Chapter 3
Creating knowledge and resources: Strategies in scholarship

> *El lenguaje [es . . .] el ánfora cristalina que permite eternizar los conceptos y las vivencias de los hombres. Por eso es el más fiel reflejo de su mentalidad y la más fecunda manifestación de su cultura. Podrán desaparecer las razas y las naciones, pero si se conservan sus idiomas, el hombre de ciencia, físico, químico, fisiólogo, psicólogo o filósofo podrá retirar del acervo intelectual contenido en el lenguaje, la parte que le interese, para analizarla, clasificarla a fin de reconstruir, como un naturalista, con un solo dato, el organismo completo, en sistema científico que le parezca.*

> Language [is . . .] the crystal vial that permits the eternalization of the concepts and lived experiences of man. Because of this it is the most loyal reflection of man's mentality and the most fecund manifestation of his culture. Races and nations can disappear, but if their languages are conserved, the man of science, physics, chemistry, physiology or philosophy, will be able to retrieve from the intellectual archive contained in language the part that interests him, in order to analyze it, classify it in order to reconstruct, like a natural scientist, with a single data point, the complete organism in the scientific system that he chooses.
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> (Crúz 1935: 8–9)

The value of language as an "intellectual archive" that accurately reflects thought and culture and lends itself to later classification and analysis, elegantly articulated by Wilfrido C. Crúz in the above citation, should sound familiar to anyone who has participated in the field of linguistics, and in documentary linguistics in particular. Many other language scholars and activists have made the argument that language has enduring value as a scientific object, drawing on a paradigm in which language is essentialized or understood as a structure (rather than a socially constructed practice), as discussed in section 1.2. Linguistic anthropologist Jane Hill (2002) discussed both the potential usefulness and risks of rhetoric that presents language as an object of incalculable and universal value. She noted that "hyperbolic valorization" and "universal ownership" of language are common themes in the arguments made by scholars and some advocates in the field of language endangerment, such as the above descriptions of language as a "crystal vial" that can be accessed by any and all disciplines of science at some future point when the speakers of the language may have "disappeared". Although these arguments may be effective for their intended audience of policy makers, other scholars, and people outside of endangered language communities, Hill (2002) was concerned that they may have an unintended result of delegitimizing everyday speech and the knowledge of speakers within minoritized communities.

Scholars play a political role through their actions and through their discourses and imaginaries, as Hill and others have pointed out. There are multiple paradigms and practices across the academic disciplines that engage in minoritized language issues, each with potential advantages and disadvantages in specific contexts. Although there are trends and stereotypes among scholarly practices – such as documentary linguists focusing on linguistic structure and sociolinguists focusing on language use and meaning (Moore, Pietikainen, and Blommaert 2010) – an ethnographic examination of language promotion in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec reveals a wide variety of imaginaries and strategies employed among scholar-activists. The citation that opens this chapter is one such example of scholar-activism which does not fall into one category alone. While it contains discursive styles that are typically attributed to linguistic researchers, it was written by an Isthmus Zapotec speaker and self-trained scholar of Zapotec language and culture.

Wilfrido C. Crúz (1898–1948), a native of the town of Espinal, engaged in various forms of linguistic and cultural research and scholarly publishing on the side of his primary occupation as a lawyer and later a politician in Oaxaca City. The passage above comes from his *El Tonalamatl Zapoteco: Ensayo sobre su interpretación lingüística* [The Zapotec Tonalamatl [Almanac]: Essay on its linguistic interpretation], an analysis of the Zapotec ritual calendar and a linguistic analysis of the terms therein, as well as a retelling of some Zapotec legends. Published in 1935, it was a product of research he had engaged in and presented over several decades (Hernández Ruiz, forthcoming). In the above passage, and throughout his work, Crúz argued for the importance of linguistic analysis as an aid in scientific research of all kinds. He critiqued the lack of Indigenous language comprehension among historical and anthropological scholars working in Mexico, arguing that linguistic analysis was necessary for cultural comprehension and scientific discovery. He later worked on a vocabulary of Zapotec comparing different varieties (Isthmus, Sierra, Valley) and was especially interested in recording words that were going out of use. He also lamented the lack of purity in the Zapotec of his day due to the "*acción corrosiva de la cultura europea en los diversos dialectos del zapoteco*" [corrosive action/ effect of European culture on the diverse dialects of Zapotec], in particular the use of Spanish words (Crúz 1935: 6–7). Although Crúz's work did not gain wide circulation, it has been preserved and is valued among historians and language enthusiasts in the Isthmus, due to both its content and pride in Zapotec autochthonous scholarship.

Crúz was not alone in studying and writing about his language; as early as the late 19th century *Istmeños* such as Arcadio G. Molino, a native of San Blas Atempa, were writing in and about Isthmus Zapotec (Pérez Báez, Cata, and Bueno Holle 2015). At the time Crúz was producing scholarship in the 1920s-40s,

a younger generation of Isthmus Zapotec intellectuals was emerging, in particular a community of youth who had moved to Mexico City to study. One of the key promoters of this endeavor was Andrés Henestrosa (1906–2008), a native of Ixhuatán, who heard Crúz talk about his research into Zapotec legends in the 1920s, and published his own version of some of these myths and several of his own stories in his 1929 book *Los hombres que dispersó la danza* [The men who were dispersed by dance]. Henestrosa went on to have a career as a writer, scholar, and eventually a politician. While Crúz worked to uncover words and traditions he viewed as endangered in order to document them for posterity, Henestrosa viewed his work as part of an ongoing cultural practice. Henestrosa (2009 [1929]) wrote in the forward to the 1945 second edition of *Los hombres que dispersó la danza* that Crúz's work "*tiene un alcance científico, arqueológico, se preocupa por la verdad histórica: el mío busca la verdad poética, que es otra cosa*" [has a scientific, archeological reach, it is concerned with historical truth: mine looks for poetic truth, which is another thing] (22). The group of young intellectuals of which Henestrosa was a part began to publish the journal *Neza* [Path] beginning in 1935, containing articles in Spanish on Isthmus history, culture and language, as well as poetry in Isthmus Zapotec. This journal gave a venue for the multiple *Istmeños* who were interested in studying their history, language, and culture, as well as those engaged in literary production in both Spanish and Zapotec.

When the American missionary and linguist Velma Pickett (1912–2008) began researching Isthmus Zapotec in the 1940s she noted that there were people writing in – as well as about – Diidxazá. In reflecting on the trajectory of her work she wrote "*Cuando llegué a Juchitán en diciembre de 1943, encontré que ya había escritores y que usaban varias ortografías de acuerdo al gusto del escritor. [. . .] Antes de llegar al campo, mi conocimiento en la lingüística me dirigía hacia la regla de usar un símbolo fonético por cada fonema. Sin embargo, en la práctica [. . .]*" [When I arrived in Juchitán in December 1943, I found that there were already writers and that they used various orthographies following the taste of the writer. [. . .] Before arriving in the field, my knowledge of linguistics directed me towards the rule of using one phonetic symbol for each phoneme. However, in practice [. . .]] (Pickett 1993:27). Pickett went on to describe how the linguistic principles she brought with her were impractical in several ways, and she eventually adopted more flexible strategies. Pickett was among the first wave of missionary linguists sent by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a Christian missionary organization founded in the United States in 1934. SIL missionaries have engaged in extensive linguistic documentation and literacy work as a part of their missionary goals. From their initial work in Mexico, SIL expanded around the world and maintains an active presence

in language documentation, Indigenous literacy initiatives and linguistic research. While some of their work is framed as scholarship first and foremost, the ultimate goal is to evangelize the communities whose languages are documented, a colonial paradigm which harks back to the abusive practices of multiple Christian sects during the colonization of the Americas. Pickett was neither the first foreign linguist nor missionary to be interested in Zapotec; Fray Juan de Córdova (1503–1595), a Dominican missionary who arrived among the first waves of Spanish colonization, recorded the Zapotec spoken in the central valleys of Oaxaca and published an extensive vocabulary list and linguistic analysis in 1578 (see also chapter 2).

Pickett aimed to go beyond documentation to the promotion of literacy, although her initial attempts to develop a phonetically transparent orthography met with various critiques from her would-be public. She was eventually invited to participate in the 1956 round table initiated by Zapotec writers which resulted in the creation of the popular alphabet (see chapter 6, also Pérez Báez, Cata, and Bueno Holle 2015; De Korne 2017b), and she subsequently abandoned the orthography that she had developed and promoted the popular alphabet through her publications. Over her many decades of involvement with Diidxazá, Pickett collaborated with numerous Zapotec writers and was instrumental in the creation of a Diidxazá grammar (Pickett, Black, and Cerqueda 2001), a Spanish-Diidxazá glossary, and literacy books published using the popular alphabet. Her 1993 reflection on her participation in the development of the Isthmus Zapotec popular alphabet quoted above was written at the invitation of *Istmeño* scholar Víctor de la Cruz and published in the journal *Guchachi' Reza* [*Iguana Rajada*, Sliced Iguana] of which he was then the editor.[15] She concludes the piece noting that certain aspects of the popular alphabet may not have been well chosen from a linguistic perspective, "*Pero seguimos el clima político del tiempo y las decisiones de la mesa redonda, y me parece que los escritores del Istmo en la actualidad están contentos con las decisiones*" [But we followed the political climate of the time and the decisions of the round table, and it appears to me that the writers in the Isthmus today are happy with the decisions] (Pickett 1993:30). Pickett noted the contrast between the norms of her academic field and the social practices that she encountered, ultimately choosing the social norms as the most appropriate way to produce the desired resource of a recognized orthography. Juggling different paradigms and priorities in activism is common, whether one is working to create both linguistic

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15 *Guchachi' Reza* was a Zapotec-run magazine published by the *Casa de la Cultura* in Juchitán beginning in 1975. See also chapters 2 and 6.

description and tools for evangelism, or scholarly texts and accessible learning materials.

While many linguists and anti-colonial scholars (including myself) profoundly disagree with the evangelical aims of missionary linguists such as Pickett, it is clear that some missionary linguists developed positive relationships and collaborations in the communities where they worked. In Juchitán, where Pickett lived, people I met remembered her as a linguist (not as a missionary) and talked about her with great affection and respect, along with several other linguists who worked in the region later in the 20th century. During the decades Pickett conducted her work, all of the linguistic documentation and literacy materials produced by SIL-affiliated linguists were made freely available and dissemination was encouraged, first in paper and eventually in the on-line database *Ethnologue*. When I arrived in Juchitán in 2013 (70 years after Pickett) I observed that her vocabulary and grammar materials were in use by university students who had found them on-line and shared them amongst themselves in pdf formats, sometimes consulting them on their phones. In 2015, SIL put up a pay-wall and made *Ethnologue* a subscription-based resource, however, a choice that has disappointed and angered many linguists and activists, as evidenced by responses on *Ethnologue*'s twitter profile and linguistic blogs and list-serve conversations. Pickett was not alive to see or comment on this. Her collaborative work has been widely circulated and referenced among scholars and learners of Isthmus Zapotec in the 20th and 21st centuries; however, this may change as SIL attempts to monetize and sell the results of this research.

Wilfrido C. Crúz, Andrés Henestrosa and Velma B. Pickett are some of the people viewed as scholars or researchers of Isthmus Zapotec by *Istmeños*. Together, they illustrate something of the range of aims and actions within the domain of language research and the diverse forms of language advocacy and activism that can be linked to research. Each pursued an imagined outcome of collecting, curating and ultimately sharing knowledge about Isthmus Zapotec, however the form of knowledge they prioritized and what they produced varied. Crúz prioritized documentation and purism, producing texts aimed at a scholarly audience, but which have also attracted interest among *Istmeños* of various professions. Henestrosa attempted to capture a cultural aesthetic and collective memory, creating stories which helped establish his renown as a writer and literary figure, and which are well known both in and beyond the Isthmus Zapotec community. He successfully straddled or deconstructed the line between art and scholarship, and is recognized for cultural, historical, and linguistic contributions. Pickett adapted her priorities as a linguist in favor of the greater priority of a socially acceptable writing norm and didactic materials aimed at increasing literacy among the Isthmus Zapotec community (and eventually,

increased reading of her preferred version of the Bible). Through collaboration with Zapotec writers she gained insights and strategies to support literacy, in addition to her descriptive linguistics training. The social position of these actors varies in important ways; while Crúz and Henestrosa were scholars of the community in which they were born, Pickett was a foreigner researching a community of which she was not an organic member. As is often the case among language activists, all of them were part of multiple communities of practice. In addition to engaging in language scholarship, Crúz and Henestrosa were both politicians, Henestrosa was also in literary circles, and Pickett was an evangelist. I choose to highlight these scholars partially because they do not fit the scientific stereotype of an 'objective', 'outside' scientist working diligently to uncover truth and knowledge. In this chapter I examine research as a socio-political practice, and aim to highlight the partiality, subjectivity, and inside-outside positioning of researchers which influences minority language research.

I first learned about the work of all these scholars from people engaged in language activism in the Isthmus during my study. The varied results of their research continue to be part of the resources and influences which are present in advocacy initiatives many decades after their work was conducted. While they may not have articulated their diverse aims as part of a social project in pursuit of linguistic equality, aspects of their work have been taken up by language activists and thus form part of this social project. In this chapter I discuss several of the scholarly communities of practice which engage most prominently with language activism, including the diverse ideological orientations and resulting priorities which they typically adopt. I understand scholarly communities or scholarly actors as those who engage in research and attempt to produce and share authoritative knowledge. Most often they are part of research institutions or universities, however they can also be based in non-government organizations, missionary organizations or other organizations which engage in research as part of their activities. As characterized by Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), each of these communities of practice is typically structured around *mutual engagement* towards a *joint enterprise*, making use of a *shared repertoire* to achieve their common goal(s). The norms of the community may change over time, and individual members may vary in the ways in which they participate. Additionally, the overlapping memberships of individual social actors influence their goals and choices. For example, although many linguists would aim for a transparent and detailed linguistic description, as Pickett did, many linguists do not have evangelical goals and might have less motivation to use a popular writing norm instead of the linguistics community-internal repertoire of the International Phonetic Alphabet.

The significance of language research as a socio-political practice has been well established, with scholars emphasizing both the potential positive and negative social impacts brought about through the pursuit of language research (Cameron et al. 1992; Errington 2001; Leonard and Haynes 2010; Lewis 2018). The ability to produce knowledge which is generally viewed as legitimate and authoritative gives research, and researchers, immense potential as social actors. At the same time, the political and ideological biases of academic institutions color and limit the kind of knowledge that is pursued and produced. I am especially interested in academic disciplines as communities of practice that engage in language advocacy because they act in particularly public and visible ways, and because I am a participant in several of them, as described further in section 3.1.1 below. Some scholars embrace the political nature and potential of research, and identify as both researchers and social agents, if not activists. Others maintain a more positivist orientation, aspiring towards objectivity and impartiality. All researchers wishing to share their work beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries are likely to face differing paradigms within their institutions, in popular media, and in society.

In the following section I illustrate how different domains of scholarship (also referred to as disciplines or communities of practice) have engaged in minoritized language research (3.1). While still on the margins of academic respectability in many ways, paradigms and frameworks for socially-engaged, action research are numerous. I then situate myself as a scholar and activist participating in multiple disciplinary communities and discuss the balancing act of working among different paradigms and methods (3.1.1), highlighting some of the methodological considerations that are important in language activism research (3.1.2). I offer an analysis of the activism strategies I observed among scholars in the Isthmus (3.2). Analyzing the strategies that I observed among other scholar-activists and reflecting on my own strategies, I illustrate the salient strategies of *creating* a variety of *resources* (from databases to cellphone apps, to didactic games), *representing* the value of local *communication practices,* and *connecting people, spaces* and *resources*. In summary I review some of the possibilities and tensions of scholar activism (3.3).

3.1 Scholarly engagement with minoritized languages

Scholars have engaged with minoritized language issues from a variety of perspectives, orienting towards language use at different social scales and carving out corresponding units of analysis, as shown in the cases of Crúz, Henestrosa and Pickett. Like all social actors, scholar-activists are informed by their moment

in time and the communities of practice (academic and otherwise) that they are a part of. I draw on the notion of social scales to help tease out different forms of scholarly engagement across time and space. As Blommaert (2010) notes, "scales organize different patterns of normativity, of what counts as language" (37). Academic disciplines have developed many useful lenses for understanding language and social relations (ranging from essentialist to constructivist, and combinations in between, as discussed in section 1.2), and their practices and priorities can be linked with different social scales, including international, national, or regional territories, languages, ethnic groups, school systems, classrooms, individual learners, and instances of language use. Likewise, some disciplines focus on processes of power negotiation and legal regulations, while others focus on processes of language learning and socialization, cultural contact, and/ or production of discourses. Most disciplines consider more than one scale, process, or unit of analysis, and as in all communities of practice, they engage in constant negotiation of their shared assumptions and undertakings.

While some scholars work in multiple disciplines or transcend disciplines all together, many of us are heavily influenced by the norms of the discipline(s) we participate in. In order to lay the groundwork for discussion of strategies across scales and across disciplines, in this section I describe scholarly disciplines with special relevance to language activism, including language planning and policy, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, documentary linguistics, applied linguistics, (multilingual) education, and international development. Each community of practice that I describe is ultimately more diverse than the description and consists of evolving practices that I do not capture here; I attempt to map out only the most salient conceptual paths that have been demarcating the social project of minoritized language research.

Traditional language policy and planning (LPP) research considers the shift or maintenance of a specific language at the scale of a territory or political unit as influenced by political regulations, such as official language status and corpus or standardization planning (Cooper 1989; Fishman 1991). Language ecology scholars discuss the organic interplay of multiple languages within a territory (Haugen 1972; Fill and Muhlhausler 2001; Maffi 2001), noting that languages thrive or become threatened in complex linguistic ecologies many of which are undergoing dramatic shifts worldwide (Calvet 1974; Hornberger and Hult 2008). More recently, LPP research has attended to political processes at local scales such as the classroom or the family (Canagarajah 2005; Shohamy 2006; Menken and García 2010), and across scales (Hornberger and Johnson 2007). Achieving a balance between different language varieties in society or redressing past imbalances is often the goal, in addition to describing how

political processes and regulations influence language use. As more and more countries, including Mexico, have given legal recognition to Indigenous languages, scholars have pointed out that national-level recognition has not been powerful enough to change social prejudices in society, as discussed in chapter 2 (Stroud and Heugh 2004; Hamel 2008b). This has led to greater interest in bottom-up politics and the agency of local actors within LPP (Johnson and Johnson 2015; Lim, Stroud, and Wee 2018).

At the intersection of language and society on the meso and micro scale, interactional sociolinguistics has examined language politics at regional and local scales, including discursive and interactional forms of inequality such as diglossia and prejudice among speech communities (Ferguson 1959; Goffman 1967; Haugen 1973). Variationist sociolinguistics has illuminated patterns in language use that relate to social inequalities, providing further insight into the social differences constructed through language (Labov 1970; 2008). Linguistic anthropology has also examined patterns in language use, socialization, and the social meanings or ideologies associated with different ways of speaking in diverse cultural contexts, from schools, to families, to political arenas (Philips 1972; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Gal and Woolard 2001). More recent work drawing on both the interactionist sociolinguistics tradition and linguistic anthropology continues to make visible the social dynamics at play through and around minoritized and endangered languages in particular (Nevins 2004; Meek 2010; Webster 2010; Moore 2012; Urla 2012; Davis 2019).

Some scholars have also focused on the discourses and ideologies that circulate around minoritized languages in the wider society, including the media, policy, and popular discourse, as well as activist discourses. Beginning with Richard Ruiz's (1984) classic typology of orientations to language as a problem, a right, or a resource, numerous critical discourse analysis studies have illuminated language ideologies in different contexts, on different scales (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998; Fairclough 2003; Jaffe 2009; Reisigl and Wodak 2009). Discourses that have come to be stereotypical of language endangerment media and scholarship have been examined and critiqued, in particular the tendency to essentialize and enumerate languages, cultures and communities (Hill 2002; Suslak 2009; Moore, Pietikainen, and Blommaert 2010), and to resist what may be considered to be natural changes in language practice (Duchêne and Heller 2007; Blommaert 2010). Discourse analysis studies thus often deconstruct ideologies of language endangerment and point out potential harms, such as Cameron's (2007) analysis of language preservation discourse as qualitatively similar to discourses underlying the formation of nation-states and supremacist movements.

The field of documentary and descriptive linguistics has expanded exponentially in recent decades, aiming to record and archive as many language varieties as possible, as they are declining in use, or as frequently expressed, before they 'die' or 'go extinct' (Hale et al. 1992; Hagège 2000; Harrison 2010; Grinevald and Bert 2012). Taking discrete languages or dialects (and often specifically their structural properties) as units of analysis, the goal is to conserve the oldest variety of a language, with minimal interference from other varieties. Young linguists are taught that "as fieldworkers, we study language and culture from the outside by objectifying it, analyzing it, and quantifying it" (Bowern 2015: 177). Although the focus on endangered languages is more recent, this discipline has conceptual roots that go back to the 'salvage linguistics' of early American linguists (Moore 2000) such as Franz Boas, Leonard Bloomfield, Edward Sapir, and Morris Swadesh (e.g. Boaz 1911). The process of recording a language is considered to save the language from 'extinction', as it will be conserved in archival format whether or not it continues to be used, similar to Wilfrid Crúz's vision of the "intellectual archive contained in language" which can advance science after "races" and "nations" have disappeared, as quoted in the opening of this chapter. The quantitative and archive-focused practices of this discipline have been critiqued by linguists interested in the goal of supporting threatened language communities (Dobrin, Austin, and Nathan 2009), bringing new forms of reflexivity and an emphasis on collaborative models (Yamada 2007; Stebbins 2012; Pérez Báez 2018) as the field continues to expand with its own graduate programs, conferences and journals.[16]

Applied linguistics and second language acquisition research has developed quasi-experimental approaches to understanding the linguistic, cognitive, and social variables and processes of language acquisition and education, with the goal to ultimately improve language education practice (Pica 1997). Many applied linguistic studies have focused on individual learners as units of analysis which are studied under the influence of controlled contextual variables, such as age, additional languages spoken (especially first language or L1) (Lado 1959), and different forms and amounts of language input (Krashen 1982). The errors or "interlanguage" produced were seen as part of the learner's unidirectional trajectory towards native or monolingual-like mastery of a language (Selinker 1971), creating a paradigm of "native speakerism" which remains ingrained despite efforts to challenge it (Rampton 1990; Kumaravadivelu 2014). Although applied linguistics scholarship has considered mainly learners and

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16 For example: http://icldc4.weebly.com; http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ldc; http://www.elpublishing.org

speakers of national languages and ignored marginalized languages, attention to minoritized languages has increased in the past decade, and there are many common interests between applied linguistics scholars and minoritized language activists and educators (Valdés 2005; Cope and Penfield 2011; King 2016). A 'social turn' in applied linguistics has supported increased use of qualitative methodologies and consideration of additional influences and concerns in the language learning process (Firth and Wagner 1997), including understandings of self, others, and cross-cultural communication in language education (Byram 1997; Norton 2000). Current trends in applied linguistics recognize the multiplicity of factors that influence language learning, not all of which fit into experimental designs, and many of which exist on scales beyond the individual learner (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Pennycook 2001, 2018) and beyond individual languages (May 2013; Douglas Fir Group 2016).

Consideration of multilingual learners' processes of language development has led to a more flexible view of language acquisition and use among scholars in education, with attention to the agency that individuals use to move between different language resources and registers and the interrelation of competencies across languages (Heller and Martin-Jones 2001; Lüdi 2004; García 2009a). Applied linguistic and education scholars' engagement with minoritized languages has expanded through attempts to teach threatened languages and/ or develop learning materials in collaboration with language communities (Hinton and Hale 2001; De Korne et al. 2009), and to promote endangered languages in schools (Hornberger and King 1996). As the promotion of Indigenous languages in schools gains traction, Indigenous education practitioners and researchers have encouraged the use of "indigenous frameworks for thinking about schooling" (Smith 2005: 94), in line with the call for culturally responsive forms of education (Ladson-Billings 1995; Osborne 1996; Paris 2012) (discussed further in chapter 4). Literacy education scholars have likewise moved towards a more fluid and locally-informed approach to reading and writing education, aiming to better understand how biliteracy is developed (Hornberger 2003) and to support multimodal and critical literacies (Cazden et al. 1996; Kress 2000; Martin-Jones and Jones 2001). Andrés Henestrosa's adaptation of Zapotec oral myths into Spanish prose with frequent use of Diidxazá terms, and his support of contemporary Zapotec literature through the journal *Neza* and other projects throughout his career, is an example of the kinds of translingual and transcultural expression which literacy educators encourage as a way to give voice to multilingual people who have been marginalized by would-be monolingual nation states (Hornberger and Link 2012).

In contexts in which minoritized languages are used by children entering formal education, "mother tongue" or "vernacular" education has been officially

endorsed by UNESCO (UNESCO 1953; 2003) and argued for by the recent field of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994). It has been incorporated as a strategy in the efforts of numerous aid and development organizations (such as MTB-MLE network, www.mlenetwork.org); Save the Children (Pinnock 2011); UNICEF (Ingram 2010); USAID (Carolyn Adger, p.c. July 2012) and many smaller NGOs and missionary organizations, including the organization of which Velma Pickett was a member, SIL. These civil society and faith-based organizations may have a significant impact on actual education practices through funding schools and collaborating with national governments.[17] Their programs tend to focus on the scale of ethnic or linguistic groups, assuming that one mother tongue can be attributed to each group, and that these groups will prefer to receive education in their vernacular language (Benson 2004; Dekker and Young 2005; Ball 2010). The aim is to improve the educational outcomes of children in specific groups or schools (although how "improvement" is understood can vary, and is often measured by standardized tests). The goal of literacy in the minoritized language is also a common goal, but often included only as a secondary measurement of program success, with transition to literacy in the majority language receiving greater emphasis in NGO programs (Guzman 2005; Premsrirat and Samoh 2012). Missionary linguists, SIL in particular, have generally invested more time in local language literacy than NGOs, creating first alphabets and then primers and workbooks alongside translated religious texts (as noted above, in the case of Isthmus Zapotec this includes a "pedagogical grammar" and other workbooks as well as translation of the new testament).

In summary, while linguists orient to languages and applied linguists orient to learners, sociolinguists orient to the ideologies and social meanings around languages and learners– which, they sometimes argue, are responsible for creating languages, learners, speakers, etc. as recognizable social phenomena in the first place. Education development researchers and practitioners orient to overall education outcomes (however they choose to conceptualize and measure those), as well as alphabets, literacy materials and text production. The scholarly communities of practice that contribute to the production of knowledge and resources on Indigenous or minoritized communication practices are thus made up of different paradigms, epistemological traditions, and a wide range of actors, with differing imaginaries, goals, and forms of engagement. Each of these disciplines has something to offer to scholar-activism projects, although none of them is

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17 For example, the Philippines DepEd Orders 74 of 2009 and 16 of 2012 (establishing mother tongue education as national policy) were directly influenced by the research and reporting of SIL members (Walter and Dekker 2008).

sufficient to solve issues of language inequality. In the following sections, I describe how I have studied and worked within several communities of practice as a scholar-activist (3.1.1) and some of the methodological considerations which I consider to be important in this endeavor (3.1.2).

3.1.1 Working as a scholar-activist across multiple disciplines

While some of the scholars in the academic communities described here are members of minoritized language communities (in any of the many ways which 'membership' can be understood), many are not, and all have multiple identities and motivations which inform their work, as described in relation to Crúz, Henestrosa and Pickett in the opening of this chapter. I am a white, female, settler-European American who has chosen to become an interdisciplinary scholar, educator and activist. Throughout my involvement in Indigenous language education and advocacy I have worked in different ways and come to talk about my work relative to the communities of practice I have participated in. When I first studied Anishinaabemowin or Ojibwe in tribally-run classes and worked on materials development and documentation for the Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians in my home region of northern Michigan, I adopted the habit of writing about 'the Language' with a capital 'L. I did this because of the ways my teachers and colleagues talked about their heritage way of speaking, often discussing its uniqueness, spiritual significance, and intimate connection with their identity. As a student of applied linguistics in British Columbia, Canada, I was socialized to learn the auto-denominations of First Nations' languages and to use them wherever possible, respecting Indigenous names as part of separate systems of meaning making, and signaling my respect for the equality and individuality of these systems. I also learned about language acquisition within the native-speaker, quasi-experimental paradigm that has dominated much of applied linguistics, although I chose to focus in my own research on the issue of "community control" within official language education policies (De Korne 2010).

When I learned about multilingualism and minority languages in Europe within a critical and interactionist sociolinguistics framework as a research fellow in Luxembourg, for the first time I was exposed to scholarship which questioned the moral superiority of minority groups and linguistic rights movements. I began to learn conceptual frameworks that captured the fluid and constructed nature of language, social groups, and power hierarchies; issues which I had already observed in practice but not named as such. This constructivist perspective gained new nuances as I participated in education scholarship in the United States as a student of educational linguistics, where I began to talk about

communicative repertoires and communities of practice in place of the Language and its People. Experiences working in non-governmental organizations (Save the Children and the Center for Applied Linguistics), academic outreach projects (the Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages), and participating in a study of the reclamation of a sleeping language (Hornberger, De Korne, and Weinberg 2016; Weinberg and De Korne 2016) have further influenced my perspective. As a result of my participation in a variety of scholarly and activist domains, my own orientation is towards minoritized languages and speakers. I often focus on the scale of a language, but also aim to incorporate the social, historical, and contemporary context responsible for giving speakers of the language the status that they have.

Having myself participated in different research and education traditions, I see them all as part of the wider social project of language activism and linguistic equality. Each community of practice projects a slightly different imaginary of what the problems are and how to address them in relation to socio-historical positionings and disciplinary norms, yet there is a common concern for the inequalities that have been and continue to be created along linguistic lines. Over time I have come to reconcile these different paradigms by viewing them as part of the same compelling, albeit elusive social imaginary of eradicating the inequalities produced through language. Taking these diverse viewpoints into account, I view Diidxazá, like other named languages, as a deictic or indexical which acquires its meaning in relation to its social positioning within a community of practice (Silverstein 1976). For some people it is part of their identity and spirituality; for some it is an under-valued educational resource; for some it is the VSO tonal language defined by the ISO 639–3 code 'zai'; for some it is a legal right; for some it is a uniquely appropriate form of self-expression; for some it is a problem and mark of shame. Working as a language activist, it is helpful to acknowledge the deictic nature of language, and the myriad significance it has both within the speech community and within scholarly communities. I return to this point in the concluding discussion in chapter 8.

As Makoni and Pennycook (2007) have noted, sometimes the answers to linguistic problems require a deconstructivist, interpretive approach, while sometimes they may require essentialist categorization and definition – among other approaches. The notion of 'strategic essentialism', or use of essentialist rhetoric for strategic social purposes in favor of marginalized groups (coined, and later critiqued, by decolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak (Spivak 1996)) has been taken up by multiple scholar-activists as an apt term for one of the key strategies employed in language activism (Leonard 2012; Zavala 2014). Digging in and holding fast to a specific point of view can be considered essentialist (and endangered language advocates have been critiqued for this (eg. Cameron 2007)), however this kind of

persistence and focus is also a tool which activists often use in efforts to change unequal social structures and norms. As an activist scholar, I aim to take up the challenge of deconstructing *and* reconstituting language, of critically questioning *and* joining in decisive, goal-driven actions. The following section examines some of the ways that researchers can aim to be reflexive, constructivist, and attempt to contribute to positive social change in specific ways.

3.1.2 Methodological choices in support of language equality

The relationship of academia as a whole to marginalized communities has come under greater focus in recent decades, with calls to develop academic culture away from its roots in European colonialism, racism, and sexism. The legitimation of Eurocentric, white, male, cis-heterosexual knowledge above other forms of knowledge has led to 'cognitive injustice'; in order to counter this imbalance diverse forms of meaning-making need to be recognized, allowing for what theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called an ecology of knowledge (Santos 2007, 2014). Calls to 'decolonize' academic research include consideration of which research questions are asked, who is participating in research, and how research is conducted, with particular attention to whose knowledge is valued, who has power in the process, and who ultimately benefits (Smith 1999). Work done within linguistics, anthropology, and education, among other academic disciplines, has been part of creating injustices and shaping prejudices towards certain languages and people (Errington 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas 2009; Battiste 2013), meaning that efforts to decolonize these disciplines require rethinking key concepts and paradigms, as well as changing who is participating and making decisions (Brayboy et al. 2012; Leonard 2017). Research and education interventions involving Indigenous groups have historically been fraught with biases, leading to movements for Indigenous-run research (e.g. Smith 2005; Wilson 2008). While still a minority in academia, Indigenous scholars have made significant contributions to broadening academic paradigms and reorienting methodologies and priorities in multiple disciplines. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars working towards an imaginary of linguistic equality have engaged in reflection and debate on how to shift the paradigms of their respective disciplines in order to conduct research that helps to reverse the colonialist heritage and structures of academia.

In their classic discussion of research on language, Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1992, 1993) described different approaches as research *on*, *for*, or *with* a population. They include anthropology and sociology, as well as linguists, in the argument that language researchers with a social justice agenda

should aim for research *with* a community through "the use of interactive methods, the acknowledgement of subjects' own agendas and the sharing of expert knowledge" (Cameron et al. 1993: 87). In relation to her work with First Nations language revitalization in Canada, Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) extended this typology to include research *by* the speech community as a possible positive outcome of linguistic scholarship. As both a member of a linguistically minoritized community and a linguistic anthropologist, Ana Celia Zentella advocated for an "anthro*political* linguistics that never loses sight of [minoritized children's] reality and struggles to change it" (Zentella 1997: 4, italics original). Her work with bilingual Puerto Rican families within this paradigm was instrumental in both political advocacy and in weakening the dominance of deficit models of bilingualism and code-switching in academia. These are just some of the efforts to build a more direct and meaningful interface between scholarship and positive social change put forward by scholars in a range of disciplines. How to use research in favor of greater equality for marginalized groups, including issues of representation, participation, and intervention, continues to be an area of concern and inquiry (Warriner and Bigelow 2019).

Whether or not the scholar is a member of the minoritized community, reflective research and collaborative models are encouraged as an important step in changing the legacy of exploitation of Indigenous (and other marginalized) communities through research (Stebbins 2012). How to collaborate in meaningful ways has been a topic of discussion, including the establishment of research goals, outcomes, and roles at the outset of research (Leonard and Haynes 2010), and fostering long-term, emergent collaborations (Pérez Báez 2018). From the field of Indigenous education, Anthony-Stevens, Stevens and Nicholas (2017) highlight the importance of efforts by community insiders, and support or alliances by community outsiders in "interrupting power structures that impede and delegitimize Indigenous efforts to enact education sovereignty" (Anthony-Stevens, Stevens, and Nicholas 2017: 21). Balancing disciplinary expectations of objectivity and generalizability with the desires of community members (and potentially one's own desires as a language activist) is a common conundrum, but one which has led to fruitful collaboration in some cases. Pérez Báez (2016) discusses the dilemma of being an outsider researcher-activist working in a context where not all speakers are interested in promoting greater use of a minoritized language. She encourages the use of research activities and results to spark discussion around issues of language use, education, and community rights, rather than adopting a passive stance or imposing the views and assumptions of the researcher. Yamada (2007) discusses a documentation project in which she, as a non-community member, attempted to put community learning goals as a priority alongside linguistic description. Hermes and Engman (2017)

illustrate the ways in which a documentation project involving a mixed team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars improved through the involvement of Indigenous language learners in data collection and analysis.

Even where the researcher is a member of the speech community, diverse perspectives and priorities within the community need to be negotiated in any research project. Chickasaw linguistic anthropologist Jenny Davis describes her research as "Native ethnography" due to the fact that she is a member of the community she studies, which has traditionally been a subject of research rather than a producer of research. At the same time, she highlights that "because individuals and the communities of which they are members are multifaceted, varied, and even contradictory in characteristics, the ways in which a researcher may be positioned as an insider are equally complex" (48). In all cases it is likely that research relationships and goals may shift throughout a project, as participants gain new understandings and perhaps new priorities and identities. For example, Rouvier (2017) describes a change in the priorities of a language revitalization project from focusing on Elder speakers working one-on-one with younger learners, to include the facilitation of group events and discussion circles where Elders had the chance to speak among each other and to practice language instead of just teaching it. Ongoing reflexivity as to the goals, roles, and power dynamics within a project, such as this, may help to avoid exploitative, extractive research practices. Whatever collaborative approach is taken, it is crucial that participation be voluntary and genuine, avoiding superficial and tokenized participatory approaches that have been observed in international development research (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

There are many approaches to participatory action research and practitioner inquiry, each of which has advantages depending on the circumstances of research and the identity and affordances of the researcher (Lewin 1946; Burns 2005; McIntyre 2008; Ravitch and Riggan 2012). Action research is better established in some scholarly disciplines than others, and in particular has gained respect in education research where all teachers are often encouraged to become practitioner researchers in their own classroom (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009). In seeking an approach that would allow me to combine some form of research and some form of activism, I have chosen to use the flexible methodological umbrella of *ethnographic monitoring*, a combination of ethnography and emergent action research developed for use in minority language education initiatives. Sociolinguist Dell Hymes formulated ethnographic monitoring as a methodological paradigm through which to research educational realities and contribute to their improvement, taking into account that *improvement* or *success* may have different meanings in different settings (Hymes 1980). Ethnographers are frequently in

a position to observe effects of hierarchical language norms, but they are less often believed to be in a position to challenge either the norms or their negative effects. Ethnographic monitoring counters this, combining the thick description and cultural relativity achieved by ethnography (Hymes 1968; Blommaert and Jie 2010) with a critical perspective and commitment to supporting educational practice for social change. As Hymes (1980) argues, "Ethnography must be descriptive and objective, yes, but not only that. It must be conscious of values and goals; it must relate description to analysis and objectivity to critical evaluation" (104). Crucially, this critical evaluation is undertaken on the base of initial description and careful interpretation of emic perspectives and values. While Hymes proposed ethnographic monitoring as a way to conduct activist research in and with bilingual schools, it has also been usefully applied in other kinds of social projects (Van der Aa and Blommaert 2011; Hornberger 2013b).

Ethnographic monitoring can be understood as "structured around three fundamental tasks: observation and description, analysis and interpretation, and evaluation oriented towards social change. These tasks build upon each other, may occur in overlapping cycles and/or in collaboration with stakeholders, and may be achieved through a variety of methods" (De Korne and Hornberger 2017: 247). The ethnographic monitoring framework does not establish specific methods, but rather encourages collaborative and critical ways of conducting research, and the use of ethnographic research towards social ends in whatever way may be appropriate in the context. In this way, ethnographic monitoring builds connections between traditional ethnography and the range of established methodologies and methods for engaged, action, or practitioner research, where researchers have some degree of participation and engagement in the context that they are studying.

In my work in the Isthmus I have followed this trajectory from description through analysis and interpretation, to evaluation aimed at social improvements, with constant cycling back through on-going description and (re)interpretations. I aim to provide a thick description of what people are doing with and through Diidxazá activism, based on participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews and focus groups with a wide range of stakeholders, semiotic landscape documentation, and document collection in Diidxazá promotion and education contexts. Thematic analysis of this data informs my interpretation of local meanings, imaginaries, and ideologies in relation to language, inequalities, and social well-being. I have sought out ways to support linguistic equality based on my evaluation of the factors influencing potential for positive social change in this context, and have collaborated in several activism projects in particular (see also 1.6). At times this has resulted in very concrete actions and proposals on my part, while at other times my participation has consisted

of providing information, reproducing a discourse, or supporting the actions of other activists, as discussed further below. As a researcher working in speech communities of which I am not an organic member, I have found this methodology to be appropriate to my social position, personal style, and goals as a non-prescriptive scholar-activist.

Aside from seeking out ways that the researcher can contribute positively to the setting they work in, the ethnographic monitoring paradigm also considers the biases that researchers bring with them. Hymes (1980) states that an ethnographer "must come to understand his/her own attitudes [. . .] and the reasons for them. Only explicit concern with values, in short, will allow ethnography to overcome hidden sources of bias" (104). As Hornberger (2013a) discusses, reflective engagement is a crucial component of critical ethnographic work, which

> may take a number of forms – it may be about working with multiple members of a research team; it may also be about relationships between researcher and researched; and may range from consultative to fully participatory relationships. It may be about collecting and analyzing data; it may also be about writing up and reporting findings. It is without doubt about reflecting critically on all of these. (2013: 105)

By recognizing oneself as a social actor with the potential to impact a context of research, a researcher automatically becomes a practitioner, someone with a role and a stake in the context. All researchers are also practitioners in knowledge creation within their disciplinary communities of practice and can benefit from on-going critical reflection on the foundations, processes, and uses of their research.

In summary, recognizing the socio-political role of research and researchers, and seeking to shift academic power balances through collaboration, are important considerations for socially-beneficial research. Despite the legacy of marginalization and exploitation of Indigenous people through academic research, there have also been positive contributions and collaborations; the increasing role of Indigenous researchers defining the agenda and terms of research will hopefully continue to strengthen the capacity of academia to engage in and respond to linguistic and other social inequalities in the future. In the following section I analyze the strategies of scholar-activists I observed in the Isthmus, as well as reflecting on my own strategies.

3.2 Scholar-activist strategies in the Isthmus

Linguists, anthropologists and education researchers were among the language activists who I observed and interviewed, and whose practices I considered in developing the framework of activism strategies presented in chapter 1. While researchers can and do engage in a range of strategies, I observed the *creation* or production of *resources* (including archives, academic texts and didactic materials) to be an especially common strategy among scholars. It was also the strategy I adopted instinctively when I began my work. In addition, scholars also have a significant role in representing the focus of their work through a specific ideological lens. In the case of linguists, there is a tendency to *represent* certain *communication practices* (in particular those of idealized native-speaker monolingual elders) as a treasure of universal value, as discussed in the opening of this chapter (Hill 2002). In contexts like Oaxaca, these representations may be in stark contrast to the low status which Indigenous language speakers often hold in society, and the widespread perception that Indigenous communication practices are *dialectos*, not languages. At the same time, they may be helpful in addressing the social stigma that Indigenous language speakers experience. Researchers may also be in the position to make important *connections* – such as between existing *resources, people*, and *spaces*, and among different people – a strategy which I have come to value more and more highly. In this section, I illustrate some of the common scholarly strategies I observed among colleagues, and through reflection on my own practices.

3.2.1 Creating resources

The production of archival or scientific resources related to a language is viewed by many documentary linguists as their primary goal and potential. Scholarly resources, such as grammars, dictionaries, analyzed recordings, and articles can contribute to language activism in a variety of ways, including bringing increased attention and respect to a communication system which has been viewed as less valuable and interesting. They can potentially assist activists working in education initiatives if they are accessible to non-linguists and produced in a language which local activists know. For example, Isthmus Zapotec linguist-historian-writer Víctor Cata has documented ceremonial marriage discourses which are no longer in use in the present day, based on fieldwork with elderly men who were trained to deliver these addresses in their youth (Cata 2012). He has also collected oral history narratives from elder speakers in the Tehuantepec dialect of Diidxazá, motivated by the fact that they are among the only speakers of this dialect, which has

not been transmitted in recent generations (Cata 2003). His scholarship has been published with support from government research funds and made available to readers in the Isthmus. Mexican linguist Gabriela Pérez Báez has produced an ethnobotanical dictionary which is trilingual in Spanish, Diidxazá, and English in order to meet the needs of different audiences locally, nationally, and internationally.[18] She strategically used the popular alphabet for Diidxazá in order to maximize accessibility in the Isthmus, rather than the more phonologically precise system she has used in her documentation work and which would likely be preferred among linguist readers. In these ways, Víctor and Gabriela have produced scholarly resources that may be of interest to Diidxazá teachers or learners in addition to other researchers.

Several of the scholar-activists working in the Isthmus have additionally created resources directed at learning Diidxazá. Noting that community members may not find dictionaries or grammars written primarily with academic audiences in mind to be the kind of resources which meet their immediate needs, linguists have engaged more and more in the creation of learning materials, with various degrees of success (Cope and Penfield 2011). Gabriela has facilitated the creation of a range of didactic resources, from games for all ages, to a literacy workbook (Pérez Báez 2015), and bilingual informational cards on common plants and their uses in the Isthmus. All of these resources draw on data from her extensive documentary research of the Juchitán variety of Isthmus Zapotec and have been created in collaboration with various members of the community as well as botanists and visual artists from elsewhere in Mexico. Gabriela, as an activist linguist, incorporated the production of learning materials throughout the process of her work, engaged in consultations with a variety of community actors about the kinds of materials that might be of interest, and has sought feedback on the materials once they were in circulation (Pérez Báez 2018). A similar strategy has been employed by a team of researchers affiliated with the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Querétaro, in central Mexico, who produced posters of the Isthmus Zapotec popular alphabet and a translation of the popular *lotería* [bingo] game and distributed them to bilingual schools. A member of the team from San Blas Atempa in the Isthmus, David Eduardo Vicente Jiménez, has gone on to produce Diidxazá translations of popular comic books for public dissemination, aiming at younger speakers and learners.[19]

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18 https://dictionaria.clld.org/contributions/diidxaza
19 http://conacytprensa.mx/index.php/ciencia/humanidades/25230-superheroes-mexicanos-zapoteco-ninos?fbclid=IwAR02Cq9h1wVMjUSxRhuK-Q2fldmBiM8AGiTzck6vmJH5Ctap8IhLGr3dz1A

Ways of creating resources vary greatly depending on the durability and content of what is created. The production of written or digital materials generally takes a reasonable amount of time but may become highly visible through promotion across social networks. For example, the plant-themed didactic games created under the umbrella of the Smithsonian ethnobotany project took around a year to create. They were subsequently distributed in hard copy to cultural centers, libraries and schools across the Isthmus, reaching a regional level of visibility. Additionally Gabriela distributed copies to libraries in Oaxaca City and took copies to display within the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, and a news piece about the games appeared in a regional newspaper (Cha'ca 2013). Digital learning materials, such as the literacy workbook which Gabriela made available in pdf form on-line,[20] can achieve even greater visibility and mobility. In addition to making materials which are accessible, resource production requires editorial choices about inclusion and exclusion of information and images. For example, when I asked for feedback on the first botanical game produced by the ethnobotany project from some of the teachers and librarians who had received copies of it, although there was much positive feedback, multiple users also commented critically on the fact that the game was almost monolingual in Diidxazá. They expressed a desire to have Spanish included in order to make it more accessible to learners of different levels. One librarian noted that the plants used in the game were from the countryside, while the children who she works with live in the town and are familiar neither with the image of the plant, nor with the Zapotec name of the plant. The editorial choices made by the team in order to privilege Diidxazá and showcase regional plants did not coincide with the view of these actors who preferred fully bilingual materials and content that would be more familiar for younger learners.

While scholars may often be in a position to access financial support and may have expertise that can be channeled into the creation of resources, they must also consider what kind of resources will be useful and aim to fulfill the expectations of as wide a user audience as possible – or choose to focus on a limited user group. Additionally, the timeframe it takes to create something is important to consider, with some projects allowing for a quick production cycle and others requiring a longer process. Finally, the creation of tangible resources often occurs by a restricted group, or even one individual, and is characterized by an unavoidable editorial or authorial control over what will be included and what will be excluded. Scholar-activists often try to produce a perfect, authoritative resource which will endure indefinitely, however in some cases it

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20 https://neho.si.edu/about-la-ventosa-collection

may be more effective to create resources as drafts and expect multiple revisions and new versions over time (Schreyer 2017). The production of resources – from technical to entertaining – is a concrete way which scholars may use their expertise in collecting and presenting information. Through these resources, and their practices and interactions, scholars are also constantly engaged in representing Isthmus Zapotec, as examined next.

3.2.2 Representing communication practices

The resources created by scholar-activists, and the choices that are made regarding what to include and how to present the information (from orthography options, to aesthetic styles, to material forms) function as social representations that often carry the weight of authoritative knowledge. Scholar-activists must choose what kind of aesthetic symbols to draw on in their representations; some may choose to highlight historical and traditional motifs, others may want to link the language with images viewed as contemporary or global. Both of these socio-historical orientations can be strategic. The use of traditional motifs or historical content can serve to legitimate and show respect for local aesthetics, and to make the materials recognizable to local users. On the other hand, the use of non-historical content and non-local references can also serve to represent materials as cutting edge and attractive to younger users. For example, the ethnobotanical materials produced by Gabriela's ethnobotany team help to represent Diidxazá as a source of technical, botanical knowledge and a medium for scientific communication. The superhero comic books produced by David Eduardo Vicente Jiménez and colleagues help to represent Diidxazá as a modern, fun, and fashionable way of communicating, linked to excitement and action. Both of these representations are strategic ways of resisting the stereotype of Indigenous language speakers as unsophisticated, isolated, relics of the past. They present an imaginary of Indigenous languages as refined sources of knowledge, and a vital part of global, digital culture.

Representations also occur through interactions. In my orientation as an applied or educational linguist, I represented Isthmus Zapotec as part of a multilingual language ecology and as an enjoyable part of daily life in the Isthmus in presentations which I gave on several occasions. From late 2013 I worked with colleagues from the local branch of the Faculty of Languages of the state university (UABJO) (see further discussion in chapter 5) to plan and facilitate a two-day event on Isthmus Zapotec which was held in April 2014. The event was aimed at teachers and activists, as well as members of the public who might

want to participate in language workshops. This event received quite a bit of local media attention. One newspaper article where the reporter had asked me for input was titled "*Promueven multilinguismo*" [They promote multilingualism].[21] Other news articles in which I had much less influence where published, including "*Promueve UABJO rescate del zapoteco*" [UABJO promotes saving Zapotec],[22] a representation that I was less pleased with, but which is common in relation to Indigenous languages of Mexico, as elsewhere in the world. In a radio interview about the event shortly before it happened, UABJO teacher Ximena Leon Fernández and I described the event as a meeting of researchers and teachers, with participatory workshops and cultural presentations. I concluded a description of the offerings of the event saying "*Y finalmente, habrá muestras culturales porque un idioma no es solamente una gramática o un objeto de estudio; es algo que . . . que disfrutamos. Que vivimos todos los días*" [And finally, there will be cultural presentations because a language is not only a grammar or an object of study; it's something that . . . that we enjoy. That we live every day] (Audio 140402). Ximena summed up the many activities saying "*Básicamente lo que estamos eh . . . buscando es fomentar el multilingüismo que sabemos que se da aquí en la región*" [Basically what we're um . . . looking to do is to foster the multilingualism that we know is here in the region] (Audio 140402). We represented the event as an inclusive space, where research and resources would be present, as well as interactive learning opportunities. We represented Diidxazá as part of the multilingual reality of the region, and promoted multilingualism as a desirable thing, in contrast to the common perception that use of Zapotec would impede use of Spanish (see chapter 2).

The radio host noted that our representation contrasted with popular representations in several ways:

Locutor *Lamentablemente . . . a veces . . . hemos dejado de . . . admirar, de amar, de profundizar nuestro conocimiento sobre nuestra propia lengua. Aunque dicen por ahí de que el zapoteco va a morir el día en que muera el sol, a veces, digo: no, creo que primero va a morir nuestra lengua porque . . . en muchas comunidades zapotecas se ha perdido ya el número de hablantes.*

Ximena *Por eso es importante no dejar de hacer esfuerzos en ese sentido, ¿no?*

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21 http://www.noticiasnet.mx/portal/istmo/general/educativas/202824-promueven-multilinguismo
22 http://www.imparcialenlinea.com/portal/?mod=nota&id=37003&cat=istmo

Locutor Claro.

Ximena Porque si uno piensa: 'ay, no va a morir nunca', pues todos nos sentamos en nuestros laureles y no . . . no hacemos nada por . . . por propiciar que se siga hablando, ¿no?

Locutor Darle importancia a este encuentro: Compartiendo experiencias, guendaruchaaga, guendanabani. Enseña, aprende, vive el zapoteco. Bisiidi, biziidi ne bibaani . . . diidxazá. ¿No?

Host Unfortunately . . . sometimes . . . we have stopped . . . admiring, loving, deepening our knowledge of our own language. Although they say around here that Zapotec will die the day that the sun dies, sometimes, I say: no, I believe that our language will die first because . . . in many Zapotec communities the number of speakers has already been lost.

Ximena That's why it's important not to stop making efforts in that way, right?

Host Clearly.

Ximena Because if one thinks: 'Ah, it will never die', well we all rest on our laurels and don't . . . don't do anything to . . . to encourage that it continues to be spoken, right?

Host Give importance to this event: Sharing experiences, *guendaruchaaga, guendanabani*. Teach, learn, live Zapotec. *Bisiidi, biziidi ne bibaani . . . diidxazá.* Right?

(Audio recording 2 April 2014)

The positive representations of Indigenous languages (or a multilingual repertoire containing Indigenous languages) articulated in public ways by scholars differ from the lack of social prestige or admiration noted by the radio host. The statement that 'Zapotec will die the day that the sun dies' is a reference to a popular poem written in Diidxazá by *Istmeño* poet Gabriel López Chiñas and first published in 1971, which concludes with a positive representation linking the vitality of Diidxazá to the vitality of the sun (see also 6.2). Nonetheless, discourses about the displacement of Zapotec are common, such as the host's assertion that 'the number of speakers has already been lost' and his disagreement with those who say that it will continue. The title of this event and our comments in promoting it contributed to a counter discourse, similar to that of Chiñas' poem. By drawing attention to the fact that for many people in the Isthmus, Zapotec is 'something we live everyday' and that the Isthmus is a multilingual region, we were representing Isthmus Zapotec as a vital part of life in the Isthmus, rather than something that is fading away. While the host aligned with our statements by encouraging his listeners to 'give importance to this event', the effects that such representations may have in the wider social space are all but impossible to trace with confidence. A representation

that is produced only once or infrequently is certainly less likely to have an influence on the perspectives and practices of a community than a representation that is repeated over time.

Scholar-activists have an especially powerful position when it comes to representations, in that they usually enjoy expert status and a heightened degree of respect, meaning that their ways of representing may carry greater weight and even be broadcast on the radio. The kinds of language produced in texts or didactic games is likely to be viewed as 'correct', at least by some of the users, simply by dint of being produced in connection with scholarship. Scholars with national and international ties may also enjoy higher degrees of respect. As I was told many times by local language activists, '*nadie es profeta en su tierra*' [no one is a prophet at home/ in their region], meaning that local experts would often receive less attention and respect simply by being from the local area. Researchers from elsewhere in Mexico or from abroad sometimes seemed to receive more respect simply because we were from far away – this was the case not just for me as a foreign researcher, but also for Mexican researchers from outside the Isthmus. An outsider positionality is not generally an advantage in scholar-activism, due to the need to build understanding and trust within a social context, however in this small respect it may have some advantages. At the same time, it necessitates even greater reflexivity over how one is using the (arguably unearned) authority and status that can come with being an outsider or a researcher. Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, a European-American scholar-educator, has reflected on the ways that those who are not members of a minoritized group may work as an ally with minoritized groups (Anthony-Stevens 2017). She outlines that it is necessary to step up and use white (or other forms of) privilege at some points, and to step aside, follow, and give space at other points. It has been a common challenge for me to determine when to step up and when to follow, when to offer my perspective and when to listen silently. These are conerns that all language activists working in collaboration must face to some degree, but they are especially acute for those of us who carry various forms of privilege, and/ or identify primarily as outsiders in the contexts we are engaged in.

3.2.3 Connecting people, spaces and resources

The production of the 'Teach, learn, live Zapotec' event (and others) was a strategic choice which responded to the lack of contact and exchange which my colleagues and I observed among different language advocates in the region. Through the creation of this temporary social space we hoped to support new

or improved connections among different actors that might strengthen the needed long-term spaces and structures of learning (discussed further in chapters 4 and 5). As I worked to gain an overview of people and groups who were engaged in language activism, I began to try to connect activists to people with similar interests, and to materials which they were not aware of, locally, nationally, and internationally. On one hand this was simple reciprocity, as people I interviewed often connected me to others I had not met yet, or informed me about resources I was not aware of, and I followed suit and did the same whenever possible. I also attempted to give copies of materials directly to people involved in teaching Diidxazá whenever possible, rather than simply informing them of their existence.

Over time, my position as an informed outsider allowed me to make connections in support of language advocacy networks in the Isthmus and beyond, and this became a conscious strategy. When a group of Diidxazá speakers who were participants in Gabriela Pérez Báez's ethnobotany project were interested in offering workshops for children in their community but were unsure how to go about this pedagogically, I invited a young woman with some experience teaching Diidxazá to visit and talk with them. She shared her trajectory of beginning to teach Diidxazá, a language she had always spoken at home but had never used in a formal domain until she was invited to teach it to adult learners. She described how she had to invent her own materials and approaches in order to do so. The conversation which ensued was animated on all sides. The group seemed much more engaged than when I had discussed learning goals and teaching techniques with them on previous occasions. The group commented afterwards on how bright and talented the young woman was, and that they were encouraged by her confidence and experience. Connecting these would-be teachers to a Diidxazá teacher role model had clear positive effects.

The outcomes of strategic connecting, such as finding a role model or gaining new confidence, are often less tangible than producing a game or a book. However, this strategy may help to build social networks with the potential to amplify advocacy initiatives, and may provide crucial solidarity to language activists. Anthony-Stevens (2017) has referred to this as 'brokering', whereby outside scholar allies "negotiate value exchanges" and "consciously leverage available resources" in support of the interests of a marginalized group (96). This strategy is not unique to scholar-activists, but is one which we may often find ourselves in a good position for, due to access to educational networks and resources.

3.3 Summary: Characteristics of scholar activism

Is scholarship an impactful form of activism? As a community of practice with the social power to produce legitimate knowledge and people who are perceived as experts, it has an undeniable influence and potential in social change projects. Scholars can propose representations, such as categories and definitions, which may come to divide or unify, legitimize or erase. Scholarship that prioritizes questions about social inequalities and well-being can channel resources and attention in directions which have been neglected. Depending on the specific context and positionality of the researcher, various forms of activism are possible, including supporting and amplifying initiatives and networks that are underway (connecting), (re)producing positive perspectives on language and culture (representing), and participating in or proposing active interventions and tangible products where appropriate (creating). The following Table 1 illustrates some of the key language activism strategies described in this chapter.

Table 1: Key language activism strategies among scholars in the Isthmus.

Actions →	Goals →	Examples
– Creating	– Resources – Events	– Production of dictionaries, learning materials, didactic games – Facilitating one-off events such as workshops or lectures
– Representing	– People/ Identities – Communication practices	– Indigenous language speakers represented as valuable – Isthmus Zapotec represented as valuable – Multilingualism represented as normal/ positive
– Connecting	– People/ Identities – Resources	– Supporting and expanding activists' networks – Providing reources to activists – Collecting and archiving resources

The mobility and non-local ties of researchers can be an advantage in assembling and distributing resources, and their technical skills are assets in the production of certain kinds of resources. Researchers who are outsiders may experience their novelty to be an advantage in drawing attention and respect to what they do and the representations that they produce – or it may make them less trustworthy and respected, depending on the context. Researchers who are community insiders may be able to benefit from extensive contextual knowledge and networks, but may also be faced with negotiating diverse perspectives

and priorities among fellow community-members. In either case, scholarship often remains fairly removed from homes, parks, markets, and the spaces of interaction and subsistence which form the heartbeat of life day to day. Research projects usually have a start and an end date; while some research products become a lasting part of the linguistic ecology and the collection of resources which activists draw from over time, others inevitably do not. Scholars often aspire to make a lasting impact, however if they are based in a city or a country far away it is less likely that they can contribute to the establishment of long-term structures of language promotion. In other words, there is much that can be done, but there are also many limitations.

The social impact of research is infamously muffled or indirect in many instances, in particular where the primary products of scholarship are destined for academic consumption. The kind of knowledge and resources that are produced may not be immediately usable, or may be usable in limited ways. Additionally, scholarship is deeply intertwined with colonial categories and logics, and in some cases neo-colonial enterprises such as missionary organizations or development projects, running the risks of doing more harm than good. There is still variation and potential for conflict in the different understandings of language (from object to action) and different imaginaries of social change via research (from supposed 'objective neutrality' and correction of errors, to different forms of engagement and alliances) across scholarly communities (see 1.2–1.3). The risk that research initiatives may impose unwanted definitions, categories, and forms of change remains. However, Indigenous scholars and allies have made important impacts in pointing out the need to critically examine the concepts and research paradigms that have served to reproduce Euro-centric understandings and structures of privilege, and the need to recognize other ways of knowing. As Anthony-Stevens (2017) puts it, all scholar-activists – but especially outsider scholar-activists – need to show up with "ongoing attention to complex relationships, uncomfortable acknowledgements of power differentials, and a commitment to antiracist, anticolonial education" (100–101).

Through calls for collaborative and decolonized research, including participatory research with communities and research lead by Indigenous scholars, some disciplines attempt to respond to the weakness of the juncture between scholarship and social change. Engaged research has a long history in education and anthropology scholarship, but linguists have been slower to join the party. In the years that I have been part of scholarly communities of practice around minoritized languages, I feel that it has become more and more common to expect reflexivity on the part of the researcher, whether they are collecting data for a dictionary, examining bilingual practices in a classroom, or studying how identity and gender are indexed in an Indigenous language. It is

also more common to see community insiders taking on roles as scholars and knowledge-producers. Additionally, scholars have been taken to task over the discourses and representations that they produce, leading to changes in the discourses about so-called 'dying' or 'extinct' languages, and more acceptance for community-based definitions of language and community priorities in language-related projects (McCarty 2017). With continued collaboration among scholars and other language activists, I am hopeful that scholars can learn from other activists and make further progress in harnessing academic work to meet social needs. The opportunity to observe and collaborate with language activists in the Isthmus has taught me about the benefits as well as limitations of what I have to offer as a scholar-activist – and I still have plenty more to learn in that regard. I hope that the increasing legitimation of various action research paradigms, such as ethnographic monitoring, will lead more scholars of language to contribute to socially-engaged research. Research which supports linguistic equality will require greater attention to who is viewed as a creator of authoritative knowledge, what kinds of representations and discourses are being (re)produced, and a humble, learning approach to making and re-making resources that are aligned with the changing interests and needs of dynamic communities of speakers and learners.