that were adjusted from the UNDP 2010 formula. Secondly, the data is that of HDI, but it will always be better to test urbanization only. Thirdly, the maps only cover certain census years, which can intervene in a deeper analysis of this variable. Yet, what is available is sufficient to prove the lack of correlation between this variable and the dependent variable, at least for now.

5.3: Note on Process-Tracing Methodology

To test the remaining variables, process tracing methodology will be used. Process tracing methodology is implemented when qualitative data is collected to answer a research question. Defined process tracing refers to analyzing the "processes, sequences, and conjectures of events" of the data to test hypotheses that could establish a causal relationship between the data and the hypothesis (Runhardt, 2021). Broadly, the concept of process tracing is an umbrella term for various methodologies of process tracing. There are two "branches" of process tracing: "bottom-up" and "top-down." The top-down approach "aim[s] to establish which causal mechanism(s) led to an effect of interest in a case study" (Runhardt, 2021). Meanwhile,

bottom-up would be the reverse, where we take a case study and see what it led to. This study implements the "top-down" approach when testing the linguistic policy variable.

While there are some criticisms about process tracing methodology in political science, this study argues that it is the best way to test the linguistic policy variable. Most of the concerns with process tracing involve the idea that "correlation doesn't equal causation." However, the historical and primary source analysis done within this study will hopefully lay those concerns to rest. Process tracing methodology was the only form by which the qualitative data could be analyzed, and it was done so robustly to properly test the hypotheses.

5.4: Community-Led Initiatives

When looking at indigenous language revitalization policies that correlate to changes in proportions of indigenous language speakers, the 1964 introduction of bilingual education and the 2003 General Law best fit the timeline (see Figures 1 and 2). Thus, each of the following variables will analyze these two policies and how prevalent that variable was in the context of Chiapas and Yucatán. Yet, emphasis should be placed on the variable and its interaction with the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights, since this is the time frame where the divergence exists in the proportion of indigenous language speakers in Chiapas and Yucatán.

5.4.a: 1964, Introduction of Bilingual Education

The introduction of bilingual education in 1964 allowed for bilingual education to be incorporated into Mexican society. Since the period after the introduction of bilingual education, both Chiapas and Yucatán experienced an increasing proportion of indigenous language speakers, the introduction of bilingual education produced these results, or at least how it was implemented. As noted in chapter three, the organization in charge of bilingual education was the SEP and the SNPCMB (Dominguez, n.d.). These organizations would work in tandem to design

the components of bilingual education programs, and the SNPCMB specifically would organize to find bilingual teachers (Dominguez, n.d.). Given the lack of "community-led initiatives" in the 1964 introduction,

5.4.b: 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights

The 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights created an organization, the NIIL, to ensure indigenous communities had access to primary bilingual education (*General Law for Indigenous Language Rights*, Art. 14, 2003). Specifically, they were in charge of "designing strategies and instruments for the development of national indigenous languages, in coordination with the three orders of governance and indigenous communities" (*General Law for Indigenous Language Rights*, Art. 14(a), 2003). The vocabulary of this article implies that indigenous communities would be consulted in the process of developing indigenous language revitalization efforts, and it is implied that all indigenous communities would be consulted broadly. If the hypothesis holds, then we would expect to see an increase in the proportion of indigenous language speakers in both Chiapas and Yucatán, as they are both implied to have access to impacting indigenous language revitalization efforts. However, the data after the 2000s from Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that only Chiapas experienced an increase, while Yucatán experienced a decrease. Since both case studies did not experience the same impact from being allowed to contribute to indigenous language revitalization efforts given the language of the 2003 General Law, then this variable does not hold for this policy either.

5.4.c.: Evaluation

Overall, the variable of "community-led initiatives" does not hold for either the 1964 introduction of bilingual education or the 2003 General Law. Thus, this variable is not an adequate answer to the research question.

5.4: Bilingual Education

The next variable that will be analyzed is that of bilingual education, specifically bilingual education led by indigenous communities.

5.4.a: 1964, Introduction of Bilingual Education

The 1964 introduction of bilingual education highlights the need for bilingual education, consistent with the literature. Yet, Hamel (2008) also specifies that this bilingual education must be led by indigenous communities. As discussed in the community-led initiatives variable, the 1964 introduction of bilingual education was led by the SEP and SNPCMB, not indigenous communities. Thus, if this variable was the best answer to the research question, we would expect to see a decrease in the proportion of indigenous language speakers in both Chiapas and Yucatán, but that is not consistent with the data presented in Figures 1 and 2.

5.4.b: 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights

Bilingual education access was heavily emphasized in the 2003 General Law. The NIIL would lead these efforts, as the fourth chapter (Article 14) specifies, "Formulate and realize projects for the linguistic development [for indigenous languages], literary and educative" [Translated] (*General Law for Indigenous Language Rights*, Art. 14(e), 2003). This indicates that the bilingual education forwarded by the 2003 General Law does not integrate the perspectives of indigenous communities, nor does it consult them in the process of constructing these primary bilingual education programs. Thus, if the hypothesis were to hold, then we would expect to see the proportion of indigenous language speakers decline, however, this is only true for Yucatán and not Chiapas (see Figures 1 and 2). This demonstrates that this variable does not adequately answer the research question in the context of the 2003 General Law.

5.4.c: Evaluation

Overall, the variable of "bilingual education," specific to that led by indigenous communities, does not hold for either the 1964 introduction of bilingual education or the 2003 General Law. While Yucatán as its own case would prove hypothesis two true, given the decrease in the proportion of indigenous language speakers, Chiapas would have to experience the same decrease for this variable to be an adequate answer to the research question. Since Chiapas demonstrated an increase in the proportion of indigenous language speakers after 2000 (see Figure 1), it refutes the second hypothesis. Thus, the second hypothesis can not be the answer to the research question.

5.5: Political Mobilization

The next variable to be analyzed is that of political mobilization. As a reference, this is an original variable forwarded in this study. The foundation for this variable was discussed in the theory and argument section, but the hypothesis drawn out by this variable is as follows:

H_3: If indigenous language revitalization policies are implemented in a location where political mobilization has occurred, and that mobilization aimed to increase indigenous rights, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers is expected to increase

5.5.a: 1964, Introduction of Bilingual Education

Political mobilization in the context of indigenous peoples' rights did not occur during this period in either Chiapas or Yucatán, which harms the validity of this variable. If this variable fully responded to the research question, then a political movement would have had to occur in both Chiapas and Yucatán to correlate to the positive increases in the proportion of indigenous language speakers seen after the 1960s (see Figures 1 and 2).

5.5.b: 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights

Before the 2003 General Law, the Zapatista movement emerged in 1994. This movement was led by the indigenous people of Chiapas (Godelmann, 2014). Given the historical background of Yucatán, it seems as if there have not been any significant movements that sought to increase indigenous rights for the state and nation overall. In this aspect, it differs from Chiapas, which can indicate that "political mobilization" could be a variable that indicates whether an indigenous language revitalization policy will succeed in a given Mexican state, at least those moving forward.

Yet, it is important to note that Leon et al. (2018) find that the implementation of bilingual education in Chiapas after the 2003 Genral Law is unique because it is led by the Zapatistas (Leon et. al., 2018, 23). This is because the Zapatistas have developed their own autonomous schools that are inclusive of bilingual education programs (Leon et al., 2018). These autonomous schools are "decentralized and changed in accordance with fit the necessities of the group, utilize individuals from the group as educators, and reinforce Indigenous dialects by agreeing them authenticity in a scholastic setting" (Leon et al. 2018, 23). The activism led by the Zapatistas allows them to find their own ways of revitalizing their indigenous languages. Given that they contributed to the creation of the 2003 General Law, it can be argued that their contributions allows for this unique implementation to occur, or at least, they can use its broad protections, such as the right to communicate in any language (*General Law for Indigenous Language Rights*, Art. 9, 2003), to establish these unique bilingual education programs.

Thus, given this instance of political mobilization in Chiapas and not Yucatán being a differentiating factor between the two states that could explain the divergence of the proportion of indigenous language speakers, it is essential to discuss the specific goals of the Zapatista

movement to draw out how it led the implementation of the 2003 General Law in a manner that produced positive impacts on the number of indigenous language speakers. Discussing this movement and its relevance to the research question, as well as being a deeper test of this variable, will be done in the next chapter.

5.5.c: Evaluation

Given that the hypothesis only holds for the 2003 Genral Law, this hypothesis can't fully answer the research question. However, this can indicate that future indigenous language revitalization policies will be impacted by this variable, since the Zapatistas continue to have a lasting effect on the implementation of indigenous rights in Chiapas. The Zapatista movement has become an integral part of the implementation of indigenous language revitalization programs in Chiapas and demonstrates how political mobilization could trigger similar results in other Mexican states.

CHAPTER 6: MOTIVES OF THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT

Before diving into the history of the Zapatista movement, it is important to note that the main leaders of the Zapatista movement were indigenous people from Chiapas. This is important because it demonstrates the willingness of the indigenous people of Chiapas to fight for their rights. Through these mechanisms, they were able to achieve significant changes, which later replicated into positive results as demonstrated by the data analyzed above.

In this chapter, the roots of the 1994 Zapatista Movement will be discussed and utilized to support the fourth hypothesis by demonstrating the unique political activist sentiments that exist in Chiapas and how that affected the contents and implementation of the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights. These sentiments of political mobilization are directly what

differentiates Chiapas and Yucatán, demonstrating why Chiapas is so unique in the context of indigenous language speakers and why Yucatán is now experiencing a period of decline in the proportion of indigenous language speakers.

6.1: The Origins of the Zapatista Movement

Scholars Dora Pellicer, Bárbara Cifuentes, and Carmen Herrera discuss the origins of the Zapatista movement and how it led to the enactment of the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights (Pellicer, Cifuentes, and Herrera, 2006). They mention that the Zapatista movement rose at around the same time as the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Pellicer, Cifuentes, and Herrera, 2006, 133). However, the conditions of indigenous people in Mexico, such as malnutrition, economic inequality, and more, were already encouraging this movement to establish itself (Godelmann, 2014). Combined, these events fueled the armed insurrection led by the Zapatistas in Southeastern Mexico (Pellicer, Cifuentes, and Herrera, 2006, 133).

Given the struggle that arose from the confrontation between the Zapatistas and the Mexican Army (who responded to the insurrection), the President at the time was encouraged to strike a cease-fire with the Zapatistas. This was known as the Law for Concord and Pacification. Following this law, was a commission established to enforce the law, made up of the three main political parties in Mexico: the National Action Party (PAN), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) (Pellicer, Cifuentes, and Herrera, 2006, 133). From this commission, discussions were held between them and the Zapatistas.

The result of the Zapatistas' meeting with the commission was the creation of the San Andrés Larráinzar Accords, or SALA (Pellicer, Cifuentes, and Herrera, 2006, 133). This accord laid out the demands of the Zapatista movement, primarily encompassing the forwarding of

indigenous rights. The specific details of the accord will be discussed in the following section of this chapter. Furthermore, the connections between those demands and the linguistic rights of indigenous people will also be discussed.

6.2: The SALA Document and the Demands of the Zapatista Movement

Broadly, the SALA document sought for the respect of indigenous identity and culture while advocating for self-determination and consultation for policies that might affect indigenous people's livelihood (Pellicer, Cifuentes, and Herrera, 2006, 133-134). Inextricably tied to indigenous identity and culture are indigenous languages, which the SALA made sure to address, advocating for their revitalization. Notably, one of the adjacent documents to the SALA (list of proposals between the Federal Government and the Zapatista Movement) lists several agreements the federal government would be obligated to follow. First mentioned was this broad claim:

"Promote and develop their [indigenous] languages and cultures, as well as their traditions…" (ETM, SALA Doc. 2, Art. 2, Sect. 6, i).

With this statement, the Zapatistas wanted to ensure that the federal government would be liable for preserving and revitalizing indigenous identity, language, and culture. Similarly, it showed the willingness of the Zapatista movement to cooperate with the federal government to advance their goals. Yet, the SALA document outlines the responsibilities of the federal government to indigenous languages further in the same document.

Firstly, they advocated for the cultural equality of indigenous languages and Spanish in Mexican society. Specifically, the document states:

"The Federal Government will promote the laws and politics necessary for indigenous languages of each state to have the same social value as Spanish and promote the development of practices

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that impede their discrimination in administrative and legal procedures" (ETM, SALA Doc. 2, Art. 3, Sect. 3).

In ensuring that indigenous languages are as respected as Spanish, more mechanisms can be employed by the federal government to promote them later. These promotions would be inclusive in both educational and media spaces.

Regarding education, the Zapatistas articulate the need for the federal government to engage in bilingual education that highlights indigenous languages. The SALA document states: "The Federal Government will enforce the promotion, development, preservation, and practice of indigenous languages in education and will propagate the teaching of reading and writing in their language…" (ETM, SALA Doc. 2, Art. 3, Sect. 3)

This part of the document cemented the continuation of bilingual education in Mexico while advocating for more in-depth teaching of reading and writing of indigenous languages.

Beyond continued integration into education, the SALA document also addresses the need for indigenous languages to exist in the general media. The document continues to describe these rights in Section 8 of the same article by stating:

"It is necessary to implement a new judicial framework in regards to communication mediums that consider…the right to use indigenous languages in media…" (ETM, SALA Doc. 2, Art. 3, Sect. 8).

The use of indigenous languages in media was another key part of the SALA document since it was one of the first to advocate for such explicitly. Yet, when looking at all of the demands, it is clear how many of the goals of the SALA document are integrated into the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights.

The 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights advocated for indigenous language rights broadly at the beginning, and although the SALA document covers more than just language rights, it similarly forwarded those same rights. Additionally, the law also establishes a need for bilingual education, another aspect also addressed in SALA. Finally, indigenous language media is similarly discussed in both the law and SALA. The SALA document influenced the content of the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights. Furthermore, this proves that the Zapatista movement directly led to the creation of the 2003 law, especially given how the SALA was signed almost directly after it was made.

Since the indigenous people of Chiapas were the ones leading the Zapatista, it can be argued that there is an inherent level of political activism that exists in that state, or at least with the indigenous community of that state. This is because they were the ones who began the movement and fought until they achieved an agreement with the federal government. Being the leaders of this movement likely also led to the implementation of the 2003 law more robustly since many of the demands of the Chiapas leaders came to fruition in this law.

The scholar Ryan Camado Guinaran utilizes the framework of Bridging Leadership to analyze how the co-creation of a policy can incentivize those creators to better manage the implementation of the law. This is because the co-creators feel a sense of accountability for the success of the policy, ensuring it reaches the communities that it was aimed at (Guinaran, ND, 78). This logic applies to the Zapatista movement because since they co-created the 2003 law, they felt obligated to make it successful, at least in Chiapas, which is where the leaders were located. They were willing to work with the federal government to ensure their rights, and when they were granted to indigenous communities, the indigenous people of Chiapas did what they could to make the best use of their rights. This included the expansion of indigenous languages

in Chiapas, which explains the increase in the proportion of indigenous language speakers in the state after the implementation of the 2003 law.

However, the Zapatista movement can also be analyzed through social movements theory. This analysis will occur in the next section, drawing the connection between social movements theory and the success of the Zapatista movement.

6.3: Connections to Social Movements Theory

This section will highlight the connections between social movements theory and the Zapatista movement to draw out what aspects influenced its success. By discussing dominant theoretical frameworks in social movements theory, it will be proven that the Zapatista movement was bound to succeed in many facets.

A prominent theory in social movements theory is that of deprivation theory, which establishes that social movements emerge from the "deprivation" of resources and/or services, impacting a community that gives them the motivation to mobilize (Sen and Avci 2016, 126). The logic is simple- if a community is denied access to resources/services they need to survive, their only path forward becomes mobilization. The roots of the Zapatista movement fit within this realm of thought. The indigenous people of Chiapas and Mexico broadly did not enjoy various cultural, educational, and identity rights, which incentivized them to rebel against the federal government. However, being deprived of these rights alone could not fuel the movement, which is where the core aspects of social movements theory come in.

Three factors: *mobilizing structures, political opportunity structures, and framing processes* are identified as key by various scholars in the realm of social movements theory. In addressing mobilizing structures, two things are determined to be important: organizational and material resources (Feeley 2006, 58). Organizational resources refer to leadership and the ability

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of a movement to obtain an appropriate one. If a social movement does not have a stable leader, then it cannot succeed, as it would be too unorganized to produce material change and crumble against opposition easily. The Zapatista movement, in particular, did meet this requirement, being led by Sub-commandant Marcos (Godelmann, 2014). Given that the Zapatista movement remained strong when faced against the Mexican Army, it is clear that Sub-commandant Marcos was a good leader for the movement.

Not much is known about the material resources the Zapatista movement had access to. However, it can be argued that they had access to sufficient resources given their ability to produce an insurrection against the federal government. This is further supported by the fact that they could keep the Mexican Army at bay for a good while when they engaged in confrontation at the beginning of the insurrection. Thus, the Zapatista movement fulfilled the mobilizing structures factor of leading a successful social movement.

Political opportunity structures relate to the political process theories prevalent in social movements theory. Political process theory argues that a social movement begins with access to political opportunities or a government that allows for these social movements to occur in the first place (Sen and Avci 2016, 127). In essence, a social movement is more likely to be successful the less repressive the governance structure. In the context of the Zapatista movement, the Mexican government did respond quickly to the insurrection, but this was because of the violence occurring. Yet, the fact that the federal government was willing to cooperate and negotiate with the Zapatista leaders demonstrates that Mexico has the political opportunity structures for social movements to be successful.

Lastly, the final variable of successful framing processes involves the interaction of "mindset" and social movements (Feeley 2006, 86). In sum, members of a social movement must

believe that their current access to organizational and material resources under their current governance structure can replicate into material change (Feeley 2006, 87). Believing they can achieve this change appears simple, but these scholars argue that it is essential for social movements to be successful. The Zapatista movement had the right framing processes since they were able to organize an insurrection and held on until negotiations were made available to them by the federal government.

Overall, the Zapatista movement had all three components of mobilizing structures, political opportunity structures, and framing processes to lead a successful movement. The success brought about by the Zapatista movement indicates that other states in Mexico could produce similar results. This would occur if they adhered to the three variables discussed above. Currently, other Mexican states don't engage in similar movements, proving how Chiapas is a unique case in the country. Diving deeper into this phenomenon will be the purpose of the next section of this chapter.

6.4: Chiapas the Outlier, Yucatán the Norm

Chiapas has situated itself in Mexico as a state with flourishing indigenous communities and an increasing number of indigenous language speakers. In comparison to other states, Chiapas is the outlier when it comes to indigenous language revitalization. This section will discuss why Chiapas is an outlier and why Yucatán is the norm in the context of indigenous language revitalization in the country.

With the 1994 Zapatista movement, Chiapas, or at least their indigenous communities, made it clear that they were willing to advocate for indigenous rights. As discussed in the previous section, they fulfilled all the requirements to be a successful movement that led to the creation of the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights. Yet, when looking at other

states, such as Yucatán, the same cannot be reported. During the period analyzed, only the Zapatista movement emerged as one that intended to impact indigenous languages throughout the country.

Thus, there is a level of political mobilization that currently only uniquely exists in Chiapas that encourages them to continue organizing themselves toward obtaining more rights for their indigenous communities. This becomes the distinguishing factor between Chiapas and Yucatán in the period after 1990, which is where the divergence in proportions began to occur. While political mobilization as a variable cannot explain why the 1964 introduction of bilingual education seemed to produce an increase in the proportion of indigenous language speakers, the levels of political mobilization can determine whether that change is positive or negative in future policies. This is reinforced by the fact that before the 1994 movement, the changes in the proportion of indigenous language speakers in Chiapas and Yucatán were in the same direction. It is only until the Zapatista movement that the changes in proportion are in different directions.

However, what has been discussed in this section is not to say that the level of political mobilization in Chiapas is unattainable in other states. As discussed in the last section, the Zapatista movement followed a "formula" to ensure that their movement was successful. Given this "formula" highlighted by social movements theory, Chiapas' levels of political activism can be replicated in other states such as Yucatán.

CHAPTER 7: LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout this thesis, the answer to the research question: This thesis focused the research question:

What explains why indigenous language revitalization efforts have been successful in Chiapas, yet have failed in Yucatán?

Through comparative historical analysis and process-tracing methods, the thesis concludes that, while none of the hypotheses held for both case studies,

H$_4$: If indigenous language revitalization policies are implemented in a location where political mobilization has occurred, and that mobilization aimed to increase indigenous rights, then the proportion of indigenous language speakers is expected to increase

is the one that can best determine the success of future indigenous language revitalization policies, given the success brought out by the Zapatista movement.

7.1: Generalization of Findings

From the 1994 Zapatista movement, it was demonstrated that by including Chiapas' indigenous communities in the development of the SALA document, the 2003 General Law for Indigenous Language Rights was able to advance sentiments from the SALA document. While the impact of this law might have been negative in Yucatán, the fact that it was conceived with direct thoughts of the indigenous communities in Chiapas and was successful there indicates that as long as indigenous communities mobilize to have their opinions integrated into policies, they will likely be more successful in their respective communities. Yet, it is important to note that the mentioned policies have to likely include robust bilingual education programs as promoted by Hamel (2008 and 2017), and has limitations.

Additionally, it is the responsibility of the federal government to support its indigenous communities as much as possible. Policies cannot be imposed on these communities without their input and expected to succeed. Each indigenous community has its own needs, and the best action the federal government can take is to support them, even if it means only doing so

financially and leaving more in-depth content of the policy to indigenous community leaders. Yet, this exists within the limits of the federal government and maintaining their sovereignty as well as only being able to provide economic resources within the national budget. The federal government will not give up its sovereignty, but it will allow for indigenous communities to have more independence in how they manage their communities, proven by the Zapatista movement. Everything within those boundaries can be something that indigenous communities advocate to receive. Economically, it is logical that the federal government be restricted by the national budget. Yet, it is imperative that at every opportunity, the budget allocated towards indigenous language revitalization be increased. Utilizing this approach is the best form to reverse language shift as each community can assess how to revitalize their languages and mobilize to integrate those methods into policies.

While it might not be easy, indigenous communities, such as those within Yucatán, can mobilize to project their demands to the federal government. This mobilization does not necessarily have to be at the level of the Zapatista movement; making their concerns heard by their congressional representatives might produce the adequate pressure necessary to promote change. With adequate pressure, other indigenous communities can use the Zapatista movement as a model and trigger negotiations with the federal government. Once negotiations are achieved, it will be easier for these communities to integrate their needs into policies. Whether or not violence is a part of this formula of success is heavily debated among social movement scholars, but what is known is that it worked in the case of the Zapatista movement. However, this does not deny the need for these movements and mobilizations to occur.

Yet, as analyzed in the social movements section, indigenous communities throughout Mexico must enter a mindset that change can occur under their current political system. The

change that is so necessary for indigenous communities can only occur from within these communities. Only they know what is best for their unique languages, and only they can adequately assess how their languages can thrive in the future. This is why the best path forward is for the federal government to interact with individual indigenous communities and produce policies with their suggestions at the forefront.

7.2: Limitations of the Study

However, there are limitations to this study. The limitations in the testing of each independent variable were noted in Chapter 5. Broadly, this study is limited by the data available on the INEGI website. The census data that was utilized in this study could not fully capture the absolute number of indigenous language speakers due to the expected limitations in census data collection. Another limitation of this study is the generalization of Yucatán to other Mexican states. Yucatán is a Mexican state that is currently struggling with the levels of its indigenous language speakers. Yet, there are a myriad of other states that are doing better or worse than the levels of Yucatán. Since it exists somewhere "in the middle," this study deemed it to be appropriate.

Finally, there is a need to integrate the opinions of indigenous people about the actions taken by the federal government to better report what policies/actions they consider to be more beneficial to indigenous language revitalization, something this study and present scholarship are lacking. With their insights, it will become clearer what policies these indigenous communities believe are easier for them to implement.

Looking towards the future, more data collection can be done to test the variables more accurately. Additionally, doing fieldwork with the indigenous communities in Mexico can prove beneficial to forwarding effective indigenous language revitalization policies. Gathering their

direct perspectives and opinions about linguistic policies in Mexico, such as collecting survey data, can further deepen the current understanding of the language shift occurring in the country and any possible alternatives to reverse it. Even if this proves to not require the federal government, it will hopefully produce positive results in the realm of indigenous language usage.

Integrating these perspectives and operationalizing them will prove to be a challenge, but the development of such a method can also be something addressed in the future by other scholars. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the methodology must consider the differing social structures of indigenous communities and how those impact their viewpoint toward indigenous language usage and revitalization.

7.3: Concluding Remarks

Overall, this study is hopeful about the ability to reverse language shifts in Mexico. By using Chiapas as a model, other states can begin mobilizing, leading to transformative policies that revitalize their languages. Despite the current outlook in other Mexican states, Chiapas is proof that the proportion of indigenous language speakers can increase in the future. Furthermore, helping revitalize indigenous languages in Mexico can similarly revitalize indigenous cultures and identity. Language is power; for the indigenous people of Mexico, now is the time to demonstrate that power.

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