

Literacy for life and work:

an exploration of an Indigenous bilingual education programme for
adults in Mexico

**Thesis Submitted for the degree of
PhD in Education & International Development**

by

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role and meaning of literacy within the context of the *Bilingual Indigenous Education Model for Life and Work* (MIB) programme for adults in Mexico. It documents practices relating to the use of literacy in Indigenous contexts and asks in what ways and for what purposes learners and facilitators engage with the MIB programme. The study demonstrates that understandings of literacies and the ways in which these are produced and enacted are strongly linked to and framed by broader historical and socio-political contexts and discourses.

Using a qualitative and multi-sited ethnographic approach, field research was conducted in three Mexican states and across fifteen distinct Indigenous communities. The study combines participant observations and field notes with twenty-five individual interviews and nine group interviews to present a critically reflexive analysis of the data that cuts across cultural and ethno-linguistic lines. Drawing from the theoretical domain of literacy as a social practice (LSP), the study elicits the varied perspectives of key stakeholders (learners and facilitators) to explore the multivalent meanings, values and uses attached to literacy.

Findings show different ways of how literacy influences and affects the lives and livelihoods of the participants, the most salient of which was a framing of literacy as a ‘defence’ to act as a means for self-determination. In addition, data revealed strong affiliative and affective dimensions of literacies, with participant experiences of ‘shame’ and exclusion articulated against examples of pride, resistance, and resilience. Issues of language and identity, power relations, implications of gender in literacy learning, and an analysis of facilitators as intercultural brokers and learners as agentic actors are also discussed.

The thesis has implications for the MIB programme and adult education in Mexico, as well as for policymakers and practitioners concerned with educational equality across the global South. Finally, it contributes new knowledge to inform policy, practice and wider scholarship on adult education, international development, and literacy studies more broadly.

Impact Statement

With this study, I present a comprehensive analysis concerning adult education in Indigenous contexts that offers important considerations and recommendations for programme development. Insights gleaned from the empirical evidence have the potential to be relevant across a range of bilingual or multilingual literacy interventions in the global South and could help inform and improve educational theory, policy and practice.

The significance and reach of this work are particularly relevant in light of the international framework of the Sustainable Development Goals that advocates for equitable learning opportunities for all. Given the pressing concerns regarding pervasive educational disparities for those in more vulnerable situations and marginalised communities (including Indigenous groups), this study enhances understanding about how and why Indigenous peoples (particularly adults) continue to be excluded from relevant educational opportunities. Thus, this research brings into sharper and more urgent focus the need for similar studies that attend to the complex issues related to Indigenous education in the global South. The social impact and key recommendations from this study have the potential to benefit a range of stakeholders including researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

This study makes a demonstrable contribution of original empirical research and will advance scholarly understanding of literacies in the broader field of education, in the first instance. It is ground-breaking in the sense that no other study (and no doctoral research) has been done exclusively on this adult literacy programme before, nor has there been a targeted enquiry on the role and meaning of literacy within the programme from the perspective of those directly engaged with it. Thus, this research fills an empirical and conceptual lacuna by harnessing more practical and concrete insights into the programme and connecting these within a socio-culturally informed theoretical framework.

Some initial findings from this study have already been disseminated by means of conference papers and seminars from national organisations such as the Education and Development Forum (UKFIET) and the British Association of International and Comparative Education (BAICE), as well as international organisations such as the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). Additionally, findings have been presented through a UNESCO webinar with an international audience from over 30 countries.

The final output of this research will be disseminated in different ways according to the intended audiences: on a local level in Mexico, the communities that participated in this study will receive a summary of the findings (translated into Spanish and, where possible, in the respective Indigenous languages) that will serve as both a detailed account and theorisation of literacies within the MIB programme and highlight key strengths as well as recommendations for future practice. On a state level, I will prepare a report for the adult education agency that runs the MIB programme that provides a summary of the findings as well as suggest opportunities for growth and improvement. Back in the UK, seminars will be organised through both the International Literacy Centre and the Centre for Education and International Development (CEID) at UCL Institute of Education.

I plan to publish a monograph based on the findings of this thesis that both raises awareness of the reach, potential, and impact of the MIB programme and highlights the significance of context-based adult education policies, strategies, and interventions. In addition, I aim to make publications available in Spanish to ensure that the findings are more widely accessible to those in research, practice and policy in Mexico and Latin America.

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List of Acronyms

CA	Capability Approach
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Latina (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean)
CGEIB	Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe (General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education)
CONAFE	Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo (National Council for Education Development)
CONAPO	Consejo Nacional de Población (National Council for Population)
CONEVAL	Consejo Nacional para la Evaluación de la Política Social (National Council for the Evaluation of Social Policy)
CONEVYT	Consejo Nacional de Educación para la Vida y el Trabajo (National Council for Education for Life and Work)
DGEI	Dirección General de Educación Indígena (General Directorate of Indigenous Education)
EFA	Education for All
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army)
FILAC	Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y El Caribe (Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean)
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
HDI	Human Development Index
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IEEA	Instituto Estatal para la Educación de los Adultos (State Institutes of Adult Education)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INALI	Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (National Institute of Indigenous Languages)
INEA	Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos

INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (Statistics, Geography and Informatics National Institute)
IYIL	International Year of Indigenous Languages
LAMP	Literacy Assessment Monitoring Programme
LIFE	Literacy Initiative for Empowerment
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LSP	Literacy as a social practice
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MIB	MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe (Bilingual Indigenous Education Model for Life and Work)
MIBES	MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe con Español como Segunda Lengua (Bilingual Indigenous Education Model for Life and Work with Spanish as a Second Language)
MORENA	Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (National Regeneration Movement)
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
NLS	New Literacy Studies
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAEPI	Proyecto de Atención Educativa a la Población Indígena (Proposal of Educational Attention for Indigenous Populations)
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDESOL	Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Ministry of Social Development)
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Education)
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Background and aims of the research

Since the turn of the 21st century, global development goals have emphasised the importance of access to basic education for all, promoted through international initiatives such as Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). More recently, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlighted the importance of increasing the number of youth and adults with ‘relevant skills’ and ensuring ‘equal access to quality access to all levels of education and vocational training’ (SDG 4, 2015). Further outcome-oriented targets and indicators demonstrate a renewed interest in achieving universal literacy and numeracy and in eliminating discrimination in education for sectors of the global population considered to be more ‘vulnerable’, including Indigenous peoples.

Within the context and discourse of educational policies and practices, what is less often in the spotlight is a focus on adult education, and more specifically, literacy learning designed for and targeted at youth and adults outside of compulsory schooling. Policymakers and practitioners do not dispute the value of adult learning: on the contrary, access and provision of learning opportunities for adults has long been regarded as a key issue in economic and human development, political engagement, and democracy (Kalman, 2005). However, despite a range of international schemes such as UNESCO’s Literacy Assessment Monitoring Programme (LAMP) which have promoted ambitious global goals aimed at monitoring, assessing, and measuring adult literacy, there remains no internationally agreed right to education for adults. Furthermore, investment in adult literacy interventions (as opposed to compulsory education) often remain low on the list of national priorities, even in countries where the educational gaps among youth and adults are significantly high (UNESCO, 2005; Robinson, 2016).

The goals of achieving universal literacy and equality in education are particularly relevant to Mexico, a country whose history involves complex and longstanding debates about whether and how to achieve educational access and equality for Indigenous peoples. Mexico holds both the largest and most ethno-linguistically diverse Indigenous population in the Latin American region, with the most recent catalogue of Indigenous languages created by the National Institute

of Indigenous Languages (INALI) identifying 364 language variants spoken in total (INALI, 2008).

In terms of educational planning and implementation, this diversity has meant that concepts of and approaches to ‘Indigenous education’ have been largely conceived and implemented from a mainstream, Eurocentric and Spanish language perspective (Ramírez Castañeda, 2006). Current national laws and international agreements dictate that Indigenous education in Mexico should be intercultural, inclusive, and respectful of diversity. However, in practice, there remain patterns of exclusion, contrasts, and obstacles in both the national educational system as well as adult education interventions (Jiménez Naranjo and Mendoza Zuany, 2012; UNESCO, 2012). This is in keeping with wider patterns of discrimination and inequality across many other postcolonial nation-states, where systems of education, in particular, have been characterised as sites of considerable tension that remain linked to assimilationist and homogenising histories (McCarty, 2003; Nakata, 2013; GEMR, 2016).

Nonetheless, some progress has been made in the past few decades with regards to tackling low educational enrolment, retention and achievement and in minimising educational gaps across the country. Reported rates of illiteracy (which according to the Mexican national census is determined by a person’s ability to read and write a note) fell from 9.5% in 2000 to 6.9% in 2010 and 4.7% in 2020 (INEGI, 2010; 2020). Conversely, the average years of schooling show an increasing trend, going from 7.5 years in 2000 to 8.6 in 2010 and 9.7 in 2020 (ibid.).

Yet despite an overall increase in national literacy rates and average years of schooling over the past few decades, the education system in Mexico continues to be beleaguered by challenges. These include (but are not limited to) gender inequity, scarcity of resources and infrastructure, a dearth of qualified teachers, and the predominant use of Spanish as the main language of instruction (Hanemann, 2017). Such issues are made more acute in the rural areas of the country—regions which, incidentally, also tend to be the most economically disadvantaged and with the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples. It is estimated that around 50% of the Indigenous population resides in rural areas, with many in communities of less than 2,500 inhabitants (CONEVAL, 2019).

Historical and present-day constraints at the compulsory education level have meant that there is a significantly higher rate of student attrition amongst Indigenous youth when compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Schmelkes, 2007). Currently, it is estimated that one out of

every four Indigenous adults aged 15 years and over cannot read or write, with this disparity being categorically higher amongst Indigenous women (Hanemann, 2019). Due to the steadily occurring educational dropout rate and the ongoing asymmetries in terms of access and attainment, the educational gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population in Mexico will be a persistent and pressing issue going into the third decade of the 21st century. Not only that, but there remain pressing concerns regarding the limited access to relevant and quality education for youth and adults who for whatever reason were precluded from having meaningful participation in the formal education system (Torres, 2009).

As such, there is an increasing need to understand whether, how and why Indigenous adults engage with learning opportunities (in Indigenous languages as well as in Spanish) in the present day. Moreover, further attention and discussions on the role and meaning of literacy as it pertains to Indigenous peoples in Mexico is something particularly significant and relevant in light of the educational targets set forth by the SDGs. As Kalman's (2005) seminal study on access to written cultures for women in Mexico suggested, further research in the field of literacy has the potential to make significant contributions to the future development and enhancement of existing literacy programmes and encourage emerging innovative options.

It is against this backdrop and within this context that the present study aims to map new empirical terrain and contribute to an ever-growing field. More specifically, this doctoral research is concerned with unpacking and understanding the role and meaning of literacy within the context of a government-led literacy programme in Mexico called the *Bilingual Indigenous Education Model for Life and Work* (MIB). The programme is an adult education intervention managed by the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) and is targeted at Indigenous language-speaking youth and adults over the age of fifteen. Described as an 'open', integrated, flexible, non-formal educational model, the MIB is focused on providing basic literacy and life skills training in native (or mother tongue) languages which is designed to adapt to the cultural characteristics of the population to which it is directed (INEA, 2012).

Previous research undertakings have explored different aspects of Indigenous education in Mexico from a range of perspectives, including public policy evaluations, linguistic anthropology studies, and sociohistorical analyses (Ramírez Castañeda, 2006; Rebolledo Angulo, 2015; Jiménez-Naranjo and Mendoza-Zuany, 2016). However, beyond an unpublished report commissioned by UNESCO-Mexico and conducted in collaboration with INEA in 2012, no other study—and no doctoral research—has been done exclusively on the

MIB programme before, nor has there been a targeted enquiry into the role and meaning of literacy within the programme from the perspective of those directly engaged with it as beneficiaries and providers (in this case, the learners and facilitators, respectively).

Therefore, this research aims to fill an empirical and conceptual lacuna by bringing together more practical and concrete insights into a contemporary literacy intervention, connecting these within a theoretical frame that views literacy as a social practice (Street, 2016). The thesis asks questions about what ways and for what purposes the participants engage with the programme and examines how they interact with and enact literacy practices. It examines participant perceptions on literacy and processes of literacy learning and explores whether or how the MIB programme has influenced their lives and livelihoods. In doing so, the thesis also calls into question the interlinkages between contemporary literacy trends and the broader socio-political contexts and processes within which they operate. Finally, the study contributes new knowledge that could inform—and potentially transform—policy, practice and wider scholarship on adult education, international development, and literacy more broadly.

Overview of theories and methods

The theoretical and methodological underpinnings featured in this study are exploratory and *qualitative* in nature. I draw from *critical ethnographic* strategies to present a multi-sited research study across the three Mexican states of Campeche, Oaxaca, and San Luis Potosi. This approach builds on and adds to an established tradition of ethnographic research on literacy in the global South (Robinson-Pant, 2000; Maddox, 2007; Meyers, 2011; Street, 2016; Boon, 2019).

I used three primary methods of data generation for this project:

1. Participant observations (moving back and forth between being a silent observer and a participant observer)
2. Semi-structured interviews, including:
 - a. individual interviews (conducted in Spanish)
 - b. group interviews (conducted in Indigenous languages with the Spanish interpretation of bilingual facilitators)
3. Field and observation notes

During October and November 2018, I visited 15 different Indigenous communities across the three states, where I observed MIB study circle sessions and invited learners and facilitators to participate in interviews on a voluntary basis. In total, the data collected for this thesis consisted of 25 individual interviews and 9 group interviews, over 30 hours of study circle observation, and 99,333 words of transcribed audio from the interviews (much of which I later translated from Spanish to English).

The theoretical frame of *literacy as a social practice* (LSP) is threaded throughout this thesis (Street, 2016, p. 336). Summarised in this introductory chapter as the sociological perspective that understands literacy as embedded in power relations and defined by socio-political structures, LSP provided a theoretical basis for addressing the key research questions that guided this study. An LSP approach allowed for a broader exploration of what literacy *is*, what it *does*, and the different ways and dimensions in which it is understood, negotiated and contested. Moreover, examining a specific literacy intervention through an LSP lens helped to better understand how literacy considered for and targeted at Indigenous adults is bound up with questions of power, inequality, and exclusion.

Key definitions

In this section, I briefly outline certain key terms that will be employed throughout this thesis in hopes of providing clarity regarding the sociohistorical, theoretical, and conceptual context of this study. I give insight into how and why I have elected to use key concepts, with the understanding that these are temporally bound by the associated conceptual framework within which this thesis was written.

Many of the associated theories and perspectives I mention here will be elaborated on in the next two chapters that review the related literature. However, I include this conceptual blueprint and outline some definitional limitations and debates from the outset to highlight the complexity and wide contextual variances of terminology in studies aiming to explore and strengthen understandings about social phenomena. In particular, studies concerning Indigenous peoples in postcolonial settings remain in constant flux in terms of epistemological and ontological positionings. This can be attributed to the ongoing demands for recognition of Indigenous ways of knowing and being which have been (and often continue to be) in tension with colonial ideas and ideologies (Mignolo, 2011).

Rather than attempt to find fixed or closed definitions of what featured concepts such as literacy, culture, development, or power *are*, I primarily aim to discuss and explain what they *do*. I follow in Street's (1993, p. 25) efforts to regard many social constructs as 'verbs' and active processes that change meaning over time and space and very often serve differing—and at times, conflicting—purposes.

In the context of this study, I describe *reading* and *writing* as communicative, socially organised, and socially situated activities and *literacy* as both a social practice and a conceptual frame within which different forms of reading and writing happen (Scribner and Cole, 1981; Gee, 2001; Hernández Zamora, 2010; Kalman and Reyes, 2017). The broader term *education* is primarily used to refer to more formalised, organised and institutional instances of learning (which includes literacy learning).

I deploy the term and concept of the *global South* to represent countries (such as Mexico) that are listed on the lower end of international development indexes and are broadly characterised by being economically disadvantaged, formerly colonised countries (Preece, 2009). The term emerged in response to more controversial 'Third World' framings following the Cold War era, with more recent use in a post-national sense to denote regions and peoples who have perceived and reported negative socioeconomic effects brought on by industrialisation and globalisation (Mahler, 2017). References to 'Southern' epistemologies have been used to convey 'non-Western' experiences and worldviews (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 75). More broadly, usage of the phrase 'marks a shift from a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power' (Dados and Connell, 2012).

I use the term *Latin America* throughout the thesis to refer to the geographic region that spans across the North, Central and South American continent and the Caribbean, with the awareness that the use of this term is also a political decision. As Green and Branford (2012) stated, the terms *Latin* and *America* both derive from and are shaped by conquest and colonialism. Walter Mignolo's influential analysis of the 'idea' of Latin America suggested that the term could not be decoupled from the region's distinct colonial past nor from contemporary *decolonial* discourses (Mignolo, 2005). The Argentine philosopher Rodolfo Kusch resisted the term Latin America outright, opting instead to use *América* in his explorations on Indigenous thought (Kusch, 2010). More recently, Indigenous scholars have adopted the common denomination of *Abya Yala* to refer to the Latin region of the American continent. The expression comes from the Guna peoples (Indigenous to what is now Panama and Colombia) and encompasses the

meaning of ‘land in full maturity’, ‘land of vital blood’ and ‘noble land that welcomes everyone’ (CEPAL/FILAC, 2020, p. 15). In this way, the *Abya Yala* paradigm has also been linked to efforts and processes of territorial and epistemic decolonisation.

Concerning *Indigenous* identities and determining who *Indigenous peoples* are, I have been guided by the UNDP’s (2005, p. 2) summary of the four common characteristics that are broadly used to identify Indigenous peoples, regarded as those who:

- a) usually live within (or maintain attachments to) geographically distinct ancestral territories
- b) tend to maintain distinct social, economic, and political institutions within their territories
- c) typically aspire to remain distinct culturally, geographically, and institutionally rather than assimilate fully into national society
- d) self-identify as Indigenous or tribal.

While this summary provides a basis to understanding *who* and *what* Indigenous peoples and groups are, there remains a complex political dimension to the processes of naming and classifying *Indigeneity*. The concept of Indigeneity and discourses around Indigenous identities specific to the Mexican context emerged following the Spanish conquest and during the colonial rule (from 1519 to 1810). The term was used in reference to the various ethnic groups that managed to retain and assert certain languages, cultural patterns, or self-definitions in the face of a widespread colonial project that largely sought to assimilate Indigenous groups into a monocultural society.

As a result, there is a contrived national ideology of ethnicity which generally suggests that the Mexican population is largely *mestizo*, that is, descendant from both native and European ancestors. However, the very ethos and concept of *mestizaje* is a contested one in Mexico when considering the term within a post-colonial terrain: it conceives of Indigenous cultures in a deliberately ambiguous way, reiterating selective positive legacies while still upholding patterns of social, political and economic discrimination (Canessa, 2010; Moreno Figueroa, 2010). Further, *mestizaje* refers to historical processes of ‘mixtures’ (racial and cultural) and embeds these in discourses of national unification, while simultaneously overlooking both overt and covert processes of Indigenous exclusion and ethnocide across time (López, 2008).

Thus, although the term *Indigenous* remains disputed amongst different groups, I elected to use it throughout this research to represent the different linguistic and ethnic groups in Mexico and the wider Latin American region due to its prevalence and general acceptance within regional educational spheres (INALI, 2008; Jiménez-Naranjo and Mendoza-Zuany, 2016). I use the term *Indigenous groups* or *peoples* (with an emphasis on the plural) as a way to recognise the differences between the different peoples and situate the term within a wider frame of self-determination and Indigenous rights (Smith, 1999). When deploying this collective term, it is not my intent to conflate or essentialise any Indigenous group, as their diversity and defining characteristics may vary widely (sometimes even within the same country or region). To further recognise and legitimise distinct Indigenous identities, I have adopted the orthographic classification of Indigenous with a capital 'I', deploying the word as a proper name and then making specific distinctions to represent the five distinct Indigenous groups featured in this thesis (Maya, Ch'ol, Mazateco, Tének, and Náhuatl).

In Mexico, another common strategy to identify and distinguish different Indigenous groups has been through linguistic classifications. As I will discuss further in Chapter 3 when providing a more detailed overview of the linguistic landscape of the country, the current categorisation of Indigenous languages is broken down by 11 'linguistic families', 68 'linguistic groupings' and 364 language 'variants' (INALI, 2008, p. 38). These enumerations, while helpful to showcase the linguistic diversity of the country, remain up for debate as they present more of a static picture of a national linguistic landscape rather than a dynamic one. Furthermore, the current ethnolinguistic summary presents issues in terms of how these languages and communities are then recognised at local, regional, and national levels and what social and economic affordances and opportunities are (or are not) open to the speakers of these languages or those who self-identify as belonging to an Indigenous group. Therefore, while I follow the subjective criterion whereby a person self-identifies as Indigenous throughout this thesis, I acknowledge that there are and will continue to be debates on this classification. Similar to how conceptions of the global South are linked to colonial powers, my understanding and use of *Indigeneity* is often implicated in and intertwined with differing ways of knowing, being and doing across colonial divides (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2014).

Finally, when referring to the participants of this study, I use the term *learner* rather than student or pupil (or the more age-specific *adult learner*) to describe those who are enrolled in the MIB programme. This was done in an effort to adhere to the Spanish counterpart *educando*

(a term roughly translated as ‘being educated’ and indicating an active process) that is used within the institutional context of the MIB. Similarly, I use the term *facilitator* instead of *teacher* or *tutor* as a nod to the programme’s designation of *asesor(a)* (or advisor), although at times I refer to teaching and teacher identities.

Thesis structure

This thesis features eight chapters, including the present introductory chapter that covers the general approach of the study. Each subsequent chapter is summarised below:

In *Chapter 2*, I present a review of the literature and develop my guiding conceptual framework. I introduce and explain the key disciplinary, empirical and theoretical considerations that framed this study, beginning with an exploration of literacy as an anchoring concept and a lens through which to explore its multiple roles, uses, and meanings. I draw from the theoretical domain of literacy as a social practice and key corollaries (including development, power, criticality, gender, (de)coloniality, language, interculturality, and mediation). I conclude by presenting the guiding research questions which provided a basis for exploring, analysing and addressing issues around literacy in Indigenous contexts in new discursive, theoretical, and practical ways.

Chapter 3 summarises the key socio-historical literacy trends in the Mexican context, spanning from pre-colonial to contemporary times. I then follow this with an overview of the background and key features of the MIB programme, touching on some of the main socio-political factors and educational policies that have influenced the programme’s development and implementation.

Chapter 4 is focused on the methodological approach used in this study and explains how and why a qualitative and multi-sited ethnographic approach shaped by critical constructivist theories of knowledge building was appropriate to meet the overall aims of the study. This is followed by an overview of the ways in which my own identity and position as a researcher underpinned and influenced the way I collected, analysed, and interpreted the qualitative data. I provide details on the data generation stage of the study, including an overview of my use of semi-structured interview strategies, group interviews, participant observations, and field notes that provided the basis for the empirical chapters. I then review how I analysed the data, describing the different stages of the inductive thematic analysis in more detail and including a discussion on my interpretive approach to translating data from Spanish to English. This is

followed by a discussion on the iterative processes of coding and categorising key data. Finally, I present the guiding five analytical categories that helped shape my overall approach and analysis of the data: namely, 1) *literacies*, 2) *identity, culture, and language*; 3) *life and work*; 4) *gender and rights*, and 5) *teaching and learning*.

Moving forward, *Chapter 5* addresses the overarching theme of *literacies* by taking a closer look at the distinct learning spaces (referred to in this thesis as ‘study circles’) and the situated experiences of participants in the MIB programme. It explores the range of ways facilitators and learners engage with literacies through their everyday lives (both from the inside and on the periphery of the programme, and in Indigenous languages and Spanish). The varying meanings, values and uses attached to literacies include framings of literacy as a ‘defence’, a ‘necessity’, a ‘tool’, and as a way to ‘access full knowledge’, ‘express myself’, ‘learn from one another’, and to ‘know our rights’.

Chapter 6 highlights some of the educational and life trajectories of the learners and facilitators, with a focus on the themes of *life and work* and *teaching and learning*. Related discussions on some of the challenges and benefits associated with the MIB programme evoked insight into different learning trajectories, processes of professionalisation, and various factors which influenced participant engagement with the programme. The chapter includes an analysis of facilitator roles as *intercultural brokers* tasked with bridging linguistic and cultural divides, building and supporting affiliative community networks, being interlocutors and creating links between institutions and people, and translating dominant codes and social practices to non-dominant ones. Moreover, it proposes that learners are *agentic actors* who are involved in active processes of negotiations about the types of literacies they perceive as necessary for achieving their goals or aims.

In *Chapter 7*, I turn my attention to the broader themes of *identity, culture, and language* and *gender and rights*. I build on the findings from the previous two empirical chapters to discuss how processes of literacy learning—particularly for adults in Indigenous contexts—are bound with complex socio-historical dimensions of power, inequality, and exclusion. I explore ways in which distinct Indigenous identities, cultures, and languages overlap and are (re)constructed, (re)claimed, and (re)negotiated in the daily lives and work of the participants. I then examine the role of gender in terms of literacy learning and how this is embedded in a wider frame of rights to education. To wrap up the discussion, participant experiences of exclusion and

gendered stratifications in education are articulated in parallel with examples of pride, resistance and resilience.

Finally, *Chapter 8* brings the research together through a discussion that recalls the conceptual frames and theories and summarises the empirical evidence presented throughout the thesis. I draw conclusions from the data to suggest that while the MIB programme endorses a rights-based approach to literacy in Indigenous contexts, it does not sufficiently challenge the intersecting systems of power that continue to exclude and marginalise Indigenous discourses and identities within educational spheres, particularly with regards to issues of gender, race, language, age, and socioeconomic status. Finally, I offer some concluding thoughts about the study as a whole and provide recommendations on new directions of study in the field.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

In the previous introductory chapter, I explained the background and aims of this study and provided an overview of the methods and structure of the present thesis. What follows is a review of the literature covering the key concepts and theoretical perspectives that underpin this study, both broadly and then more specifically from an adult education standpoint and as investigated in Indigenous and post-colonial contexts.

This thesis is situated in the wider field of *literacy studies*, and as such, the literature is presented through this wider lens and then broken down into related sections. The first section engages with and unpacks key conceptual understandings and interpretations of what literacy *is* and *does* and explains how the concept is deployed throughout the thesis. I then provide a review of literature on *literacy as a social practice* (LSP), discussing some of the key conceptual arguments, debates and divides that characterise the LSP approach. Separate sections are then devoted to examining the interplay between literacy and dimensions of development, power, criticality, gender, (de)coloniality, language, and interculturality. Finally, it surveys the ways in which literacy can be mediated and brokered by key actors.

While these sections will invariably contain certain theoretical and conceptual overlaps under the umbrella of literacy as a social practice, I opted to break them down individually to discuss each in context and relate them to the overarching topic and goals of this research. The chapter concludes with a discussion on and presentation of the overarching research questions and sub-questions.

Defining literacy

What does literacy mean? What does it mean to be literate? What role does literacy play in people's lives and wider societies? How do different groups engage with and value different texts and processes of reading and writing? Such key questions have long been asked, investigated, and debated in literacy studies, building a comprehensive body of work to draw from when undertaking new empirical analysis on the topic (Goody and Watt, 1963; Prinsloo

and Breier, 1996; Maddox, 2007; Basu, Maddox and Robinson-Pant, 2008; Vieira, 2013; Street, 2016).

Literacy is not a monolithic term. As this chapter will discuss, the existing body of knowledge in the field demonstrates that there is a breadth of ways to understand and analyse the complex phenomenon of reading and writing. Rather than attempt a systematic review of all related theoretical debates and discussions, I use this section to present a more targeted conceptual articulation of ideas that are most pertinent to the study at hand: specifically, literacy as seen and understood through an adult learning perspective.

In very general terms, to be considered as ‘literate’ a person should demonstrate certain abilities such as signing their name, reading and writing a simple sentence or engaging in activities where literacy is needed for effective functioning in their communities (Kalman, 2008, p. 525). However, such individualised and rudimentary characterisations often fail to capture the multiple and complex processes and contexts within which literacy is manifested. Furthermore, attempts to define literacy invariably brings up the enumerative and essentialising categories of *literate-illiterate* and associations to being *educated-uneducated*, binaries which emerge strongly within adult education spheres and scholarship. These ‘reductive dichotomies’ make it difficult to probe beyond expected and reported outcomes in adult education, often preventing a deeper analysis of the complex processes of learning, change, identity building, and agency that are wrapped up in diverse literacy practices (Basu, Maddox and Robinson-Pant, 2008; Gadsden, 2017, p. 33).

The ways in which adults may (or may not) be considered ‘literate’ has also been linked to what scholars refer to as ‘deficit’ models and discourses in and of adult education, where adults are positioned as individuals *lacking* basic literacy skills and therefore are perceived to be in need of a certain type of ‘knowledge’ and a baseline of skills that could grant them better economic opportunities at large (Aikman *et al.*, 2016; Acharya, Jere and Robinson-Pant, 2019a, p. 268). This reductionist approach tends to overlook the vast social and historical factors that influence literacy practices in different contexts and portrays literacy (and for that matter, illiteracy) as essentialised and static. As Brandt (2001, p. 8) previously pointed out, illiteracy itself is ‘rarely self-chosen and rarely self-created’, and literacy practices as they arise and are promoted by different actors or institutions may not always be the type of literacy that people wish to use.

Within the realm of adult education, metrics concerning literacy rates and levels are often put forward as evidence of either educational achievements or lags, often underestimating or even disregarding the political processes involved in determining such metrics (Bryan and Esposito, 2011). However, the construction and implementation of institutional literacy assessments assume that ‘literacy is objectively measurable’ in the first place, with reports of literacy rates being ‘taken at face value’ (Bartlett, 2008, p. 741). Scholars have questioned whether or to what extent there is a link between more dominant or prescriptive forms of literacies and the types of literacies in people’s everyday lives, therefore challenging the reliability of reported literacy data (Hamilton and Barton, 2000; Singh and Sherchan, 2019).

Considering these conceptual complexities, then, it becomes clear that attempts to demarcate what literacy *is* remains highly dependent on the context and the purpose for which it is being defined. Thus, the task of drawing definitional distinctions carries with it heavy political implications. While literacy could broadly be summarised as the processes of reading and writing and the interaction with different forms of texts, a more expansive exercise (and more fitting with this particular study) would be to consider what literacy *does* (Bartlett, 2008; Street, 2011). In other words, the different ways and purposes in which actors take up different types of literacy practices vary across time and space, and as such there are no predictable outcomes.

Reconsidering literacy and its complex relationship to wider social structures is in accordance with the more recent paradigmatic shift towards a socially situated perspective of literacy, otherwise referred to as *literacy as a social practice* (LSP), the theoretical frame within which I largely situate my research and which I expand upon in the next section.

Literacy as a social practice

The emergence of the social practice paradigm in literacy studies can be traced back to earlier scholarship suggesting that literacy learning could be regarded as a set of neutral, technical skills (Goody and Watt, 1963). This conceptualisation of literacy became analogous to what is referred to as the *autonomous* model of literacy, which tended to treat literacy as an ‘independent variable’ with consequent patterns of social, economic and political development (Street, 1984, p. 2). The assumption that literacy on its own—independent from and irrespective of diverse contextual and situated social factors—could bring about improved social effects sparked an emerging counter-discourse highlighting the complex social nature of literacy. As a result, scholars and practitioners interrogated literacy’s relationship to wider

social contexts, power, and identities and linked these to an *ideological* model of literacy, thus emphasising literacy as ‘embedded in relations of power’ and ‘rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, [and] being’ (Street, 2001, p. 7, 2016, p. 337).

These demarcations between *ideological* and *autonomous* models of literacy led to the development of the field of ‘New Literacy Studies’ (NLS). The NLS perspective influenced a large number of studies that sought to move away from seeing literacy as an individual attribute or skill to regarding literacy practices as connected to ‘different social, political, economic and religious realities’ (Kalman, 2005, p. 9). Even more recently, scholarship has shifted away from the term NLS to using literacy as a social practice (or LSP) more generally, the purpose being to draw attention to the multiple and varied contexts and users of literacy rather than foregrounding the academic research studies on the topic itself (Burnett *et al.*, 2014; Street, 2016; Duncan, 2020).

From a sociocultural analytical outlook, literacy is characterised by its complex variances according to a range of factors such as language, domain, script, context, and actors (Gee, 2001; Bartlett, 2008). The LSP orientation does not ignore the technical or cognitive aspects of literacy, but rather views these as secondary to literacies conceived as fundamentally embedded ‘within sociocultural settings and the discursive practices and power relations of everyday life’ (McCarty, 2006, p. xviii). LSP considers the complexity and plurality of literacy and how it carries different meanings depending on the context (UNESCO, 2004; Hanemann, 2015b). In other words, literacy can be seen as relative to who and where those who are participating in literacy are.

Further research in the field led to a renewed conception of literacy not as a single analytical unit, but rather as having *multiple* practices that vary in relation to time, space, and power structures:

Multiple literacy practices are also a sign of stratification and struggle. Their variety speaks of different and often unequal subsidy systems for literacy, which often lead to differential outcomes and levels of literacy achievement. Literacy practices trail along within themselves histories of opportunities granted and opportunities denied, as well as ascending power or waning worth, legitimacy or marginality of particular literate experience. Focusing merely on the uses of literacy as they seem to arise from local goals and interests can obscure these complications (Brandt, 2001, p. 8).

Brandt’s theorisation of literacy as being an economic, political, and intellectual resource serves two complementary purposes: first, it can help to understand why literacy is propped up

as a universal goal (as evidenced by international frameworks such as the SDGs), but also it serves to consider the different vested interests—economic, political, and otherwise—behind literacy and how it can also potentially be conscripted and rationed to gain competitive advantages in an increasingly globalised world (Brandt, 2001). This supports my take on LSP, which in the case of this study is centred on opportunities (both granted and denied), linguistic and cultural valuation and legitimacy (in Indigenous contexts in Mexico), and the way that literacy learning is enacted, negotiated, and contested on the margins (from the perspective of people participating in the MIB programme).

Central to the LSP framework is the distinction between literacy *events* (or the observable and more practical elements of literacy) and literacy *practices* (or literacy embedded in larger systems and patterned by power relations). Within LSP, events and practices are regarded as separate analytical units, both of which conceptually implicate each other (Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Easton, 2014). Broadly speaking, literacy *events* are empirical as opposed to theoretical and refer to the discrete events or situations in which people engage with varied forms of reading or writing (for example, a learner reading aloud during a MIB study circle session) (Heath, 1983).

Literacy *practices*, on the other hand, tend to be conceptualised as more abstract, representing the larger systems and patterns of literacy events in any given society or community (for example, widely adopting or standardising a Latin alphabet), many of which exist for different purposes within and across different domains and involve attitudes, values and social relationships (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2000). Both literacy *events* and *practices* have been analysed and used as descriptive and analytical constructs in prior studies, and there remains an ongoing debate about their boundaries and their potentials for being discrete and therefore countable (Kell, 2011; Bloome *et al.*, 2019).

One of the major scholarly contributions of LSP is also regarded by some as one of its main limitations: by paying significant attention to the documentation and exploration of local literacies to gain more in-depth insights into local contexts, there is also a risk in ‘romanticising the local’ in such a way that obfuscates a deeper and more critical engagement with wider policies and practices at a macro level (Basu, Maddox and Robinson-Pant, 2008, p. 772). As such, critiques of LSP approaches and studies stem from an over-emphasis on the local, to the point where broader economic and political frameworks have been overlooked or even disregarded (Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Meyers, 2014). Conversely, a greater emphasis on the

global contexts could also arguably understate and overshadow the more nuanced, situated, and individualised perspectives and experiences that are indivisibly constitutive of larger practices.

A central question that Barton (2013) posed is how qualitative literacy scholars can move beyond the particularities of the ‘local’—with its concomitant limitations in an unpredictable and ever-evolving social world—to engage with broader literature and scholarly debates that seek to move more towards the ‘global’ and find more general significance to further inform and shape wider policies and practices. As a result, scholars have sought to mediate and bridge the disconnections between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ and call for ethnographies that explore situated literacy events, while at the same time analyse how these are linked to ‘connected to larger sociohistorical influences, political processes, ideological questions, and material consequences’ (Warriner, 2009, p. 160).

For example, Prins’ (2010) longitudinal ethnographic study involving former participants of an adult literacy programme in El Salvador showed that increased literacy enabled better communication within families and communities. Robinson-Pant’s (2000, p. 349) analysis of women’s experiences of literacy learning in Nepal suggested that beyond programmatic aims related to improved income generation prospects, participants highly valued the social space and the opportunity to become ‘educated’ through literacy classes. Long term ethnographic research on Indigenous women’s learning in Peru demonstrated how different types of learning (through experience, training, and a distinct Indigenous cosmovision) emerged as key to furthering goals of Indigenous self-determination (Aikman, 2019). Such studies illustrate how even the most seemingly localised literacy and learning practices remain embedded in and interdependent with broader changing social and economic forces. In this way, many situated literacy studies support the idea that there can be a ‘global impact of local examples’ and demonstrate how an increasing range of empirical evidence can help to challenge dominant discourses in the field (Barton, 2013, p. 217).

It is at the conceptual intersection between literacy events and practices where I make a concerted effort to place this study. More specifically, my research will draw from key elements of the LSP paradigm that emphasise the importance of presenting accurate and context-bound representations of literacy practices, while at the same time seeking ‘transcontextualising potentials of literacy’ where local literacy events could be linked to broader literacy practices (Brandt and Clinton, 2002, p. 337). From an LSP perspective, it is

considered important to look beyond situated literacies and examine the surrounding contexts within which it is embedded. Only then could scholars begin to make determinations or theorisations about what kind of literacies people engage with, why, and to see whether these could be strengthened to serve individual or collective purposes. In this way, this thesis aims to look *at* and *through* literacy events (emerging from the MIB context) to explore whether and how these are embedded in more ‘global’ literacy practices.

Furthermore, I draw from the LSP approach to take account not only of the uses of reading and writing in a particular setting, but also of learners’ discourses about literacy as understood within their distinct community contexts (Papen, 2005). The aim of a social practice approach is not to impose external priorities regarding the prominence or importance of literacy practices, but rather begin by asking what literacies are most important and meaningful to those communities (Street, 2016). Considering individual perspectives on literacies and the ways issues of power play into different practices are—from an LSP viewpoint—important given the historical precedent of how those considered to be undereducated or ‘illiterate’ were not often viewed as strong sources of evidence, even if they are sharing their own life experiences and histories (Hernández Zamora, 2010).

The tensions and contestations between ‘the local’ and ‘the global’ discussed above demonstrate that this remains an area of ongoing debate within the domain of LSP. This study makes no claim to achieve a seamless balance between local and global perspectives on literacies as a whole; rather, it aims to achieve an in-depth analysis of the empirical data and draw out the most relevant emerging particularities of both the observable and the more abstract elements of literacies in the Mexican context. The data-driven nature of my study meant that I approached issues concerning local/global continuities and discontinuities in an exploratory and interpretive way, with the overarching aim of bringing literacy events and practices together and exploring their relationship without privileging one over the other.

Literacy and development

Widespread and universal literacy is often foregrounded ‘as a key determinant of well-being, an important social entitlement, and a goal of human development’ (Maddox, 2008, p. 1). Frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the more recent Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) have strongly positioned literacy as foundational for achieving key goals related to education and to ‘stimulate social, cultural, political and

economic participation, especially on the part of disadvantaged groups’ (UNESCO, 2005, p. 137). Literacy’s purported link to political participation and economic development are ideas that have been supported by various international declarations as well as national literacy campaigns all around the world (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996; Collins and Blot, 2003).

By the same token, the ‘battle against illiteracy’—particularly in so-called ‘developing’ regions such as Latin America—remains ongoing, with efforts to ‘reduce’ or ‘eradicate’ illiteracy having had mixed approaches and mixed results over the decades (Torres, 2009, p. 40). Illiteracy (in its most general definition) has been linked to poverty, insecurity and inequality and is considered by many as a type of deprivation and a marker of social injustice (Sen, 2003). This is further illustrated by tools such as the Human Development Index (HDI), which places adult and youth literacy rates and educational attainment at the centre of measurements of social welfare (UNDP, 2020).

While literacy is therefore generally seen as having ‘an important evaluative position in theories of development’, there remains no single unifying theory that can attend to ‘its complex role in processes of social change, account for the role of literate (and illiterate) identities and practices in shaping social relations, capacities and aspirations’ (Basu, Maddox and Robinson-Pant, 2008, p. 769). However, some prominent theoretical frames and approaches have been used to explore and analyse the role of literacy in development discourses.

For example, the capability approach (CA) regards development through a series of human *capabilities*. In this context, the role of education is perceived in a broader sense, where a person’s capability sets or ‘opportunity freedoms’ can lead to more specific functionings or ‘beings and doings’ (Tikly, 2019, p. 43). Through the CA lens, literacy is presented as a key goal of human development and as a ‘basic capability’ through which individuals can benefit in a multitude of ways, including for enhancing communication and participating more fully in community life (Maddox, 2008, p. 189). In addition, the value of literacy is emphasised as both *intrinsic* (or valuable in its own right and as an end to itself) and *instrumental* for its potential to enhance people’s capabilities, agentic potentials, and freedoms (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2006; Maddox, 2008)

While widely cited as a useful approach to examine individual capabilities to seek and achieve one’s fullest potential without constraints, the CA has also been critiqued within educational

spheres for failing to fully acknowledge complexities such as inequalities and power structures within educational systems, as well as colonial legacies, curriculum misalignments, and a lack of adequate material resources or trained facilitators (Robeyns, 2017). Maddox (2008) elaborated on some of the limitations of the CA by arguing that Sen and Nussbaum's framing of literacy as a mostly neutral social good to an extent disregards more nuanced takes on the meaning of literacy (and education more broadly). Similarly, Street (2011) questioned whether the moral and economic arguments surrounding the capabilities framings of literacy skew towards a type of universalism that works against the particularities and plural conceptions of socially embedded literacies and continues to uphold ideas about literacy as an autonomous and technical skill.

Taking this into consideration, it could be argued that different vehicles of literacy learning (including schools and more formalised adult literacy interventions such as the one highlighted in this study) do not necessarily equate to heightened literacy capabilities. More targeted studies have discussed literacy as a core capability in terms of human development and social justice, among other factors (Nussbaum, 2000; Alkire, 2002; Tikly and Barrett, 2011). Thus, while CA studies have made valuable contributions to the broader fields of education and development, it was not the aim of this study to use a more normative approach to examine literacy as one of multiple dimensions of wellbeing. More relevant to this project were aspects of the ways in which the CA conceptualises the relationship between literacy and an individual's wider functionings, capabilities, and agency. Questions about whether, how, and to what extent people have reason to value literacies resonated deeply with the data featured in this study, and as such, later discussions about the contexts and processes in which literacies are embedded and their potential as a fundamental instrument of agency and self-determination gives further centrality to literacy within wider development debates.

The idea that literacy acquisition is consistent with social and economic development has been widely promoted by public and private sectors. Economic arguments for literacy have tended to view enrolment rates in compulsory schooling as a proxy for overall literacy rates, something which could be debated when looking at more non-formal and informal approaches to education (that is, different types of organised learning activities happening outside of the formal education system). In her comprehensive analysis on literacy and migration in Mexico, Meyers (2014) argued that many literacy programs endorse a *contract* approach to literacy; in other words, literacy viewed only in terms of its potential for economic development and

improvement. Such economic generalisations were (and still are) common in many post-colonial states, where literacy programmes tended to be designed and widely promoted as an avenue for economic advancement and heightened political participation. At the same time, many literacy studies with a stronger economic focus have also offered greater insight and analysis on ‘distributional inequality, from intra-household levels to regional, national level analysis and international comparison, and explore relationships of correlation that are unavailable or unacceptable in ethnographic analysis’ (Basu, Maddox and Robinson-Pant, 2008).

In recent years, measurements and comparisons of educational enrolment, attainment, and literacy rates have increasingly been used as a tool to demonstrate ‘development’ on an international playing field, as evidenced by large scale surveys such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) or the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement’s (IEA) Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). In the case of Mexico, overall literacy rates have risen dramatically over the course of only a few decades, thanks in part to the expansion of compulsory schooling, which as of 2012 includes a guaranteed upper secondary education (OECD, 2018). To provide a general picture, the percentage of those with completed basic education (considered here to include primary and lower secondary education, or an equivalent to nine years of schooling) rose from an estimated 9 per cent in the 1970s to an estimated 86 per cent in 2016 (as calculated by youth between the ages of 20-24) (Hanemann, 2017; INEE, 2018). Moreover, the national literacy rate (as determined by a person’s ability to read and write a note) is estimated to be around 95 per cent as of 2018 (World Bank, 2020). However, these efforts and advances continue to be concentrated mostly on the compulsory schooling level, with much less emphasis on educational opportunities for youth and adults outside of the formal system.

The chronic inattention towards adult education and learning—in Mexico and other lower to middle-income countries—led to the emergence of different responses from a variety of sources (including grassroots organisations, NGOs, religious organisations, and others) aiming to fill the provision gap. For example, large-scale literacy campaigns and popular education movements targeted at out-of-school youth and adults gained popularity in the mid-20th century and since then have been widespread across many so-called developing countries (Hanemann, 2015a). Certain models became influential and far-reaching: for example, Cuba’s well known

Yo, Si Puedo (Yes, I Can) programme first emerged on the heels of the Cuban revolution in 1961 and purported to have reduced the national rate of illiteracy from 21% to 3.9% over the course of a single year (Torres, 1991). The model has since been adapted across numerous countries in Asia and Africa, as well as in aboriginal Australia with some reported successes (Boughton and Durnan, 2014). In addition, missionary work by the faith-based group Summer Institute of Linguistics (now known as SIL International) in Mexico and Latin America from the 1930s onwards was in many cases the first of its kind to try to identify, document, standardise Indigenous languages of the Americas into contemporary and more widely distributable written forms (Stoll, 1982; Hartch, 2006).

However, the results of such interventions and campaigns remained disparate and often produced mixed results, with many of them still failing to take into account that literacy by itself (and therefore de-linked from social structures, power, local languages, and traditions, among other factors) may not bring about swift economic improvement (Coulmas and Guerini, 2012). Moreover, such campaigns have at times been leveraged as a mechanism to promote certain political agendas, with reported results serving as a way to evidence ‘development’ (particularly in economic terms) but with lingering concerns regarding continuity and sustainability of different interventions (Hanemann, 2015b).

The above examples of literacy campaigns and interventions serve as precedents for the programme that lies at the centre of this study: in its current form, the MIB is described as an integrated and bilingual non-formal basic literacy and life skills training programme (UIL, 2013). In many ways, the MIB programme exists largely as a response to changing discourses and more recent calls to ensure educational access, quality, equality and equity for Indigenous peoples in Mexico, yet promotes the instrumental purposes of literacy learning with an emphasis on work and livelihoods. In this way, the model largely sustains assumptions about literacy and its concomitant linkages to social and economic development.

Wider development policies (outside of education) in Mexico are largely reflected through a range of social programmes stemming from the now-defunct Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) and the current Ministry of ‘Wellbeing’ (*Secretaría del Bienestar*). Most relevant to this study was the rollout and adaptation of a flagship anti-poverty conditional cash transfer programme that began under the name *Progresá*, later re-branded as *Oportunidades* and then as PROSPERA, as it is referred to in this thesis (Adato, 2000; Molyneux, 2006; Abarbanell, 2020). Initially, the PROSPERA programme was specifically targeted at households

considered to be in ‘extreme poverty’ or at a higher risk of being caught in cyclical and intergenerational poverty, predominantly in rural areas and with a key focus on education, nutrition, and health (León Himmelstine, 2017).

While a key objective of PROSPERA was poverty alleviation, more emphasis was placed on ‘increasing human capital’ and social inclusion through improved educational and health interventions (Kugler and Rojas, 2018, p. 2). The programme was designed to give beneficiaries control of how they used cash payments, provided that they adhered to certain conditions, including the requirement that children attend school (aimed at preventing widespread school attrition) and that adults attend regular talks regarding available health and learning services (López and Salles, 2006).

At its peak, PROSPERA was one of the largest CCT programs in the world, and by 2016, the programme provided support to approximately 6.8 million households in all 32 Mexican states (SEDESOL, 2016). The merits of the PROSPERA programme were subsequently promoted as ‘a model from Mexico for the world’ in terms of demonstrating the potentials and achievements of a successful CCT and providing evidence of positive effects on employment outcomes (The World Bank, 2014; Dávila Lárraga, 2016). However, the programme was not without its critiques: despite its purported successes, PROSPERA was still regarded by many as a ‘quintessentially neo-liberal programme’ that combined ‘social policy approaches with the contractarian, co-responsibility models associated with new approaches to social welfare and poverty relief’ (Molyneux, 2006, p. 426). A report from the think tank Development Pathways in the UK suggested that while many CCT programmes across the global South were indeed modelled after PROSPERA, there was also evidence of punitive, gendered sanctions (Kidd, 2019).

One working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research in the USA suggested that increasing pressures and obligations to comply with the PROSPERA’s conditions seemed to rest solely on the female beneficiaries (Kugler and Rojas, 2018). Another study on violence against women in Oaxaca suggested that because women were the sole cash beneficiaries (with a high proportion of them also being Indigenous), they were at a particularly high risk of being assaulted and robbed on payment days (Briseño Maas and Bautista Martínez, 2016). Further claims of extortion and coercion, voter intimidation, and threats of being stripped of their benefits over failure to attend health appointments led a female beneficiary in the southern state of Chiapas to argue that PROSPERA was a programme ‘built on fear’ of being deemed non-

compliant (Abarbanell, 2020, p. 751). Such allegations were at the basis of the justification to abolish the programme in 2019 after over two decades in favour of more blanket social welfare policies and so-called scholarships promoted by the new administration (Enciso, 2019).

Looking at PROSPERA as a ‘mechanism’ or ‘tool’ to ‘reduce, mitigate, and cope with’ the risks and vulnerabilities associated with poverty demands that attention be paid to some of the root causes of poverty to begin with (World Bank, 2000, p. 135). However, many social protection initiatives designed to tackle poverty in Latin America still fail to adequately address the specific risks of those living in poverty contexts (for example, unequal access to education or limited and poorly paid jobs), thus leaving the needs of many adults—particularly women—unaddressed (Molyneux and Thomson, 2011). As the data from this study suggests, there were some overlaps in terms of participation in the PROSPERA programme as well as the MIB. At times, this two-way conditionality between cash support and engagement in education influenced some adults’ decisions to engage in their local MIB study circles. Such interlinkages between literacy and wider development discourses will thus be further illustrated through the lived experiences of participants in later chapters.

Literacy and power

Central to the debate about what literacy is, what it does, who it is for and how it is used is the argument that modern forms of literacies (most often associated with texts) are closely associated with modern forms of power (Collins and Blot, 2003). Including a comprehensive and multidisciplinary overview of power in societies is beyond the scope of this study. However, in this section, I will pick up on the links between literacy and power as it relates to education, knowledge, and the ongoing struggle for self-determination in postcolonial and Indigenous contexts.

To begin to explore whether or how literacy is shaped by power, I first address the concept of *power* itself, the dimensions and mechanisms of which run in both small and large currents and are inscribed in social systems and formations, languages, and cultural practices. In this study, I approach the concept of power along similar lines as Foucault (1978), who maintained that power operates as a network within and across the social world, therefore making it inherent in social discourse and practice. Rather than originating from a single source, individual, or group, power can be seen as embedded in institutions, spaces, and ways of being (Paechter, 2002). This interwoven web of power and power relations means that at times, particular

discourses may be more dominant than others, yet these too can be challenged, shifted, and contested according to context, space, and time.

In terms of how literacies are bound up with issues of power and power relations, Brandt (2001, p. 19) suggested that to begin to understand how and why people engage with literacy learning, a key initial step would be ‘to think about who or what underwrites occasions of literacy learning’. The argument that literacies could be (and historically speaking, have been) controlled by a dominant few to retain power over more marginalised others suggests that literacies are ‘deeply and inescapably bound up with producing, reproducing, and maintaining unequal arrangements of power’ (Crowther, Hamilton and Tett, 2001, p. 1). Similarly, Collins and Blot (2003, p. 154) described power as ‘multifaceted’ and pervasive within the ‘official literacies of nation-states and colonial regimes’. Regarded in this way, postcolonial settings could be seen as sites of historical imposition and conquest ‘*of* language and *by* language’, signifying that ‘the control of literacy, its use, and the conditions under which people become literate’ remains deeply imbued with issues of power (ibid., p. 3).

This interplay between global, national or institutional agendas on literacy and local interests has been previously examined through the conceptual frame of *powerful literacies* with the aim of making power visible and to analyse power dynamics within education systems and structures (Crowther, Hamilton and Tett, 2001). Through this lens, hegemonic literacy practices are viewed in relation to the many literacies that dominant agendas persistently (and sometimes purposefully) attempt to exclude. As Rockwell (2006, p. 6) argued, systems of power ‘tend to both undermine and deny the literacy of the group they rule or dominate’.

The above discussion about literacy *and* power also leads to a discussion of literacy *as* power, which is derived from Scribner’s (1984) metaphor of literacy as a tool for social transformation, community advancement, and ‘associated with efforts at mobilising poor communities for their own development and growth’ (Mace, 1998, p. 12). This is not to say that the literacy as power metaphor overlooks the potential risks of regarding literacy as solely a force of positive change: literacy has also been used as a mechanism to deny opportunities, reinforce social stratifications and maintain social hegemonies (Brandt, 2001; Gee, 2008). Therefore, this accounts for an understanding of literacy considering both its transformative as well as its coercive powers, its ability to be hegemonic and counterhegemonic, and the way it can both maintain power and enable resistance (McCarty, 2006; Vautour, 2019).

Literacy *as* power also raises questions about literacy *as* *empowering*. The concept of *empowerment* has been explored and used widely in both development and gender studies (Stromquist, 2009; North, 2013; UNESCO, 2014; Cornwall and Rivas, 2015). In a broad sense, *empowerment* could generally be understood as a ‘process of transformation involving both the acquisition of capabilities and changes in subjectivity that enable agency to be exercised’ (Molyneux, 2006, p. 429). In the context of literacy, empowerment is said to be related to economic, political, cognitive and psychological dimensions (Hanemann, 2019). Going further, Stromquist (2009) contended that literacy is strongly linked to affective perceptions such as confidence, self-esteem and efficacy, which could then arguably lead to higher degrees of self-determination and agency.

Recent studies indicate that adult literacy and education programmes that are more tailored to the socio-cultural norms and languages of different regions have the potential to unleash processes of empowerment ‘through which structures of power can be identified, negotiated and transformed’ (Ghose and Mullick, 2015, p. 350). At the same time, Chopra (2011, p. 634) warned that adult education interventions that purport a goal of empowerment by means of literacy ‘may not take into account the material realities and desires of diverse gendered adult education subjects’. Thus, power and processes of (dis)empowerment can be regarded not only as gendered, but also as racialised within Indigenous contexts (Canessa, 2010; Borland, 2014).

The above notions are useful when analysing the varying mechanisms of power relations and the exclusion of Indigenous peoples within the Mexican educational context and how these are intertwined with wider discourses of power. In Mexico, literacy and power are strongly associated with the Spanish language and its associated dominant sociocultural influence, whereas Indigenous languages and their respective literacies are more often structurally and symbolically positioned as powerless (Kalman and Reyes, 2017). As King (1994, p. 2) stated in her book on language and literacy in Mexico, there continues to be an ‘equation of literacy with knowledge, and consequently with structures of power within society’ in both historical and contemporary educational terms.

Rockwell (2006) underscored the need to consider the interplay between power and literacy within its appropriate historical dimensions. By paying attention to how discourses of power have tended to negate or undermine ‘subaltern uses of literacy’, Rockwell suggested that a link could be made between the onset of massified, formalised schooling in the 20th century and the imposition and consequent legitimisation of particular forms of literacies *for* the Indigenous

population in Mexico but not *by* them (ibid., p. 8). Thus, Indigenous uses of and engagement with ‘an imposed scriptural economy’ indicates that power, in this context, straddles several lines: the oral and written, the modern and traditional, and the colonial and post-colonial, to name a few (Collins and Blot, 2003, p. 150).

Considering the interlinkages between literacy and power and the ways in which individuals or groups either bolster or challenge structures of power, Paechter (2002, p. 4) argued that ‘wherever there are power relations, there are also relations of resistance’. These contestations and resistances between different groups can occur in many forms, be both large and small, and vary over time and space. As I will expound further in the next chapter looking at literacy and socio-political trends over time, Indigenous groups (particularly those in Mexico) have a long history of developing strategies to deal with dominant forms and uses of literacies. At times, these strategies have even meant that dominant and imposed literacies and languages have been used as a means for self-advocacy, to assert Indigenous needs and identities, and to defend Indigenous knowledges and lifeways (Rockwell, 2006). Further analysis on the varying degrees of acceptance of and resistance to dominant literacies are discussed in the empirical chapters.

Literacy and criticality

Critical theory emerged from the work of key figures such as Marx, Foucault, and Gramsci (to name only a few) as a way to identify, challenge and change unequal social conditions in which different forms of oppressions operate (be these social, economic, racial, or others) (Thomas, 2018). Critical scholars and practitioners have since developed a range of ways to think about and critique social structures to understand and act upon injustices and inequalities (Fraser, 1989; Held, 1990; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005).

Seen through a critical lens, education—and by extension, literacy learning for adults—is thus seen as something highly political with the potential to also be highly transformative (Mezirow, 1991, 2003). Critical studies thus drew attention to *dialogue* as a liberating *praxis* (otherwise defined as a *process* by which liberation is enacted) of individuals and emphasised ‘the interdependence and relationality of systems and individuals, domination and liberation, theory and praxis, students and teacher’ (Berila, 2016, p. 9).

A key corollary of critical theory specific to the field of education is *critical pedagogy*, which was most notably expounded and championed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in the

1960s. Critical pedagogy promotes open and democratic opportunities for participation in learning processes through the *conscientisation* of all, but in particular for disfranchised population groups (Berila, 2016). By taking on more active agentic roles, those participating in different types of learning could then—in theory—begin to question asymmetric power structures and consequently seek ways to transform their conditions.

In a broad sense, critical and anti-oppression pedagogies maintain that knowledge is always historically produced and culturally situated (a perspective that is in close alignment with the previously explored LSP). Critical *adult* literacy is most commonly associated with the work of Freire in rural Brazil, but it is also linked to a wider group of thinkers such as Giroux (1988, 2020), McLaren (1998) and Apple (1990) who explored and advocated for more empowering, liberating and emancipatory pedagogical paradigms. Under the wider umbrella of critical pedagogy, literacies and their related practices cannot be disentangled from broader power structures within and across societies or communities (Freire and Macedo, 1987; Lankshear and McLaren, 1993; McCarty, 2003; Giroux, 2020).

Central to Freire's (1970a, p. 20) work was the focus on power dynamics between those he claimed were 'oppressors' and the 'oppressed', and of the various social forces, institutions, and actors which shape and define existing inequalities. The agendas and mechanisms behind dominant discourses and knowledges that serve the interests of the 'oppressors' and maintain structures of power have been articulated and explored through discourses of deficit in relation to literacies. For example, Freire (1970a, p. 72) coined the 'banking' concept of education wherein adults are mostly regarded as passive and non-agentic recipients of prefiltered deposited knowledge. In other words, a person without a certain type of (externally imposed) knowledge would arguably be viewed not by what they know within the context they know it, but by what they do *not* know, *cannot* do, or do *not* represent.

Previous research suggests that such discourses of deficit are not only common in adult education spheres, policies, and practices, but that there are continuities in terms of the associated affective dimensions of being persistently perceived through a deficit lens. This means that certain exclusions, stigmas, and feelings of shame are pervasive amongst those who engage with literacy learning activities as adults, which in turn are often internalised within a wider deficit perspective (Bartlett, 2007a). In order to perceive, name, and contest these oppressions and seek transformative emancipation, Freire argued that individuals must undergo a process of *conscientização*, or a form of *critical consciousness* whereby individuals can

pursue knowledge in their own ways, according to their own customs and beliefs, and on their own terms. In other words, critical approaches to education, pedagogy, and literacy can arguably help to develop processes by which individuals and groups can (re)claim their rights and exert self-determination.

Literacy and gender

The interplay between gender and education and the gender gap in literacy attainment has been previously examined in terms of structural and social constraints and barriers (Walter, 2004; Meyers, 2011; Robinson-Pant, 2014; Stromquist, 2014). Within wider development discourses, literacy for women—and Indigenous women in particular—is often tied to issues of equity, health, violence, and community involvement (Eldred *et al.*, 2014; Hanemann, 2019; Hanemann and McKay, 2019).

Debates concerning ‘women’s illiteracy’ have often emphasised women’s *lack* of literacy as a barrier to achieving overall gender equality in education. International agreements on adult learning and education such as the *Belém Framework for Action* underlined the benefits of a ‘gender-sensitive provision in adult learning and education, particularly with respect to women’ (2010, p. 11). Similarly, the strategic framework set out by UNESCO’s *Literacy Initiative for Empowerment* (LIFE) had as one of its goals to reduce gender disparities and empower learners (with a focus on women and marginalised groups) through a reinforcement of national and international ‘commitments to literacy’ and an enhancement of capacity and opportunity for literacy learning (UNESCO, 2008, p. 4). The more recent SDGs have as a goal to achieve gender equality and promote empowerment for women and young girls, suggesting that the ongoing curtailment of women’s rights and disparities across all spheres of society remains an urgent issue.

Previous and current agreements, policies and interventions around the world thus suggest that gendered inequalities in relation to access to literacy have been (and continue to be) bound up in and interacting with wider gender inequalities in society as a whole. In the decades leading up to the turn of the 21st century, women were often instrumentalised in policy discourses, regarded as both the target of education interventions and as the means to achieve national and international educational targets. Such policy perspectives followed a general rationalisation that women’s literacy was beneficial, as it had the potential to contribute towards improved efficiency in women’s assumed roles of mothers and caretakers (Robinson-Pant, 2004).

Critiques regarding the reductionist positioning of ‘illiterate’ (often conflated with ‘ignorant’) women as *disempowered* began unsettling many of the dominant assumptions and discourses regarding literacy and gender (Mohanty, 1984, p. 352). Veering away from assumptions about poor women as a homogeneous group, a wide range of ethnographic studies emerged addressing and exploring different ways in which literacy is embedded in gendered relations of power. Studies such as Kalman’s (2005, p. 79) engaged in wider debates about access to literacy for women in Mexico and argued that for literacy efforts to be efficient and relevant, ‘it is imperative to situate the teaching, understand written culture within the local context, and portray the immediate community as a place for reading and writing’. Edited volumes from Robinson-Pant (2004) and Street (2001) drew attention to a range of ethnographic perspectives which problematised the links between literacy, gender, and power, highlighting how women’s literacy in particular has been regarded as key to development. However, despite the emphasis on the part of government, NGOs, and other agencies to promote women’s literacy, it remains the case that women make up approximately two-thirds of the population who are unable to read and write (Robinson-Pant, 2014).

While the persistent and pervasive gender gap in education is a concern in many countries, it is often experienced more acutely in Indigenous and Southern contexts. Both Hanemann (2005, p. 6) and Cappelli (2018, p. 4) agreed that Indigenous women in particular often face ‘a complex gendered, socioeconomic triple bind’ or ‘triple discrimination’ simply for being female, Indigenous, and poor. In the context of Mexico, these hindrances were further reiterated by a female *Comandanta* (or Commander) of the Mexican Zapatista Army (an Indigenous movement whose origins I describe further in Chapter 3) named Ester, who stated in a public speech that ‘we are oppressed three times over, because we are poor, because we are Indigenous, and because we are women’ (cited in Klein, 2015, p. 140-141). Hanemann (2005, pp. 6–7) elaborated on these overlapping and aggravating factors:

Indigenous women in the developing world face many common threats such as poverty, little or no access to health care and education; armed conflicts; pollution ... unsympathetic governments; loss of their lands; and human trafficking to name just a few. Everywhere they are paid less, are given the lowest jobs, and are often subject to discrimination, humiliation and sexual abuse.

This purposeful framing of gender with other manifestations of marginalisation (read: Indigenous and poor) may at first glance echo prior reductionist portrayals of the ahistorical and homogeneous ‘Third World Woman’ (Mohanty, 1984, p. 351). However, in the context of

this study it helps to emphasise how within the larger struggle for Indigenous rights and equality, alarming rates of gender disparity in education continue to be overlooked and struggle to progress from discourse to practice. The extremely high rate of female learners in the MIB programme (approximately 92%) arguably demonstrates the persistent educational deprivation of Indigenous women not just in Mexico, but across the global South (Hanemann and Scarpino, 2016).

In this instance, an Indigenous woman in Mexico who is poor is not simply the sum of the ‘triple bind’, but the characteristics themselves are interdependent and cannot be separated out. Although the present study remains first and foremost situated within the broader field of literacy studies, at times the empirical data also demanded further attention towards the unequally gendered access to and engagement with literacies. In order to articulate, acknowledge, and theorise the multiplicity of social inequalities, an intersectional perspective offered a way to identify and examine the multiple, complex and interrelated dimensions and processes of exclusion underpinning adult literacy in Indigenous contexts.

As a political project, *intersectionality* was initially put forward as a concept within the context of Black legal studies when Crenshaw (1991) proposed its use as a tool to analyse the ways in which various forms of social oppressions and inequalities overlap and interact with each other (Nash, 2008). The dynamism of the concept is evident when scrutinising how it has evolved from this initial usage: what began as something historically situated in a class-race-gender debate about Black women in the justice system in the USA has now been widely deployed in broader feminist scholarship in a variety of country contexts and as a way to explore a range of social issues, including identity and migration (Lutz, Herrera Vivar and Supik, 2011).

From an intersectional perspective, categories or markers of identity/difference such as race, age, gender, disability or socioeconomic background are not seen as mutually exclusive, nor are they merely additive. Within an intersectional frame, wide ranges of social categories are fundamentally re-constitutive in the sense that they interact with and are affected by each other, and thus are being guided by a less reductionist and more ‘complex ontology’ that demands these social positions be treated as relational (Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006, p. 187; Christensen and Jensen, 2012).

A further understanding and usage of intersectionality as a conceptual tool aided in the data analysis stage. More specifically, it allowed me to more comprehensively examine some of the

ways in which female MIB learners continue to be excluded within what is still a largely patriarchal society (examples and testimonies of which are further explored in Chapter 7) (Frias, 2010). As Molyneaux (2006, p. 427) expanded in her analysis of the conditional cash transfer programme PROSPERA, social policies in Latin America reflect more ‘familial, patriarchal and paternalistic’ social needs that remain highly gendered in nature. Despite more recent expansions of female participation in education and the workforce, social provisions have been (and often continue to be) put into place with the assumption that women’s primary occupation would be within the home and they would largely depend on male members of their family to provide financially.

The data in this study therefore sheds some light on the wider effects of gendered attitudes in education and the longstanding impact it still has on the lives of many women participants of the MIB. At the same time, gendered attitudes towards literacies also uncovered how some male learners were also impacted by prevailing discourses and practices (for example, through the prioritisation of work over schooling). Throughout the writing of this thesis, I was reminded of the complexities when defining or unpacking intersecting social categories of exclusion and how such an analysis would demand a different line of enquiry largely outside of the remit of this study, whose primary aim was to explore the role and meaning of literacy in the MIB context. Still, I consider that the related data on the gendered dimensions of adult literacy learning featured in the empirical chapters (and particularly in Chapter 7) could nonetheless potentially inform further theorisations of intersectionality.

Literacy and (de)coloniality

Decolonial arguments have emerged from the 20th century and onwards as a ‘challenge to the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe’ (Bhambra, 2014, p. 115). Recent calls for decolonisation within and across all levels of education and in their respective curricula (including, most relevant to this study, in the adult education sphere) have also renewed discussions on the ways in which colonial legacies weigh upon contemporary understandings of knowledge, social order, gender, race, and how these can be reconceptualised to accommodate for emerging perspectives from the margins (Schmelkes, 2011).

According to Quijano (2007), *coloniality* can be defined as both a pattern and a structure of domination and exploitation rooted in social classifications, the effects of which operated—

and continue to operate—across both formerly colonising and colonised societies. Thus, the concept of *decoloniality* could be defined both as a process of political struggle by colonised people against the erasure and denial of their identities and cultures and as a political movement of recognition of and resistance to the effects of such exclusion (Curiel, 2007). Therefore, rather than seek to erase complex colonial pasts, decolonial efforts pursue a range of restorative, redistributive, and reconciliatory measures and actions across institutions, communities, and different sectors of society.

As an early leader in the field of post-colonial studies, Fanon (2001) insisted that the dehumanisation of colonialism had a ripple effect as observed through violence, racism, and expropriation of land by the colonisers, which in turn influenced processes of ‘othering’ against parts of the population (including Indigenous peoples and those of African descent) through mechanisms of power and domination. Related conceptual explorations and debates prompted scholarly pursuits against the exclusion of ‘subaltern knowledges’ (Mignolo, 2000, p. 3) and aimed to move away from the minimisation of Indigenous experiences and essentialisation of the Indigenous *Other* as voiceless and without agency.

In wider postcolonial studies, Spivak’s (1995) work was particularly influential in terms of mapping out the structural exclusions of the *subaltern* and offering an analysis of the asymmetric relationship between dominant and non-dominant discourses. Broadly speaking, the subaltern can be regarded as ‘a figure of exclusion’ with a fundamental ‘lack of access to institutions of rights and obligations’—in other words, a type of non-citizen living within modern socio-political structures that are purported to be built on a degree of political representation (Thomas, 2018, p. 861). Through the lens of subaltern studies that sought to bring attention to untold histories, scholars have further examined the effects of ‘misrecognition and misrepresentation’ in education and the ways in which these can be manifested in both subtle and overt ways (Power and Taylor, 2013, p. 468). Therefore, the potential embedding and favouring of dominant values and ideologies in systems of education could in turn further silence and marginalise those who were excluded to begin with.

Unpacking the idea of *decolonisation* further, Curiel (2007) suggested that *processes* of decolonising imply a recognition of the complex nature of relations and social subordinations that occur when an individual or group exercise power over those considered to be ‘Others’. Moreover, it promotes an establishing of stronger solidarity between those seeking to maintain and preserve their ways of knowing, doing, and being in the face of domination (Fanon, 2001).

In this way, a decolonial approach is meant to represent a theoretical and epistemic resistance to Eurocentric, ethnocentric, androcentric, and racist views that have at times reduced those in the global South to ‘marginal and exotic objects of study’ (Curiel, 2007, p. 93).

In terms of literacies, the ongoing struggle to ‘preserve, and later to rewrite, history’ demonstrates the enduring power and influence of Northern (and often colonial) literacies against competing Southern literate traditions (Collins and Blot, 2003). Mignolo (1989, p. 53) referred to this power as ‘the tyranny of the alphabet’ whereby the history of conquered peoples was consequently written, incorporated and represented through Western histories and European lenses, further reifying the legacies of colonialism. However, it could be argued that those peoples said to be ‘without writing’ or ‘without history’ are merely the ones who ‘lack only a certain type of writing’ or a certain type of history (Derrida, 1974, p. 83; Wolf, 2010).

Just as LSP studies argue that there exists a *multiplicity* of literacies, decolonial analyses can serve to highlight that not all literacies carry the same cultural weight nor are inscribed with the same social value. Hernandez Zamora (2019, p. 369) argued that it is ‘essential to complement the LSP with a decolonial position that places education, learning and written culture at the intersection between the historical, the postcolonial and the sociocultural’. It is in this way that the political critiques linked to the LSP perspective overlap with those from postcolonial and decolonial thought: both perspectives question dominant policies, practices and discourses that undermine, minimise, erase, or co-opt the literacy practices of non-dominant groups.

Therefore, adopting decolonial perspectives in LSP studies means (among other things) interrogating and analysing how literacy practices have been historically shaped or socially mediated by power relations. Different degrees of power relations (be they social, political, economic, pedagogical, or other) and the social legitimacy of literacies implies multiple inclusions and exclusions of certain voices, knowledges, languages, and identities.

Against this backdrop, the MIB study circles featured in this study emerged as key sites from which to examine some of the ongoing negotiations and reproductions of social hierarchies. On one hand, the MIB programme as a whole arguably represents tentative efforts on part of the Mexican government to develop and promote a longer-term strategy for learning that takes into account the enduring ethnolinguistic diversity of the country. On the other hand, the data in later chapters also suggests that those who engage in the MIB have at times questioned (and

continue to question) whether or to what extent the model and the type of promoted literacies speaks to their lived experiences or responds to their interests or needs.

Past national integrationist policies in Mexico have been somewhat dislodged by contemporary movements for Indigenous rights (such as the Zapatista uprising in 1994) and decolonial discourses have entered the national conversation. However, many of the social hierarchies that maintain a stratification between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups remain intact, and neoliberal discourses and policies continue to dominate social and educational spheres (Bertely Busquets, 2016). Thus, the colonial project in Mexico is an ongoing one.

Among the wider debates on Indigenous rights to education, one of the most visible effects and legacies of colonialism is linguistic (Green and Branford, 2012). As King (1994) argued, literacy and language in Mexico have been at the centre of a wider ideological debate over cultural identity, one that has continued to unfold since the colonial era despite the more recent shift towards ethnic pluralism. The next section takes a closer look at these related issues.

Literacy and languages

Many of the challenges for educational systems in multilingual contexts often lies with whether and how to design, adapt, and deliver quality education that takes into account the distinct social, cultural, linguistic and political realities and needs of different groups. Looking at the literacy and power (as I did in a previous section) raises related questions about the languages such literacies are manifested in, represented by, and how these are utilised and valued, both by those who engage with the languages directly and those who do not.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the INALI catalogued 68 language groups originating from 11 linguistic families, identifying a total of 364 language variants that are spoken across Mexico. According to the INALI, a *linguistic family* is defined as a set of languages whose similarities in linguistic structures (phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical) are due to a common historical origin. A *linguistic grouping* is the set of variants that identifies a language and a distinct group of Indigenous peoples (for instance, Mixtec is regarded as both an ethnicity and a language, but there are a dozen distinct variants of the Mixtec language with varying degrees of intelligibility between them). The *linguistic variant* category refers to a form of speech that presents internal differences with other variants of the same grouping (whether this is through sounds, words, or meaning). For some groups, the differences between one variant

and another can feature marked sociocultural differences and are often conditioned by territory, religious beliefs or political life (Hamel, 2008).

Given the diversity of languages and language variants, it follows that language remains a contested terrain in Mexico. The colonial project created an enduring legacy of social inequality with intersecting axes of difference and reinforced linguistic and cultural hierarchies (Crossa, 2012). This is represented by—but not limited to—former national policies which broadly sought to demarcate and (re)construct the role of Indigenous populations within the boundaries of the nation-state (to be discussed further detail in Chapter 3). The enduring influence and repercussions of colonial legacies are starkly observed across systems of education, the purposes and functions of which long resided in promoting not just a dominant language (in the case of this study, Spanish) but a set of accompanying ideological judgements and frameworks, thus purposefully subsuming extant Indigenous languages and their respective embedded traditions in favour of the language of the colonial power (Collins and Blot, 2003).

Language has previously been theorised as a significant site of tension when scrutinising its symbolic power (Fairclough, 2015). For example, Bourdieu (1991, 1998) contended that language and linguistic practices should be regarded as a medium through which people can exert power in pursuit of their own interests, and therefore could be seen as representing a type of cultural *capital*. According to Bourdieu, certain forms of language can acquire and be attached to higher (or lower) levels of legitimacy and therefore wield different forms of symbolic power. Communicating, naming, or assigning meaning to something in one linguistic exchange arguably means that there is a simultaneous exclusion of other meanings and experiences, thus implying that diverse social interactions often occur within discourses of symbolic domination.

From a constructivist standpoint, language is created and moulded within and by different social contexts, which in turn influences the ways in which it is used (Pennycook, 2010). Such perspectives have been articulated against views that language can and should be regarded as fixed and fused to a specific nation-state or national identity (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007). These essentialising ideologies serve to uphold more politically infused discourses of national unity that advocate for a single language (such as Spanish in Mexico) thereby overlooking and undervaluing linguistic variations. Such assimilatory discourses and practices have been explored in a variety of country contexts, with evidence that underpinning assimilationist

agendas have played a role in creating and reinforcing unequal social relations by means of language ideologies, thus upholding patterns of linguistic discrimination in education, both formal and non-formal (Hamel, 2008; Wright, 2012; Cushing, 2019).

Simultaneously, forms of linguistic diversity within specific socio-cultural contexts are valued on different levels and scales depending on whether and how social groups, institutions, local and regional governments interact with and/or deploy language. In turn, such discourses and beliefs about the valuations of language and literacies outside of the dominant one and the degree to which these are regarded or accepted as ‘official’ has implications in terms of how speakers of those languages perceive both the language and themselves as its speakers (Heath and Street, 2008, p. 18).

Issues and debates regarding language rights within educational spheres have come to the forefront in more recent decades. The conference on Education for All in Jomtiem, Thailand, in 1990 stressed the importance of native language learning and called for the expansion of mother-tongue education programmes, a message which was then reiterated in the Dakar Framework for Action a decade later (UNESCO, 1990; World Education Forum, 2000; Robinson, 2016). In 2007, the UN adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which among other things established Indigenous peoples’ right to education in their own languages (UN General Assembly, 2007).

More recently, the UN declared 2019 as the Year of Indigenous Languages in an effort to draw attention to the rapid rate of language disappearance and to help achieve the SDGs through the promotion of Indigenous languages (at national, regional and international levels) and thereby further understanding, reconciliation and cooperation. Within this international discourse, the role of and right to language was expressed as being ‘a prerequisite for freedom of thought, opinion and expression, access to education and information, employment’ as well as a mechanism for building inclusive societies and achieving sustainable development (IYIL, 2019). In light of such recent policies, declarations, and initiatives that encourage actions for language preservation and revitalisation, it is additionally worth looking at the emerging concept of *interculturality* as a way to further explore what seems to be an overall shift in discourse and practice with regards to ethnolinguistic diversity.

Literacy and interculturality

The handling of social, ethnolinguistic, cultural, and political differences in different country contexts can be identified and traced in the design and implementation of certain state policies related to education (and otherwise) throughout history. While key policies relevant to Indigenous education will be further detailed in the next chapter, I use this section to unpack the concept of *interculturality* as it pertains to the Mexican context to then explore its linkages with literacy.

Interculturality has emerged as a relevant ideological principle guiding contemporary Indigenous thinking across various social, educational, and political spheres, simultaneously eliding with efforts and processes of decolonisation across postcolonial states (Walsh, 2012). In its broadest sense, interculturality is concerned with processes of recognition, dialogue, and mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge between cultures (Dietz and Mateos Cortés, 2011b; Restrepo, 2014).

In many ways, the concept was developed as a critique of the concept and project of *multiculturalism*, which has been regarded by some as being largely conceived on a basis of cultural ‘separateness’ or ‘otherness’ (UNESCO, 2009, p. 29; García and Velasco, 2012, p. 2). In contrast, *interculturality* proposes ‘an articulation of knowledges that takes into account the intercultural co-construction of diverse epistemologies and cosmologies’ (Rappaport, 2005; Walsh, 2012, p. 17). It advocates to bring about meaningful change within and across different societies, not only accepting or tolerating identified or perceived differences, but departing from a point of interconnected kinship (O’Donovan, 2015). Moreover, Martín-Díaz (2017, p. 85) argued that the concept of interculturality has both a theoretical and political dimension and represents an ‘epistemic transformation’ with the potential to transcend some of the limitations of multiculturalism as both a discourse and framework.

Wider critiques and contestations against assimilatory ideologies and policies of the past in Latin America led to the rise of interculturality in both discourse and policy ‘as a project to curtail the hegemonic effects of *mestizaje*’ (Saldívar, 2018, p. 440). Rather than support the mere coexistence of diverse groups under a demarcated national identity or ideology (an idea commonly associated with multiculturalism), an intercultural perspective distinguishes itself by recognising cultural variances, encouraging ‘mutually enriching relationships on an equal footing’, and fostering cross-cultural understandings (Schmelkes, 2011, p. 102). The promotion of ‘intercultural dialogue’ as an alternative to multicultural approaches and arrangements on a

broader state level has similarly been linked to efforts of conflict resolution, reconciliation, and for ensuring social cohesion (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 8).

The paradigm shift towards interculturality within education in Mexico, Latin America, and beyond has not been without its criticisms. For example, Saldívar (2018) argued that contemporary notions of interculturality in some ways could be compared to the prior ideological wave of *indigenismo* in Mexico, or a political strategy of post-revolutionary state consolidation characterised by hegemonic discourses, policies, and practices (trends which will be further discussed in the next chapter) (Taylor, 2005). Comparing these, more recent reactions to and relative acceptance of intercultural approaches and discourses from dominant *mestizo* groups does little to challenge or change pervasive social hierarchies, nor does it adequately curb the ongoing negative effects of hegemonic *mestizo* systems and intersecting discrimination for Indigenous groups in contemporary Mexican society (Canessa, 2007; Tubino and Sinnigen, 2013).

Likewise, efforts to embed more intercultural approaches in public schooling (and to some degree, adult education interventions) have been characterised as being superficial and lacking in consideration towards the inherent power structures and dynamics amongst both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups (Velasco Cruz and Jablonska Zaborowska, 2010). As Schmelkes (2011, p. 102) contended, interculturality as a concept points towards ‘an ideal, a utopia, an aspiration which describes a reality in which relationships between or among cultures are not asymmetric’. Thus, it could be argued that even if or when there is intercultural embeddedness at programmatic levels (for example, within a literacy learning intervention such as the MIB), as well as at institutional or national policy levels, this does not necessarily guarantee that pervading social hierarchies are lessened.

Literacy mediation and brokers

Kalman (2009, p. 165) referred to the circumstances in which someone ‘brokers literacy practices, language use, and the consequences of reading and writing for others’ as a process called *mediation*. The concept of mediation has been used as a frame for analysing how literacy ‘mediators’ engage with and interpret written texts and subsequently how they involve and support others in processes of reading and writing for a variety of purposes (Papen, 2010b; Thériault, 2016). In this way, the idea of mediation is linked to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) seminal theory of situated learning whereby people engage in mutual repertoire working

towards a common goal within a ‘community of practice’. Additionally, it is from these learning spaces that ‘meaning from and around written language and appropriate processes of interpretation and symbolic forms’ emerge and are actively (co)constructed by participants across contexts (Kalman, 2008, p. 531).

This relational aspect of mediation is key when unpacking and analysing the activities that mediators and learners engage in. Papen’s (2010) ethnographic research on literacy practices and mediation in the Namibian context suggested that mediators play a particularly important role in social situations where those involved may (or may not) all have the same access to the dominant language and literacy practices. Linking this back to ideas about power, Papen went on to suggest mediation becomes a ‘process’ whereby dominant discourses and literacies can be challenged with the aid of a mediator (ibid., p. 79). Accordingly, it could be argued that to some extent, literacy mediators have the potential to disrupt hierarchical relations and help alter the power dynamics between different social actors.

While uses of written language and engagement with different texts are often circumscribed by institutional boundaries and locally situated, it is in these spaces where mediators can help learners cross contextual and discursive lines, thereby (co)constructing the literacy practices which aim to fulfil or satisfy emerging needs for interpreting or producing literacies. In multilingual contexts, the role of a literacy mediator overlaps with that of a translator of both spoken words and written texts and their respective meanings (Baynham and Masing, 2000). In other words, literacy mediators working in contexts with more than one language are simultaneously involved in complex processes of cultural and linguistic negotiations. Prior studies have thus suggested that in contexts where non-dominant groups meet dominant groups, literacy mediators assume the dual role of *cultural brokers*, or individuals who are required to both understand and interpret ideological meanings behind texts as well as deal with the technical issues of linguistic coding and decoding (Martinez-Cosio and Martinez Iannaccone, 2007; Papen, 2010b). Thus, it is also within the context of mutual knowledge exchange and collaboration that dominant discourses have the potential to be negotiated and contested (Baynham and Masing, 2000).

Further studies have underlined how mediator-brokers can provide a link between diverse social and cultural contexts. In a study on literacy brokering for Sudanese refugees, Perry (2009, p. 256) portrayed the role of brokers as individuals who ‘bridge linguistic, cultural, and textual divides for others’. Similarly, ongoing mediations between local communities and

national and institutional decision-makers across history arguably reflect how ‘cultural brokers’ are tasked with ‘shortening the cultural distance’ between the two (Wolf, 1959; Saldívar, 2018, p. 448). To this, Dietz and Mateos Cortés (2011a) added the dimension of *intercultural* mediator when analysing the discourses and practices of graduates from an Indigenous intercultural university. They suggested that mediators working in cross-cultural contexts are often expected to assume a ‘role as inter-cultural, inter-lingual and inter-actor “translators” who manage, apply and generate knowledge from diverse worlds’, worlds which are themselves often ‘asymmetrical and antagonistically shaped’ yet remain closely interlinked with each other (Dietz and Mateos Cortés, 2011a, pp. 18–19). Related explorations, observations and analyses in later chapters on the dyadic relationship between facilitators and learners participating in the MIB are thus made with such ideas in mind.

Summary and research questions

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the key theories and concepts that were used to answer the research questions of this study, primarily drawing from the notable body of work situated within the burgeoning field of literacy as a social practice (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Kalman, 2005; Papen, 2010a; Street, 2016). Given the nature of my enquiry (exploring literacies in Indigenous contexts) and paying particular attention to the theoretical issues that can arise when exploring educational interventions in Indigenous and post-colonial settings, the range of relevant concepts featured in the different sections highlighted some of the key ways in which adult literacies intersect and interact with complex socio-political processes.

The conceptual framework for this study was thus based on a social practice lens that regards literacies as being embedded in relations and structures of power, shaped by a plurality of different cultural and political contexts, and linked to broader concerns of inclusion and exclusion in education (Street, 2005; Martin-Jones, Kroon and Kurvers, 2011; Rogers and Street, 2012). An LSP approach directed the analysis, while the interconnected discussions detailing key theories, issues and debates around development, power, criticality, gender, (de)coloniality, languages, interculturality, and mediation provided a coalitional set of concepts to better respond to the complexities that emerged within and across the data.

In this way, the integrated framework offered a novel and comprehensive means to explore, theorise, and articulate the role and meaning of literacies in the context of this study, while at

the same time prompting an ongoing engagement with relevant theory throughout the various stages of the research and writing. The initial literature review phase allowed me to read across topics and disciplines in preparation for going into the field. Upon returning from the field, I promptly reengaged with related literature, thereby making the transition from generic ideas to more topical ones and further expanding the breadth and scope of my search to accommodate for the new data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This dynamic movement between the field data and the literature is distinguishable in ethnographic studies (something which I elaborate on in Chapter 4). Consequently, it also led me to consider the MIB programme as having a dynamic, two-way process: as I go on to argue throughout the remaining chapters, the MIB both influences and shapes those who participate in it just as much as it is influenced and shaped by externally dictated factors.

The process of narrowing down my research focus and crafting my guiding research questions was an iterative and reflective one (Agee, 2009). Given my aim to explore and analyse the role and meaning of literacy from the perspectives of those who engage with the MIB programme, I developed four principal research questions which guided the research process:

RQ1. What are the meanings, values and uses attached to literacy, according to MIB learners and facilitators?

RQ2. How do participants perceive literacy and processes of literacy learning in relation to their lived experiences as Indigenous adults in Mexico?

RQ3. In what ways and for what purposes do learners and facilitators of the MIB engage with the programme?

RQ4. How do participants feel the programme has influenced and/or had a wider effect on their lives and livelihoods?

Having provided a review of relevant literature and outlined the guiding research questions, the next chapter will offer a socio-historical overview of literacy trends in Mexico. It will conclude with an overview of the adult education landscape and a detailed look at the MIB programme.

Literacy, education, and society in Mexico

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a general background of Mexico as a country, beginning with an overview of the key socio-economic, demographic, and political characteristics that have shaped—and continue to shape—the country’s contemporary society. I then conduct a historical mapping of Mexico’s salient literacy trends from pre-colonial to contemporary times. This is followed by a section devoted to reviewing the adult education landscape in Mexico, which serves as a backdrop to a more detailed examination of the bilingual educational model at the heart of this study, the MIB.

Mexico at a glance

Mexico is a federal republic that occupies a large territory in the southernmost region of North America. It is among the most densely inhabited countries in the world, with an approximate population of over 126 million (INEGI, 2021). It is also the world’s most populous Spanish speaking country, a fact that is contrasted by the previously mentioned ethno-linguistic diversity. The most recent census estimates that 21.5% of the population (equivalent to around 25.7 million people) self-identify as Indigenous. Additionally, 6.1% (or 7.3 million) of the population reported as being speakers of an Indigenous language, while 11% of those speakers (or 865,972) are monolingual in only an Indigenous language and do not speak Spanish (IWGIA, 2020; INEGI, 2021).

The year 2020 was the first time that the national census included data on Mexico’s Afro-descendant population, following a recommendation from Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Similar to how the data on Indigenous peoples are collected, this was captured using the criteria of self-identification, with the results showing that the country’s Afro-Mexican population accounted for 2% of the country’s overall population, equivalent to more than 2.5 million people.

The country’s central national government is divided into three legislative, executive, and judicial branches that operate independent of each other. Decentralised political divisions are represented by 32 sovereign states, with each state divided into smaller political entities known

as municipalities. The three levels of government (federal, state and municipality) interact in different ways depending on the region. In some cases, municipalities retain a traditional governance system known as *usos y costumbres* (or customs and traditions), which is a type of ‘subnational’ Indigenous customary law that can be traced back to the Spanish colonial era, with variations found in other Latin American countries including Guatemala and Bolivia (Benton, 2011, p. 1).

Usos y costumbres is generally characterised by procedures and principles of consensus decision-making and voluntary communal service, with variations across different municipalities (Anaya Muñoz, 2004). The system also disavows political parties or affiliations, which in the past had led to tensions between self-governing Indigenous communities and federal and state governments (Eisenstadt, 2004; Weinberg, 2007). Municipalities in Mexico that retain an *usos y costumbres* approach to governance—while generally ‘tolerated’ by the government—remain subject to the informal and discretionary powers of local authorities (Esteva and Pérez, 2001).

A consistent upward trend in economic growth since the beginning of the 21st century has recently positioned Mexico as an upper-middle-income country. As a member of the OECD, a trading member of the former North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and a member of the current US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), Mexico’s role on the global stage has moved in line with market-based patterns of globalisation. However, the social and economic adjustments brought forth by widespread liberalisation and privatisation have also had significant effects in terms of uneven income distribution, decreasing wages, and job precarity. Such shifts mean that the country remains characterised by sharp socio-economic contrasts (Green and Branford, 2012; Laurell, 2015).

For example, a recent multidimensional poverty study done by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development estimated that 43.6% of the overall population in Mexico (or 53.4 million) lives in poverty and 10% (or 11.4 million) live in *extreme* poverty, and therefore are perceived to be lacking ‘the necessary conditions for the effective enjoyment of their rights’ (CONEVAL, 2019; Secretaria de Bienestar, 2019, p. 4). Conditions of social and economic precarity remain markedly higher amongst the Indigenous population: the percentage of Indigenous population living in poverty is estimated to be 69.5%, in contrast to the 39% of the non-Indigenous population. Moreover, 27.9% of Indigenous people are in situations of extreme poverty, versus only 5.3% for those who are non-Indigenous. In this

context, the threshold set by CONEVAL for determining conditions of extreme multidimensional poverty is measured in terms of six social indicators (of which at least three need to be met to not be considered as being in extreme poverty) and a person's income relative to the cost of a basic food basket. As of early 2021, the minimum monthly income *per capita* needed to be considered above the wellbeing line was \$1,200.18 MXN (or £43.49 GBP) in rural areas and \$ 1681.47 (or £60.90 GBP) in urban areas (CONEVAL, 2021).

In addition to general poverty issues, recent studies also estimate that 58% of the economically active population in Mexico work in the informal sector to generate their day-to-day income (Alcaraz, Chiquiar and Salcedo, 2015; Molyneux, 2016). As a result, Mexico has a tax-to-GDP ratio of merely 16.5%, placing it far below the OECD average of 33% (OECD, 2020). Generally speaking, low tax revenues often translate into inadequate commitments to social systems (including education), as is the case in Mexico. Moreover, low participation rates in the formal economy imply that a majority of the working population has little to no access to any of the existing (albeit precarious) state welfare systems. Compounding issues such as a high perception of corruption and insecurity and rising incidences of organised crime and violence have further exacerbated social tensions (Transparency International, 2020).

The complex milieu of modern Mexico and its current trends regarding policies and interventions related to literacy can be better understood by taking a closer and more comprehensive look at literacy's interdependence with and nestedness in broader historical and socio-political contexts. The following sections will therefore address key trends to help illustrate how Indigenous literacies and knowledges were (and to an extent, continue to be) subordinated in Mexico.

Literacy trends in Mexico: a historical perspective

Mexican history can largely be distilled through three critical junctures: the Spanish Conquest of 1519, the War of Independence in 1810, and the Revolution of 1910. Each event had a significant impact on Indigenous rights and marked different trends in terms of literacy. I have divided the following sections accordingly, providing an overview of relevant trends across the pre-colonial, colonial, post-independence, post-revolutionary, and contemporary time periods.

While this periodisation may appear extensive and overly general, I have narrowed down the focus to primarily discuss key historical trends and related milestones in educational policies that reflect and feed into a wider discussion on the complexity of literacies in Indigenous

contexts in Mexico. In this way, I aim to provide important insights into the educational landscape within which the current MIB programme emerged.

Pre-colonial trends

The roots of literacy in what is today known as Mexico can be traced to advanced Mesoamerican civilizations going as far back as 8,000 BCE. Along with ancient China and Mesopotamia, Mesoamerica is considered to be one of three global regions where independent writing systems emerged (Justeson, 1986). Not only that, but Lounsbury (1989) identified as many as thirteen distinct writing systems emerging from the Middle American region during the pre-Columbian era.

From the centuries-old syllabaries of different Native American groups to the codices of the Maya and Aztecs, extant archaeological and historical evidence demonstrates that the original languages of the Americas emerged from ‘complex civilizations’ with equally complex ‘literate traditions’ (Collins and Blot, 2003). Indeed, by the time of the Spanish Conquest (1519-1521), many Indigenous groups of the region had developed systems of writing and had ‘literary cultures that met the needs of their particular societies’ (King, 1994, p. 27) therefore demonstrating ‘a plurality of literacies different in kind and use’ (Collins and Blot, 2003, p. 132).

Colonial trends (1519-1810)

The effects, implications, and legacies of the 300-year colonial rule of Spain in Mexico were multiple and complex. Violence, diseases, widespread seizures of land, and other aggravating factors resulted in a devastating reduction of the Indigenous population and the loss of at least 100 Indigenous tongues (Hamel, 2008; McCarty, 2012). Furthermore, it was during this era that Indigenous languages and forms of writing were subjected to a process of *castilianising* (or converting to Castilian), whereby Spanish was put forward as the primary language of communication and used as a means to spread the Christian faith to the Indigenous population (Heath, 1972).

The ensuing *castilianisation* of the existing Mesoamerican civilisations did not set out as a sweeping imposition of the Spanish language. Rather, many Spanish missionaries made notable efforts to translate Christian texts into the language of the Indigenous groups they encountered and use these languages for religious conversion (Stavenhagen, 2012).

Nonetheless, the early colonial period marked the beginning of an ongoing campaign for assimilation and a longstanding linguistic and cultural exclusion and marginalisation of Indigenous groups.

Because artefacts such as the Mayan codices were considered to be sacred repositories of rituals and traditions of Indigenous systems of faith, they were then targeted as a threat to the spread of Christianity (Marcus, 1992). This subsequently led to the large-scale destruction of texts by religious actors (known as ‘rituals of purification’) and an erasure of most material manifestations of Indigenous literacies, the non-alphabetic nature of which was deemed uncivilised and ‘dictated by the devil’ by the European conquerors (King, 1994, p. 28; Collins and Blot, 2003, p. 130).

Of the numerous texts that existed recording centuries of Indigenous history, historians acknowledge that only a handful of codices survived the sweeping annihilation during the 16th century (Christenson, 2007). Efforts to transcribe and thus preserve Indigenous histories were made and kept in secret, away from Christian authorities who would seek to eliminate them. Among the most important pieces of surviving Mesoamerican literature is the origin myth called the *Popol Vuh* (roughly translated as the ‘Book of the People’). Originally written in a Maya language (k’iche) and adapted to Spanish by a Spanish friar in the mid-1500s, the corpus of stories about the history and creation of the world that make up the *Popol Vuh* is an important example of Indigenous literacy that has not only survived, but has also been embedded the wider cosmovision of many Indigenous groups in Latin America today (Christenson, 2007; McCarty, 2012).

Considering the breadth of literary heritage and evidence of complex writing systems emerging from the Mesoamerican region, the current ‘myth’ and misconception that many of the existing Indigenous languages in Mexico are largely oral or had no written form until recently could thus be challenged and contradicted (Sánchez Tyson, 2017, p. 58). While many Indigenous groups valued and preserved mostly oral traditions (thereby remaining largely agraphic or with texts being mostly reserved for the intellectual elites), most surviving Indigenous languages were either largely suppressed or had simply never been through a process of orthographic standardisation (Houston, 1994; King, 1994; Hernández Zamora, 2018).

The fact that most Indigenous groups in Mexico were largely perceived as either being non-literate or mostly orally based (and therefore not textually or alphabetically represented)

continues to be propagated to this day, to the detriment and devaluing of the respective Indigenous languages and literacies (Rockwell, 1999). In addition, this longstanding portrayal of Indigenous literacies as relics of the past rather than active, dynamic systems have had a strong influence on more modern education institutions and directives. More broadly, the idea of Indigenous groups as both isolated and static entities with little to no literate traditions prior to the advent of colonialism continues to affect the way Indigenous literacies, knowledges, histories and identities are perceived, represented, described and experienced. Such enduring ideas prompted Rockwell (1999, p. 1) to pose a question that remains relevant in the first part of the 21st century: how did Indigenous peoples in Mexico ‘who in the past possessed what is increasingly recognised as a sophisticated writing system, come to be considered over a period of 400 years members of “oral cultures”?’

Enduring pre-colonial perceptions of Indigenous literacies as ‘oral’, primitive, or underdeveloped were similarly described by Eric Wolf in his 1982 anthropological survey titled *Europe and the People Without History* which analysed the dynamics of culture and the relations of power in modern economic processes. Referring to those subjects whose perspectives are discounted within larger global narratives (primarily Indigenous peoples), Wolf used the phrase ‘the people without history’ to then challenge the notion of *histories* themselves, arguing that the concept of history was a privilege conceived by and for European modernity (Wolf, 2010, p. xx). In Wolf’s view, history itself became an ‘epistemic power differential’, and those societies who did not speak the imperial languages and did not have histories of alphabetic writing were deemed to have no reliable memories or records of their past (Mignolo, 2005, p. xii).

Mignolo (2005) later referred to this concerted and collective erasure of history as part of an ongoing ‘colonial wound’ that caused—and continues to cause—an imposed and internalised sense of inferiority of those who did not fit within the predetermined (and colonial) models of modernity. Similarly, Smith (1999, p. 31) argued that despite evidence of Indigenous literacies and literate practices in many regions and cultures before Western colonisation, these surviving literacies were often deemed ‘uncivilised’ and as something which ‘did not count as a record of legitimate knowledge’ by the colonisers who encountered them.

This ongoing tension between what counted (or not) as literacy in the region that would later become Mexico following the Spanish conquest was described further by Collins and Blot (2003, pp. 131–137):

It is the legacy of this conflict between the alphabetic literacy of the Spaniards and the various literacies of the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica that provides the cultural backdrop to the present struggle to sustain ethnic identity in the face of the powerful forces of nationhood carried out overwhelmingly through educational institutions by means of language and literacy.

The literacies of the ancient peoples of Mexico were central to their history and to their struggle against the forces of domination. Those concerned with contemporary issues of educational policy which deny this history continue a process of disempowerment relegating native peoples to a negative category of “oral” peoples who must be saved, in a secular sense, in order to be assimilated fully into national consciousness.

These processes of disempowerment over time and the simultaneous struggle for Indigenous rights and legitimacy thus permeated (and continues to affect) more nascent education policies and practices, as the next section will describe.

Post-independence trends (1810-1910)

To speak of Indigenous literacies in the newly independent nation-state of Mexico is to refer to a time when Indigenous peoples were a population majority without the political power of the Spanish-speaking minority. The transition from colony to self-governing country (and a highly multi-ethnic and multilingual one at that) brought on a national ‘crisis of identity’ rife with ideological and political contradictions and tensions (King, 1994, p. 6).

Not least among these tensions was the role and influence of the Catholic church in state affairs, which remained strong in the early 19th century. The battle over what type of government the country would have resulted in a clash of ideas: on one hand, there were calls to build a democratic, secular, and more liberal state, and on the other, ideas about a more conservative, religious, and monarchical regime prevailed. These internal struggles and disagreements between two very different competing visions led to decades of political upheaval in the form of military coups, wars, and rotating authoritarian regimes which all vied for power and influence (Gonz, 2008).

The post-independence era was thus characterised by a prevailing political ideology of nation and citizenship building that aimed to assert state legitimacy and therefore subsume the different Indigenous groups into a single, homogeneous Spanish-speaking dominant society (Heath, 1972). In terms of education, this meant that the gradual creation and expansion of the early national education system was implemented with Spanish as the sole language of instruction, even though many Indigenous languages remained prominent at regional and local

levels. Moreover, marginal literacy learning practices for adults in Indigenous contexts were strongly interlinked with religious instruction (Schmelkes, Águila and Núñez, 2009).

This national project to ‘assimilate the Indigenous and peasant masses’ into mainstream society continued throughout the period of the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (from 1877 until 1910) which culminated in the Mexican Revolution (Schmelkes, Águila and Núñez, 2009, p. 251). Among many things, the Revolution was sparked by widespread disaffection with the political stronghold of the Díaz regime which largely concentrated power amongst wealthy landowners and industrialists who exploited the labour of peasants (the majority of which were Indigenous peoples) (Stavenhagen, 2012). The end of the Revolution thus ushered in major land and nationalist education reforms, described in the following section.

Post-revolutionary and nationalist trends (1910-2000)

The renewed Constitution of 1917 following the Revolution defined primary education as compulsory, free, secular for the entire population (Schmelkes, Águila and Núñez, 2009). By the time the national Ministry of Education of Mexico (SEP) was created in 1921 (with its stated responsibility to develop, oversee and implement national educational policies, standards, and provision) it was estimated that 87% of the Mexican population were ‘illiterate’ (Hamel, 2008; Schmelkes, Águila and Núñez, 2009). Whether this so-called illiteracy was indicative of the entire population (therefore including both Spanish and Indigenous language speakers) is unclear; more evident in government policies of the time were nationalist trends that largely regarded compulsory schooling as the main tool to shape a new, unified Mexican society.

The intervening period after the Revolution thus brought forth further expansion of formal schooling to accommodate for rapid population growth and to meet the renewed nationalist agenda. Efforts to expand formal education provision across the country were widespread, although this growth was largely concentrated in more urban areas (Stavenhagen, 2012). Literacy ‘brigades’ were organised in the 1920s to distribute pamphlets and educational materials to more rural areas (Kalman and Reyes, 2017, p. 408). The first rural teaching colleges (known as *Escuelas Normales*) were opened in the same decade to promote and strengthen the nationalist educational project (Dietz and Mateos Cortés, 2011b).

Despite the rapid expansion of a national educational system that ushered in mandatory public schooling in Mexico, participation in formal education from Indigenous groups remained

limited from the outset (López, 2009; Busquets, 2016). Not only that, but there was no government-mandated provision or coordinated educational strategy for adult learners. Rather, a series of disparate efforts emerged as a way to fill the provisional gap, with similarly uneven results. Efforts such as national adult literacy campaigns in the 1940s and again in the 1970s reported an overall reduction of national ‘illiteracy’ rates, but these were implemented ‘almost exclusively in Spanish’ (Stavenhagen, 2012, p. 58). Other non-governmental efforts to develop bilingual education and promote Indigenous language literacy included the work of SIL, whose linguistic work produced significant specialised knowledge about Indigenous languages in Mexico (more so than any governmental efforts to document or standardise the different languages). However, SIL’s principal concerns with missionary activities were increasingly met with resistance and accusations of foreign political interference curtailed larger literacy efforts (Hartch, 2006).

Thus, it was over the course of many decades in the wake of the Revolution that SEP’s educational approach largely overlooked Indigenous literacies and privileged a standardised, Eurocentric, and alphabet-based approach to language instruction and schooling (López Gopar, 2007). Moreover, such consolidating policies and practices in education reflected the ‘centralist and vertical’ *indigenista* approaches which promoted a ‘monoculturally and monolingually conceived Mexican society’ and signalled a perception of ‘peasants’ and Indigenous people as one and the same, and therefore as subjects who lacked the type of knowledge deemed valuable by the central government (Dietz and Mateos Cortés, 2011b, p. 67, 2021, p. 101).

In parallel to the education-related reforms, the agrarian reforms that happened after the Revolution ended in 1917 sparked similar movements throughout the Latin American region and had longstanding effects on Indigenous groups in terms of territorial rights (Perramond, 2008). By the 1940s, many of Mexico’s large production agricultural estates (known as *fincas* or *haciendas*) were broken up and divided amongst an estimated 1.5 million families in the form of parcels of communal land known as *ejidos*, which were subsequently administered by Indigenous communities for individual use in accordance with traditional self-governing norms (Green and Branford, 2012).

The continuing nationalist discourse of *indigenismo* to assimilate the peripheral (Indigenous groups) to the dominant (*mestizo*, Spanish speaking society) further reinforced existing social stratifications, thus facilitating and justifying what Taylor (2005, p. 80) called ‘an accelerated internal colonialism’. Therefore, during a crucial time of national growth, the place and power

of Indigenous peoples in national discourse and policy were constrained by the directives of non-Indigenous actors within a single-party framework that largely sought ‘a normative Spanish-speaking, capitalist-oriented society’ (ibid.).

Despite the pervasive nationalist trends in education, however, various counter-discourses, movements and organisations began emerging as a way to challenge the overriding centralist and vertical educational approaches. It was within this context of changing social and educational demands promoted by Indigenous advocates and activists that the General Directorate of Indigenous Education (DGEI) was created in Mexico in 1978. To date, it remains the agency in charge of regulating, supervising and evaluating all intercultural educational initiatives. To an extent, the creation of organisations such as the DGEI symbolised the waning of more explicit policies of assimilation in education and represented a significant advancement of Indigenous rights in education. However, as Zolla and Márquez Zolla (2004, p. 244) indicated, even agencies like the DGEI were modelled on the basis of the ‘incorporation’ of Indigenous groups into the nation.

Toward the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s, there was a notable shift in discourse concerning Indigenous rights (in education and beyond), reflected in a series of international treaties and national policy changes (Jackson and Warren, 2005). On an international level, Mexico signed the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) *Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*, which was developed as a legal instrument aimed at the protection of Indigenous rights (including the right to a relevant education). Citing the need for more explicit protections in national laws and policies that take into account the specific characteristics and demands of Indigenous peoples, the Convention advocated that educational development and provision should be done in cooperation with Indigenous peoples and its access be guaranteed at all levels (thereby implicitly including adult education). Furthermore, Article 47 stated that educational strategies for Indigenous peoples must ‘incorporate histories, their knowledge and technologies, their value systems and their further social, economic and cultural aspirations’ (ILO, 1989, 2003, p. 62).

On a national level, a constitutional amendment in 1992 declared Mexico as a ‘pluricultural’ country and purported to guarantee Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination and autonomy. The amendment represented a fundamental break from the homogenising discourse on national identity and came with various social and educational implications. For example, the process of decentralisation following an education reform in the same year transferred

control of basic education and teacher training to the individual states, thereby aiming to increase local relevance in education and improve the quality of education (Ornelas, 2000). Despite these reforms and efforts to adopt a more intercultural perspective in education planning and implementation, however, there remained a disconnect between the federal government and many Indigenous groups, who for the most part remained underrepresented or excluded from national discourse and political decision-making.

An example of these disputes can be illustrated by a key issue regarding territory: following a constitutional revision in 1991, the legal protections aimed at preventing the privatisation of land and potential monopolisation by private interests were dismantled. The system of land tenure that had adapted and survived for over four centuries and was later protected by the Mexican Constitution was repealed, ending the federal protection of *ejidos* with immediate and destructive consequences for Indigenous groups across Mexico. The *ejido* system—once regarded as a progressive system of land tenure and as a way to guarantee Indigenous control of the land—was seen as a hindrance for further growth (and potential profits) in light of a rapidly expanding private sector. The constitutional modifications allowed for *ejidatarios* to sell, mortgage or rent individual plots of land, thus enabling ‘a mass transfer of rural land from Indigenous communities to multinational food corporations’ (Kelly, 1994, p. 544). As a consequence, the autonomous structures of Indigenous groups whose subsistence and traditions were strongly tied to said land were weakened, exacerbating poverty in what were already impoverished areas (ibid.).

Such mounting social and political tensions resulted in the emergence of small- and large-scale Indigenous movements, the most prominent of which became the Zapatista uprising in 1994. The revolt came on the back of the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) agreement and was in many ways an organised and visible resistance from the global South against a perceived too-powerful global North (Dados and Connell, 2012).

Among the Zapatista’s many demands were calls for Indigenous interests and discourses to be embedded in decision-making at all levels (including in education), not merely in a symbolic or tokenistic way, but as a foundational aspect of contemporary society building within a severely stratified and multi-ethnic society (Rebolledo, 2010). Calls for broader political and cultural representation, land rights, labour rights, guarantees of relevant education, access to health care, and a broad dismantling of structural and institutionalised discrimination followed (Rockwell, 1998; Taylor, 2005).

The Zapatista movement culminated in the signing of the San Andrés accords in 1996, which among other things aimed to raise awareness of the existing socio-cultural and linguistic diversity and laid out demands for more relevant Indigenous educational opportunities. Throughout the literature surrounding the Zapatista ideology, there is a clear connection between the subjugation and subordination of Indigenous people and the onset of neoliberal and capitalist policies in Mexico, which the Zapatistas largely consider to be at the root of current discord, and oppression against Indigenous peoples around the world. What the Zapatista stance often fails to deliver, however, is a critique of its own ideological limitations and how these, too, remain entrenched in issues of power within Indigenous patriarchal systems which are sometimes at odds with each other (Cappelli, 2018).

As such, there remain unresolved tensions and contradictions within the Zapatista rhetoric as well as unfulfilled commitments on part of the Mexican federal government, which has led some to claim that the signing of the Accords functioned more as a declaration on paper than actionable and tangible change (Klein, 2015). Notwithstanding, the influence of the Zapatista resistance as a ‘social project based on the plurality of the peoples and cultures that make up Mexico and the diversity of their ideals’ reflected a significant shift in the country’s complex (and ongoing) socio-political transition (Esteva and Pérez, 2001, p. 124). Moreover, the movement spearheaded similar social movements across Latin America aimed at furthering Indigenous rights, equality and autonomy (in education and otherwise) and was followed by key milestones in Mexican national policy with regards to Indigenous rights, which will be discussed in the next section.

Contemporary trends (2000-present)

By 2000, reported rates of illiteracy in Mexico dropped below 10% for the first time (Kalman and Reyes, 2017). Other major shifts included another constitutional reform that protected Indigenous rights in 2001, followed by the founding of the General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education (CGEIB) in the same year.

By 2003, the *General Law of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was approved, a legislative mandate which explicitly outlined the rights of all Indigenous groups to access linguistically and culturally relevant educational opportunities (López, 2009). It stated that all Indigenous languages and Spanish hold the status of ‘national languages’ due to their historical origin and ‘have the same validity, guaranteeing at all times human rights to non-discrimination

and access to justice in accordance with the Constitution' (*Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*, 2003, p. 1).

In 2005, the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) was created, thus beginning a more coordinated and concerted effort to document the national languages and their variants as well as help to develop, promote and implement intercultural education projects. Such policies, legislative precedents and institutional developments at a national level represented a culmination of a collaboration between Indigenous institutions, leaders, and thinkers and the federal government and were largely the result of the discourse engendered by the Zapatistas and other Indigenous movements (Rebolledo, 2010).

On an international level, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in 2007 marked another important step in the recognition and promotion of Indigenous rights. Among other affirmations, it stated the following in reference to educational rights:

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 ... States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures ... to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language. (UN General Assembly, 2007, Articles 13 and 14).

Without underestimating the importance of these socio-political shifts on an international and national level, the bid for more pluralised approaches to education and other social and economic policies has had many setbacks in Mexico. Bilingual Indigenous education initiatives have been largely neglected and resources diverted, and moreover, processes of ethno-linguistic exclusion in education continue to be bound up in issues of status, privilege, and defined by unequal power structures (Schmelkes, 2011). Legacies of *indigenismo* remain to this day in the form of misaligned educational strategies and a national curriculum that is still highly centralised within the ministry of education (Dietz and Mateos Cortés, 2021).

The literacy trends discussed above demonstrate how education in Mexico has witnessed many shifts and expansions. With regards to education targeted at youth and adults, the more recent trends and reforms in the 21st century have affected how strategies of adult education (in Mexico and beyond) are both perceived and acted upon and how they are often entangled with political and economic issues related to global competitiveness, productivity, and labour (Torres, 2008; Robinson, 2016). The next section reviews the current adult education landscape in the Mexican context and then expands upon the characteristics of the MIB programme.

Adult Education in Mexico

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the international discourse related to education stemming from organisations such as UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank (to name only a few) widely endorses the notion of education at all levels (including adult education) as a human right. Despite repeated affirmations that literacy is key for achieving educational equality and furthering national development, countries' responses to closing the educational gaps are often heavily concentrated on primary and secondary schooling for children (Milana and Nesbit, 2015). Even as recently as the mid-90s, the World Bank put forth recommendations against investments in adult literacy, deeming educational programmes for adults as having a 'poor track record' with low 'effectiveness rates' (The World Bank, 1995, p. 90; Torres, 2006).

While this stance later shifted towards recommendations advocating for *family* literacy (therefore including adults), continuities in educational policies demonstrate a relative lack of attention and low prioritisation of adult education. This is reflected by consistently low allocation of funding in most countries, where government investment in educational initiatives targeted at out-of-school youth and adults is typically less than 1% (Robinson, 2016). Mexico is no exception: as the main adult education agency, INEA operates with an estimated 1% of the national education budget (De Dios Castro, 2011; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013).

INEA was created as a federal agency in 1981 and tasked with overseeing non-formal education efforts across the country, including adult basic education and literacy. The agency acts as both a regulatory and coordinating body for adult education nationwide, and thus is responsible for all educational accreditation and certification in line with federal education laws. In addition to its capacity as an accrediting body within the SEP, INEA oversees the development of materials and standardised exams (Valenzuela Gómez-Gallardo, 2000). Coordination agreements between state governments and INEA outline an overall decentralisation of adult education services, meaning that programmes are provided by the individual State Institutes for Adult Education (IEEA).

INEA's programmes and modes of operation have evolved during successive educational reforms. The *Programme of Educational Development 1995-2000* began a process of redefining the foundational concepts behind adult education approaches and emphasised the development of life skills beyond basic literacy. The *National Education Programme 2001-*

2006 made further and more explicit references to adult education as a lifelong and life-wide process that involved different social dimensions. By 2002, the *National Council for Education for Life and Work* (or CONEVyT) was created to coordinate and evaluate a range of public and private initiatives (Bracho and Martínez, 2007).

Besides INEA's different programmes, there are narrow offerings of basic education for youth and adults outside of the compulsory education system. The *National Council for Education Development* (or CONAFE) was created in 1976 and provides 'compensatory education programmes' aimed at improving basic education for disadvantaged students (Shapiro and Moreno Trevino, 2004, p. 2). CONAFE's educational programmes are primarily designed to fit the needs of learners living in rural communities with low population that do not meet the SEP's minimum conditions for operating public schools, which is to have at least 100 school-aged children in a community (López, 2009). Given that many Indigenous communities across the country are sparsely populated, CONAFE developed a *Proposal of Educational Attention for Indigenous Populations* (PAEPI), although this is mainly targeted at children, with limited offerings to adults.

The Indigenous Bilingual Educational Model for Life and Work (MIB)

A renewed framework of policies and programmes at the turn of the century gave way to the creation of the *Educational Model for Life and Work* (MEVyT) in 2000 (under the coordination of INEA). The main MEVyT offerings are aimed at all learners over the age of 15, while the *MEVyT 10-14* attends to younger children. In the interests of opening an access route to basic education for Indigenous language speakers, the *Indigenous Bilingual MEVyT* (the MIB) was formally launched in 2007 and continues operating to the writing of this thesis. The former two modalities are carried out exclusively in Spanish, whereas the MIB has been and continues to be developed in various Indigenous languages and variants.

To date, it is estimated that the MIB has served over 100,000 learners across 18 states in over 63 languages, with 92% of its participants being women (UNESCO, 2011, 2012; INEA, 2018a). By 2018 (the year when the fieldwork for this study was carried out), there were 69,011 individuals enrolled in the MIB programme (INEA, 2018b). In their comprehensive review of Effective Literacy Programmes worldwide, Hanemann and Scarpino (2016, p. 145) described MIB programme provision as including the following central elements: a) 'basic and functional

literacy’ in a range of Indigenous languages and Spanish; b) life skills and civic education (including human rights, gender equality, nutrition, conflict management, reproductive rights, and health); c) training to develop labour-related skills; d) social and intercultural studies, and e) environmental conservation management.

Upon registration, each MIB learner goes through a ‘diagnostic evaluation’ (INEA, 2015a, p. 6) to determine their point of entry into the programme, a process which includes an initial interview, a review of the learner’s previous educational records (if there are any), and a written diagnostic exam (provided if the learner reports a degree of reading and writing ability during the interview). The MIB works with Indigenous language speakers who are either monolingual in an Indigenous language or possess varying degrees of oral Spanish proficiency. Depending on the results of the diagnostic, a learner might be provided with literacy materials exclusively in their Indigenous language, or they might begin with integrated modules that feature the Indigenous language and Spanish simultaneously.

The programme distinguishes three different categories of bilingualism: ‘receptive’ bilinguals (those for whom an Indigenous language is their dominant and most used language and have a limited understanding of Spanish words and expressions), ‘incipient’ bilinguals (those who may be able to speak some Spanish words but cannot carry a full conversation), and ‘coordinated’ bilinguals (those who speak and understand one or more Indigenous languages and Spanish). Moreover, it explicitly takes the approach of incorporating Spanish as a second language, with the eventual goal of transitioning learners to completing the basic education modules in Spanish (hence the term *bilingual* in the title) (Mendoza Ortega, 2008). This approach is in keeping with the results of a survey on adult education and literacy programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, which recommended that Spanish can and should be introduced as a second language (UIS, 2014).

Key to the MEVyT model is its relatively novel approach in pedagogical and curricular terms: veering away from the more linear national curriculum, the MEVyT is specifically designed in a modular way to allow learners to progress at their own pace, while at the same time incorporating curricular elements which recognise prior knowledge and experience. The modules are categorised into three main types—‘basic’, ‘diversified’ and ‘alternative’—of which a total of 12 need to be accredited to obtain an official educational certificate for the primary or secondary school level (Bracho and Martínez, 2007, p. 285; INEA, 2018b).

The *basic* MIB modules are sequential with a focus on literacy and numeracy, and are described as longer-term and ‘more complex’ given the temporal dimensions and considerations specific to emergent literacy learning (INEA, 2015b). The initial level requires the accreditation of five basic modules: *I start to read and write in my language* (MIBES 1); *Let’s speak Spanish* (MIBES 2); *I read and write in my language* (MIBES 3); *I start to read and write Spanish* (MIBES 4), and *I use the written language* (MIBES 5). According to INEA’s own criteria, a learner is considered as ‘literate’ once they have accredited these five initial modules, upon which they are eligible to receive a ‘certificate of literacy’. It is this level that is most relevant to this research, as these are the only modules that exclusively incorporate Indigenous language elements. Thus, the participant experiences with the MIB programme featured in this thesis largely emerge from their engagement at the basic level (though not exclusively, as some participants had already progressed beyond that).

The more advanced *diversified* modules are non-sequential and cover a range of topics aimed at engendering specific subject knowledge as well as life skills. Some modules are compulsory (covering subjects such as history and science), but in addition, learners have the option to choose certain modules according to their distinct interests or needs, and as such, there are modules related to parenting, sexual and reproductive health, and civic engagement, among others. A number of *alternative* modules can be taken instead of certain basic ones depending on specific circumstances, as they are applied to more specific fields of interest (for instance, numeracy as applied agriculture, business, or home economics).

Once enrolled in the MIB, learners then have the option to join a local *study circle* to receive the support of a MIB facilitator. These study circles take place in many different spaces and settings (examples of which are illustrated in later chapters) and are typically multigrade (or in this case, multi-modular) in nature. According to the government website that reports educational statistics for INEA, there are over 108,995 study circles in place across the country across 478 national coordination offices (INEA, 2018a).

As an educational model, the MIB has garnered international attention, having been awarded a UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize in 2011 for its advancement of mother-tongue literacy education and training. Despite this recognition, however, research into the MIB programme remains limited. Until the UNESCO office in Mexico commissioned a mixed-methods evaluation of the programme in collaboration with INEA in 2012, no larger-scale empirical or evaluative studies had been previously conducted to analyse the scale or impact of the MIB.

Further, upon conclusion the UNESCO report was not made publicly available, and to date, only one article has discussed some of the findings of that research largely in terms of women's perceptions of the programme and its empowering potential (Hanemann, 2019).

As the 2012 report concluded and as the data from this study supports, there remain many programmatic and pedagogical constraints within the MIB and across INEA as a government institution. These challenges include—but are not limited to—low allocation of funding and scarcity of resources, low facilitator remuneration and inadequate training, high rates of facilitator and administrator turnover. As the ensuing empirical chapters will go on to discuss in more detail, the implications of these limitations are wide-ranging and have different effects on how and why people engage with literacies. Prior to this discussion, however, the next chapter will describe the overall design of the study, the different methods of data generation, and provide more details on the analysis of empirical data.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

Introduction

The present chapter will describe the overarching methodological considerations of this study. It includes a discussion of the stages prior to and during fieldwork as well as an explanation of the analytical processes used to explore the data. In addition, this chapter will explain my positionality as a doctoral researcher in Indigenous contexts and provide an overview on the trustworthiness of the data and findings. It concludes with a discussion on the related ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

The chapter is sectioned into three main parts: the first will include a review of the different methodological strands that comprised my overall research design: namely, how I used *ethnographic approaches* in social research and drew from a *critical constructivist* perspective to explore the role and meaning of literacies as they relate to the MIB programme in Mexico.

The second section will cover the methods of data generation. Specifically, I will discuss the field research that took place in the Mexican states of Campeche, Oaxaca, and San Luis Potosí during the months of October and November 2018. During that time, I visited 15 Indigenous communities across the three states and conducted 25 individual interviews and 9 group interviews. I used three methods for evidence gathering which made up the basis of the empirical chapters of this thesis: 1) *participant observations* (moving back and forth between being a silent classroom observer and a participant observer), 2) oral *semi-structured interviews* (including informal interactions), and 3) detailed *field notes* that reflected on the learning activities related to literacy.

The third section will highlight my approach to data analysis and discuss the process in which I arrived at the final themes that shaped my empirical chapters and the overall research findings. Finally, I discuss the various ethical considerations and methodological limitations of the study.

Methodological approaches

The methodological design of this thesis is *qualitative*, *constructivist* and *critical*. In addition, my study was *interpretive*, therefore allowing emerging theoretical connections to arise

throughout the research and writing stages. This leveraging of theory as an ‘interpretive tool’ (Varpio *et al.*, 2020, p. 992) allowed me to deepen my engagement with key literature while the data analysis was underway, thus accommodating for additional relevant theories to feed into the analysis process and further elucidate key aspects and insights gleaned from the data.

For this study, I also took an empirically-driven approach. This meant that I worked from the data up in search for interlinkages, patterns, or dissonances to generate new theoretical and practical understandings of literacies within the MIB programme. I did not begin with a hypothesis or have pre-determined analytical categories, but rather I followed an iterative, generative process for understanding a particular phenomenon (literacies) within a specific context (the MIB programme in Mexico) while foregrounding distinct participant perspectives (learners and facilitators). In this way, this study was also *inductive* in nature and allowed for emerging themes to arise.

Underlying this research process was the added value of multiple sources of evidence of the MIB programme in action within its ‘real world’ context that were then integrated into the overall analysis (Robson and McCartan, 2015, p. 3). This included data in the form of photographs and writing samples from the field as well as excerpts from the MIB learning materials (which are publicly available online).

A multi-sited ethnographic approach

The term *ethnography* carries different meanings and is dependent on the discipline through which it is utilised: generally speaking, it is predicated upon attention to the everyday and is concerned with gaining intimate knowledge of communities and groups. While ethnography could be regarded as a research approach, its dimensions cover a wide range of techniques, all with different strengths and limitations depending on the context in which they are applied (Chan, 2018). A particular conceptual tension arises when attempting to define ethnography as a standalone *method*, which is largely related to an understanding of ethnography derived from and defined by more ‘traditional’ anthropological scholarship and indicates an immersion in social settings over a sustained period of time (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004, p. 535). However, scholars have contested this view, suggesting that ethnographic studies can accommodate for a range of designs and temporal lengths depending on the unique contingencies and purposes of the research and without compromising potential findings (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004; Gallo, 2009).

Thus, while I acknowledge that the anthropological interpretation of ethnography underpins many contemporary understandings and research practices, the temporal constraints of my study did not allow for prolonged research in the field. As such, I make the distinction of following an ethnographic *approach*, borrowing ethnographic *techniques* and *strategies*, and drawing from ethnographic *tools* (such as field notes and interviews) to generate the data that informed the findings of the study, thereby still making use of the theoretical principles derived from ethnography (Wolcott, 2008, p. 42; Bloome, 2012, p. 11)

An ethnographic approach to exploring literacy within an Indigenous language educational programme is particularly apt given the established precedence of ethnographic approaches in the field. In particular, previous LSP studies have created a space for ethnographic research that seeks to examine literacy beyond formal and institutional boundaries and have demonstrated different meanings and purposes of literacy in everyday contexts (Street, 2016; Aikman and Robinson-Pant, 2019; Bloome *et al.*, 2019). Rogers and Street (2012) argued that ethnographic perspectives enable a deeper understanding of what happens in relation to reading and writing in different contexts. Furthermore, Maddox (2008, p. 195) posited that ethnographic studies can provide more nuanced and comprehensive insights into elements such as literacy acquisition and capabilities, institutional access to education, and ‘agency, gender relations, and identity’.

The existing body of knowledge thus supports the argument that ethnographic strategies and perspectives on literacy can help provide important details and context to events and practices and expand upon the meanings and uses of literacies through in-depth accounts in a variety of cultural settings. Moreover, it is when an ethnographic approach is combined with a social practice perspective that the meanings of literacies take on an *ideological* character (hence the ideological model of LSP) and the role of power relations in literacy practices becomes more salient (Prins, 2010; Rogers and Street, 2012). This foregrounding of societal structures and imbalanced power relations in the exploration and analysis of educational settings is strongly linked to critical approaches in research, which I will examine in more detail in the next section.

One of the main goals I had in deploying ethnographic strategies was to explore what is happening ‘on the ground’ within the MIB programme. I relied on these strategies to extract more nuanced and holistic characteristics of each research site, MIB study circle observations, and interviews. The aim of doing so was to provide ‘thick descriptions’ of the data (Geertz, 1973) to therefore ‘construct, test, and amplify theoretical perspectives through systematic

observing recording and analysing of human behaviour in specifiable spaces and interactions’ (Heath and Street, 2008, p. 38; see also Yin, 2014).

Ethnography as a research strategy, then, can also be viewed as a way to provide a platform for more individual perspectives that are may be overlooked in larger scale, evaluative or programmatic studies (Naples, 2003). At the same time that ethnography can be seen as a *strategy*, I also contend that ethnography is an interpretive *process* with lines of continuity throughout each stage of analysis and writing that ultimately help to develop new insights into a particular phenomenon (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In this way, I regarded my use of an ethnographic approach a way to facilitate connections between ‘micro-level processes to macro-level structures’ in educational settings (Gordon, Holland and Lahelma, 2011, p. 193).

Bloome (2012, p. 11) recommended that educational studies that rely on data emerging primarily from the boundaries of a programme or classroom should avoid the pitfalls of isolating these events from their wider sociocultural contexts, as this could ‘potentially distort descriptions of what they do and what it means’ and ‘make opaque the power relations among various social institutions’ (for example, the influence that INEA holds over the everyday management and practice of the MIB). Thus, I aimed to uncover the more situated experiences related to literacies within the MIB programme not just as a descriptive exercise, but also as a way to uncover historical and socio-political interlinkages through a parallel engagement with theory and empirical evidence.

My methodological approach was also *multi-sited* in the sense that I did not generate the data from a single place, event, or community, but rather across multiple sites in the same country. Multi-sited ethnography has been described as an exercise in mapping terrain, following ‘chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations’ and facilitating a more widely informed perspective on any given social phenomenon (Marcus, 1995, p. 105). By having an explicit logic of association between the different sites (in this case, all of them featuring an active MIB study circle), the sites can thus be brought together within the frame of a study to posit patterns, associations, and relationships on the basis of first-hand ethnographic data. In other words, multi-sited ethnography can help to explore a given social phenomenon from multiple locations and capture variances from site to site, which in turn enables a more comprehensive overall analysis (Gallo, 2009).

A critical constructivist approach

In keeping with the notion that qualitative educational research is not a neutral endeavour and acknowledging the spatial and temporal dimensions that shape different constructions of reality (Kincheloe, 2005, 2009), my research also combines *critical* and *constructivist* perspectives which influenced how the data was generated and later analysed.

A constructivist standpoint enabled me to locate my analysis within the specific sociohistorical and interactional conditions in which it emerged from, rather than attempting to analyse the social phenomena of literacy as a more abstract or decontextualised concept. From this relativist view, the generation and analysis of empirical phenomena becomes situated knowledge, emphasising the following: ‘(a) the social conditions of the research situation; (b) the researcher’s perspectives, positions, and practices; (c) the researcher’s participation in the construction of data; and (d) the social construction of research acts, as well as participants’ worlds’ (Charmaz and Bryant, 2008, p. 376).

Complementing the constructivist approach, the *critical* paradigm acknowledges lived experiences in context (in the case of this study, the experiences of MIB learners and facilitators and my own experiences as a researcher) and examines social conditions with an aim to move beyond a mere understanding of mechanisms of discrimination or oppression to then seek emancipatory transformation (Horkheimer and O’Connell, 1982; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Held, 1990). A critically positioned researcher therefore adopts an ‘action agenda’ for the purposes of furthering positive social transformation (Hardcastle, Usher and Holmes, 2006, p. 151). Moreover, assuming a critical perspective encourages the researcher to interrogate definitionally complex concepts (such as gender or race, for example) and link these to wider sociohistorical events in an effort to uncover prevailing discourses, ideologies, assumptions, and systems of domination (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005).

As a result, critical approaches in ethnographic research demand that attention be paid to ‘the interplay between the researcher and the participant, between data and theory, and between research and action’ (Cook, 2008, p. 150). A reliance on reflexivity (both on the role of the researcher and on the methodological approach itself) is also important. The active role of the researcher and their capacity for continuous reflexivity recognises that both the research process and findings are constrained by sociohistorical conditions. As I discuss in a later section on positionality, my encounters and experiences throughout the course of the fieldwork and the analysis had a significant role to play in writing up the final analyses.

The critical constructivist paradigm is more interested in interpretations rather than explanations of causality. In this way, the approach allowed me to ‘generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings’ from the findings rather than begin with or test a specific theory (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 7). Within this theoretical frame, processes of induction and deduction can therefore offer emergent theoretical insights.

Critical researchers in post-colonial (and Indigenous) contexts are additionally tasked with recognising the inherent power differentials between themselves and their participants. Understanding how power can both privilege and exclude people and how it operates within and across the research context is also key (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2014). From this perspective, the research findings of this study can be regarded as discursively situated and implicated in power relations and issues in terms of ‘doing’ research in Indigenous contexts, something which the next section addresses.

An agenda for Indigenous research

Underpinned and implicated in the different forms of methodological approaches and analyses are the ways in which educational research in Indigenous contexts has been conducted previously. Similarly, an Indigenous research agenda is interlinked with ethical considerations, which I will address towards the end of this chapter.

In her seminal book regarding decolonising methodologies for research with Indigenous peoples, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggested that Indigenous people in particular have previously been ‘oppressed by theory’ (1999, p. 38), citing research as being linked to and upheld by ‘the worst excesses of colonialism’ (ibid., p. 1). Smith argued that research and theory are themselves sites of struggle between the global North and South and are at the root of processes of social and epistemological marginalisation and ‘othering’.

As such, research concerning Indigenous issues (in both its historical and contemporary manifestations, and in education and beyond) has been—and continues to be—imbued with significant political, conceptual, methodological, and epistemological tensions. Similar to dominant models of education, prevailing models of research (more often linked to Northern research traditions) have often been ‘top-down’ and followed colonial models of intellectual practices such as ‘defining terms, naming, categorising and hierarchising, “disciplining,” and [...] assigning value’ (Louie *et al.*, 2017, p. 20).

Among other concerns, the role of researchers in Southern contexts and the associated risks therein include perpetuating extractive research practices (an issue that is particularly heightened when considering research of an ethnographic nature) and reproducing neo-colonial discourses and interventions that purport to be beneficial to Indigenous communities, while simultaneously and systematically ignoring or devaluing Indigenous epistemologies (Preece, 2011). Further, there is a risk that in seeking to understand the ‘Other’ that ‘the local’ is painted in such broad strokes that it essentialises the conditions of disadvantage, defining them through markers of precarity and deficiency (or poor, illiterate, uneducated, marginalised) and proposes mostly prescriptive and top-down solutions. Such framings risk diminishing the individual and collective agencies of those who participate in different types of research by assuming that Indigenous experiences, narratives, and ways of understanding (which tend to not conform to Northern research traditions) are unreliable or that there is little awareness of the structural disadvantages that affect them. As Meyers (2014, p. 11) argued, understanding that there very often *is* a deep awareness of complex conditions and circumstances is crucial for recognising the agency of those who ‘react to, incorporate, resist, and/or adapt to the dominant forms of literacy’.

Taking these concerns into consideration and acknowledging the nature of this study, I considered Smith’s conceptual and methodological proposal of adopting and adapting an Indigenous research agenda as a way to attend to potential emerging issues (theoretical, methodological, and otherwise) in an open and critically reflexive way. Of these critical elements in an Indigenous research agenda, the underpinning focus on *self-determination* stands out as more than simply a political goal, but one ‘of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains’ involving ‘processes of transformation, of decolonisation, of healing and of mobilisation as peoples’ (Smith, 1999, p. 116).

In addition to the proposed methodological processes, Smith proposed explicit principles or ‘projects’ that could be drawn from to question or challenge existing dominant structures and norms in theory, policy, and practice. These projects are ‘claiming, testimonies, storytelling, celebrating survival, indigenising, intervening, revitalising, connecting, reading, writing, representing, gendering, envisioning, reframing, restoring, returning, democratising, networking, naming, protecting, creating, negotiating, discovering, and sharing’ (Smith, 1999, pp. 143–161). Moreover, these projects resonate with the Latin American method of *testimonio*

whereby the subaltern voice and memory is acknowledged to be embedded in a larger cultural group (or groups) and therefore becomes a strategy of resistance and a way to bear witness to personal narratives and stories that transcend the boundaries of native languages (Mutua and Swadener, 2004; Burgos-Debray and Menchú, 2009; Pérez Huber and Pulido Villanueva, 2019).

An Indigenous research agenda, then, becomes primarily concerned with inquiry as both a political and moral endeavour within a complex and distinctive historical field, one that should be underpinned by goals of intercultural dialogue and social justice. Moreover, such an agenda would in theory tend to have open dispositions towards more pluralistic understandings of knowing, being, and doing (Nakata, 2013). This study therefore seeks to engage in and speak to Indigenous contexts and spaces in both geographic and epistemic terms by foregrounding and legitimising Indigenous experiences with and around literacies, while simultaneously contributing to the production of original knowledge that could inform educational theory and practice in discursive, theoretical, and practical ways.

As with any research agenda, there are caveats that are important to highlight. Non-Indigenous researchers (such as myself) who engage in research involving Indigenous peoples, ideas, traditions, cultures, languages, therefore need to be aware of potential biases and power differentials. Rather than attempt to distance myself from the data and present a fixed and positivistic set of empirical findings, I followed a relational approach to the data. This reflexive approach challenged me to continually question my position within the research context, something which the next section will elaborate on.

Positionality and reflexivity

The concept of researcher positionality has long been discussed in socially-oriented research, and can broadly be described as the personal characteristics, behaviours, beliefs, political stances, and cultural and socioeconomic background of a given researcher (Scott and Morrison, 2006; Denscombe, 2010). This section will articulate more clearly my individual position in relation to the research at hand, explore the assumptions that underpin my approach, and discuss the role that reflexivity in research played throughout different stages of this study.

Scholars have long argued that the experiences and positionings of the researcher-writer are directly implicated in the emerging narratives and findings of any study (Marcus, 1995; Conteh, 2020). Taking this into account, dimensions of positionality can be both

epistemological (or shaped by how we understand the world) and ontological (determined by our lived experiences in the world). The nature of qualitative inquiry further suggests that each researcher is a key instrument in the process of data generation, the salience of which is particularly evident in ethnographic approaches where the ethnographer is considered the ‘ultimate instrument of field work’ (Heath and Street, 2008, p. 57).

In this sense, my approach to the research process was broadly in line with Thomas’ (1993, p. 42) argument that ethnographic researchers are ‘active creators rather than passive recorders’ of events or narratives. Considering my role as an ‘active creator’ in the research and problematising my positionality thus led to me adopt a self-reflective stance that sought to acknowledge and reflect upon my own experiences in relation to the experiences of the learners and facilitators who participated in this study. Further examination of the literature led me to define *reflexivity* as an ongoing process of self-examination and disclosure about a given researcher’s background, identity, subjectivities, and assumptions that underpin and influence the way they generate and interpret data (Gray, 2017).

In adopting a reflexive approach and thinking about positionality in more relational terms, I followed in Usher and Edwards’ (1994) assertion that such a practice can help researchers identify and interrogate potential power asymmetries between themselves and their research participants, as well as turn a more critical lens on the stages of data generation, analysis, and dissemination. In particular, researchers working in Indigenous regions such as myself are strongly encouraged to be as clear about their intentions as possible and to incorporate active, iterative efforts of thinking about the ‘larger picture’ and embedding a ‘critical analysis of their own processes’ throughout the different stages of research (Smith, 1999, p. 137).

As a person who was born in Mexico and spent their formative and early adult years there, I possess a certain degree of ‘insider’ knowledge and heritage that was shared in part with my research participants (Sherry, 2008, p. 433). At the same time, my bilingual (Spanish and English) and bi-cultural family background (with one parent from Mexico and the other from the US), along with my transnational experiences working as an adult literacy practitioner in the US and as a postgraduate research student in the UK added certain ‘outsider’ elements (Giwa, 2015, p. 316) and further ‘baggage’ to my identity and position (Smith, 1999, p. 10).

Simultaneously straddling the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ lines led me to locate myself as an ‘in-between’ who was actively negotiating my position in the field (Milligan, 2016). Nast (1994,

p. 57) expounded on this state of ‘betweenness’ and attested to the complex and unavoidable negotiation of ‘the worlds of me and not-me’, or the differences between the researcher (in this case, me) and the participants (the MIB learners and facilitators).

My degree of familiarity with INEA as an institution and with the Spanish language MEVyT model in general began from being a former learner myself: as a person who was schooled at home all throughout primary and secondary school, I took a series of exams based on subject modules to get my official educational certificates through my local INEA chapter. After graduating from university in Mexico, I worked as an educational coordinator at a community-based non-profit organisation in the United States from 2011 to 2013. There, I was a facilitator for the international branch of the MEVyT aimed at reaching Mexicans abroad, a programme referred to in the US as *Plazas Comunitarias* or ‘community centres’ (Sánchez Tyson, 2020, p. 91). In this way, my ‘insider’ status in the field was strengthened in the sense that I had direct experiences with the MEVyT model as both a former learner and facilitator. These combined experiences thus led me to develop an interest in the MIB, another division of the overall MEVyT model that I had no previous experience with.

As with any study, there are concerns about the power relations implicit in the process of ‘doing’ research within or outside of the context the researcher is most familiar with or calls home. My experience in the field led me to question, shift, (re)construct and (re)negotiate my own identity and to reflect on identities and positions of privilege, including my own. As Siwale (2015) argued, research in one’s home country can raise a whole host of issues and discomfort, something I can also attest to. Throughout the fieldwork stage, I was unsettled with and conflicted by how deeply familiar I was with the urban context I grew up in (a mid-sized city in northern Mexico), but not with any the Indigenous contexts I visited. At times, my experiences in many of these communities gave me a sense I was in another country entirely, a disconnect which also factored into my experiences throughout the fieldwork and afterwards during the transcription and writing up stages. As a result, I also found myself intellectually positioned between the familiar and the unfamiliar and noted how these dislocations and relocations influenced both the data generation and analysis process.

While my status as a Mexican and degree of familiarity with the research context likely reduced larger issues related to access (Cotterill and Letherby, 1994), I was concerned with other issues related to my positionality and how these affected my relationship with the MIB learners and facilitators and the information that they chose to share—or not share—with me. First, I am

Mexican, but I do not identify as Maya, Ch'ol, Mazateco, Tének or Náhuatl, nor do I speak any of the respective Indigenous languages. I became aware of how I myself am a product of a long-term linguistic and cultural assimilation project in Mexico; I regretted the fact that I didn't speak any of the Indigenous languages I had the opportunity to interact with, and was surprised by my degree of unfamiliarity with many of the histories and traditions of the places I visited. I felt a sense of irony that it took me leaving and physically distancing myself from my home country to be able to look back and observe, explore, and understand it better from the outside. However, this new perspective also helped me gain a better awareness of the variety and complexity of literacy practices in my country of origin, as well as my role within such settings.

My presence during the field visits were without a doubt highly visible, and likely influenced the social dynamics by which all interactions took place. While my self-described non-Indigenous status did not impede my ability to build connections with the participants, it is possible that my age (early 30's), gender (female), socioeconomic status (middle class) and phenotype (light skinned) had an effect on the way the data was generated. Similarly, I noted a potential effect my presence might have on the pedagogical approaches I observed. For instance, there were occasions where the INEA liaisons informed me that participants were called to attend the study circle outside of their regular meeting times specifically because of my visit. Additionally, there were examples of certain learning activities that seemed to be organised for my benefit, suggesting a direct influence on participant interactions. For example, in one observed study circle session the learners organised a special demonstration involving passing along a match in a circle (whoever was holding the match when it extinguished was tasked with summarising the previous session), an activity which otherwise may not have been organised were it not for my visit.

The above example demonstrates how my presence may well have altered the observed attitudes and behaviours within the study circle sessions. Nonetheless, I had a sense that I was still observing mostly routine activities and that the cultural milieu in each site seemed to remain largely unaltered (Bryman, 2016). While such behavioural shifts and different forms of 'participant reactivity' precludes researchers from remaining uninvolved or non-reactionary to those around them, it has been argued that the potential alterations in the behaviours of participants is unlikely to 'damage' a qualitative study (Carspecken, 1996, p. 52; Paradis and Sutkin, 2017, p. 37).

To minimise any perceptions as an authority linked to any specific institution, I consistently provided very brief personal introductions during the field visits, stating my first name and proceeding with a short explanation that I was a student (not affiliated with INEA) originally from a city in northern Mexico who wanted to find out more about the MIB programme. Mostly, I downplayed the fact that I was a doctoral student at a UK university unless I was asked, although the information sheet and my contact information openly stated my affiliation.

Regardless of my effort to begin with more informal introductions and generate a sense of ease and openness amongst the potential participants, I was often conferred titles such as '*maestra*' (teacher), '*licenciada*' (licenced at a Bachelor's degree level), or '*compañera*' (classmate or colleague) by people in the communities. This tendency to address people through titles is customary in Mexico, and despite their seeming formality, is done out of respect. Moreover, despite my efforts to clearly state my purposes for being at each site, at times certain questions were raised regarding my role and relationship to INEA or the Mexican government. In one instance, I was asked whether I was sent to evaluate the programme on behalf of the newly elected president (my visits occurred a few months after the federal elections in July of 2018). More than once, I was asked whether I could directly provide support in the form of material resources (such as a whiteboard or notebooks) or if I could enquire about the status of facilitator training or payment. Thus, I found that my layered personal and professional identities became entangled with my national identity and affected my interactions with participants in different ways.

This navigation and negotiation of my own identity was in keeping with the previously described notion that I was key piece (or instrument) of my own research, and underlined the idea that as a process, the construction of identity is 'temporally articulated, it is contradictory, and it is always susceptible to change' (Sato, 2014, p. 51). Recognising these multiple, dynamic, overlapping, ambiguous, and at times contradictory identities in myself, I suggest that such questionings, (re)figurings, (re)articulations and theorisations of identity and self-understanding (as understood within their specific historical and contextual time) did constitute a process, one which will not end even after the writing of this thesis (Feghali, 2011). Recognising and analysing the complexities of identity reformulation processes can thus aid individuals like me—as well as other researchers working across diverse contexts and cultures—to identify and adapt to pluralistic identities and modes of operation and be mindful

of how our identities play a role in the analysis and dissemination of research findings (Anzaldúa, 2007; Purdy and Jones, 2013).

In conclusion, while the analysis and findings sections of this thesis will undoubtedly be imbued by my own experiences, assumptions, and reflections on the research experience (either explicitly or implicitly), rather than complicating or overshadowing the data and its subsequent analysis, I believe that my active participation and reflexivity has deepened it. Moreover, I believe that my concerted efforts to be fully transparent about the research process and to critically discuss my situatedness in the context of this study could aid future critiques of the overall research findings.

Data generation

Having outlined the key methodological approaches used for this study, I move now to discussing the ways in which the data was constructed or *generated*. I make use of the term *data generation* to remain in keeping with the idea that the activeness of the researcher plays a role studies drawing from ethnographic strategies (Mason, 2002 p. 52). There were three primary methods of data generation for this project, each of which I will explain in further detail in the upcoming sections:

1. Participant observations
2. Semi-structured interviews, including:
 - a. individual interviews (in Spanish)
 - b. group interviews (in Indigenous languages and Spanish)
3. Field and observation notes

Prior to detailing these methods, I discuss key issues and concerns related to fieldwork and provide an overview of the specific research sites from which the data was generated.

Fieldwork

The ability to gain access to the field is a crucial aspect for carrying out qualitative social research. Likewise, the transparency with which a study relates the various intricacies, uncertainties, complexities of the field and discusses ‘the political and ethical implications of negotiating access and building relationships with research participants’ is important for evidentiating methodological rigour and soundness (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016, p. 536).

Taking this into consideration, I followed a series of steps and employed different strategies to gain access to the specific research sites featured in this study. I began by reaching out to the General Director of INEA as the first and primary institutional ‘gatekeeper’ to begin negotiating access to the field (Brewer, 2000, p. 58). Following an initial discussion about the project, I was asked to submit an expanded research protocol that included a proposed timeline and summary of research methods. I received confirmation of the agency’s willingness to support my project on the condition that when I concluded my study, I share my key findings through a brief report with each respective state coordinating office.

Once the research protocol was approved, my main point of contact was with INEA’s Academic Director, who subsequently directed me to the primary state-level contacts who became my primary liaisons in the field. I shared the information sheet (see Appendix C for the version in English) with the regional coordinators prior to my visit.

Unavoidably, there were some logistical uncertainties before and during my time in the field. For example, the states I would be visiting were not confirmed until three weeks before my departure from the UK, and the exact communities were sometimes confirmed with less than a week in advance (in one case, they were arranged on the same day of my visit). Despite my prior communication with the local coordinating offices, some of the study circles were still given minimal notice and information about the purpose of my visits. In one instance, I had to take the additional step of requesting permission from a municipal authority to visit one of the communities. In one state, there were scheduling delays due to road blockades (a form of protest which is a relatively common occurrence in parts of the country). Such changing circumstances thus required me to maintain a flexible approach.

Many of these uncertainties were ongoing throughout my time in the field, but rather than being a hindrance to my research, the challenges that I faced provided valuable clues to understanding the particularities of the context I was exploring at various different levels (country, state, community, institutional, and programme). Therefore, even though I was not able to independently determine where I would conduct the fieldwork, following the appropriate institutional channels ensured that my research fully adhered to national and institutional regulations. Moreover, the particularities of each state and municipality permeated the ways in which the data was generated and later analysed, and the regional differences allowed me to gain a wider range of participant perspectives.

Research sites

In this section, I provide a brief socio-demographic overview of the specific research sites featured in this study to help situate my experiences and interactions in the field and to illustrate the heterogeneity between different regions in terms of overall population size and Indigenous language speaking populations.

The fieldwork took place in three states: Campeche in the southeast, Oaxaca in the southwest, and San Luis Potosí in central Mexico (see Figure 4.2). The featured data related to poverty and reported rates of illiteracy in the different states and municipalities follows the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy's (CONEVAL) multidimensional criteria which analyses poverty through both social and economic terms and measures the 'illiterate' percentage of the population as 'people 15 years of age or older who cannot read or write a message' (CONEVAL, 2019b, p. 133).

Figure 4.1 Map of research sites



Campeche

Located in the southeast part of the country, Campeche is divided into 11 municipalities and has a total population of 928,363 (INEGI, 2021). The Indigenous language speaking population accounts for 10% of the state's population, with a majority of these being Mayan speakers (77%) and a minority of Ch'ol speakers (12%) (ibid.).

In total, I visited six study circles spread across two municipalities in Campeche: Calkiní to the north (a predominantly Mayan region), and Calakmul to the south (a Ch'ol region) (see Figure 4.3). Demographic data and information about regarding socioeconomic levels, average years of schooling, and the proportion of Indigenous language speakers in the two municipalities can be seen in Table 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Municipalities in Campeche



Table 4.1 Poverty and literacy rates by municipality: Campeche

Municipality	Total population	Population in poverty	Population in extreme poverty	Indigenous language speaking population	Average years of schooling (aged 15+)	Illiterate population (aged 15+)
Calkiní	52,890	60.5%	19.3%	26,442	8.1	4,915
Calakmul	26,882	85.8%	46.1%	7,401	6.0	2,888

(Source: CONEVAL, 2015b, 2015c)

Oaxaca

With a total of 570 municipalities with a population of 4,132,148 (31% of whom speak an Indigenous language), Oaxaca has the highest Indigenous population overall and is the most linguistically diverse of the three states featured in this study (INEGI, 2021). Additionally, it is estimated that 415 municipalities in Oaxaca adopted and operate under the Indigenous self-governing approach known as *usos y costumbres* (described previously in Chapter 3) (Eisenstadt, 2007; Esteva, Babones and Babcicky, 2013).

Fieldwork took place three municipalities in the northern Mazateco region (see Figure 4.4). As demonstrated by the data in Table 4.3, the featured municipalities were not densely populated and were all characterised higher levels of poverty, lower average years of schooling, and a higher reported rate of illiteracy in proportion to the overall population than in the rest of the municipalities visited in Campeche or San Luis Potosí.

Figure 4.3 Municipalities in Oaxaca



Table 4.2 Poverty and literacy rates by municipality: Oaxaca

Municipality	Total population	Population in poverty	Population in extreme poverty	Indigenous language speaking population	Average years of schooling (aged 15+)	Illiterate population (aged 15+)
Santa María Chilchotla	20,584	93.4%	71.5%	18,353	4.1	4,769
Huautla de Jiménez	30,004	82.1%	52.6%	24,578	5.3	6,975
San Mateo Yoloxochitlán	3,475	86.2%	44.6%	2,391	5.7	526

(Source: CONEVAL, 2015e, 2015g, 2015h)

San Luis Potosí

The state of San Luis Potosí is located in central Mexico and is comprised of 58 municipalities. Of the total population of 2,822,255, 9% are Indigenous language speakers (INEGI, 2021). Fieldwork took place across four municipalities in the south-eastern part of the state known as the *La Huasteca* region, which roughly delineates the region where the Huastec people dominated during the Mesoamerican period.

Both ethnolinguistic groups featured here (Tének and Náhuatl) share similar traits and historical roots in the same region. However, the Tének in particular tend to use the auto-denomination of being *Huastecans* and speaking the *Huasteco* language (INALI, 2019). Currently, the Náhuatl make up 52% of the overall Indigenous population in the state, while the Tének account for 41% (INEGI, 2021).

Figure 4.4 Municipalities in San Luis Potosí



Table 4.3 Poverty and literacy rates by municipality: San Luis Potosi

Municipality	Total population	Population in poverty	Population in extreme poverty	Indigenous language speaking population	Average years of schooling (aged 15+)	Illiterate population (aged 15 +)
Aquismón	47,423	89.5	59.1	31,872	5.4	6,596
Tampacán	15,838	76.7	34.6	7,106	7.0	1,611
Ciudad Valles	167,713	38.8	6.8	12,828	8.7	7,576
San Martín Chalchicuautla	21,347	82.7	42.7	9,586	5.9	3,150

(Source: CONEVAL, 2015d, 2015i, 2015a, 2015f)

As can be seen from the table above, the featured municipalities of San Luis Potosí offered a glimpse of both rural and then more urban communities, whereas the sites visited in Campeche and Oaxaca were mostly rural. Out of all the municipalities visited, Ciudad Valles was significantly more populous, albeit one with a smaller proportion of Indigenous language speakers. Therefore, I observed no significant differences in terms of study circle sizes, numbers of participants, or infrastructure.

Having provided this socio-demographic background of the different regions, I now break these down to present the specific localities where the fieldwork took place (see Table 4.2). While concerns for any adverse consequences of featuring identifiable community details within their respective municipalities were minimal, I was led by sensitivities to the contextual patterns of the different communities, all of which carry their own complex historical, ethnolinguistic, and cultural characteristics. Therefore, I opted to retain the name of each

municipality as a way to maintain a level of rootedness to a real time and place, but added a layer of privacy by assigning a number to each individual community according to the chronological order in which the visit occurred (Nespor, 2000).

Table 4.4 Summary of research sites

State	Municipality	Community	Language
Campeche	Calkiní	Calkiní 1	Mayan
		Calkiní 2	
	Calakmul	Calakmul 1	Ch'ol
		Calakmul 2	
		Calakmul 3	
		Calakmul 4	
Oaxaca	Huautla de Jiménez	Huautla	Mazateco
	Santa María Chilchotla	Chilchotla	
	San Mateo Yolochochitlán	San Mateo	
San Luis Potosí	Ciudad Valles	Valles 1	Tének
		Valles 2	
	Aquismón	Aquismón 1	
		Aquismón 2	
	San Martín Chalchicuautla	San Martín	Náhuatl
	Tampacán	Tampacán	

Sampling and recruitment of participants

When recruiting for participant in this study, I used a combination of *purposive* and *convenience* (or *opportunity*) sampling. *Purposive* sampling refers to a strategic approach to selecting research participants and locations to ensure that they are relevant to the overarching research questions (Robinson, 2014).

Because my research questions were directly seeking to uncover different perspectives on literacies in social contexts, the pre-determined criteria I used was that the participants be directly involved in the MIB as either a learner or a facilitator. As such, the sampling for this study was determined by two key levels: locations and people (Atkinson *et al.*, 2012).

Interviews

At the core of the study and the analysis of this thesis are the interviews with MIB learners and facilitators. Altogether, I conducted *individual* interviews with fourteen learners (five male and nine female) and eleven facilitators (one male and ten female). I conducted a total of nine *group interviews* (with sizes ranging from ten to twenty people per group comprised of both male and female learners).

In qualitative studies, interviews are generally designed with a specific aim to elicit a range of perspectives about a certain topic, thereby acting as a type of ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Wellington, 2015, p. 138). Both the individual and group interviews I conducted followed a *semi-structured* approach to maximise the opportunity to explore broader narratives on literacies and foreground the perspectives of key stakeholders (Kvale, 1996). With this approach, I was able to both follow a general guide with issues to be covered during the discussion and retain a degree of flexibility when deciding the order, range, depth, and variety of questions within the same framework.

To prepare for conducting the interviews, I drafted a detailed interview schedule (see Appendix F for the full version in English) which was later simplified to better accommodate for probing and follow up questions as they arose. I followed the same interview guide for both learners and facilitators, often using general topics related to literacies as an ‘aide memoire’ (Bernard and Ryan, 2010; Coleman, 2016, p. 252). Questions included variations of the following prompts: *What comes to mind when you think of reading and writing? What is it for? Is it important? How have you used reading and writing in the past?* (See Appendix G for the simplified version in English).

When the discussion warranted further clarification, I used probing strategies with the aim of further elaborating or expanding on specific stories, experiences, or viewpoints. These included phrases such as ‘*Can you tell me more?*’ or ‘*Can you give me an example?*’ to elicit more detail-oriented information or to gain clarification (Wellington, 2015). At times, questions were adapted to accommodate for the variance of experiences between learners and facilitators.

All interviews were audio recorded using a password-protected dictaphone. As I explain further in the section regarding ethical considerations, prior to conducting the interviews I ensured that all participants had a copy of an information sheet explaining the purpose and aims of the study

(see Appendix C). In addition, all interviewees signed consent forms where they acknowledged that their participation in the study was voluntary.

In conducting individual interviews, I was primarily aiming to unpack specific participant experiences and perspectives (therefore adding to the ‘thickness’ of descriptions) to then examine whether or to what extent there were concatenations or dissociations across the data. I used the group interview method as a complementary approach to data generation in circumstances where time constraints did not allow for individual interviews or where most learners were monolingual in Indigenous languages (or who chose not to speak Spanish). Also referred to as the *focus group* or *multiple person interview* in the wider literature, the group interview method largely describes groups discussions where participants can interact with both the researcher as moderator as well as with each other (Creswell, 2009; Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

All interviews for this study were conducted in Spanish, with the exception of most of the group interviews, which were done in both Spanish and the corresponding Indigenous language. In those cases, I solicited the aid of the facilitators (who by default were fluent in both the regional language variant and in Spanish) who then interpreted the discussions in real time. Although the dynamics of speaking and listening through the facilitator as interpreter likely had an influence on the depth and breadth of the data, I considered the group interviews to have had an added interactional and collaborative element in that the discussions were further stimulated by mutual contributions from the participants.

Although I did not conduct any formal interviews with any INEA officials, many of the informal interactions and conversations I had with INEA administrators and ‘teaching technicians’ (or *técnico docente*) also provided a valuable glimpse into different aspects of the programme. In general, INEA technicians are responsible for the ‘planning, organising, coordinating, implementing, linking, implementing, supervising, promoting, disseminating, executing and monitoring’ the educational services that are offered by the state coordinating offices (INEA, 2018b, p. 24). Due to the fact that all of my visits were conducted with the aid and accompaniment of one or more technicians, at times, some of these actors had marginal participation during the group interviews. Consequently, some of their contributions and reflections also fed into the wider group discussions, and thus are also featured in some of the empirical chapters (although to a much lesser extent than the perspectives of learners and facilitators).

The time I was able to spend in each study circle and the number of learners and facilitators I was able to interview in each place varied greatly between the different sites. In some instances, I was only able to interview a facilitator without observing their respective study circle because the date and time of my visit did not coincide with their class schedule or there were no learners in attendance. Similarly, the duration of the group and individual interviews was not consistent: these ranged from interviews lasting under five minutes to some which lasted over one hour.

I took care not to significantly disrupt or infringe upon the regular activities of the study circle sessions. However, due to availability and time constraints, many of the one-on-one interviews with learners still occurred during their scheduled study session hours. All the one-on-one interviews with facilitators were arranged to be before or after any scheduled session to not take away from programmed activities.

In total, two group interviews were held in Campeche, three in Oaxaca, and four in San Luis Potosi. The groups ranged in size, from as few as six participants up to fifteen (see Appendix H for a summary). This count excludes the facilitators and INEA support staff, as the facilitators signed separate consent forms for individual interviews. Regarding the individual interviews, there were twenty-five conducted in total, with a mix of learners and facilitators (for a breakdown of participants, see Appendix I).

Observation and fieldnotes

The observational data featured in this thesis was primarily informed by people (those engaged with the MIB programme) as well as spaces (in and around the MIB study circles). This data is represented by field notes, writing samples, and photographs gathered and generated in the field, all of which were crucial for me to gain a better understanding of the context within which the MIB activities took place and aided in the subsequent data analysis stage.

As a technique, *participant observations* are considered to be a ‘core activity in ethnographic fieldwork’ (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011, p. 352). They involve a ‘dialectic between experience and interpretation’, or a continuous interaction of specific situated occurrences in the field and their meanings as viewed and interpreted by the researcher (Clifford, 1988, p. 34). Emphasising the word *participant* means that the researcher plays a central role in the generation, interpretation, and representation of the data.

During my visits to the communities, I carried a dictaphone, a folder with the printed consent and information sheets, a reporter's notebook to make handwritten observation notes, and a mobile phone with a camera for taking photos. It was my goal to document with each field visit contemporaneously and add strong descriptive elements to that could afford a substantial reconstruction and recounting of situations and occurred events (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011).

My notes were handwritten using a mix of both Spanish and English (see Appendix B for an example). The level of detail in these notes varied, but generally I attempted to write down an account of what I experienced during each site visit and were made before, during, and following each visit. These ranged from general reflections (for example, '*the radio was playing a song about migrating to the North*') to specific commentary related to the programme ('*the facilitator said they are paid \$600 pesos if their student passes the first test*'). They included observations on the dynamics between MIB learners and facilitators and how they navigated the learning spaces and the materials. Furthermore, because the interviews often took place before, during, and after study circle sessions and observations, the notes often included initial reflections from the interviews themselves.

The observations I made, while bound to a specific time and place, were helpfully anchored to and supplemented by corresponding field notes and photos for each respective field visit. The data enabled me to recall certain (inter)actions and conversations (both formal and more informal) despite having been removed from the field for some time. Taken together with the interview data, the observational data facilitated a continuous reflexive process in which I visited and then re-visited the different data sources as the analysis progressed, thus providing a bridge between the field and the analysis and writing of the thesis. I often returned to the field notes during the transcription and analysis process, cross-examining the day's notes with a particular interview to see if I could draw relevant comparison and gauge whether my reactions or recollections had changed. In this way, the notes were essential in helping me recount my time in the field and provided vital context that may have been lost in the busyness of travel, interviews, observations, and other interactions.

Data analysis

This section outlines the various stages and processes of data analysis, including the transcription and subsequent translation of audio recorded data, thematic analysis, coding and categorising, and a discussion on the trustworthiness of the findings.

I employed *inductive* and *iterative* strategies for data analysis throughout the duration of the study, beginning from the fieldwork stage to the final stages of writing (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005). In addition, I went through a dialectic and non-linear process of immersion in and reflection of the data (Agar, 1980). This meant that I was continuously moving back and forth between theory, data and literature, in keeping with the notion that ethnographic data analysis begins in the field and concludes only when the final intended output is completed (Schensul and LeCompte, 1999; Mills and Morton, 2013).

Transcription and translation

The process of transcribing recorded data can be considered as the first stage of the overall analysis and interpretation process, and involves various underpinning theoretical and practical decisions (Kvale, 2011; Davidson, 2017). While the increasing availability and use of technological tools in research means that transcription and translation can be outsourced or largely automated, for this study I acted as both researcher-transcriber and researcher-translator. Here, I will describe the related methodological considerations of these roles and discuss how they played into the overall data analysis process.

As Bailey (2008) noted, written forms of audible data are often the first step of the interpretive process of data analysis, one which offers ample opportunities to excise more precise observations of phenomena and patterns that may have been previously unnoticed. Along these lines, I regarded the transcription stage of this study as an *interpretive* rather than technical process which served as a bridge between data generation and analysis.

Once the fieldwork was completed, I returned to the interview data in its raw form and began the process of transcribing. The process was carried out in two key stages, both of which gave me the opportunity to reengage with the temporal and spatial settings in which the interviews happened and (re)discover many of the nuanced details in spoken conversation that I had either overlooked or forgotten in the moment.

First, I played the recorded audio of each interview through a pair of headphones. I used an audio player called ExpressScribe designed specifically for transcription work, which enabled me to slow down the recorded audio for enhanced intelligibility. I produced the first draft of written transcriptions with the aid of Google Voice Typing, a text-to-speech dictation tool. Once I began playing back the recorded audio, I then enabled the Voice Typing function and proceeded to dictate the spoken words of each interview. In this way, the first draft of transcripts in Spanish was produced by repeating the words of both the researcher (myself) and the participants.

The second stage consisted of me listening to the audio of the interview again and re-reading the written transcription, pausing at times to make additional corrections, to insert spaces or punctuation, and to make general edits to improve accuracy. The segments featured in this thesis are presented with the aim of maintaining the natural oral flow of each speaker. However, at times I omitted more repetitive or extraneous comments within these same excerpts (visually represented with ellipses [...]) and added punctuation to improve readability. In a few instances, small portions of the audio were omitted or marked as inaudible due to external noise or low speaking volume.

Strategies related to the use of voice recognition software tools in qualitative research have previously explored the usefulness and advantages of the voice transcription technique. For example, Park and Zeanah (2005, p. 246) argued that the ‘listen and repeat’ method afforded researchers with the time to listen more carefully without being hindered with concerns about typing accuracy. In addition, speech-to-text tools can provide a relative increase in speed of the transcription process, and overall has been reported as being less physically and mentally taxing (Mathenson, 2007). Overall, drawing from the ‘listen and repeat’ transcription strategy provided an additional an element of data immersion in that it allowed me to pay closer attention to the content of the interviews from the very beginning of the analysis process.

Given that I was the sole person transcribing the qualitative interview data, I was able to grow increasingly familiar with all aspects of recorded data and build ‘additional theoretical sensitivity during the research process’ which ultimately helped facilitate emerging findings the data (Mathenson, 2007, p. 548; Roulston, 2013). Taking on the role of ‘researcher-transcriber’ also prompted me to consider how transcription can be an integral and dynamic part of engaging with the data, as it involved a back-and-forth movement between the places where the fieldwork took place and the desk-based analysis and (re)writing stages.

It is also worth making a note here about the role of translation in my analysis and the challenges and tensions that arise when working with multilingual data, which are not often discussed or debated in much detail. There is some literature that explores the distinct nature of cross-cultural research and some of the associated methodological and linguistic entanglements that can occur therein. For example, González y González and Lincoln (2006; 2008) discussed non-traditional ways of reporting cross-cultural qualitative data, arguing that specific attention should be given to the methodological issues that can arise when working with data in more than one language that emerges from multiple perspectives and is situated in non-Western cultural contexts.

It is often assumed that data in different languages simply undergoes a process of translation, that this is largely a straightforward process, and that translators are ‘technicians’ tasked with merely producing a final text in another language (Wong and Poon, 2010, p. 151). Such texts then often represented as a final technical product rather than as a subjective and complex interlinguistic process. While there remain certain technical elements to the process of managing data in two languages, I argue that translation is far from straightforward: instead, it is predominantly a process of interpreting meaning at a specific time and in a specific place (González y González and Lincoln, 2006).

According to Bailey (2008, p. 129), transcripts themselves are not ‘neutral records of events’ but rather are a reflection of researcher’s interpretations. Thus, the element of translation means that there is an added layer of interpretation to the transcriptions: the process involves navigating across different linguistic and contextual terrains, adding an overlay of complexity to the already complex process of transcription and analysis.

The relative lack of debate around translation issues is compounded by a lack of attention towards the sociocultural background and role of the researcher if they are also the translator (such as the case in this thesis). Despite the fact that I come from a bi-cultural background, speak Spanish and English, and even have professional experience as a translator, I nonetheless encountered various challenges during the process of translating the original transcripts. As both the researcher and the translator in this instance, I considered myself as having what Spradley (1980, p. 161) denoted as a ‘dual task’: on one hand, I needed to make sense out of the patterns and decode messages in the data in Spanish, and on the other, I had to ensure that these meanings were communicated and rendered in English in such a way that would be accessible and understandable for the purposes of this thesis.

The linguistic limitations I faced during my time in the field highlighted the complex nature of working in multilingual contexts. Given that I did not speak any of the Indigenous languages and had neither the resources nor the time to seek the support of local research assistants who could assist with transcription in the respective Indigenous languages, I transcribed and translated only what the facilitator interpreted in real time for the 9 group interviews. In this way, the group interviews could be regarded as a reflection of multiple interpretations in terms of language (my Spanish to English translation being an overlay of the facilitator's translation from their respective Indigenous language to Spanish) and also in terms of judgements about what key message to convey and whose perspectives were deemed most relevant (given that the facilitators would often summarise several learner responses into a single response).

In addition, many of the participants spoke Spanish as their second (or third) language. While this did not prove to be a barrier for our communication during the individual interviews, at times it was a struggle for me to interpret and analyse the meanings of what was relayed without imposing my personal inferences to their words. Although I was drawing from my personal knowledge and experiences to interpret meaning from one context to another, I strived to maintain a continuous concern for accuracy and sensitivity to the situations and contexts in which the data was generated.

Ultimately, I came to regard the process of translation as an integral part of my overall analysis. Given my experiences, I therefore contend that the process of translating data—similar to the process of analysing it—is also an iterative one, where the bilingual translator-researcher becomes deeply familiar with the data in two (or more) languages and continues to go back and forth between different linguistic contexts to further refine their understandings. Thus, the data emerging from the interviews as it appears in this thesis is a result of a complex and multi-staged process of analysis: not only were the individual interviews following a process of relaying thoughts and perspectives from Indigenous languages to Spanish (on part of the participants) and then from Spanish to English (on my part), but the group interviews had the added element of data being conveyed through the facilitator's simultaneous interpretations into Spanish.

Recognising the complexities brought about by these multilingual settings and taking care to (re)present and translate the data as faithfully as possible and to the best of my ability, I nonetheless recognise many meanings could still potentially be 'lost in translation'. Authors such as Anzaldúa (2007) defended the use of bilingual texts and the interspersing of languages

as a way to convey the distinct interlinkages (and sometimes clashes) between two or more bordering languages and cultures. Taking such cues from Anzaldúa and due to the multilingual nature of my data, I have therefore opted to retain certain terms in their original Spanish form in this thesis. This was done partly to include specific terms that I considered to have no direct translation in English (for example, *ejido*, *cargo*, or *convivencia*, all terms which I provide corresponding descriptions and explanations for as they appear) and partly to be able to harness these contextually rich and distinctive vocabularies for the purposes of feeding into my analysis.

Featuring selected extracts from interviews implicitly means that there has been an additional process of reducing and representing data. Decisions on what to present or highlight and why can therefore lead to different framings and analyses of data (González y González and Lincoln, 2006). Thus, while I present all interview extracts in English in the main text of the thesis, I made a further effort to preserve the richness and continuities of the data in Spanish by presenting side by side English-Spanish translations of every featured extract in Appendix K. In doing so, I maintain that any reader who is familiar with Spanish would thus be able to understand, critique, or debate the way I have translated the data.

Thematic analysis

Upon completing the transcriptions, I began a process of immersion in the transcripts and field notes as a first step towards completing a *thematic analysis*. This approach was befitting for this study because it provided theoretical and methodological flexibility, allowed me to explore similarities and differences across the data and summarise these, and enabled a valuable process of generating emerging or ‘unanticipated insights’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 97).

Faced with a large amount of data (the transcriptions alone amounted to almost 100,000 words), I was guided by the phases of analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to help me manage and keep track of the relationships and issues of interest I found within the data and form bounded analytical categories. They suggest an initial stage of familiarisation with the data, a stage which I refer to here as ‘immersion’, or a way for me to ‘critically engage with, read, and analyse’ my data (Ravitch and Carl, 2016, p. 217). This largely involved time dedicated to reading the full transcripts in Spanish all the way through and re-visiting and highlighting key sections and comments by hand.

This resulted in the next stage of generating initial codes, or breaking down of large amounts of data into smaller fragments and collating those key highlights across the entire data set. Following this, I set aside a time for ‘freewriting’ or developing a collection of working notes ranging from both the specific and the general (Elbow, 1989, p. 42; Becker and Richards, 2007).

Further guided by critical ethnographic strategies for analysis, I moved between the smaller units of data and my general working notes to then beginning to search for and develop wider themes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This led to what Braun and Clarke termed as a stage of ‘reviewing’ of themes (2006, p. 87), which I regarded as a process of both re-viewing and re-immersing myself in the data. Although I had previously immersed myself in the data through the transcription process and read through them multiple times, the search for emerging patterns in the data (all in Spanish) provided a basis from which to develop the initial codes and themes. The iterative stage of *re-immersion* was followed by a coding process, which I describe in more detail below.

Coding

In qualitative research, coding is generally known to be an interpretive process of generating concepts and ideas stemming directly from the ‘raw’ data (in this case, interview transcripts, fieldnotes, observations, writing samples and photos). These processes are the basis for most theoretical ‘discoveries’ (Scott and Morrison, 2006, p. 33).

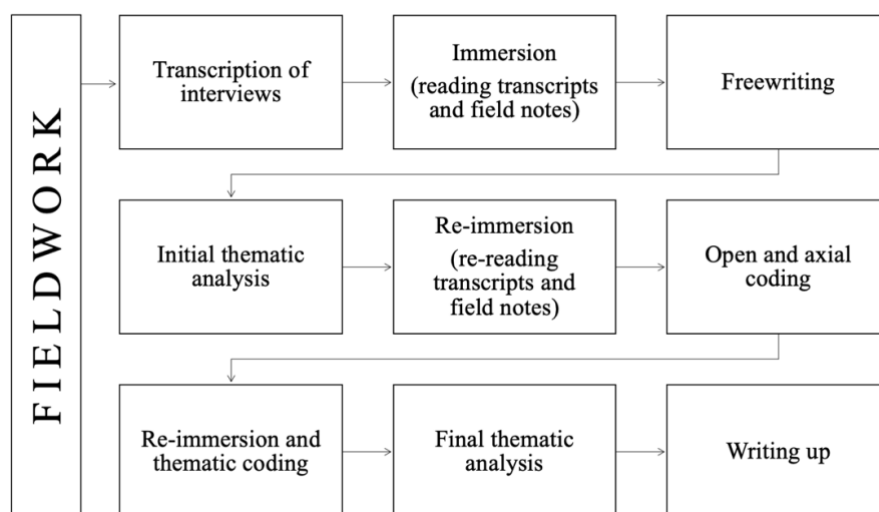
Included in this process are the steps that each researcher takes in identifying and systematising different concepts and ideas that emerge from the data. In the case of this study, I used an inductive strategy which consisted of distinguishing key features, phrases, and recurring ideas and concepts in the data and then assigning labels or ‘codes’. I accomplished this using ‘in vivo’ coding (or codes directly obtained from the data) using the participants’ original contributions in Spanish. This early stage of assigning unrestricted codes to the raw data is referred to ‘open coding’ and it involved a close scrutinization of all sources of evidence to produce provisional codes and categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 69).

As my analysis progressed, I began a process of ‘axial’ coding which involved a clustering and patterning of emerging codes into categories (Strauss, 1987; Benaquisto, 2008). These clusters were refined over time through each successive review and re-engagement with the data, thereby removing certain overlaps and redundancies. Although I did all coding by hand in an

effort to remain fully immersed in the data, I also used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to help organise the various data sources (such as interview transcripts, field notes, and photographs) and to run queries on recurring words, phrases and concepts during the coding process. The tables in Appendix J breaks down each theme and presents the related ‘in vivo’ codes in Spanish with its sister code in English.

The open and axial coding processes described above thus resulted in a coding scheme that led to the final five analytical themes which are addressed throughout the following three chapters. Chapter 5 will cover the theme of 1) *literacies*; the themes of 2) *teaching and learning* and 3) *life and work* will be addressed in Chapter 6; finally, Chapter 7 will deal specifically with the themes of 4) *identity, culture, and language* and 5) *gender and rights*. Table 4.5 (see below) represents all stages of the inductive analysis process taken together.

Figure 4.5 Inductive analysis process



Trustworthiness

Whereas some academic research relies heavily on the quantitative accuracy of data to ensure validity and reliability, qualitative research has distinguished itself by generally having a differing set of goals and outcomes. As such, conceptualisations and standards of validity are often dependent on the type of study, with many qualitative and ethnographic researchers opting to use *trustworthiness* in research as a way to gauge the quality and soundness of data (Lincoln and Guba, 1984). In other words, the accuracy of data representation largely depends on how the researcher handles issues of bias and takes into account different perspectives, situations, interactions, and contexts (Creswell *et al.*, 2000).

Interpretivist scholars in particular often disavow generalisability as a research goal, arguing that the finer details and patterns that often emerge from qualitative data cannot be disentangled from the complex social settings within which they occurred and therefore do not allow for wider generalisations to be made (Merriam, 2001). Therefore, the extent to which data can be considered trustworthy can be enhanced through a variety of factors, including (but not limited to) multiple data sources, rigorous training, triangulation of evidence, reflexivity of researcher subjectivity, and eliciting a wide range of participant perspectives (Patton, 2015).

Given this study's *qualitative* and *critical constructivist* methodological approach, I considered it appropriate to address concerns of research validity through the conceptual lens of trustworthiness. I took several measures into consideration in an effort to strengthen the trustworthiness of my research. First, I underwent rigorous and wide-ranging training in research methods, retaining a particular focus on qualitative methods and analysis. Second, I had continuous feedback from both my monthly supervision meetings, my doctoral peers, and other colleagues at the IoE. I remained continuously engaged in broader discussions about the key issues raised in my study the wider academic community by presenting emerging findings at different stages of the research in different forums (including academic conferences, informal literacy discussions, webinars, and seminars). Third, I followed Thomas' (1993, p. 62) recommendations to listen closely to data and let it 'speak', regardless of whether it contradicted my expectations or aims, while taking the time to reflect on the implications and effects of my research. Ultimately, these steps helped to highlight the responsibility that I as a researcher have within an academic field to be accountable for my theoretical and methodological justifications and to present my data in a truthful and reasonable manner.

Ethical considerations

Data obtained from qualitative research methods aiming to emphasise participant perspectives raises a number of questions about informed consent, sampling, and confidentiality, among other considerations. I followed all requirements for gaining ethical approval as outlined by my institutional department, which included undergoing a strict application process and submitting a risk assessment form. Rather than viewing the ethical approval stage as something procedural, I viewed it as part and parcel of the research process.

All participants were asked for their informed consent to be observed, interviewed, and recorded and were given the right to opt out of the study at any point. The data presented

throughout this thesis was anonymised to ensure the confidentiality of each participant, facilitator, and study circle. Finally, all participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

The interview questions and prompts were crafted with a clear focus on the research questions related to literacy, thereby minimising the risk of participants discussing potentially sensitive issues. All participants were informed that they could interrupt or end the interview at any time. For each visit I made to the different study circles, I introduced myself to the study circle participants and facilitators and had copies of the information sheet available for people to read and take.

Informed and voluntary consent is imperative to ensure participants are fully aware of their right to freely express opinions and ideas without fear of retribution or coercion. Following the recommended guidelines of informed consent and confidentiality as recommended by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018), I developed an information sheet and consent forms that met the current General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) standards for handling personal data (UCL, 2018). Moreover, I ensured that all consent forms also adhered to the Federal Law of Data Protection in Mexico (2010). There was a consent form for interviews and a separate consent form for observations (as seen in Appendices D and E). Both forms were in Spanish, and in the cases with mostly monolingual Indigenous-language group interviews, the bilingual facilitator assisted with reading and translating the form out loud. The consent forms outlined the different ways in which the data would be used in the study and required all participants to provide explicit written consent to be included.

Besides providing participants with all the information pertaining to the research at hand, informed consent aims to address issues of asymmetrical researcher-participant power relations that might arise despite taking specific measures to mitigate risks. On the one hand, I was committed to meeting the institutional ethical standards for studies with human participants, which included the process of obtaining written consent. On the other, I perceived a level of disconnection between institutional norms and expectations of a certain mode and tradition of ‘doing’ research and what research activities look like on the ground, nuances of which might be overlooked. In particular, requiring signatures from participants in Indigenous contexts who may or may not be able to read or write could affect their level of comfort and willingness to participate.

Given the possibility and likelihood of interactions with emergent literacy learners as participants, I prepared the consent forms accordingly. In the cases where participants were unable to read or sign the form, I provided them with the option of having the forms read out loud to them and requested a simple mark the page to indicate that they consented to being interviewed or observed (see Appendix E). I sought consent for observation by reading a short script in Spanish aloud explaining that I would be observing and taking notes during the study circle session (see Appendix D). I stated that my observations were to gain more knowledge about the programme and were not for the purposes of evaluating their performance as learners. I asked participants to sign, initial or otherwise mark the consent form for observation featuring the script and date of the session.

Regardless of these mitigation measures, some of the participants viewed the forms with guardedness and a level of precaution that indicated a general wariness in terms of the signing of documents. In one instance, despite following the same protocol explaining the information sheet and consent form in detail, a potential participant declined to sign the form citing that she never signed anything without having her husband read it first. Although I was unable to interview this person, this informal interaction was still a valuable one for me: it prompted me to think of ways social researchers are called upon to revise and adapt their methods and approaches according to the contexts within which they aim to generate new knowledge. It demonstrated that even when steps are taken to minimise risks and participants are given the space to ask questions and discuss the details of the research prior to agreeing to participate (or not), the process of gaining consent is not always straightforward—indeed, informed consent can sometimes also mean informed refusal (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992).

Given the evident complexities of social research in Indigenous contexts and the challenges I faced in the field, it was incumbent upon me to consider the ways in which prior experiences (both positive and negative) with formal institutions and/or external actors engaged in research activities may influence the process of generating the data and how this shapes the consequent writing and dissemination of findings. The nature of the study demanded an approach that considered both the institutional and the interpersonal ethical dimensions whereby the goals of the research could be achieved while also fostering a relationship between myself and the participants that was based on trust and research integrity (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016).

I found Smith's (1999, p. 10) list of questions to be asked of researchers working in Indigenous contexts particularly beneficial as a complementary guide for ethical considerations. In asking

Whose research is it? Who owns it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? and Who will write it up? I was able to assert and communicate to all participants that the study was independent in nature. The doctoral project received no external funding, nor was it a product of any agency (government or otherwise) tasking me with a review of the state of adult education in Mexico or the MIB programme for evaluative purposes. Therefore, the process of design, execution and writing up rested solely with me, with the added and crucial support in the form of research training and consistent formal and informal supervisory reviews over the course of the doctoral programme.

The questions about *How will its results be disseminated?* and *What knowledge will the community gain from this study?* can be answered in both finalised and more tentative ways: firstly, my commitment to share key findings through a summary report in Spanish with the participating state INEA offices means that the results will initially be disseminated in the regions in which the research took place. Depending on the availability of local facilitators and technicians as well as internet accessibility, upon concluding the study I will also offer to organise virtual community events to feed back the findings to the participating communities and invite further discussions. In addition to disseminating results at the local levels, different aspects of the research were also presented at various academic conferences across 2018 to 2021, and the completed research findings are likely to be published in the form of articles or a monograph with the aim of reaching an international audience of academics, practitioners and policymakers.

Finally, questions of *Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? and To whom is the researcher accountable?* prompted me to consider the output of this research both in terms of accountability, but also of trust. Concerns about trust added to my efforts to not only ensure that each visit was conducted following the same careful process of informed consent, but led me to think about ways in which I could maintain an open exchange of dialogue with various stakeholders and audiences in such a way that the research is mutually beneficial. I consider myself accountable, first and foremost, to the research participants who generously gave me their time and shared their perspectives and who can, at any time, question or critique the findings herein. I also consider that those working at INEA at the federal, state and local levels and those engaging with the MIB programme as learners may be able to benefit from the evidence and findings (new knowledge which they themselves informed and co-created) presented in this thesis to potentially inform or enhance understanding and practice. On a

broader scale, the research could also benefit and serve the interests of others in related fields of study or practice who are concerned with similar educational issues.

Limitations

There were various limitations in terms of methodology that arose throughout the course of this doctoral research, the range of which I outline presently. Firstly, the scope of the study was not only limited by the sample size, but also by the significant temporal constraints of the in-country data generation stage. Because of these constraints, I was unable to accumulate data from prolonged immersion in the field nor include direct observations about wider community literacy practices outside of the MIB context.

In total, the fieldwork was conducted over the course of six non-consecutive weeks, and the time I was able to spend in each community and on each interview was largely determined by external factors (for example, study circle schedules and staffing levels) and did not exceed more than a few hours in each location. Moreover, I was not able to independently determine where I would conduct the fieldwork, and therefore it could be argued that the relatively narrow scope of my research (literacies within the context of a single government programme at select study circles) could restrict the overall findings. Nonetheless, following the appropriate institutional channels to conduct the research in the different locations and obtain the informed consent of the participants ensured that my research fully adhered to the expected standards of ethics and data protection.

I also acknowledge the data featured here might be perceived as limited by its subjective and interpretive nature, given that it was generated from participant accounts and not triangulated with other types of data such as surveys or other experiments. Given such limitations, I do not suggest that the arguments and findings put forward in this thesis are encompassing of a widespread experience and understanding of Indigenous literacies in Mexico or elsewhere, nor indeed even of experiences within the MIB programme itself. The twenty-five individual interview and nine group interviews in three Mexican states are therefore not intended to be representative of the entire country, nor are the perspectives and experiences highlighted in the thesis meant to overshadow the wide range of other potential understandings of literacies in Indigenous contexts or beyond. Nonetheless, the degree of heterogeneity between the participants and the different regions still provides valuable insight into the programme as a

whole and contributes to a wider discussion and debate on the role and meaning of literacy in Indigenous contexts.

On a more reflexive note, I additionally took note of my personal limitations throughout the different stages of this project. I acknowledged the possibility that my personal biases could come into play and influence the analysis and interpretation of data. The issue of researcher bias additionally opens up critiques related to representation and power differentials between the researcher and the ‘researched’ in peripheral settings (Mohanty, 2003; Robinson, 2014). To reduce and mitigate this bias, I have aimed to have the highest degree of transparency in terms of how the qualitative data was collected, presented, and analysed.

As I discussed in the earlier section regarding translations, the interpretations of participant voices as represented in the empirical chapters—by their very nature of being translated (from their original Spanish to English) and organised in a way to ‘fit’ within expected academic disciplines and conventions—are echoes of an imperfect methodological process. While this could be considered a limitation, the degree of transparency within these processes (for example, by providing the original transcripts as I do in Appendix J) can, to an extent, attend to any ethical concerns regarding potential misrepresentation of data.

Thus, while the findings of this study prevent me from making wider statistical generalisations, this was not the purpose of this study—rather, I aimed generate and deepen theoretical and practical understandings and contribute new empirical data on the topic to provide a detailed and bounded account of literacies (Bryman, 2016). While many studies across critical and constructivist paradigms have voiced that generalisability is neither desirable nor possible in qualitative studies, to an extent, I argue that the findings of this thesis could contribute to wider ‘analytical generalisations’ inasmuch as it contains ‘context bound typicalities’ while still recognising the complexities, contradictions and dynamisms within each context (Halkier, 2011, p. 788). In this way, I argue that the exploratory nature of the study and the data generated for this study have provided a basis to present certain theoretical and practical findings, which will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

The what, where, how and why of literacies

Introduction

Having provided a review of the relevant literature and background on the methodological approach of this study, the following three chapters will give prominence to the empirical data generated for the purposes of this study.

The present chapter begins with a detailed overview of the distinct spaces within which literacy learning was enacted, negotiated, and contested within the MIB. It continues by then interweaving the perspectives of the participants across the different research sites to explore the overarching theme of *literacies* through an integrated analysis on the meanings, values and uses attached to literacies, the most salient of which were framings of literacy as a ‘defence’, a ‘necessity’, a ‘tool’, as a way to ‘access full knowledge’, ‘express myself’, ‘learn from one another’, and to ‘know our rights’.

Along with data from the interviews, this chapter features data in the form of photographs, writing samples, and some relevant samples of MIB materials (which are available online). Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on the potentials of literacy learning spaces to engender mutual learning, build agency, and scaffold confidence in learners despite histories of exclusion in education.

Study circles

By INEA’s definition, *study circles* are characterised as ‘meeting points’ whereby learning activities take place. These spaces are comprised of youth and adults who meet in a specified location that is ‘recognised and endorsed’ by the regional coordinating office (INEA, 2018b, p. 24). Once established, study circles are then entitled to receive material support and officially carry out programmatic activities.

The physical spaces and social environments in which the activities of the MIB take place varied according to state and municipality. The State Institutes of Adult Education (IEEA) often have a central office and a number of regional coordinating centres known as *Plazas Comunitarias* (the same designation for the learning model as it is implemented in the United

States, the difference being that in the US *Plazas* is the name for the programme as a whole and in Mexico, it refers to the locations). These *Plazas* are characterised by being a more permanent institutional fixture, often furnished with office equipment, computers, and an internet connection, although resources and infrastructure vary. Whereas *Plazas* could serve both as coordinating offices that host study circles (both in the Spanish-only MEVyT model as well as the MIB model), most MIB study circles operate as a type of ‘satellite’ adhered to the nearest regional *Plaza* in ‘alternative spaces ... rooms/spaces at community health centres’ or other public areas (Field notes 15.11.18).

Of the study circles I visited, I observed the range of locations that had been designated for the MIB activities. These included two which were housed in a more established *Plaza*, and therefore had access to resources including computers, tables, chairs, bookcases, fans, and electricity (as seen in Image Cluster 5.1).

Image Cluster 5.1 - Study circles (indoors)



During a visit to one of the localities with a resource library and a computer lab, there was an unexpected power outage towards the end of the observed session. This rendered the use of computers useless and made it difficult for learners to read any material, given that the meeting time of the session was in the evening and there was not much natural light remaining. The facilitator described power outages in their community as a somewhat common occurrence, as mentioned in the following field note:

Towards the end of our time [in the study circle], the power went out in the building. The teacher [Berenice] said that that happened from time to time. She

described how when that happened, people would take their cell phones out to light up the pages of their books and continue working. (Field notes, 3.10.18)

Based on my observations, such micro-adaptations using different technologies were not uncommon. In many instances, it appeared that MIB learners and facilitators found a range of ways to try to overcome material shortages or physical limitations, whether this is through the sharing of books or the makeshift arrangements using ledges as seats or plain paper in place of a whiteboard.

In several communities, the study circles took place outdoors or in open spaces with different coverings to shield from the sun or rain (including thatched or tin roofs) and with an array of temporary seating and table arrangements. One study circle was organised at the same location as the community health centre, whereas another was attached to the local community kitchen (seen in Image 5.2).

Image Cluster 5.2 - Study circles (outdoors)



Other outdoor or semi-enclosed meeting places included two where the MIB sessions were held in the patio of a local meeting area (as seen in Image 5.3). These did not appear to have permanent fixtures other than a few spare benches and tables. In these locations, I observed how learners mostly held their books in their laps to read and write in, and none of the resources (for example, a small whiteboard) seemed to be permanent fixtures.

Image Cluster 5.3 - Study circles (semi-enclosed)



Another study circle carried out its activities in a semi-enclosed area located on the property of the local facilitator, who had arranged a working space using a large dining table joined with a plastic folding table and had hung up a small whiteboard on a thin wire on the unfinished cinderblock wall. Upon discussions during that visit, it appeared that this mostly residential setting for the local study circle had been arranged by the learners who, upon being offered another community space to meet, opted to meet at the facilitator's house primarily out of personal preferences.

In another location, the community space made available for the study circle was notably in need of repairs (recent rains had flooded the room), and some learners similarly expressed their preference of meeting at the facilitator's house for the sessions rather than the pre-arranged location (see these examples in Image Cluster 5.4).

Image Cluster 5.4 - Study circles (residential and community)



Compounded with deficiencies in terms of infrastructure and materials were a range of reported difficulties on the physical access to some of the study circles, many of which were

characterised by their rurality and remoteness. The complexities of working within such geographically and culturally diverse contexts were highlighted to me during an interaction with an INEA technician and encapsulated in the following field note:

There is a community on an island in the middle of a dam. They described some places in Oaxaca as “más que rural” or more than rural. They said that there are some places that are disconnected, with no phone signal and are very hard to reach. (Field note, 24.10.2019)

The difficulty in accessing some of the study circles was exemplified by my visit to the community space which had experienced recent flooding, whose more remote location I also documented in a field note:

The [study circle] was mid-way down the side of a steep mountain. We had to hike down a treacherous rock path which was still very slippery from heavy rainfall. The técnicas [technicians] told me that they are used to trekking up and down to reach several communities like this, and that the residents hike up and down multiple times a day, often carrying things they are selling or buying in town or carrying their small children. (Field note, 25.10.18)

Access to the site highlighted the characterisation of some study circles being ‘more than rural’ and the reality of the sheer physical fitness that would be required to access the study circle. This raised questions about the extent to which study circles might be accessible (or not) for many learners, despite the state agency’s efforts to keep the learning spaces as localised as possible. Not only could some locations potentially exclude those with mobility issues, but issues of distance, the need for transportation, and a range of other limitations were further described by a facilitator named Gaby in another location:

Where we teach, well, it’s really far [in distance] for my learners ... I’d like, well, to look for a place closer to here. Well, the other [study circle] where I teach, there’s no electricity. I need electricity. (Gaby, Calakmul 4 facilitator, interview 10.10.2018-5.1)

Other conditions and attitudes that had hindered access to the study circles in her community were described by an INEA technician named Lola, whose peripheral comments during a group interview fed into the wider discussion:

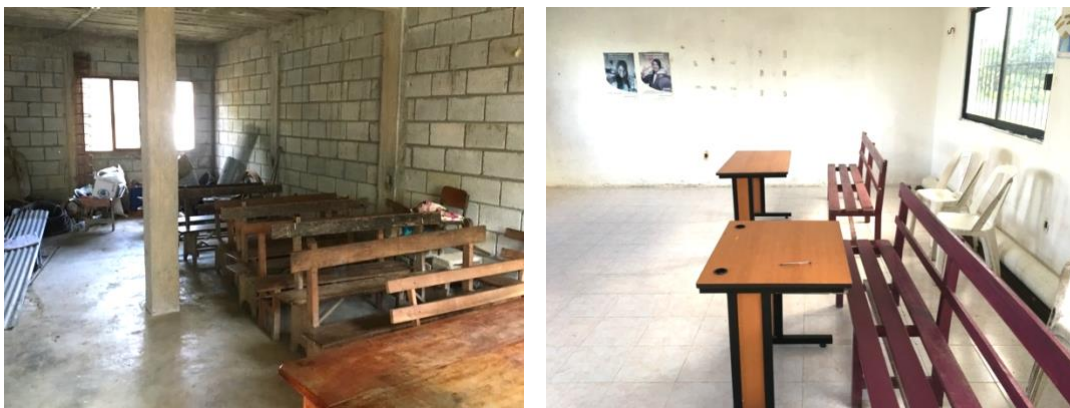
The same people from the town sometimes don’t have that interest in supporting the study circle ... they say that people ... well, aren’t interested ... they don’t leave the key to the place [where the study circle meets]. They have to have their lessons on the outside part [of the building]. But now they did leave the keys. So sometimes they [the learners] say that the same people in the town aren’t interested in supporting the students.

It hasn't been an obstacle that there's no place [for the study circle to meet]. For example, [the facilitator] says that when it's closed here and the [local] authority doesn't leave the key and it's raining and everything, they look for ways to go to the facilitator's house ... Also, for example, she talks about the weather conditions. Well, on Wednesday it was raining a lot. And there was no key here, and the conditions were so that we couldn't be outside. So they went to the facilitator's house to have their classes. (*Lola, Chilchotla INEA technician, group interview 25.10.2018-5.2*)

Lola's suggestion that inconsistent access to the designated meeting space community meant that there was little interest in the literacy learning activities from the local authorities. Moreover, she indicated that this disinterest and ambivalence indicated a general lack of support for the MIB programme, whose activities could be significantly disrupted by weather conditions. Regardless, Lola emphasised how such hindrances had not proved to be a defining obstacle for the participants, who demonstrated their willingness to adapt to their conditions and seek alternative arrangements to carry out their activities.

In several locations, the community spaces which housed the local MIB study circle were often multipurpose and were thus used for storage or to host other community activities outside of the session times. One example was an indoor location that had an assortment of seating availability but lacked electricity, whereas another was housed in the same place as the local conciliation court and therefore had good lighting and more modern furniture (see Image Cluster 5.5).

Image Cluster 5.5 – Study circles (multipurpose)



Because of their multipurpose nature, some of the more enclosed sites often had an array of signage ranging from topics about justice, violence, health, and other local announcements (both in the local Indigenous languages and in Spanish). Some signs were specifically related to literacy learning, including posters featuring the process of learning as well as printed out

pages with the Mayan alphabet and the traditional Mayan numerical system using vigesimal positional numerals (as seen in Image Cluster 5.56).

Image Cluster 5.6 – Literacy learning signage



Other signage featured information aimed at the general public, including notices on a range of legal, electoral, and gender rights topics. In the location where the study circle shared a space with the local conciliation court, I encountered a poster from a public awareness campaign against gender violence called the ‘Violentómetro’ (or violence meter) represented by a thermometer measuring different manifestations and levels of severity of gender violence (with explicit measurements ranging from ‘hurtful jokes’ to ‘murder’). There was also a community suggestion box with the word ‘Peace’ painted onto it (in English), as well as notices about the voting process and the duties of elected officials.

In another location, there was a makeshift sign regarding trash clean-up responsibilities (which ended with the statement ‘Clean Mexico is everyone’s task!’) posted just outside where the study circle met. These examples can be seen in Image Cluster 5.7.

Image Cluster 5.7 – General information signage



Indications of material scarcity and inadequately equipped learning spaces were more acutely observed in those study circles without a board or any enclosed space to meet. In many of those cases, facilitators recounted some of the hardships of trying to run a study circle and not having access to many materials (details which will be further discussed in Chapter 6). I noted that a common feature that provided a stronger sense of ownership for learners and facilitators was having a type of board to write on and use during the sessions, even when the space itself lacked a sense of permanence. Often, the boards provided a focal point from which other community notices, student writing and artwork, and complementary literacy learning materials were posted, examples of which can be seen in Image Cluster 5.1.

Image Cluster 5.8 – Study circle boards and materials



Even in the cases where the study circle had access to a more enclosed space and a board, however, participants still relayed other practical constraints (in terms of weather, lighting, and other conditions) which at times hindered their ability to take full advantage of the meeting time or meet the needs of the learners. A facilitator named Paola provided more specific examples of some of these issues:

A lot of the times they lend us the communal house. That's what we call it ... it's a closed space. But, for example, a lot of the times, well, there's not good lighting. My student has poor eyesight. Right? So that's one of the problems that I see ... they have poor eyesight, and they say, *maestra* [teacher], I can't see what it says here. The letters are really small.

There's no furniture. Or sometimes there's no table, right? That's steady to work on ... one of the difficulties I have there is that it's hot. And I take [the study circle] outside ... carrying my board and my table. And if it's cold, then inside. But for example, the board is small—I'm not going to lie to you, it's about one meter by one meter ... yeah, so sometimes you face these kinds of things. (Paola, *Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-5.3*)

Taken together, this closer look at the social-interactional aspects and spaces within which readers and writers engaged in the MIB programme and how they 'mediate literacy for each other' and work towards a shared goal (in this case, literacy learning) were crucial for further understanding both how learning happened as well as how literacies were socially embedded (Kalman, 2008, p. 531). In the following section, I explore this further by unpacking some of the different meanings, values and uses of literacies according to the perspective of the MIB participants.

Literacy as...

The various framings of literacies and the related analysis featured throughout the remaining sections of this chapter range from the general to the more contextual, the conceptual to the practical, and at times involve an analysis of literacies through different metaphors. The overlapping ideas on literacies emerging from participant perspectives—regardless of their geographical and ethnolinguistic variances—provided an opportunity to consider the ways in which participants assign importance, values, usefulness, or merit to reading and writing (in both Indigenous languages and Spanish, as well as in their everyday lives and on a broader scale).

'A defence'

Approaching the topic of literacies and their meanings within the context of the MIB programme as well as in participants' everyday lives was, in many ways, an avenue for broader discussions on a range of social issues. From the outset, I encountered patterns in the data in terms of perceptions on literacy as a safeguard against real and perceived vulnerabilities. As a leading example, Patricia (a facilitator), provided a clear-cut idea of what she considered the underpinning purpose of literacy learning:

Well, I imagine learning to read and write is to defend yourself in life as it leads you along ... I imagine that it's a defence against everything that comes. Because life, as we say, isn't written. But yes, to learn to read and write, it's to defend yourself. (*Patricia, Calakmul 2 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-5.4*)

Patricia's framing of reading and writing as a 'defence' threaded throughout the life course suggested that on an individual level, literacy learning could be a form of social safeguarding. Her observation that life was not 'written', insofar as it is unpredictable and often influenced and shaped by external forces and circumstances (such as a shifting labour market or an unstable political climate) implied that literacy could add a layer of protection and act as a means for self-advocacy. This was further highlighted by an example from a learner named Dora:

What if a paper arrives ... or a letter, or a—any paper, and we can't read it? And if others, if other people are going to read it ... suppose you got a report of something. But what if that's not it? Or you got something that says you owe money. What if you don't? ... It's important, well, that we know how to read. (*Dora, San Martín learner, group interview 22.11.2018-5.5*)

Here, Dora offered different scenarios in which an individual's ability to read and understand different texts could be a determinant in potential situations of vulnerability (for example, falling victim to money owing scams). In this way, Dora's critical questioning elided with Patricia's examination of how literacies could intervene to act as a 'defence' against 'everything that comes'. In addition, Dora's example of being presented with papers, reports, or other types of documents without being able to independently verify their content highlighted how having to seek help from and rely on others for comprehension can place someone at a disadvantage, which in turn could lead to potential deception. A facilitator named Paola provided further thoughts on the same notion of dependence as a disadvantage:

[Not knowing how to read or write is] something that will hold you back ... for example, in situations where your son or daughter may have gone away to work and is going to send you money. How are you going to get that money if you don't even know how you're going to sign? ... That means you have to depend on someone else. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-5.6*)

The idea of being 'held back' and therefore having 'to depend on someone else' in certain situations involving texts and writing reified Patricia and Dora's observations on the importance of leveraging literacies for self-reliance. In Paola's example, the very act of dependence could be regarded as inherently risky and have high stakes in terms of being able to safely access remittances.

Further analysis on the interrelated discussions of defence and dependence as linked to literacies revealed how an individualistic angle (or not depending on anyone else) seemed to be somewhat at odds with certain conceptual continuities of ‘living harmoniously’ and aspirations of positive community interdependence amongst Indigenous groups (Mato, 2016, p. 230). However, patterns of mistrust, apprehension, and scepticism of outside groups, institutions, politicians (and even researchers) are understandable when considering the socio-historical injustices related to discrimination in education, land dispossession, marginalisation and exploitation that have been (and continue to be) perpetrated against Indigenous peoples in Mexico and beyond (Smith, 1999; Stavenhagen, 2015). Such links suggest that issues of trust (in people, institutions, authorities, and more) among Indigenous communities remains ongoing and is contemporarily manifested in different ways (for example, mistrust in the signing of documents).

A learner named Adriana made a general comment about vulnerability and offered a basis for the underpinning mistrust, linking this to her personal observations:

Someone who doesn’t know how to read, write, or do maths, really—people just take advantage of us ... that’s what I’ve noticed. (*Adriana, Aquismon 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-5.7*)

Although Adriana did not provide specific examples of how she or others had been ‘taken advantage’ of, her remark underscored the ‘defence’ aspect of literacies and numeracies: in noticing patterns within situations, Adriana was able to make a connection between a person’s ability to engage with reading, writing or maths and negative outcomes of ill-treatment or exploitation. A facilitator, Celia, added to the discussion on the topic by suggesting that one’s level of vulnerability was often correlated to their literacy level:

They [the learners in her study circle] tell me, I’d like to ... learn to read. Why? So that tomorrow I don’t just sign any document. With the situation being the way it is right now, I don’t want anyone to take advantage of me. Why? Because mainly, I want to learn. Because, well, I don’t want anyone to make me sign any paper. (*Celia, Huautla facilitator, interview 24.10.2018-5.8*)

Similarly, another facilitator named Gaby commented on the importance of understanding documents requiring signatures to prevent patterns of abuse:

For example, you come and [ask me to] sign a paper ... First, I have to read to be able to sign it ... that’s why for me it is very important, because that way no one can trick you. (*Gaby, Calakmul 4 facilitator, interview 10.10.2018-5.9*)

These instances of not wanting to be (or having been) ‘taken advantage of’ or ‘tricked’ as described by the MIB participants further supported the sense of general mistrust discussed earlier and the consequent need for a ‘defence’. In particular, the perceptions of vulnerability seemed to be largely tied to more interactions that require paperwork and signatures, which in turn suggests that experiences involving institutional and government actors remain fraught with tensions. Moreover, Celia’s reference to the ‘situation being the way it is’ intimates a wider susceptibility to the more volatile social and political state of affairs in Mexico where issues of corruption and organised and drug-related crime are commonplace (Rosen and Zepeda Martínez, 2015).

Whereas the previous examples discussed individual vulnerability in more practical terms, a facilitator named Paola discussed a similar yet broader notion of defencelessness by invoking a metaphor of being physically constrained:

I mean, if you can't read, if you don't know how to write, your hands are tied, right? Because there are people who don't know how old they are. Yeah? They don't know when they were born. There are people who can't write their names. They can't write their signature. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-5.10*)

Paola’s metaphor of not knowing how to read and write as being akin to having ‘your hands tied’ helped to highlight some of the fundamental ways in which people are often expected to engage with literacies in contemporary societies. In this case, it would appear that accessing, navigating and understanding contemporary bureaucracies, public and private institutions, or financial services (among other things) requires a working understanding of when and how to sign one’s name on a document. Paola’s example suggests that without the ability to read and understand the meaning and purpose of official forms or know how and when to sign their names, individuals could be precluded from participating more fully in their communities or even from asserting some of their basic rights as citizens.

Two other learners spoke of similar limitations, highlighting practical examples of needing numeracy skills being unable to help their child with homework while also making use of embodied metaphors:

There are people here who don't even know [how to identify] 50 cents, okay? ... It's as if ... our eyes are covered. (*Raúl, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-5.11*)

There were times when my daughter was little ... she told me, *Mamá*, help me with my homework. But if you don't know the letters, and I don't know them

either—we're *both* blind. I told her, how am I going to help you with your work? I started to cry when she was little. (*Norma, Calkiní 2 learner, interview 4.10.2018-5.12*)

Both Raul and Norma's comments evoked a sense of helplessness and frustration as well as an understanding of the perceived hindrances caused by a limited grasp on literacies and numeracies encountered in their everyday lives. Considering the metaphors of 'tied hands', 'covered eyes' and being 'blind', there seemed to be an underlying idea that constraints experienced on an individual level (through examples of being unable to write a signature, identify money, or help with homework) and the perceived need for literacies emerged from situations and circumstances in which personal safeguarding was important. In other words, fully understanding what a signature is for, being able to do personal accounting, and helping children with schoolwork represent different reasons for being driven to literacy learning 'as a way to avoid deception and minimise shame' (Prins, 2010, p. 425).

'A necessity'

Following up on literacies as they relate to people's ability to engage with various formal institutions and access various services (including the MIB and PROSPERA programmes), a portrayal of literacies as something necessary in everyday life also emerged from the discussions. Graciela, a facilitator, explained it thus:

It's a necessity for them [the learners] ... because the PROSPERA programme is here. Sometimes they give them the appointments. That day, on a certain date you have to go to the medical appointment. Sometimes they forget ... and the person, well, the one who doesn't know anything [about reading and writing], well, they're not going to know what day, what date their appointment is. (*Graciela, Calakmul 1 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-5.13*).

Here, Graciela framed the 'necessity' of reading and writing into more localised and practical terms: things such as reading appointment reminders or noting days on a calendar could not only mean the difference between getting necessary medical checks, but missed appointments would be regarded as non-compliance within the PROSPERA programme and therefore hinder someone's ability to receive their benefits.

From her perspective as a facilitator, Diana stated that reading and writing was 'very useful' for her and her community. Initially, she discussed this in broadly dichotomous terms, stating that if you don't know how to read, 'you can't do anything' and 'when you know how to read, you can learn everything you want' (interview 26.10.2018). The perceived necessity or 'usefulness' of literacies were further detailed by a learner named Adriana:

[Reading and writing are] useful for a lot of things. To do maths ... to write little letters to my children, who don't live here ... so that when we go to buy something, they don't look down on us ... more or less we can do the maths.
(Adriana, *Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-5.14*)

Adriana's observations on the practical applications of literacy coalesced on a broader level through her statement that it had the potential to break patterns of discrimination and lessen the probabilities of having others 'look down' on those who struggle with reading, writing or maths in everyday settings (such as negotiating the price for goods or services or communicating with family members living elsewhere).

Adriana's example of written letters to communicate with family was illustrated by an interaction between a facilitator named Liliana and a learner in her study circle, who narrated the following experience:

There was a *señora* in another community where I also give classes. The *señora* wrote her son a letter, and I said yeah, if you want, we can mail it for real like you used to do. Write the letter. And she wrote the letter ... and I said hey, well, this letter is sent and it comes back, a reply gets sent back. So, we were seeing how knowing how to read and knowing how to write is good for a lot of things.
(Liliana, *San Martín facilitator, group interview 22.11.2018-5.15*)

Liliana went on to describe everyday instances of reading and writing that were 'useful' to communicate a message, such as leaving notes on her refrigerator to let her family know when she'd come home or with instructions to her children on when to heat tortillas for lunch.

As the discussion with Liliana's group continued, her discernment that knowing how to read and write is 'good for a lot of things' extended beyond providing examples of everyday interactions with literacy and numeracy to wider conceptions on the usefulness of literacies. More specifically, what emerged (in Liliana's group and beyond) was a framing of the necessity of literacies in terms of people's responsibilities towards their communities, manifested through an organised form of self-governance known as the *cargo* (roughly translated as responsibility or role), a system which became commonplace with the creation of the *ejidos* following the Mexican Revolution and remains one of the prevailing forms of local governance in many Indigenous communities today (Weinberg, 2007).

Historically, *cargo* systems in Mexico have tended to exclude women from participating in leadership roles and even from the electoral process (Anaya Muñoz, 2004; Sulem, 2013). However, recent studies point towards the gradual increased involvement of Indigenous women in political and civic life, in large part due to migration which tends to be male

(Worthen, 2015; Cleary, 2020). This suggests that gendered attitudes towards leadership and governance might be changing in accordance with shifting demographic and migration patterns, although it is difficult to gauge the extent of the shifts in social dynamics. In the communities featured in this study, there were (somewhat limited) examples of female participation in local leadership, with the broader need for literacies being linked to various *cargo* responsibilities. Liliana elaborated on this further:

Sometimes when they give them some *cargo* in the community and they have to write, they have to read, and they have to go to meetings where they ... [tell them] now, you take this back to your community. (*Liliana, San Martín facilitator, group interview 22.11.2018-5.16*)

In another study circle, a learner named Raul highlighted a specific example of how reading and writing official correspondence was a common and important element of his *cargo* responsibilities:

If we don't know anything, not even a number, for example ... if a letter comes to us, well, we won't know. And sometimes I'm struggling there, and I'm looking at the letter and I do a double-take. And that's when I ask my daughter and my grandson, 'Hey, what does it say here?' (*Raúl, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-5.17*)

In response to Raul's comments, an INEA technician named Pedro picked up on this example of official 'letters' as a key determining factor and incentive for learners to participate in the programme. Pedro's active participation and reflexive contributions during the group interview in Tampacán (who, along with the facilitator assisted at times with the real-time interpretation of learner comments from Náhuatl to Spanish) often added great depth to the overall group discussion, offering comments such as the following:

According to the people, the learners, I think that reading and writing is very important because of what ... Raúl was mentioning. Well, he's already been through various *cargos* ... How important reading and writing is—*that's* where the importance lies. Because if they can't read and write, they won't be able to read official letters. (*Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-5.18*)

These illustrations of how learners 'occupied' their *cargo* roles and the ways in which they related this to the 'importance' of reading and writing provided a glimpse into a changing and evolving *cargo* system. Despite retaining a form of local autonomy, the obligations and demands of local leadership roles are increasingly in interaction with local and state government authorities, and Indigenous communities are under a large amount of pressure to modernise along with the rest of the country (González-Fuente, 2011). Not only that, but

further comments from Pedro and Raul highlighted how patterns of migrations have impacted how and when community members take up and rotate through these roles and the perceived need for reading and writing:

Writing and reading are very important because, because of the *cargos* they have ... that they occupy within the locality ... They're given *cargos*. He's [Raúl] [been] a judge, he's [been] a delegate, a commissioner ... they see a need, where it is necessary to learn. ... Not only the men, but the women occupy various positions. (*Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-5.19*)

We are 26 *ejidatarios*, barely enough ... there's only *ejidatarios*, young people don't participate here. Just *ejidatarios*. And that's how we go on, I mean, I've been [in a *cargo* role] three times, imagine that. The time it was my turn, I was about 20 years old, the first time. At 30, I was there again. And now again. I'm 73 years old. Why? Because there aren't that many of us. And now, here in the *ejido*, they don't let a young person ... become *ejidatarios*, they can't do it. (*Raúl, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-5.20*)

This direct association to literacies as 'a need' and something 'necessary' for members of the community to fulfil the different *cargos* illustrated a key way in which the learners engaged with and incorporated a range of literacies into their daily work. Furthermore, Pedro's mention that it was 'not only the men' who assumed various leadership positions indicated a degree of gender balance between the *cargos*, thus supporting the growing evidence that more Indigenous women are beginning to assume local *cargo* roles and participate in local politics (León Himmelstine, 2017; Loyola-Hernández, 2018). That stated, the degree to which the women living and working within the municipalities featured in this study were involved in local leadership was unclear; throughout the visits and interaction, there was only one instance where a woman out of the study circle group discussed having held the *cargo* as the health leader (a term known as '*vocera*' or as someone who is the voice for a certain issue or area of interest) for four years in a row.

Whereas Raúl made an indirect link to the phenomenon of migration as a potential cause for their multiple rotations through various *cargos*, Pedro interjected again with a more overt explanation of labour-related migration in their community:

Even though they're already older, but the community—there are no more people. The young people have to emigrate because of lack of work. There's not much, there aren't many sources of work. So that's why, well, they give them *cargos* again as commissioner ... He's had to be commissioner three times already. So, for them—it's really useful for them to come to classes. (*Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-5.21*)

Pedro's signalling of a generational exodus of young people from the community due to 'lack of work' was not only used as a justification for the continuous rotation of *cargos* amongst the older generation, but was a wider indication of how the wider labour migration patterns may have affected the growth and cohesion of many *ejidos*. Evidence of extensive internal migration within Mexico (primarily from rural regions to more urbanised ones) and international migration (mainly to the U.S.) from the 1990s onwards have had, and continue to have, widespread implications. In some cases, local economies have become destabilised with the lack of younger workers (most of them younger men), and the continued prevalence and preference of Spanish over Indigenous languages for improved access to work opportunities has contributed to the shifts in the overall linguistic landscape (Massey and Taylor, 2004).

At the same time, the continuance of the customary law governance system that overlaps with the federal and state electoral system seemed to be a core aspect of the local community and culture in many of the localities visited. It appeared to influence ideas about the purposes of literacies and therefore for engaging with the MIB. Such cultural and political characteristics particular to Indigenous groups therefore substantiates some of the ways in which Indigenous autonomy is manifested yet still interacts with government programmes (including the MIB and PROSPERA).

'Access to full knowledge'

Another discussion that emerged in relation to the potentials of literacy alluded to knowledge and the various ways that it is defined, accessed, understood, and negotiated. While the term *knowledge* itself invites a wider conceptual debate, the issue of knowledge was introduced by the facilitator Marcos in terms of accessibility:

As far as reading ... it's access to full knowledge, to an experience ... Let's suppose in a book, we don't know, we're not in the area of that event. But through a reading, I mean, we find out what's happening out there. So that's why reading leads us to know what's happening inside or outside. (*Marcos, Tampacán facilitator, group interview 23.11.2018-5.22*)

Here, Marcos' observations about 'access to full knowledge' raised questions about what is considered full knowledge, and whose knowledge, and for what purposes. While Marcos did not expand upon this comment, he seemed to suggest that reading can be a means to learn about the wider social world ('outside') as well as within a bounded community ('inside'). Additionally, his comments recalled some of the prior discussions and debates in the literature regarding literacy as both globally and locally situated (outside and inside).

The complexities of discussing access to ‘full knowledge’ in Indigenous contexts quickly become entangled in dynamics of power: regarding knowledge as a ‘multidimensional body of understandings’ and taking into account how Indigenous knowledge in particular has historically been perceived as ‘inferior and primitive’ means that contemporary knowledge-generating practices are not neutral (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2014, p. 135).

Knowledge in the context of the MIB programme could on the one hand be viewed within the remit of its institutional and instrumental purposes, with the acknowledgement that it is a government-led programme and therefore has government-led interests. On the other hand, knowledge as perceived and defined by learners and facilitators helped to illustrate how understandings can go beyond a mere exercise of reading comprehension or to pass an exam. As an example, a learner named Alejandro articulated his motivations to join the MIB programme in a way that signalled a desire to be able to read and write to ‘understand’ the wider world:

I don't understand. But I want to learn, and I feel good, well, with the book ... Keep studying ... Because someone who just ... doesn't read, doesn't study ... There's nothing to, to move you, to give you an idea to do something ... and looking at the book, well, there are a lot of things there ... so that's very important.

I want to learn. But I want to learn, like—learn not just by writing it down, no. I want it ... to stay in my head, not just like that ... I want to understand. Not just like that, not just looking, just, no. I want to understand what it says there ... in a newspaper. I want to understand what it says. (*Alejandro, Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-5.23*)

By expressing that he wanted to learn not only by ‘writing it down’ or ‘just looking’, it appeared as though Alejandro was eager to move past the initial stage of literacy learning which at times can be marked by setbacks or seemingly slow progress. Furthermore, by saying that he wanted the things he learned to ‘stay in my head’, he was able to envision specific ways in which he would use this learning (for example, to understand information written in a newspaper). He continued by citing further perceived deficiencies of emergent literacy learners as well as stating an added goal of wanting to reach a higher level of knowledge and awareness:

[I want] an advisor who, who doesn't get annoyed, right? [laughs] ... they also get annoyed. Because we're—I tell you, we're really stupid ... we can't remember ... we forget ... they need to repeat over and over until it sticks ... There are others who still aren't, who aren't okay. They don't know anything. In order for you to know well, you need time.

If a facilitator teaches well until it sticks ... just so they learn a little bit ... then the person is, well—is conscious. You know ... what he does, or what he says, or what he wants to do ... That's how one, well, becomes more ... more awake.
(Alejandro, *Aquismón 2 learner*, interview 21.11.2018-5.24)

Alejandro went on to state that 'patience' was of the utmost importance throughout the literacy learning process; according to him, 'to really know something well, it takes time' (interview 21.11.2018). Thus, while Alejandro demonstrated an awareness of the considerable time investment in the literacy learning process, he seemed to also attribute his lack of advancement to a series of personal failures: he perceived that the acts of not 'remembering' and 'forgetting' were a confirmation that he was 'stupid'. Furthermore, he suggested that the repetitive nature of this type of learning had previously caused facilitators to 'get annoyed' with him.

In this way, variations and discontinuities related to the processes of literacy learning could be demoralising rather than motivating for some learners. Alejandro's frustration at the repetitive nature and perceived slow pace of literacy learning led him to position himself and other adult learners like him as 'really stupid'. At the same time, Alejandro conveyed a certain determination for literacy learning to 'stick' with him by referring to a figurative future state of consciousness (or becoming 'more awake'). Such reflexive and meta-cognitive processes described by Alejandro were consonant with Marcos' ideas about gaining 'full knowledge' through literacies, thereby generating associations between reading, writing, understanding, and questioning the wider world.

'A very valuable tool'

Picking up on the previously mentioned dynamism of knowledge in terms of how literacies can enable an understanding of the immediate (inside) and the more remote (outside), further discussions with participants brought up a similar notion of moving beyond the boundaries of the 'inside'. For instance, Paola positioned reading and writing as a key tool in being able to make this transition and raise awareness of the self and that which lies 'outside':

Well, I think [literacy] is a very valuable tool. Because if you don't know how to read ... you don't know what's happening around you. I mean, you don't have that knowledge of what's happening, or what goes on beyond what we're living.
(Paola, *Aquismón 2 facilitator*, interview 20.11.2018-5.25)

Here, Paola's description of literacy as a 'valuable tool' could be construed in different ways: she gives weight to literacy as a vehicle to look forwards (or 'beyond') as well as backwards to reflect on 'what's going on around you'. This perceived link between not knowing how to

read and not having knowledge of ‘what’s going on around you’ was similar to Marcos’ concept of ‘full’ knowledge as something that is gained through continued exposure to more than one’s immediate life experiences. This movement from *not knowing* to *knowing* was further described by Francisco:

[Reading and writing] is to be able to enter the world of letters ... and of communication itself. We know that ... you can communicate with a, with mimicry, with body movements, but there’s nothing like the person being literate so that there can be that communication with, with ease ... with everything, all the elements, like I said, to communicate something, right?
(Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-5.26)

Here, while Francisco gave some weight to other forms of expression (such as gestures or ‘body movements’), he positioned reading and writing as the central pathway to ‘enter the world of letters’ and of communication itself.

This relational process of gaining further knowledge of ‘what’s happening’ was thus mentioned both in terms of using and engaging with the content from the MIB materials, but also more generally through a wider range of texts, activities, and other modalities. For example, one learner credited his engagement with the MIB programme to his faith, describing how his desire to read the Bible was a key motivator for him to pursue literacy learning once he found out about it through local promoters of the PROSPERA programme. Similarly, when discussing texts in Indigenous languages outside of the MIB materials, a facilitator eagerly demonstrated an application on her mobile phone that had online versions of the Bible and other related publications by the Jehovah’s Witnesses in Mayan (versions which, coincidentally, also exist in all five Indigenous languages featured in this study).

Another learner framed his leveraging of reading as a tool in more practical terms, saying that his work as a taxi driver required him to read on a daily basis. One INEA technician alluded to changes in the ways people were able to sign their names for a variety of reasons, stating that in many cases, a fingerprint was no longer an acceptable form of signature for most government bureaucracies the way it used to be in previous years (including to receive PROSPERA disbursements). In this way, the writing of signatures helped elucidate another way in which literacies were framed as a ‘valuable tool’ with a range of outcomes (Betts, 2003).

A way to ‘express myself’

In various instances during the interviews, literacies were discussed in relation to both the constraining and unleashing of self-expression and associated psychosocial effects. Examples of shifts in attitudes and confidence-building as a result of literacy learning were prominent and led to an examination of how participants drew from literacies to express thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

Pilar provided a description of shifts in attitudes that she had noticed in the learners who attended her study circle:

When I learned to read and write, it feels really nice. It feels nice to express yourself ... The *señoras* [women] that I work with ... they express themselves and they say, I feel really good with myself, I feel good learning to read and write. Not like before, they rejected me, I mean—they insulted me because I couldn’t read what was written on a poster.

[Literacy is to] feel good about ourselves as people, [as a] human being, and to, well, teach your children how to read and write too. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-5.27*)

Here, Pilar was making an explicit link between a figurative ‘before’ (not knowing) synonymous with rejection and insults, and an ‘after’ (knowing) of being able to ‘express themselves’ and feeling ‘good with myself’. While Pilar may have been describing learner transitions from a ‘before’ time (rooted in experiences of social rejection) to a ‘now’ time (with enhanced confidence) in very broad terms, she attributed knowing how to read and write as directly beneficial to one’s self-esteem, beginning with her own example. In addition to describing her self-identified ability to express herself as ‘feeling really nice’, Pilar then opened this up by arguing that literacy has the potential for others to ‘feel good’ about themselves.

Building on the examples of some people experiences ‘rejection’ or being ‘insulted’ because of their reported inability to read or write, Pilar touched upon the notion of learners being hesitant—and at times even afraid—to engage fully with the MIB programme for various reasons:

The benefits [of the MIB] are that, that the learners learn to read and write, to express themselves, well, without fear. Without, without fear of, well, to express what they feel. Because I’ve seen, well, in several people who don’t want to read, they don’t want to learn, because well, they’re afraid that—that it’s not, it’s not correct ... Because we only, well—here, it’s only Ch’ol what we speak. Mostly they don’t use Spanish. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-5.28*)

Such recounted experiences of ‘fear’ to express feelings or thoughts underlined how processes of reading and writing were never neutral in contexts where one language holds dominance over others. Adding to a broader sense of trepidation was Pilar’s estimation that some people ‘don’t want to learn’ due to the fear that what they might speak and write would not be ‘correct’ because ‘here, it’s only Ch’ol that we speak’. In other words, Pilar was suggesting that for some, the Ch’ol language could be perceived *incorrect* by its very nature because it was not Spanish.

While the underpinning affective dimensions of literacy learning will be further explored in Chapter 7, the way in which Pilar described the salience of reading and writing (in both dominant and non-dominant languages) as a potential avenue towards *self-expression* ‘without fear’ became key to understanding the following comment from Francisco about people ‘daring’ to manifest nascent ways of expression through writing:

When they start working [in the study circles] ... we start to observe that there are a lot of things that they keep to themselves, okay? There are a lot of things they keep to themselves. So, when you have knowledge of the letters, of *la palabra* [the word]—the person dares to manifest it in writing, to manifest it by speaking it in a correct way ... and when they dare to write, it’s because they want to say something. They want to communicate. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-5.29*)

Freely expressing oneself in the context of the study circles (through writing or speaking), therefore, was portrayed as a radical and courageous act, personified by Indigenous identities navigating both their Indigenous language(s) and Spanish. Furthermore, by invoking the term *fear*, Pilar was exteriorising what Francisco alluded to, but did not state explicitly: that fear itself appeared to be a driver for many Indigenous learners, not to seek opportunities to read and write, but rather to ‘keep to themselves’ and suppress or deny their own ability to speak their minds due to concerns of social retribution and shaming.

Further feelings of fear were mentioned not only in terms of self-expression but in embodied terms as well, as described by Guadalupe:

I read kind of slow, but I do read a little, yeah ... like right now, my hand could move a bit. Today I couldn't write anymore, it was shaking a lot ... [earlier] it felt okay to move my hand ... so my hand won’t be scared to write. (*Guadalupe, Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-5.30*)

Guadalupe’s descriptions of a physical manifestation of ‘fear’ in that her hand was ‘shaking a lot’ and in a more abstract sense of her hand being ‘scared to write’ were thus indicative of a

compounded anxiety related to reading and writing and a level of self-awareness of her own apprehension when engaging with the MIB literacy materials. However, she also alluded to times when the same fear was lessened and explained how even though her pace of reading might be perceived as slow, she could read regardless. In this way, Guadalupe was still able to inadvertently note her progression in literacy learning, despite her proclaimed feelings of fear.

Additional reflections by Adriana provided another example of how even when a learner is able to make a note of their own progression in literacy learning, there can still be a level of embarrassment and doubt about their ability to express themselves:

Little by little, that's how I learned. I'm still, well, I'm ashamed to say some things. And right now, I sort of ... I can't express myself very well. The little, what I've understood is what I'm using today.

[My motivations are] to learn, even if I can't express myself very well. Before ... I couldn't speak any Spanish. Just *Huasteco* [Tének]. There's a little that I've learned, a little bit, it's not very much. A little bit. Because I'm already an adult ... But the little that, well, I've heard is still useful. To do maths, to write, even though my letters aren't very pretty, but that's what I do. (*Adriana, Aquismon 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-5.31*)

Adriana spoke of her experience in a tentative way—she acknowledged that she'd learned something since joining the study circle, but 'not very much'. She indicated that she could write, but her 'letters aren't very pretty'. But most importantly, she said she was eager to learn, despite her belief that she could not express herself 'very well'.

Upon closer analysis, feelings of fear and related instances of internalised self-censorship as described by the participants recalled the various paradigms of deficit, disadvantage, diminished and constrained self-expression, and nationalist trends in education and development as described in previous studies related to adult education contexts (Prins, 2010; Hamilton and Pitt, 2011; Rogers and Street, 2012; Aikman *et al.*, 2016; Acharya, Jere and Robinson-Pant, 2019b).

Interconnected narratives related to literacies and self-expression in this section resonated with Freire's argument that learning to read and write and speaking 'the word' implies an act of 'reflection and action' that is 'associated with the right of self-expression and world-expression, of creating and re-creating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical process' (1970b, p. 212). From a Freirean perspective, to deny or undermine the existence of ethnolinguistic diversity would thereby mean to deny different forms of self-expression, which in turn could arguably weaken the social and political

foundations of a country like Mexico and others which bear similar histories of exclusion (Nettle and Romaine, 2000, p. 23).

A way to ‘learn from one another’

Another emerging pattern in discussions on literacies placed the instances and opportunities of mutual learning at the heart of the MIB study circles. The exchange of ideas and experiences as a result of convening for study circle sessions emerged as an aspect of the programme which carried equal importance to the related educational gains or results. Pedro provided an observation on the seemingly ubiquitous nature of mutual support within the context of the MIB:

Here, they don’t just come to read, to write ... it’s to *convivir* [live and be together]. To share experiences. Ideas. Really, they learn from one another here, together ... the teacher is very dynamic. Sometimes he gives them activities, they de-stress ... I tell them, when you come here, don’t think about the beans, the machete. (*Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-5.32*)

The sharing of experiences and mutual learning underlined by Pedro are encompassed here by the concept of *convivencia*. Although the term has no direct English translation, it could be roughly translated as learning to live together and be together and involves ‘reciprocity, relationship building, and interdependence in a community’ (Solano-Campos, 2013, p. 621). In Pedro’s estimations, the MIB often acted as an organising space within which participants could extract more than literacy learning, but also provide and promote opportunities for community-building. Providing further insight into what *convivencia* might mean in the MIB contexts, Francisco spoke of the concept as a set of values:

[Francisco] said ... “We generate values—values of *convivencia*”. He said he fosters these values of *convivencia* [in the MIB study circles] because they’re being forgotten. He said that Indigenous people tend to disappear in favour of individualism instead of community. (*Field notes, 4 October 2018*)

Building on the idea of interdependence, the notion of *convivencia* and its underpinning associations to living harmoniously in a mutually respectful environment illustrates how aligned it the axiological approach of interculturality which emphasises dialogue and community. In this way, the increasingly prevalent placement of individual interests over collective ones (reflected in, among other things, largely capitalistic economic systems in many Northern countries) is at odds with Indigenous perspectives about relationality, reciprocity, and connectedness (Walsh, 2012; Bishop, Vass and Thompson, 2019). Although this study does

not explore more specific tensions and issues between individualism and collectivism, certain observations and contributions from participants highlighted some of the ways that the study circles helped to build a sense of community and comradery.

For example, I observed one study circle where the attendees seemed particularly attuned to the needs of others, exemplified by their efforts within the group to help a particular learner who needed eyeglasses to read:

One of the students commented that she couldn't write because she needed glasses. The teacher talked about how they had been thinking about starting a small class fund to help her buy her glasses, even if it was only [donating] \$1 peso [each]. (Field notes, 26 October 2018)

That same group reflected a mixture of ages, abilities, and educational backgrounds all coming together for the MIB activities, something common in my observations. While most learners in the study circles I visited tended to be between the ages of 40 to 60 (some of which brought their younger school-aged children or grandchildren along with them to the sessions), there were also much younger learners enrolled in the programme. One such learner was Claudia, who provided some insight into instances of intergenerational mutual learning in her group that she found beneficial:

I was invited to participate. At first, I didn't want to, because it was really difficult for me ... some have gone a long time without writing, without practising it, and it's difficult for them. And then, well, I didn't want to, because I said, well—it's going to be really difficult for me.

Once they invited me and I started working with them, well, it's started to be, well, something—like something fun. Because, I mean, I learn with them. Sometimes they come to talk, sometimes the *señor* [man] talks and talks for hours, and well, I learn a lot of things from them. Sometimes because they are elderly, or they have different experiences. (Claudia, San Martín learner, group interview 22.11.2018-5.33)

As the facilitator for that group, Liliana built upon Claudia's observations and discussed how when she invited people to join her study circle, she would reiterate the *convivencia* aspect of the study circles to them as a way to promote programme engagement:

I have young people [in my study circle]. For example, [Claudia's] very young ... and well, she learns from what we discuss. Or I also learn from them.

For example, when I go out to invite them [the learners], I tell them that, well, that [the study circle] is to *convivir* [be together]... They come to learn to write, to read, they come to *convivir* ... I have a celebration for them when it's, I don't know, Mother's Day. We have a *convivio* [celebration together]. Or if it's Father's Day ... Or if it's Grandparents Day ... And there, they're learning

various things ... they share their experiences. (*Liliana, San Martín facilitator, group interview 22.11.2018-5.34*)

Such testimonies about opportunities to share different experiences and learn from each other emphasised how the study circles acted as a point of encounter for more than reading and writing within the bounds of a specific programme. Whether and to what extent MIB learners considered the mutual support aspects of the study circles as crucial to their involvement was difficult to determine. However, Yesenia provided an example of how such positive mutual interactions influenced her ongoing participation as much as the opportunity to read and write in her native language did:

I've really liked it. More than anything, there are *convivios* [special occasions and gatherings] sometimes ... there, we spend time together, and sometimes we even play ... during these times that I've come, I've liked it a lot. More than anything, to *convivir* with them and to learn Náhuatl more. (*Yesenia, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-5.35*)

In addition to the study circles being described as spaces where people could convene and celebrate holidays and special occasions, Norma emphasised the ways in which the study circles helped to carry on community traditions so that these were not lost:

What we do here in the community—we do, well, celebrations. Celebrations on the *Día de San José*, the Day of the Dead, and various things. Yeah, we do something and, well, *convivimos* [we share and celebrate together] ... That's the tradition that we have here ... now in November, we're going to have one last *convivio* [gathering/celebration] of the Dead. And I think that in some parts here in the community ... they do dances. There are offerings and such. That's what our communities are like. (*Norma, Calkiní 2 learner, interview 4.10.2018-5.36*)

For these learners, the MIB spaces therefore seemed to act as a type of conduit for mutual learning and sharing that was not necessarily based on the institutional texts or the expected outcomes of passing exams or gaining an educational certificate. In this way, it could be argued that a prominent strength of the MIB was attributed to the elements of *convivencia* as adapted to the interests and needs of each community, a benefit that cannot easily be represented through institutional assessments.

A way to 'know our rights'

Similar to the previous discussion about how the MIB at times acted as an encounter point for wider activities (including mutual, intergenerational learning and carrying out traditions and celebrations), discussions also arose in terms of how learners and facilitators interacted and

engaged with institutional texts and whether they perceived the materials as relevant to their everyday lives, work, traditions, and communities.

In particular, I noted that in the discussions on how MIB learning materials were deployed within the study circles that themes related to territory, land, and harvest emerged quite prominently. Liliana provided a more detailed example:

There are things [in the modules] ... topics on the harvest ... it explains how things were done before. The traditions and all that. So they learn, because now no one does all those traditions. The ones they used to do ... There are some things that are going away. That are being lost. So they learn, and well, it catches their attention. Because they find out how things were done in the past ... So that's what we can see ... that some things can be recovered.

In the book there's also a text on planting corn. And, well, the way it comes in the book—well, here in the community that's what we do ... The book has everything, well, it has quite a few topics that we here in the community do ... Now, for example, the *muchachos* [young men] are going to work in the city and they no longer work in the fields like they used to. (*Liliana, San Martín facilitator, group interview 22.11.2018-5.37*)

In this example which highlights both traditions perceived to be lost and those maintained, Liliana touched on various contemporary issues facing Indigenous communities: firstly, how there is both a pressure to modernise and industrialise local harvesting practices as well as maintain or recover local traditions. Second, that the recurring issue of migration (discussed at earlier points in this chapter) from Indigenous communities to seek work elsewhere indicates how and why many of the communities are undergoing a period of adjustment to new social, economic, and labour patterns. A similar observation about the meaning of these traditions had and the importance of featuring local practices and traditions in the MIB texts (examples which can be found in Image Cluster 5.9) was raised by Pedro:

Most of the students like that book, because there are readings in that book ... it tells them a story ... for example, there's like, advice ... but it comes in Náhuatl ... Well, the students really like it ... Here this book talks ... about the Day of the Dead. For example, this one, it talks about when a child is born and what ritual to do. It talks about, well, the corn festival, the tradition of giving thanks, that they give to Mother Earth for, for a well. They give thanks for the water.

And [this book talks about] the corn harvest as well ... It talks about deforestation too ... It tells a story that a tree is talking. That, well, it gets cut, and it also bleeds. And it also dies. So the tree talks to the person cutting down the tree. So that's very nice, and he [the learner] already read it.

It talks about it in this book, a lot of which we don't do anymore, right? ... There are even people who, although they're older, no longer do it, right? They don't

do it anymore, they don't do it anymore. And well, that catches their attention. And well, look ... it's here, but everything is in the mother tongue. Yeah, all those things are here. (*Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-5.38*)

Image Cluster 5.9 - Sample of material (Náhuatl)



Sintli

Sintli **tijchijtoke** tosentlakualis, ika timoskaltijtokej, kej tokaliwaj wan tatatawaj, yeka ni pilsintsij tlawel tlasojtli. Topilkonewaj tikiniliwaj ma kimokuitlawikan wan ma kittepanitakaj, amo san kampawelli ma kiazkokuikaj, ma amo ipan mokejsetsakaj, pampa yaya technakayotijtok.

Ma tijtlasojtlan tonana tlaltipaktli, ya techmakatok pilsintsin tlen ika tiyoltokej.

Miak tlamantli pilsintsin techkawilijtekej tatatawaj: pojpoloj, pichisintli, kakawasintli, sintojtopoktli, nojkia miak flapalli; kostik, chipawak, yawitl, akostik, chilkostik, chichilitik.

¡Tetlayokoltij!

Se wewejtakatl tlawel mokesojki kemaj kiitak se telpokatl kipeyawa se tomaktik teokuawitl, se ome ixayo kiski iixiyolko, kinekityaya chikawak mochokilis, san moyoltetlijki. Imanejmak kiwikak iyalmelak, kitenamijki tlaltipaktli, tlachixki ipan ilwikak wan motsonojolinijki.

San iyoltipan noilwiji: —tetlayokoltij ne telpokatl, miktok tlalinnamikilis, ¿welis amo kittalmaniktijkej itatawan?

Miakej tiwewewjtakamej tijmokuitawijtiwalajkes ne teokuawitl, axtijmatij ajkeya kitocjki, tojwantij san tinmokuitlawijke. ¡Tetlayokoltij! ¡Tetlayokoltij!

Tlajkuilojketl: Rutilio Méndez González.



Both Liliana and Pedro spoke of how the local traditions captured in the MIB texts ‘caught the attention’ of learners and gave rise to discussions and reflections about what practices were (or were not) still carried out. Interestingly, while they both mentioned that many such practices were ‘going away’, ‘being lost’, or ‘not done anymore’, they simultaneously offered a view how certain practices (such as a way of planting corn, a festival, or traditions for newborn children and giving thanks) remained in place to that day. Thus, within their expressed concern about the perceived loss of local customs, they also noted how the texts prompted discussions around local histories as well as surviving customs.

Adding to the discussion about whether and how learners saw the MIB texts as relevant to their lives, Dora provided an example of the range of information in the initial modules that she considered to be linked to daily necessities and interactions (which can be found in Image Cluster 5.10):

There's [information] about the *Seguro Popular* [the public health service], there's [information] about the birth certificate ... about the *cartilla* [health and vaccination record], the voter's card, also about medical prescriptions ... it indicates the ways that medications should be taken ... the birth certificate, it says—it gives proof of the date and time of our births and certifies who our parents are.

Also [the module] has how to, well, make a recipe, how to write a note ... There are many things here. More than anything ... here it comes in Spanish and

Náhuatl ... Yes, it catches my attention. There are many things here that we do at home. Yes, that's why more or less I really like coming to classes. (*Dora, San Martín learner, group interview 22.11.2018-5.39*)

Image Cluster 5.10 - Sample of material (Náhuatl)


 **Xitlajtlachili wan xijtempowa.**

¿Tlake amatl timoilwia?

¿Tlake timoilwia kijtowa?

¿Tlake tlayolmelawalli tijpantis ipan tlakatilamatl?



 **Xikixpowa wan xitlatempowa.**

¿Tlake ni amatekilti?

¿Tlachke tlayolmelawalli kipixtok tlaixpantli?



 **Xikijkuiio.**

¿Tlen ajkia iaxka tlaixpantli?

¿Keski xiwitl kipia?

The previous observations on how the MIB texts incorporate themes and topics related to Indigenous customs and histories as well as contemporary bureaucracies in Indigenous languages demonstrate the degree to which the modules aim to balance local interests (for instance, on local harvesting practices or festivities) with national and institutional norms and conventions (for example, related to the national health, electoral, and civil registration systems). However, it was Francisco who described how a deeper engagement with MIB texts could also provide a pathway to discussions and reflections on wider rights:

It really is of the utmost importance to people, because we've been reviewing the documents suggested by the modules and it allows us to know our rights. The rights of women, of children, of Indigenous peoples ... The modules have, well, the elements so that families can better themselves, in some way. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-5.37*)

In this way, the embedded topics emerging from the MIB modules could be regarded not simply as a way to cover a range of topics of potential interest, but the texts themselves could act as an additional encounter point of ideas and discussions about wider rights and the ways in which Indigenous peoples can recognise, (re)claim, challenge or adapt to their surroundings and to changing environments with the support of literacies in their local languages.

Discussion

In this chapter, I illustrated the dialectical relationship between diverse conceptions of literacies and their multifaceted social surroundings, observed from within the boundaries of the programme and simultaneously analysed through a wider socio-historical and political backdrop. Early in the chapter, I mapped the various social spaces (referred throughout the thesis as study circles) to better understand where and how literacy learning took place and how literacies were ‘socially disseminated’ (Kalman, 2008, p. 531).

Going forward, the analytical theme of *literacies* allowed me to unpick situated interactions and engagements with literacies, both within and outside the MIB. Considering the range of ways in which literacies were positioned according to the participants, the data in this chapter suggests that within a context of disadvantage on multiple fronts (historical, educational, social, linguistic, and economic), learners and facilitators alike constructed literacies as something multivalent. Moreover, the detailed account on the meaning of literacies (framed in this chapter as a *defence*, a *necessity*, as a way have *access to full knowledge*, as a *valuable tool*, as a way to *express oneself*, as a way to *learn from one another*, and as a way to *know one’s rights*) supported the idea of a *multiplicity* of literacies (therefore strongly linked to the LSP paradigm) which are imbued with different values depending on the ways and purposes by which participants choose to engage with them.

Beyond any immediate and situated event, data from this chapter underlined how the political nature of literacies cannot be excised from processes of literacy learning. It indicated how literacies (or a perceived or real lack thereof) remain immersed in and sustained by power relations, with recounted experiences of being ‘humiliated’, ‘insulted’, ‘tricked’, and ‘taken advantage of’ having an influence on many participants. The ongoing stigma of ‘illiteracy’, concerns regarding reliance on others (or having lower agency), and fears of expression (primarily due to ethnolinguistic discrimination) echoed in the data are concerns which are regularly deployed in Freire’s argument in support of developing critical consciousness (*conscientização*). Freire maintained that for education and learning to be ‘useful’, there needs to be an element of personal transformation that extends beyond any given classroom or learning context to all aspects of a learner’s life (Freire, 1970b, 1970a; Kitchenham, 2008). Therefore, in ‘learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions’ as well as injustices, ‘individuals can take action against the oppressive elements of reality’ (Freire, 1970b, p. 35).

Along these lines, the data in this chapter also emphasised different forms of agentic action in the face of ongoing barriers and discriminations. Regarding agency as ‘the extent to which individuals are able to exert control in their personal and social lives’ (Varpio *et al.*, 2020, p. 990), participant perspectives on literacy learning as a ‘defence’, a ‘tool’ and as a way to ‘express oneself’ arguably highlighted some of the agentic and aspirational dimensions of literacies in both instrumental and symbolic ways (Rogers and Street, 2012). Looking past some of the more generic adjectives participants used to describe literacies as ‘necessary’, ‘useful’, or ‘nice’, I noted how these framings were often contextualised and situated (in other words, rooted in a specific time and place and from an individual perspective) and linked to everyday life experiences. For example, Adriana’s mention of utility in terms of using maths for daily tasks or writing letters to family members who lived outside of the community or Raúl’s description of wanting to improve his reading and writing to better fulfil his *cargo* role in the community demonstrated how literacies (in both Indigenous languages and Spanish) can (and often do) become tailored to individual and community needs, regardless of whether or how literacy materials are developed or promoted (such as through a government-led programme such as the MIB).

Such localised examples of some of the more instrumental purposes of literacies (for example, to take a MIB exam or to provide a signature to receive benefits) paired with some of its more symbolic potentials (as a way to advocate for or defend oneself and to ‘learn from on another’) suggest further links to self-confidence and identity building through mutual interaction (Bartlett, 2007b). Related to this idea, Pilar’s description of how it ‘feels nice’ to express oneself and how literacies have helped learners in her study circle to ‘feel good’ about themselves suggested a potential scaffolding of confidence and self-esteem occurring within MIB contexts.

Building on the idea of mutual support, discussions concerning how participants perceived the study circles as a way to ‘learn from one another’ highlighted the prominence and importance of mutual learning. For some learners, such aspects of learning and sharing together made possible through the MIB study circles were seen as a key motivator and a way to (re)connect with others in their community through shared activities, traditions, and other celebrations. The value and significance of the interpersonal dimensions of literacy learning—while much more nuanced and much less easily measured than its practical dimensions—has been previously examined and theorised through affiliative and network-based lenses. For example, in an

ethnographic study on adult literacy education in El Salvador, Prins (2010) underscored the interpersonal and psychosocial benefits primarily attributed to the literacy classes. A study on adult literacy, gender and violence in South Africa explored some spaces where adult learning took place and highlighted their potential to ‘mediate interlocking experiences of inequality’ through positive interactions (Nussey, 2019, p. 29).

This chapter therefore adds to the discussion on the significance of mutual learning with a similar proposition that the ‘successes’ of adult literacy programmes could be monitored and evaluated in such a way that their potential social benefits and impact on the community be considered as well as (and as much as) their economic ones. This is not to say that all adult education interventions or learning spaces by themselves can or will lead to specific social benefits—however, the data in this chapter does support the argument that to size up any given adult literacy interventions primarily against their economic potentials would be to downplay or disregard the crucial networking and affiliative elements (articulated here through the concept of *convivencia*) that adult learning spaces can provide.

Although *convivencia* remains a relatively emergent concept in education, it is increasingly buoyed by movements emphasising Indigenous ideas and values of living harmoniously in community and with the land (Mato, 2016). What is more, there appear to be overlapping concepts related to *convivencia* which are underpinned by intercultural processes of recognition, dialogue, and mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge. In the Latin American context, the Andean concept of *Buen Vivir* (or living well) has emerged as a similar theorisation of an alternative and more humanistic conception of ‘development’ that is underpinned by the idea of mutual dependence between human beings (Esteva, 2010; CEPAL/FILAC, 2020). Other related concepts and ideologies include the *ubuntu* paradigm emerging from African contexts which emphasises the communal nature of everyday lives and ‘denotes mutual understanding [...] of the value of human difference’, as well as the German concept of *bildung* which sees individuals as ‘embedded in a world that is at the same time that of the differentiated other’ (Brock-Utne, 2016, p. 31).

The relationships with and conceptions of literacies featured in this chapter were therefore found to be produced and enacted through distinct histories and identities, linked to tangible usages, and imbued with intangible meanings. The next chapter turns its attention towards the key actors involved in the MIB programme, delving deeper into some of the learner and

facilitator's personal trajectories and exploring their experiences within the programme and its influence on their lives and livelihoods.

Life and work for MIB learners and facilitators

Introduction

This chapter is centred around the analytical themes of *life and work* and *teaching and learning* with the goal of exploring how and why learners and facilitators engage with the MIB programme. It examines some of the personal, professional, and educational backgrounds and trajectories of the participants and asks whether or to what extent their engagement with the programme has influenced their lives (as community members, learners, facilitators, and more) or their livelihoods (as working adults both inside and outside the home and across a range of occupations).

The chapter begins with a closer look at the experiences of MIB facilitators, whose complex role is discussed in terms of how they understand, claim, build, and enact their professional identities and pedagogical practices. In the second section of the chapter, I turn my attention to the experiences of MIB learners and explore their perspectives on processes of and motivations for literacy learning as well as the agentic and aspirational nature of their involvement in the programme. Given the dyadic relationship between facilitators and learners and the related processes of action and reflection (otherwise termed as *praxis*) that emerged from the data, the two main sections of the chapter feature overlapping discussions, perceptions and reflections from facilitators about learners, and vice versa (Freire, 1970a).

Solidarity figures? The role of MIB facilitators

According to INEA's guidelines, a MIB facilitator is described as a 'solidarity figure who speaks, reads and writes both Spanish and their Indigenous language of origin' and facilitates learning through 'motivation, academic support and continuous feedback' to ensure learner participation, often in group settings (UNESCO, 2012, p. 97; SEP, 2021). However, within the widely available institutional guidelines, reports, and even the MIB facilitator training materials, there remains little attention towards the backgrounds and trajectories of the facilitators themselves that sheds light on the different pathways of development to become a so-called figure of solidarity.

The related negotiations of identity, experiences of personal and professional development, and reflections on the roles and responsibilities of facilitators are explored throughout this section to gain an understanding of the processes of *becoming* and experiences of *being* MIB facilitators. In addition, related discussions about how participants got involved with the programme and how they tackle a range of challenges in their respective communities provided further pedagogical and practical insights into the MIB and helped to illustrate how facilitators as ‘solidarity figures’ are often involved in multiple processes of teaching, learning, and mediating all at once.

On becoming facilitators

Considering how MIB facilitators are by default individuals who live and work in Indigenous communities (and often consider them their communities and languages of origin), there appeared to be a range of factors by which they became involved in the programme and took up their roles. Whether it was mainly due to personal motivations and professional aspirations or because of external encouragement from family and INEA workers, each of their stories contributed towards gaining a more comprehensive picture of facilitator trajectories.

To provide an example of the various entry points into the field of literacy instruction, Pilar disclosed her transition of becoming a MIB facilitator through a combination of self-guided and institutionally supported means:

Since I was a little girl, I’ve always had the illusion of teaching ... to learn from adults through teaching. And from that moment on, I focused on getting ahead. And I accompanied my mother to the trainings. That’s why, well, the people from INEA came to see me, to see if I wanted to be a facilitator after my mother died. Yeah, that’s how I started with INEA. And since then, well, I’m participating in helping adults to learn to read and write.

It’s given me a lot ... it’s taught me several things. I’ve trained in the MEVyT programme, I feel good about myself helping other people learn to read and write ... it’s helped me a lot, personally. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-6.1*)

Pilar’s insight on having the ‘illusion’ of being a teacher from a very young age and seeing this as a mutually enriching process (‘to learn from adults through teaching’) as well as a personally fulfilling one (‘I feel good about myself’ and ‘it’s helped me a lot’) was helpful to understand her perseverance throughout various challenges leading up to her assuming the role (including losing her mother and the difficulties she encountered when undertaking further training, to be described later in this chapter). Pilar’s focus on ‘getting ahead’ as a facilitator had, in her case,

resulted in the self-proclaimed benefits of being ‘given a lot’ and having taught her ‘several things’. Along similar lines, Patricia succinctly described her motivations for improving her oral and written skills in her native Ch’ol:

What I would like ... [is] to learn to speak Ch’ol well and write well. I would be—I would *really* feel like a teacher of an Indigenous language. (*Patricia, Calakmul 2 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-6.2*)

This display of motivation for self-improvement as articulated by Patricia’s aspirations to ‘feel’ and assume an identity as an Indigenous language teacher supports the notion that for some MIB facilitators, there is arguably a wider vocational dimension to their decision to participate in the programme, one which may be imbued with certain values and aspirations related to *teaching* and *being teachers*.

As the facilitators expounded on their experiences and the different ways in which they perceived their role, a broader linking discussion emerged regarding their own transitions from learners to facilitators. In several cases, many of the facilitators I interviewed were initially approached by INEA support staff before they perceived themselves to have a level of readiness or preparation for the role. For instance, Diana became involved in the programme only after her daughter—who had been leading a study circle to gain work experience upon Diana’s encouragement—left the community to attend university. According to Diana, she had never considered that she would be able to fulfil this role after her daughter moved away because of her level of education:

I had my ... daughter who was studying ... my oldest daughter. And I told her, well, you should teach, *hija* [daughter] ... it helps you, and so on. They won’t give you very much, they’ll give you your payment of \$200 pesos. Well, she got excited, right? But she told me when she went to study her degree, ‘*Mami*’, she says, ‘Well, what am I going to do with my *señoras* [women]?’ And, well, I still needed to take one exam for *secundaria*¹. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview 26.10.2018-6.3*)

Based on this account, Diana seemed to be in a situation where she was both interested and willing to take over her daughter’s MIB study circle but did not have the minimum qualification required for the role. Motivated by the potential opportunity, Diana then enrolled in the local

¹ Here Diana is referring to upper secondary school level, which is the minimum requirement for becoming a facilitator for INEA. The MEVyT modules at this level are only available in Spanish.

INEA chapter as a learner herself, eventually earning the required certificate and taking over as facilitator for the local study circle.

Further interactions with facilitators suggested that even in cases where they had the minimum required educational certificate, many of them still felt underprepared to take on the MIB facilitation for a number of reasons. Gaby recounted her initial involvement with INEA and her subsequent surprise after finding out that she was recruited to be a MIB facilitator as opposed to a Spanish-language MEVyT one:

Well, in my case ... when we went to receive the PROSPERA payments, I asked. Because my mother, she insisted that I join INEA, right? That I, that I become a teacher. I told her no, I don't like it. I have two kids, well, I have to look after them ... she said, if you join, I'll join.

I never thought they were going to give me the [MIB], right? I mean, I thought the *Hispano* [Spanish] ... Yeah, they surprised me when they told me that you're going to teach the dialect ... I told them, how come? 'No, well you speak [the] Ch'ol dialect'. Oh, yeah. In fact, I do, I tell them. But I don't know how to write it, I tell them. I know how to speak it—I don't know how to write it. 'No, well, we'll teach you'. Well, okay, I tell them, I'd like to learn more, and write it. So, there, so I started ... I do like it. (*Gaby, Calakmul 4 facilitator, interview 10.10.2018-6.4*)

This second-hand account of Gaby's interactions with INEA support workers provided some insight into INEA's approach to facilitator recruitment in that she was strongly encouraged to attend the facilitator training regardless of her claims that she 'didn't know how to write' the Ch'ol language (which she interestingly referred to as a 'dialect' rather than a variant or standalone language). Moreover, the proposed arrangement served the dual purpose of providing Gaby with training and support to undertake the role while ensuring programme coverage within that community in Calakmul.

Patricia narrated a similar experience where she was the only one out of a pool of prospective local facilitators who was willing to take on the Indigenous language stream of the programme, even though she claimed that she did not know how to write it herself:

I simply sent my name [to INEA] because there were several who sent their name. And when they found out that it's for, for, well, for Indigenous people. No one wanted it. Everyone backed out.

I'll accept, I tell them. [laughs] They called me out for four days of training ... in the Ch'ol dialect. I mean, I didn't even know how to write it. But I did know how to pronounce it ... Since then, I started to like it. To teach writing. They taught me how to write it, how it needs to have vowels and all that. Honestly,

it's ... that it's difficult, it *is* difficult. (*Patricia, Calakmul 2 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-6.5*)

Patricia and Gaby's experiences of being recruited—while ostensibly needing stronger foundations in reading and writing in their respective Indigenous languages themselves—demonstrated how in some cases, the facilitator-learner identity was dynamic and interchangeable. Pilar provided further insight into the process of being recruited and provided access to training:

There were no Ch'ol teachers here ... I told the, the trainer, well—I don't know if I can, well, I don't know if I can, I tell her. Because it's in Ch'ol. It's really difficult, I tell him. 'You can do it', he says. 'You can do it. I'll train you for that'. And he gave me that book in Ch'ol, and I looked at it square-eyed because I didn't know what—[laughs] it's my tongue, I tell him, but I don't know what it says! I don't know how, I don't know how to read it, I don't know how to express it ... Little by little I started getting the hang of, well, the book ... now I know how to read in, in Ch'ol. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-6.6*)

Pilar's comments about feeling that she didn't know how to 'express' herself in her own tongue not only links back to the notion of fear and potential stigmatisation on the basis of language discussed in the previous chapter, but she proceeded to go into more detail about some of the struggles she faced when stepping into the facilitator role:

At first, I used to get a lot of headaches. Sometimes I tell my parents, I don't know why I got into this, I don't know how I'm going to get out, I told them. I told them, I don't want anything anymore, I can't learn anything anymore. It's *our* language, I told them, but I don't know anything. I've even had headaches, vomiting, I don't want to know anything about this book. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-6.7*)

Here, Pilar's depictions of the strain she was under during the training process were in direct contrast to the impression I got during the site visit, where she demonstrated a level of confidence and ease in leading the study circle session. However, her struggles as described in both embodied, physical terms (through headaches and vomiting) and in terms of frustration and feeling incapable of 'learning anything anymore' evinced another picture, one that points towards some of the steeper learning curves that some facilitators may encounter during the process of becoming a MIB facilitator.

Pilar went on to illustrate how she relied on family support during this challenging time, leading to a point in her professional development where she found motivation from the fact that she noted a progression in being able to read in her native tongue:

But I have, I have my grandfather who ... can write ... and he tells me, he comes to my house and he says, 'What are you doing *m'ija* [daughter]?' Nothing, *abuelo* [grandfather], I tell him. I'm trying to understand this book, but it's just, this book and I clash, I tell him. 'Don't worry, don't worry, this is our language', he says. And my grandfather started to read some words to me, and he read, and read, so, um, I liked it. I liked that book. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-6.8*)

Gaby, Patricia, and Pilar's joint experiences highlighted three aspects of professional development and identity building: firstly, that INEA support workers seem to actively recruit and give precedence to Indigenous language-speaking members within the target communities who demonstrate an ability, interest, or motivation in being a facilitator. Second, it suggested that INEA is keen to offer and provide opportunities for facilitator training deemed necessary to set them on the path towards becoming a MIB facilitator, regardless of their perceived level of proficiency in reading and writing the language. Third, their testimonies provided some insight into processes of transition and identity construction from learner to facilitator, and in doing so, how they further developed their cultural brokering skills through bridging languages and bringing community members together for a study circle under the institutional umbrella of the MIB programme (Martinez-Cosio and Martinez Iannacone, 2007; Papen, 2010b).

In addition to discussions about their experiences of being recruited for the programme, many of the facilitators then indicated how they assumed the role of recruiters for the MIB themselves, in some cases going door to door to invite new learners to the programme. Elaborating on the learner recruitment practices and learner profiles, Paola described the experience of having to 'convince' people to join:

There are places where I have students—mostly, they're women who didn't finish high school. Why? Because they got pregnant in the first year of secondary school ... and they couldn't continue ... I have very young people who didn't finish ... and even now, I mean, you have to show up and convince them to finish her secondary school ... you still see those kinds of situations.

It's very difficult to convince a person who is already older to come and study. So, you have to show up, not just like, do you want to study? No. You have to show up from the time that they tell you their problems and until you convince them, so that person joins the study circle. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-6.9*)

Similarly, Pedro elaborated on the challenges of gradually building up a consistent and cohesive study circle, describing his ongoing efforts to try and get a local study circle off the ground after several failed attempts:

I remember the first time we arrived here, we invited them ... and like *Doña Juana* [a local learner] said, ‘You just come here to rile us up and then you back out, right?’ [laughter] Really, it was just complaints [laughter] ... But I’m really pleased, because I see how everyone attends [the study circle]. (*Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-6.10*)

Upon further discussion with that specific group in Tampacán, it seemed there had been a significant amount of facilitator turnover, leading to a degree of mistrust from the learners that there would be regular MIB study circle sessions at all. Having witnessed such inconsistencies, Yesenia briefly described her experiences from back then to the present:

I would come, and the teacher wouldn’t come ... we always came, and it was closed ... [Since then, Marcos] hasn’t failed us ... since he started, he has always shown up. I really like it, because he has always shown up. He comes in good spirits to teach us ... he just comes in good spirits ... Yes, he always gets a smile out of us if we come and we’re sad ... we forget ... for a while. (*Yesenia, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-6.11*)

Yesenia’s observation that Marcos hadn’t ‘failed’ the study circle participants began with noting his consistency and reliability as a facilitator (‘he always showed up’) and ended with a description of the affective impact he had on her and others. By coming ‘in good spirits’, Marcos was regarded as being able to create a positive learning space that was a reprieve from day-to-day struggles or challenges. In this way, the facilitator appeared to play a key role in determining whether or not learners joined—and then remained engaged—with the programme.

That stated, the persistence with which some facilitators carried out their activities and their encouragement for learners to join the local study circles was not always met with the same positive reaction, leading facilitators to use different strategies of learner recruitment. For instance, Gaby made mention of how she actively recruited potential learners by emphasising how recipients of PROSPERA cash transfers were strongly encouraged (although technically not required) to engage in educational activities. She described an interaction with a family member who despite her encouragement, still decided not to join the local study circle:

I have an aunt, and I went to see her, twice to see her. And she told me ... that she had a lot of work, that she’s already, well, already of [an older] age. ‘I’m not going to be able to’, she says. ‘It’s too far where you’re going to teach’, she says ... ‘I’m not going to learn anymore’, she says. ‘Besides, I can’t see very well anymore’, she says ... ‘I’m not going, I know I’m not going to learn’, she says. Okay, I tell her. But it’s going to affect your PROSPERA, I tell her ... Because we were with the PROSPERA thing, and PROSPERA, well, tells us that we

have to be studying ... ‘They can take it from me, they take it from me’, she says. (*Gaby, Calakmul 4 facilitator, interview 10.10.2018-6.12*)

This retold interaction provided an example of how members of different communities (and people who in theory might be regarded as standing to benefit from joining the MIB) could at times still contest, challenge, and even reject certain offerings or opportunities made available or promoted to them (including the cash support from PROSPERA). Although her aunt did not end up joining that specific study circle, Gaby seemed undeterred by this and mentioned how she planned to continue to recruit people within her community moving forward.

Taking these experiences into account, MIB facilitators thus appeared to not only serve as the primary liaison representing the MIB programme (and by extension, INEA and the SEP), but they were then expected to recruit and maintain a steady stream of learners to meet enrolment and outcome targets. Relatedly, issues linked to working conditions and uneven perceptions regarding the professionalisation emerged from further discussions and are addressed in the next section. In addition, facilitators reported a range of challenges (on both practical and pedagogical levels) that at times.

On professionalisation, scarcity, and (in)security

Despite the ostensible level of responsibility as ‘solidarity figures’ within and towards the programme discussed in the previous section, there remained contrasts in terms of how facilitators viewed their role. As this section will draw out and further expand, some MIB facilitators referred to their role as a ‘job’, thus conferring a degree of professional standing to the role. At the same time, others would state that their involvement in the programme was more of a ‘hobby’ in the sense that the financial earnings gained through their facilitator efforts could never be consistent enough or sufficient to earn a living, thus calling into question the long-term sustainability of the role.

Adding further context, one INEA support staff recounted that in their experience of overseeing more than 100 facilitators across several years, they were aware that many of them had ‘*double or triple jobs to make ends meet*’ (Field notes, 15.11.18). Such circumstances were exemplified by facilitators like Diana, who confirmed that she mostly relied on selling cosmetics as her primary avenue of earning money and did not consider her activities as a MIB facilitator as her primary occupation. However, Paola’s view on the nature of the role differed in the sense that she considered how compensation, pedagogical practice, professional development, and job satisfaction aspects came into play:

I also think this is a job. So, I think that if you're earning financially, well, then you also have to invest part of your time so it's, well, reflected in what you're going to teach ... Right? Because you're not just going to teach them a little bit of what the book says ... you can't go teach a class if you don't even know what you're going to teach ... INEA, they do give us training. They don't give us training very often, right? But yes, they do give us training.

In my case, I feel satisfied with the work I've done ... it's not necessary to get financial gratification, right? For example, I go to the community and they bring me an orange. I leave with my bunch of bananas ... I feel the affection that people, well, give you for what you do ... So, I'm grateful for that, yes. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-6.13*)

Here, Paola suggested that while the training made available to MIB facilitators may not be regular and the financial compensation may not be considered much (compared to the average salary—more details on this to follow), the role still required a strong level of professional preparation and commitment. Her self-declared satisfaction with her work was emphasised by her articulations of 'feeling affection' and appreciation from her learners for her role as a facilitator and how these positive affective demonstrations on behalf of her students made her feel 'grateful', deeming any type of financial compensation as not 'necessary' for her to fulfil her role. Paola's remarks echoed those of Gaby's, who stated that she prioritised being a part of learners' learning process over being remunerated:

That I want to teach, I'll teach. It's not because I want to get paid, no. No. I need for them to learn, and for them to say, or for the *señoras* [women] to say, 'I learned from Gaby', right? That's what I want. Right? I'd like for them to say, 'Oh, I learned because of her'. That's what I'd like, right? That they learn to read and write [the language] ... Let them know, well ... that I'm proud of them, because they can learn a lot ... That's my goal. If I manage, well, for them to learn to read and write and write their names, so that they can use it anywhere—not in *Hispano* [Spanish], but in their dialect ... that they write in their dialect ... well, that's my goal. (*Gaby, Calakmul 4 facilitator, interview 10.10.2018-6.14*)

In maintaining that her overarching goal was to support the learners, Gaby was also alluding to a wider desire of teaching (irrespective of payment), being recognised as a teacher, and being credited with supporting processes of learning by those in her community. In other comparable comments, Diana, Patricia, and Selene elucidated their interests and motivations for engaging with the MIB as facilitators, which similarly had little to do with financial incentives and more to do with giving back to their communities:

I don't care if I don't have a salary, or I don't have—that's not the main thing. The main thing is that you give support to, to your fellow, to your fellow human beings. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-6.15*)

I didn't care at first if they paid or not, but what I liked was to teach those who don't know how to read and write. (*Patricia, Calakmul 2 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-6.16*)

Well, in itself, the goal of this would be, well, in itself, that women have learned a little from my experience ... Even though I don't have many studies, the little I have can be shared, well, as far as they can learn ... I'm interested, because in itself, well, my interest here was to help my community. (*Selene, Chilchotla facilitator, interview 25.10.2018-6.17*)

Taken together, this data suggests that in some cases, altruistic motivations underpinned and determined whether, how, and to what extent some facilitators became involved and invested in the programme. Notwithstanding, there remained differing perspectives on the degree to which there was adequate recognition or legitimization of their facilitation efforts (mainly through training and remuneration) as well as concerns regarding challenging working conditions could be seen as making the sustainability of the role untenable for some. Such challenges were reflected by—but not limited to—aspects such as an acute scarcity of resources and material support in many of the communities, some of which Diana spoke about in more detail:

We need notebooks. Maybe they won't last until the book is finished, because sometimes we work more in a notebook to do exercises and all that. So it would help us to have more, a bit more material ... There's a really low number [of materials] that sometimes we have to reuse some... Or the *técnicos* [INEA technicians] here have to go around collecting and seeing who has a book left over ... Because then sometimes, well, as a facilitator, well, for example, I have to buy a marker, I have to buy—when, I mean, they don't give me any [markers] over there.

Yeah, so then it comes from our [bank] accounts ... sometimes, I even recycle sheets of paper. When I didn't have a whiteboard, I suffered a lot ... I said, how am I going to do it? No, well, I started to reuse the material, I got some posters from the topic [the book]—I would write on the back of them ... We even made a whiteboard with white paper and card stock on the back ... [we stuck] contact paper on top. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-6.18*)

Such descriptions of the constraints (and the related adaptations in the face of scarce resources) illuminated aspects of the programme that are perhaps not immediately visible from an institutional standpoint: whereas INEA promotes the fact that all MIB materials and sessions are free and accessible to all, there is less attention paid to the range of limitations that might hinder day to day learning activities and the ways in which facilitators like Diana might 'suffer' as a consequence of inadequate resources or support. Demonstrating a more pressing and urgent need for support, Gaby indirectly entreated the INEA technician present during her interview for further assistance:

Another thing, in my case, I need materials for my learners. Honestly, well, like I'm telling you, of the money, we barely have any, we don't have ... well, I don't have enough to buy things, materials for my learners ... well, that's what I would like, well, yeah. That they support me with the materials. (*Gaby, Calakmul 4 facilitator, interview 10.10.2018-6.19*)

Adding these concerns were other issues that strongly indicated that ongoing scarcity was not only reflected on a localised level through inadequately equipped learning spaces, but on a wider institutional one through the curtailing of state budgets. In a showcase of how budgetary constraints had a ripple effect on MIB activities, it so happened that planned field visits in the state of San Luis Potosí were considerably delayed by the regional INEA liaison. This issue was later revealed to be because the state INEA office had run out of their operating budget for the remainder of the year (towards the end of November 2018), and as such, there were few support staff who were able (or willing) to travel to the communities or cover the transportation costs. While this issue was ultimately resolved, some of the support staff conveyed a deep sense of frustration at some of the wider institutional limitations in more informal interactions, some of which were captured in a related field note:

They [the INEA support staff who arranged the visits] talked about how INEA operates with only 0.03% of the national budget for education. They said 'hacemos milagros' [we do miracles] and 'hacemos de tripas corazón' [a saying roughly translated to making the best out of a bad situation]. They spoke of the technological innovation that INEA has that far surpasses that of the SEP. They said it was contradictory—that the SEP has never reached the same level of technological capacity, despite having most of the money [of the national education budget].

They spoke of INEA workers being 'negreados²' or having to work as slaves under extreme pressure. They spoke of their situation being 'contra la espada y la pared' [between a rock and a hard place]. (Field notes, 15.11.18)

These candid interactions illustrated several issues: first, INEA support staff emphasised the comparatively small operation budget they had, the shortfalls of which was causing them to effectively cease administrative operations for the rest of the year with no recourse from the government. Second, they made a point to highlight the 'technological innovation' of INEA (arguably reflected through the MEVyT model, and the MIB model more specifically), which in their opinion surpassed any curricular and pedagogical innovation within the compulsory education system.

² In the Latin American context, the term *negreado* comes from *negro* (meaning the colour black). It is a term used colloquially which evokes racially charged notions of Black slaves being overworked, exploited, and dehumanised.

Equally as concerning was that issues or inconsistencies with operational budgets could have various immediate implications for facilitators and learners: limitations in terms of access to materials, training, and support with assessments meant that at times, MIB activities could be stalled (or even effectively come to a halt, such as was the case in San Luis Potosí) and lead to further programmatic discontinuities. Moreover, rules and regulations surrounding INEA's compensation structure for 'solidarity figures' proved to be clouded by red tape. For instance, during an interview Gaby displayed a level of confusion around how (or even if) she would be financially compensated or what professional development would be available to her in lieu of payment:

Another thing that I wanted to tell you all—I need more workshops to teach me how to read and write [my language] ... The *licenciado* [referring to the INEA support worker] told me that there's cash support for me, but it's a matter of me filling out all the books. Is there no other way you can support me in this? (*Gaby, Calakmul 4 facilitator, interview 10.10.2018-6.20*)

By 'filling out all the books', Gaby was referring to the programme's regulations whereby facilitators only receive compensation if learners registered under their specific study circles completed the required modules and passed their respective exams. Whereas in previous years facilitators received a small stipend on a regular basis (regardless of the outcomes of learner assessments), since then, there seemed to have been a subsequent shift to an incentive-based compensation model, some details of which were summarised in a field note:

I asked more about payments to asesores [facilitators]. They described the "pago por productividad" [payment by productivity] and how that depends on what [exams] the people pass. It's a "regla de operación" [operations rule]. \$600 pesos payment for those who pass La Palabra [the initial book], \$93 pesos per module after that. They said that in theory, an asesor could make between \$1,500 to \$10,000 pesos per month. This would only be possible if they had a very large number of students. (Field notes, 15.11.18)

By placing a significant amount of pressure on the facilitators to achieve certain results from the outset and emphasising the link between 'productivity' as measured solely by exam outcomes and as a pre-requisite for payment, INEA's approach towards programme monitoring and evaluation arguably shifted in line with more market-oriented and neoliberal educational reforms and policies seen in Mexico and beyond in the 21st century (Ward, 2012). Further investigation into the most recent operating rules of INEA indicated that beyond the initial, one-off payment of \$600 MXN (approximately £21 GBP) for learners passing the first test, MIB facilitators earn on average between \$120 to \$350 per exam passed, an amount which

only narrowly exceeds the national minimum wage (which in Mexico is calculated per day rather than per hour—as of 2021, the rate was set at \$141.70, or £5.13) (SEP, 2021).

At the same time, the institutional guidelines revealed that MIB facilitators were allocated a minimum of five training sessions amounting to 40 hours with all costs included, as opposed to the minimum of 16 hours of training for Spanish language facilitators (SEP, 2021). While such training policies did seem to acknowledge the added pedagogical complexity of working in MIB contexts, there was little supporting evidence regarding the rates at which the facilitators actually attended these trainings or whether or not they received initial or ongoing offerings of professional development. Informal discussions with INEA support staff and facilitators pointed towards a different picture, one where not all costs were covered, nor time demands were taken into account:

The location [of the MIB facilitator training] was not so remote, but according to the técnica [INEA support worker] it is still difficult to access. They said that taxis take a long time to get there (they stop a lot) and that sometimes they even have to hitchhike from one place to another. A técnica said that she supervised 7 different municipalities and usually pays \$40 pesos each way. (Field notes, 26.10.18)

Similar to the INEA workers who were tasked with travelling between different municipalities, some facilitators mentioned how they also regularly travelled to nearby communities to support different study circles, but that at times their visits were hindered by competing family or work responsibilities. Not only that, but related issues regarding the safety with which they felt they could carry out their activities also emerged from further discussions. Insight into the corollary—and vastly underreported—issue of (in)security thus added another dimension of complexity to the positioning of a ‘solidarity figure’. Lived experiences with regional violence were highlighted by an INEA support worker named Irma, who described what seemed to be relatively constant levels of violence in the communities she visited. She recounted more than one instance of having to ask members in the community to host her overnight for fear of travelling back home in the dark, among other concerns:

[Irma] described the dangers of travelling to all the different [study circles] she is responsible for. She said that one place was dangerous and that a lot of ‘accidents’ happen there. When I asked what kinds of accidents, she said ‘de que matan a la gente gratis’ [they kill people for free] there. She said other communities she has to visit are more violent, and that in one specific place ‘se pelean a machetazos’ [they fight with machetes]. She described how the municipal president travels with bodyguards. (Field notes, 26.10.2019)

While the causes and manifestations of regional violence varied from state to state (and even from municipality to municipality), they could broadly be attributed to ongoing tensions between state and local authorities as well as incidences of organised crime which significantly incremented following the so-called ‘war against drugs’ during Felipe Calderón Hinojosa’s administration from 2006 onwards (Rosen and Zepeda Martínez, 2015, p. 154). Although the scope of this study did not allow for further exploration into the root causes or implications of violence within and across the featured Indigenous communities, Irma’s observations served to illustrate how for some support staff and facilitators, mobility between different study circles entailed more than simply assuming the costs of transportation—at times, it meant risking their own safety and security. Thus, while inadequate or uneven compensation or training could potentially hinder a facilitator’s ability to carry out MIB activities fully and successfully, taking on such considerable risks to their own person might also have a significant bearing on a facilitator’s decision to become and remain involved in the programme.

On pedagogy and practice

Despite discontinuities in terms of training and support for MIB facilitators, discussions with facilitators shed light on aspects of teaching and learning within the MIB that further emphasised the complexities of multilingual, multigrade, and even multigenerational literacy instruction across one or more study circles. Paola gave an insightful account of the dynamics within her different study circles, including a description of how she prioritised the time during the sessions and how she paid specific attention to those learners at the emergent literacy level:

I arrive around nine in the morning, and I primarily attend to my students who don’t know how to read and who don’t know how to write ... they’re the first ones ... that I’m going to pay attention to. Why? Because I feel that they’re the ones that require a lot more attention than someone who already knows how to read and already knows how to write. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-6.21*)

Beyond an indication that she paid ‘a lot more attention’ to those at the initial levels of the programme, Paola went on to discuss her approach to having adults with a range of physical or cognitive difficulties within her groups. She was the first (and only one) of the facilitators I spoke to who touched upon working with learners with different abilities and who explicitly emphasised inclusion within the learning space:

I have people too, for example, who have different disabilities ... and just because they have a disability doesn’t mean that they aren’t going to get involved here in the study circle. On the contrary, right? ... They’re the ones

that—the ones that I help the most, that I pay more attention to ... Why? Because there are people who are—who discriminate. I mean, ‘I don't want to sit with him, because he's like that’ [a person with a disability] ... I say no, no, on the contrary. You're all supposed to be a team, and you have to, you have to, well, see that, well, human side, right? ... Just because he has a disability, well, that doesn't mean that he won't be able to [learn] like you. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-6.22*)

Here, Paola was underlining a sense of community building within her study circles: by encouraging all who participated to be a ‘team’ and to rethink what it means to learn regardless of cognitive or physical difficulties suggested that she was approaching her study circles from a strongly egalitarian perspective, thus aligning with the previously mentioned potential of *convivencia* (or living and learning together) which could emerge as a result of the MIB activities.

Paola's example of how she adapted her practices to accommodate, engage and support learners regardless of any underlying learning differences brought to light two key issues in terms of pedagogical practice: first, it indicated how some study circles operate as a type of mixed level—and at times, mixed ability—class. Second, it highlighted how the educational background and training of the facilitators themselves may help them be better equipped to manage more complex settings. She continued:

For example, I finished university, right? So, I feel that up until now, my ability—what I transmit to my students, well yeah, well, it's good. Yeah, they've told me themselves. Why? Because I don't just show up and give a class. Right? You have to interact with them ... so that they trust you with questions, with their doubts.

I feel that sometimes there are facilitators that lack that ... more advanced ... training, I mean, more advanced for them, so that they can, well, teach their classes ... INEA tells you to go the training, right? ... But sometimes there are people who say, no, well, I'm not going to go because I don't have time. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-6.23*)

Paola's confidence in her teaching abilities is reflected in her comments about receiving strong positive feedback from her learners. Interestingly, she also made a link to establishing trust within the study circles that extends beyond simply ‘showing up’ to a class and involves deeper and more meaningful interactions with the learners.

The previously mentioned analogy of doing ‘miracles’ and making the best out of challenging situations despite the acute scarcity of resources was compounded by further constraints related to the non-linear nature of adult learning. For example, Graciela addressed how the complex

and temporal dimensions of literacy learning at times led to learner discouragement due to their perceived lack of ‘progress’:

It’s really complicated for them ... up until now we haven’t progressed, I think, because it doesn’t help me to move forward. Because if people don’t know how to read and write, it doesn’t help me to move forward with the module ... I have to take it step by step ... if they stop attending for one or two sessions, then their memory is practically erased. And I have to go back. (*Graciela, Calakmul 1 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-6.24*)

Here, Graciela described the idea of ‘progression’ or ‘moving forward’ in literacy learning for adult learners as a non-linear one, acknowledging that for her, a lack of consistency in a learner’s attendance can significantly hinder their progress. On a similar note, Diana spoke further about how at times she observed serious issues of learner confidence which affected her own motivation as a facilitator: she stated that there had been times when she wanted to ‘throw in the towel’, but that the work and her students ‘followed her’ and dissuaded her from withdrawing from the programme. She then described what she considered to be two-way nature of learning where the learner’s willingness played a large role in the process:

Then they tell me ... I just don’t want to go anymore, I’m not going to learn anymore. I say, if you say you’re not going to, then obviously you won’t learn. If you say yes, you’ll learn. Because there you’re saying that you don’t want to, well, it’s because, well, you don’t want to ... I can’t force you. I can’t force you if you don’t want to.

The point here is that you say that you are interested. And the ones who come, well, are the ones that, the ones that have come really constantly ... One of my learners was commenting that who knows how many years she’s been studying and she just can’t, she hasn’t finished learning. But the thing is, you’re never finished learning ... On the contrary, you have to put in the effort. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-6.25*)

Diana’s account of this interaction reveals how notions of ‘learning’ within the MIB programme can be linked to a hypothetical ‘finish’ line where literacy learners might expect a continuous trend of progression to ultimately achieve a certain expected level of knowledge, which could in turn lead to frustration and inertia in the learning process. Notwithstanding, a learner named Teresa from this same group offered the following testimony which indicated how Diana’s investment of time, continuous encouragement, and pedagogical engagement with the learners made a difference:

She does teach us ... She does explain what letter we have to write. And how the words go. Because the other time they [someone from INEA] invited us to study, but what happened is that they just took our names, and we wrote it down, and they told us to ... take an exam. And then they just left us the books, and

they never explained to us how we're going to learn ourselves ... we don't even know the letters. We don't know how to write.

I'm really happy to study. I thank God that we have, like, [a facilitator], well, that teaches us ... It's really difficult when one doesn't know any letters ... But, I'm also grateful to *Doña* Diana because she lends us her time and, and she teaches with all her might, with all her heart ... She gives us her time. (*Teresa, San Mateo learner, group interview 26.10.2018-6.26*)

The extent to which Teresa was motivated by Diana to engage in the programme despite her stated difficulties and hesitations was consonant with Yesenia's previously mentioned perspective of how as a facilitator, Marcos hadn't 'failed' the learners in her community. Beyond factors which were arguably related to the perceived reliability of the facilitator and the promotion of values of *convivencia* within the study circles, facilitators and learners also hinted at more complex and affective pedagogical decisions and practices which additionally played a role in their wider engagement with the programme. Recounted efforts of inclusion within multigrade and mixed ability groups, a recognition of the temporal dimension of emergent literacy learning, and the patience and commitment towards the learners (among other aspects) thus provided examples of how MIB facilitators might act as a unifying and positive force for adults seeking literacy learning opportunities.

'Educando'/Being educated: Perspectives from MIB learners

Returning to INEA's official guidelines and examining the ways in which learners were profiled and positioned as the target population for whom the MIB programme (and the Spanish language MEVyT one more broadly) was designed, certain recurring characteristics emerged. More generally, it described learners as *educandos*, or those over the age of 15 who 'receive' and 'are supported by' the educational, accreditation and certification services provided by INEA (SEP, 2021, pp. 4–5). According to INEA, an *educando* demonstrates that they are undergoing an active process of being educated through the taking and passing of exams which ultimately lead to programme accreditation.

Parallel to this more programmatic profile, the guidelines also refer to learners as those who, 'express their willingness to receive the services of the INEA' through an initial intake interview (ibid., p. 5). Further descriptions locate learners as being in 'a situation of vulnerability' due to 'age, socio-economic, physical, cultural identity, or ethnic or national origin' or because of 'geographical and migratory conditions' which is largely characterised

by conditions of ‘*rezago educativo*’ (which for lack of a better translation could be termed as educational lag or backwardness) (SEP, 2021, pp. 4–5).

Such descriptions evoke a static profile of MIB learners—as vulnerable, disadvantaged, or lagging behind—which recalls previously mentioned ‘deficit’ models and discourses patterned across adult education policies and practices (Aikman et al., 2016; Acharya, Jere and Robinson-Pant, 2019a, p. 268). Although the institutional language could in some ways be seen as upholding a deficit discourse whereby the target population of adults are perceived as needing an externally dictated and pre-determined type of education, it simultaneously elicits a key element of learner agency by also defining learners as people who express willingness to participate.

This section intends to delve deeper into how and why learners engage in the MIB programme and examines the role and purpose of literacy learning for their lives and livelihoods. Similar to the previous section, the following explorations on the trajectories and experiences of learners within the MIB programme includes reflections on the different challenges and experiences related to literacy learning from both learners and facilitators.

On literacy learning for life and work

As this section will explore and highlight, the circumstances by which adult learners were motivated to pursue opportunities for literacy learning through the MIB were found to be dependent on a range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Providing an example, Selene speculated that a primary motivator to engage in the study circles was a potential sense of achievement made tangible through INEA’s certificates:

The benefits, I think would be, well, that they study ... it’s to fulfil their dreams. Why? Because when the women get a certificate of literacy, for them, it’s already a really great achievement ... something they had never expected, and never dreamed of ... and when, well, they at least get a piece of paper, well, they’re really happy. Then—then their mentality goes beyond. They want to study, to keep studying more and more. They don’t want to miss [a study circle session] ... But now that they get a certificate of literacy, well, they say, well, I was able to take the first step, now we’re going for more. And they’re learning more. (*Selene, Chilchotla facilitator, interview 25.10.2018-6.27*)

Whereas Selene gave weight to the institutional aspect of the MIB and suggested that the official results often act as an impetus for further learning, Alejandro countered Selene’s view

by arguing that to pursue literacy learning opportunities meant more than simply seeking institutional recognition by means of ‘papers’:

[It’s not about having] more paper [certificates]. No, no ... if you don’t know [how to read and write], well, then—the paper is useless. (*Alejandro, Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-6.28*)

Therefore, despite Selene’s observations on how learning ‘achievements’ (reflected by the accreditation of MIB levels) led to the learners to ‘keep studying more and more’ and helped them to ‘fulfil their dreams’, Alejandro noted that any achievement in earning a ‘paper’ was rendered ‘useless’ unless the learner understood the things they read. Alejandro’s stance was in resonance with his comments featured in the previous chapter regarding ‘access to full knowledge’ about how his engagement in the MIB was underpinned by a motivation to have information and knowledge ‘stay in his head’.

Regardless of whether or not an official certificate could adequately represent a person’s reading comprehension level or ability to apply reading and writing in their everyday life (a debate which will not directly be addressed here), educational certificates were still generally regarded by participants as a stepping stone to better work opportunities and a potential marker for upward social and economic mobility. This was illustrated by Claudia, who spoke about her educational goals in relation to future work prospects:

I want to finish my studies. Well, my goal is to finish *prepa* [upper secondary school] ... In Monterrey or any other place, they need ... papers to have a good job ... I’m giving it my best to get ahead and finish. That’s my goal. To finish *prepa* ... I’m just barely studying the initial [level] ... Because in truth, I need the papers to go, to get out ... well, to be able to work. (*Claudia, San Martín learner, group interview 22.11.2018-6.29*)

Claudia’s direct link between needing papers to secure ‘a good job’ indicated how her decision to participate in the MIB was influenced by the potential work opportunities she could accede in the future on account of having the official educational certificates. Her mention of a large city and the need of papers to ‘get out’ further implied that her goal was to transition from her rural community to seek employment in a more urban region. This was in keeping with further observations from a learner named Victoria, who hinted that many of the jobs which may have been considered more ‘informal’ in previous decades (such as food preparation or work in the agricultural business) now often required the minimum expected educational levels and the corresponding formal documents:

When you go out to the city, they don't give you a job just like that ... You have to do some paperwork to get a job. And when you don't know how to read and write, well, you don't have work ... even if you just make some tortillas by hand, there in the city, well, they ask you for papers. They tell you, 'Give me your papers, bring them to me tomorrow so that you can work here with me'.

We don't know how to weigh the tortillas. We don't know how to charge ... We don't know about, like, anything. It's a lot. Yeah ... I've suffered from not knowing how to read and write, yeah ... only those who know how to read and write, well, they have their job. They eat. But the rest of us, well, when we don't know how to read and write, it's like that—you don't eat. (*Victoria, San Mateo learner, group interview 26.10.2018-6.30*)

Knowing how to read and write, for Victoria, was thus constructed as key to survival in the most basic terms ('when we don't know how to read and write ... you don't eat'). Moreover, she made the stark distinction between 'those who know how to read and write' and 'the rest of us' and those who 'have their job' and those who 'suffer', thus drawing a marked line to demonstrate a constraining of opportunities that occur as a direct result of not knowing how to read and write.

Patterns of contemporary labour trends which increasingly require a minimum level of education were sharply contrasted by learners' prior experiences of being forced to abandon formalised education at an early age to seek paid employment (which presumably in previous decades did not strictly require official educational certificates, at least for certain types of jobs). To this, Manuel offered the following testimony:

In those times ... like 20% or 30% [of the people] knew how to write. That's it, nobody knows how to write. You just wake up, you make your *pozolito*³, you go to the field, you come back ... Here, there's no time to read and write. (*Manuel, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-6.31*)

Beyond the generalisation that the main labour activities for many of those in Indigenous communities were bound to agricultural work in 'the field', Manuel's estimation of low literacy rates being primarily linked to having 'no time to read and write' were consistent with other experiences whereby learners were more inclined, pressured, or had little choice in transitioning into the labour market at a young age:

He [a learner in the study circle] says that he didn't know [how to read and write], because since he was little, he never knew how to be in school. Because he was little and became an orphan. And later he said that ... parents back then,

³ Here Manuel is referring to *pozol*, a fermented corn dough which can be eaten or mixed with water and has been used since pre-Hispanic times to provide sustenance and curb hunger during long periods of work, primarily in the fields.

well, they gave education less importance ... adults would tell children, why are you going to study? There's a lot of work, it's better, then—they were inclined to work in the field, the women just as much as the men. (*Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-6.32*)

Using the experiences of learners in the study circles he oversaw, Pedro thus deduced that previous rates of school attrition could be traced back to parents themselves who pressured their children to work and gave 'less importance' to schooling. In addition, he illustrated an alleged gender balance in terms of workers involved in agricultural activities which seemed to go back several decades. While it was difficult to determine to what extent the trend of men and women's equal participation in such activities was on average across the research sites, at least in one instance it was reflected during my visit to Calakmul 1, where many of the learners (all of whom were women except for one) left promptly after the MIB session stating that they needed to get to the fields for the *corte de chile* (chile harvesting).

Continuing the discussion on the potential reasons why adults may have dropped out of schooling at a young age (and therefore re-engaged in learning through the MIB as adults), Diana offered the following:

I was in *primaria* [primary school], but as we say, life, right? You go to the city, and you fall in love with money [laughs] ... you let a lot of things go. I got married at a very young age, too. I got married when I was 15. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-6.33*)

In Diana's words, going to work and beginning to make money meant 'letting a lot of things go', thus implying that the added and competing family and work responsibilities superseded her ability to attend or return to formal schooling. Providing a more direct example of how domestic tasks and family responsibilities similarly hindered her ability to stay in school when she was younger, Norma contributed the following:

I think a lot [about] when I'm little, I have to wash the dishes. I have to ... [make the] *tamales*, *pozole*, everything. To go to school. When I return, I'm going to go to the field, I'm going to go *moler* [grind corn], I come back, I work and everything, sort of like that. I have to do the washing. What time are you going to have? For your studies? Because of that ... I don't keep going to school. I stayed like this. (*Norma, Calkiní 2 learner, interview 4.10.2018-6.34*)

Taking Norma, Manuel, and Diana's similar experiences into consideration, it could be argued that the involvement of adults in programmes such as the MIB could be linked to what remains a steadily occurring dropout rate amongst Indigenous youth and ongoing constraints in terms of educational access and attainment (Schmelkes, 2007; Hanemann, 2019). Despite major

policy changes and programs like PROSPERA that incentivise families to keep children in school and an existing legal framework meant to discourage child labour of any child under the age of 16, the matter of children dropping out of education to join the workforce remains an issue across the country and is particularly conspicuous in Indigenous regions (Skoufias and Parker, 2001; Alcaraz, Chiquiar and Salcedo, 2012; Lopez-Calva and Patrinos, 2015). According to Orraca's (2014) review on child labour in Mexico, the levels of economic participation of this cohort are significant and concerning, estimated at more than three million as of 2011.

As such, dealing with external pressures to help provide financially for their families or simply seeking opportunities for economic betterment arguably remains a concern for many Indigenous people, both older and younger, which Selene described in more detail:

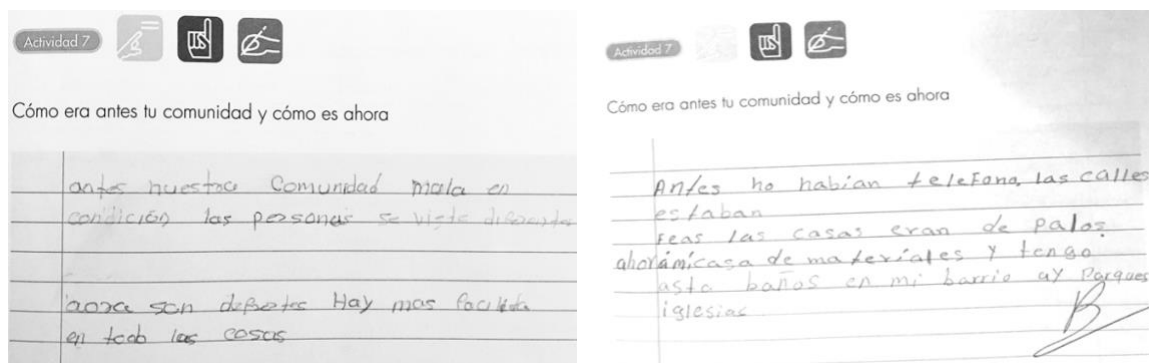
Really, here in my town, well, would I say that there are a lot of jobs, no. What most ...people do here is the, they're farmers. They grow corn, beans, squash. That's what they dedicate themselves to every day. Because their motivation, well, is the earth. Because, as I said ... the majority are all *campesinos* [peasants or people who work in the fields]. (*Selene, Chilchotla facilitator, interview 25.10.2018-6.35*)

Selene's remarks appeared to distinguish 'jobs' as something other than farming work, which is likely undertaken on a seasonal basis and therefore may not a reliable or constant source of income. Moreover, Selene also referred to 'the earth' as the source of 'motivation' for people in her community, which also suggests that beyond any practical drive to care for and harvest the land (presumably to earn money), the sense of purpose derived from the land itself was also an intrinsic motivator to undertake agricultural activities and carry on traditions related to harvest (such as those featured in some of the examples of the MIB texts highlighted in the previous chapter, which seemed to often provoke wider discussions on the significance of local agricultural activities and Indigenous traditions). However, the underpinning issue of limited work opportunities in more rural Indigenous communities further elucidated another potential reason behind some labour-related migration patterns in Indigenous communities discussed in Chapter 5.

Further discussions with participants recounting experiences of living, working, and learning in Indigenous communities brought forth a sense of change—of infrastructure, educational opportunities, and more—which was arguably linked to more recent policies and programmes promoting rural development and poverty alleviation (such as the PROSPERA programme).

Relatedly, Manuel and Jorge from the same group in Calkiní 1 shared a recently completed exercise⁴ that prompted them to think about how their community was before and what it was like now (see Figure 6.1).

Image Cluster 6.1 - Writing samples



There, Manuel described how *'before, our community [was] in bad condition people dressed differently. Now things are different things are easier in every way'*. Similarly, Jorge detailed some of the circumstances *'before'* by stating that there were *'No telephones. The streets were ugly the houses were made of sticks [.] Now my house is [made] of materials and I even have bathrooms in my barrio [neighbourhood] [.] There are parks [,] churches.'*

While the featured observations captured in the writing samples about observed changes in their community were brief, they did suggest a transition from *'bad'* conditions to one where things were *'easier in every way'*. In addition, Jorge noted a change in attitude with regards to education and language of instruction:

Well, right now everyone is learning. There are schools ... [where] they are teaching in Mayan ... even the government is showing more interest ... [the MIB] is an example. (Jorge, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-6.36)

Norma added to Jorge's assertion that the federal and state governments were *'showing more interest'* by referring to scholarship programmes and general support for young people to remain in school:

Today's students, they do give them support from the government. They're supporting them to study, they give scholarships and all that. That's the good thing. (Norma, Calkiní 2 learner, interview 4.10.2018-6.37)

⁴ Having already passed all five initial MIB modules in Mayan, Manuel and Jorge were working through a Spanish language MEVyT module.

Although Jorge and Norma were referring to support for young people to remain in school (and potentially have access to basic education in different Indigenous languages) and not to their more direct experiences with schooling or with the MIB, their perceptions on social welfare and development policies in action indicated a wider awareness and prevalence of government programmes. Whereas both spoke of this ‘support from the government’ in a mostly positive way, I also encountered some who were more sceptical and dismissive of such policies.

As an example, I had an interaction with a learner during a group interview who asked me directly whether I knew anything about potential ‘support’ for adult learners. It was here where the link between the MIB and PROSPERA became much clearer: previous efforts to promote both programmes resulted in a standing agreement between INEA and the government agency SEDESOL which oversaw the CCT programme to ‘support beneficiaries who learn how to read and write or finish *primaria* or *secundaria* with INEA’ upon receiving a certificate of completion (Campos Hernández, 2015, p. 7). A blanket policy of offering a cash support of \$400 MXN (approximately £15 GBP) upon completion of the initial level (MIBES 1-5) and a payment of \$500 MXN (or £18 GBP) for completing primary or secondary school levels were implemented, although how consistently such payments were disbursed was less clear. On this topic, Liliana intervened:

That’s why not everyone comes here [to the study circle]. Why? Because everyone wants financial support. And that support isn’t important ... some people also say to me no, well, ‘When will they give me the financial support?’ ... I can’t tell them that. Whether they’re going to give it out, whether they’re not going to give it out ... sometimes you register, and the financial support comes to you, well good ... there are times when no, there’s nothing. Even if you have good grades, even if you’re requesting it, there are times when there’s no—there’s no financial support.

If they do it for money—that’s why many, some people don’t, they don’t come. Because they want to receive something in return. But, well, I’ve told them ... that support only comes every so often. I also tell them that when I invited them [to the study circle], I didn’t tell them that there was going to be any money.

I talked to one of the *señores* [men], and I told him no, well, don’t study to get paid. Just because you receive that. Because once you receive it, you finish it in two, three days. But if you study because you want to learn, you’ll learn a lot of things ... that stays with you forever. For your children. For your grandchildren. For other people. (*Liliana, San Martín facilitator, group interview 22.11.2018-6.38*)

Liliana’s opinion that the prospects of financial support were directly correlated to the levels of participation in the MIB programme was the first explicit mention of just how much influence the PROSPERA programme might have in incentivising or putting pressure on

potential learners to attend. At the same time, she made a point that she did not personally promote these incentives when recruiting new learners and appeared to be resigned to the fact that whether or not a person decided to join the MIB study circle because of this, there was still the issue that the PROSPERA payments were themselves unreliable and therefore ‘not important’ when it came to literacy learning.

Adding to the broader discussion about learner incentives, Diana recalled an interaction with a potential learner who displayed a level of suspicion and hesitance to join the local study circle, describing it thus:

On one occasion, one learner ... ‘Oh’, she says. ‘If I go ... with you, what’ll you give me? *Despensa* [a food basket]?’ No, I tell her. Because I’m not a politician. [laughs] ... I said no, I’m going to give you knowledge. You’re going to learn. And nobody will take that away from you. Food, that’ll run out in two, three days. But yeah, if you want to, go ahead. If not, then what’s the point. I’ll leave it to your judgement. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-6.39*)

Interestingly, both Liliana and Diana’s swift dismissal of different incentives (cash or food baskets) and their emphasis on a type of learning that would ‘stay with you forever’ and knowledge that ‘no one will take away’ from them that might be possible through the MIB was a soft indictment of social welfare policies at large. Moreover, Diana’s offhanded comment that she was ‘not a politician’ reflected an understanding of prior (and contemporary) corrupt political practices which included, among other things, the buying of votes and bribes in the form of money or basic food baskets with staple items (Castellanos Silva, 2017).

Related to this topic, Manuel submitted an exacting critique of the PROSPERA programme, calling instead for a renewed conception of community development rooted in localised needs rather than government priorities and supported through continued monitoring instead of direct cash transfers:

If the government goes into the communities to listen to the needs of the people, there are *really* people in need ... if they’re going to support us in the field, don’t give me money. Because if you give me money, I can spend it. Buy me my tools to work ... What do I need in the field? Well, we need tractors. Irrigation systems. So that we can work in the field, and we can produce. So that we can support and provide for our families.

What I want are my tools to be able to work. I’ve seen a lot of people get [financial support] in the fields ... They pay the PROSPERA to the señoras. They pay this. And it’s like, it’s finished. And their husbands take it away. There in the canteen. After a while, they’re already drunk. They’re already with the waitresses, spending all their money. Tomorrow they don’t have any money.

That's why I tell you, don't give me money ... Buy my tools ... and manage me for one or two years while I'm working with the tools. And if I'm not working ... take it away. Take it away again, because it's not working for me. If I'm working, then yes. (*Manuel, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-6.40*)

Manuel's repeated statements of 'don't give me money' and the corresponding proposal for alternative forms of direct support (in this case, resources for his line of work in agricultural production) were evidence of his disavowal of the current system and a desire to see further change. Through his comments, Manuel's implied that direct cash transfers often resulted in the funds being misspent, with the added allusion to alcoholism, a prevalent concern in many Indigenous communities (Green and Branford, 2012). While such assumptions cannot be made regarding every person participating in the PROSPERA programme, his stated disaffection with the programme demonstrated a critical reflection of how at times, even widely supported interventions targeting those perceived to be 'in need' may not be enough to sufficiently alleviate or disrupt longstanding, structurally embedded discrimination which continues to reproduce and perpetuate cycles of poverty.

Taken together, the featured experiences of MIB learners go far beyond the all-too familiar positioning of an adult learner as someone vulnerable, disadvantaged or largely ill-equipped to understand (and thus transform and improve) their conditions. Rather, participants provided insight into complex histories of exclusion in education and offered a range of intrinsic, extrinsic, and instrumental motivations for engaging in the MIB programme.

Discussion

This chapter looked at the experiences and trajectories of the MIB learners and facilitators in terms of their *life and work* and explored processes of *teaching and learning* within the MIB study circles. It examined various dimensions and characteristics of the facilitators, whose complex role suggests that issues of professionalisation are intertwined with broader processes of identity building and cultural brokerage. Attention was then turned towards the learners, whose perspectives on literacy learning for everyday life and its effects on their livelihoods demonstrated how different intrinsic and extrinsic factors play into their pursuit of and engagement with the MIB programme.

Despite INEA's positioning of facilitators as so-called 'solidarity figures' central to the ethos of the MIB programme, the data in this chapter found that the training and professional preparation available for the MIB facilitators remains insufficient in light of the complex

challenges (on personal, practical and pedagogical levels) that they face on a daily basis. Presently, MIB facilitators are tasked with toeing the line between government institutions and programmes (such as INEA or PROSPERA) and people in their communities, thus demanding a complex articulation of both ‘hybrid literacies’ and ‘hybrid practices’ more generally (de la Piedra, 2009, p. 110; Azuara and Reyes, 2011, p. 183). They are entrusted with bridging linguistic and cultural divides, building and supporting affiliative community networks, being interlocutors and intermediaries between institutions and people, and translating dominant codes and social practices to non-dominant ones. They straddle multiple contexts at different times and in different spaces through reading, writing, speaking, or action. All the while, they are delegated the responsibility of ‘providing’ literacy and ensuring that they meet institutional standards and expectations with extremely limited guarantees: of financial compensation, professional development—and at times—even their own safety.

This evidence is in keeping with international reports on adult and youth literacy educators working outside of national compulsory education systems, whose already precarious working conditions have been exacerbated by ongoing challenges related to national budgets and the more recent COVID-19 crisis (Paluch, 2018; Warkineh, Rogers and Danki, 2018; UNESCO, 2020). Given the added dimension of teaching and learning activities occurring in Indigenous contexts, the role of a MIB facilitator, I argue, extends far beyond that of a simple ‘solidarity figure’ or a community volunteer with altruistic motivations. In mediating different types of literacies, in different languages, and for different purposes, their role becomes one of an *intercultural broker* who is often involved in several complex social processes at once.

Within the context of learning spaces such as classrooms (or in this case, study circles), there is a combination of cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement in any given task (Reeve and Tseng, 2011; Burnett and Merchant, 2020). In an ethnographic study of transnational literacies of Romanian immigrants in the United States, Mihut (2014, p. 58) proposed the idea of *literacy as affinity* to describe the ‘discursive repertoire comprised of language of empathy, personal experiences, and even social relations embedded in the literate experience’. In other words, the brokering of literacies is shaped by interpersonal realities and intersubjectivities (or how people interact with and understand each other in a contextually and historically situated place and time) as well as by affective and discursive experiences. Drawing from these ideas, the work of the MIB facilitators is arguably imbued with a significant amount of emotional work, manifested in actions such as language use and in the building and fostering of

relationships, to name only a few. Moreover, instances of affinity often occur alongside the circumscribed work related to cultivating multilingual literacy learning, which indicates how facilitators are also involved in accumulating cross-cultural and cross-institutional practices and perspectives.

At the same time, the MIB learners are also involved in a range of repertoires, affective work, and complex ‘vernacular literacy practices’ which lie beyond the institutionally directed ones and are associated with local uses and discourses regarding literacies (Papen, 2005, p. 49). In this way, the characteristics of and purposes for the MIB learners’ engagement in literacy learning aligned with what Baynham and Prinsloo (2009, p. 108) also outlined as ‘vernacular’: that is, everyday literacy practices for MIB learners were often purposeful and generative, collaborative and interactive, tied to a specific time and place, non-linear, linked to identities and values, and ultimately were agentic in the sense that learners arrived to and engaged with the MIB for their own reasons and motivations. Whether and to what extent an individual’s motivation was influenced by extrinsic pressures (such as being told learning activities were linked to PROSPERA benefits, as Gaby did) or more intrinsic factors of motivation (for personal betterment, to run a business, or to seek improved work opportunities) varied. Nonetheless, learners could arguably still be regarded as *agentic actors* involved in active processes of negotiations about the types of literacies they perceived as necessary for achieving their goals or aims.

This extrinsic-intrinsic continuum of learner agency in literacy learning was further reflected in experiences such as Claudia and Victoria’s, whose stated goals for participating in the MIB were tied to separable outcomes such as getting a job or gaining the official certificates from INEA to be able to ‘get out’ and earn a better living. Other learners such as Alejandro gave less weight and importance to the institutional nature of the programme, stating that an educational certificate was ‘useless’ if a learner was still unable to apply reading and writing in their everyday lives (while drawing from his example about struggling to run a business because of limited skills in maths and reading). These examples highlight only a few of the many ways and purposes for engaging with the MIB programme, the nuances of which are extensive and are only partially reflected in the data of this study due to a limited number of participants.

Finally, another aspect of teaching and learning which emerged strongly from the data in this chapter was the role that facilitators played in terms of learner motivation and involvement in processes of literacy learning, something which has previously been highlighted in other adult

learning contexts and studies examining intrinsic motivation and learner wellbeing (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Walter, 2004; Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 2019). This was expressed through Yesenia's description of how a high rate of facilitator turnover in her community initially affected her engagement with the programme, but later how Marcos' strong commitment as a facilitator for her local study circle acted as a key motivator for her to continue. This same sentiment was echoed in Teresa's comments, which stressed the importance of Diana's role as a facilitator in her involvement in the MIB and how much she valued her teaching 'with all her might' and 'all her heart'. Such examples underline how the dyadic relationship between learners and facilitators is a cornerstone of the MIB programme, one which has both enabling and constraining potentials.

Moving forward, the next chapter attends to broader discussions and participants perspectives on identities, languages, and rights and examines these across different socio-political, cultural, and historical realities.

‘Our customs, our culture, our language’: Perspectives on rights, resistance, and resilience

Introduction

Whereas the previous two chapters targeted questions in relation to lived experiences within and across the MIB, this chapter draws on the data according to the analytical theme of *identity, culture, and language*, going back and forth between localised perspectives and the broader social settings within which these are manifested. Issues of identities and languages and their contestations are discussed alongside an analysis of the affective dimensions of adult literacy learning. These sections are then followed by a focus on the themes of *gender and rights*, where an analysis on the implications of gender in literacy learning reveal instances of forced exclusion from schooling, gender-based violence, and cultural norms that reify gendered roles and expectations and male dominance over educational and health decisions.

While literacy remained the anchoring frame within which the following discussions were carried out, many of the participants volunteered insights into peripheral—but no less important—aspects of identifying and reclaiming Indigenous identities and histories. Broader discussions on Indigenous rights (both educational and otherwise) evinced some of the complex political dimensions of resistance and resilience made visible through participant experiences with social movements and perspectives on development, language status, and gender discrimination. This section will therefore examine some of these perspectives in more detail and map some key historical markers in tandem with participant narratives.

‘You should never be ashamed’: (Re)claiming and (re)framing identities through literacies and languages

As mentioned in Chapter 4 regarding an Indigenous agenda for research, there are various principles or ‘projects’ which Smith (1999) posed as a way to challenge existing dominant structures and norms in theory, policy and practice. Among these are projects of ‘claiming’ and ‘reframing’ narratives and identities in the face of the longstanding injustices and violations of rights through violence (both real and symbolic) against Indigenous peoples.

The following sections discuss some key aspects in the process of (re)claiming and (re)framing Indigenous identities: beginning with a range of participant perspectives on Indigenous languages and their variants, the section then moves forward with an exploration of the experiences of shame and pride (of Indigenous identities, languages, customs, and more) within and outside of the MIB.

On languages and language variants

As I discussed in Chapter 5, the sheer linguistic diversity in Mexico has meant that the MIB programme has had a gradual rollout of textbooks in different Indigenous languages and their variants (approximately 60 to date, out of 364 identified by INALI). Adding to the complex nature of the linguistic landscape is the fact that many of these languages may be mutually unintelligible, despite geographical proximity or convergences in local customs (García and Velasco, 2012).

Relatedly, Pilar provided further insight into what she considered to be the most important reason to make learning opportunities such as the MIB programme available in the different Indigenous languages:

In the Indigenous languages of Mexico, I think it's, well, so that we don't lose our customs. So that the language isn't lost, so that, well, our children or our grandchildren learn the customs more and more each time ... That's my father's custom, I'm not going to lose it, well, for anything in the world. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-7.1*)

By referring to the 'customs' particular to each Indigenous group, Pilar's view seemed to be one that considers language as part and parcel of these traditions. Furthermore, she invoked a key element of intergenerational transfer of customs to avoid the language being 'lost'. Thus, Pilar's comments suggest that the collective memory and knowledge imbued in each language passed down through generations could both serve to make distinct customs more explicit and help ensure that the various Indigenous languages are not entirely subsumed by Spanish. In a similar vein, Diana also framed the Mazateco language as a 'tradition' in and of itself:

It's necessary to speak the mother tongue. Because as I was saying, that's what makes us recognise where we're from ... that we're *Oaxaqueños*, right? ... Because well, if that's lost, well, more than anything you lose a tradition, right? ... So, the mother tongue is very important ... I feel it's really important that we preserve it because, well, it's our culture. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-7.2*)

Here, Diana stressed that speaking Indigenous languages was not only important, but ‘necessary’ as an avenue of cultural preservation, with the added dimension of asserting a distinct regional identity at the same time (‘we’re *Oaxaqueños*’). Although from entirely different states and study circles, Guadalupe and Patricia similarly reiterated both the intergenerational implications of language preservation and the link this has to Indigenous identities by stating the following:

[It’s so] we don’t lose our language ... where we come from, with our fathers and our mothers. So, we talk like this ... We haven’t stopped speaking [Tének] ... Here, we’re *Huasteco*. (*Guadalupe, Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-7.3*)

Your parents know how to speak Ch’ol, and you were born, you have to be guided. I mean, follow in the footsteps of your parents. (*Patricia, Calakmul 2 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-7.4*)

Building on this language-identity nexus, a learner named Alfredo made an explicit reference to the colonial roots of the linguistic dominance of Spanish. Alfredo underlined an awareness of the pervasive and existing linguistic hierarchy in Mexico while also asserting and emphasising an Indigenous identity:

Spanish comes from Spain ... the Náhuatl here, it’s the one of the Indigenous people here. We’re Indigenous. (*Alfredo, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-7.5*)

This strong sense of linguistic preservation as explicated by the participants was also contrasted by examples of what they perceived as linguistic losses, demonstrating a continuing tension between identified instances of language erosion by some of the participants and efforts of language revitalisation (chiefly reflected in the 2003 General Law for the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples) within the same context. As an example, Patricia lamented what she observed to be a ‘loss’ of the Ch’ol language in her community and even within her own family circle:

Well, it’s important to me because we are mostly losing it. I see it with my, because of my siblings. I have siblings who ... no longer speak it. I have to speak it for my students. I have to speak it for my grandparents. I have to speak it for my children who come after me.

I want to write a history of the community in Ch’ol. But it’s complicated to start writing it ... I don’t know where to start. Where to start? ... Who founded the town, why they arrived, why they came here, how they arrived ... what their goal was. (*Patricia, Calakmul 2 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-7.6*)

Patricia's sense of urgency ('I have to speak it') was apparent and further marked by her expressed wish to write a history of her community and therefore capture and retain an identity grounded in the local language and local traditions. This keen interest in local histories and languages and the potential influence this might have had on people's decisions to engage in the MIB was further elaborated on by Diana:

They're interested in their language. So I say to them, well, that's good! Come and audit [my classes]. Or come, for, well, for me there's no problem ... As long as they have that interest ... You're welcome here. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-7.7*)

This recounted level of 'interest' in 'their language' was something that several facilitators picked up on during the interviews, varying examples of which emerged as a type of counterweight to the reported level of interest and perceived need (or pressure) to learn Spanish. For instance, Paola mentioned how she was determined to speak Tének to her young daughter regardless of pressure from her husband and explained her reasons for doing so:

For example, my husband says no, well, why is the child going to learn that [Tének]? I'd prefer that she learn English now, probably ... So, I think that he's already discriminating the language. And I would tell him—I tell him—well, that's your point of view as a father, right? As a mother, I would like my daughter to learn [Tének]. Why? ... For example, I'm 24 years old. And I eat because—I ate because of my dad. And my dad, for example, he's a radio announcer, and he speaks Tének, right? So, I tell him, I've been with him for twenty-something years, and I practically ate because of the language he spoke. Right? So, for me, well, I feel proud, because it's thanks to that that I was able to get ahead. (*Paola, Aquismón 2 facilitator, interview 20.11.2018-7.8*)

Here, Paola traced a clear link between the Tének language and her father's livelihood. More specifically, she credited his job at a local Indigenous language radio station as a key reason behind her wellbeing and her educational achievements (having graduated from university). Thus, for Paola, the Tének language was a source of pride and something that she felt was important to pass on to her young daughter.

Paola's stance notwithstanding, different data from each community demonstrated how such language valuation attitudes varied from community to community and were often subject to other socially determined factors. Guadalupe provided an example of a situation that affected the language she spoke to her four children, which in turn affected her own communication with them:

[My son's] teacher said that's why my children didn't ... 'He won't be able to study, because, because we speak in *Huasteco*', he said ... The teacher told us

that when we started school. That's why I spoke to the boy like that [in Spanish], even though I can't speak much in Spanish ... and that's why the boys hardly speak *Huasteco*. (*Guadalupe, Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-7.9*)

Guadalupe's account thus suggests that this teacher might have had preconceived assumptions that her children 'would not be able to study' or advance in their basic education if they spoke exclusively in Tének at home. This dismissal appeared to have enough of an impact on Guadalupe to the extent that she ceased speaking to her sons in her native tongue, despite her self-proclaimed limitations in Spanish.

Localised interactions such as the one Guadalupe described and their related subjectivities make it difficult to unpack the basis of these socially shaped linguistic hierarchies and attitudes that often give preference to dominant languages (in this case, Spanish). However, the recounted interaction prompted me to recall and consider the experience through the 'literacy as defence' framing mentioned in Chapter 5. Through this lens, it is possible that Guadalupe's son's teacher was suggesting that Náhuatl would be extraneous to the children's educational potential and ability to fully participate in a society where Spanish is heavily dominant, and therefore be better able to 'defend' themselves.

Within this hierarchical view of languages and the various ways it was manifested in the different communities, I also heard from several participants who explicitly demoted their way of speaking their linguistic variant as incorrect or wrong. A learner named Carlos stated that he joined the MIB programme to learn more about his language, and offered a stark assessment of the way he and others in his community drew from their native tongue:

I want to read more Náhuatl. We do use Náhuatl here, but it is not legitimate. It's like, let's say—scrambled with Spanish ... That's how we talk. But no, I realized that no, no, the Náhuatl isn't legitimate ... what he [the facilitator Marcos] teaches really *is* legitimate Náhuatl. (*Carlos, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-7.10*)

First, by stating that he felt those in his community did not speak a 'legitimate' Indigenous language, Carlos provided insight into how the many Indigenous languages in the country—even amongst each other—can be and are sometimes situated at different levels of the language valuation scale. Spanish as a dominant language comes into play here only in that it has seemingly infiltrated some of the vernacular of the region, but rather than be seen as desirable, its heavy influence seemed to lessen the perceived 'legitimacy' of the Náhuatl language. Thus, Carlos' account suggests that he was encouraged to engage with the MIB programme by what

he claimed was his facilitator's ability to provide more 'legitimate' language and literacy learning opportunities.

I heard similar questionings about the perceived authenticity of Indigenous languages again from other learners, two of whom echoed Carlos' comments questioning the 'legitimacy' of their everyday use of their language:

We speak Náhuatl, as you say, but it's not—it's not the same. (*Simón, San Martín learner, group interview 22.11.2018-7.11*)

It's not the original. It's not 100% Náhuatl. (*Rosa, San Martín learner, group interview 22.11.2018-7.12*)

This shared belief that the Náhuatl they spoke was not 'legitimate' supported the idea that people like Carlos, Simón and Rosa were in part motivated to participate in the MIB programme because of the potential to develop a foundation of reading and writing that would help to (re)claim what they considered to be a more authentic or valid form of their native tongue. This suggests that for some MIB learners, another key source of motivation to participate in literacy learning is the desire to reconnect with their native language, which in turn hints at a stronger link to ongoing processes of identity (re)claiming and building.

Despite what seemed to be a general level of agreement that the MIB materials accounted for the languages spoken in the different communities featured in this study, in one instance it was evident that there were still limits to how much these could accommodate the different linguistic variants. For example, Diana explained that while she worked with the MIB textbooks in Mazateco, there were no books in the Mazateco variant that was native to the San Mateo community. She explained this further:

We have to change the versions. Because the book we handle is that of Mazateco *Alto* [high] ... We are *Semi-Medio* [mid] and *Alto*. Because, well, we speak a bit of everything. It's neither *Medio* nor *Alto*, but we're between the, between the two ... between the three variants. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-7.13*)

This linguistic (and therefore more broadly, cultural) negotiation with the official institutional texts reveals how despite INEA's efforts thus far, the linguistic heterogeneity between regions (and even sometimes within the same region) present a significant challenge in terms of ensuring equitable coverage of the MIB programme. Although I was unable to determine whether San Mateo's Mazateco variant was not considered to be widely spoken enough to produce new MIB materials or whether they might be further down INEA's production

pipeline, it seemed to be the case that Diana's real-time adaptations within the MIB sessions were key in bridging these linguistic and cultural differences within her study circle.

On shame

Underpinning much of the data featured in the previous two chapters was the prominence of the affective dimensions related to identities and languages and how different affective responses are co-occurring with literacy learning. Providing further context to experiences and narratives related to shame, Francisco added the following:

In the beginning, there was a person, well, that was opposed [to the MIB] we could say, right? Because they said that nothing that I comment on, nothing that I show them, well, is important to them. Because, well—there has been a lot of suffering. A lot of suffering. Of the marginalisation ... of the, well, humiliations that they've received when speaking the Mayan language. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.14*)

By highlighting the levels of scepticism that some learners displayed regarding the relevance of the programme, Francisco offered a rationale for what could be regarded as 'opposition' on behalf of some learners: rather than a dismissal of or disinterest in the programme itself, their overall hesitance was likely rooted in the 'suffering', 'marginalisation' and 'humiliations' caused by speaking an Indigenous language (in this case, Maya) or identifying as being from an Indigenous group that were embodied and internalised by the learners, in both direct and indirect ways.

To this, Jorge was able to articulate some examples of shame and shaming when discussing his prior educational experiences. Jorge had only gone to school for four years until he was forced to drop out to work. He lamented the fact that Mayan was rendered obsolete within formal education while he was growing up, which initiated feelings of embarrassment amongst his peers when he was younger:

They didn't teach [Mayan] in schools. In fact, you were embarrassed to speak Mayan at school, because the other classmates made fun of you. 'You aren't *mestizo*'. (*Jorge, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-7.15*)

By deploying the term *mestizo* (or a person of both European and Indigenous American descent) here—and its related colonial implications—Jorge's classmates were arguably emphasising enduring nationalist discourses of an idealised integrated and 'mixed' social identity and imaginary of Mexican within which Indigenous traits are at best undesirable and at worst a threat to unification. Within this ideological frame, his classmates seemed to be

reasserting themselves as a defined and dominant *mestizo* population, while simultaneously subjecting Jorge to a process of othering, entrenched in racialised inequalities and with distinctly nationalistic undertones. Jorge's response prompted me to ask him how this comment made him feel, to which he responded the following:

One feels humiliated. I mean, you don't know how to value languages. (*Jorge, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-7.16*)

Not only did his school classmate's denunciation of him not being *mestizo* induce feelings of humiliation for Jorge, he then immediately linked this to how it also affected his ability to perceive his language (or any language other than Spanish) as something of value. Jorge's lived experience with humiliation thus provided a direct example of the type of 'suffering', 'marginalisation', and 'humiliation' described by Francisco more generally. Comments from another learner in the same study circle named Manuel also resonated deeply with Jorge's:

Here in the state of Campeche, when you speak Mayan, they treat you like—the *lowest* kind of person. Like a, a *naco* [someone uneducated]. Like, 'Oh, why do you speak Mayan? Oh, you're a *naco*'. (*Manuel, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-7.17*)

Manuel's example of how the word *naco* had previously been attributed to him illustrated the types of normalised and racialised confrontations Indigenous peoples faced and how these are frequently coupled with notions of being backward, slow and stupid (King, 1994; Crossa, 2012). Further, he described this designation of 'the *lowest* kind of person' and ill-treatment as something happening in the present tense, thereby suggesting that these microaggressions were ongoing. He went on:

That makes the person try not to speak Mayan. And that affected me a lot ... and well, those who know Mayan, don't speak Mayan ... 'Do you speak Mayan?' No, I don't speak Mayan. Even though you *know* Mayan. You *speak* Mayan. So, we're ashamed to speak Mayan. (*Manuel, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-7.18*)

Here, while Manuel stated that he had been personally affected by such comments, he then expanded these feeling of shame beyond his immediate lived experiences to a collective *we*, thus suggesting that a masking or denial of language and identity was more widespread and that shared experiences of shaming and othering were thus internalised and normalised. Manuel's emphasis on the words 'knowing' and 'speaking' and feeling the need to hide this knowledge and speech out of shame points to the high emotional toll of being discriminated

against and highlights a wider and more damaging stigmatisation of Indigenous peoples and languages.

Graciela attested to some of the difficulties she faced as a facilitator for the emergent literacy learners, specifically relating these back issues of language valuation:

Teaching from scratch—what else can I say? I mean, it's a bit difficult. Difficult in what way? Because sometimes people, I mean—the people themselves reproach ... their own language. (*Graciela, Calakmul 1 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-7.19*)

This self-reproach of language and the respective customs and identities linked to it was further highlighted by Pilar, who coupled this with issues of migration to more urban (and therefore Spanish dominant) areas of Campeche for work purposes:

A lot of times here ... the people, well, go to work at [the nearest city]. And they pretend they don't know Ch'ol, only Spanish. And they're ashamed of their tongue. (*Pilar, Calakmul 3 facilitator, interview 9.10.2018-7.20*)

With this, Pilar indicated that migration to larger cities (mostly to seek employment) went hand in hand with the pressures to learn Spanish, which in some cases then led to a voluntary detachment from their Indigenous heritage and language. Moreover, Spanish seemed to be the avenue by which social interactions and work opportunities opened up for many of these migrants. Given the patterns of both national and international migration (previously discussed in Chapter 5), it is likely the case that for many, non-disclosures of identities were often done out of a potential sense of 'defence' (also discussed in Chapter 5). Pilar's comment above also reinforced Manuel's experiences of identity and language suppression, suggesting that Indigenous people 'pretend' to only speak Spanish and not disclose their knowledge of an Indigenous language out of shame. A learner named Alejandro took experiences of discrimination a step further:

Some who speak Spanish say that ... 'You all speak Tének, you're worth nothing' ... They said, 'No, you're worth nothing. You're not rich, you're not—you don't have any money. You're poor. What good are you?' (*Alejandro, Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-7.21*)

Alejandro's example once again hints at the wider existing social divisions between 'some who speak Spanish' and those who don't. For some, the social stigma maintaining these divisions were—and likely still are—exacerbated by the aggravating factors of poverty and dearth of literacy as a result of little to no formal education. Although he did not specify in what context this interaction occurred nor who made such comments, the hostilities that Alejandro described

because of his socioeconomic status signals a perceived correlation between one's economic worth and social worth—if someone is considered poor (or more specifically, 'not rich'), they are 'worth nothing'. While Alejandro did not indicate whether this belief was ultimately internalised or not, his overall tone and demeanour further supported the notion that many Indigenous people have at times resorted to the masking of telling traits (mainly their languages) as a potential way to avoid instances and experiences of shame.

On pride

The varying 'shame narratives' (in educational settings and beyond) laid out in the previous section were thrown into a new light when juxtaposed against countering *pride narratives* which also emerged in discussions with participants (Bartlett, 2007a, p. 547). Some spoke of identities as interlinked with language and with a sense of belonging to a place and group, further emphasising how patterns and processes of self-identification for Indigenous peoples help accommodate multiple constructions and (re)framings of identities.

Francisco articulated how he defined, constructed, and negotiated the meaning of an Indigenous identity in the following:

An Indigenous identity is, well, it's everything we represent, isn't it? Everything that represents, I mean, the culture, the knowledge, the practices, the cultural manifestations, well, of how we—I mean, how we are before all of society ... To have an [Indigenous] identity is not to be less before others. It's [an identity] of equality, of equity. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.22*)

An Indigenous identity, according to Francisco, begins not with being 'less before others' but with being on even ground, thereby placing cultural differences and processes of mutual recognition at the basis of equality and equity. Such a stance is aligned with the conceptual basis of interculturality, which promotes the idea that differences—whether these be of 'knowledge', 'practices' and 'cultural manifestations' or other—should be recognised and respected in their own right (Dietz and Mateos Cortés, 2011b; Walsh, 2012; Restrepo, 2014). Francisco added:

Having that identity, I retain ... what my ancestors were, what they spoke over all of the Yucatan peninsula and in parts of Guatemala and Belize.

We exist. We speak the Mayan language. We write it ... I'm not trying to sell it in economic terms, but to defend it to the world as something so that they see that we're still preserving some customs, some of them [which are] deeply rooted. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.23*)

Here, Francisco encircled ancestry and territory within his frame of identity, and by doing so, he made explicit the longstanding Maya heritage that crosses contemporary nation-state borders. Moreover, by underlining the simple certitude that Indigenous people ‘exist’ and retain certain customs and languages, he (re)asserted an Indigenous heritage that has survived despite multiple assimilationist interventions over the course of five centuries (Green and Branford, 2012). A learner named Irene spoke of more specific ways of how she asserted her family’s Indigenous heritage:

My kids at school, well, they get asked ... if they speak Náhuatl ... sometimes they’re embarrassed to answer in Náhuatl ... and I tell them they should learn, that they should never be ashamed that they speak Náhuatl, I tell them. If they ask you, tell them you do ... I tell him [her son], you should never be ashamed, I tell him. Because you’re from an Indigenous family, I tell him. (*Irene, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-7.24*)

Irene’s insistence in telling her children to ‘never be ashamed’ matched her determination to ensure that her young children spoke Náhuatl alongside Spanish to be able to communicate with their grandparents, thereby illustrating an intergenerational aspect of language use linked to preserving customs and cultures. This sense of pride was akin to Paola’s previous statements earlier in this chapter regarding her goal to speak Tének to her young daughter because she considered it a large part of how she ‘was able to get ahead’.

Also in keeping with Irene’s emphasis on ‘never being ashamed’ were Graciela’s comments about pride in the face of discrimination:

I think [discrimination] still exists ... Because it’s happened to me. It’s happened. Sometimes when you speak, you speak the [Spanish] language. Sometimes ... [even in] the community where I live. ‘Hey, why are you talking like that?’ And I say, well, I’m not ashamed.

For my part, I would never be ashamed of what I know, of what I am, of where I come from. I mean, I never—*never*. Never in my life. When I bump into a person and they ask, I, well, really, I—I speak the Indigenous language. And I feel proud. Why? Because practically Spanish, well, don’t think I learned it when I was younger. No, I learned it when I was older ... and sometimes I give that as an example to my students. (*Graciela, Calakmul 1 facilitator, interview 8.10.2018-7.25*)

Graciela’s firm rejection of shame associated with speaking an Indigenous language and of ‘what I know ... what I am ... where I come from’ stands in resistance to previous articulated instances and experiences of shame, humiliation, embarrassment, and broader discrimination. Further, Graciela offered her own example of making mistakes in Spanish (her second

language) and choosing to continue to speak both Spanish and her Indigenous language regardless of being made fun of. Further demonstrations of a strong (re)claiming of language and literacies within MIB contexts were described by Diana:

I can't use the [INEA] book from [nearby city], because I speak *my* Mazateco. My Mazateco from here in San Mateo. And I'm not going to write it like there, because I'm going to write it how I understand it ... So that's been a really important factor in, let's say, in writing ... in fact, my learners demand it of me. It's not me anymore, but it's them saying to me sometimes, why are you writing like over there? ... So, I can't write it like there, and I'm going to write it as I speak it. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-7.26*)

In recounting how the learners in her group 'demand' that she represent the Mazateco variant emerging from a specific town and adapt her practice accordingly despite what is featured in the institutional textbooks, there seemed to be within Diana's group a general sense of cohesiveness and agreement that the language from 'over there' (or the more widely spoken Mazateco variant)—while similar enough to their own—was still not as they 'understand it' or 'speak it'.

In 'writing it as they speak it', Diana and her group thus exerted a level of agency and control over the way they chose to engage with literacies as outlined by the MIB. Furthermore, the group exhibited how certain linguistic and pedagogical micro-adaptations can play out in some of the more marginal and rural study circles. Rather than be limited by their marginality (or by their apparent linguistic minority status) Diana's group defined themselves by it, expressed pride in it, and showed how a single community could both engage with and contest institutional texts and norms at the same time.

'They wanted us to disappear': (re)claiming rights

In parallel to discourses about identity, culture, and language, there were additional emerging narratives and histories which spoke of resistance countering injustices, resilience against longstanding oppressive structures, and critiques and (re)imaginings of contemporary forms of development. What follows is an exploration of gender and rights on a broader scale, as derived from participant experiences and reified across time, space, and place.

A machista agenda in literacy learning?

To begin unpack the different ways in which issues around gender relations and inequalities emerged from the study circle observations and the interviews, I first took a step back and

considered some of my initial impressions of the gendered nature of the adult literacy learning spaces: scattered across my field notes were observations from group interviews where ‘*the ones who did speak out were mostly men*’ (23.11.2018) and ‘*the people in charge ... were showing me all of their books ... all of them were men*’ (3.10.2018). I recalled the telling data from the joint INEA-UNESCO report that spoke to a widespread institutional asymmetry: over 70.3 per cent of MIB facilitators surveyed were women, while 73 per cent of management positions for the MIB programme were men (UNESCO, 2012), figures that were generally reflected in my interactions with the INEA coordinators at the state level and local MIB technicians.

One interaction towards the beginning of my fieldwork exemplified the complexities of gender and my own position in the field. An informal discussion with Miguel, the IIEA worker who accompanied me to the visits in Campeche, highlighted an aspect of gender dynamics and trust as reflected in the following excerpt from my field notes:

Miguel talked about trust within the communities. He said that the people ‘only give you their trust once’. He said that because I was a female, that people were more likely to be open and talk to me. He said that men are still machista. (Field notes, 3.10.2018)

While the term *machismo* can be broadly defined as a patriarchal system of male dominance (Green and Branford, 2012), I interpreted Miguel’s use of the *machista* here as a way to suggest that people would perhaps be more likely to speak with me (a female) given broader social patterns of partner intimidation that at times prevent women from speaking more openly to men who were not within their immediate family. Miguel’s words of caution about trust served as a reminder for the rest of my time in the field; first, I became more aware of how former interactions with federal and state institutions seemed to have eroded the trust in some Indigenous communities. Second, I was reminded how my gendered self could affect participant reactivity or willingness to take part in the project.

Gender divisions were also revealed in socio-spatial terms and patterns within the study circles themselves, something particularly evident in my visit to Marcos’ study circle in San Luis Potosí. I described this phenomenon further in a field note:

The [learners] were all sitting on a ledge in a row as there were no chairs and only one table, which they insisted I use. There were no tables for the [learners]. The men were separated from the women, each occupying separate sides of the space. As more people arrived (men), they would assess the seating

arrangement and squeeze in in order to sit next to the men, even though there was space by the women. (Field notes, 23.11.2018)

These observations revealed clear gender demarcations in spatial terms, although whether or not this was done out of respect or customary practices within the community was unclear. As I observed the learners' efforts to fit into 'their' side of the ledge in accordance with their gender, I was struck by the gender balance within the group (approximately 50-50, so not reflective of the reported 92% rate of female learners) and the voluntary participation of both male and female learners during the group interview. The multiple gender dynamics within the boundaries of a single study circle demonstrated how each research site—with their overlaps and idiosyncrasies—offered a distinct opportunity to explore these issues in more detail.

At one point during the individual interview with Francisco, I followed a line of enquiry regarding the reported and observed disparities in programme enrolment according to gender. He then made the following observation about the female majority within the MIB:

Men consider that with what they already have is enough ... with what they have they don't, well, they don't need literacy. They don't need to continue with that preparation ... Here, what we see is that men justify this by saying that they have a lot of work. From the moment he gets up he goes to the *milpa* [field] or he goes to work. I've had the opportunity to interview some of them, and they tell me no, well, I'm a construction worker ... I come home tired, so it's better for the señora to go [to the MIB study circle]. Right?

So, those are parts of the conversations that I've had with men that, well, they pass along that responsibility to the señora, because she has more time for that, or they leave them with that responsibility, right? That's why we have a majority—out of 15 [learners in the study circle], 14 are women. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.27*)

Considering these comments in the wider context of the study, I noted that Francisco's postulations that men 'don't need literacy' and how this was justified by a heavy workload was at odds with the learner Victoria's claim in Chapter 6 that linked literacies to being able to work and therefore eat, regardless of gender or type of work. Going by his comments, Francisco seemed to be suggesting that this female 'responsibility' to begin (or continue) efforts of literacy learning was ostensibly 'passed along' to the *señoras* because it was perceived by their male partners or family members that they had 'more time for that'. At the same time, there was little mention as to how or why this 'responsibility' of literacy was solely seen as a female issue. This shifting of responsibility onto the (female) individual was deepened by Celia, another facilitator, who went even further with a presumption that female learners sought out

the programme as adults because of prior voluntary disengagement with schooling when they were younger:

The reason there are mostly women [in the MIB], it's because I think that before, they didn't take studying very seriously ... now, they realise that it's important, right? (*Celia, Huautla facilitator, interview 24.10.2018-7.28*)

Celia's inference that the MIB's female majority was linked to learners not taking education 'very seriously' in the past and Francisco's comments suggesting that female learners had more time to take on the added 'responsibility' of literacy learning registered as contradictory, in large part because they were almost immediately followed by comments by both of them that laid bare various key counterarguments, highlighted here:

I was telling them that, like, I understand their situation. Because, well—they also work ... they don't have a salary, but they work. As of dawn, they attend to the children who go to school, the food, their little animals, if they have little animals—or X or Y, well, activities they have at home ... women multiply themselves in that way, right? ... I've seen how, well, sometimes when we visit them, they're active ... right? I've never found a woman lying down ... in her hammock when we visit them. They're busy all day. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.29*)

The first time they arrived, each person did tell their story. Why they were here, why they wanted to study. Some because, well, because their parents were *machistas*, another one because supposedly her parents didn't want to give her money to, well, buy the [school supplies] ... So, both because of economic resources and because of rights, well, they couldn't study. And now, well, that they're coming, well, now they're studying. (*Celia, Huautla facilitator, interview 24.10.2018-7.30*)

With this, Francisco surmised how both the men and women 'worked' from dawn, albeit in different roles and capacities, while making the distinction that it was women's labour in the home which was likely to be unpaid. Similarly, Celia alluded to a range of barriers from *machista* attitudes and limitations of 'economic resources' and 'rights' that may have prevented learners from going to school when they were younger. In making these unassuming observations about the complexities and nuances of gender roles and expectations, it seemed that both Celia and Francisco were unsuspectingly speaking to the wider debate about gendered attitudes regarding work and education. While they acknowledged that the ways in which women 'multiplied themselves' were many and were overlapping, by speaking about broader barriers to education, they simultaneously overlooked how more ingrained gender norms which tie women almost exclusively to (unpaid) childcare and domestic work could potentially affect their opportunities to engage in literacy learning more so than the men.

Further countering her initial speculation that female learners may not have given much weight to schooling when they were younger, Celia provided additional thoughts on the root causes of educational disruptions for many female learners participating in the MIB:

Yes, the men were given permission [to attend school]. But they [the women] weren't, maybe because their parents—maybe they were very *machistas*, and they told them no, you shouldn't go, you have nothing to do there. All you have to do is do housework. So there—they know more about cooking than about how to read. (*Celia, Huautla facilitator, interview 24.10.2018-7.31*)

Celia's (somewhat conflicting) intimations on why more women participated in the MIB programme than men revealed how underpinning *machista* attitudes seemed to have played a large enough role to where they effectively denied young female learners the right or 'permission' to access schooling. Simultaneously, she suggested that these attitudes brought about a reinforcement of gender roles and expectations to the extent that many women in her community were similarly constrained and remained mostly limited to work within the home, thus 'know more about cooking' than reading and writing.

In terms of how certain gendered attitudes specifically impeded people's ability to accede learning opportunities, Adriana provided an example which further evidenced how trends of over-privileging males to attend school had a direct impact on female learners:

I haven't finished primaria ... My dad, well—well, before he used to say that us women, well, we don't—it's not worth it for us to study ... that us women, that we're worth nothing. Only men. Like that. Like that.

I wanted to move on, but he didn't support me anymore ... Instead, he says that he's not going to send me to school anymore. He pulled me out of school ... Whatever they told us, that's what you had to do. And if you don't do it, well you know ... if you talk back, they belittle you. He hits you, and you get scared. That's what I suffered through back then ... that's why I moved here with my partner. Because my father wouldn't send me to school anymore, and well, I couldn't find anything to do. I got together with a man when I was 15 years old.

It wasn't okay, nothing—what was I going to do? When I left with my partner, that's when I saw that I had suffered ... but it's not what I wanted. I wanted to, well, keep studying. But he didn't give me, my father didn't give me any support ... I believe for lack of money, I don't know why ... So that's why I didn't finish studying at all. Now as an adult, well—well, I started because, well, there's an opportunity for that. From INEA ... so that's why we're here right now. (*Adriana, Aquismón 2 learner, interview 21.11.2018-7.32*)

Adriana's retracing of reasons why she could not continue her basic schooling could thus be regarded as linked to Celia's previously cited barriers of *machista* attitudes ('it's not worth it for us [women] to study'), of economic resources ('they didn't buy me what I need for school')

and rights ('he pulled me out of school'). Her candid reflections on the 'suffering' she endured, both in physical ('he hits you, and you get scared') and psychological terms ('I saw that I had suffered') also signalled a pattern of abuse which was—and in some cases, continues to be—arguably condoned by means of normalised *machista* attitudes. Speaking of similar barriers, Paola brought up an example of a learner she knew who sought out the MIB programme primarily as an access route to earn her official *primaria* certificate:

For example, I have a student, and I was telling her, where's your certificate? She said, I did finish *primaria*, she told me. But I had to go back to the beginning ... she said, *me junté* [moved away with a partner] she said. My father got angry and he burned my certificate ... so she had to start from scratch ... to get her certificate back. So, I think that *machismo*, well, it was felt then. And it still exists. (Paola, *Aquismón 2 facilitator*, interview 20.11.2018-7.33)

Without knowing more about that learner's specific situation, I could surmise that while there was likely an official record of this learner's certificate, she may have been confronted with institutional and bureaucratic red tape (including, but not limited to, the need to provide a range of other identifying documents, applications, and payments for duplicate copies which may or may not be possible for some) which influenced her decision to 'start from scratch'. Paola's argument that *machismo* was 'felt' through the purposeful destruction of personal documents and that it still existed aligned with Diana's estimations on the matter:

Well, I think that *machismo* has always been there. And here, I've been a bit open with my learners. I tell them, now there are a lot of things ... before, well there wasn't a *Casa de Día* [women's shelter], support for Indigenous women. That, well, they had to have the children that, well, that God sent them, right? ... Looking at it today, in everyday life, well, it's not like that ... there has been gender equity now, well—now it's kind of, it's levelled off a bit. Although there are still [some women] that are mistreated, that are abused by their husbands. (Diana, *San Mateo facilitator*, interview on 26.10.2018-7.34)

Although Diana's commentary about improved gender relations and equality pointed towards an improvement in gender relations (offering the example of a women's shelter as evidence), she also provided second-hand accounts of learner experiences that suggested that gender inequalities remained pervasive in the San Mateo community. Diana went on to recall an interaction with a learner regarding discrimination and *machismo* that emerged directly from a topic in one of the MIB textbooks:

It did reflect her [the learner's] life a lot. Because she even told us about it here [in the study circle], right? She told us that they married her, she got married at age 14. And she had, her—she has 8 children ... and she got sick, and her husband didn't let her go to the doctor. Because, well, sometimes it happens,

right? ... The husband says, don't go. The *machismo*. So that's related there with ... the books ... I told her, your story is there. (Diana, *San Mateo facilitator*, interview on 26.10.2018-7.35)

This instance highlighted how in some cases the MIB texts acted as departure points for more introspective discussions within study circles, and also suggests that Diana was able to leverage the blueprint provided by the materials to open up a safe pedagogical space where learners could discuss their perceptions on and experiences with *machismo* in their community. At the same time, this single example also elicits multiple effects that can be ascribed to the existing *machista* agenda, the repercussions of which range from child marriage to violations of reproductive rights and impingement on health and wellbeing by impeding access to basic care.

Further examples of the situated and lived effects of a *machista* agenda on women's access to healthcare and education emerged from Diana's same study circle, including the testimony from a learner named Ximena:

My husband didn't want me to 'tie my egg' [get tubal ligation]. That's why I kept having them. I had nine, but I aborted, well—I had two abortions and seven lived. And so, well, my husband said no, because if you are going to [get tubal ligation] now, it's because you're loose. Because that's what they say sometimes—women are loose. That's what he told me. That sometimes women do that. They sometimes they cheat, they cheat on us [the men].

Sometimes we do get those who are men that serve us [as facilitators], right? That, that was the problem ... [Or] the doctors who serve us. (Ximena, *San Mateo learner*, group interview 26.10.2018-7.36)

Beyond recounting her lived experiences on the loss of control over her reproductive decisions and unsubstantiated accusations implying that seeking more permanent birth control was synonymous with being sexually 'loose' and prone to infidelity, Ximena seemed to be attempting to reconcile these incidents with wider shared experiences of the effects of *machista* attitudes by suggesting that the 'problems' of potentially interacting with male facilitators or doctors was an issue that other women in her community faced as well. Within the Mexican context, issues related to contraception (or the lack thereof) remain deeply rooted in both a prevalence of the Catholic faith and the prevailing construct of masculinity as defined and shaped by *machismo*, which among many things regards female fertility as proof of virility and upholds male dominance (Green and Branford, 2012). Similar issues related to reproductive rights (including the public 'monitoring and shaming' of women's reproductive choices and other reported abuses and violations of bodily autonomy) were substantiated by recent

ethnographic research on Indigenous women's autonomy and the PROSPERA programme in a Mayan community (Abarbanell, 2020, p. 746).

Furthermore, Ximena's comments highlighted some of the complex gendered power dynamics that could exist for women in situations where potential interactions with different 'men who serve us' (whether this be a male MIB facilitator or a male doctor providing a health check-up facilitated through PROSPERA) might preclude them from seeking different types of social support for fear of retribution. The widespread implications and repercussions of these additional barriers (in the form of limited or denied opportunities for learning and attention to preventative healthcare, among others) provide clues about some of the long-term and far-reaching consequences of gender violence as related to the wellbeing and learning of Indigenous women. Diana provided an additional example of a learner who was facing such barriers and discussed how such topics were broached within the study circle:

I have a similar case here with the *compañera* [colleague]... sometimes she tells me that, well, 'My husband doesn't, he doesn't allow me to come to school' ... I tell her, but then *you* try to talk to them, I tell her. Try to talk to him—or even bring him here so I can talk ... today, well, *machismo*, well, it's no longer—nowadays it should no longer be ... Because today we have rights. And there's no reason for them to mistreat you.

So, then, I think that here we promote a little bit of psychology in our study circle as well ... it's not just the subject of a book, but we ... open up the space. Maybe we start with a theme, but we come to another theme that leads us to our daily lives. So from there, they open up to the spaces.

As a citizen of here, of this town, well, I try—I do what I can to support them. So sometimes, well, I say, well, don't let them, right? Don't let them mistreat you. You have the right to go, and to do and, well—because you're a human being. Your life is worth a lot. (*Diana, San Mateo facilitator, interview on 26.10.2018-7.37*)

Here, Diana made more explicit the reciprocal nature between themes stemming from the MIB materials and the ways in which these offered an avenue for many of the learners to 'open up' within the learning spaces. At the same time, her comments also shed light on how issues of rights emerged from the discussions in large part thanks to her concerted efforts to open up those spaces to begin with. Although the relative limitations of the data prevented a more comprehensive analysis on whether or not such discussions on rights played a role in individual agency or broader social transformation, examples like Diana's demonstrated how MIB study circles might still provide a safe avenue for reflection and mutual support.

The reflections, considerations, and analyses on the influence of gendered attitudes towards education discussed thus far would not be complete without an expanded look at the ways in which an overriding *machista* agenda in education also influenced and impacted some of the male participants. Francisco's notions of men not 'needing' literacy as justified by 'having a lot of work' and Celia's assertion that 'men were given permission' to study where women were not (mentioned earlier in this section) were thus scrutinised against the testimony of a male learner named Mario, who offered a differing perspective on the matter:

I did like class ... I finished fifth grade in *primaria*. But because, well—you see, first my father told me ... 'That boy shouldn't be in school so much, because he's going to get lazy and he's not going to work. No, bring him here, let him work' ... At that time, I was like twelve, thirteen years old.

I regret it. Well, that I couldn't get ahead. Because I left [school] for my dad, he was alone, and he was working by himself ... [I went] to work to earn money. To work in the *milpa* [field]... It's been about ten, twenty years, since I left school. I forgot everything. (Mario, Tampacán learner, group interview 23.11.2018-7.38)

Driven by the necessity of additional field labour and his father's idea that he would 'get lazy' the more time he spent in school, Mario left school against his will. His experiences reflected a wider (and gendered) expectation of needing to work and earn money, an idea which is contrasted with the assumed prioritisation of schooling for male students. Moreover, Mario's testimony raised questions about whether education (regardless of age or gender) might be regarded as necessary for work, or whether certain types of work (for example, agricultural activities) meant that people may not 'need' certain types of education.

Considering that these discussions about learning opportunities (both denied and granted) emerged from the context of the MIB, the key difference in engaging with a literacy programme as an adult seemed to be linked to the previously discussed ideas on literacies as defence, a necessity, and as part of a path towards self-reliance. Pedro highlighted this idea further:

[Mario] explained that his father, before, gave work more importance than education. And then later, after some time, he was invited [to the MIB], where he later sort of started learning ... they see a necessity, where it is necessary to learn ... Why? Because now he depends on himself, he said ... before, that was impossible, but now ... that's what they let us know. (Pedro, Tampacán INEA technician, group interview 23.11.2018-7.39)

In Mario's case—similar to many of the women who recounted how they returned to learning later in life as well—it was clear that the gendered expectations that before had prevented him from accessing further schooling were broken down enough for him to engage in the MIB as

an adult. Therefore, the potentials for the MIB materials to facilitate and foster discussions about gender and rights and for the MIB study circles to act as safe spaces within which to discuss the same arguably have broader implications in terms of counteracting the longstanding *machista* agendas and discourses (Canessa, 2010).

On resistance and resilience

The prior sections have illustrated some of the complex negotiations of language, culture, identity, and gender issues in literacy learning. This final section narrows down to focus on two key narratives from Francisco and Manuel, who independently provided rich accounts of and reflections on the histories of exclusion and exploitation of Indigenous groups and the ways in which patterns of resistance and resilience emerged.

Francisco provided a vivid narrative of his experiences growing up during the 1970s, a period known for its political upheaval under an authoritarian and repressive single-party regime in Mexico (Gonz, 2008). He claimed that having an Indigenous identity was perceived as undesirable at the time:

When I was 12 years old, they took me to a social integration centre called, um in—the 70s, they were called Social Integration Centres. They were boarding schools where they took us Indigenous children ... We stayed there, we lived there ... they took us away from our families. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.40*)

Under the guise of national unification and matching the overtones of nationalist discourses of the time, these centres emerged from a push towards more decentralised educational initiatives which tended to emphasise more technical skills (Ramírez Castañeda, 2006). Francisco's first-hand account of being 'taken away' from his family to be immersed in a setting where the goal was to assimilate young Indigenous children into a mainstream and Spanish-speaking society provided a glimpse into the social implications of such an endeavour:

They, um—'rescued' us. That's what they called it, they 'rescued' the boarding school graduates. They gave us eight months of training and we left as *castellanizadores* [Spanish language teachers]. But the intention, the dark part of that time, was to alphabetise to disappear the language ... They wanted us to disappear as a culture. As Indigenous groups. As people. Because they could no longer, um, integrate us as a single Mexican society. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.41*)

Francisco's stark assessment of the purpose of the Social Integration Centres (SICs) aligned with the underpinning ideological stance of *indigenismo* and suggested a more widespread and

‘dark’ political agenda of erasure against individual and collective Indigenous personhood. The construction of the role of a *castellanizador* provided further evidence that those Indigenous people deemed to be ‘rescued’ by the Mexican government were then seen as cultural agents tasked with ‘rescuing’ other Indigenous peoples and spreading a dominant and desirable social archetype and model citizen. In this way, issues of power relations and control through the promotion of certain types of literacies return to the forefront and are illustrated through the imposition ‘of language and by language’ (Collins and Blot, 2003, p. 154)

While Francisco’s account of integrationist policies in practice is specific to the Campeche context, there is evidence that a number of these SICs operated on other states in the country and that the young Indigenous learners who were enrolled were tasked ‘as intermediaries between ... Indigenous communities and the State’ (Bastiani Gómez *et al.*, 2012, p. 13). Such experiences serve to exemplify how the prevailing *indigenista* policies of the time aimed to accelerate and guide processes of ‘acculturation’ of Indigenous people to transition to being ‘full’ citizens (Stavenhagen, 2010, p. 24).

What is more, there is corroboration that while more overt *indigenista* policies are no longer in place, certain integrationist elements remain present in the education system. As an example, more recent evaluation reports from the Ministry of Education make references to existing ‘shelters’ for Indigenous children that are aimed at ‘facilitating access to primary education for Indigenous children from communities with dispersed settlements’ and which ‘lack’ appropriate educational services or fully established schools (SEP, 2014; Mendoza Zuany, 2017; INPI, 2020, p. 8). However, the reports make no direct mention about the language of instruction beyond mentions of general and decentralised efforts of ‘linguistic standardisation of Indigenous languages and the production of didactic material’ emphasising these as the ‘mother tongue’ with Spanish as a second language (Mendoza Zuany, 2017, p. 18). It may well be the case that those learners in the so-called shelters are no longer tasked with being *castellanizadores* upon returning to their communities, but further evidence on the nature of these shelters would be needed to determine whether or to what extent integrationist and assimilationist elements persist.

Further critiques on the current national education system in Mexico reinforce the argument that despite efforts of inclusion and recognition and consideration of different Indigenous groups and languages, the national curriculum remains largely homogeneous. The ongoing limitations at the compulsory school level include ‘material and symbolic deficiencies’,

ongoing issues in terms of the usage of Indigenous languages for pedagogical practices, as well as ‘discourses and practices of teachers who embody real and symbolic violence’ (Cruz Pérez, 2011, p. 40). Such issues further underline the severity of deficiencies and constraints that then overlap with and feed into the adult education system.

Francisco went on to describe a long-standing struggle to assert his educational rights beyond the confines of a *castellanizador* and what seemed to be a wider collective pushback against government policies during those years:

I had, well, I call it an opportunity ... an opportunity that we went against the government back then. Because yes, just like what happened in ‘68, it was going to happen to us ... Because they just wanted us to be bilingual technicians, they didn't want us to have a teacher's degree at that time ... they were pigeonholing us to just be technicians. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.42*)

Francisco’s mention of 1968 was a wider reference to social and political tensions happening around the world; in particular, the student movements in Mexico of that year culminated in what is now referred to as the Tlatelolco massacre, where armed forces opened fire on unarmed protestors, most of them students protesting state repression (Poniatowska, 1998). Francisco went into further detail about the movement sparked by his fellow ‘technicians’:

We rebelled, and we were the first class [of students] to fight against the [state] government ... the youngest of us practically went out *caña y cañón* [armed with canes and cannons]. We were at the front of the marches to get them [the government] to recognize the study we were doing as bilingual teachers. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.43*)

Such smaller student movements, though likely overshadowed by national socio-political tensions of the time, seemed to still be influenced by the same and played out similarly across different regions of the country. Francisco’s depictions of his fellow classmates ‘rebell[ing]’ against the local, state and federal governments follows the trend that many of the rural *Normal* teaching colleges continue to this day and are highlighted by cases such as the alleged kidnapping and disappearance of 43 students from the *Normal* school of Ayotzinapa in the state of Guerrero in 2014 (students who, paradoxically, had reportedly commandeered buses to travel to a commemorative march for the anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre). While still an unresolved case, it is suspected that these forced disappearances occurred at the hands of local government actors and members of the organised crime ring, indicating the degree to which these conflicts between educators and state and federal governments persist and are at tension.

In Francisco's case, he described a broader struggle for institutional recognition of his and his colleague's educational training as well as an individual right to pursue what he considered to be the vocation of teaching that he was seeking:

Because I was working in the communities, I was seeking a teacher's profile ... For a long time, I couldn't get into any Normal [teacher training colleges] ... they rejected my degree. They told me it was invalid, and everything. And they, they pushed us Indigenous peoples back. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.44*)

Francisco's aspirations to become a teacher and be granted access to higher education were thus hindered by an educational system that denied further training opportunities to Indigenous youth who had been driven through the so-called SICs only to have their qualifications subsequently invalidated—qualifications that had, ultimately, been issued by the very same system. To him, these acts seemed to represent more than an individual rejection of credentials, but a collective rebuff against all Indigenous peoples seeking to accede higher education through the national education system, thereby perpetuating the 'dark' agenda that only a certain type of people (namely, non-Indigenous and Spanish speaking) had the right to access these learning spaces and have upward educational aspirations. He continued:

It was almost as if I was fighting against a system by myself ... we would make proposals through the [teacher's] union, we made proposals through the department, and nothing. Like I told you, when I went to the *Normal Superior* in Campeche, they saw my degree and they simply told me that it doesn't have—I mean, that it doesn't have, well—that it wasn't right. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.45*)

The issues Francisco raises around the lack of institutional recognition of knowledge could be seen as linked to a wider call for the recognition, validation and accreditation of more 'informal' types of learning (RVA), an area that explores how societies can make diverse types of knowledge and skills more visible and why (Singh, 2015). However, it is in his declaration that he was 'fighting against a system by myself' and his claim of being 'pigeonholed' as a technician rather than a teacher is where Francisco arguably reveals key insights into the types of complex and nuanced social resistances that Indigenous people have been—and continue to be—engaged in and the ways in which they challenge certain 'systems' that were designed to hold them back. These struggles cut across various dimensions such as educational rights, labour movements, and gender equality and ultimately resulted in various institutional changes, including the creation of the National Pedagogical University (UPN) in 1978.

The UPN—along with the existing *Normal Superior* system—is characterised as a public higher education institution aimed at teacher training, and as such began offering degrees and diplomas specifically related to Indigenous education as of the early 1990s (Mato, 2012). Whereas the *Normal* school in Campeche allegedly refused to validate his prior qualifications, Francisco explained how he was ultimately able to pursue higher education studies at the UPN:

They practically, I mean, they rejected me ... when the UPN opened its doors ... to Indigenous teachers ... that's when I got the *licenciatura* [bachelor's degree] ... and I was able to get my degree. (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.46*)

Francisco's educational trajectory later led him to pursue a master's degree in Educational Management, and he spoke of these experiences as being key to his current role as a MIB facilitator now that he was retired. He also went on to discuss how some former teaching colleagues from his student movement days in Yucatán worked in various roles within the state's higher education institutions and were now involved in various activities aimed at the study and conservation of the Mayan language. Reflecting on this, Francisco offered the following:

In all of this, I think it's been *years* of struggle ... I say struggle because, because every day, um, you have that, well—what do you call it? The desire to improve every day, right? (*Francisco, Calkiní 2 facilitator, interview 5.10.2018-7.47*)

Francisco's ability to articulate 'struggle' as a driver of improvement and change was, in my view, also a form of negotiated resistance to reach a form of transitional justice for Indigenous peoples. To traverse from a socio-political landscape where the apparent goal was to systematically erase Indigenous languages and cultures in the name of national unity to one that suggests a renewed interest in and revaluation of Indigenous identities and languages (rendered more visible through efforts such as—but not limited to—the MIB programme) conveys a broad and significant societal shift. At the same time, the enduring legacies of social oppression still surface and are manifested in a multitude of ways when examining the current state of Indigenous affairs, as one learner named Manuel made apparent when recounting his family's history in relation to his own educational background.

With Manuel, what began as a conversation about not being able to attend formal schooling as a child soon evolved into a discussion on the impact of intergenerational disadvantage as a result of historical oppression of Indigenous peoples in the Campeche region. Manuel

highlighted the fact that his parents had not had any type of schooling, which in his father's case was an outcome of what he referred to as 'slavery':

My parents were participating in slavery. My father was a slave. My grandfather was a slave. (*Manuel, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-7.48*)

Manuel's striking statement prompted me to probe deeper into the matter of historical and contemporary systems of economic exploitation in Mexico, both during the interview and later during the analysis stage. Firstly, I asked Manuel for further context and clarification, specifically about who it was that held his family as 'slaves' and their living and working conditions. He added the following:

The owners of the *fincas* [agricultural estates] ... [would wake them up] at 4 in the morning ... when the trumpet sounded, all the slaves had to get up ... they go to work ... they work for the *patrón* [boss or landowner] ... and when they fail, they don't get there on time, they give them their *cintazo* [beating with a belt] ... they tie them up on a special tree or something, and they give them their *cintazo*. (*Manuel, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-7.49*)

Upon further analysis, it became apparent that Manuel was referring to former unsanctioned systems of controlled Indigenous labour through intergenerational debt peonage or 'contract slavery' which was the predominating labour system on many large agricultural *fincas* in the southern part of Mexico in the early 20th century (Turner, 1910, p. 110). According to Klein (2015), the last known *fincas* were only dismantled following successive land distribution programmes in the 1970s, meaning that such systems of labour exploitation or coerced labour still acted as a 'subterfuge for slavery' up until more recent decades (Reséndez, 2016).

Although Manuel did not go into the specifics on which type of *finca* his ancestors had worked on, the details of forced labour and physical abuse and were strikingly similar to several testimonies found in Klein's in-depth study focusing on Indigenous Zapatista women, who similarly recounted conditions of exploitation experienced by their parents and grandparents (2015). When questioned about how his family's circumstances changed, Manuel stated the following:

My grandfather died there. My father left when—when my grandfather took on the debt ... my grandfather took all of my father's debt. And that's how he got out, and another uncle too. My grandfather was the one who was left carrying all the debts. (*Manuel, Calkiní 1 learner, interview 3.10.2018-7.50*)

The testimony from Manuel substantiated the legacies of colonial domination that exploited the labour of the Indigenous groups in the region to drive forward commerce and business

profits, recreating conditions much alike slavery as it is more widely understood throughout the Americas (Alejos García and Martínez Sánchez, 2007). Here, I also noted some of the parallels in terms of ‘slavery’ as linked to literacy as a tool for (dis)empowerment: despite the many historical variances depending on the country context, a key commonality was a near-complete barring of reading and writing, with literacies being regarded as a threat to institutions that rely on the same systems of exploitation to thrive.

This section highlighted how within the broader debate on Indigenous rights in Mexico, the path toward social and legal recognition has been a long one and remains ongoing. In many cases, asserting and legitimising Indigenous identities has meant tracing personal and community histories, which can also mean remembering how Indigenous peoples have been the target of systematic discrimination, land dispossession, marginalisation and exploitation, both through colonisation and through the more recent ‘imposed’ globalised and neoliberal order (Stavenhagen, 2015, p. 97).

This act of remembering, as Smith describes, can potentially be ‘painful’ in the sense that it ‘involves remembering not just what colonisation was about, but what being dehumanised meant for [Indigenous] cultural practices’ (ibid., p. 147). For people like Francisco and Manuel, it involved reflecting on efforts of assimilation to disappear entire groups and histories of labour exploitation; for learners in Diana’s study circle, it meant recounting forced exclusion from schoolings based on gender and gender-based violence. Nonetheless, what emerged just as strongly throughout these rememberings were the instances of resistances in the face of disappearance and a resilience (that is, an ability to adapt and overcome barriers despite adversity) across time, space, and place (Kirmayer *et al.*, 2011).

Discussion

The data in this chapter gave insight into the varying social positionings of Indigenous peoples in Mexico as reflected through the dynamic, unfixed identities and perspectives of participants within and across different socio-political, cultural, and historical realities. The chapter revealed different ways in which affiliative and affective dimensions of literacies can be shaped by identities, power relations, and gendered attitudes towards literacy learning.

Looking at the recurring experiences of ‘shame’ and ‘humiliation’ (about Indigenous identities and languages, as well as perceived conditions of low literacy) that emerged during several of the interviews, I observed similarities between the experiences of MIB participants and

Bartlett's (2007a) prior analysis on the 'micropolitics of shame and shaming' in the context of an adult literacy programme in Brazil. Testimonies in this chapter touched on affective responses when discussing experiences with literacies and brought forth certain 'shame narratives' (such as Jorge's experiences of being humiliated by his classmates and Manuel's feelings of being ashamed to speak Mayan) (Bartlett, 2007a, p. 547). At the same time, experiences of shame were juxtaposed against those of pride (of who they were, where they were from, and their self-identified status as belonging to an Indigenous group), as articulated strongly by participants such as Graciela and Irene.

Within the context of both shame and pride narratives, the chapter explored how socio-discursive spaces such as the MIB study circles—with their potential to open up mutually enriching and supportive environments—are deeply linked to the 'systems of values, beliefs, practices, norms, conventions and relations of power' that have been constructed and shaped through distinct socio-political happenings over time (Ivanič, 1998, p. 42). Within the 'verb' of culture and literacy, the role and power of language in reinforcing (or opposing) such practices and values cannot be overlooked (Street, 1993, p. 25; Bartlett, 2008; Fairclough, 2015). The strong links between language as an element of 'active and improvised identity work' (and therefore a part of challenging shame narratives) substantiate the argument that processes of self-identification and self-making are strongly situated and defined by mutual social interactions, alignments, and contrasts (McCarthy and Moje, 2002; Bartlett, 2007b, p. 55).

Within the complex historical context of Mexico, Francisco's life experiences during the 1970s and onwards described in this chapter highlighted how systems of power arguably attempted to 'disappear' Indigenous identities and languages through more institutionalised educational means (such as through Social Integration Centres and modern processes of *castilianisation*) and more covert ways (for example, through nationalist discourses that privileged a *mestizo* ideal). Francisco's claim that the Mexican government wanted to 'disappear' and subsume entire Indigenous cultures and groups into a single mainstream Spanish-speaking society was a strong indictment of previous assimilationist *indigenista* approaches in education: historically speaking, rather than seeking 'integration', there was arguably a government aim of social eradication in Mexico (King, 1994; Rockwell, 1999; Wolf, 2010). In North America alone, tense histories of residential boarding schools in Canada and boarding schools on reservations in the United States for Indigenous groups, while modelled and operated differently from the

Mexican SICs and the current ‘shelters’ for Indigenous children in rural areas, highlight how the role of the state in Indigenous education was not—and is not—politically neutral (Dawson, 2012; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Niezen, 2017; Blackstock and Palmater, 2021). Whether or to what extent there are national efforts to improve relations between the state and Indigenous peoples varies: in the case of Mexico, there remains no official commission for truth or reconciliation in spite of its ‘dark’ history and similarly dark present, not least exemplified by the forced disappearance of 43 Indigenous trainee teachers in 2014 which remains unresolved to this day (Chavez-Segura, 2015).

Against the odds, Indigenous people in Mexico have managed to keep alive different cultural patterns despite over five centuries of cultural, economic, territorial violence (Green and Branford, 2012). Considering survival as ‘the degree to which Indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity’ (Smith, 1999, p. 145), survival could therefore be regarded as a project and a process of (re)framing identities, (re)claiming histories, and de-linking from colonial attitudes. Within this context, literacies can arguably play out and be experienced as a ‘tool for resistance to other forms of oppression’ (Meyers, 2011, p. 858). Literacies might be implicated in small-scale resistances (for example, through Diana’s assertion that she would write and speak in her language variant regardless of what the MIB materials dictated) to larger ones linked to social movements (exemplified by Francisco’s activities related to Indigenous student movements lobbying for rights to access higher education, or more broadly by the ongoing Zapatista movement).

Returning to the role and meaning of language within histories of exclusion and movements of resistance, it should be reiterated that the *General Law of Linguistic Rights* in Mexico regards all languages as equal under the law. However, whether and to what extent each state or municipality upholds this presumption of linguistic equality and accommodates for different languages and their variants is less clear. Not only is Spanish (and increasingly, English) seen as crucial to gain better access to work opportunities, but its dominance is highly visible and permeates all public spaces across Mexico: Spanish is the prevailing language in government, in all types of media, and in most institutions and services, a reality which continues to contribute to the decrease in Indigenous language usage (Hernández Zamora, 2018).

Thus, I argue that the *valuations* of Indigenous languages (whether these be considered more oral-based or more ‘official’ by having standardised written forms) could be regarded as being on a scale of high to low in terms of social acceptance. In addition, Indigenous languages

involve different social actors and operate on various social, political, and cultural levels depending on the contexts within which they are deployed (or not). It is here where the MIB emerges as an interesting case—on one hand, it makes a notable and noble effort to incorporate Indigenous languages using a rights-based approach that emphasises native language literacy learning. On the other hand, it follows similar patterns found in other transitional models of education in that Indigenous languages are largely treated as a bridge to a second (dominant) language that is still regarded as having a higher social value, even if it is not explicitly presented as such.

Ultimately, the idea that literacy learning in the dominant language (in this case, Spanish) could ameliorate economic and social marginalisation—while a strong argument in and of itself—cannot be decoupled from prior and ongoing denigrations of Indigenous literacies as not ‘correct’, ‘legitimate’, desirable, or useful. This is supported by Street’s (2017) argument that more ‘formal’ (and therefore more institutional) literacies tended to delegitimise those on the periphery, and therefore tended to play a role in reproducing different forms of social hierarchies. Thus, the development and promotion of transitional bilingual programmes such as the MIB may still play a role in assigning low value and function to Indigenous languages (Hamel, 2017).

The data in this chapter also suggests that longstanding patriarchal systems still have a stronghold in what remains a highly gendered and racialised Mexican society, particularly in Indigenous communities. The data revealed certain continuities in terms of gendered constraints which included—but are not limited to—instances of forced exclusion from schooling, gender-based violence, and cultural norms that reify gendered roles and expectations and male dominance over educational and health decisions. The design and management of the now-defunct PROSPERA programme is a key example of how gendered assumptions also remain embedded in national social policy: by placing women at the centre of the programme’s outcomes as programme beneficiaries, there was a clear cut devolvement of responsibilities (of health, education, and wellbeing) to women, and mothers specifically (Molyneux, 2016). Therefore, while women may have been considered ‘more likely than men to spend the funds on their children’s welfare’ they were consequently ‘treated as the means of production of a healthier next generation’, thereby leaving very little room to ‘improve opportunities for the women themselves’ (Abarbanell, 2020, p. 747).

In discerning whether there may be an evolving gender equality agenda in education in Mexico, a glance at the broader educational landscape suggests that women are enrolled in higher education and accessing the formal labour market at a higher rate than ever before (OECD, 2019). However, these reported advances also coincide with a surge in violence against women across the country—from 2000 to 2015, an estimated 28,710 cases of murder committed against women were reported (Angulo Lopez, 2019). In 2020 alone more than 600 gender-based homicides were reported, with these numbers still being disputed by activists who suggest the number could be much higher (*Legal Monitor Worldwide*, 2020). Such statistics belie an internal struggle to outwardly convey widespread gender equality while still reinforcing a patriarchal agenda. Not only that, but the high propensity of femicide in some regions in Mexico (and impunity of the same) suggests there is a persistent and ongoing gender ‘crisis’ (Angulo Lopez, 2019; Eulich, 2020).

Although this study does not focus on the broader issue of gender violence in more detail, it is nonetheless important to draw attention to the associations between gendered violence, poverty and inequality, all of which can be seen as multidimensional and linked to ‘structural and symbolic manifestations of oppression’ (Parkes and Unterhalter, 2015, p. 16). Within this context, lived experiences of structural and symbolic violence can be found within the data: for example, Adriana’s example of being prevented from advancing in formal schooling because she was told that women weren’t ‘worth it’, Celia’s assertion that women were often not given ‘permission’ to study, and Diana’s recounting of existing patterns of mistreatment and abuse experienced by female learners in her study circle provided some insight into how an enduring *machista* agenda has affected (and continues to affect) educational trajectories.

At the same time, compelling evidence that adult female learners face steeper barriers in education and account for over 90% of those enrolled in the MIB does not mean that male learners are immune to educational discrimination in these contexts. Concerns regarding equal access to education were backed up by Mario and Francisco’s assertions that for many men, the pressures to work often exceeded the perceived need for literacy learning or education. Therefore, in some cases, male learners were similarly denied learning opportunities and thus sought the support of the MIB as adults.

The processes of reframing identities and (re)claiming rights addressed in this chapter thus revealed how issues of gender, identity, culture, language are multi-layered and multi-

dimensional. In the following final chapter, I bring together the key ideas and findings from the three empirical chapters and provide some concluding thoughts about the overall study.

Introduction

This thesis explored the role and meaning of literacy in the context of a bilingual Indigenous literacy programme in Mexico with the goal of gaining insight into a hitherto under-researched literacy intervention. Drawing from a social practice framework that regards literacies as embedded in complex social dimensions of power, I examined different perspectives on the meanings and values attached to literacies by participants who directly engage with, negotiate, and contest them, both through the programme and in their everyday lives. By contributing more nuanced illustrations of how literacy events unfold in determined Indigenous contexts, new understandings were generated with the potential to speak back to the debate about broader literacy practices in the global South and their linkages to socio-historical and political processes.

In this final chapter, I will revisit the key themes and issues that emerged from the data, highlight the most salient empirical findings, and discuss how and to what extent the guiding research questions have been addressed throughout the thesis. I then provide an overview of the implications of the research and suggest some recommendations going forward. I include some reflections on the project as a whole and outline potential areas for future research, wrapping up with some final conclusions.

Summary of findings

The present thesis offers findings and theorisations on a range of issues related to literacy which have the potential to inform policy, practice and wider scholarship on education and international development. Here, I briefly recapitulate the key ideas from each chapter and emphasise the contributions this study makes to new knowledge in the fields of education, international development, and literacy studies more broadly.

Following the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 drew out some of the key arguments, debates, and divides regarding literacy, providing a broad sketch of relevant literature which then provided a theoretical basis for the remainder of the thesis. I explained how literacy as a social practice provided an overarching frame to explore and analyse the MIB programme and helped

to facilitate an analysis of literacy *events* and *practices* to better understand how MIB actors engage with, pursue, and understand literacy. I reviewed key literature related to literacy and its concomitant dimensions of development, power, criticality, gender, (de)coloniality, language, interculturality and mediation. These overlapping dimensions further supported the embeddedness of literacies in hegemonic relations of power across transnational and historical temporalities.

Relevant literacy trends over time were described in more detail in Chapter 3, where I discussed how the history of Mexico is patterned by complex and compounding struggles as a result of the long term project of constructing a ‘unified, homogeneous nation-state’ following independence (Hamel, 2008, p. 302). I went on to suggest that the socio-historical and political legacies of a longstanding exclusionary agenda of nationalist ideals meant that Indigenous literacies were largely subdued (and at times even negated), despite rich traditions of knowledge preservation and complex writing systems preceding colonial times.

Chapter 4 covered the key methodological considerations of this study. It included an overview of the overall research approach (drawing from ethnographic strategies from a critical constructivist perspective) and described the multi-sited nature of the study, as well as the different methods of data generation. Details on inductive and iterative strategies for the analysis of empirical data were also discussed. This chapter also outlined the five analytical themes featured in this study: 1) *literacies*, 2) *identity, culture and language*; 3) *life and work*; 4) *gender and rights*, and 5) *teaching and learning*. These themes—along with the research questions—enabled a focused approach to data analysis and acted as a heuristic to give centrality to literacies and their events and practices in context. Moreover, the themes and questions guided my observations and explorations into the theoretical and practical multivalence of literacies, while still allowing for emergent findings.

Chapter 5 explored the analytical theme of *literacies*, responding to questions surrounding participant perspectives *on the different meanings, values and uses attached to literacies* (expressed in RQ1). In addition, it explored *perceptions of literacies and processes of literacy learning in relation to participants’ lived experiences* in their community contexts (linked to RQ2). It was in this chapter where I unpicked more localised and nuanced interactions and engagements with literacies, the intricacies of which I argue are interdependent with and nested in broader socio-historical events and literacy trends in Mexico. I began with a look at *where* literacy learning takes place in the context of the MIB (the study circles). By looking at what

values might be imbued in literacies in this same context and in accordance with the perspectives and experiences of those engaging with the MIB, I investigated *how* and *why* participants assign importance, worth, usefulness, and merit to literacy. The individual and collective relationships with literacies (produced and enacted through specific life and cultural histories) were found to be closely linked to a wide variety of uses ranging from everyday practical usages (for example, literacy and numeracy for driving a taxi or running a business) to more abstract ones (to feel better about oneself or to carry on traditions). A further unpacking of *what* literacies mean on a more abstract level gave way to the most salient meanings, values and uses attached to literacies. These emerged through series of framings of literacy as a *defence*, a *necessity*, as a way to have *access to full knowledge*, as a *valuable tool*, as a way to *express oneself*, as a way to *learn from one another*, and as a way to *know one's rights*.

Chapter 6 considered the ways and purposes learners and facilitators engage with the MIB programme, focusing on the themes of *teaching and learning* as well as *life and work*. A general line of enquiry on *the ways of and purposes for engaging with the MIB programme* (outlined in RQ3) as well as participants' perceptions on *the influence and wider effect it has had on their lives and livelihoods* (related to RQ4) captured smaller scale interactions within the programme and drove an analysis and interpretation of more evaluative contributions and reflections from the participants. Related discussions on the perceived challenges and benefits associated with the MIB programme evoked insight into different learning trajectories, processes of professionalisation, and various intrinsic and extrinsic factors which often determined participant engagement with the programme. The chapter then included an analysis of facilitator roles not only as 'solidarity figures' but as *intercultural brokers* tasked with bridging linguistic and cultural divides. Moreover, it found that learner agency in literacy learning rested on an extrinsic-intrinsic continuum and involved external and internal factors of motivation (including linkages to a conditional cash transfer programme and more personal motivations such as to run a business or communicate with family outside the community).

The data in Chapter 7 attended to the multi-layered themes of *identity, culture, and language* as well as *gender and rights*. The issues and discussions arising from these themes highlighted emergent findings which were largely unforeseen and not directly addressed through the research questions. However, the importance and relevance of these themes carried equal weight to the previous explorations on *literacies, teaching and learning, and life and work*. The data in this chapter revealed strong affiliative and affective dimensions of literacies—imbued

with issues of language and identity, power relations, and implications of gender in literacy learning—with participant experiences of ‘shame’ and exclusion articulated against examples of resistance, resilience, and mutual learning. Furthermore, the chapter’s arguments suggest that underlying valuations of Indigenous languages operate on a scale of social acceptance (from high to low) and on various levels (social, political, cultural), and involve different actors. I argue that in its current form, the MIB makes use of Indigenous languages to arguably perform a ‘bridging function to the dominant language’ (Hanemann, 2019, p. 4). In this way, the programme retains a largely *transitional* approach (with the primary goal of transitioning emergent literacy learners from reading and writing in their native Indigenous languages to reading and writing in Spanish) rather than advancing an *additive* model of learning (where the learners’ first language is valued and maintained and where the learning of a second language is complementary to the first) (Hanemann and McKay, 2019, p. 353).

More generally, the findings suggest that while the MIB programme promotes an innovative, rights-based approach to education and has expanded learning opportunities for many Indigenous groups, it does not sufficiently challenge the interlocking systems of power that still affect Indigenous people, particularly with regards to social and political issues of gender, race, language, age, and socioeconomic status. Although various stages of its development have involved key Indigenous stakeholders, ultimately, the MIB remains a programme created and run *for* Indigenous people by external, government-based agents, not *by* Indigenous people, organisations, or intellectuals. Therefore, the work to maintain, sustain, develop, and enhance the MIB will be ongoing and will involve multiple stakeholders. In the next section, I discuss some of the key implications arising from this study and venture some recommendations for the programme going forward.

Implications and recommendations

Locating this study in three geographically, ethnically, and linguistically diverse Mexican states had several analytical implications. Just as this study was shaped by the fifteen different communities wherein the empirical data was generated, it was bound by and located within the practical and discursive terrain of the MIB programme. The MIB study circles were the points of departure through which I conducted my empirical exploration, and the extent to which learners and facilitators shared (or did not share) their stories, testimonies, and perspectives have shaped the overall findings had a bearing on the implications and recommendations discussed in this section.

The empirical data generated for this study indicated that despite its international recognition and the relative acceptance and buy-in of the programme on part of the learners and facilitators (an acceptance reflected both in data from this study as well as the UNESCO Mexico study from 2012), the MIB continues to operate under complex and multisectoral pressures and constraints. The underlying pressure from the Mexican federal government, local authorities, and INEA to meet national and international educational targets—while arguably necessary to drive action and innovation and justify funding—at times can work against emergent literacy learning initiatives such as the MIB that are, by their nature, not linear and do not produce rapid nor easily measured results. All the same, the MIB and similar programmes are often held up to national (and international) comparative standards that strongly promote shorter-term, quantifiable outcomes and outputs.

The implications of such an approach mean that in a large part, literacy learning within the MIB may well continue to be instrumentalised to pass institutional exams and show results in terms of how many people have been ‘literacised’, and less so for individual or community impact. However, assessment results cannot by themselves capture the complexities and nuances of literacy learning processes, nor can they adequately determine whether or to what extent such literacies are perceived as meaningful, useful, necessary, desired, or relevant to the lives and livelihoods of those engaged in the programme.

For the MIB to be a sustainable educational strategy, then, there needs to be a long-term, sustainable planning horizon that takes a more holistic approach in parallel with more short-term planning which prioritises enrolment and attainment. Further emphasis needs to be made on the complex pedagogical demands (required on part of the facilitators) and the temporal and affective dimensions of emergent literacy learning (on part of the learners). Programmes like the MIB understandably rely on institutional assessment tools to try to measure learner progress. However, assessment-related ‘productivity’ should not be the sole indicator that represents—and therefore often decides—whether or not programmes continue to be funded and developed. Rather than being monitored and accredited by literacy indices according to assessments, future evaluative approaches for the MIB (and other similar programmes) would benefit from aiming to capture the programme’s community impact through consistent longitudinal monitoring. Integrative processes of programme evaluation that consider community-based impact could arguably inform and help shape overall teaching and learning

practices, which in turn could help maintain and improve programme engagement, attainment, and even completion.

One of the key issues when it comes to *bilingual* and *adult* education is arguably rooted in how bilingual educators themselves are recruited, managed, trained, supported, remunerated, and ultimately valued at social and institutional levels. In Chapter 6, I proposed that bilingual facilitators engaged in the MIB programme are navigating highly complex roles as *intercultural brokers*, all while dealing with weakened institutional support, severe scarcity of materials, inadequate infrastructure, and systems of remuneration that do not take into account the complex level of skill, time commitment, and decision-making that the role entails. At best, the way the model is designed relies too heavily on the voluntary commitment of its facilitators; at worst, it risks exploiting them.

Providing continuous financial and professional development support for MIB facilitators could arguably help INEA meet (and potentially exceed) institutional targets. Steps taken towards the professional development of facilitators could also attend to more of the non-measurable outcomes related to learning and mutual enrichment that the MIB study circles have the potential to provide. At the same time, institutional support in terms of professional development and financial compensation needs to be commensurate to not only the demand, but needs to reflect the highly complex task.

In terms of more immediate and concrete steps to address the issue of facilitator development and professionalisation, one of the key recommended steps featured in the UNESCO report surveying the programme was that INEA undertakes a strict review of its current mode of facilitator compensation. This was supported by the argument that the MIB programme is more complex than the Spanish language MEVyT, and thus requires the facilitators to have more experience and training. The report concludes with a proposal that INEA consider more effective and sustainable pathways for longer-term career development for the facilitators to lessen the high turnover rates to enable a more ‘stable’ programmatic outlook that maintains a ‘vision of the future’ (UNESCO, 2012, p. 91).

In light of the findings of this study, these key recommendations still stand nearly a decade after they were first proposed. However, when taking this into consideration at the time of the fieldwork (2018) and then at the completion of this thesis (2021), there remains little evidence that suggests that INEA has made strides towards following the recommended action steps.

The constraints were reflected through more direct situations I observed (such as the operating budget running out and all testing activities being halted) and through broader discussions and issues raised by learners and facilitators (including instances of administrative and facilitator turnover and inadequate resources). While facilitators were generally regarded in high esteem (highlighted by examples such as Paola's testimony about feeling appreciation for her work through displays of gratitude such as the gift of food), the precarious working conditions and scarcity of resources and support indicates that further strategic support is needed. The fragmentation within the national education system in Mexico means that adequate financing for adult education (and therefore improved support for adult educators) is not only deprioritised, but is likely at further risk of deterioration owing to the COVID-19 situation (United Nations, 2020).

Certainly, the MIB represents an important step towards the implementation of an educational model in which native language literacy learning and Spanish language learning are regarded as complementary and non-hierarchical—by many standards, an intercultural model. However, the MIB would benefit from strengthening aspects of the model which advance additive approaches to language learning, which among other things would mean extending materials in Indigenous languages beyond the five basic literacy modules that currently exist and continue to expand its reach by including more languages and their localised variants. Research has shown that educational models wherein the dominant (and colonial) language is the primary language of instruction further can compound existing exclusions, disadvantages and asymmetries and contribute to the accelerating language loss in Indigenous contexts (GEMR, 2016).

There is no question that in the Mexican context, Spanish (and in more recent decades, even English) has displaced and eroded the use of Indigenous languages and contributed towards a longstanding unequal distribution of literacies. Issues of language status and valorisation and negotiations of 'linguistic citizenship' within multilingual contexts continue to be bound up in debates about the role languages play in facilitating participation in social, economic and political life (Rubagumya *et al.*, 2011, p. 78; Williams and Stroud, 2013). Not only that, but the language valuation scale comes into play even when determining which Indigenous languages are privileged over others or hold higher social status—whether or not certain languages have a higher number of speakers (such as Mayan or Náhuatl, which are two of the

most widely spoken languages in Mexico), it is in the interest of governments and programmes to attend to linguistic diversity as much as possible.

Within this frame, efforts of language sustainability and revitalisation for *all* languages and variants remain ‘integrally tied to Indigenous self-determination and concomitant rights to traditional homelands, education and ethnocultural identities’ and thus remain a central matter in the overall debate about educational rights for Indigenous peoples (McCarty, 2012, p. 549). Language cannot be disentangled from culture, nor can culture be extricated from history, just as literacies in Indigenous contexts cannot be neutral or disconnected from wider social practices.

Recommendations to further develop the programme, of course, implies a significant investment in time and resources. The impetus for programme development and longer-term investment in resources (both in terms of funding and paid workers) then arises from further evidence building on the wide-ranging possibilities and opportunities made possible through literacy learning, particularly those opportunities which recognises the varying needs, interests, uses and meanings in context.

Reflections and areas for further research

The present study produced new data and unveiled new perspectives on the topic of literacies and adult education while simultaneously making the case for a breadth of future research. The abovementioned complexities and tensions with regards to the MIB suggest that there is a continued and urgent need to enhance, innovate, and implement models of literacy learning that take into account the distinct needs of those who engage in them. Here, I bring together several key reflections on the study and propose key elements and factors that need to be considered going forward. Similarly, I suggest that an ongoing enquiry into the role and meaning of literacies in Indigenous contexts be maintained as a way to build new evidence to improve, build upon, and expand effective teaching and learning strategies and pedagogical repertoires.

In the final stages of the writing and analysis, I returned to the core premise of the MIB programme that is summed up in the title of this thesis: an educational model for *life* and *work*. But *whose* lives? What *type* of work, and what *kind* of education? International interventions that promote adult learning often converge on many similar themes as the MIB: incorporating elements of ‘life’ (or broadly human rights) as well as a ‘work’ (or broadly human capital) into

literacy learning and furthering skills-based approaches to learning. And yet, this (somewhat oversimplified) summary of overall goals for adult education continues to be based on the flawed premise that literacy can—on its own, independent of context or socio-political characteristics and processes—act as a means to achieve improved employment opportunities, higher incomes, enhanced communities and economies, and better lives (Street, 2006, 2016). However, the findings in this thesis suggest that such a perspective only tells one side of a much more complex story, one that encompasses dimensions of power, identity building, resistance, and self-determination.

Further reflections led me to assert that the types of literacies that different societies prioritise or deem as more or less powerful, more widely recognised, or hold a higher social status continue to be deeply embedded in discussions, debates, policies, and practices regarding educational equality. Moreover, this study reaffirms the embeddedness of literacies in hegemonic relations of power (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Kalman and Street, 2013). This thesis therefore makes the case for a more intentional reframing and re-imagining of literacies that makes more explicit the existing social hierarchies and power dynamics in the contexts within which they emerge. Such a reformulation (in theory, policy, and practice) of the purpose and aim of adult literacy learning—conceived and developed in continuous collaboration by those directly engaging in literacy learning as beneficiaries or providers—would be better positioned to intercede on behalf of those whom the policies and interventions are targeted at. Moreover, such reframings can add to the work of dismantling assumptions (about Indigeneity, literacies, identities, and more) and contribute towards processes of decolonisation in education by bringing those on the margins into the wider debate.

Related calls for more participatory and ‘bottom up’ approaches to literacy, education, and learning are nothing new: grassroots efforts on the margins (or entirely outside) of institutional frameworks continue to (re)create new ways to look at, understand, live in, and learn in the world (Esteva, 2010). Other research has looked at learning and development from a distinctly Southern perspective and through the frame of lifelong learning (LLL) to propose that more ‘Indigenised’ approaches to LLL could offer a way to examine, develop, and enhance national and international agendas for learning. Such agendas, if adapted and developed in context, would ideally be centred ‘on issues of democratisation, social justice, human rights and human dignity’ while at the same time be highly ‘sensitive to context, enhancing local ownership of content, means and process’ (Preece, 2009, p. 597).

A general glance at the Mexican national context also indicates some of the ways in which Indigenous groups are responding to calls for educational equity. Processes of Indigenisation at the higher education level are emerging from intercultural universities across the country (as well as in other regions in Latin America), which ‘propose as their mission to educate intellectuals and professionals committed to the development of their peoples and regions’ (Schmelkes, 2009, p. 7). In many ways, intercultural universities could be regarded as an organised articulation of longstanding demands by Indigenous peoples with regards to education: first, that there be access to linguistically and culturally pertinent education; second, that Indigenous peoples should be able to exert their agency and be involved in decision-making when it comes to educational planning, evaluation, and implementation; and finally, that Indigenous cultures be recognised and valued from a social justice perspective in the different country contexts in which they live (*ibid.*).

Returning to the MIB, I am persuaded by the present exploration of the programme that despite its institutionalised nature, the MIB does incorporate certain intercultural elements in its curriculum and provides a potential space for fostering dialogue, raising critical consciousnesses, and offering a platform by which people can reinscribe Indigenous ways of being, doing, knowing, and learning. The extent to which this happens and the general degree of acceptance from MIB participants, of course, will vary. Further investigation would be required to broaden the scope of inquiry into contemporary educational models and discourses to explore how intercultural elements are embedded and adapted and whether these adequately attend to Indigenous needs and agendas, in Mexico and beyond.

Changing policies over time, competing interests and agendas, and a rapidly changing global labour market make discourses and practices within adult learning a politically contested terrain. The justifiable prioritisation of education targeted at children across the globe has meant that general buy-in for developing, implementing and supporting different types of adult education—regardless of their pedagogical innovation or perceived potential for socioeconomic betterment—remains tenuous. Within this frame, notions of literacy for ‘life and work’ often mean that the instrumental purpose of more formalised literacy interventions is to promote skills and certifications that are purported to help individuals make a ‘better living’, without considering that such a living is often made to fit within the prevailing economic order and its needs.

Thus, while certain educational interventions may contribute to and support social mobility for adults in a variety of ways (including, but not limited to, wider and better paid work opportunities), it is not a guarantee. The data presented in this thesis demonstrates that there often remain various intervening socio-political factors and obstacles (for example, the language of instruction in which literacy learning takes place) that can derail or even block upward trajectories in education (Brice Heath and Sobol, 2013). In addition, the findings support the idea that literacy determined by and serving the purposes of different political actors can at times serve to prop up dominant languages and structures or even promote a hidden curriculum underpinned by enduring colonial legacies, thereby working against the interests of marginalised groups and further entrenching educational inequalities.

The enduring inequality in education with regards to Indigenous groups (explored in different ways across this thesis) demands the recognition of systematic, racialised and gendered injustices within and across organisations, institutions and social movements that are purportedly based on equal rights in Mexico. Such enduring injustices cannot be remedied or alleviated without scrutiny on the intersectional oppressions and the ways in which these interact with each other (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). Ongoing work towards more equitable and just societies begins with an examination of whether and how intersecting forms of discrimination (in their varied and complex forms) is embedded in different systems, institutions, and ideologies, and how these interact with each other. By continuing to unveil these issues, different actors and stakeholders can take up the task of adapting to the educational challenges of the 21st century.

Concluding thoughts

During the writing of this thesis, there were a series of significant socio-political events in Mexico and around the world that suggest even further change and uncertainty for the future of the MIB programme and Indigenous education at large. The presidential election in Mexico in 2018 and the subsequent change of administration in 2019 meant that Andres Manuel López Obrador's 'National Regeneration Movement' (MORENA) political party carried forward an agenda and discourse of social transformation 'for the poor' while simultaneously implementing policies that suggest a dangerous return to the authoritative governments of the past. This is marked by a pattern of systematic weakening (and sometimes dismantling) of autonomous institutions aimed at counterbalancing executive power, and a return to federally

centralised power with a party majority that does not sufficiently challenge any of these changes.

Since the change of administration, social programmes such as PROSPERA have been eliminated and replaced by direct cash ‘scholarships’ for young people in school and ‘pensions’ for adults over the age of 65. The rationale for diverting public funding into a single social welfare system was to help prevent alleged corruption within existing systems. In contexts such as Mexico with long histories of political interference and corruption, close attention must indeed be paid to the management and transparency of federally funded programmes. However, an increasing centralisation of social programmes (and executive power in general) demands the same level of scrutiny, something which the administration has been reticent to provide. On a broader level, the question about whether or to what extent cash transfers play a role in poverty alleviation and improved access to education remains.

Ultimately, while the MIB programme operates under the auspice of the Ministry of Education, it is more vulnerable to budget cuts and reallocations than it has ever been. The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated the already constrained conditions and further weakened the public support and funding streams necessary for supporting the MIB. This precarious situation is not only limited to Mexico, but international commitments towards adult education are also at risk. Preliminary results surveying and monitoring the global literacy landscape suggest that there continue to be a dearth of policies that focus on education for youth and adults, thus signalling multiple deficits in terms of responding to the 2030 agenda on educational equality (UNESCO/OREALC, 2019; United Nations, 2020).

As a final reflection, I posit that the social processes of literacies are profoundly bound to the overarching and ongoing project of Indigenous self-determination, as expressed through different terrains (social, cultural, economic, psychological, and more), and involving complex processes (of mobilisation, decolonisation, and transformation). The interlinkages between literacies and self-determination emerged strongly in the data of this study through the articulations of literacy as a ‘defence’ and as a means of self-expression, self-reliance, and to assert and (re)claim rights, all of which are arguably crucial for the project of self-determination. Still, self-determination—similar to more abstract concepts such as gender, culture, or even literacy—cannot be broken down into measurable parts nor made to fit pre-determined social moulds. Different types and dimensions of self-determination (whether they be intellectual, territorial, political, spiritual or others) might emerge from different

perspectives, for different purposes and interests, and be expressed and interpreted in different ways (Smith, 1999; Taylor, 2005). Moreover, its conceptualisations will undoubtedly be affected by changes in thought and practice in a determined time and space and will therefore continue to be debated.

In the context of this study, participant experiences of overcoming barriers in education, identity construction, community building, and resistance arguably demonstrate that Indigenous self-determination can happen at both large and small scales, with certain continuities and discontinuities, and at community and individual levels. Thus, while studies (such as this one in the broader field of education) might offer some insight into the varying types and degrees of self-determination, these still cannot be readily measured nor oversimplified. To do so would be to divert attention away from the complex—and at times, arduous—task of identifying and analysing social issues in context, understanding the causes, effects and implications of them, and work towards developing ideas and proposals on how to address and solve them.

Having stated that, I reached the end of this study with the conclusion that by retaining a focus on literacies, their social natures, and their many attached meanings and dimensions, I was also examining literacy as a form and aspect of self-determination. Literacies are arguably as much a manifestation of self-determination as they are a human capability, a form of human and social capital, or a potential means of poverty alleviation. Literacies intersect with and cannot be disentangled from self-determination. Therefore, even the most seemingly inclusive international policies, discourses and practices promoting educational equity and inclusion still demand close attention to issues of Indigenous self-determination and whether or not such adaptations repeat more tokenistic, non-agentic, and even neo-colonial narratives.

The central contribution of this study, then, lies in the argument that literacies and self-determination are part and parcel of agendas of equality, justice, recognition, and decolonisation in education and beyond. The thesis provides original insights and draws attention to the complexities and nuances of Indigenous experiences in education, and in particular in adult education, thereby offering a distinctive addition to scholarship within a growing field of qualitative and participant-perspective oriented research, as developed on—and with—Indigenous peoples. It gives precedence to Indigenous voices and highlights their power within and despite dominant discourses, while also recognising the overlaying tensions that accompany such an approach.

More fundamentally, the study is underpinned by a commitment to and affirmation of self-determination for Indigenous peoples, in both their aspirational and instrumental orientations (McKinley and Smith, 2019). I have sought to do this through method, action, and reflection, in solidarity with the participants of this project, and with the awareness that the frame and scope of the study both broadened and restricted the findings. It is in this way that the lessons from this thesis are distinctive: although they encompass participant experiences within the socio-historical and political backdrop in Mexico, the perspectives and debates brought forth as a result of this study are nevertheless crucial to inform and drive forward scholarship on adult education, international development, and understandings of literacy as a social practice.

Global efforts to end poverty and achieve a more just and peaceful world have never been more urgent. However, even within the discourse of coordinated and international efforts such as the SDGs, there is the risk of instrumentalising Indigenous peoples and their ways of knowing and being as a key solution to the perceived harms of capitalism and neoliberalism in what remains a politically fragmented and unstable world (made even more tenuous following the COVID-19 crisis). Within the renewed discourses of global sustainability and in the face of steep social challenges and changing climates, Indigenous peoples have been heralded as stewards of knowledge and land. However, these calls to ameliorate societal and environmental ills have been largely made from North to South, while largely disregarding the epistemic and territorial violence that has been—and continues to be—exerted against the South on part of the North. As much it is essential for Indigenous peoples to ‘re-write and re-right colonial representations and histories’ in order to (re)assert their presence, identities, social imaginaries, and memories on their own terms, they have an equal right to a certain level of social amnesia to overcome injustices and (re)imagine their identities and roles should they choose to do so (Nakata, 2013, pp. 294–295). The responsibilities of achieving a more sustainable world and equalising educational opportunities rest not with a few, but with all.

Future directions in terms of how to address global challenges related to (but not limited to) relevant and quality education in the global South need not be antagonistic between North and South. It is here where intercultural and decolonial approaches to future research could offer a framework by which new educational proposals and innovations emerge to further cultivate analytical, methodological, theoretical approaches underpinned by principles of social justice and self-determination. This is not to say that the discourse and agendas associated with such approaches are a silver bullet of sorts: colonial critiques, intercultural responses, and processes

of Indigenising education and learning cannot by themselves deliver nor assure improved practices in Indigenous contexts (Nakata, 2013).

The way forward also demands a recognition that despite the availability of new frameworks for articulating the complexity and diversity of Indigenous social struggles across Latin America and the wider global South, our vocabulary remains relatively and relationally limited. Similar to how the work to enhance the MIB and similar interventions will be ongoing, so will the work to follow through with the commitments to Indigenous projects that Smith (1999, pp. 143–161) raised of ‘claiming, testimonies, storytelling, celebrating survival, indigenising, intervening, revitalising, connecting, reading, writing, representing, gendering, envisioning, reframing, restoring, returning, democratising, networking, naming, protecting, creating, negotiating, discovering, and sharing’.

As a qualitative educational researcher working within the broad remit of social sciences and engaging in the specific domain of literacy studies, it would be disingenuous to claim that my personal background played little to no role in this study. As social researchers, how do we guarantee that there are no power imbalances or abuses, particularly when this research is carried out in Southern regions and while interfacing with Indigenous peoples? How do we sidestep the social inequalities that bend the scale towards those who benefit from this type of research in a tangible way (i.e., earning a terminal degree or getting a job)? How do we speak back to our own socially embedded assumptions? I pose these questions without claiming to have clear cut answers, but rather to elucidate the complex nature of the roles and responsibilities in research.

In the case of this thesis, my analysis remains constrained by my own beliefs, biases, ideologies, blind spots, and shortcomings as a researcher. From a critical constructivist standpoint, I am in agreement that the interplay between researcher and their study cannot be avoided. Therefore, I have aimed for the highest degree of transparency and attempted to the best of my ability to foreground my intentions and goals for undertaking this project and to explicitly uncover my biases and assumptions. Whether or not I managed to accomplish this and to what extent, I leave to the readers. In the interim, I remain open to learning and to new ways of knowing and doing and welcome any and all critiques and challenges to these conclusions.

From the beginning of this study, I sought to fill the gaps in my own knowledge and experience. Ultimately, what this process taught me was that where I may be able to fill some gaps, others would still emerge. The task ahead—for myself, as well as for other educational researchers and educators—is one of continuous enquiry that takes into account contemporary social challenges while situating them in their respective historical and theoretical contexts. This thesis then acts as an invitation to other scholars to continue work in the field of literacy and serves as an entryway to a much broader discussion and debate.

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Appendices

Appendix A.1: Sample from interview transcript

L: ¿Y habla usted maya en casa con su familia?

J: Si, somos mayeros. Somos maya ... sí es bonito aprender maya. Y no nada más es, este, hablarlo, si no que igual saberlo cómo se escribe.

L: ¿Y eso no lo había hecho antes?

J: No, no lo habíamos hecho. O sea, hablábamos como sea [risas]

L: ¿Pero no escribían español tampoco?

J: Español, sí, sí, de todo, escribir, de sacar cuentas y todo.

L: Y eso de - porque me interesa mucho, pues - muchos piensan en la escritura como leer una novela larga. Pero no necesariamente es así ¿verdad? Todo -- la vida diaria tiene muchas instancias de que estamos leyendo y escribiendo un, pues, muchas cosas. ¿No puede pensar en unos ejemplos que hace usted? ¿De leer y escribir? Tal vez en maya --

J: Si en cualquier cosa que leas tú ... Si, por ejemplo, nosotros la verdad, pues, yo diario tengo qué leer. Soy taxista.

L: Ah pues, ¿es taxista usted!

J: Diario tengo que leer.

L: Porque sino se pierde, ¿verdad?

J: No. O me dan una infracción.

L: También, eso no sería bueno.

J: Y por eso sí es bonito saber leer y escribir.

Appendix A.2: Sample from group interview transcript

L: Pero a mí me gusta mucho, bueno, aprender de los que saben y saber porque piensan que es importante todavía leer y escribir en esas lenguas y saber hablarlas. ¿Porque creen que es importante todavía mantener esas esas lenguas en México? Porque ustedes, porque su lengua ¿verdad? Es una de muchas. ¿Porque creen que es importante?

Educando 1 (mujer): Pues para no perderlo. Para tenerlo siempre presente, pues.

Educando 2 (mujer): Es muy importante.

Educando 3 (mujer): Para no olvidar.

Educando 4 (mujer): Es que los niños que tenemos, pues ya no habla ello.

Educando 5 (mujer): Es muy importante --

Educando 6 (mujer): Ya no hablan, ya no quiere hablar, pues.

Educando 7 (mujer): Porque cuando uno sale a la ciudad, no como quiera te da trabajo.

Educando 8 (mujer): Le gusta mas en castellano que en, este, nuestro idioma.

Educando 9 (mujer): Tienes que, tienes que hacer unos papeles para que te den trabajo. Y cuando no sabe leer y escribir, pues, te quedas sin trabajo. No puedes ni, aunque nada más vayas a echar tortilla, ahí si te piden papeles. Ahí te dicen tráiganme estos papeles, porque, para que sepas yo qué año saliste. Porque también, aunque nada más echa unas tortillas de mano, ahí en la ciudad, pues te pides papeles. Te dice, preséntame tus papeles ya mañana me lo traes y ya para qué puedas trabajar aquí conmigo.

Educando 9 (mujer): Y lo que nada más los que saben leer y escribir pues ellos si tienen su trabajito. Ellos si comen. Pero a los demás, bueno, cuando no sabemos leer y escribir, Es así, quédate sin comer. Porque, pues, no sabes, pues. No sabe, o sea, no te permite pues uno trabajo.

Appendix B: Example of field notes

8 DE OCT

DI# - INAPAM
para adultos mayores
hispanohablante - MEVYT material

talleres de costura, otras actividades

viáticos - asesores

todo - empieza con el educando
y asesor

si no hay educando no hay
asesores, si no son esos no
numeros sin numeros no
hay instituto

lo que se requiere es la
paciencia

asesora - viaja 8 veces x mes
60 per way

Appendix C: Information Sheet

Institute of Education



MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe: un estudio etnográfico de un programa de alfabetización Indígena en México

Hoja de información

¿Quién está realizando la investigación?

Mi nombre es Lorena Sánchez, y soy alumna de doctorado en el departamento de Educación, Práctica y Sociedad en el Instituto de Educación UCL en Londres, Reino Unido.

¿Por qué se está realizando esta investigación?

Con esta investigación, es mi meta aprender más sobre el MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe (MIB) y explorar los diferentes significados, usos y prácticas de la alfabetización para adultos indígenas en México.

¿Por qué me están invitando a participar?

Los invito a participar en mi proyecto de investigación porque estoy interesada en hablar con personas que tienen experiencia directa con el programa MIB, ya sea como participantes del programa, asesores o coordinadores. Sus aportes, experiencias e ideas serían invaluablees para este estudio.

¿Qué pasará si decido participar?

Si decide participar, le haré unas preguntas acerca de su experiencia con el programa de alfabetización MIB. Esta discusión durará entre 30 minutos y una hora, y se programará en la fecha y hora que le resulte más conveniente. No se le pedirá que responda ninguna de las preguntas, y puede suspender la entrevista en cualquier momento.

¿Alguien sabrá que he estado involucrado?

No. Puede que sus palabras se usen por escrito o en presentaciones futuras basadas en este estudio, pero no se usará su nombre verdadero.

¿Debo participar?

Depende de usted si elige o no participar. Espero que si eliges estar involucrado/a que tengas una experiencia valiosa.

¡Muchas gracias por tomar el tiempo de leer esta hoja informativa!

Si deseas participar, por favor complete y devuelva el formulario de consentimiento de la entrevista.

Si tiene más preguntas, puede comunicarse conmigo a lorena.sanchez.15@ucl.ac.uk.

Este proyecto ha sido revisado y aprobado por el Comité de Ética en Investigación del Instituto de Educación de UCL (Número Z6364106/2018/07/102 investigación social).

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Appendix D: Sample observation consent form

Institute of Education

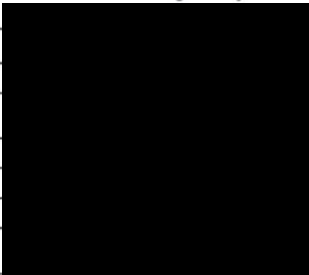


MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe: un estudio etnográfico de un programa de alfabetización Indígena en México

Formulario de consentimiento de observación

Fecha: 25 octubre 2018

[Saludos y presentaciones] Yo (Lorena Sánchez Tyson) soy una alumna de doctorado que está interesada en aprender más sobre la alfabetización en el contexto del MEVyT indígena Bilingüe y en su comunidad. Hoy estaré observando la sesión de círculo de estudio y voy a hacer notas escritas sobre cómo es el programa en su comunidad. No te evaluaré ni a ti ni a tus asesores, y no utilizaré los nombres reales de nadie. Mis notas solamente se usarán para los fines de mi estudio, y puedes detener tu participación en cualquier momento. Al agregar tu firma o al marcar la página siguiente, aceptas que esta observación tendrá lugar hoy.

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Appendix E: Sample interview consent form

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MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe: un estudio etnográfico de un programa de alfabetización Indígena en México

Formulario de consentimiento de entrevista

Este formulario es para asegurarse de que acepta participar en el proyecto de investigación de Lorena Sánchez sobre el MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe. Por favor complete este formulario marcando SÍ o NO en respuesta a las siguientes preguntas:

☐ Este formulario se leyó en voz alta al/a la participante

Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo que Lorena me hará preguntas sobre mis experiencias relacionadas con el programa MEVyT Indígena Bilingüe.

SÍ NO
☒ ☐

Entiendo que nuestra conversación será grabada en audio y que Lorena escribirá una transcripción de lo que dijimos.

☒ ☐

Estoy de acuerdo que mis palabras se podrán utilizar en cualquier trabajo escrito o presentación basada en este estudio, pero que mi nombre real no se utilizará.

☒ ☐

Entiendo que puedo suspender la entrevista o retirarme del proyecto en cualquier momento, y si lo hago, lo que diga en la entrevista no será utilizado.

☒ ☐

Si tienes preguntas o dudas acerca de ser entrevistado/a, puedes hablar con Lorena o comunicarte con ella en cualquier momento por medio de su correo electrónico lorena.sanchez.15@ucl.ac.uk.

gab 21 NOV 18
Firma del participante Fecha

Nombre de la investigadora

/ Firma de la investigadora

☐ El/La participante optó por proporcionar su consentimiento verbal en vez de escrito (audio grabado)

21 NOV 18
Fecha

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Appendix F: Detailed interview schedule

Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Introduction *(I want to build rapport and provide the participant with the necessary background and information)*

a) Purpose of the research

- My project is focused on what literacy means for you and your community. Because you are a participant in the MIB, I would like to hear about your experiences with the programme and whether and how reading and writing plays a role in your life.

b) Interview practicalities and consent

- The interview will last from 30 minutes to one hour, and I will be recording the audio of what we say. I will not share this audio file with anyone [begin recording]
- There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions – you may ask me to repeat, clarify, or skip any question. You can end the interview at any point, and anything you said will not be used.
- Your real name will not be used when I write the transcript of our discussion, and it will not appear in my final writing. Would you like to choose a name I can use when quoting you in my writing?
- [Have participant read consent form or read the form out loud to them]. Can you sign the consent form for the interview? [in the case that participant cannot write or mark the page] Can you state that you consent to be interviewed today?

2. Participant background and profile *(I want to find out their connection to the community, elements of life history related to education and literacy learning)*

a) Personal Profile

- i. Tell me a bit about yourself,
- ii. What language(s) do you speak?
- iii. Who do you live with?
- iv. What is a normal day like for you?
- v. What do you like to do?
- vi. What do you think about when people say Indigenous?

b) Life History

- i. Could you tell me a bit about what it was like when you were growing up?
- ii. How have you used reading in writing in the past? How do you think you will use it in the future?

3. Local community (*I want to find out more information about the local community, particularly around education and literacy practices*)

a) Community profile

- i. Tell me a bit about your community.
- ii. How long have you lived in [x] community?
- iii. How many people live in your community?
- iv. What do people do in your community?

b) Education and literacy practices

- i. Can you tell me a bit about opportunities for learning in your community?
- ii. Before beginning the MIB, did you attend any other educational programme?
- iii. Are you aware of any other programmes similar to the MIB for adults?
- iv. Do you know of or participate in any activities that involve reading and writing in [your language]?

4. Perceptions on literacy in the MIB study circles (*I want to find out the participant's uses of literacy, how they value literacy, their expectations with regards to literacy learning, and in the case of the MIB facilitators, their perceptions on the uses and values of literacy*)

a) Definitions of literacy

- i. What comes to mind when you think about reading and writing?
- ii. In your opinion, why do we read and write?

b) Expectations regarding literacy learning

- i. What were your personal expectations when beginning the MIB?
- ii. What do you hope to gain from participating in the MIB?

c) Perceptions on the uses and values of literacy

- i. In your opinion, is literacy important in [your language]?

- ii. What kind of materials (besides the MIB ones) are there in [your language]?
- iii. What do you think are some of the different uses of literacy?
- iv. How do you use literacy in your everyday life?
- v. Do you think literacy is important? Why/Why not?
- vi. Do you think literacy in Indigenous languages is important? Why/Why not?

5. Perceptions on literacy in the community *(I want to find out the history of literacy in the local setting, and the availability and nature of literacy materials in Indigenous languages)*

a) History of literacy in community

- i. Can you tell me a bit about literacy in your community?

b) Availability of literacy materials in Indigenous language(s)

- i. Do you think it's important to have literacy materials in your local languages? Why/Why not?
- ii. Do you think the material in the MIB books are interesting? Do you identify with some of the stories?

6. Bilingual Literacy for Life Programme *(I want to find out their role as related to the programme, their experiences within the programme, prior learning experiences, their motivations for enrolling in the programme, the perceived benefits of participating in the programme, and the challenges they have faced while participating in the programme)*

a) Role within MIB

- i. What is your role in the MIB?
- ii. How did you first hear about the MIB?
- iii. How long have you been involved with the MIB?

b) Experiences with MIB - Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about your experiences as a student/facilitator of the MIB.

- i. What was your experience like when you registered and first started attending the MIB? Was it easy/difficult to enrol?
- ii. Can you describe a normal study circle session?
- iii. In your opinion, what are the aims and objectives of the MIB?

- iv. Has the MIB helped you think about your 'life and work' experiences?
If yes, how?
- v. What is your opinion about the MIB materials? Is there anything you would change or improve?
- vi. Do you like reading the things in your MIB materials? What sort of things do you like?
- vii. Can you show me your book and describe what you are working on at the moment?
- viii. Why do you think there are more women than men in the programme?

c) Motivations

- i. What motivated you to enrol/begin teaching in the MIB?
- ii. Is anyone else in your family enrolled in the MIB?
- iii. Do you plan to continue in the MIB? If so, until what level do you aspire to reach?

d) Benefits

- i. What are some of the things you like about the MIB?
- ii. What have been some good things about participating in the MIB?
- iii. Do you think programmes like the MIB help address any educational issues in [x] community? What about in Mexico?
- iv. What has been the most important thing of being a part of MIB for you personally?

e) Challenges

- i. What has been hard about being in the MIB?
- ii. Do you have any difficulties reaching the location where the MIB study circle takes place?
- iii. In your opinion, what are some things that would make the MIB better?

7. Conclusion

- a) Final comments** – Do you have any final questions or comments for me?
- b) Writing samples** – Would you be willing to share a writing sample from your book with me?
- c) Sharing** – Would you like me to share a summary of my findings with you?

Appendix G: Final interview guide

Introduction: My project

Profile

- Tell me a bit about yourself and how you started the programme

Literacy prompts

- What comes to mind when you think of reading and writing?
- What is it for?
- How have you used reading and writing in the past?
- Is it important to read and write in _____?
- Examples of the use of reading and writing
- Daily life?

MIB prompts

- How did you hear about the MIB? How long ago?
- How would you describe the MIB?
- Expectations?
- Motivations?
- Describe a normal session
- What are the goals and objectives?
- Experiences of life and work?
- What do you think of the materials?
- Would you improve anything?
- What do you like?
- Could you show me your book?
- What other materials are there in _____?
- Do you think it's important?
- Benefits?
- Challenges?

Other prompts

- Work?
- Family?
- Kids?
- Married?
- Faith?
- Formal education?
- Languages?
- What comes to mind when people talk about being Indigenous?

Appendix H: Summary of group interviews

Date	Community	Ethnic group	Number of participants (learners)	Duration
8.10.18	Calakmul 1	Maya	10	19:52:00
9.10.18	Calakmul 3		9	10:42:00
24.10.18	Huautla	Mazateco	7	14:45:00
25.10.18	Chilchotla		8	21:03:00
26.10.18	San Mateo		12	28:46:00
15.11.18	Valles 1	Tének	6	15:57:00
15.11.18	Valles 2		11	20:18:00
22.11.18	San Martín	Náhuatl	6	46:06:00
23.11.18	Tampacán		15	53:44:00

Appendix I: Summary of individual interviews

Date	Comm- unity	Ethnic group	Learner / facilitator	Gender	Name	Duration
3.10.18	Calkiní 1	Maya	Learner	Female	Elena	15:38:00
3.10.18			Learner	Male	Jorge	16:08:00
3.10.18			Learner	Male	Manuel	33:03:00
3.10.18			Facilitator	Female	Berenice	23:10:00
4.10.18	Calkiní 2		Learner	Female	Marina	11:31:00
4.10.18			Learner	Female	Juana	12:57:00
4.10.18			Learner	Female	Norma	13:54:00
4.10.18			Learner	Female	Olga	3:46:00
4.10.18			Learner	Female	Rosa	9:02:00
5.10.18			Facilitator	Male	Francisco	54:56:00
8.10.18	Calakmul 1	Ch'ol	Facilitator	Female	Graciela	40:54:00
8.10.18	Calakmul 2		Facilitator	Female	Patricia	36:33:00
9.10.18	Calakmul 3		Facilitator	Female	Pilar	18:10:00
10.10.18	Calakmul 4		Facilitator	Female	Gaby	28:43:00
24.10.18	Huautla	Mazateco	Facilitator	Female	Celia	16:48:00
25.10.18	Chilchotla		Facilitator	Female	Selene	13:46:00
26.10.18	San Mateo		Facilitator	Female	Diana	27:02:00
15.11.18	Valles 2	Tének	Learner	Male	Felix	17:03:00
15.11.18			Learner	Female	Tamara	11:54:00
15.11.18			Learner	Male	Andres	12:30:00
20.11.18	Aquismón 1		Facilitator	Female	Paola	40:59:00
20.11.18			Facilitator	Female	Fernanda	18:06:00
21.11.18	Aquismón 2		Learner	Female	Guadalupe	14:48:00
21.11.18			Learner	Female	Adriana	20:22:00
21.11.18			Learner	Male	Alejandro	16:58:00

Appendix J: Coding schemes

Literacies: *in vivo* codes (Spanish) and English translations

Category	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)	English translation
Literacies	<i>Para aprender leer y escribir es para defenderte a la vida que te va llevando</i>	To learn to read and write is to defend yourself in life that's leading you along
	<i>Es una defensa más a todo lo que se viene</i>	It is a defence to everything that comes
	<i>Vamos a tratar de defendernos en el español</i>	We'll try to defend ourselves in Spanish
	<i>Hay niños que tienen que aprender a leer y escribir para defenderse de la vida</i>	There are children who have to learn to read and write to defend themselves from life
	<i>He sufrido de que no sabe uno leer y escribir</i>	I've suffered from not knowing how to read and write
	<i>No quiero que nadie se aproveche de mí</i>	I don't want anyone to take advantage of me
	<i>Porque así nadie te puede engañar</i>	Because that way no one can trick you
	<i>Si no sabes leer, si no sabes escribir, te atan las manos</i>	If you can't read or write, your hands are tied
	<i>No tienes ese conocimiento de qué está pasando, o qué va más allá de lo que estamos viviendo</i>	You don't have knowledge of what is happening or what goes beyond what we are living
	<i>Nunca es tarde para aprender</i>	It's never too late to learn
	<i>Ellas saben más cocinar que saber leer</i>	They know more about cooking than knowing how to read
	<i>No se me queda la letra</i>	The letters don't stick with me
	<i>Nunca se termina de aprender</i>	You're never finished learning
	<i>Aquí no hay tiempo para leer y escribir</i>	Here, there's no time to read and write
	<i>Hay personas que ni sus nombres pueden escribir</i>	There are people who can't write their names
	<i>Cuando no sabemos leer y escribir ... quédate sin comer</i>	When we don't know how to read and write ... you don't eat

Identity, culture, language: in vivo codes (Spanish) and English translations

Category	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)	English translation
Identity, culture, language	<i>Tener identidad no es ser menos ante los otros</i>	To have an Indigenous identity is not to be less before others
	<i>Su motivación, pues, es la tierra</i>	Their motivation is the earth
	<i>Seguir el paso de tus papás</i>	Follow in the footsteps of your parents
	<i>Ese es el costumbre de mi papá, no lo voy a perder, este, por nada del mundo</i>	I won't lose my father's tradition for anything in the world
	<i>Si es necesario hablar la lengua materna</i>	It's necessary to speak the mother tongue
	<i>[La lengua materna] es la que nos hace reconocer de dónde somos</i>	[The mother tongue] is what makes us recognise where we're from
	<i>Es muy importante que lo sigamos conservando [la lengua] porque, pues, es nuestra cultura</i>	It's really important that we preserve [our language] because, well, it's our culture
	<i>Acá en este ejido, pues, yo lo veo que estás perdiendo nuestro dialecto</i>	Here in this <i>ejido</i> I see that we're losing our dialects
	<i>Yo lo tengo que hablar por mis niños que vienen atrás de mí</i>	I have to speak it for my children who come after me
	<i>Nunca es tarde para aprender</i>	It's never too late to learn
	<i>Ellas saben más cocinar que saber leer</i>	They know more about cooking than knowing how to read
	<i>No se me queda la letra</i>	The letters don't stick with me
	<i>Nunca se termina de aprender</i>	You're never finished learning
	<i>Aquí no hay tiempo para leer y escribir</i>	Here, there's no time to read and write
	<i>Cuando no sabemos leer y escribir ... quédate sin comer</i>	When we don't know how to read and write ... you don't eat

Life and work: *in vivo* codes (Spanish) and English translations

Category	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)	English translation by author
Life and work	<i>Tienes que hacer unos papeles para que te den trabajo</i>	You have to do some paperwork to get a job
	<i>Y cuando no sabe leer y escribir, pues, te quedas sin trabajo</i>	When you don't know how to read and write you don't have work
	<i>Nada más los que saben leer y escribir, pues, ellos si tienen su trabajito</i>	Only those who know how to read and write have a job
	<i>Me gustó el dinero, y ya me metí a trabajar</i>	I liked money, so I went to work
	<i>Empieza a ganar ese dinero, lo ves bonito y es bastante, y ya el estudio lo dejamos atrás</i>	You start earning money, it's nice and it's a lot, and so then we leave studying behind
	<i>PROSPERA, pues, nos dice que tenemos que estar estudiando</i>	PROSPERA tells us that we have to be studying
	<i>Te vas a la ciudad, y te enamora el dinero</i>	You go to the city, and you fall in love with money
	<i>No me importa si no tengo un sueldo</i>	I don't care if I don't have a salary
	<i>No me des dinero ... dame herramientas de mi trabajo</i>	Don't give me money ... buy me my tools to work
	<i>Los jóvenes tienen que emigrar por falta de trabajo ... que no hay mucho, no hay muchas fuentes de trabajo</i>	The young people have to emigrate because of lack of work ... there's not much, there aren't many sources of work
	<i>Necesitan los papeles ... para tener buen trabajo</i>	They need ... papers to have a good job
	<i>Cuando uno sale a la ciudad, no como quiera te da trabajo</i>	When you go out to the city, they don't give you a job just like that

Gender and rights: in vivo codes (Spanish) and English translations

Category	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)	English translation by author
Gender and rights	<i>Yo creo que el machismo siempre ha habido</i>	I think that machismo has always been there
	<i>Tenían que tener los hijos que, pues, que Dios les enviaba</i>	They had to have the children that God sent them
	<i>Hay todavía que son maltratadas, qué son ultrajadas por sus esposos</i>	There are still [some women] that they are mistreated, what are abused by their husbands
	<i>Luego mi esposo no, no me permite que venga la escuela</i>	Sometimes my husband doesn't let me to come to school
	<i>La mujer se multiplica en eso</i>	Women multiply themselves in that way
	<i>Por parte de tanto de los recursos económicos y por derechos ... no pudieron estudiar</i>	Because of economic resources and because of rights they couldn't study
	<i>A los hombres sí le dieron permiso, pero que ellas no</i>	Yes, the men were given permission, but they weren't
	<i>Ellas saben más cocinar que saber leer</i>	They know more about cooking than about how to read
	<i>Que nosotras las mujeres ... no tenemos validez de estudiar ... que nosotras las mujeres, que nosotras no valemos nada</i>	That us women ... it's not worth it for us to study ... that us women, that we're worth nothing
	<i>Me dice que ya no me va a mandar a la escuela, me sacó de la escuela</i>	He says that he's not going to send me to school anymore, he pulled me out of school
	<i>Aunque hay todavía que son maltratadas, qué son ultrajadas por sus esposos</i>	There are still that are mistreated, that are abused by their husbands
	<i>El machismo ... en la actualidad ya no debería de ser ... porque hoy en día ya tenemos derechos</i>	<i>Machismo</i> ... nowadays it should no longer be ... Because today we have rights
	<i>Tienes derecho de ir, y de hacer y, pues, porque tú eres un ser humano. Tu vida vale mucho</i>	You have the right to go, and to do ... because you're a human being, your life is worth a lot

Teaching and learning: *in vivo* codes (Spanish) and English translations

Category	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)	English translation by author
Teaching and learning	<i>Yo necesito más talleres para que me enseñen a leerlo y a escribirlo</i>	I need more workshops to teach me how to read and write it
	<i>Allá donde doy clases, no hay luz. Necesito la luz</i>	Where I teach, there's no light. I need the light
	<i>Yo necesito materiales para mis educandos</i>	I need materials for my learners
	<i>No me alcanza para comprar cosas, materiales de mis educandos</i>	I don't have enough to buy things, materials for my learners
	<i>A veces tenemos que reutilizar un material</i>	Sometimes we have to reuse material
	<i>Cuando no tenía pizarrón, sufrí mucho</i>	When I didn't have a whiteboard, I suffered a lot
	<i>Me gustaría que me digan, ah, yo aprendí por ella</i>	I'd like for them to say, oh, I learned because of her
	<i>No me interesaba si pagaban o no</i>	I didn't care if they paid or not
	<i>Lo que a mí me gustaba era enseñarle a los que no saben leer y escribir</i>	What I liked was to teach those who don't know how to read and write
	<i>Tanto tú aprendes de ellos como ellos aprenden de ti</i>	You learn from them as much as they learn from you
	<i>Lo enseña con todas las ganas ella, con todo su corazón</i>	She teaches with all her might, with all her heart
	<i>Nos da su tiempo</i>	She gives us her time

Appendix K: Interview extracts in Spanish with English translations

Chapter 5: Pp. 111–143

Date / Code	Participant	English translation by author	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)
10.10.2018-5.1	Gaby	Where we teach, well, it's really far [in distance] for my learners ... I'd like, well, to look for a place closer to here. Well, the other [study circle] where I teach, there's no electricity. I need electricity.	<i>Allá donde damos clases, pues, para mis educandos está muy lejos ... y a mí me gustaría, pues, buscar un local más aquí cerquita. Bueno, el otro [círculo de estudio] allá donde doy clases, no hay luz. Necesito la luz.</i>
25.10.2018-5.2	Lola	<p>The same people from the town sometimes don't have that interest in supporting the study circle ... they say that people ... well, aren't interested ... they don't leave the key to the place [where the study circle meets]. They have to have their lessons on the outside part [of the building]. But now they did leave the keys. So sometimes they [the learners] say that the same people in the town aren't interested in supporting the students.</p> <p>It hasn't been an obstacle that there's no place [for the study circle to meet]. For example, [the facilitator] says that when it's closed here and the [local] authority doesn't leave the key and it's raining and everything,</p>	<p><i>Las mismas personas del pueblo a veces no tienen ese interés de apoyar a los círculos de estudio ... ellos dicen que la gente ... pues, no le interesa ... no deja la llave de ese local [donde se reúne el círculo de estudio]. Tiene que recibir sus asesorías lo que es en la parte de afuera. Pero ahorita si dejó las llaves. Entonces a veces dicen ellos que las mismas personas de la localidad no sé interesan por apoyar a los educandos.</i></p> <p><i>No ha sido un obstáculo el que no esté el lugar [para reunirse el círculo de estudio]. Por ejemplo, [la asesora] dice cuando aquí está cerrado y no dejan llave la autoridad [local] y está lloviendo y todo, entonces buscan</i></p>

		<p>they look for ways to go to the facilitator's house ...</p> <p>Also, for example, she talks about the weather conditions. Well, on Wednesday it was raining a lot. And there was no key here, and the conditions were so that we couldn't be outside. So they went to the facilitator's house to have their classes.</p>	<p><i>la manera de ir a la casa de la asesora ... Igual por ejemplo, dice sobre las condiciones del clima. Pues ya, el miércoles estaba lloviendo bastante. Entonces no había la llave de aquí, y las condiciones para estar en fuera. Entonces fueron a la casa de la asesora a recibir sus clases.</i></p>
20.11.2018-5.3	Paola	<p>A lot of the times they lend us the communal house. That's what we call it ... it's a closed space. But, for example, a lot of the times, well, there's not good lighting. My student has poor eyesight. Right? So that's one of the problems that I see ... they have poor eyesight, and they say, <i>maestra</i> [teacher], I can't see what it says here. The letters are really small.</p> <p>There's no furniture. Or sometimes there's no table, right? That's steady to work on ... one of the difficulties I have there is that it's hot. And I take [the study circle] outside ... carrying my board and my table. And if it's cold, then inside. But for example, the board is small—I'm not going to lie to you, it's about one meter by one meter ... yeah, so sometimes you face these kinds of things.</p>	<p><i>Muchas de las veces nos prestan la, la casa comunal. Así le llamamos nosotros ... es un espacio cerrado. Pero, por ejemplo, muchas de las veces, este, no tiene buena iluminación. Mi alumno está mal de la vista. ¿Sí? Entonces es uno de los problemas que yo veo ... están mal de la vista, y que dice, maestra, yo no veo que dice aquí. Las letras vienen muy chiquitas.</i></p> <p><i>No hay inmobiliario. O a veces no hay una mesa ¿verdad? Firme, para trabajar ... una de las dificultades que tengo ahí, hace calor. Y yo me lo llevo [a mi círculo de estudio] ... cargando a mi pizarra y mi mesa. Y si hace frío, pues adentro. Pero por ejemplo el pizarrón es chico, no te voy a mentir, como de un metro por un metro ... sí, entonces a veces te enfrentas con ese tipo de cosas.</i></p>
8.10.2018-5.4	Patricia	<p>Well, I imagine learning to read and write is to defend yourself in life as it leads you along ... I imagine that it's a defence against everything that comes. Because life, as</p>	<p><i>Me imagino para aprender leer y escribir es para defenderte a la vida que te iba llevando ... me imagino que es una defensa más a todo lo que se viene. Porque la vida, como quien dice, no se sabe cómo está escrito, pues.</i></p>

		we say, isn't written. But yes, to learn to read and write, it's to defend yourself.	<i>Pero si, para aprender a leer y escribir, es para defenderte.</i>
22.11.2018-5.5	Dora	What if a paper arrives ... or a letter, or a—any paper, and we can't read it? And if others, if other people are going to read it ... suppose you got a report of something. But what if that's not it? Or you got something that says you owe money. What if you don't? ... It's important, well, that we know how to read.	<i>Si un papel llega y, este, una carta o un—cualquier papel, ¿y no lo podemos leer? Y si otro, otros que lo van a leer ... según te llegó un reporte de tal. ¿Y si no es eso? O que te llegó que debes algo, ¿y si no es eso? ... Es importante, este, que sepamos leer.</i>
20.11.2018-5.6	Paola	[Not knowing how to read or write is] something that will hold you back ... for example, in situations where your son or daughter may have gone away to work and is going to send you money. How are you going to get that money if you don't even know how you're going to sign? ... That means you have to depend on someone else.	<i>[Si no sabes leer y escribir] es algo que te va a atar ... por ejemplo, en cuestiones de que tu hijo tal vez se fue a trabajar y te va a mandar dinero. Y ¿cómo lo vas a ir tú a traer ese dinero si ni siquiera sabes cómo vas a firmar? ... Entonces eso quiere decir que tú tienes que depender de otra persona.</i>
21.11.2018-5.7	Adriana	Someone who doesn't know how to read, write, or do maths, really—people just take advantage of us ... that's what I've noticed.	<i>Uno que no sabe ni leer, ni escribir, ni sacar cuentas, de verdad—las personas se aprovechan nada mas de nosotros ... Eso es lo que yo me he dado de ver.</i>
24.10.2018-5.8	Celia	They [the learners in her study circle] tell me, I'd like to ... learn to read. Why? So that tomorrow I don't just sign any document. With the situation being the way it is right now, I don't want anyone to take advantage of me. Why?	<i>Me dicen [los educandos], a mí me gustaría ... aprender a leer, ¿por qué? Para que el día de mañana yo no firme cualquier documento. Así como está la situación ahorita, no quiero que nadie se aproveche de mí. ¿Por qué? Porque principalmente quiero aprender. Con lo mismo de</i>

		Because mainly, I want to learn. Because, well, I don't want anyone to make me sign any paper.	<i>que, pues, no quiero que me hagan firmar o cualquier papel.</i>
10.10.2018-5.9	Gaby	For example, you come and [ask me to] sign a paper ... First, I have to read to be able to sign it ... that's why for me it is very important, because that way no one can trick you.	<i>Por ejemplo, tú vienes y me [pides] que yo firme un papel ... Lo primero, tengo que leer para poder firmarlo ... por eso para mí es muy importante, porque así nadie te puede engañar.</i>
20.11.2018-5.10	Paola	I mean, if you can't read, if you don't know how to write, your hands are tied, right? Because there are people who don't know how old they are. Yeah? They don't know when they were born. There are people who can't write their names. They can't write their signature.	<i>O sea, si no sabes leer, si no sabes escribir, te atan las manos, ¿sí? Porque hay personas que no saben ni cuántos años tienen. ¿Sí? No saben ni cuándo nacieron. Hay personas que ni sus nombres pueden escribir. No pueden hacer su firma.</i>
23.11.2018-5.11	Raúl	There are people here who don't even know [how to identify] 50 cents, okay? ... It's as if ... our eyes are covered.	<i>Aquí existen personas que no te conocen ni 50 centavos, ¿sí? ... Como si fuera ... estamos tapados de los ojos.</i>
4.10.2018-5.12	Norma	There were times when my daughter was little ... she told me, <i>Mamá</i> , help me with my homework. But if you don't know the letters, and I don't know them either—we're both blind. I told her, how am I going to help you with your work? I started to cry when she was little.	<i>Entonces hay veces cuando esta chica mi hija, me dice mamá, ayúdame con mi tarea. Pero si tú no conoces ni letras, ni yo también—estamos ciegos los dos. Le digo, ¿como te voy a ayudar en tu trabajo? Empiezo a llorar cuando esta chica.</i>
8.10.2018-5.13	Graciela	It's a necessity for them [the learners] ... because the PROSPERA programme is here. Sometimes they give them the appointments. That day, on a certain date you	<i>Es una necesidad para ellos [los educandos] ... porque aquí está el programa de PROSPERA. A veces se le dan las citas. El día, en tal fecha tienes que asistir a la cita</i>

		have to go to the medical appointment. Sometimes they forget ... and the person, well, the one who doesn't know anything [about reading and writing], well, they're not going to know what day, what date their appointment is.	<i>médica. A veces se les olvida ... Y la persona pues, el que no sabe nada [de lectura o escritura], pues no va a saber qué día, qué fecha llega su cita.</i>
21.11.2018-5.14	Adriana	[Reading and writing is] useful for a lot of things. To do maths ... to write little letters to my children, who don't live here ... so that when we go to buy something, they don't look down on us ... more or less we can do the maths.	<i>[Leer y escribir] me sirve con muchas cosas. Para sacar cuentas ... para hacer unas cartitas a mis hijos, que no se encuentran aquí ... así cuando vamos a comprar que ya no nos hagan menos ... mas o menos podemos sacar cuentas.</i>
22.11.2018-5.15	Liliana	There was a <i>señora</i> in another community where I also give classes. The <i>señora</i> wrote her son a letter, and I said yeah, if you want, we can mail it for real like you used to do. Write the letter. And she wrote the letter ... and I said hey, well, this letter is sent and it comes back, a reply gets sent back. So, we were seeing how knowing how to read and knowing how to write is good for a lot of things.	<i>Había una señora en otra comunidad donde yo también estoy dando asesoría. La señora le hizo una carta a su hijo, y le dije si, si quieres que la mandemos de verdad así como se hacía antes, haz la carta. Y ella hizo la carta ... Y le digo oye, pues, esta carta se envía y se regresan, se regresa la contestación. Y entonces estábamos viendo que el saber leer y saber escribir nos sirve para muchas cosas.</i>
22.11.2018-5.16	Liliana	Sometimes when they give them some <i>cargo</i> in the community and they have to write, they have to read, and they have to go to meetings where they ... [tell them] now, you take this back to your community.	<i>A veces cuando a ellos les dan algún cargo en la comunidad y tienen que escribir, tienen que leer, y tienen que ir a reuniones donde ... [les dicen] ahora llevas esto a tu comunidad.</i>

23.11.2018-5.17	Raúl	If we don't know anything, not even a number, for example ... if a letter comes to us, well, we won't know. And sometimes I'm struggling there, and I'm looking at the letter and I do a double take. And that's when I ask my daughter and my grandson, 'Hey, what does it say here?'	<i>Si no conocemos nada, ni un número por ejemplo ... sí por ahí viene un oficio, pues, no vamos a saber. Y a veces estoy batallando allí, y allí estoy viendo el oficio dónde me cuatrapeo. Y allí si pido mi hija y mi nieto, 'Oye, ¿aquí como dice?'</i>
23.11.2018-5.18	Pedro	According to the people, the learners, I think that reading and writing is very important because of what ... Raúl was mentioning. Well, he's already been through various cargos ... How important reading and writing is—that's where the importance lies. Because if they can't read and write, they won't be able to read official letters.	<i>De acuerdo a las personas, los educandos, creo que la lectura y la escritura es muy importante por lo que mencionaba Raúl. Este, él ya ha pasado por varios cargos ... Y qué tan importante es leer y escribir. He ahí la importancia. Porque si no sabe leer y escribir, no va a poder leer un oficio.</i>
23.11.2018-5.19	Pedro	Writing and reading are very important because, because of the cargos they have ... that they occupy within the locality ... They're given cargos. He's [Raúl] [been] a judge, he's [been] a delegate, a commissioner ... they see a need, where it is necessary to learn ... Not only the men, but the women occupy various positions.	<i>Pero si es muy importante la escritura y la lectura porque, por los cargos que utilizan, este, que ellos ocupan dentro de la localidad ... Les otorgan los cargos. Que es juez, que es delegado, comisariado ... se ven una necesidad dónde si es necesario aprender ... No nada más los señores, sino las señoras ocupan varios cargos.</i>
23.11.2018-5.20	Raúl	We are 26 <i>ejidatarios</i> , barely enough ... there's only <i>ejidatarios</i> , young people don't participate here. Just <i>ejidatarios</i> . And that's how we go on, I mean, I've been [in a cargo role] three times, imagine that. The time it was my turn, I was about 20 years old, the first time. At 30, I was there again. And now again. I'm 73 years old.	<i>Somos 26 ejidatarios, apenas alcanza ... puro ejidatario, aquí no participan jóvenes. Puro ejidatario. Y así vamos, este, yo llevo ya tres veces [en un cargo], imagínate. Primero me tocó, yo tenía como 20 años, el primero. Ya 30 años estuve un otra vez. Y ahora otra vez. Ya tengo 73 años. ¿Por qué? Porque no somos muchos. Y luego aquí</i>

		Why? Because there aren't that many of us. And now here in the <i>ejido</i> they don't let a young person ... become <i>ejidatarios</i> , they can't do it.	<i>en el ejido no permiten que un joven ... pase a ser ejidatarios, no puede.</i>
23.11.2018-5.21	Pedro	Even though they're already older, but the community—there are no more people. The young people have to emigrate because of lack of work. There's not much, there aren't many sources of work. So that's why, well, they give them <i>cargos</i> again as commissioner ... He's had to be commissioner three times already. So, for them—it's really useful for them to come to classes.	<i>Aunque ellos ya son grandes de edad, pero la comunidad—no hay más gente. Los jóvenes tienen que emigrar por falta de trabajo. Que no hay mucho, no hay muchas fuentes de trabajo. Por eso, este, los vuelven a poner cargos como comisariado ... ya van tres veces de comisariado. Entonces ellos—a ellos si les sirve mucho el venir a una asesoría.</i>
23.11.2018-5.22	Marcos	As far as reading ... it's access to full knowledge, to an experience ... Let's suppose in a book, we don't know, we're not in the area of that event. But through a reading, I mean, we find out what's happening out there. So that's why reading leads us to know what's happening inside or outside.	<i>Y en cuanto a lo que es la lectura ... es el acceso a un conocimiento pleno, a una experiencia ... Vamos a suponer en un libro, no sabemos, no estamos en el área de ese acontecimiento. Pero mediante una lectura, o sea, nos enteramos de lo que pasa ahí afuera. Entonces por eso la lectura nos lleva a conocer lo que está pasando dentro o lo que es fuera.</i>
21.11.2018-5.23	Alejandro	I don't understand. But I want to learn, and I feel good, well, with the book ... Keep studying ... Because someone who just ... doesn't read, doesn't study ... There's nothing to, to move your, to give you an idea to do something ... and looking at the book, well, there are a lot of things there ... so that's very important.	<i>No entiendo. Pero yo quiero aprender, y me siento bien que, pues, con el libro ... Seguir estudiando ... Porque así uno no, este, no, no lee, no estudia ... No hay nada que, pues, que, este, pues, no hay nada para que, para que te mueve la, la idea para hacer algo ... y viendo el libro, pues, ahí trae muchas cosas. Entonces eso es muy importante, sí.</i>

		<p>I want to learn. But I want to learn, like—learn not just by writing it down, no. I want it ... to stay in my head, not just like that ... I want to understand. Not just like that, not just looking, just, no. I want to <i>understand</i> what it says there ... in a newspaper. I want to understand what it says.</p>	<p><i>Yo quiero aprender. Pero yo quiero aprender, así—aprender no nomás que lo anote uno, no. Yo quiero ... que quede en mi cabeza, no así nomás ... Quiero entender bien. Así no nomas, no nomás mirar, nomás, no. Quiero entender que es lo que dice ahí ... en un periódico. Quiero entender que es lo que dice.</i></p>
<p>21.11.2018-5.24</p>	<p>Alejandro</p>	<p>[I want] an advisor who, who doesn't get annoyed, right? [laughs] ... they also get annoyed. Because we're—I tell you, we're really stupid ... we can't remember ... we forgot ... they need to repeat over and over until it sticks ... There are others who still aren't, who aren't okay. They don't know anything. In order for you to know well, you need time.</p> <p>If a facilitator teaches well until it sticks ... just so they learn a little bit ... then the person is, well—is conscious. You know ... what he does, or what he says, or what he wants to do ... That's how one, well, becomes more ... more awake.</p>	<p><i>[Quiero] un asesor que, que no se fastidie ¿sí?[risa] ... también se fastidia. Porque nosotros—te digo, somos muy tontos ... no puede acordar ... ya se olvidó ... Necesita repetirle y repetirle hasta que quede ... Y hay otros que todavía no, no están bien. No saben nada. Eso de para que haga saber bien, se necesita tiempo.</i></p> <p><i>Ya si un asesor que enseña bien hasta que quede ... ya que sepan poco ... ya queda la persona ya, este, pues—ya consciente. Ya sabes lo que ... hace o lo que dice o lo que quiere hacer ... Eso es lo que uno, este, se hace más ... más despierto ya.</i></p>
<p>20.11.2018-5.25</p>	<p>Paola</p>	<p>Well, I think [literacy] is a very valuable tool. Because if you don't know how to read ... you don't know what's happening around you. I mean, you don't have that knowledge of what's happening, or what goes on beyond what we're living.</p>	<p><i>Pues yo creo que [la alfabetización] es una herramienta muy valiosa. Porque si tú no sabes leer ... no sabes lo que está pasando a tu alrededor. O sea, no tienes ese conocimiento de qué está pasando, o qué va más allá de lo que estamos viviendo.</i></p>

5.10.2018-5.26	Francisco	[Reading and writing] is to be able to enter the world of letters ... and of communication itself. We know that ... you can communicate with a, with mimicry, with body movements, but there's nothing like the person being literate so that there can be that communication with, with ease ... with everything, all the elements, like I said, to communicate something, right?	<i>[La alfabetización] es para poder ingresar al mundo de las letras ... y de la comunicación en sí. Sabemos qué ... se puede comunicar uno con un, con la mímica, con movimientos corporales, pero no es nada como el que sea alfabetizada la persona para que pueda haber esa comunicación con, con soltura ... con todo, todos los elementos, cómo le digo, para poder comunicar algo, ¿no?</i>
9.10.2018-5.27	Pilar	When I learned to read and write, it feels really nice. It feels nice to express yourself ... The <i>señoras</i> [women] that I work with ... they express themselves and they say, I feel really good with myself, I feel good learning to read and write. Not like before, they rejected me, I mean—they insulted me because I couldn't read what was written on a poster. [Literacy is to] feel good about ourselves as people, [as a] human being, and to, well, teach your children how to read and write too.	<i>Cuando aprendí a leer y escribir, se siente muy bonito. Se siente bonito expresarse ... las señoras que yo atiendo ... se expresan y que dicen, me siento bien bonito conmigo mismo, me siento bien aprender a leer y escribir. No como antes, me rechazaban, este—me insultaban porque yo no sabía leer lo que estaba escrito en un cartel. [Leer y escribir es] para sentirse bien con nosotras mismas como personas, [como] ser humano, y para, este, aprender a leer y escribir a sus hijos igual.</i>
9.10.2018-5.28	Pilar	The benefits [of the MIB] are that, that the learners learn to read and write, to express themselves, well, without fear. Without, without fear of, well, to express what they feel. Because I've seen, well, in several people who don't want to read, they don't want to learn, because well, they're afraid that—that it's not, it's not correct ...	<i>Los beneficios [del MIB] son que, que los educandos aprendan a leer y escribir, a expresarse, este, sin miedo. Sin, sin miedo a, este, a expresar lo que sienten. Porque he visto, este, en varias personas que no quieren leer, no quieren aprender, porque este, tiene miedo de que—de que no es, no es lo correcto ... Porque pura, este, aquí es</i>

		Because we only, well—here, it's only Ch'ol what we speak. Mostly they don't use Spanish.	<i>puro ch'ol lo que hablamos. Mayormente no utilizan el español.</i>
5.10.2018-5.29	Francisco	When they start working [in the study circles] ... we start to observe that there are a lot of things that they keep to themselves, okay? There are a lot of things they keep to themselves. So, when you have knowledge of the letters, of <i>la palabra</i> [the word]—the person dares to manifest it in writing, to manifest it by speaking it in a correct way ... and when they dare to write, it's because they want to say something. They want to communicate.	<i>Cuando inician el, los trabajos ... empezamos a observar que hay muchas cosas que se guardan, ¿ok? Hay muchas cosas que se guardan. Entonces cuando ya se tiene conocimiento de la letra, de la palabra—la persona se atreve a manifestarlo escrito, a manifestarlo hablándolo ya de, de manera correcta ... Y cuando se atreven a escribir, es que quieren decir algo. Quieren comunicar.</i>
21.11.2018-5.30	Guadalupe	I read kind of slow, but I do read a little, yeah ... like right now, my hand could move a bit. Today I couldn't write anymore, it was shaking a lot ... [earlier] it felt okay to move my hand ... so my hand won't be scared to write.	<i>Así leo como lento, pero si leo poquito, sí ... así como que ahorita ya un poquito mi mano. Y hoy ya no podía escribir, me temblaba mucho ... Ahorita como que no, ya no ... lo sentí bien para mover mis manos ... para no tener miedo mi mano para escribir.</i>
21.11.2018-5.31	Adriana	<p>Little by little, that's how I learned. I'm still, well, I'm ashamed to say some things. And right now, I sort of ... I can't express myself very well. The little, what I've understood is what I'm using today.</p> <p>[My motivations are] to learn, even if I can't express myself very well. Before ... I couldn't speak any Spanish. Just Huasteco [Tének]. There's a little that I've learned, a little bit, it's not very much. A little bit. Because I'm already an adult ... it almost doesn't help</p>	<p><i>De poco a poco así fui aprendiendo. Todavía no, pues, tengo vergüenza de decir algunas cosas. Y ahorita como que más o menos ... no puedo expresarme muy bien. Lo poco, lo que he entendido es hoy lo que estoy usando.</i></p> <p><i>[Mi motivación es] para aprender, aunque no pueda expresarme muy bien. Antes ... no hablaba nada en español. Puro huasteco [tének]. Lo poco lo que he aprendido, tantito, no le digo que es mucho. Poquito. Porque ya soy adulta ... por poco ya no me ayuda la</i></p>

		my mind, I don't think ...but the little that, well, [I've] heard is still useful. To do maths, to write, even though my letters aren't very pretty, but that's what I do.	<i>mente, yo creo ... Pero los pocos lo que, este, [he] escuchado me sirve todavía. Sacar cuentas, escribir, aunque sea no muy bonito las letras, pero es lo que hago.</i>
23.11.2018-5.32	Pedro	Here, they don't just come to read, to write ... it's to <i>convivir</i> [live and be together]. To share experiences. Ideas. Really, they learn from one another here, together ... the teacher is very dynamic. Sometimes he gives them activities, they de-stress ... I tell them, when you come here, don't think about the beans, the machete.	<i>Pues aquí no nada más vienen a leer, a escribir ... es convivir. Compartir experiencias. Ideas. La verdad uno aprende de otro, aquí en conjunto ... el maestro es muy dinámico. A veces los pone unas dinámicas, se desestresan ... les digo, cuando lleguen aquí, no piensen en los frijoles, en el machete.</i>
22.11.2018-5.33	Claudia	I was invited, well, to participate. At first, I didn't want to, because it was really difficult for me ... some have gone a long time without writing, without practicing it, and it's difficult for them. And then, well, I didn't want to, because I said, well—it's going to be really difficult for me. Once they invited me and I started working with them, well, it's started to be, well, something—like something fun. Because, I mean, I learn with them. Sometimes they come to talk, sometimes the <i>señor</i> [man] talks and talks for hours, and well, I learn a lot of things from them. Sometimes because they are elderly, or they have different experiences.	<i>A mí me invitaron, este, a participar. Al principio yo no quería, porque si se me hacía muy difícil ... otros llevan mucho tiempo sin escribir, sin practicarlo, y si se les dificulta. Y entonces, pues, yo no quería, porque dije, pues— se me va a hacer muy difícil. Una vez que me invitaron y empecé a trabajar con ellos, pues, me ha estado pareciendo, pues, algo—como algo divertido. Porque, este, aprendo con ellos. A veces vienen a platicar, a veces el señor tarda horas platicando y platicando y, pues, aprendo muchas cosas de ellos. A veces porque ellos son mayores de edad, o tienen otras experiencias diferentes.</i>

22.11.2018-5.34	Liliana	<p>I have young people [in my study circle]. For example, [Claudia's] very young ... and well, she learns from what we discuss. Or I also learn from them.</p> <p>For example, when I go out to invite them [the learners], I tell them that, well, that [the study circle] is to <i>convivir</i> ... They come to learn to write, to read, they come to <i>convivir</i> ... I have a celebration for them when it's, I don't know, Mother's Day. We have a <i>convivio</i>. Or if it's Father's Day ... Or if it's Grandparents Day ... And there, they're learning various things ... they share their experiences.</p>	<p><i>Tengo jóvenes [en mi círculo de estudio]. Por ejemplo, ella [Claudia] es muy joven ... y pues, aprende de lo que comentamos. O yo aprendo también de ellos.</i></p> <p><i>Cómo por ejemplo, cuando yo los voy a invitar [a los educandos], les digo que, este, pues, que [el círculo de estudio] es para convivir ... vienen aprender a escribir a leer, vienen a convivir ... Yo les festejo cuando es, no sé, Día de las Madres. Hacemos un convivio. Que si es Día del Padre ... sí el día del abuelo ... Y van aprendiendo varias cosas ... comparten sus experiencias.</i></p>
23.11.2018-5.35	Yesenia	<p>I've really liked it. More than anything, there are <i>convivios</i> [special occasions and gatherings] sometimes ... there, we spend time together, and sometimes we even play ... during these times that I've come, I've liked it a lot. More than anything, to <i>convivir</i> with them and to learn Náhuatl more.</p>	<p><i>Pero si me ha gustado mucho. Más que nada los, hay convivios a veces ... Y ahí convivimos, y a veces hasta jugamos ... A mí, en estos tiempos que he venido, me ha gustado mucho. Más que nada, a convivir con ellos y a aprender más el náhuatl.</i></p>
4.10.2018-5.36	Norma	<p>What we do here in the community—we do, well, celebrations. Celebrations on the Día de San José, the Day of the Dead, and various things. Yeah, we do something and, well, <i>convivimos</i> [we share and celebrate together] ... That's the tradition that we have here ... now in November, we're going to have one last <i>convivio</i> [gathering/celebration] of the Dead. And I think that in some parts here in the community ... they do dances.</p>	<p><i>Lo que hacemos aquí en la comunidad—hacemos, este, festejos. Festejos el día de San José, el Día de los Muertos y varias cosas. Si, hacemos algo y, este, convivimos ... Así la tradición que tenemos nosotros aquí ... ahorita en noviembre vamos a hacer una un último convivio de los muertos. Y creo algunas partes aquí en la comunidad ...</i></p>

		There are offerings and such. That's what our communities are like.	<i>hacen danzas. Hay ofrendas, así. Así nuestra ... comunidad.</i>
22.11.2018-5.37	Liliana	<p>There are things [in the modules] like she says, topics on the harvest ... it explains how things were done before. The traditions and all that. So they learn, because now no one does all those traditions. The ones they used to do ... There are some things that are going away. That are being lost. So they learn, and well, it catches their attention. Because they find out how things were done in the past ... So that's what we can see ... that some things can be recovered.</p> <p>In the book there's also a text on planting corn. And, well, the way it comes in the book—well, here in the community that's what we do ... The book has everything, well, it has quite a few topics that we here in the community do ... Now, for example, the <i>muchachos</i> [young men] are going to work in the city and they no longer work in the fields like they used to.</p>	<p><i>Vienen así [en los módulos] como dice ella, temas de la cosecha ... explicado cómo se hacían antes. Las tradiciones y todo eso. Entonces ellos van aprendiendo, porque ahorita ya no se hacen todos esos tradiciones. Los que hacían ... Y hay algunas cosas que se están quitando. Se están perdiendo. Entonces ellos van aprendiendo y, este, pues, les llama la atención. Porque se enteran como hacían las cosas antes ... entonces es lo que vemos que ... se pueden recuperar algunas cosas.</i></p> <p><i>En el libro viene también un texto de la siembra del maíz. Y pues, cómo de dónde lo que viene en el libro—pues, aquí nosotros en la comunidad también hacemos ... en el libro viene todo, este, bastantes temas que nosotros aquí en la comunidad hacemos ... ahorita, por ejemplo, los muchachos se van a trabajar a la ciudad y ya no se dedican a la siembra como antes.</i></p>
23.11.2018-5.38	Pedro	Most of the students like that book, because there are readings in that book ... it tells them a story ... for example, there's like, advice ... but it comes in Náhuatl ... Well, the students really like it ... Here this book talks ... about the Day of the Dead. For example, this one, it talks about when a child is born and what ritual to do. It	<i>La mayoría de los educandos les gusta ese libro, porque en ese libro hay lecturas ... les cuenta una historia ... por ejemplo, viene cómo consejos ... pero viene en náhuatl ... Pues, les gusta mucho a los educandos.</i>

		<p>talks about, well, the corn festival, the tradition of giving thanks, that they give to Mother Earth for, for a well. They give thanks for the water.</p> <p>And [this book talks about] the corn harvest as well ... It talks about deforestation too ... It tells a story that a tree is talking. That, well, it gets cut, and it also bleeds. And it also dies. So the tree talks to the person cutting down the tree. So that's very nice, and he [the learner] already read it.</p> <p>It talks about it in this book, a lot of which we don't do anymore, right? ... There are even people who, although they're older, no longer do it, right? They don't do it anymore, they don't do it anymore. And well, that catches their attention. And well, look ... it's here, but everything is in the mother tongue. Yeah, all those things are here.</p>	<p><i>Aquí este libro habla de esto, de Día de Muertos. Por ejemplo, este, habla de cuando nace un niño y que ritual hacer. Habla acerca de, este, el festival del maíz, de la costumbre que dé las gracias, que le dan a la Madre Tierra por, por un pozo. Dan gracias por el agua.</i></p> <p><i>Y este [libro habla de] la cosecha también del maíz ... Habla de la deforestación también ... Ahí cuenta la historia de que está hablando el árbol. Que, este, se le tala, también sangra. Y también se muere. Ahí habla el árbol con el talador de árbol. Entonces está muy bonito eso, y ya él [el educando] lo leyó.</i></p> <p><i>Habla eso aquí en este libro de la cual es mucho ya no lo hacemos ¿verdad?... Inclusive hay gente que, que aunque ya esté grande, ya no lo hace ¿verdad? Ya no lo hacen, ya no lo hacen. Y pues, les llaman mucho la atención. Y pues, mire ... aquí viene, pero todo viene[en] la lengua materna. Aja, vienen todas esas cosas.</i></p>
22.11.2018-5.39	Dora	<p>There's [information] about the <i>Seguro Popular</i> [the public health service], there's [information] about the birth certificate ... about the <i>cartilla</i> [health and vaccination record], the voter's card, also about medical prescriptions ... it indicates the ways that medications should be taken ... the birth certificate, it says—it gives proof of the date and time of our births and certifies who our parents are.</p>	<p><i>Viene [información] del Seguro Popular, viene de acta de nacimiento ... Viene de la cartilla, de la credencial para votar, también viene de las recetas médicas ... indica la forma que se debe de tomarse los medicamentos ... el acta de nacimiento dice, da constancia de la fecha y la hora de nuestros nacimientos y certifica quiénes son nuestros padres.</i></p>

		Also [the module] has how to, well, make a recipe, how to write a note ... There are many things here. More than anything ... here it comes in Spanish and Náhuatl ... Yes, it catches my attention. There are many things here that we do at home. Yes, that's why more or less I really like coming to classes.	<i>También aquí [en el módulo] viene como que, este, hacer una receta, hacer un recado ... Aquí viene de muchas cosas. Más que nada, aquí también viene, aquí viene en español y náhuatl ... Si, me llama mucho la atención. Aquí vienen muchas cosas que si hacemos en la casa. Sí, por eso más o menos sí me gusta mucho venir a las clases.</i>
5.10.2018-5.37	Francisco	It really is of the utmost importance to people, because we've been reviewing the documents suggested by the modules and it allows us to know our rights. The rights of women, of children, of Indigenous peoples ... The modules have, well, the elements so that families can better themselves, in some way.	<i>Pues realmente es de suma importancia para, para la gente, porque hemos estado revisando los documentos que nos sugieren los módulos y permite que conozcamos los derechos. Conozcamos los derechos de la mujer, del niño, de los pueblos indígenas ... los módulos, tiene, este, los elementos para que las familias puedan ir superándose, de alguna manera.</i>

Chapter 6: Pp. 144–172

Date / Code	Participant	English translation by author	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)
9.10.2018-6.1	Pilar	<p>Since I was a little girl, I've always had the illusion of teaching ... to learn from adults through teaching. And from that moment on, I focused on getting ahead. And I accompanied my mother to the trainings. That's why, well, the people from INEA came to see me, to see if I wanted to be a facilitator after my mother died. Yeah, that's how I started with INEA. And since then, well, I'm participating in helping adults to learn to read and write.</p> <p>It's given me a lot ... it's taught me several things. I've trained in the MEVyT programme, I feel good about myself helping other people learn to read and write ... it's helped me a lot, personally.</p>	<p><i>Es que yo esté, desde niña siempre he tenido la ilusión de enseñar ... [de] aprender de los adultos por medio de la enseñanza. Y yo desde ese momento, me enfoqué en salir adelante. Y acompañar a mi madre a las capacitaciones. Fue por eso que, este, personas de la INEA me vinieron a ver, a ver si quería ser asesora después del fallecimiento de mi madre. Sí, fue así como llegué a la INEA. Y desde ahorita, este, estoy participando en ayudar a los adultos a aprender a leer y escribir.</i></p> <p><i>Me ha dado mucho ... me ha enseñado varias cosas. Me he capacitado en el programa del MEVyT, me siento bien conmigo misma ayudando a otras personas a aprender a leer y escribir ... me ha ayudado muchísimo en lo personal.</i></p>
8.10.2018-6.2	Patricia	<p>What I would like ... [is] to learn to speak Ch'ol well and write well. I would be—I would really feel like a teacher of an Indigenous language.</p>	<p><i>Y lo que yo quiero ... [es] aprender bien hablar el ch'ol y escribir bien. Yo si me sería—si me sentiría como una maestra de lo que es de lengua indígena.</i></p>
26.10.2018-6.3	Diana	<p>I had my ... daughter who was studying ... my oldest daughter. And I told her, well, you should teach, <i>hija</i> [daughter] ... it helps you, and so on. They won't give you very much, they'll give you your payment of \$200</p>	<p><i>Yo me tenía a mí ... muchacha que estaba estudiando ... mi muchacha mayor. Y yo le decía, pues, da clases, hija ... te ayuda, y así. No, no mucho te van a dar, te van a dar tu gratificación que son 200 pesos. Pues ella se emocionaba</i></p>

		<p>pesos. Well, she got excited, right? But she told me when she went to study her degree, ‘Mami’, she says, ‘Well, what am I going to do with my <i>señoras</i> [women]?’ And, well, I still needed to take one exam for <i>secundaria</i>.</p>	<p><i>¿no? Pero ya me decía ella cuando se fue a la carrera, ‘Mami’ dice, ‘pues ¿qué voy a hacer con mis señoras?’ Y pues, yo me faltaba todavía creo para presentar un examen para la secundaria.</i></p>
10.10.2018-6.4	Gaby	<p>Well, in my case ... when we went to receive the PROSPERA payments, I asked. Because my mother, she insisted that I join INEA, right? That I, that I become a teacher. I told her no, I don’t like it. I have two kids, well, I have to look after them ... she said—if you join, I’ll join.</p> <p>I never thought they were going to give me the [MIB], right? I mean, I thought the <i>Hispano</i> [Spanish] ... Yeah, they surprised me when they told me that you’re going to teach the dialect ... I told them, how come? ‘No, well you speak [the] Ch’ol dialect’. Oh, yeah. In fact, I do, I tell them. But I don’t know how to write it, I tell them. I know how to speak it—I don’t know how to write it. ‘No, well, we’ll teach you’. Well, okay, I tell them, I’d like to learn more, and write it. So, there, so I started ... I do like it.</p>	<p><i>Pues en este caso, pues, yo fui la primera preguntando cuándo cobramos Prospera, porque mi mamá, ella me insistió en decirme que entrará del, INEA, ¿no? De, de que fuera maestra. Y yo le dije, nada, no me gusta. Como tengo dos niños, pues, tengo que atenderlo. Bueno, dice mi mamá, si tú entras, yo entro.</i></p> <p><i>Yo nunca pensé que me iban a dar el MEVyT, ¿no? De repente, yo pensé que del hispano ... si, me sorprendieron cuando me dijeron que tú vas a atender lo del dialecto ... le dije, ¿y eso? ‘No, es que tú hablas dialecto ch’ol’. Ah, sí. De hecho, yo sí, le digo. Pero no sé escribirlo, le digo. Yo sé hablarlo—no sé escribirlo. ‘No, pues te enseñamos’. Pues está bien, le digo, a mí me gustaría aprender más, y escribirlo. Bueno, ahí, así que entré ... sí me gusta.</i></p>
8.10.2018-6.5	Patricia	<p>I simply sent my name [to INEA] because there were several who sent their name. And when they found out that it’s for, for, well, for Indigenous people. No one wanted it. Everyone backed out.</p> <p>I’ll accept, I tell them. [laughs] They called me out for four days of training ... [in] the Ch’ol dialect. I mean, I</p>	<p><i>Simplemente mandé mi nombre, porque habían varias que mandaron su nombre. Y cuando se enteraron que es para, para, este, para indígenas. Nadie lo quiso. Todos se echaron para atrás.</i></p> <p><i>Yo acepto, le digo. [risa] Ya me llamaron a cuatro días de asesoría ... [en] lo que es en dialecto ch’ol. Es más, no sabía</i></p>

		<p>didn't even know how to write it. But I did know how to pronounce it ... Since then, I started to like it. To teach writing. They taught me how to write it, how it needs to have vowels and all that. Honestly, it's ... that it's difficult, it <i>is</i> difficult.</p>	<p><i>ni escribirlo. Pero si lo sabía pronunciar ... Desde esa vez, pues me empezó a gustar. Ya enseñar escribir, me enseñaron a cómo escribirlo, a cómo debe de llevar sus vocales y todo eso ... La neta si es ... de que difícil, si es difícil.</i></p>
<p>9.10.2018-6.6</p>	<p>Pilar</p>	<p>There were no Ch'ol teachers here ... I told the, the trainer, well—I don't know if I can, well, I don't know if I can, I tell her. Because it's in Ch'ol. It's really difficult, I tell him. 'You can do it', he says. 'You can do it. I'll train you for that'. And he gave me that book in Ch'ol, and I looked at it square-eyed because I didn't know what—[laughs] it's my tongue, I tell him, but I don't know what it says! I don't know how, I don't know how to read it, I don't know how to express it ... Little by little I started getting the hang of, well, the book ... now I know how to read in, in Ch'ol.</p>	<p><i>No habían maestros de chol acá ... Le digo a la, a la formadora, este—no sé si podré, este, no sé si podré, le digo. Porque es en ch'ol. Es muy difícil, le digo. 'Si vas a poder, dice'. 'Si vas a poder, yo te voy a capacitar para eso'. Y me dio ese libro en ch'ol, y me quedé con los ojos cuadrados porque no sabía que— [risa] Es mi lengua, le digo, ¡pero no sé qué es lo que dice! No sé cómo, no sé cómo leerlo no sé cómo se expresa ... Poco a poco le fui agarrando el hilo, este, al libro ... ahorita ya sé leer en, en ch'ol.</i></p>
<p>9.10.2018-6.7</p>	<p>Pilar</p>	<p>At first, I used to get a lot of headaches. Sometimes I tell my parents, I don't know why I got into this, I don't know how I'm going to get out, I told them. I told them, I don't want anything anymore, I can't learn anything anymore. It's our language, I told them, but I don't know anything. I've even had headaches, vomiting, I don't want to know anything about this book.</p>	<p><i>Al principio si me daba mucho dolor de cabeza. A veces le digo a mis papás, no sé para qué me metí, no sé cómo voy a salir, le digo. Le digo, ya no quiero nada, ya no aprendo nada. Es nuestra lengua, le digo, pero no sé nada. Hasta me ha dado dolor de cabeza, vómito, yo no quiero saber nada de este libro.</i></p>

9.10.2018-6.8	Pilar	<p>But I have, I have my grandfather who ... can write ... and he tells me, he comes to my house and he says, ‘What are you doing <i>m’ija</i> [daughter]?’ ‘Nothing, <i>abuelo</i> [grandfather]’, I tell him. ‘I’m trying to understand this book, but it’s just, this book and I clash’, I tell him. ‘Don’t worry, don’t worry, this is our language’, he says. And my grandfather started to read some words to me, and he read, and read, so, um, I liked it. I liked that book.</p>	<p><i>Pero tengo, tengo mi abuelo que ... escribe manuscrita. Tiene, este, tres escrituras. Aja. Tiene tres escrituras en manuscrita. Y me dice, me llega a mi casa dice, ¿que haces m’ija? Nada abuelo, le digo. Estoy tratando de entender este libro, pero no, mas, este libro nos chocamos los dos, le digo. No te, no te preocupes, si esto es nuestra lengua, dice. Y algunas palabras que mi abuelo me empezó a leer, y a leer, a leer así que, que, este, me gustó. Me gustó ese libro.</i></p>
20.11.2018-6.9	Paola	<p>There are places where I have students—mostly, they’re women who didn’t finish high school. Why? Because they got pregnant in the first year of secondary school ... and they couldn’t continue ... I have very young people who didn’t finish ... and even now, I mean, you have to show up and convince them to finish her secondary school ... you still see those kinds of situations.</p> <p>It’s very difficult to convince a person who is already older to come and study. So, you have to show up, not just like, do you want to study? No. You have to show up from the time that they tell you their problems and until you convince them, so that person joins the study circle.</p>	<p><i>Hay lugares en donde yo tengo alumnos—más que nada son mujeres que no terminaron la secundaria. ¿Por qué? Porque se embarazaron la primer grado de secundaria ... Y ya no pudieron continuar ... tengo muy jóvenes que no terminaron ... y hasta ahorita, o sea, tienes que llegar y convencerla de que de que termine su secundaria ... sí se ve todavía ese tipo de situaciones.</i></p> <p><i>Es muy difícil convencer a una persona que ya está grande a acercarse a estudiar. Entonces tienes que llegar, ahora sí que no nada más ¿quieres estudiar? No. Tienes que llegar desde que te cuenten sus problemas, y hasta que ya tú lo convences para que esa persona se una al círculo [de estudio].</i></p>
23.11.2018-6.10	Pedro	<p>I remember the first time we arrived here, we invited them ... and like Doña Juana [a local learner] said, ‘You just come here to rile us up and then you back out, right?’ [laughter] Really, it was just complaints [laughter] ... But</p>	<p><i>Recuerdo la primera vez que llegamos aquí, les invitamos, este, pues, que como expresó Doña Juana, ‘Es que nada más vienen a alborotarnos, y no cumplen ¿verdad?’ [risas] De</i></p>

		I'm really pleased, because I see how everyone attends [the study circle].	<i>veras, fueron puros reclamos [risas] ... Pero a mí me da mucho gusto porque veo que todos asisten.</i>
23.11.2018-6.11	Yesenia	I would just, well, come, and the teacher wouldn't come ... we always came, and it was closed ... [Marcos] hasn't failed us ... since he started, he has always showed up. I really like it, because he has always shown up. He comes in good spirits to teach us ... he just comes in good spirits ... Yes, he always gets a smile out of us if we come and we're sad ... we forget ... for a while.	<i>Pero na' más, este, venía, y no venía el maestro ... siempre veníamos, está cerrado ... [Marcos] no nos ha fallado ... desde que él empezó, pues siempre ha venido. Me gusta mucho, porque siempre ha venido. Viene con ánimos a enseñarnos, de así, viene con buen ánimo nomás ... si, siempre nos saca una sonrisa si venimos tristes ... olvidamos aquí ... por un rato.</i>
10.10.2018-6.12	Gaby	I have an aunt, and I went to see her, twice to see her. And she told me ... that she had a lot of work, that she's already, well, already of [an older] age. 'I'm not going to be able to', she says. 'It's too far where you're going to teach', she says ... 'I'm not going to learn anymore', she says. 'Besides, I can't see very well anymore', she says ... 'I'm not going, I know I'm not going to learn', she says. Okay, I tell her. But it's going to affect your PROSPERA, I tell her ... Because we were with the PROSPERA thing, and PROSPERA, well, tells us that we have to be studying ... 'They can take it from me, they take it from me', she says.	<i>Yo tengo una tía, y ahí fui a verla, dos veces a verla. Y me dijo ... que tenía mucho trabajo, que ya está, pues, ya [mayor] de edad. 'Yo no voy a poder', dice. 'Ya está muy lejos donde vas a ir a enseñar', dice ... 'Ya no voy a aprender', dice. 'Además, ya no veo muy bien igual', dice ... 'y no voy, yo sé que no voy a aprender', dice. Ah bueno, le digo. Pero te va a perjudicar en tu PROSPERA, le digo ... Pero como estábamos de eso de PROSPERA, y de PROSPERA, pues, nos dice que tenemos que estar estudiando ... 'Que me lo quiten, que me lo quiten', dice.</i>
20.11.2018-6.13	Paola	I also think this is a job. So, I think that if you're earning financially, well, then you also have to invest part of your time so it's, well, reflected in what you're going to teach ... Right? Because you're not just going to teach them a	<i>Pero creo yo que esto es un trabajo también. Entonces yo creo que si tú estás ganando económicamente, pues, entonces también tú tienes que invertir parte de tu tiempo para que se vea, este, reflejado en lo que vas a enseñar ...</i>

		<p>little bit of what the book says ... you can't go teach a class if you don't even know what you're going to teach ... INEA, they do give us training. They don't give us training very often, right? But yes, they do give us training.</p> <p>In my case, I feel satisfied with the work I've done ... it's not necessary to get financial gratification, right? ... For example, I go to the community and they bring me an orange. I leave with my bunch of bananas ... I feel the affection that people, well, give you for what you do ... so, I'm grateful for that, yes.</p>	<p><i>¿Sí? Porque no nada mas vas a ir a enseñarles tantito de lo que dice el libro ... o no puedes ir a dar una asesoría si tú ni siquiera sabes que es lo que vas a dar ... Entonces el INEA pues si, si nos da capacitación. No nos da una capacitación que digas tú seguida ¿verdad? Pero si, si nos dan una capacitación.</i></p> <p><i>En mi caso si me siento satisfecha con el trabajo que he hecho ahorita ... no es necesario que te gratifiquen, este, económicamente ¿verdad? ... Por ejemplo, me voy a la comunidad y me llevan una naranja. Me voy con mi racimo de plátanos ... se siente el cariño que las personas pues, pues te dan por lo que tú ya, lo que tú ya haces ... Entonces, agradecida por eso, pues si.</i></p>
10.10.2018-6.14	Gaby	<p>That I want to teach, I'll teach. It's not because I want to get paid, no. No. I need for them to learn, and for them to say, or for the señoras [women] to say, 'I learned from Gaby', right? That's what I want. Right? I'd like for them to say, 'Oh, I learned because of her'. That's what I'd like, right? That they learn to read and write [the language] ... Let them know, well ... that I'm proud of them, because they can learn a lot ... That's my goal. If I manage, well, for them to learn to read and write and write their names, so that they can use it anywhere—not in <i>hispano</i> [Spanish], but in their dialect ... that they write in their dialect ... well, that's my goal.</p>	<p><i>De que yo quiero enseñar, yo sí lo voy a enseñar. No es porque yo quiero que me paguen, no. No. Yo necesito que me aprenda, y que digan, o que digan las señoras, 'Sí aprendí de Gaby', ¿no? Es lo que yo quiero. ¿No? Me gustaría que me digan 'Ah, yo aprendí por ella'. Es lo que me gustaría ¿no? Que aprendan a leerlo y escribirlo [el idioma] ... Que sepan, este ... que yo sea orgullosa de ellas porque pueden aprender mucho ... esa es mi meta. Que si logro, pues, que aprendan a leer y escribir y escribir sus nombres, para que así en cualquier lugar puedan ocuparlo—aunque no de hispano, pero si en su dialecto ... que ellas escriben en su dialecto ... pues esa es mi meta.</i></p>

26.10.2018-6.15	Diana	I don't care if I don't have a salary, or I don't have—that's not the main thing. The main thing is that you give support to, to your fellow, to your fellow human beings.	<i>No me importa si no tengo un sueldo, o no tengo—eso no es lo primordial. Lo primordial es tu que apoyo das a, a tus seres—a tus semejantes.</i>
8.10.2018-6.16	Patricia	I didn't care at first if they paid or not, but what I liked was to teach those who don't know how to read and write.	<i>Yo en primera no me interesaba si pagaban o no, pero lo que a mí me gustaba era enseñarle, a los que no saben leer y escribir.</i>
25.10.2018-6.17	Selene	Well, in itself, the goal of this would be, well, in itself, that women have learned a little from my experience ... Even though I don't have many studies, the little I have can be shared, well, as far as they can learn ... I'm interested, because in itself, well, my interest here was to help my community.	<i>Pues en sí, la meta de esto sería, pues, pues ya en sí, que las mujeres hayan aprendido un poco de mi experiencia ... a pesar de que no tengo mucho estudio, lo poquito que tengo se lo puedo compartir, pues, hasta donde aprenden ... me interesa, porque en sí, pues, aquí mi interés era ayudar a mi comunidad.</i>
26.10.2018-6.18	Diana	We need notebooks. Maybe they won't last until the book is finished, because sometimes we work more in a notebook to do exercises and all that. So it would help us to have more, a bit more material ... There's a really low number [of materials] that sometimes we have to reuse some... Or the <i>técnicos</i> [INEA technicians] here have to go around collecting and seeing who has a book left over ... Because then sometimes, well, as a facilitator, well, for example, I have to buy a marker, I have to buy—when, I mean, they don't give me any [markers] over there. Yeah, so then it comes from our [bank] accounts ... sometimes, I even recycle sheets of paper. When I didn't	<i>Porque necesitamos el cuaderno. A lo mejor no nos va a durar hasta que se acabe el libro, porque a veces trabajamos más en un cuaderno para hacer ejercicios y todo eso. Entonces si nos ayudaría que tuviéramos más, un poquito más de material ... es muy contaditos que a veces tenemos que reutilizar un material ... O aquí los técnicos que tienen que andar recolectando y a ver a quién le sobra un libro ... Porque luego a veces, pues, como asesora, pues, por ejemplo, tengo que comprar un marcador, tengo que comprar—cuándo, o sea, no me los dan allá. Sí, entonces pues corre de nuestra cuenta ... Entonces yo incluso a veces reciclo hojas. Cuando no tenía pizarrón, sufrí</i>

		have a whiteboard, I suffered a lot ... I said, how am I going to do it? No, well, I started to reuse the material, I got some posters from the topic [the book]—I would write on the back of them ... We even made a whiteboard with white paper and card stock on the back ... [we stuck] contact paper on top.	<i>mucho ... yo decía ¿como voy a hacerle? No, pues, ya empecé yo a reutilizar el material, que me llegaron unas láminas de todo el tema [del módulo]—atrás le escribía yo ... Incluso un pizarrón hacíamos, un papel blanco, cartulina abajo ... [le pegamos] el papel contact arriba.</i>
10.10.2018-6.19	Gaby	Another thing, in my case, I need materials for my learners. Honestly, well, like I'm telling you, of the money, we barely have any, we don't have ... well, I don't have enough to buy things, materials for my learners ... well, that's what I would like, well, yeah. That they support me with the materials.	<i>Otra cosa, en mi caso, yo necesito materiales para mis educandos. Pues yo la verdad, pues, así como yo te digo, pues, de lo económico nosotros no casi no, no tenemos ... pues no me alcanza para comprar cosas, materiales de mis educandos ... pues, es lo que me gustaría, pues, ya. Que me apoyen de los materiales.</i>
10.10.2018-6.20	Gaby	Another thing that I wanted to tell you all—I need more workshops to teach me how to read and write [my language] ... The <i>licenciado</i> [referring to the INEA support staff] told me that there's cash support for me, but it's a matter of me filling out all the books. Is there no other way you can support me in this?	<i>Y otra cosa que yo les quería yo avisar—yo necesito más talleres para que me enseñen a leerlo y a escribirlo [mi idioma] ... el licenciado me dijo que hay un apoyo efectivo pa' mí, pero es de que yo llene todos los libros. ¿Será que no hay otra forma de cómo me puedan apoyar en eso?</i>
20.11.2018-6.21	Paola	I arrive around nine in the morning, and I primarily attend to my students who don't know how to read and who don't know how to write ... they're the first ones ... that I'm going to pay attention to. Why? Because I feel that they're the ones that require a lot more attention than	<i>Yo llego alrededor de las nueve de la mañana y atiendo primeramente a todos mis alumnos que no saben leer y que no saben escribir ... a ellos son a los primeros ... que les voy a dar la atención. ¿Por qué? Porque siento yo que ellos son los que requieren mucho más atención que alguien que ya sabe leer y que ya sabe escribir.</i>

		someone who already knows how to read and already knows how to write.	
20.11.2018-6.22	Paola	<p>I have people too, for example, who have different disabilities ... and just because they have a disability doesn't mean that they aren't going to get involved here in the study circle. On the contrary, right? ... They're the ones that—the ones that I help the most, that I pay more attention to ... Why? Because there are people who are—who discriminate. I mean, 'I don't want to sit with him, because he's like that' [a person with a disability] ... I say no, no, on the contrary. You're all supposed to be a team, and you have to, you have to, well, see that, well, human side, right? ... Just because he has a disability, well, that doesn't mean that he won't be able to [learn] like you.</p>	<p><i>Tengo personas también, por ejemplo, que tienen discapacidades diferentes ... y no porque tengan una discapacidad quiere decir que no se van a involucrar aquí en el círculo de estudio. Al contrario, ¿verdad? ... Son los que, los—a los que más yo les ayudo, les presto mayor atención ... ¿Por qué? Por que hay personas que son—que discriminan. O sea, 'Yo no me quiero sentar con él, porque él está así' ... le digo no, no, al contrario. Ustedes se supone que son un equipo, y tienen, que tienen que, este, ver ese lado, este, humano ¿no? ... No porque tenga una discapacidad, pues, quiere decir que el no va a poder [aprender] igual que usted.</i></p>
20.11.2018-6.23	Paola	<p>For example, I finished university, right? So, I feel that up until now, my ability—what I transmit to my students, well yeah, well, it's good. Yeah, they've told me themselves. Why? Because I don't just show up and give a class. Right? You have to interact with them ... so that they trust you with questions, with their doubts.</p> <p>I feel that sometimes there are facilitators that lack that ... more advanced ... training, I mean, more advanced for them, so that they can, well, teach their classes ... INEA tells you to go the training, right? ... But sometimes there</p>	<p><i>Por ejemplo, terminé la universidad ¿sí? Entonces yo siento que mi capacidad hasta ahorita—lo que yo les transmito a mis alumnos, pues sí, este, es bueno. Si, ellos mismos me lo han dicho. ¿Por qué? Por porque no nada más es de llegar y dar la asesoría. ¿Sí? Tienes que interactuar con ellos para que ellos, este, te tengan confianza de preguntas, de sus dudas.</i></p> <p><i>Siento que a veces hay asesoras que si les falta ... más avanzado ... una capacitación, este, más avanzada para ellos, para que puedan, este, darle sus asesorías ... INEA te dice que vayas a capacitación ¿verdad? ... Sin embargo, a</i></p>

		are people who say, no, well, I'm not going to go because I don't have time.	<i>veces hay personas que dicen no, pues, no voy a ir porque no tengo tiempo.</i>
8.10.2018-6.24	Graciela	It's really complicated for them ... up until now we haven't progressed, I think, because it doesn't help me to move forward. Because if people don't know how to read and write, it doesn't help me to move forward with the module ... I have to take it step by step ... if they stop attending for one or two sessions, then their memory is practically erased. And I have to go back.	<i>Es muy complicado para ellos ... hasta ahorita no hemos avanzado creo, porque no me sirve avanzar. Porque si la gente no sabe este leer y escribir, no me sirve avanzar con el módulo ... tengo que llevarlo paso a paso ... si deja de asistir una o dos asesorías, pues prácticamente se le borra la memoria. Y yo tengo que volver.</i>
26.10.2018-6.25	Diana	<p>Then they tell me ... I just don't want to go anymore, I'm not going to learn anymore. I say, if you say you're not going to, then obviously you won't learn. If you say yes, you'll learn. Because there you're saying that you don't want to, well, it's because, well, you don't want to ... I can't force you. I can't force you if you don't want to.</p> <p>The point here is that you say that you are interested. And the ones who come, well, are the ones that, the ones that have come really constantly ... One of my learners was commenting that who knows how many years she's been studying and she just can't, she hasn't finished learning. But the thing is, you're never finished learning ... On the contrary, you have to put in the effort.</p>	<p><i>Luego me dicen ... es que ya no quiero ir, ya no voy a aprender. Le digo, si tú dices no, pues obvio no vas a aprender. Si tú dices si, vas a aprender. Porque ahí tú estás diciendo que ya no quieres, pues, es porque, pues, tu no quieres ... ahí ya no puedo obligarte. No puedo hacerte a la fuerza si tú no quieres.</i></p> <p><i>Aquí el asunto es que tú digas que sí tengo interés. Y las que vienen, pues, son las que, las que han venido muy constante ... me comentaba una de mis educandos [que] quién sabe yo cuántos años lleva estudiando y nomás no, no termina de aprender. Pero es que nunca se termina de aprender ... sino al contrario, tienes que ponerte las pilas.</i></p>
26.10.2018-6.26	Teresa	She does teach us ... She does explain what letter we have to write. And how the words go. Because the other time they [someone from INEA] invited us to study, but what	<i>Porque ella si nos enseña ... si nos explica con que letra tenemos que escribir. Y cómo va las palabras. Porque la otra vez y nos invitaron [del INEA] que estudiáramos, pero</i>

		<p>happened is that they just took our names, and we wrote it down, and they told us to ... take an exam. And then they just left us the books, and they never explained to us how we're going to learn ourselves ... we don't even know the letters. We don't know how to write.</p> <p>I'm really happy to study. I thank God that we have, like, [a facilitator], well, that teaches us ... It's really difficult when one doesn't know any letters ... But, I'm also grateful to <i>Doña</i> Diana because she lends us her time and, and she teaches with all her might, with all her heart ... She gives us her time.</p>	<p><i>lo que pasa es que nada más nos tomaron nuestros nombres, y anotamos, y nos dijeron que ... hiciéramos examen. Y nada más nos fueron a dejar los libros, y nunca nos explicarán cómo vamos a aprender nosotros mismas ... no sabemos ni las letras. No conocemos cómo se escribe.</i></p> <p><i>La verdad si estoy feliz yo de estudiar. Le doy gracias a Dios que tenemos así [una asesora], este, que enseña ... Está muy difícil cuando no sabe uno la letra ... pero, y también le doy gracias a doña Diana porque si nos presta su tiempo y, y lo enseña con todas las ganas ella, con todo su corazón ... nos presta así, su tiempo.</i></p>
25.10.2018-6.27	Selene	<p>The benefits, I think would be, well, that they study ... it's to fulfil their dreams. Why? Because when the women get a certificate of literacy, for them, it's already a really great achievement ... something they had never expected, and never dreamed of ... and when, well, they at least get a piece of paper, well, they're really happy. Then—then their mentality goes beyond. They want to study, to keep studying more and more. They don't want to miss [a study circle session] ... But now that they get a certificate of literacy, well, they say, well, I was able to take the first step, now we're going for more. And they're learning more.</p>	<p><i>Los beneficios, creo que serían, pues, de que ellos se pongan a estudiar ... es cumplir sus sueños. ¿Por qué? Porque cuando las mujeres ya tienen ya un papel de alfabetización, ya para ellas, ya es un logro muy grande ... algo que nunca habían esperado, y nunca habían soñado. Y cuando ya, pues, les llega mínimo un papel, pues ellos ya están muy felices. Ya—ya su mentalidad va más allá. Quieren estudiar, seguir estudiando más y más. Ya no quieren faltar [al círculo de estudio] ... Pero ahorita que ya le llega un papel de alfabetización, pues, ya ella[s] dicen, pues, ya pude el primer paso, ahora vamos por más. Y ya van aprendiendo más.</i></p>

21.11.2018- 6.28	Alejandro	[It's not about having] more paper [certificates]. No, no ... if you don't know [how to read and write], well, then—the paper is useless.	<i>No, no [se trata de] tener más papel [certificados]. No, no ... que no conozca [leer y escribir], pues, entonces de nada sirve el papel.</i>
22.11.2018- 6.29	Claudia	I want to finish my studies. Well, my goal is to finish <i>prepa</i> [upper secondary school] ... In Monterrey or any other place, they need ... papers to have a good job ... I'm giving it my best to get ahead and finish. That's my goal. To finish <i>prepa</i> ... I'm just barely studying the initial [level] ... Because in truth, I need the papers to go, to get out ... well, to be able to work.	<i>Quiero terminar mis estudios. Bueno, mi meta es terminar la prepa ... En Monterrey o en cualquier lugar necesitan los papeles ... para tener buen trabajo ... estoy echando ganas para salir adelante y terminar mi meta es eso. Terminar la prepa ... apenas estoy estudiando [el nivel] inicial ... La verdad, yo necesito los papeles para ir, salir ... pues, poder trabajar.</i>
26.10.2018- 6.30	Victoria	<p>When you go out to the city, they don't give you a job just like that ... You have to do some paperwork to get a job. And when you don't know how to read and write, well, you don't have work ... even if you just make some tortillas by hand, there in the city, well, they ask you for papers. They tell you, 'Give me your papers, bring them to me tomorrow so that you can work here with me'.</p> <p>We don't know how to weigh the tortillas. We don't know how to charge ... We don't know about, like, anything. It's a lot. Yeah ... I've suffered from not knowing how to read and write, yeah ... only those who know how to read and write, well, they have their job. They eat. But the rest of us, well, when we don't know how to read and write, it's like that—you don't eat.</p>	<p><i>Porque cuando uno sale a la ciudad, no como quiera te da trabajo ... tienes que hacer unos papeles para que te den trabajo. Y cuando no sabe leer y escribir, pues, te quedas sin trabajo ... aunque nada más echa unas tortillas de mano, ahí en la ciudad, pues te pides papeles. Te dice, preséntame tus papeles, ya mañana me lo traes y ya para qué puedas trabajar aquí conmigo.</i></p> <p><i>Porque no sabemos pesar las tortillas. No sabemos cobrar ... no sabemos de así, nada. Es mucho. Aja ... he sufrido de que no sabe uno leer y escribir, aja ... nada más los que saben leer y escribir pues ellos si tienen su trabajito. Ellos si comen. Pero a los demás, bueno, cuando no sabemos leer y escribir, es así—quédate sin comer.</i></p>

3.10.2018-6.31	Manuel	In those times ... like 20 or 30% [of the people] knew how to write. That's it, nobody knows how to write. You just wake up, you make your <i>pozolito</i> , you go to the field, you come back ... here, there's no time to read and write.	<i>En esos tiempos ... como 20 o 30% [de las personas] nada más que saben escribir. Nada más, nadie sabe escribir. Solamente amaneces, te haces tu pozolito, te vas al monte, te regresas ... aquí no hay tiempo para leer y escribir.</i>
23.11.2018-6.32	Pedro	He says that he didn't know [how to read and write], because since he was little, he never knew how to be in school. Because he was little and became an orphan. And later he said that ... parents back then, well, they gave education less importance ... adults would tell children, why are you going to study? There's a lot of work, it's better, then—they were inclined to work in the field, the women just as much as the men.	<i>Dice que él no sabía [leer y escribir], porque desde chiquito nunca supo andar en la escuela. Porque era pequeño y quedó huérfano, y posteriormente dice que ... los papás antiguos, la educación pues le daban menos importancia ... los adultos a los niños les decía[n], ¿porque vas a estudiar? Hay mucho trabajo, mejor, pues, se inclinaban a los labores del campo, tanto como una mujer como un varón.</i>
26.10.2018-6.33	Diana	I was in <i>primaria</i> [primary school], but as we say, life, right? You go to the city, and you fall in love with money [laughs] ... you let a lot of things go. I got married at a very young age, too. I got married when I was 15.	<i>Estuve en la primaria, pero pues dijéramos, la vida ¿no? Te vas a la ciudad, y te enamora el dinero [risa] ... dejas ir muchas cosas. Me casé también a muy temprana edad. Me casé a los 15 años.</i>
4.10.2018-6.34	Norma	I think a lot [about] when I'm little, I have to wash the dishes. I have to ... [make the] tamales, pozole, everything. To go to school. When I return, I'm going to go to the field, I'm going to go <i>moler</i> [grind corn], I come back, I work and everything, sort of like that. I have to do the washing. What time are you going to have? For your studies? Because of that ... I don't keep going to school. I stayed like this.	<i>Pienso mucho que yo cuando estoy chica tengo que lavar los trastes. Tengo que ... [preparar los] tamales, pozole, todo. Para ir a la escuela. Cuando yo regreso, voy a ir al campo, voy a ir a moler, regreso, trabajo todo, así casi. Tengo que lavar. ¿Qué tiempo vas a sacar? ¿Para tu estudio? De eso ... no sigo yendo a la escuela. Ya me dejé así.</i>

25.10.2018-6.35	Selene	Really, here in my town, well, would I say that there are a lot of jobs, no. What most ...people do here is the, they're farmers. They grow corn, beans, squash. That's what they dedicate themselves to every day. Because their motivation, well, is the earth. Because, as I said ... the majority are all <i>campesinos</i> [peasants or people who work in the fields].	<i>Pues así que le diga que hay muchos empleos, no. A lo que más se dedican aquí las ... personas, es a, son campesinos. A cultivar maíz, el frijol, la calabaza. Es lo que se dedican a hacer día por día. Porque su motivación, pues, es la tierra. Porque, así como le digo ... la mayoría todos son campesinos.</i>
3.10.2018-6.36	Jorge	Well, right now everyone is learning. There are schools ... [where] they are teaching in Mayan ... even the government is showing more interest ... [the MIB] is an example.	<i>Pues ahorita todos están aprendiendo. Hay escuelas igual hay uno [...] Están enseñando en maya ... hasta el gobierno está poniendo más interés ... [el MIB] es un ejemplo.</i>
4.10.2018-6.37	Norma	Today's students, they do give them support from the government. They're supporting them to study, they give scholarships and all that. That's the good thing.	<i>Ahorita hoy los alumnos de hoy si le dan apoyo del gobierno. Los están apoyando que estudian, dan becas y todo eso. Es lo bueno [...]</i>
22.11.2018-6.38	Liliana	That's why not everyone comes here [to the study circle]. Why? Because everyone wants financial support. And that support isn't important ... some people also say to me no, well, 'When will they give me the financial support'? ... I can't tell them that. Whether they're going to give it out, whether they're not going to give it out ... sometimes you register, and the financial support comes to you, well good ... there are times when no, there's nothing. Even if you have good grades, even if you're requesting it, there are times when there's no—there's no financial support.	<i>Es que es por eso que aquí no vienen todos [al círculo de estudio]. ¿Por qué? Porque todos quieren apoyo. Y el apoyo no es importante ... algunas personas que también me dicen no, este, y '¿Cuándo me van a dar el apoyo?' ... eso yo no les puedo decir. Que si les van a dar, que si no les van a dar ... de repente te inscribes y te llega el apoyo, pues bien ... hay veces que no, no hay nada. Aunque lleves buenas calificaciones, aunque lo estés solicitando, hay veces que no hay—no hay apoyo. Si ellos lo hacen por dinero—por eso muchos, algunas personas no, no vienen. Porque ellos quieren recibir algo a</i>

		<p>If they do it for money—that's why many, some people don't, they don't come. Because they want to receive something in return. But, well, I've told them ... that support only comes every so often. I also tell them that when I invited them [to the study circle], I didn't tell them that there was going to be any money.</p> <p>I talked to one of the <i>señores</i> [men], and I told him no, well, don't study to get paid. Just because you receive that. Because once you receive it, you finish it in two, three days. But if you study because you want to learn, you'll learn a lot of things ... that stays with you forever. For your children. For your grandchildren. For other people.</p>	<p><i>cambio. Pero, pues, yo les he dicho ... ese apoyo nomás se les da no sé cada cuándo. Yo también le digo yo cuando les invité [al círculo de estudio], yo no les dije que si iba a haber dinero.</i></p> <p><i>Yo he platicado con uno de los señores, y le dije no, pues, no estudies para que te paguen. Porque te recibas eso. Porque eso lo recibes, dos, tres días te lo acabas. Pero si tú estudias porque tú quieres aprender vas a aprender muchas cosas ... se te queda para siempre. Para los hijos. Para los nietos. Para otras personas.</i></p>
26.10.2018-6.39	Diana	<p>On one occasion, one learner ... 'Oh', she says. 'If I go ... with you, what'll you give me? <i>Despensa</i> [a food basket]?' No, I tell her. Because I'm not a politician. [laughs] ... I said no, I'm going to give you knowledge. You're going to learn. And nobody will take that away from you. Food, that'll run out in two, three days. But yeah, if you want to, go ahead. If not, then what's the point. I'll leave it to your judgement.</p>	<p><i>Si me decía en una ocasión una, una educando ... 'Ay', dice. 'Sí yo voy ... contigo, ¿que me vas a dar? ¿Despensa?' No, le digo. Porque yo no soy política. [risas] ... Yo le decía no, yo te voy a dar conocimiento. Vas a aprender. Y eso nadie te lo va a quitar. Una despensa, pues se va a acabar en dos, tres días. Pero eso sí, sí ya si gustas, adelante. Si no, pues para que. Te lo dejo a tu criterio.</i></p>
3.10.2018-6.40	Manuel	<p>If the government goes into the communities to listen to the needs of the people, there are really people in need ... if they're going to support us in the field, don't give me money. Because if you give me money, I can spend it.</p>	<p><i>Si gobierno va en las comunidades a escuchar la necesidad de la gente, realmente hay gente necesitada ... si nos van a apoyar en el campo, no me des dinero. Porque si me das dinero, lo puedo gastar. Cómprame mi herramienta pa'</i></p>

	<p>Buy me my tools to work ... What do I need in the field? Well, we need tractors. Irrigation systems. So that we can work in the field, and we can produce. So that we can support and provide for our families.</p> <p>What I want are my tools to be able to work. I've seen a lot of people get [financial support] in the fields ... they pay the PROSPERA to the señoras. They pay this. And it's like, it's finished. And their husbands take it away. There in the canteen. After a while, they're already drunk. They're already with the waitresses, spending all their money. Tomorrow they don't have any money.</p> <p>That's why I tell you, don't give me money ... Buy my tools ... and manage me for one or two years while I'm working with the tools. And if I'm not working ... take it away. Take it away again, because it's not working for me. If I'm working, then yes.</p>	<p><i>trabajar ... ¿Qué es lo que necesito en el campo? Pues necesitamos tractores. Rastras. Sistemas de riego. Para que nosotros podemos trabajar en el campo y se pueda producir. Para que podamos buscar el sustento de nuestras familias.</i></p> <p><i>Lo que quiero es mi herramienta para poder trabajar. Mucha gente que he visto le dan [apoyo financiero] en los campos ... les pagan su PROSPERA a las señoras. Le pagan esto. Y es como, se acaba. Y sus esposos les quitan. Ahí en la cantina. Al rato ya están borrachos. Ya están con las meseras, gastando todo su dinero. Mañana ya no tienen dinero.</i></p> <p><i>Y por eso le digo, no me des dinero ... compra mi herramienta ... y adminístrame uno o dos años que estoy trabajando con las herramientas. Y si no estoy trabajando ... quítemelo. Quítemelo otra vez, porque no me esta sirviendo. Sí estoy trabajando, entonces sí.</i></p>
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Date / Code	Participant	English translation by author	Original extract from transcripts (Spanish)
9.10.2018-7.1	Pilar	In the Indigenous languages of Mexico, I think it's, well, so that we don't lose our customs. So that the language isn't lost, so that, well, our children or our grandchildren learn the customs more and more each time ... That's my father's custom, I'm not going to lose it, well, for anything in the world.	<i>En las lenguas indígenas de México, yo pienso que es, este, para que no perdamos nuestras costumbres. Para que no se pierda la lengua, para que, esté, nuestros hijos o nuestros nietos vayan aprendiendo cada vez más las costumbres ... Ese es el costumbre de mi papá, no lo voy a perder este, por nada del mundo.</i>
26.10.2018-7.2	Diana	It's necessary to speak the mother tongue. Because as I was saying, that's what makes us recognise where we're from ... that we're Oaxaqueños, right? ... Because well, if that's lost, well, more than anything you lose a tradition, right? ... So, the mother tongue is very important ... I feel it's really important that we preserve it because, well, it's our culture.	<i>Si es necesario hablar la lengua materna. Porque como les decía, esa es la que nos hace reconocer de dónde somos ... que somos Oaxaqueños, ¿no? ... Porque pues, si se pierde, pues, más que nada se pierde una tradición ¿no? Entonces la lengua materna pues sí es muy importante ... yo siento que sí es muy importante que lo sigamos conservando porque, pues, es nuestra cultura.</i>
21.11.2018-7.3	Guadalupe	[It's so] we don't lose our language ... where we come from, with our fathers and our mothers. So, we talk like this ... We haven't stopped speaking [Tének] ... Here, we're <i>Huasteco</i> .	<i>[Es para] no perder nuestra idioma ... 'onde venimos, con los papás y las mamás. Entonces hablamos así ... no hemos dejado de hablar [tének] ... aquí somos huasteco.</i>

8.10.2018-7.4	Patricia	Your parents know how to speak Ch'ol, and you were born, you have to be guided. I mean, follow in the footsteps of your parents.	<i>Tus papás saben hablar ese ch'ol, y naciste, tienes que guiarte. O sea, seguir el paso de tus papás.</i>
23.11.2018-7.5	Alfredo	Spanish comes from Spain ... the Náhuatl here, it's the one of the Indigenous people here. We're Indigenous.	<i>El español es se viene del España ... el náhuatl aquí, es el de aquí el de los indígenas. Somos indígenas.</i>
8.10.2018-7.6	Patricia	Well, it's important to me because we are mostly losing it. I see it with my, because of my siblings. I have siblings who ... no longer speak it. I have to speak it for my students. I have to speak it for my grandparents. I have to speak it for my children who come after me. I want to write a history of the community in Ch'ol. But it's complicated to start writing it ... I don't know where to start. Where to start? ... Who founded the town, why they arrived, why they came here, how they arrived ... what their goal was.	<i>Para mí sí es importante porque mayormente lo estamos perdiendo. Lo veo con mi, por mis hermanos. Tengo hermanos que ... ya no la hablan. Yo lo tengo que hablar por mis educandos. Yo lo tengo que hablar por mis abuelitos. Yo lo tengo que hablar por mis niños que vienen atrás de mí. Porque en la escuela se lo piden. Yo quiero escribir en ch'ol una historia de la comunidad. Pero está complicada para empezar escribirlo ... no sé por dónde empezar. ¿Por dónde empezar? ... que fundió la localidad, porque llegaron, porque llegaron acá ... cuál fue su objetivo.</i>
26.10.2018-7.7	Diana	They're interested in their language. So I say to them, well, that's good! Come and audit [my classes]. Or come, for, well, for me there's no problem ... As long as they have that interest ... You're welcome here.	<i>Se interesan por su lengua. Entonces ya le digo, no pues ¡qué bien! Ven de oyente. O ven, por, pues, por mí no hay problema ... mientras tenga ese interés .. Bienvenido aquí.</i>
20.11.2018-7.8	Paola	For example, my husband says no, well, why is the child going to learn that [Tének]? I'd prefer that she learn English now, probably ... So, I think that he's already	<i>Por ejemplo, mi esposo dice no, pues, ¿para que va a aprender la niña eso [tének]? Yo prefiero que ella aprenda a lo mejor inglés ahora ... Entonces ahí yo creo que sí ya</i>

		discriminating the language. And I would tell him—I tell him—well, that's your point of view as a father, right? As a mother, I would like my daughter to learn [Tének]. Why? ... For example, I'm 24 years old. And I eat because—I ate because of my dad. And my dad, for example, he's a radio announcer, and he speaks Tének, right? So, I tell him, I've been with him for twenty-something years, and I practically ate because of the language he spoke. Right? So, for me, well, I feel proud, because it's thanks to that that I was able to get ahead.	<i>está discriminando la lengua. Y yo le decía el—le digo—bueno, eso es tu punto de vista como papá ¿verdad? Yo como mamá, a mí sí me gustaría que mi hija aprenda [tének]. ¿Por qué? ... Por ejemplo, tengo 24 años. Y yo como por mi—comía por mi papá. Y mi papá, por ejemplo, el es el locutor de la radio, y el habla tének, ¿sí? Entonces le digo, llevo veintitantos años de estar con él le digo, y yo comía prácticamente de la lengua que él hablaba. ¿Sí? Entonces para mi, pues yo me siento orgullosa, porque gracias a eso [a] mi ya me sacó adelante.</i>
21.11.2018-7.9	Guadalupe	[My son's] teacher said that's why my children didn't ... 'He won't be able to study, because, because we speak in <i>Huasteco</i> ', he said ... The teacher told us that when we started school. That's why I spoke to the boy like that [in Spanish], even though I can't speak much in Spanish ... and that's why the boys hardly speak <i>Huasteco</i> .	<i>Decía el maestro [de mi hijo] que por eso mis hijos no ... 'No va a poder estudiar, porque, porque hablamos en huasteco', dice ... El maestro así nos dijo cuando entramos a la escuela nosotros. Y por eso yo lo hablé así al muchacho [en español], aunque no puedo mucho hablar en español ... y por eso los muchachos casi no hablan huasteco.</i>
23.11.2018-7.10	Carlos	I want to read more Náhuatl. We do use Náhuatl here, but it is not legitimate. It's like, let's say—scrambled with Spanish ... That's how we talk. But no, I realized that no, no, the Náhuatl isn't legitimate ... what he [the facilitator Marcos] teaches really <i>is</i> legitimate Náhuatl.	<i>Quiero leer más náhuatl. Si ocupamos como el náhuatl aquí, pero no es legítimo. Es como digamos -- revuelto con español ... Pues así hablamos. Pero no, yo me di cuenta que no, no, no es legítimo el náhuatl ... lo que [el asesor Marcos] enseña es de veras lo que es náhuatl legítimo.</i>

22.11.2018-7.11	Simón	We speak Náhuatl, you would say, but it's not—it's not the same.	<i>Porque nosotros hablamos náhuatl, tú dices, pero no es—no es igual.</i>
22.11.2018-7.12	Rosa	It's not the original. It's not 100% Náhuatl.	<i>No es original. No es el 100% náhuatl.</i>
26.10.2018-7.13	Diana	We have to change the versions. Because the book we handle is that of Mazateco Alto [high] ... We are Semi-Medio [mid] and Alto. Because, well, we speak a bit of everything. It's neither Medio nor Alto, but we're between the—between the two ... between the three variants.	<i>Tenemos que cambiar las versiones. Porque el libro que manejamos es la de mazateco alto ... nosotros somos semi-medio y alto. Porque, pues, manejamos de todo. No es ni medio, ni alto, sino estamos entre que—entre las dos ... entre las tres variantes.</i>
5.10.2018-7.14	Francisco	In the beginning, there was a person, well, that was opposed [to the MIB] we could say, right? Because they said that nothing that I comment on, nothing that I show them, well, is important to them. Because, well—there has been a lot of suffering. A lot of suffering. Of the marginalisation ... of the, well, humiliations that they've received when speaking the Mayan language.	<i>Al principio había una persona, este, pues contraposición [hacia el MIB] pudiéramos decir, ¿verdad? Porque decían que nada de lo que yo comento, nada de lo que yo les muestro, este, tiene importancia para ellos. Porque, pues—se ha sufrido mucho. Se ha sufrido mucho. De la marginación ... de las, este, humillaciones que han recibido al hablar la lengua maya.</i>
3.10.2018-7.15	Jorge	They didn't teach [Mayan] in schools. In fact, you were embarrassed to speak Mayan at school, because the other classmates made fun of you. 'You aren't mestizo'.	<i>No enseñaban [maya] en las escuelas. Es más, te daba pena hablar maya en la escuela, porque te burlaban los otros compañeros. 'No eres mestizo'.</i>
3.10.2018-7.16	Jorge	One feels humiliated. I mean, you don't know how to value languages.	<i>Sí se siente humillado uno. Pues, no sabe uno valorar lenguas.</i>

3.10.2018-7.17	Manuel	Here in the state of Campeche, when you speak Mayan, they treat you like—the i kind of person. Like a, a <i>naco</i> [someone uneducated]. Like, ‘Oh, why do you speak Mayan? Oh, you’re a <i>naco</i> ’.	<i>Aquí en el Estado de Campeche, cuando hablas el maya te tratan como una persona—de las más bajas. Como un, un naco. Como, ‘Ay, ¿porque hablas maya? Ah, tú eres un naco’.</i>
3.10.2018-7.18	Manuel	That makes the person try not to speak Mayan. And that affected me a lot ... and well, those who know Mayan, don’t speak Mayan ... ‘Do you speak Mayan?’ No, I don’t speak Mayan. Even though you <i>know</i> Mayan. You <i>speak</i> Mayan. So, we’re ashamed to speak Mayan.	<i>Eso le da a la persona tratar de no hablar maya. Y eso me afectó mucho ... y pues, el que sabe maya, no habla maya. ... ‘¿Sabe hablar maya?’ No, no se hablar maya. Aunque sabe maya. Platica en maya. Entonces nos avergonzamos de hablar maya.</i>
8.10.2018-7.19	Graciela	Teaching from scratch—what else can I say? I mean, it’s a bit difficult. Difficult in what way? Because sometimes people, I mean—the people themselves reproach ... their own language.	<i>Enseñar desde cero—¿pues qué más puedo yo decir? O sea, si es un poco dificultoso. ¿Difícultoso en cuestión en qué? Porque a veces la gente, o sea—la propia gente reprocha ... su propia lengua.</i>
9.10.2018-7.20	Pilar	A lot of times here ... the people, well, go to work at [the nearest city]. And they pretend they don’t know Ch’ol, only Spanish. And they’re ashamed of their tongue.	<i>Porque muchas veces aquí, este, este, las personas, este, se van a trabajar a [la ciudad mas cercana]. Y hacen como que no saben ch’ol, puro español. Y se avergüenzan de su lengua.</i>
21.11.2018-7.21	Alejandro	Some who speak Spanish say that ... ‘You all speak Tének, you’re worth nothing’ ... They said, ‘No, you’re worth nothing. You’re not rich, you’re not—you don’t have any money. You’re poor. What good are you?’	<i>Algunos dicen, unos que hablan español ... ‘Hablan tének, no vale nada’ ... dice ‘No, no valen nada. No son ricos, no son—no tienen dinero. Son pobres. ¿De que sirves?’</i>

5.10.2018-7.22	Francisco	An Indigenous identity is, well, it's everything we represent, isn't it? Everything that represents, I mean, the culture, the knowledge, the practices, the cultural manifestations, well, of how we—I mean, how we are before all of society ... To have an [Indigenous] identity is not to be less before others. It's [an identity] of equality, of equity.	<i>Una identidad indígena es este pues es todo lo que representamos, ¿no? Todo lo que representa, este, la cultura, los conocimientos, las prácticas, las manifestaciones, este, pues culturales de cómo nos, este, cómo estamos ante toda una sociedad ... tener identidad [indígena] no es ser menos ante los otros. Es [una identidad] de igualdad, es de equidad.</i>
5.10.2018-7.23	Francisco	Having that identity, I retain ... what my ancestors were, what they spoke over all of the Yucatan peninsula and in parts of Guatemala and Belize. We exist. We speak the Mayan language. We write it ... I'm not trying to sell it in economic terms, but to defend it to the world as something so that they see that we're still preserving some customs, some of them [which are] deeply rooted.	<i>Teniendo esa identidad me conservo ... lo que fueron mis antepasados, lo que hablaron en todo lo que representa la península Yucatán y parte de Guatemala y Belice. Existimos. Hablamos la lengua maya. Escribimos ... no trato de venderlo como para lo económico, sino defenderlo al mundo como algo que vean que todavía tenemos preservando algunas costumbres, algunas [que son] muy arraigadas.</i>
23.11.2018-7.24	Irene	My kids at school, well, they get asked ... if they speak Náhuatl ... sometimes they're embarrassed to answer in Náhuatl ... and I tell them they should learn, that they should never be ashamed that they speak Náhuatl, I tell them. If they ask you, tell them you do ... I tell him [her son], you should never be ashamed, I tell him. Because you're from an Indigenous family, I tell him.	<i>Mis hijos en la escuela, este, les pregunten ... si hablan en náhuatl ... a veces les da pena contestar en náhuatl ... y le digo, deben de aprender, nunca se deben de avergonzar de que hablen en náhuatl, les digo. Si les preguntan, contéstenle ... Le digo [a mi hijo], nunca te debes de avergonzar, le digo. Porque eres de una familia indígena, le digo.</i>

8.10.2018-7.25	Graciela	<p>I think [discrimination] still exists ... Because it's happened to me. It's happened. Sometimes when you speak, you speak the [Spanish] language. Sometimes ... [even in] the community where I live. 'Hey, why are you talking like that?' And I say, well, I'm not ashamed.</p> <p>For my part, I would never be ashamed of what I know, of what I am, of where I come from. I mean, I never—<i>never</i>. Never in my life. When I bump into a person and they ask, I, well, really, I—I speak the Indigenous language. And I feel proud. Why? Because practically Spanish, well, don't think I learned it when I was younger. No, I learned it when I was older ... and sometimes I give that as an example to my students.</p>	<p><i>Yo creo que [la discriminación] sí aún existe ... Porque igual me ha pasado. Me ha pasado que sí. A veces cuando hablas, hablas la lengua [española]. A veces ... [en] la comunidad donde vivo. 'Oye ¿porque estás hablando así?' Y le digo, pues yo no me avergüenzo.</i></p> <p><i>Yo por mi parte, nunca me avergonzaría de lo que sé, de lo que soy, de dónde vengo. O sea, yo nunca—jamás. Jamás en mi vida. Yo cuando topo con persona y preguntan, yo, pues yo la verdad, yo la—yo hablo la lengua indígena. Y me siento orgulloso. ¿Por qué? Porque prácticamente pues el español pues yo ya, no creas que yo aprendí de chica. No, yo ya aprendí de grande ... y a veces eso lo pongo como ejemplo a los educandos.</i></p>
26.10.2018-7.26	Diana	<p>I can't use the book from [nearby city], because I speak my Mazateco. My Mazateco from here in San Mateo. And I'm not going to write it like there, because I'm going to write it how I understand it ... So that's been a really important factor in, let's say, in writing ... in fact, my learners demand it of me. It's not me anymore, but it's them saying to me sometimes, 'Why are you writing like over there? ... So, I can't write it like there, and I'm going to write it as I speak it.</p>	<p><i>Yo no puedo usar el libro de [ciudad cercana], porque yo hablo mi mazateco. Mi mazateco es de aquí de San Mateo. Y no lo voy a escribir como allá, porque yo lo voy a escribir a cómo yo le entiendo ... Entonces ese ha sido un, un factor muy importante en, dijéramos, en la escritura ... más bien, me exigen mis educandos. Ya no yo, sino ellas luego me dicen, ¿porque estas escribiendo como allá?... Entonces pues yo no lo puedo escribir allá como los de allá, sino voy a escribirlo tal cual lo hablo yo.</i></p>
5.10.2018-7.27	Francisco	<p>Men consider that with what they already have is enough ... with what they have they don't, well, they don't need literacy. They don't need to continue with that preparation</p>	<p><i>El varón considera que pues ya con lo que tienes ... con lo que tiene no es, este, no necesita de la alfabetización. No necesita continuar a una preparación ... pues aquí lo que</i></p>

		<p>... Here, what we observe is that men justify this by saying that he has a lot of work. From the moment he gets up he goes to the <i>milpa</i> [field] or he goes to work. I've had the opportunity to interview some of them, and they tell me no, well, I'm a construction worker ... I come home tired, so it's better for the <i>señora</i> to go. Right?</p> <p>So, those are parts of the conversations that I've had with men that, well, they pass along that responsibility to the <i>señora</i>, because she has more time for that, or they leave them with that responsibility, right? That's why we have a majority—out of 15 [learners in the study circle], 14 are women.</p>	<p><i>observamos es que este el varón justifica que tiene mucho trabajo. Desde que amanece ya se va a la milpa o se va a su trabajo. He tenido la oportunidad de entrevistar a algunos, y me dicen no pues es que yo soy albañil ... regreso cansado, y mejor que vaya la señora. ¿Sí?</i></p> <p><i>Entonces son partes de las conversaciones que he tenido con varones que, pues, ya le cede la responsabilidad a la señora. Como que tiene más tiempo para eso, o ya les dejan la responsabilidad, ¿no? Entonces por eso tenemos en su inmensa mayoría—de 15 [educandos en el círculo de estudio], son 14 mujeres.</i></p>
24.10.2018-7.28	Celia	<p>The reason there are mostly women [in the MIB], it's because I think that before, they didn't take studying very seriously ... now, they realise that it's important, right?</p>	<p><i>Porque mayoría son mujeres, porque creo que antes no, no lo tomaron muy en serio lo que es el estudio ... ahorita se dan cuenta que si es importante.</i></p>
5.10.2018-7.29	Francisco	<p>I was telling them that, like, I understand their situation. Because, well—they also work ... they don't have a salary, but they work. As of dawn, they attend to the children who go to school, the food, their little animals, if they have little animals, or X or Y, well, activities they have at home ... women multiply themselves in that way, right? ... I've seen how, well, sometimes when we visit them, they're active ... I've never found a woman lying down ... in her hammock when we visit them. They're busy all day.</p>	<p><i>Yo les decía que como, comprendo su situación, porque pues éste también ellas trabajan ... aunque no tienen un salario, pero trabajan. Desde que amanece, ellas atienden lo de los niños que van a la escuela, lo de la comida, lo de sus animalitos, si tienen animalitos, o X o Y, este, actividad que tengan en la casa ... la mujer se multiplica en eso, ¿no? ... Yo he observado cómo, este, a veces cuando los visitamos están activas ... no he encontrado una mujer</i></p>

			<i>acostada ... en su hamaquita cuando llegamos a visitarlas. Todo el día están ocupadas.</i>
24.10.2018-7.30	Celia	The first time they arrived, each person did tell their story. Why they were here, why they wanted to study. Some because, well, because their parents were <i>machistas</i> , another because supposedly her parents didn't want to give her money to, well, buy the [school supplies] ... So, both because of economic resources and because of rights, well, they couldn't study. And now, well, that they're coming, well, now they're studying.	<i>La primera vez que llegaron, pues sí contaron su historia de cada quien. Que porque estaban aquí, de porque querían estudiar. Algunas porque, pues, porque sus papás eran machistas, el otro porque según sus papás no le querían dar dinero pues para comprarle los [útiles escolares] ... Pues, por parte de tanto de los recursos económicos y por derechos, pues, no pudieron estudiar. Y ya ahorita, pues, que ya vienen, pues, que ya estudian.</i>
24.10.2018-7.31	Celia	Yes, the men were given permission [to attend school]. But they [the women] weren't, maybe because their parents—maybe they were very <i>machistas</i> , and they told them no, you shouldn't go, you have nothing to do there. All you have to do is do housework. So there—they know more about cooking than about how to read.	<i>Si, a los hombres sí le dieron permiso [de ir a la escuela]. Pero que ellas no, que nada más sus papás—a lo mejor eran muy machistas y le decía no, tú no tienes que ir, no tienes nada que hacer allá. Lo único que tienes que hacer es quehacer en el hogar. Pues ahí—ellas saben más cocinar que saber leer.</i>
21.11.2018-7.32	Adriana	I haven't finished primaria ... My dad, well—well, before he used to say that us women, well, we don't—it's not worth it for us to study ... that us women, that we're worth nothing. Only men. Like that. Like that. I wanted to move on, but he didn't support me anymore ... Instead, he says that he's not going to send me to school anymore. He pulled me out of school ... Whatever they told us, that's what you had to do. And if you don't do it,	<i>Mi papá, este—pues, antes más me decía que nosotras las mujeres, pues, no—no tenemos validez de estudiar ... que nosotras las mujeres, que nosotras no valemos nada. Solamente los hombres. Así. Así. Yo quería seguir adelante, pero él ya no me apoyó ... mejor me dice que ya no me va a mandar a la escuela. Me sacó de la escuela ... Nosotros lo que digan, es lo que tienes que hacer. Y si no lo haces, pues ya sabes ... ya si tu lo</i>

		<p>well you know ... if you talk back, they belittle you. He hits you, and you get scared. That's what I suffered through back then ... that's why I moved here with my partner. Because my father wouldn't send me to school anymore, and well, I couldn't find anything to do. I got together with a man when I was 15 years old.</p> <p>It wasn't okay, nothing—what was I going to do? When I left with my partner, that's when I saw that I had suffered ... but it's not what I wanted. I wanted to, well, keep studying. But he didn't give me, my father didn't give me any support ... I believe for lack of money, I don't know why ... So that's why I didn't finish studying at all. Now as an adult, well—well, I started because, well, there's an opportunity for that. From INEA ... so that's why we're here right now.</p>	<p><i>contestas, pues te hacen menos. Te golpea, y te asustas. Así yo sufrí en esos tiempos ... y eso es que ya me junté para acá. Porque mi papá también no me mandan más a la escuela, pues, yo no hallaba que hacer. Yo me junté con un hombre a los 15 años.</i></p> <p><i>No está bien, nada—¿que voy a hacer? Cuando yo me junté, es cuando vi que ya sufrí ... pero no es lo que yo quería. Yo quería, este, seguir estudiando. Pero no me dio, no me dio el apoyo a mi papá ... yo creo por falta de dinero, no sé porque ... Entonces por eso yo no terminé nada de estudiar. Ahora ya de adulta pues, pues, también entré porque, pues, hay una oportunidad de eso. De la INEA. Si, y por eso estamos ahorita aquí.</i></p>
20.11.2018-7.33	Paola	<p>For example, I have a student, and I was telling her, where's your certificate? She said, I did finish <i>primaria</i>, she told me. But I had to go back to the beginning ... she said, <i>me junté</i> [moved away with a partner] she said. My father got angry and he burned my certificate ... so she had to start from scratch ... to get her certificate back. So, I think that <i>machismo</i>, well, it was felt then. And it still exists.</p>	<p><i>Y tengo, por ejemplo, una alumna que yo le decía, ¿y tu certificado? Dice, yo sí terminé la primaria, me decía ella. Pero yo de tuve que regresar desde el principio ... yo me junté, dice. Mi papá se enojó y me quemó mi certificado ... entonces tuvo que empezar de cero ... para volver a tener su papel. Entonces yo creo que el machismo pues, pues, si se sintió. Y todavía existe.</i></p>
26.10.2018-7.34	Diana	<p>Well, I think that <i>machismo</i> has always been there. And here, I've been a bit open with my learners. I tell them, now there are a lot of things ... before, well there wasn't a</p>	<p><i>Pues, yo creo que el machismo siempre ha habido. Y acá, yo he sido un poco abierta con mis educandos. Les digo, ahorita ya hay muchas cosas ... anteriormente, pues no</i></p>

		<p>Casa de Día [women's shelter], support for Indigenous women. That, well, they had to have the children that, well, that God sent them, right? ... Looking at it today, in everyday life, well, it's not like that ... there has been gender equity now, well—now it's kind of, it's levelled off a bit. Although there are still [some women] that are mistreated, that are abused by their husbands.</p>	<p><i>había lo que es Casa de Día, apoyo hacia la mujer indígena. De que pues, tenían que tener los hijos que, pues, que Dios les enviaba ¿no? ... Viéndolo hoy en día, la vida cotidiana, pues, no es así ... ya hubo la equidad de género, pues, ya como que se—se ha nivelado un poco. Aunque hay todavía [mujeres] que son maltratadas, qué son ultrajadas por sus esposos.</i></p>
26.10.2018-7.35	Diana	<p>It did reflect her [the learner's] life a lot. Because she even told us about it here [in the study circle], right? She told us that they married her, she got married at age 14. And she had, her—she has 8 children ... and she got sick, and her husband didn't let her go to the doctor. Because, well, sometimes it happens, right? ... The husband says, don't go. The machismo. So that's related there with ... the books ... I told her, your story is there.</p>	<p><i>Si se reflejaba mucho su vida. porque ella incluso nos las platico aquí [en el círculo de estudio] ¿no? Nos dijo que a ella la casaron, se casó a los 14 años. Y tuvo, sus—tiene 8 hijos ... y se enfermó, y no lo [la] dejaba ir al médico su marido. Porque, pues, a veces suele pasar ¿no?... te dice el marido, vete. El machismo. Entonces viene relacionado ahí con ... estos libros ... le digo, aquí esta tu historia.</i></p>
26.10.2018-7.36	Ximena	<p>My husband didn't want me to 'tie my egg' [get tubal ligation]. That's why I kept having them [her children]. I had nine, but I aborted, well—I had two abortions and seven lived. And so, well, my husband said no, because if you are going to [get tubal ligation] now, it's because you're loose. Because that's what they say sometimes—women are loose. That's what he told me. That sometimes women do that. They sometimes they cheat, they cheat on us [the men].</p>	<p><i>Mi esposo no quería que yo me ligara el huevo. Por eso fue que los fui teniendo [sus hijos]. Tuve nueve, pero aborté, pues—tuve dos abortos y viven siete. Y así, pues, mi esposo me decía no, porque si te vas a ligar ahorita, es porque eres mañosa. Porque luego así dicen—las mujeres que son mañosas. Así me decía. Que luego así hacen las mujeres. Que luego engañan—nos engañan [a los hombres].</i></p>

		Sometimes we do get those who are men that serve us [as facilitators], right? That, that was the problem ... [Or] the doctors who serve us.	<i>Luego si tocan que son los que son hombres los que nos atienden ¿no? Eso ese era el problema ... Los doctores que nos atendieran.</i>
26.10.2018-7.37	Diana	<p>I have a similar case here with the <i>compañera</i> [colleague]... sometimes she tells me that, well, ‘My husband doesn’t, he doesn’t allow me to come to school’ ... I tell her, but then you try to talk to them, I tell her. Try to talk to him—or even bring him here so I can talk ... today, well, <i>machismo</i>, well, it’s no longer—nowadays it should no longer be ... Because today we have rights. And there’s no reason for them to mistreat you.</p> <p>So, then, I think that here we promote a little bit of psychology in our study circle as well ... it’s not just the subject of a book, but we ... open up the space. Maybe we start with a theme, but we come to another theme that leads us to our daily lives. So from there, they open up to the spaces.</p> <p>As a citizen of here, of this town, well, I try—I do what I can to support them. So sometimes, well, I say, well, don’t let them, right? Don’t let them mistreat you. You have the right to go, and to do and, well—because you’re a human being. Your life is worth a lot.</p>	<p><i>Entonces tengo un caso similar acá con la compañera ... luego me platica que, pues, ‘Luego mi esposo no, no me permite que venga la escuela’ ... le digo, pero pues tú trata de hablar con ellos, le digo. Trata de hablar con el—o incluso tráelo para que yo platique ... hoy en día, pues, el machismo, pues, ya no es—en la actualidad ya no debería de ser ... porque hoy en día ya tenemos derechos. Y no tienen por qué maltratarte, más que nada.</i></p> <p><i>Entonces, pues, nosotras acá también creo que fomentamos un poco de psicología también en nuestro círculo de estudios ... no nada más es el tema de un libro sino ... abrimos el espacio. Ya a la mejor empezamos con un tema, pero llegamos a otro tema que nos conlleva a nuestra vida cotidiana. Entonces de ahí ya se abren a los espacios.</i></p> <p><i>Yo como ciudadana de aquí del pueblo, pues, trato—hago lo posible por apoyarlas. Entonces a veces, pues, yo le digo, pues, no te dejes, ¿no? No dejes que te maltraten. Tienes derecho de ir, y de hacer y, pues, porque tú eres un ser humano. Tu vida vale mucho.</i></p>
23.11.2018-7.38	Mario	I did like class ... I finished fifth grade in primaria. But because, well—you see, first my father told me ... ‘That boy shouldn’t be in school so much, because he’s going to	<i>Yo sí me gusta clase ... yo terminé en quinto grado en primaria. Pero como, este—ya ves que primero mi papá me dijeron que ‘Que ese niño no debe dejar tanto la escuela,</i>

		<p>get lazy and he's not going to work. No, bring him here, let him work' ... At that time, I was like twelve, thirteen years old.</p> <p>I regret it. Well, that I couldn't get ahead. Because I left [school] for my dad, he was alone, and he was working by himself ... [I went] to work to earn money. To work in the <i>milpa</i> [field]... It's been about ten, twenty years, since I left school. I forgot everything.</p>	<p><i>porque se va a hacer flojo y no va a trabajar'. 'No, tráelo acá, que trabaje' ... En aquel tiempo, [tenía] como doce, trece años.</i></p> <p><i>Yo me arrepiento. Pues, ya no pude salir más adelante. Porque mejor lo dejé [la escuela] por mi papá, está solo y está trabajando ... [me fui] a trabajar para ganar dinero. Para trabajar la milpa ... Ya tardé unos diez, veinte años, ya por ahí ya lo dejé el estudio. Se me olvidó todo.</i></p>
23.11.2018-7.39	Pedro	<p>[Mario] explained that his father, before, gave work more importance than education. And then later, after some time, he was invited to [the MIB], where he later sort of started learning ... they see a necessity, where it is necessary to learn ... Why? Because now he depends on himself, he said ... before, that was impossible, but now ... that's what they let us know.</p>	<p><i>Entonces se le explicaba que su papá, anteriormente era más trabajo que les daba de más importancia que lo que la educación. Y ya posteriormente paso el lapso del tiempo donde lo invitaron [al MIB]. Donde posteriormente fue medio aprendiendo ... se ven una necesidad dónde si es necesario aprender ... ¿Por qué? Porque ahora ya como depende de el mismo, ya él decía ... anteriormente, cuando era imposible pero ahora ... lo que da a conocer.</i></p>
5.10.2018-7.40	Francisco	<p>When I was 12 years old, they took me to a social integration centre called, um—in the, the 70s, they were called Social Integration Centres. They were boarding schools where they took us Indigenous children ... We stayed there, we lived there ... they took us away from our families.</p>	<p><i>A los 12 años fue cuando me llevaron a un centro de integración social que se llamaba, este—en los años este 70, se llamaban Centros de Integración Social. Eran unos internados donde nos llevaban a los, a los niños indígenas ... allá permanecíamos, allá vivíamos ... nos alejaban de la familia.</i></p>

5.10.2018-7.41	Francisco	They, um—‘rescued’ us. That's what they called it, they ‘rescued’ the boarding school graduates. They gave us eight months of training and we left as <i>castellanizadores</i> [Spanish language teachers]. But the intention, the dark part of that time, was to alphabetise to disappear the language ... They wanted us to disappear as a culture. As Indigenous groups. As people. Because they could no longer, um, integrate us as a single Mexican society.	<i>Nos fueron, este—‘rescatando’. Así le llamaban, nos ‘rescataban’ a los egresados del internado. Nos dieron una capacitación de ocho meses y nos fuimos como castellanizadores. Pero la intención, la parte oscura de aquel entonces, era alfabetizar para desaparecer la lengua ... Nos querían desaparecer como cultura. Cómo grupos indígenas. Cómo personas. Que ya no nos podían, este, integrar como una sola sociedad mexicana.</i>
5.10.2018-7.42	Francisco	I had, well, I call it an opportunity ... an opportunity that we went against the government back then. Because yes, just like what happened in ‘68, it was going to happen to us ... Because they just wanted us to be bilingual technicians, they didn't want us to have a teacher's degree at that time ... they were pigeonholing us to just be technicians.	<i>Yo tuve, pues, yo le llamo oportunidad ... una oportunidad el que nos hayamos puesto en contra del gobierno en aquel entonces. Porque si, así como sucedió en el 68, así nos iba a suceder en Yucatán. Porque nada más nos querían hacer como técnicos bilingües, no querían ni un título de profesor para nosotros en esa época ... nos estaban encasillando a ser técnicos nada más.</i>
5.10.2018-7.43	Francisco	We rebelled, and we were the first class [of students] to fight against the [state] government ... the youngest of us practically went out caña y cañón [armed with canes and cannons]. We were at the front of the marches to get them [the government] to recognize the study we were doing as bilingual teachers.	<i>Nos rebelamos, y fuimos la primera generación [de alumnos] que luchamos en contra del gobierno ... pues prácticamente los más jóvenes fuimos caña y cañón, fuimos los primeros que íbamos en las marchas para lograr que [el gobierno] nos reconocieran el estudio que estábamos haciendo como maestros bilingües.</i>
5.10.2018-7.44	Francisco	Because I was working in the communities, I was seeking a teacher's profile ... For a long time, I couldn't get into any Normal [teacher training colleges] ... they rejected my	<i>Porque yo, dando el servicio a las comunidades, buscaba un perfil de profesor ... en un largo tiempo no pude ingresar a ninguna [escuela] Normal ... me rechazaron el</i>

		degree. They told me it was invalid, and everything. And they, they pushed us Indigenous peoples back.	<i>título. Me dijeron que no tenía validez, y todo. Y nos, nos rezagaban a los indígenas.</i>
5.10.2018-7.45	Francisco	It was almost as if I was fighting against a system by myself ... we would make proposals through the [teacher's] union, we made proposals through the department, and nothing. Like I told you, when I went to the Normal Superior in Campeche, they saw my degree and they simply told me that it doesn't have—I mean, that it doesn't have, well—that it wasn't right.	<i>Pues casi, casi estaba yo solo luchando contra un sistema ... hacíamos las propuestas a través del sindicato [de maestros], hacíamos las propuestas a través del departamento, y nada. Le digo que cuando fui a la Normal Superior de Campeche me vieron el título y me dijeron simple y sencillamente no tiene—este, no tiene, este—que no estaba bien.</i>
5.10.2018-7.46	Francisco	They practically, I mean, they rejected me ... when the UPN opened its doors ... to Indigenous teachers ... that's when I got the <i>licenciatura</i> [bachelor's degree] ... and I was able to get my degree.	<i>Pues yo prácticamente, o sea, me rechazaron ... cuando la UPN abrió las puertas ... a los maestros indígenas ... entonces fue cuando yo tuve una licenciatura para el medio indígena. Y pude hacer mi licenciatura.</i>
5.10.2018-7.47	Francisco	In all of this, I think it's been <i>years</i> of struggle ... I say struggle because, because every day, um, you have that, well—what do you call it? The desire to improve every day, right?	<i>En todo esto yo creo que ha sido años de lucha ... lucha digo yo por la, porque todos los días, eh, uno tiene esa pues—qué será, el deseo de mejorar cada día, ¿no?</i>
3.10.2018-7.48	Manuel	My parents were participating in slavery. My father was a slave. My grandfather was a slave.	<i>Mis papás estaban participando en esclavitud. Mi papá fue esclavo. Mi abuelo fue esclavo.</i>
3.10.2018-7.49	Manuel	The owners of the <i>fincas</i> [agricultural estates] ... [would wake them up] at 4 in the morning ... when the trumpet sounded, all the slaves had to get up ... they go to work ...	<i>Los dueños de las fincas ... [los despertaban] a las 4 de la mañana ... cuando suena la trompeta, todos los esclavos se tienen que levantar ... se van a trabajar ... trabajan para el</i>

		they work for the <i>patrón</i> [boss or landowner] ... and when they fail, they don't get there on time, they give them their <i>cintazo</i> [beating with a belt] ... they tie them up on a special tree or something, and they give them their <i>cintazo</i> .	<i>patrón ... y cuándo falla, no llega a la hora, le dan su cintazo ... las amarran en un árbol especial o algo, y le daban su cintazo.</i>
3.10.2018-7.50	Manuel	My grandfather died there. My father left when—when my grandfather took on the debt ... my grandfather took all of my father's debt. And that's how he got out, and another uncle too. My grandfather was the one who was left carrying all the debts.	<i>Mi abuelo se murió allá. Mi papa salió cuando—cuando mi abuelo ya tomó el cargo ... mi abuelo cargó toda la cuenta de mi papá. Y así fue que salió, y otro tío también. Mi abuelo fue el que quedo cargando todas las deudas.</i>