



**Working Papers on Culture, Education and Human
Development**

ISSN 1699-437X
Year 2005, Volume 1, Number 3 (October)

**WHOSE ENGLISH IS IT ANYWAY? CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY:
ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS FROM OAXACA, MEXICO**

Ángeles Clemente
Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca

Michael J. Higgins
*Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social de
Oaxaca*

Contact address:
Ángeles Clemente
Apartado Postal 742
Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico 68000
e-mail: angelesclemente@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

In this paper we will present a series of ethnographic portraits of students who are in the process of learning and teaching English at the *Centro de Idiomas*, which is part of the state university in the city of Oaxaca, Mexico. These portraits will focus on how the students at the Centro navigate the cultural and social complexities of learning English as an additional language. Our argument will look at the way the process of the accumulation of cultural capital, modes of identity construction, and the dynamics of social agency affect the means for learning an additional language (Bourdieu, 1991; Pavlenko, 2002). The young working and middle class Oaxacan students at the Centro are involved in the pursuit of various forms of linguistics and cultural capital. Moreover, they use their various identity locations as a means of learning, using and teaching English. These identity locations involve issues concerning gender, sexuality, ethnicity and assumptions about standards of English. These students move between these assumptions and their own desires about language performance and they use their own agency to recompose English as something beyond such assumptions (Sayer, Clemente and Higgins 2004).

KEYWORDS: Culture - Language - Identity - Ethnography - Oaxaca

Braulio: "Often our English teachers give us a story to read, and then they will ask us to report on what we think the reading was about. However, for us, using a language is not only about interpreting other peoples' ideas, but also about producing our own ideas! When learning and using English, we want to leave that level of interpreting the ideas of others or reporting what other people said. That level is only practicing. We need to go beyond the idea of only practicing and acquiring skills. We need to start expressing what we think and what we feel in English.

Freda: Exactly, we need to be ourselves within this *other* language!

(Braulio: Muchas veces nuestros maestros de inglés nos dan una historia para leer y luego nos piden que hagamos un reporte de lo que pensamos que se trata la lectura. Pero, para nosotros, usar el idioma no es solamente interpretar las ideas de otras gentes ¡sino también producir nuestras propias ideas! Queremos que cuando aprendamos y usemos el inglés, no nos quedemos en el nivel de interpretación de ideas ajenas o reportes de lo que dicen los demás. Ese nivel es de práctica nada más. Necesitamos ir más allá de la práctica y de la adquisición de habilidades. Necesitamos empezar a expresar en inglés lo que pensamos y lo que sentimos.

Freda: ¡Exactamente! Necesitamos ser nosotros mismos en el otro idioma."

(Freda and Braulio, two students at the *Centro de Idiomas*, offering their views on use of English)

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we will present a series of ethnographic portraits of students who are in the process of learning and teaching English at the *Centro de Idiomas*, which is part of the state university in the city of Oaxaca, Mexico. These portraits will focus on how the students at the Centro navigate the cultural and social complexities of learning English as an additional language. Our argument will focus on how the process of the accumulation of symbolic and cultural capital, modes of identity construction, and the dynamics of social agency affect the means for learning an additional language (Bourdieu, 1991 and Pavlenko, 2002). The young working and middle class Oaxacan students at the *Centro* are involved in the pursuit of various forms of linguistics and cultural capital. Moreover, they use their various identity locations as a means of learning, using and teaching English. These identity locations involve issues concerning gender, sexuality, ethnicity and assumptions about standards of English. These students move between these assumptions and their own desires about language performance. They use their own agency to recompose English as something beyond such assumptions (Sayer, Clemente and Higgins, 2004).

We will present these ethnographic portraits to represent how students use their own social agency, framed by their various identity locations, to pursue a diversity of language learning activities. For Nour, the issues of gender and ethnicity frame her pursuit of English; in the case of Arturo, the pursuit of English provides him with a safe zone for exploring the contours of his sexuality and social class; whereas for Freda and Braulio, they use their language skills to appropriate for themselves the street vernacular of

English. For these students the use of English is a means of accumulating different forms of linguistic and symbolic capital within the context of their existing and emerging identities.

These social and language activities take place in what we refer to as *learning cultures*. Learning cultures represent two co-existing social domains: the social/cognitive dynamics of language learning and the overall cultural context of that learning. We hope to capture the social actions of these learning cultures by listening to and seeing how students relocate themselves so that their English competency is not only 'knowledge of themselves as the other' but also knowledge of themselves as creative and communicative language actors.

SETTING

We are carrying out this ethnographic project at the Centro de Idiomas, which is the language and teacher training center for the state university of Oaxaca (*Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca*). The state of Oaxaca is located in the Southwest region of Mexico and has a population of over 3 1/5 million people. The state of Oaxaca is noted for its ethnic diversity, stunning ecological variety, and extreme poverty in the countryside. The university is located in the city of Oaxaca. The city has a population of close to half a million, and is the political, commercial and communication center of the state. The city is famous for its colonial architecture, ethnic and social diversity, and culinary excellence. It is also a city expressing many of the problems of urbanization in Mexico: shortage of housing, limited employment possibilities for those in the popular classes, traffic congestion, and almost daily political protest.

Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca began in the mid 50's as a professional school and has grown over the decades into a full university. In terms of national patterns of educational funding and its own particular political history, the university has been in continuous struggle between those who see the university as a site for their particular political and social conflicts and those who wish the university to be a center for excellence in research and teaching. Like other academic units in the university, the Centro de Idiomas works within these political and structural constraints.

Centro de Idiomas was founded 30 years ago as a language center, with the main focus on English. During this time it has grown into an important set of academic programs for the university. Its main academic focus is the training of undergraduate students in the area of teaching English as second language (TEFL). It also offers a master's degree in applied linguistics, courses in various languages, and Spanish and others subjects for foreign students.

The current undergraduate students (numbering around 600) come mainly from the city and region of the valley of Oaxaca. They are mostly from middle class and working class backgrounds, often being the first in their family to study at the university level. The majority of the students are female. Most of the students at the Centro are from a mestizo background (persons with an ethnic mixture of European and Indigenous backgrounds). Very few of the students come from the indigenous communities of Oaxaca, though many of their parents or grandparents have come from these communities. The majority of the students enter the university with plans to study other programs but for various reasons gravitate towards the Centro, thinking that they are going to be studying a variety of languages, and are surprised to find that the degree offered at the Centro is in teaching English. After figuring out what their educational options are, they develop quite a diversity of learning activities about how they want to use and teach English.

The faculty at the Centro is also a diverse group. There are only six full-time faculty positions but a very large number of part-time teachers. The part-time faculty are divided between those who are more or less permanent part-timers who have worked there for many years without formally getting a full-time position and short-term part-timers, who tend to be hired to teach English or one of the other languages taught at the Centro. Of the full-time faculty, only one is Mexican, with the rest being from the United States, Canada and France. Of the somewhat permanent part-time teachers, most are Mexican, while the more casual part-time teachers are international.

KEY CONCEPTS

Before providing the following ethnographic portraits, we will provide an explanation of the key concepts we will be using in the analysis.

Linguistic, Social, Cultural, and Symbolic Capital

In attempting to understand activities and practices of social actors, many have been attracted to Bourdieu's ideas on the dynamics of cultural reproduction through his use of the metaphor of *capital* to represent the differential access that social actors have to positions of authority and power. Bourdieu contends that there are various forms of authority and power that circulate through social systems based upon access to different forms of not only economic capital but also social capital. In various ways, he refers to forms of linguistic, educational, social, cultural and symbolic forms of capital. Since Bourdieu's style is at best vague about the exact definition of these terms, and many of his interpreters also use the same terms in a somewhat vague manner, we offer our own humble understanding of these concepts (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1991, and 2001; Norton, 2005, Pavlenko, 2002; Pennycook, 2001).

In his style of using economic metaphors, Bourdieu sees social formations as organized around various 'fields' that require different forms of capital to gain access to these locations. Thus, linguistic capital refers to those accumulating forms of linguistic practices that would grant you authority and power in that field. Different language activities or different languages would have symbolic value that could increase the actor's status within that context. This, in turn, would aid or hinder actors in the accumulation of educational capital; with a high status of linguistic or cultural capital, the social actors would be able to accumulate more educational capital. Furthermore, one's level of social capital (the range of social networks and social access) and cultural capital (social and cultural *habitus* of one's family background) will also aid or hinder one's access to other social fields. Thus, students coming from 'better off' economical and social backgrounds enter into such fields, such as the educational one, with pre-existing advantages.

As Pennycook has suggested, there is a degree of formality to these concepts of Bourdieu and they seem to lack a sensitivity of how such activities are carried out or performed in the context of everyday life (Pennycook, 2001). Further, these arguments do not seem to leave much room for how actors would use their own agency (see below) in pursuing these different forms of capital. Thus, for our purpose of understanding the ethnographic portraits of the students, we will be using three of these concepts in the following manner:

Linguistic capital: This involves the value of the language one uses or is attempting to use. For these students, the addition of English to their language repertoire is a form of increasing their linguistic capital.

Cultural capital: It represents pre-existing forms of status or prestige that actors bring from their social and family background to the pursuit of other social capitals.

Symbolic capital: The status or prestige of capitals that one has or is attempting to accumulate. It is symbolic capital that affirms the value of the other social capitals. In the case of these students, there is a high symbolic value in their pursuit of English.

Thus, we contend that these students at the Centro are seeking forms of linguistic and cultural capital through their pursuit of English, which they then can convert into new forms of social and/or cultural capital or add to their existing levels.

Modes of Identity Construction

We are suggesting that these students are using their various identity locations or constructing new identity locations in the pursuit of English and the resulting forms of social capital. Drawing from the post-modernist, post-colonialist, feminist, and activity theory (Pennycook, 2001), we see identities

as social realities that are always in the process of construction and expressed in plural and fluid forms (Bauman, 2000; Castells, 2000; Garcia Canclini, 1995; Haraway, 1991; Norton, 2000). These activities take place in the everyday activities of students as they locate themselves in terms of gender, sexuality, social class, ethnicity, and in the case of these students, the identity questions around language use (native versus non-native speakers).

Social and Personal Agency: Agency is a set of ideas used within various discourses to represent how actors within particular social and cultural contexts are able to understand and act upon those conditions (Giddens, 1979). It is not an argument for personal freedom or radical individualism; rather, it is in relation to a social context that agency can be expressed. It is social in that it involves the complex interaction between others and personal in the sense that it is how particular actors can navigate these conditions of social action (Bhabha, 1994). How these students compose their learning activities and how these activities aid in their pursuit of the accumulation of symbolic and cultural capital is an expression of their own personal agency within the domains of the learning cultures of the Centro de Idiomas.

Language Learning Cultures

The construction of language learning cultures requires the representation of two coexisting domains of socio-cultural activities and practices: first, the social/cognitive domain of language learning, that is, the actual activities and practices of language learning; secondly, the overall cultural context of the social locations of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, age, and ableness. These two domains engender each other to produce and reproduce the particularities of learning cultures.

We define culture as a system for representing the symbolic, intuitive, and behavioral worlds that people have constructed, live in and act upon. People mediate these systems through the use of cultural tools of interpretation, through the construction of meaning, and through the development of strategies for problem solving. The specificity of particular cultures is a historical process framed by the material and social context of the actors.

The reproduction of specific cultural systems involves the intergenerational interactions of its members in mapping previous depositions (or what Bourdieu (1977) calls *habitus*) onto the social context of everyday life. It is in the social spaces of everyday life where the cultural realities are composed and affirmed. The social locations of gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity and social classes are the sites where the overall configuration of these cultural systems are mediated and contested.

Given this definition, we contend that learning is central to the process of cultural behavior. Learning is about moving away from the actual and achieving the possible. Learning challenges existing realities by seeking deeper meanings of concepts and actions. Furthermore, learning is the way in which one constructs a critique of existing personal and social realities. To paraphrase Bauman (1973), we would suggest the idea of culture as learning or learning as culture.

This, we feel, illustrates how cultural activities mediate the linkage between personal agency and social structure (Block, 2003). It involves representing the symbolic, intuitive, and behavioral worlds these students have constructed, live in and act upon. We believe that it is in the social spaces of our everyday lives that the activities and practices of learning and teaching are composed and affirmed as cultural realities.

Thus, learning cultures are forms of creative adaptations between individuals and between the individuals and the institutional context of their learning. Learning cultures provide space for social actors to negotiate their own respective learning activities and to locate each other within their respective histories of social and cultural diversity (Clemente and Higgins, 2004).

ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In this paper we use ethnographic analysis to capture language-learning activities in the everyday lives of the students (Higgins, 1997). Ethnography is a critical means for recording and interpreting the social practices of cultural actors in their everyday lives (Bourdieu, 1977; Geertz, 1973) and how those activities are reproduced within the overall socio-cultural context of these actors, giving particular importance to the locations of such social identities as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and social class (Baron and Kotthoff, 2001; Eckert and McConell-Ginet, 2003). Ethnographic representations are the means for illustrating the universalistic features of cultural processes (Bauman, 1973), the complexity of social diversity (Higgins and Coen, 2000), and the particularities of the micro-practices that human actors use in the creation of their symbolic actions, such as learning languages (Holliday 2002; Clemente, 2003). The concept of learning cultures draws from these traditions by stressing that these dynamics involve synthesizing concepts of language and learning from SLA and the discourse on culture from anthropology (Clemente and Higgins, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

In order to explain the methodology that we have used to develop this paper, we will need to give some background to our general ethnographic project from which it was drawn. While pondering the various arguments within applied linguistics on how to understand the social and cultural dynamics involved in additional language acquisition, we thought we had a particularly

unique location, that is the Centro de Idiomas, for researching these questions. Further, we thought that by combining our disciplinary backgrounds of Applied Linguistics and Cultural Anthropology, we could develop a “thick” ethnography of the social and cultural context of how young Oaxacan students were pursuing the learning and usage of English. We also thought that it would be a richer ethnography if we worked in collaboration with students at the Centro to develop the project. We began with a seminar on “Culture, Language Learning and Ethnography”, where we explored the theoretical and methodological issues involved in doing ethnography on the Centro de Idiomas. We focused on how to work within one’s own social context and the role that critical reflection would play in this process. It was in this context where we began to realize how students at the Centro were producing creative and critical styles of English usage¹. It was in this seminar where we explored the issues that have become our key concepts for the interpretation of the ethnographic portraits presented in this paper (especially the role of gender, sexuality, social class and ethnicity). It is also where we developed the parameters for the various methods we would use in the collection of data: general census material, interviews, life histories, focus groups and classroom observations. Further, we discussed the role of participant observations in such student activities as school parties, assemblies, interactions in the school social spaces and the formation of various student cliques.

At the conclusion of the seminar we invited the students to work with us as student ethnographers. We had ten volunteers who worked on collecting general census material and conducting the interviews and observations. We also had 15 other students who agreed to allow us to track them throughout the academic year. We also had the student ethnographers write their own life histories and keep journals on their own behavior so that they could make comparisons with the materials they were gathering from the other students. We read all their materials, made suggestions as to what other materials were needed, and how they should focus their remaining interviews. Then we began our own interviews with both the student ethnographers and those in the tracking grouping in order to further develop the overall ethnographic “thickness” of the materials. Through the weaving together of all these materials, the three portraits that we will present in this paper were developed. We will provide some brief comments about each portrait.

The portrait of Arturo emerged out of the ‘tracked student’ group. He was one of the students in that sample. Throughout the seminar we had talked about the role that identity locations such as gender, sexuality, social class and ethnicity could play in language learning. Arturo’s openness about his own gayness became a very rich source of inquiry. After reading the material the student ethnographers had gathered on Arturo, we began doing more in-

depth interviews with him, which led to this current portrait. Arturo is now in his last year of studying at the *Centro*.

Nour was one of our student ethnographers and she did her own thesis project on the reasons and motivations for students' choosing to study at the *Centro*. Since she was also writing her own life history, we became interested in the various ways that gender, sexuality, social class and ethnicity were woven into her everyday activities at the *Centro*. Thus, we began to do more in-depth interviews with her in order to develop the ethnographic portrait. She is currently leaving for England where she is going to spend a year teaching Spanish.

Since this ethnographic project involves the analysis of the students' everyday learning activities, Ángeles Clemente began to involve various students in the class she was teaching. From this context the portraits of Freda and Braulio emerged. They were in her Comparative Linguistics class and in that class they developed their project on English vernacular. Based on that project, we began doing interviews with them in order to attain more information on their backgrounds and to work up their portraits. They are currently in their third year of their studies at the *Centro*.

To sum up, our methods have been fairly traditional in terms doing ethnographic work: interviews, census material, life histories, observations and the interpretation of all these. They have been somewhat non-traditional by using students as ethnographers and by studying our own working and social context. And there is certainly a tone of "post-methodology" in our overall approach that stresses multiple levels of critical self-reflection.

ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS

Nour

Nour is an attractive and intelligent young woman studying at the Language Center. She is 23 years old and comes from a middle class family. Her father, whose background is Lebanese, is a physician and her mother is a housewife of Spanish heritage. Nour was recommended by one of her professors to work with us on the development of this ethnographic research project. He said that she was incredibly committed and bright. We have been working with her for the last two years and have discovered that apart from being responsible and intelligent, she is very compassionate, humble, and witty.

However, in spite of all her good qualities, she is not very popular among her classmates. Let's try to explain her situation. Nour is one of the few students that came to this school because she wanted to be an English teacher. Being very committed to her studies, she is quite responsible, in contrast with most of her classmates who are at times not very academically oriented. This is how she describes problems with her classmates:

“We clash. My classmates and I. I have been part of this class for five years and I think that most of them are a mess. They are not interested in school, they do not seem to be university students, and they do not care about their academic preparation. Sometimes I think that, with them, I am going backwards. They do not even seem to have a life plan. They do not seem to like what they are doing or what they are studying, and they are not motivated. They are the ones that cause the university to have a very low academic level, and because I say what I think, they do not accept me”.

(“ Chocamos, yo y mis compañeros. He estado en este grupo por cinco años y creo que la mayoría de ellos andan muy mal. No están interesados en la escuela, no parecen estudiantes universitarios, no les interesa su preparación académica. A veces pienso que, con ellos, voy para atrás. No se ve que tengan un plan de vida. Creo que no les gusta lo que están haciendo y lo que están estudiando, y no están motivados. Ellos son los causantes de que la universidad tenga un bajo nivel académico, y porque siempre digo lo que pienso, por eso no me aceptan”.)

She is not only critical of her classmates but also of her teachers:

“As a student I have a feeling of frustration because of the poor teaching of some of the members of the faculty. There are some courses I still wonder why I was here, really poor teaching... In fifth semester I wanted to quit. I was so frustrated, not getting what I wanted, but I didn't want my parents to spend money to send me away. So I had to stay here.”

(“Como estudiante tengo un sentimiento de frustración por la mala enseñanza de algunos de los maestros. Hay algunos cursos que todavía me hacen preguntarme que hacía yo allí, maestros muy malos... En quinto semestre estuve a punto de salirme. Me sentía tan frustrada, pues no encontraba lo que estaba buscando, pero tampoco quería que mis padres tuvieran que gastar dinero para que yo me fuera a una universidad en otro estado. Por eso me tuve que quedar”).

Another cause of differences between Nour and her classmates was political. She supported an academic candidate for the direction of the school, while most of her classmates were against him:

“I supported a candidate they did not like, and I put forward my reasons but, of course, academic reasons would not convince them” (*“Apoye a un candidato que a ellos no les gustaba, les di mis razones pero, por supuesto, las razones académicas no los convencieron.*

Nour thinks that most of her classmates do not have the capacity to be critical:

“They do not read. They only sit in front of the TV and accept everything they hear”. (*Ellos no leen. Solamente se sientan en frente de la televisión y aceptan todo lo que oyen.*)”

This lack of reflection and critical attitude led to the most difficult situation for Nour in her school life:

“A crucial moment for my separation from the rest of the group was about 9/11. The media were accusing the Arabs, and my classmates know that my background is Arab, and they were just listening to and accepting the news and I wanted to demonstrate that they were wrong. It was very difficult for me. They were literally attacking me. And I was defending myself and thinking about my relatives that live there. That was when I separated from my classmates. Before that, I had not noticed that kind of racism, and I was not going to stay quiet. And I felt so impotent, so helpless. I had to speak up, but they believed only what the media said. Some of them may have been only joking, but they hurt me so much”

(“Un momento crítico en mi separación del grupo fue el 11 de septiembre. Los medios acusaban a los árabes, y mis compañeros sabían que mis antepasados eran árabes. Ellos sólo escuchaban y aceptaban todo lo que decían las noticias. Yo les quería demostrar que estaban mal. Fue muy difícil. Literalmente me estaban atacando. Y yo me defendía y pensaba en mi familia que vivía allá. Por eso me separe de mis compañeros. Ya desde antes, había notado una especie de racismo, y no iba a quedarme callada. Y me sentía tan impotente, tan indefensa. Tenía que hablar, pero ellos sólo creían lo que oían en los medios. Algunos tal vez estaban bromeando pero me hirieron demasiado”.)

From that moment her defense was to show an attitude of indifference about the affairs that concerned the class, whose members, consciously or unconsciously, kept telling her that she was different:

“I did not want to be in the generation group photograph because I did not feel part of the group and also because I did not agree with their decisions. Did you see that they decided to wear cap and gown for the photo? Come on, we do not use that here, that’s a gringo costume, and you know me, I reject everything that is gringo.”

(“No quise estar en la foto de la generación porque no me sentía parte del grupo y porque no estaba de acuerdo con sus decisiones. ¿Sabías que decidieron retratarse con birrete y toga? ¡Por favor! Eso no se usa aquí, es una costumbre gringa, y tú sabes, me choca todo lo que es gringo”.)

According to two of her male classmates, another reason for Nour not being as popular as other girls is her appearance:

“Well, I do not know her very well, but we are not blind; she is very attractive... there is no doubt that she is attractive. We think she is distant, she does not allow the boys to get very close to her. Her appearance is very striking; a lot of guys think that she is so beautiful and so intelligent...but they also think that they are not good enough for her. Some of them must think that ‘I am so poor and look so Oaxacan, you know, with brown skin and she is white and beautiful’...”

(“Bueno, no la conocemos bien, pero ¡no estamos ciegos!, es muy atractiva... no hay duda que es muy atractiva. Lo que pensamos es que se aparta mucho, que no deja que los chavos se le acerquen. Su apariencia llama mucho la atención; muchos chavos piensan que ella es tan guapa y tan inteligente... pero también piensan que ellos no la merecen. Algunos han de pensar: “Yo soy pobre y me veo tan oaxaqueño, ya ves, ¡yo tan prieto y ella tan blanca y bonita...”)

However, there are some who do not think the same way:

“They have told me that the boys are afraid of me. But there are also some that have insisted, and gosh, they have been so insistent that I had to ask a friend to come to the school and pretend that he was my boyfriend. I just wanted to get rid of them.”

(“Me han dicho que los muchachos tienen miedo de mí. Pero hay algunos que han insistido, y mira que han sido insistentes, tanto que tuve que pedirle a un amigo que viniera a la escuela y se hiciera pasar por mi novio para deshacerme de ellos.”)

And this situation has also happened with her few male friends:

“Some of my male friends think that because I am his friend I want to have a relationship, so they start insisting. That has happened even with my best friends. And they do not understand that I love them as friends, but they always want more.”

(“Algunos de mis amigos piensan que porque son mis amigos yo quiero tener una relación con ellos, y empiezan a insistir. Ha pasado hasta con mis mejores amigos. Y no entienden que los quiero como amigos pero ellos siempre quieren más.”)

Fortunately, her project with our research group has given her new motivation to be in the school:

“There have been moments when being by myself in the school, with its highly social life, has been very difficult... not to belonging to a social group. I have come to recognize that I have to adapt myself, to learn to live with different people. My investigation has allowed me to understand other people and to understand myself. What am I doing here? What are they doing here? I know that there are prejudices here. At the national level, I have suffered prejudices because I am from Oaxaca and because I study in UABJO (one of the poorest public universities in the country and with a lot of political crises), but with my study I became aware that because I am not indigenous, I have had some opportunities. Some of my informants (some of my classmates) told me that they or their parents had to spend the whole night here to get a “ficha”. Before carrying out my research, I did not know that...Taking part in the ethnographic project at the *Centro de Idiomas* has helped me to know why we are here, to find answers to understand the way I feel and to understand my classmates, to know about my context, my school and the way we are”.

(“Ha habido momentos en que estar sola en la escuela, con tanta vida social alrededor, ha sido muy difícil... no pertenecer a ningún grupo. Me he dado cuenta que tengo que adaptarme, aprender a vivir con diferentes personas. Mi investigación me hizo entender a otras gentes y a mí misma: ¿Qué hago aquí? ¿Qué hacen aquí? Sé que hay prejuicios aquí. A nivel nacional he sufrido prejuicios porque vengo de Oaxaca y porque estudio en la UABJO (una de las universidades más pobres y con más crisis políticas del país), pero con mi estudio me di cuenta que no soy indígena, que he tenido oportunidades. Algunos de mis informantes me dijeron que sus padres tuvieron que pasar toda la noche aquí para que les dieran una ficha. Antes de mi investigación yo no lo sabía... Haber participado en el proyecto de la etnografía del Centro de Idiomas me ayudó a darme cuenta porque ellos estudian aquí, a encontrar las respuestas para entender porque me siento así y a entender a mis compañeros, conocer mi contexto, mi escuela y nuestra forma de ser.”)

Arturo

Arturo is a lively, extroverted student at the Centro. He is from a rural working class family from a small village near the city of Oaxaca. His mother has had to support him and his older sister with small-scale vending enterprises while coping with the alcoholism and macho attitudes of his father. He and his sister are the first ones in his extended family to go to university to get a degree. His sister is a pre-school teacher. He feels a great responsibility to get his degree since he is the first one who speaks English in his family. However, his family is not very happy with his choice:

“At the beginning they thought that it was an “double edged sword”, because they thought that either I was going to change and become “agringado,” “malinchist,” betraying my own country and culture, or I was not going to make any progress. They used to say: ‘As a physician you earn money, but being an English teacher is not profitable.’”

(“Al principio pensaron que era una arma de dos filos porque creían que iba a cambiar y volverme agringado, malinchista, traicionando mi propio país y mi propia cultura. O que no iba a progresar. Me decían “Como doctor ganas dinero pero los maestros de inglés no sacan nada”.)

As a child, Arturo was weak and somewhat sickly. This resulted in his having to stay at home and prevented him from enjoying his childhood as much as he would have liked. He thinks that was the reason he was so timid, introverted and fearful of speaking when he was in kindergarten. He remembers that one time at that age he got lost and had trouble asking for help because of his problems with talking. His life did not change very much during the six years of elementary school and the two first years of secondary school. Besides, he became overweight, which was the cause of bullying from his classmates. He depicts himself at that time as a shy, quiet ‘gordito’ who was alone most of the time, preferring to stay in the classroom while his classmates enjoyed their break. He says that his reaction to this difficult situation was to become a lonely but irritating adolescent who would refuse to use public buses or attend school. Because of his slow academic progress, he even failed his English courses. His mother decided to send him to a private Catholic school run by nuns. Here, he says, the atmosphere was different and he did not feel alone, and in the religion he found the strength and confidence he was lacking before.

At the end of secondary school he started to think about what he wanted to be in life. Although the idea of becoming a priest was attractive to him, it was actually his desire to learn English that made him start high school in a public school in order to be able to enter the Centro. His first year at *Preparatoria 7* was difficult for him. The atmosphere at this new school was too relaxed and disorienting for him. It was evident that he was different from his classmates.

He remembers that he used to go to school wearing slacks and a long sleeve shirt with a tie. Sometimes he found the ambience so negative that he would carry his Bible with him thinking that everything in this context was sinful. However, he also found that in different ways there was a lot of diversity among his classmates, who instead of rejecting him, invited him to take part in their *desmades* ('parties'). Finally, he decided to change, first his appearance (now he wears jeans and t-shirts) and then his point of view and behavior. He left his Bible behind and started smoking and drinking, though he points out that he never tried the other drugs his friends used to take. That decision, he says, was a remnant of his religious days when they told him that there are some things that are wrong.

The following is a sample of Arturo's point of view and his feelings about issues related to the construction of his identity:

"I am a boy whose social life is very restricted. Actually, it revolves around the *Centro* and my classmates. However, during this past year I have learned to deal with my reality, a reality very difficult to deal with, since I have had to develop two different personalities and lives fighting against what I am. I am referring to my sexual preferences.

This has limited my social life because it was not until this year that I woke up from the lethargy that depressed me so much because I refused to accept my sexual orientation. Now I have learned how to live as a straight man in front of my family and how to express my homosexuality when I am not with them. I feel that the day I tell my family they will be very disappointed, but for me it will be a sort of liberation because I will not be pretending to be what I am not anymore.

The *Centro* is the right place for me. It has been very helpful for me to be here because I feel that a high number of students are gay and that encourages me and makes me feel that I am not alone anymore. Now I know that I am not the only one whose sexual preferences are different."

("Soy un muchacho con una vida social muy escasa. Por lo pronto mi vida social es en el Centro con mis compañeros. Pero el año pasado tuve que aprender a como vivir mi realidad, una realidad difícil de aceptar pues tengo que vivir dos diferentes personalidades y vidas, luchando contra lo que soy. Me refiero a mis preferencias sexuales. Esto ha limitado mi vida social porque desde apenas este año desperté de ese letargo que me deprimía mucho porque no quería aceptar mi orientación sexual. Ahora he aprendido a vivir como un hombre heterosexual frente a la familia y expresar mi homosexualidad cuando no estoy con ellos. Siento que el día que le diga a mi familia se van a enojar mucho pero va a ser como una especie de liberación porque ya no tendré que aparentar lo que no soy.

El Centro es el mejor lugar para mí. Me ha ayudado mucho estar aquí porque siento que aquí hay muchos estudiantes que son gay y eso me anima, me hace sentir que ya no estoy solo. Ahora se que no soy el único que tiene diferentes preferencias sexuales".)

About learning English and its link to social status:

"People think that because you speak another language you have a better cultural level, that you are 'in.' For instance, one day a student from the States, with whom I practice my English at school, invited me to the cinema; you know the new cinemas

they just opened. The place was full of 'fresitas'; show offs, rich young boys and girls that look down at others. They looked at me as if saying, 'What are you doing here? You do not belong here? You don't look fresa, or nice, or cool.' But, boy, they were shocked when my friend, a tall blond guy, green eyes, arrived and started to talk to me in English and I answered him back and we had a fluid conversation in English. They were astonished, thinking 'Órale! (Gosh!) How can HE speak English and we, who think so much of ourselves, can't.' Their attitude simply changed. I do not know how to explain it but their attitude changed, I swear. And that gives you a better status, doesn't it?"

"My friends have also reacted to my learning English because, you know, sometimes I forget the words in Spanish and I say them in English and they start calling me 'fresa,' and sometimes the situation turns tense. I guess that they are sensitive to that. They feel that they are left aside; they feel diminished and excluded. And you feel uncomfortable as well; you do not want to leave them aside, but at the same time if I come across a gringo that I know, I have to talk in English but my intention is not to say anything I do not want them to know about ...They say that I have changed, that now I am 'fresa,' that I am 'fresa' because I only hang out with gringos. They see you differently, but in fact you have only changed a little bit, but your essence is the same. They do not see that because they are looking at it from the outside. They think that because you speak another language you have changed. They may think that you are exchanging them for new people and that you are also changing your culture, and of course you are changing your friends."

("La gente piensa que porque hablas otro idioma tienes un nivel cultural mejor, que estás "in". Por ejemplo, un día un estudiante de los Estados Unidos, con el que practicaba mi inglés me invitó al cine; ya sabes, a los cines que apenas inauguraron. El lugar estaba lleno de fresitas presumidos, niños ricos que te hacen merengón. Me miraban como si dijeran: "¿Y tú? ¿Qué haces aquí? Tú no perteneces a este lugar. No te ves fresa ni nice ni cool". Pero, no sabes, se quedaron atónitos cuando mi amigo, un chavo alto, güero y de ojos verdes llegó y me empezó a hablar en inglés y yo le contestaba también en inglés, y teníamos una conversación fluida en inglés. Estaban perplejos, pensando "Órale! ¿Cómo puede ÉL hablar inglés y nosotros, que nos creemos mucho, no podemos?" Su actitud cambió completamente. No sé como explicarlo pero cambió, lo juro. ¿Y eso te da más estatus, no?")

Mis amigos también han tenido una reacción porque estoy aprendiendo inglés porque, tú sabes, algunas veces se me olvidan las palabras en español y las digo en inglés y ellos me empiezan a decir que soy fresa y la situación se pone muy tensa. Creo que se ponen muy sensibles. Sienten que los hago a un lado, que los hago menos, o que los excluyo. Y yo también me siento incómodo, porque no los quieres hacer a un lado ¿no? pero al mismo tiempo cuando me encuentro a un gringo que conozco, le empiezo a hablar en inglés. Es porque tengo que hablar en inglés, pero mi intención no es decir algo que no quiera que escuchen...Ellos dicen que he cambiado, que ahora soy fresa, que soy fresa porque me junto con gringos. Te ven diferente, pero sólo cambias un poquito, tu esencia es la misma. No se dan cuenta que están mirando desde afuera. Piensan que porque hablas otra lengua ya cambiaste. Tal vez piensan que los estás cambiando por gente nueva y que tú también estás cambiando tu cultura, y por supuesto estás cambiando a tus amigos.")

Arturo nowadays:

"I have changed my religion. I do not like being a Catholic any more. It was very repressive. I feel I was forced to believe in something I was against. Like most religions, there are too many restrictions and rules. That becomes very constraining when you have different sexual preferences. In many religions you do not have a place; they tell you that for you 'there is no God.' They regard you as if you have

killed a human being; they expel you from their group. They tell you that you are going to hell because you are....gay! I was really worried about that, always thinking that I was not bad, that my feelings were good. When several priests told me that I needed to feel repentant, my reasoning was sort of: if I am straight I could kill somebody, and then kill again and again, but then when I am about to die, if I say 'I repent,' will I then go to Heaven? Some Sundays I still go to church with my parents but with a strong feeling that it is a farce. Recently I found out about Wicca, a religion where there are no taboos and where they tell you that there is not one alternative but many. I have heard that some think that this is witchery, but they say that because they do not know anything about it. Wicca is about understanding your context and finding a balance. It is about a circular world with you in the middle, and you need to know how to get it balanced, and you can achieve that by respecting and loving others and by doing good deeds."

("Cambié de religión. Ya no me gusta ser católico; son muy represivos. Yo sentía como si creyera en algo que estaba en mi contra. Como la mayoría de las religiones, tienen demasiadas restricciones y reglas. Eso te restringe demasiado cuando tienes diferentes preferencias sexuales.. En muchas religiones yo no tengo un lugar; te dicen que para ti "no hay Dios". Te toman como si hubieras matado a alguien; te echan de su grupo. Te dicen que te vas a ir al infierno porque eres...gay! Yo estaba muy preocupado por eso, siempre pensando que yo no era tan malo, que mis sentimientos eran buenos. Cuando varios sacerdotes me dijeron que necesitaba arrepentirme, mi razonamiento fue así: si soy heterosexual y mato a alguien, y luego mato otra vez y otra vez, y si cuando esté a punto de morir yo digo "estoy arrepentido" ¿me iré al cielo? A veces todavía voy a misa los domingos con mis padres pero siempre con el sentimiento que todo es una farsa.

Recientemente encontré información sobre Wicca, una religión donde no hay taboos y donde te dicen que no hay un solo camino sino muchas alternativas. He oído que algunos piensan que es como brujería, pero lo dicen porque no saben nada acerca de esta religión. En Wicca tratan de entender tu contexto y encontrar un balance. Se trata de un mundo circular en donde tú estás en el centro, y tú necesitas saber como obtener ese balance, y tú puedes alcanzar ese balance con el respeto y amor hacia los demás y con tus buenas acciones".)

A Post Script:

"I feel relieved now because my family finally knows that I am gay...it sounds strange, doesn't it? I am not as tense as I used to be. The atmosphere at home has changed; now it is my parents who are very upset. I just told them last week, but they are processing it little by little. They've just got to understand me."

"I would like to tell other gay young people to be strong because you need that strength to succeed in life. Sometimes it is difficult, but we need to keep in mind that our stay in this world is temporal and that we do not have to be what our parents want us to be. They already lived their lives and it is our turn to live ours!"

("Me siento aliviado ahora que mi familia ya sabe que soy gay...suena raro, ¿no? Ya no estoy tan tenso como antes. La atmósfera en la casa ha cambiado; ahora mis padres están muy enojados. Apenas les dije la semana pasada, pero lo están procesando poco a poco. Tienen que entenderme.

Me gustaría decirles a otros chavos gay que hay que ser fuertes porque se necesita esa fuerza para tener éxito en la vida. Algunas veces es difícil, pero necesitamos siempre tener en mente que nuestro paso por este mundo es temporal y nosotros no tenemos

que ser lo que nuestros padres quieren que seamos. Ellos ya vivieron sus vidas y ahora nos toca a nosotros vivir las nuestras”.)

Freda and Braulio

Freda and Braulio are *novios* (a couple) who took part in my Comparative Linguistics course (AC). They are in their early twenties and are very similar. Their appearance and manners are middle class. Both have brown complexion, dark eyes and thick curly hair. In the classroom, they sit next to each other and hold hands; exchange comments and smiles, but never stop being very attentive and participative.

The objective of this specific course was to explore the comparative aspects of Spanish and English. Each two-student team was in charge of a topic they chose from a list I gave them. One of last topics was vernacular language, in particular taboo words. Many teams expressed their desire to work with this topic, but it was Freda and Braulio who ended up taking it on. Their presentation was the last day of the term, when all their other courses had already finished. I was surprised that nobody missed that session.

For their presentation they chose to make a video, using two young native speakers of English to play the role of traditional teachers. It was staged with actors playing the role of the teachers sitting at their desks and with a whiteboard behind showing the students the pronunciation of this rather specialized vocabulary.

Since we cannot present the video in the text, we will provide a summary, so as to be able to understand Freda and Braulio's comments about their project. The video opens with a rap/rock song playing in the background while the camera focuses on a page in a Spanish/English dictionary where the word slang is defined. This is followed by an introduction to what the viewers are about to encounter. The narrator, who is a young native English speaker from the United States, explains that this video is to teach the students how to use English slang words. He explains to the viewers that these are just words, though they may perhaps be vulgar to some, they are just words. He does, however, caution the viewers about using these words in the United States.

The scene then switches to a classroom, where another American English speaker is introducing the class for the day. He is seated at a desk and behind him is the white board. He is dressed casually, and begins the class with the words written on the board and then pronouncing each word for the students. For example:

Slang words for breasts:

Tits
Titties
Boobs

Big titties
(etc.)

Slang words for penis:

Cock
Dick
Pencil dick
Twigs and berries
Shlong
(etc.)

Slang words for butts:

Booty
Ass
Grab Ass
Asscrack
Wide load
(etc.)

Slang words for vagina:

Pussy
Clit
Cunt
Come dumpster
Elephant toe
(etc.)

The video continues in this style going through several more examples. The following is what Freda and Braulio said about their experience doing the video project for the class:

About the video:

- Braulio: "When we explained our idea to the native speakers they liked it and agreed that we would be the directors of the video. We could not be the teachers because of pronunciation and style limitations. They gave the right emphasis to the words. We did the video that way to make a combination of something original with something informal, and also because we wanted to have fun. It was a topic that had a lot of potential.

(- Braulio: " Cuando le explicamos nuestra idea a los hablantes nativos les gusto y estuvieron de acuerdo que nosotros lo dirigiríamos. Nosotros no podríamos ser los maestros por nuestras limitaciones en cuanto la pronunciación y estilo. Ellos le darían el énfasis correcto a las palabras. Hicimos el video de esa manera para combinar algo original con algo informal, y también porque queríamos divertirnos. Era un tema que tenía mucho potencial.")

About the topic:

Braulio: "The topic was taboo words, especially sexual slang words that are taboo. Insults were not considered. For us, insults are more accepted and they are not as strong. At the beginning we did not know what kind of words we were going to come across. We would not have had problems saying the words in English, though for Freda it would have been difficult to say these words in Spanish.

Freda: I would have felt nervous rather than uncomfortable. Actually it was safer not to say the words in Spanish, because all of us were Spanish speakers. That's why we did not give the translation.

Braulio: Also, we avoided the translation because, in spite of the similarities, we found a lot of variety in English, so for one word in Spanish there are several in English. It is that they were more specific with these sexual terms, while we tend to generalize a lot in terms of sexual terminology. They give the words a figurative connotation. We do that as well but less often.... Let me explain myself, we refer to something very often but with the same word whereas they use different words to refer to the same thing.

Freda: Maybe because we are afraid of being vulgar, that's why we do not use so many synonyms. We choose the word that sounds less strong, that appears less strong"

(Braulio: "El tema era sobre palabras tabú, especialmente las palabras vernáculas sobre cuestiones sexuales. No incluimos insultos. Para nosotros los insultos son más aceptados y no son tan fuertes. Al principio no sabíamos que clase de palabras íbamos a encontrar. No íbamos a tener problemas al decir las palabras en inglés, aunque para Freda iba a ser difícil decir las palabras en español.

Freda: Me hubiera sentido nerviosa más que incómoda. En realidad era más seguro no decir las palabras en español porque todos nosotros somos hablantes del español. Por eso decidimos no dar la traducción.

Braulio: Evitamos la traducción porque, aunque hay similitudes, encontramos mucha más variedad en inglés, por una palabra en español había varias en inglés. Es como si en inglés fueran más específicos en cuanto a términos sexuales, mientras que nosotros tendemos a generalizar mucho en cuanto a la terminología sexual. Ellos dicen palabras con connotaciones figurativas. También nosotros lo hacemos pero menos frecuentemente...Déjame explicarme, nos referimos a algo muy frecuentemente pero con la misma palabra mientras que ellos usan diferentes palabras para referirse a la misma cosa.

Freda: Quizá porque tenemos miedo a ser vulgares, por eso no usamos muchos sinónimos. Escogemos la palabra que suene menos fuerte, que parece menos fuerte".)

About the relevance of the topic:

Ángeles: "Why was the class so interested in and excited about the presentation? Why were they taking notes of every single word or phrase and showed more motivation than when we studied false cognates or affixes?"

Freda: Because taboo words are prohibited and prohibited things are exciting. Most of us use bad words, and we always hear them, but we do not accept it, and we also do not accept that we are interested in this language and how it is used in different places and different situations. However, we are also interested in learning this vernacular in English because we are learning English. It is good because we widen the range of our colloquial English."

(Ángeles: "¿Por qué estaba el grupo tan interesado y tan alborotado por la presentación? ¿Por qué estaban todos anotando cada palabra y cada frase y por qué se veían mucho más motivados que cuando estudiamos los cognados o los afijos?)

Freda: Porque las palabras tabú están prohibidas y las cosas prohibidas llaman la atención. La mayoría de nosotros usamos malas palabras, y siempre las estamos oyendo, pero no lo aceptamos, y tampoco aceptamos que nos interesa este tipo de lenguaje y como se usa en diferentes lugares y en diferentes situaciones. Aunque también estamos interesados en aprender este vernáculo porque estamos aprendiendo inglés. Es bueno porque ampliamos el rango de nuestro inglés coloquial".)

About the usefulness of the vocabulary, about communicative competence, about conveying emotions:

Ángeles: "Are you going to use them?"

Freda: Yeah, very often!

Braulio: For me, when you start to learn a new language it is essential to start building phrases and sentences; although I can not express myself completely, I can start structuring my ideas even though it is only bit by bit, but for me it is important to feel I can express myself. To make jokes is very motivating, you know; it means to get rid of that barrier that only allows you to ask the routine questions and listen to the routine answers such as, "What is your name? Where are you from? Do you like Oaxaca? I am Pete, I live in Oregon. Yes, I do". There is a motivating value in being able to make somebody laugh, to make somebody relax, and to start a friendship.

Freda: And to make people feel some emotions. This use of the language allows you to create a friendly atmosphere, to be more relaxed, less formal. You start using this language and people realize that you can make jokes, that you can talk!

It is very good for your communication and to establish a friendly atmosphere, because the most important thing when communicating is to use ordinary words, the language of everyday!"

(Ángeles: "¿Las van a usar?"

Freda: ¡Si, muy seguido!

Braulio: Para mí, cuando empiezas a aprender un nuevo idioma es esencial empezar a construir frases y oraciones; aunque no me pueda expresar completamente, puedo estructurar mis ideas poco a poquito, pero para mí es importante sentir que me puedo expresar. Hacer bromas es muy motivante, tú sabes; significa romper con esa barrera que sólo te permite hacer preguntas de rutina y escuchar las respuestas de rutina como: "What is your name? Where are you from? Do you like Oaxaca? I am Pete. I live in Oregon. Yes I do" Existe un valor de motivación en ser capaz de hacer reír a alguien, de hacerlo relajarse y empezar una amistad.

Freda: Y hacer a la gente sentir algunas emociones. Este uso del idioma te deja crear un ambiente amigable, estar más relajado, menos formal. Empiezas a usar este lenguaje y la gente se da cuenta que puedes hacer bromas, que puedes hablar! Es muy bueno para la comunicación y para crear un ambiente amistoso, porque la cosa más importante al comunicarte es usar palabras ordinarias, ¡el lenguaje de todos los días!"

About your native speaker interlocutor:

Braulio: "Yeah! We want to start talking about non-fictional topics, non-abstract topics. We just want to communicate to establish a relationship, not to think that you are forced to talk. On the contrary, one should try to see one's interlocutor as a friend, someone you can talk to, a source of conversation not a source of "practice your L2."

Braulio: "¡Si! Queremos empezar a hablar de temas no ficticios, temas no abstractos. Lo único que queremos al comunicarnos es establecer una relación, no pensar en que

tienes que hablar a fuerza. Al contrario, uno debería tratar a su interlocutor como un amigo, como alguien con quien se puede hablar, como una fuente para conversar y no como una fuente para 'practicar tu L2'.")

About using English creatively:

Ángeles: "Are you going to use these words (between you two)?"

Braulio: Of course! We have used them when we are talking in Spanish when we need them, when we have the opportunity, and it is easier to use them in English than in Spanish.

Freda: Yeah, it is more fun!

Braulio: Maybe for us it sounds stronger in Spanish, more offensive. In English, it is only a joke, a light joke. Between us, using these words is like using a secret code. Nobody understands except for us. It has so much potential...

(Ángeles "¿Van a usar estas palabras, entre ustedes dos?)

Braulio: ¡Claro! Ya las hemos usado cuando estamos hablando en español y las necesitamos, cuando tenemos la oportunidad de usarlas. Es más fácil usarlas en inglés que en español.

Freda: ¡Si, es más divertido!

Braulio: Quizá para nosotros suena más fuerte en español, más ofensivo. En inglés, sólo es una broma, una pequeña broma. Entre nosotros, cuando usamos estas palabras es como usar un código secreto. Nadie lo entiende excepto nosotros. Tiene tanto potencial."

About making fun of English teaching and about being critical about the content of English courses:

Ángeles: "In the video why did you choose to represent a teaching situation?"

Braulio: We thought that it was a great situation to have a teacher teaching something that he would never teach. He would be teaching what is never taught, what is never shown, which is usually left outside the classroom. We also had to represent a traditional teacher to make the situation extreme because the traditional teacher would never say these words. We wanted to make clear that we wanted to teach a lesson, to do a documentary on something that seemed to be serious, that is why we started that way, in a very "documentary-like way" with the dictionary and then the contrast at the end with the Mexican songs."

(Ángeles : "¿En el video por qué decidieron representar una situación de enseñanza?)

Braulio: Pensamos que sería bueno tener a un maestro enseñando algo que nunca enseñaría. Lo tendríamos enseñando lo que nunca ha enseñado, lo que nunca ha mostrado, lo que generalmente se deja fuera del salón de clases. También quisimos representar a un maestro tradicional para hacer la situación más extrema porque ese maestro nunca diría esas palabras. Queríamos dejar claro que queríamos dar una clase, hacer un documental de algo que pareciera serio, por eso empezamos de esa manera, muy a la manera de los documentales, con un diccionario que luego contrastara con el final de las canciones mexicanas".)

About some cultural links:

Freda: "The idea of the Mexican songs was to make a contrast, but to make a connection between how both these styles of music like to use street vernaculars in their lyrics.

Braulio: I liked the idea of the hip-hop because it is an Afro-American creation that has influenced us a lot. Hip-hop is about conflict in their street culture, and has a very particular way to tell stories that we like. Hip-hop is somewhat like our corridos

in that it tells stories about conflicts also. That's why hip-hop is very popular here because we had the antecedent of the corridos and the narcocorridos, which are very similar."

(Freda: "La idea de las canciones mexicanas fue crear un contraste pero hacer la conexión con los dos estilos de música que usan vernáculo de la calle para la letra.

Braulio: Me gustó la idea del hip-hop porque es una creación afro-americana que ha tenido mucha influencia. El hip-hop es acerca de los conflictos de la cultura de la calle y tiene una manera muy particular de contar historias que nos gustan. El hip-hop es como nuestros corridos que también cuentan historias de conflictos. Por eso el hip-hop es muy popular aquí porque tenemos el antecedente de los corridos y los narcocorridos, son muy similares".)

About some clashes between school and family:

Ángeles: "Can we talk about anything here in this school, like politics, religion or sexuality?"

Braulio: Yes, we can. However, when we were working on the video at home my mother asked me about the topic of the assignment and I told her that it was about bad words, strong words. She asked: 'Is that your homework? What kind of homework is that? That's what they asked you to do? Is that what they teach you at school?' My relationship with my mother is good, so I explained it to her later. However, she was not happy, and I realized that the whole time she was 'sacada de onda' (upset).

Freda: Yeah, the idea that people have about school is different. For them those topics stay outside the school. These are topics to discuss in the family in a serious way, maybe with other social groups, but not in the classroom. You do not come to school to do that, to learn that.

Braulio: The school's goal should be to teach you the language and that means to learn about all areas, engage in the topics that you need to be able to participate."

(Ángeles: "¿Podemos hablar de cualquier cosa aquí en la escuela, como de política, religión o sexualidad?"

Braulio: Sí, si podemos. Aunque cuando estábamos trabajando en el video en mi casa mi mamá me preguntó cuál era el tema del trabajo y le dije que era sobre malas palabras, palabras fuertes. Entonces me pregunto: "¿Es esa su tarea? Qué clase de tarea es esa? ¿Eso es lo que les dejan hacer? ¿Eso es lo que les enseñan en la escuela?" La relación con mi mamá es muy buena, por eso le dije que después le explicaba. Pero pude notar que no estaba contenta, me di cuenta que todo el tiempo estaba como sacada de onda.

Freda: Sí, la idea de la gente acerca de la escuela es diferente. Para ellos esos temas se tratan fuera de la escuela. Son temas para discutir con la familia en serio, quizá con otros grupos sociales, pero no en el salón de clases. No venimos a la escuela a esto, a aprender estas cosas.

Braulio: El objetivo de la escuela debería ser enseñarte el lenguaje y eso significa aprender todas las áreas, involucrarte en todos los temas que necesitas para poder participar".)

About constructing their own identities as English speakers:

Braulio: "Our English teacher gives us a story to read and then he asks us to report what we think it was about. However, using a language is not only about interpreting other people's ideas, but also about us producing our own ideas. When learning and using English, I want to leave that level of interpreting the ideas of others and then

reporting what other people said. That level is only practicing. We need to go beyond the idea of just practicing our skills. We need to start expressing what we think and what we feel, to be ourselves.

Freda: Exactly, be yourself in the *other* language!

Braulio: People may think that we were only having fun with this video, but it was very important for us. We see its value.”

(Braulio: “Muchas veces nuestros maestros de inglés nos dan una historia para leer y luego nos piden que hagamos un reporte de lo que pensamos que se trata la lectura. Pero, para nosotros, usar el idioma no es solamente interpretar las ideas de otras gentes ¡sino también producir nuestras propias ideas! Queremos que cuando aprendamos y usemos el inglés, no nos quedemos en el nivel de interpretación de ideas ajenas o reportes de lo que dicen los demás. Ese nivel es de práctica nada más. Necesitamos ir más allá de la práctica y de la adquisición de habilidades. Necesitamos empezar a expresar en inglés lo que pensamos y lo que sentimos.

Freda: ¡Exactamente! Necesitamos ser nosotros mismos en el otro idioma.

Braulio: La gente piensa que lo único que hicimos fue divertirnos con este video, pero en realidad fue muy importante para nosotros. Nosotros sabemos su valor”.)

INTERPRETATION OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS

Nour

In terms of the four students presented in these ethnographic portraits, Nour clearly entered the Centro with more cultural capital than others (and no doubt more economic capital also). Given her family’s class standing, the professional context of her father, and her mother’s family background from Spain, her everyday life was a context in which she had access to different forms of social capital. One clear example of this is that in our sample of students at the Centro, she was one of few who were aware of the academic structure of the university, what kind of programs there were at the Centro, and what she wanted to study. She had spent time comparing the cost and programs at different universities, and found for various reasons that the program at the Centro was best suited to her needs. She came with an identity of herself as a student with serious goals and desires about her studies and what she thought a university setting should be. She had to balance these goals with her desire to be or not to be part of the in-group of her class.

With her preexisting level of cultural capital, she was able to use her agency to pursue her goals without being hindered by the perceptions and actions of other students in terms of her gender, heterosexuality, and ethnicity. She is an assertive young woman who was not hesitant to express her views, particularly about her fellow students or teachers. She felt that she had awareness and understanding about what a university education was, and she demanded that students and faculty should be able to act in that manner. In terms of her student identity, she chose to maintain these beliefs over winning social approval. Further, she did not use the perception of her attractiveness as a means of gaining social approval or to soften her assertiveness.

Her understanding of her gender and sexual locations is expressed in how she dealt with others' perceptions of her attractiveness or her *onda* or personal style. Others read her assertiveness as if she wanted to distance herself from the other students or that she was so attractive that it was not possible for others (especially young men) to approach her. Her understanding of the dynamics of the personal politics of heterosexuality is expressed in how she knew that some young men were only offering friendship and access to their social networks in the anticipation of certain presumed sexual favors from her. She used her own agency in confronting this through the strategy of having a male friend to act as her *novio* 'boyfriend' to ward off the attentions of other young men.

A dramatic example of a combination of her cultural capital, her various identity locations and her personal agency is how she dealt with the concerns over her ethnic background. She is quite aware of her Arab heritage (Lebanese) through her father's family and her own visits to Lebanon. Further, she has had various travel experiences outside Mexico and is quite aware of the diversity of ethnic and political issues in the contemporary world. She felt that many of her classmates saw the events of September 11 in terms of stereotypes about radical Arabs. She challenged them to see these complex events more critically. For this, she was chastised and further marginalized by her classmates. Though she was hurt by these actions and felt that it was in fact an expression of racism, she committed herself to doing even better in her educational pursuits. In fact, she came to have a reflective understanding of her social locations and those of her classmates by participating in this ethnographic project.

Thus, Nour did not find her gender, heterosexuality or ethnicity a hindrance in the pursuit of the linguistic and symbolic capital involved in learning English but was able to use these locations through her own personal agency to enhance and attain her educational and personal goals. Moreover, she will be able to convert these capital "gains" into her own cultural capital and in so doing further her skills and desires about learning and using English. Though her positions within the learning cultures of the *Centro* were often distant and conflictive, she was able to navigate around these *topes* (barriers) towards her own social hopes and goals.

Arturo

Arturo's portrait is a compelling story of how this young man has used his own agency to navigate his way through various levels of his familial and educational contexts. Given the shifting and conflictive situations he has found himself in, he was able to maintain a vision of what he wanted from his life. This is expressed quite strongly in his rejection of his family's concerns about his studying English (they felt that he would become a "gringo" and would never make money like a medical doctor), his acceptance

of his new-found sexuality in opposition to his family's and his religious beliefs, and how he hopes to continue with both of these identity locations.

Also, the history of his educational adventures is a strong representation of the social activities involved in the construction of identities. From his entry into primary school up to his current activities in the Centro, he has been constantly constructing and practicing various identities to locate or find himself. He has moved from being a very timid child to being a somewhat confused teenager, and now is entering young adulthood accepting his homosexuality and exploring forms of alternative religious beliefs. Further, it has been through learning English in the supportive context of the learning cultures at the Centro that he has gained the security to continue these pursuits.

In the context of the learning cultures at the Centro de Idiomas he has been able to encounter safe houses for himself, where he has been able to understand his homosexuality and further his pursuit of the linguistic and symbolic capital associated with English (Canagarajah, 1999). At the *Centro* he has found friends that share his quest for learning English and who accept his sexual orientation without judgment. He has had to relocate himself in terms of older friends who thought that he was attempting to be better than they were through his command of English and the friendships he has attained. Within this more open context his self-esteem seems to have increased with his willingness to be open about his sexuality and his exploration of new forms of spirituality. He is finding that through the pursuit of various forms of linguistic and symbolic capital in the context of the learning cultures of the Centro, he is enriching his cultural capital. Like Nour, his identity locations have helped, not hindered him in learning and using English.

Freda and Braulio

The explanations and perceptions expressed by Freda and Braulio about their class project and the video they produced are quite insightful and imaginative about language learning and use. They also express a set of ideas about language use that is not often talked about in applied linguistics: the pleasure of being able to use one's new language in an open and creative manner. For them, language learning should be fun, an open space for laughter and play, which in turn can shorten the social distance in communication between language users, in this case between native and non-native speakers (or as Canagarajah characterizes it, between expert users and novice ones). In an informal way, they have introduced questions of the politics of pleasure to the pursuit of the various forms of linguistic and symbolic capital involved in the activities of learning English as an additional language.

In their comments there is also a subversion of the standards of English and how English is or could be taught. They clearly are suggesting the

subversion of the authority of the English teacher (expert or novice) over how and what should be part of learning English, particularly in terms of what should or should not be included as appropriate material for study and use, such as street vernacular. They also advocate learners having a strong role in choosing or determining what skills to learn and how to use those skills. They stress the importance of having fun with language and that their own feelings and desires are part of this quest.

One of the joys of ethnographic investigation is that in capturing the everyday activities of social actors one finds expressions of what are often the abstract concerns of one's own discipline. Freda and Braulio are in the process of constructing for themselves very complex identities as language learners and users. This has given them a "thicker" understanding of themselves as language learners and users, the dynamics of language teaching and the need for creative use of the "other language" and that such activities are or should be joyful and pleasurable. This is an illustration of how they have been using their own agency to pursue the different forms of social capital in learning English as an additional language. It seems that, for them, the conversion of their accumulated social capitals into cultural capital opens up space for them to be the kind of language learners and users they desire to be. Freda and Braulio also reflect Bauman's contention that culture is about creating new possibilities not maintaining traditions (Bauman, 1973). Within the context of the learning cultures at the Centro, they do not accept that they should see English as a given body of standards that they have to reproduce, but that the learning of English can be the means of finding and creating new possibilities of language performance.

CONCLUSION: WHOSE ENGLISH IS IT ANYWAY?

In the context of the ethnographic portraits that we have presented, how can we answer the question posed in our title, "Whose English is it anyway?". We think the answer lies in Freda's declaration: "...we need to be ourselves within that other language!" In order to address this question more formally, we will unpack Freda's statement. First, what is this other language? Obviously, it is English. But, whose English? And which English? Clearly, these questions are connected to the discussion of World English: What is World English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Widdowson, 2003)? Is it a new international language (McKay, 2002)?

Is it the core of an emerging *lingua franca* that frames the communication style of the network society (Castells, 2000; Knapp and Meierkord, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2001)? Is the concept of World English too limited? Should we be concerned with the development of World Englishes (Holborow, 1999; Kachru, 1986)? Is the spread of English a form of imperialism that reinforces patterns of domination or does English become a counter-hegemonic force that can be a means for forms of resistance to neo-colonialism

(Canagarajah, 1999; Hamel, 2003; Pennycook, 2004)? Are the desires of those seeking to learn English throughout the world motivated by the forces of globalization or do they express people's concerns for using their own agency in locating themselves within these globalization processes (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 2001)? What role do such identity locations as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, ableness and age have in determining who has access to these varieties of English (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002; Pennycook, 2001)? What are the learning conditions for acquiring these Englishes (Canagarajah, 1999; Norton and Toohey, 2004)?

It seems to us that all the trends and dynamics mentioned above occur within the overall context of what is referred to as globalization. Globalization represents the current world economy that is presently dominated by the political economies of the United States, Europe and Japan. Since the political economy of the United States currently sets the parameters for these patterns of economic and political interaction, the use of English has a central role. In the worlds of banking and trade, universities and research, high tech and biotech industries, and telecommunications and entertainment, English seems to be the *lingua franca*. This is especially so in both government and private sectors (Knapp and Meierkord, 2002). This would seem to be the ethnographic reality of World English. Because of the historic combination of British colonialism's effects with the patterns of United States economic and military imperialism, communicating in English has become imperative for those whose histories have been framed by these political and economic forces. This has engendered arguments about the ownership of English, who controls the standard of English and how and by whom English should be taught. These concerns have given rise to debates about the role of native versus non-native speakers of English and who is more qualified to be able to instruct others to learn and use English (Widdowson, 2003). The conflicts over who gets access to English have provided new spaces for the reformulation of identity locations. However, access to the learning and use of English is often determined by one's position in a social class. In this context of globalization, middle and upper class actors access English generally within institutional contexts whereas working and poor folks access English in the labor context of migration (Castells, 2000). It is in this very broad cultural, social and political context that these young language learners and users in Oaxaca are composing their own answers to the question of "*Whose English is it anyway?*"

What constitutes "being ourselves in this other language"? In the ethnographic portraits that we have presented, we have tried to show how these students are developing their own creative and critical means to be themselves in this other language. We are not suggesting that these students are creating a new variant of English in linguistic terms (e.g. grammar or phonetics). What we are suggesting is that because of the sociocultural context in which these students live, their conception of English is different from that of other English learning communities, such as the immigrants in Canada studied by Norton (2000). As illustrated in these ethnographic

portraits, while pursuing these learning and teaching activities, these students get involved in the construction of various identity locations such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity and social class. They use these identity locations to invest in various forms of linguistic and cultural capital. This investment represents the affirmation of their own forms of personal agency (Norton, 2000). As we have stated, we refer to these bilingual learning activities as learning cultures. We have emphasized that we see culture as a system for representing the diversity of the symbolic, intuitive, and behavioral worlds that people have constructed, live in and act upon. Culture is moving beyond the real to engage the possible (Bauman, 1973). Thus, learning is central to the process of cultural behavior. Learning challenges existing realities by seeking deeper meanings of concepts and actions. Furthermore, learning is the way in which one constructs a critique of existing personal and social realities. These are the range of social activities that take place in the context of these students learning cultures at the Centro de Idiomas. It is within these social contexts that the students are relocating themselves beyond the dichotomy of the native/non-native speakers and moving towards an awareness of themselves as having the possibility to be creative and critical bilingual social actors.

Given the direction of our assumptions, who is the “other” in this overall cultural, social and political context? It is clear to us that these students have knowledge of themselves as the other (in terms of being different) while having knowledge of themselves as creative and communicative language actors. In these portraits, all these young students have an awareness of their otherness: Nour in terms of her gender and ethnicity; Arturo in terms of his sexuality and social class background; and Freda and Braulio in terms of their quest for the use of street vernacular as a means of making language learning pleasurable. Furthermore, they are aware of their otherness in terms of the global patterns of symbolic and cultural capital accumulation that locates them so near yet so far away from the sociopolitical realities of the United States and Europe. They use their awareness of the realities of being the other to motivate themselves in their particular pursuits of language learning and not as a hindrance to their goals and aspirations.

Quite clearly, the dynamics of their interwoven activities have engendered in all of them a desire to use their English language skills in creative and communicative. They have moved themselves beyond the opposition of native/non-native speaker and have placed themselves within a continuum of novice/expert users of English in particular social and linguistic contexts. By doing this they have also blocked their subordination to the hegemony of Standard English. How?

Within some discourses of second or additional language acquisition, the opposition between the native and the non-native speaker is ironic. First, the terms have been changed from nouns into adjectives. More importantly,

there is an inversion of the discursive positions of *native* and *non-native*. As a noun in the colonial context the native is a powerless and voiceless person, whereas the non-native has the power, the authority and the voice. In the colonial context, the native has been defined in the following manner: the root sense of the term native as 'born to the land' was changed in the colonial context, to a pejorative term where the native was considered inferior to the colonial settlers or administrators. Native meant savage, that is, an uncivilized or child-like person. The colonial discourse was anchored on the assumption that it was the colonizers who would bring modernity and civilization to the natives. Or in the case of classic civilizations such as India or China, a social-Darwinian argument about the stages of civilizations was used to justify the colonization. These older civilizations were held to be in decline and that they required the purity of the cultures of the colonizers. For the colonizers, there was always the fear that the native ways would populate these of the colonizers (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998). In the colonial context than the native was the other.

Within the context of teaching English as a second language this relation between the native and non-native as language speakers has been subverted. The terms in this context, used as adjectives qualifying the noun *speaker*, have been reversed. In the colonial context, the native is a sedentary social actor, whereas in the English language learning context, the native becomes a mobile actor travelling with his or her voice. The native speaker of English has the voice of authority and with that voice, the power to impose what are to be the standards of English usage. Conversely, the non-native speaker of English is the voiceless actor (for example, the concern by some in SLA that non-native speakers should not be allowed to use their L1 in the L2 classroom) and there are suggestions of primitivism in terms of concerns about fossilization of errors and not moving beyond the stage of interlanguage. Furthermore, the non-native speaker is powerless against the regulations of Standard English imposed by the language gatekeepers. Thus, now it is the non-native speaker of English that is the other. These students' creative ways for learning and using their English allow them to move away from being the "other" in terms of their command over Standard English.

For these students, to accept the authority and commands of Standard English (or work with rules and regulation of the gatekeepers of these standards) would place them within the irresolvable dichotomy of the native versus the non-native speaker of English. However World Englishes are conceptualized (Brutt-Griffler, 2002), the users will frame their language activities in terms of their own social and cultural contexts. As these students construct their own approach to using English, they are also locating themselves within the broader context of World Englishes. How they use their English gives them a voice and space within this field. In this sense, the Centro de Idiomas is a contact zone where the students can construct safe houses where they can explore their use of English (Canagarajah, 1999). This is not a social reality that can be represented as an opposition between native and non-native speakers, but a social process

of how these actors are approximating and remaking English into a virtual device that is theirs, either as a tool of communication or as a new identity location. Thus, through the dynamics of the diversity of their learning cultures, they are moving beyond the hegemonic constraints of Standard English, and not letting themselves be defined as the other. That is, they are being “themselves in this other language”.

NOTES

1. We have developed these student usages of English into a model we have referred to as Mexican English (Clemente and Higgins 2005).

REFERENCES

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (1998). *Post-Colonial: Key concepts*. London: Routledge.
- Baron, B. and Kotthoff, H. (2001). *Gender in Interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Bauman, Z. (1973). *Culture as praxis*. London: Routledge and Kegan.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Block, D. (2003). *The social turn in second language acquisition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outlines for a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Canagarajah, A. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brutt-Griffler, J. (2002). *World English: A study of its development*. London: Multilingual Matters.
- Castells, M. (2000). *The Power of identity. Vol. 2*. London: Blackwell Publishers.

- Clemente, A. (2003). Learning cultures and counselling: Teacher/learner interaction within a self-directed scheme. In D. Palfreyman and R. Smith (eds), *Learner autonomy across cultures* (pp. 201-219). London: Palgrave.
- Clemente, A. and Higgins, M. (2003). The production of learning cultures: The interface between Applied Linguistics and Anthropology. *Proceedings from 2003 Congreso de Lingüística Aplicada*, México DF: CELE-UNAM.
- Clemente, A. and Higgins, M. (2004). Whose English is it anyway? Ethnography of Centro de Idiomas in Oaxaca, Mexico. Paper presented at the 37th Annual BAAL Meeting, London, 10 September.
- Clemente, A. and Higgins, M. (2005). So close yet so far: Localization of the global pursuit of English. Manuscript in preparation.
- Eckert, P, and McConell-Ginet, S. (2003). *Gender and language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garcia Canclini, N. (1995). *Hybrid cultures*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hamel, R. E. (2003). *Language empires, linguistic imperialism, and future of global languages*. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Department of Anthropology. México, D.F.
- Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women*. New York: Routledge
- Higgins, M. (1997). *Somos tocayos*. Oaxaca: Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Culturas.
- Higgins, M. and Coen, T. (2000). *Streets, bedrooms and patios: The ordinariness of diversity in urban Oaxaca*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Holborow, M. (1999). *The politics of English*. London: Sage Publications.
- Holliday, A. (2002). *Doing and writing qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Kachru, B.B. (1986). *The alchemy of English*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Knapp, K. and C. Meierkord. (2002). *Lingua franca communication*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH.

Lantolf, J. and Thorne S. (2004). *Sociocultural theory and the sociogenesis of second language development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McKay, S.L. (2002). *Teaching English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Norton, B. (2005). *Identity, agency and language learning*. Workshop at the Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, Mexico, 15 April.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity, and educational change*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Norton, B. and Toohey, K. (eds.) (2004). *Critical pedagogies and language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pavlenko, A. (2002). Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in second language learning use. In V. Cook (ed.), *Portraits of the L2 user* (pp. 277-302). London: Multilingual Matters.

Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. London: Erlbaum Publishers.

Pennycook, A. (2004). Performativity and language studies. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies: An International Journal*, 1 (1), 1-19.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistics imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rampton, B. (1997). Second language learning in late modernity. *Modern Languages Journal*, 81 (3), 329-333.

Sayer, P; Clemente, A. and Higgins, M. (2004) Learning/Teaching English in Oaxaca, Mexico: Teachers, Language and Identity. Paper presented at the AAAL Meeting 2004, Portland, USA, 1 May.

Seidlhofer, B. (2001). Closing a conceptual gap: The case for a description of English as a *lingua franca*. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11 (2), 133-58.

Widdowson, W.H. (2003). *Defining issues in English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**¿ENTONCES, DE QUIÉN ES EL INGLÉS? CULTURA, LENGUAJE E IDENTIDAD: RETRATOS
ETNOGRÁFICOS DE OAXACA, MÉXICO**

RESUMEN

En este artículo presentamos una serie de retratos etnográficos de algunos estudiantes que se encuentran en el proceso de aprender y enseñar inglés en el Centro de Idiomas que forma parte de la universidad estatal de la Ciudad de Oaxaca en México. Estos retratos se enfocan en la manera en que los estudiantes del Centro navegan las complejidades sociales y culturales de aprender el inglés como un lenguaje adicional. Nuestro argumento se centra en la manera en que el proceso de acumulación de capital simbólico y cultural, los modos de construcción de identidad, y las dinámicas de agencia social, influyen en el aprendizaje de una lengua adicional (Bourdieu, 1991; Pavlenko, 2002). Los jóvenes oaxaqueños de clase media y clase trabajadora del Centro se encuentran inmersos en la búsqueda de varias formas de capital lingüístico y cultural. Además, usan sus diferentes locaciones de identidad conectadas con el género, la sexualidad, la etnicidad y las suposiciones acerca de los estándares del inglés. Estos estudiantes se mueven entre estas suposiciones y sus propios deseos acerca de su ejecución lingüística y usan su agencia para recomponer el inglés más allá de esas suposiciones (Sayer, Clemente y Higgins 2004).

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cultura - Lenguaje - Identidad - Etnografía - Oaxaca