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ORIGINAL PAPER

Family language policy, transnationalism, and the diaspora community of San Lucas Quiaviní of Oaxaca, Mexico

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Abstract San Lucas Quiaviní is a community of Zapotec (Otomanguean) speakers in Oaxaca, Mexico. Since the 1970s, the community has seen large-scale migration to Los Angeles, California, where about half the community now resides. Participant observation and interviews conducted over nine years in both locales, with a focus on interactional patterns in the home domain, indicate that parental language ideologies concerning the relationship between language and place of birth, the nature of multilingual acquisition and impact belief—the belief that parents have as to the level of control they can exercise over their children's language choices (De Houwer in Studies on language acquisition. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, 1999), taken together, disfavor the maintenance of the heritage language. In particular, a weak impact belief undermines parents' ability to engage in language interventions in support of San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec. As a result, family-external language intervention factors that promote language shift, such as the school and peer groups, exert great influence. With a substantial number of San Lucas families living in California and their impact on language choices in the home community (Pérez Báez in press), family language policy is of great relevance to the survival prospects of San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec not only in diaspora but also in the home community.

Keywords Family language policy · Language and migration · Language endangerment · Mexican indigenous languages

Introduction

This article reports on a study of family language policy among speakers of San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec (SLQZ) in diaspora in Los Angeles, CA. SLQZ is an

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Otomanguean language from the southern state of Oaxaca in Mexico. The focus of this study is on language use patterns in the family, the language ideologies that influence language choices and weaken parental language intervention, and the resulting language shift trends among children. Language shift in diaspora communities is, in and of itself, not extraordinary. This San Lucas case is, however, of significance in the context of language endangerment because language shift in the San Lucas community in diaspora is "exported" back to San Lucas through strong transnational ties, thereby opening the San Lucas home—which until now had been a Zapotec-only domain—to Spanish. In doing so, language choices in diaspora are destabilizing the primary domain of use of a language already at risk, thereby compromising further the prospects of maintenance of the language (Pérez Báez in press). It is therefore paramount that the complexity behind this language shift process be understood if one is to develop adequate language revitalization initiatives for San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec.

The language spoken in San Lucas is a Valley Zapotec language (Otomanguean). The term Zapotec corresponds to a language family comparable in dialectal complexity to the family of Romance languages. SLQZ exhibits traits common to all Zapotec languages such as VSO word order, contrastive tone and complex vowel phonation. It exhibits loss of pre- and post-stress vowels common to languages in the Central Valleys of Oaxaca. At the same time, it exhibits features unique to SLQZ, such as six different third person pronouns and a unique set of formality and deictic categories (cf. Jones and Knudson 1977; López Cruz 1997; Munro and Lopez 1999; Munro 2000).

In San Lucas, the language enjoys continued vitality and children often remain SLQZ-monolingual until they enter the school system. In Los Angeles, however, there is very limited or no active use of SLQZ among children. The total speaker base of SLQZ is small with an estimated 3,000 speakers evenly divided between the home community in San Lucas and a diaspora community settled in the Los Angeles area in California since the 1970s. National census data show that the population in San Lucas has decreased by 20 %, from 2,156 inhabitants to 1,745 between 1990 and 2010 (INEGI 1990, 2010). More dramatically, the decrease in the child population in the same period is of more than 50 % in the 0–4 and 5–9 age groups. As such, the language community is small, the overall speaker base in San Lucas is shrinking—especially the child speaker base—and language shift is being brought about in San Lucas by its own migrant community (Pérez Báez in press). Therefore, SLQZ is considered an endangered language.

Among San Lucas Quiaviní immigrants in Los Angeles, the shift away from the ancestral language occurs by the 2nd generation and as early as the generation 1.5, that is among children who are immigrants themselves independently of how much socialization they may have received in SLQZ in San Lucas. This shift is more rapid than the average "linguistic life expectancies" among Spanish-speaking Mexicans who maintain their own heritage language through the 2nd and 3rd generations (Rumbaut 2009). This paper intends to understand the language choices made by San Lucas parents in diaspora and the factors leading to language shift among their children. The approach taken here centers on family language policy and allows for a micro-level analysis of language use patterns within the family with a focus on language use between adults, parents and their children and children themselves, and of the variety of language choices that emerge. This analysis coupled with discussions on language ideologies provided in this paper shed light on the factors that bring about language shift in the diaspora community of SLQZ speakers.

To begin this paper, Sect. "Family language policy and language endangerment" places the case of San Lucas Quiaviní in the context of contemporary language endangerment trends to argue that micro-level analysis of day-to-day patterns of language use, the beliefs that drive them and the efforts to manipulate them—or lack thereof—can serve to improve language revitalization approaches. Section "Field research and data collection methods" provides information on the methods used in the collection of the data that substantiates the community profile presented in Sect. "The complex profile of the diaspora community". In Sect. "Language use in the home", interaction patterns are described in detail and explained on the bases of the language ideologies identified. Closing remarks are offered in Sect. "Summary and conclusion".

Family language policy and language endangerment

Family language policy is specifically concerned with "what families actually do with language in day-to-day interactions; their beliefs and ideologies about language and language use; and their goals and efforts to shape language use and learning outcomes" (King et al. 2008). The study presented here takes on a family language policy approach in analyzing language shift among San Lucas families in Los Angeles. Luykx (2005) explains that language shift occurs in two contexts: "(1) rapidly modernizing societies undergoing language shift from a vernacular language (or languages) to an official language; and (2) immigrant communities in which families are transplanted into unfamiliar linguistic territory" (2005: 1408). The San Lucas diaspora community is one in which language choices are being negotiated in both scenarios with language shift as a result. San Lucas Quiaviní is a Zapotec town in rural southern Mexico faced with pressures from Spanish—the national language, which dominates mass media, education, health and social services among other domains. San Lucas immigrants therefore bring to the diaspora their experience as speakers of a minority language—spoken by only a couple thousand individuals within a nation of close to 100 million people, of which 93 % speak Spanish natively. In the diaspora, SLQZ speakers find themselves in a trilingual situation that involves the national language of the host community—English, and the national language of their country of origin—Spanish, considered by the community just as dominant in Los Angeles as English.

The empirical data on language use patterns among San Lucas Quiaviní migrants provide insights into the processes that result in language shift in diaspora. In San Lucas, the local language continues to be the language of daily interaction. This constitutes the 'default' family language policy. Children's acquisition of Spanish is delegated to the school (Pérez Báez 2006, 2009). In Los Angeles, however, the use of SLQZ is limited to adults. As it is explained in this paper, among parents, two patterns can be observed: parents who speak SLQZ to their children and parents who chose Spanish instead. The outcome is shift away from SLQZ in both cases. Los Angeles born and raised children do not grow up to become active speakers of

SLQZ. Further, children who were socialized in San Lucas from birth or during periods of return migration to San Lucas and who were at some point active speakers of SLQZ, will also shift to Spanish and English rapidly, even in the home.

The micro-level analysis of SLQZ use in diaspora is motivated by the realization that the language choices made among migrants in Los Angeles have a negative impact on the vitality of their language back in San Lucas itself. Migration between San Lucas and Los Angeles has been characterized at the outset by patterns of return migration both for short visits to attend celebrations such as the Patron Saint Festivities, and for longer stays of several months. Migrants often bring their children along to San Lucas. Pérez Báez (in press) explains in detail that in San Lucas, migrant families generally maintain the language use patterns that they practice in diaspora. Most crucially, children generally present themselves as speakers of Spanish and English and drive bi-/multilingual relatives to accommodate to them. In doing so, children "export" their use of Spanish and English to San Lucas, thereby introducing these languages into San Lucas homes which had remained a Zapotec-only domain until recently. In this context, a thorough understanding of the language shift processes in diaspora constitutes a first effort towards understanding language family policies in language communities separated by transnational migration.

This brings up several points of empirical and theoretical relevance to the fields of family language policy, socialization and migration and language endangerment. First, the literature on language socialization and language shift in the context of migration that deals with Mexicans—and other Latin American immigrants—in the United States generally fails to acknowledge adequately or at all the fact that Spanish monolinguals constitute only one of myriad language communities in Mexico (cf. Baquedano-López 2004; Bhimji 2005; Rumbaut 2009). To second Lavadenz (2005), it should not be assumed that Latin American immigrants only speak Spanish and English. In the 2000 US Census, close to half a million individuals self-identified as Hispanic American Indians—individuals of indigenous origin from a predominantly Spanish-speaking country (Huizar Murillo 2004). Few studies, such as Velasco (2010), Pérez Báez (in press) and the study presented here acknowledge the complexity of the linguistic repertoire of Mexican migrants. When considering the need for improved documentation of language shift processes, (Mufwene 2006; Sallabank 2012), documentation of language use patterns in an especially complex context such as that of SLQZ, becomes relevant.

Secondly, the study of the impact of language shift in the context of migration has been relegated to its relevance for the immigrant community. The literature on language shift among immigrants in the United States is vast, starting with Fishman's research on Yiddish (1965) and Puerto Rican Spanish (1971) and by Haugen on Norwegian (1967, 1969). Yet as Baquedano-López and Mangual Figueroa (2011) state, much remains to be known about the impact that socialization among migrants might have outside their own communities. However, the authors do not contemplate the possibility of impact of an immigrant community to the community of origin and to the vitality of its language even though their very definition of diaspora implies bi-directional influence between them: "The related concept of 'diaspora' is used to indicate the movement (whether by force or by choice) of people from one nation (or nation state) to another, and the ways in which this movement affords ideological, social, and economic links to the homeland or community of origin" (2011: 537). Pérez Báez (in press) shows the mechanisms through which language shift in the immigrant community negatively impacts the vitality of an indigenous endangered language in the home community. This in turn makes it critical that a micro-analysis of the interactional patterns involved in language shift in the immigrant community be understood.

Data at the macro-level on language use patterns in immigrants of indigenous origin to the United States do not provide us with insights on what affects parents and children's language choice on an individual basis. A micro-level family language policy approach allows us to uncover in detail the influencing forces behind such choices with a focus on culture-specific beliefs that may hamper language maintenance and may account for the differences in language maintenance and shift trends from one community to another. Language ideologies about the relationship between place of birth, multilingual acquisition and impact belief among San Lucas immigrants, account for a diminished role of parents as implementers of language intervention that might favor SLQZ. As a consequence, family language policy becomes unstructured, which in turn generates an opportunity for language intervention to emerge from sources outside the home such as the school system and peer groups that favor Spanish and English.

Thirdly, the case presented here is of relevance to contemporary approaches to language endangerment. As mentioned earlier, studies on heritage language maintenance among Mexican immigrants focus on Spanish as the language in question. A shift away from Spanish among Mexican immigrants or any other Spanish-speaking immigrant group will not put Spanish—or at least most varieties of it—at risk. However, as stated above, a shift away from SLQZ in Los Angeles increases the vulnerability of SLQZ. Yet, no studies to my knowledge have documented such a situation. In fact, migration is seldom considered as a factor in language endangerment. For instance, UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment tool for vitality assessment does not include migration as a language endangerment factor (Brenzinger 2007). Hinton (2011) describes various types of language revitalization strategies covering school-based initiatives, community-based learning, adult language learning and family-based revitalization, where in all cases, the community of concern is the community where the relevant language is or was spoken indigenously. The SLQZ case suggests that there is value in developing language revitalization strategies that involve the immigrant community in addition to the home community, and that are informed by a family language policy approach.

Field research and data collection methods

This study is based on empirical data collected through participant observation and sociolinguistic interviews in San Lucas and Los Angeles from 2002 to 2011. The research followed Wölck's (1985) tripartite model of sociolinguistic field research, which involves a case study, a community profile and spot checks. At the core are case studies in both locales based on participant observation while residing in community homes for about a month at a time. Participant observation was complemented by interviews with seven families in San Lucas and 19 families in Los Angeles—the focus of this paper—in order to develop community profiles for both communities following Wölck (2004). Subsequent targeted interviews were conducted in both locales as spot checks to fill data gaps. The main participant selection criterion was parenthood, but other criteria were considered, including time of arrival in the US, re-emigration, children's place of birth and age of arrival in the US. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or Zapotec following the interviewee's preference. Excerpts are presented here with the question in English, the response in the language used by the interviewee, and a free translation into English.

The complex profile of the diaspora community

The data that emerge from macro-level, and institutional analyses of the socio-economic situation of migrants fail to explain the cultural changes that families and individuals face, their process of adaptation into the host community and the challenges associated with reconstructing the contexts that can support the vitality of a heritage language. In this section, I provide an overview of the elements of community life in the San Lucas diaspora that are relevant to understanding language use patterns (see Pérez Báez (2009) for a detailed community profile).

Table 1 provides a schematic view of the families who participated in this study. What emerges is a complex community that took some 20 years to form. The community is characterized by extended periods of family separation with fathers spending several years in Los Angeles before enabling their spouse and children to migrate. Such is the case of most families in Table 1 who have San Lucas-born children. The composition of the family unit is often complex, as families may have both San Lucas- and Los Angeles-born children who may have had different socialization experiences. This is the case of families 6, 7 and 11. Families have often engaged in travel and even return migration to San Lucas as seen in the fourth column in Table 1. I elaborate on the particulars of the San Lucas immigrant community in the paragraphs that follow.

At the outset, in the 1970s, the diaspora community was essentially comprised of men who usually returned to San Lucas for one- or two-year stays, (Hardeman 1987; Hulshof 1991).[1] Women began to participate in emigration in the 1980s, allowing for couples to reunite or form in diaspora. Later, the patterns of return migration and re-emigration gave way to permanent migration. Young emigrants in their late teens and early twenties would marry within the community and raise families in Los Angeles and separated families would reunite as well. This has contributed to a decrease in the child population as more children of San Lucas parents are born and raised in Los Angeles rather than in San Lucas (see families in Table 1 with

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[1] For a history of emigration from San Lucas Quiaviní see (Hardeman 1987), Hulshof (1991), Lopez and Runsten (2004), Pérez Báez (2009).

Table 1 Profile of interviewees

Family	Arrival in LA	Years in LA	Return migration/ travel to SLQ	Language repertoire on arrival to LA	SLQ-born children	Ages of SLQ-born children	Arrival of SLQ-born children	LA-born children	Ages of LA-born children
1	1989	19	1	SLQZ				3	12, 8, 3
2	2004	4	3	SLQZ some Sp	3	14, 11, 9	2004		
3	1998	10	1	SLQZ Sp				2	6, 3
4	2005	3	3	Mixe SLQZ Sp	2	9, 8	2005		
5	1997	11	1	SLQZ some Sp				3	10, 7, 2.5
6	1989-1996 2001-	7 + 7	2	SLQZ some Sp	1	10	2001	3	14, 6, 3
7	1992	13	2	SLQZ	1	13	1995	1	10
8				SLQZ		25<			
9	2005			SLQZ Sp				1	1
10	2004	4	4	SLQZ some Sp	4	16, 13, 10, 7	2004		
11		5		?	3	18, 16, 9	2003?	1	3
12	1977	31		SLQZ Sp				3	27, 24, 18
13	1988	20	Several	?	2	25, 23	1988		
14	1988	20		SLQZ				1	1
15									
16	2007	4 mo.	3	SLQZ Sp	6	17<	1–6 years		
17	1982			SLQZ some Sp				2	15, 13
18	1989			SLQZ some Sp					
19	2002	6		SLQZ some Sp				2	6, 1

Ages are at the time of interview in April 2008. Family 18 did not yet have children but actively and frequently assisted in child rearing in an extended family arrangement

LA-born children) and as children began to participate in emigration since the 1990s (see families in Table 1 with SLQ-born children).

Despite the trend to settle in Los Angeles, there is significant travel between Los Angeles and San Lucas to attend events such as the Patron Saint festivities, weddings and funerals, to care for an ill relative, or to fulfill a community responsibility. Los Angeles born and/or raised children often travel to San Lucas.

These children generally only have passive competence in Zapotec and, as mentioned earlier, motivate shift to Spanish and sometimes English among bilingual relatives who accommodate to these children. This shift represents the entry of Spanish into the home in San Lucas, thereby threatening the primary domain of language use in SLQZ and therefore its vitality (Pérez Báez in press).

The SLQ diaspora community has settled in the greater Los Angeles area. The concentration of the community in some neighborhoods is sufficient to allow fellow buny San Luc ‘people from San Lucas’ to run into each other on the streets. In Santa Monica, for instance, there are contiguous apartment buildings almost fully occupied by San Lucas families. However, those who live in other neighborhoods such as Inglewood or the San Fernando Valley find themselves isolated from the rest of the community. In either case, close relatives who would see each other daily in San Lucas might not see each other for months in Los Angeles. As such, the context that allows for cultural practices such as reverential greetings does not present itself with the frequency it does in San Lucas.

Certain aspects of family organization continue to be practiced in the immigrant community. This can be seen in the living arrangements made according to an immigrant’s particular situation. A newly arrived relative is usually housed by a next of kin according to the community’s kinship hierarchy. Thus an immigrant mother will be housed by her oldest son, a young man by an older brother, a young woman by her sister. Sharing arrangements may prevail after a newcomer is established in a job and earning an income and even among long-time settled immigrants. Lopez and Runsten (2004) explain that this as a strategy to reconcile low wages and high rents. I would add that this is also in keeping with the San Lucas practice of living in extended family arrangements. Having said this, it is also the case that single-family housing arrangements are common in the diaspora, whereas extended family arrangements are the norm in San Lucas.

Despite the 40-year-long history of the San Lucas diaspora community, there is little in the way of community-wide organizations. Lopez (personal communication) considers this to be partly due to the fact that for the first 20 years, migrants were almost exclusively men who saw their Los Angeles experience as temporary. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the formation of the diaspora community was a slow process. In recent years, community organizations have emerged around basketball playing, traditional wind and percussion music bands and the Patron Saint festivities. Also, social gatherings are common and include baptisms, first communions and confirmations. Nevertheless, social interaction within the community occurs primarily at the level of the extended family.

To summarize, the diaspora community developed slowly for the first twenty years during which, immigrants saw their sojourn as temporary. As such, the development of structured efforts to recreate cultural practices was slow and has only become a more structured effort in the last ten years or so. Social networks have shrunk and are limited to interaction within extended families. There is frequent travel between the home and the immigrant community and the shift to Spanish among Los Angeles children has impacted the primary domain of use of Zapotec in San Lucas. It is this impact that motivates this study on family language policy among immigrant families: in order to develop adequate language revitalization strategies for San Lucas Quiaviní, appropriate strategies also need to be developed for the community in Los Angeles. As such, parental language choices, the ideologies influencing them and the resulting family language use patterns need to be well understood.

Language use in the home

Language use patterns in the immigrant community reflect the complexity of the community itself. In this section, language use is analyzed among adults (parent to parent), parent to child, and children (child to parent and child to child). The focus is on the use of SLQZ among parents and the shift to Spanish among children. In addition a discussion is included on the use of English. Table 2 summarizes the language use patters found in terms of maintenance of SLQZ or shift away from it. These are explained in the subsections that follow.

Language use among adults

The *Adult* column in Table 2 shows that adult interaction constitutes a consistent domain of language use for SLQZ in diaspora. This was not always the case. In the 70 and 80s, established relatives would shift to Spanish to provide immersion environments for newcomers with low confidence in their Spanish skills. Spanish has been consistently considered among San Lucas migrants as instrumentally necessary as English, if not more. This is illustrated in example (1). Among interviewees, only one person indicated that English was the most important language in the Los Angeles area. Four interviewees responded that both Spanish and English were important while four other interviewees only selected Spanish as the most important language of the area. Hence the general trend towards assisting newcomers in the process of acquiring Spanish in Los Angeles.

(1) *Sigue siendo importante el español aquí…igual [que el inglés] porque aquí estamos latinos y americanos, y por ejemplo si tu no hablas el español y encuentras a alguien en la calle o estás trabajando y quieren platicar contigo, no sabes cómo contestar, y no más te quedas. O hay veces que quieres saber de algo, y no sabes cómo preguntar…Si sólo hablas inglés en LA, estás perdido*
"Spanish continues to be important here same (as English) because Latinos and Americans live here together, and for example, if you don't speak Spanish and you meet someone on the street or you are at work and someone wants to talk to you, you don't know how to answer and you freeze. Or if you need to know something and you don't know how to ask…If you don't speak Spanish in LA, you are lost."

The linguistic profile of adult immigrants changed over time as Spanish-only education became available in San Lucas in the late 70s and immigrants gradually arrived in Los Angeles as confident SLQZ-Spanish bilinguals. This relaxed the need

Table 2 Continuum of language maintenance to language shift in the SLQ diaspora community

SLQZ maintenance to shift	Adults	Parent to children	Children to parent/siblings	Families exhibiting pattern
SLQZ maintenance	Yes	Yes	Yes	6, 10, 16
Adult SLQZ use; some SLQZ transmission	Yes (SLQZ in private only)	Yes	No	7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 18 (2)
SLQZ use among adults only (no transmission)	Yes (SLQZ in private only)	No	No	3, 4, 5, 9, 12, 15, 17 (1, 19)
Total language shift	No	No	No	–

to teach Spanish to newcomers and allowed for a language shift reversal among adults (cf. Pérez Báez forthcoming).

Having said this, it is the case that some of the adult interaction in SLQZ might only occur in the privacy of the home. Such is the case of Family 2 where the parents report speaking to their children in Zapotec but only at home, and Families 1 and 19 where the parents speak to each other (but not to their children) in Zapotec, but only at home (see Table 2). Example (2) provided by one of the parents illustrates this tendency.

(2) *En la calle, en la tienda, en el mall, porque a veces, encontramos a alguien, dice mi esposo "qué van a pensar, qué estamos hablando"*
"On the streets at the store, at the mall, because if we run into someone, my husband says "they are going to wonder what we speak"."

Language use in parent–child communication

The *Parent to children* column in Table 2 shows that parents are about evenly divided between those who speak SLQZ with their children and those who do not. In the paragraphs that follow, we turn to a discussion of the language use patterns observed and the language ideologies associated with them.

Ideologies about language and place of birth. A correlation that emerged upon analysis of the interview data is that families who have maintained SLQZ in parent–child communication have done so with children who were born in San Lucas or were socialized in SLQZ during a period of return migration. Among these families, maintenance of SLQZ was documented as being of two kinds. The first includes cases in which children had been socialized in San Lucas and after emigration to the United States, parents and children maintained active use of Zapotec in their interaction (Families 6, 10 and 16). The second includes cases where parents continue to use SLQZ with their children but the children respond back in Spanish (Families 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 18, 2). In the aggregate, it is the case that different dyads within single families will make different language choices. For example, it may be that Zapotec is used actively between parents and one of the children, but Spanish will be the language of communication between the parent and another one of the children, and these choices correlate (with one exception) with place of birth.

Throughout all years of research and fieldwork, and in different contexts, community members in San Lucas and Los Angeles expressed a belief that children are “born speaking” the language associated with their place of birth. In San Lucas, community members often expressed a lack of concern over language endangerment on the grounds that children “are born speaking Zapotec”, a phenomenon that would ensure the continuity of the language. In Los Angeles, parents consistently consider Spanish and English to be the languages that Los Angeles-born children should acquire. Further, Spanish is considered to be the language to which SLQ-born children would shift first when arriving in Los Angeles. Some parents consider that Los Angeles-born babies are in fact unable to understand Zapotec and must therefore be addressed only in Spanish. One mother, when asked why she spoke in Spanish to her infant son, responded that Spanish would be the only language that the child could understand at birth and hence the only language the mother had at her disposal for communication with her child. The main point to make here is that Spanish represents the language of communication between SLQ-born and LA-born members of any given family. The dominant role of Spanish for Los Angeles children is shared throughout the transnational community. In other words, San Lucas residents also assign significant importance to Spanish in Los Angeles, as illustrated in example (3) of a mother, a San Lucas lifetime resident, who explains how the linguistic inventory of Los Angeles-born children is viewed in San Lucas. Specifically, the speaker states that Los Angeles children are no longer considered San Lucas children and correlates this with the Los Angeles children’s preference of Spanish over Zapotec.

(3) *Yo creo que la gente en San Lucas dice, bueno, ya nació ahí(en Los Angeles), pues…ya ahí no hablan más zapoteco, ya puro español, estos niños ya nacieron, osea, ya no, como que ya no lo ven como de San Lucas*
“I think that people in San Lucas say well, s/he was born there (in Los Angeles), so…people don’t speak Zapotec there, only Spanish now, these children were already born there, I mean, they don’t, like they don’t see the children as being from San Lucas.”

English in the linguistic repertoire of the immigrant community. In six of the families in the surveyed sample, English was reported by interviewees and observed by me as a medium of communication between some fathers and their children. This is illustrated by the comments in (4) from the mother of Family 7.

(4) Q: Do they (your children) ever speak to you in English?
A: *Queity rgwenedirëng naa Ingles. Nazh Dixtily cwën Dizhsa rcazrëng ygwerëng*
“They don’t speak to me in English. Only in Spanish and Zapotec they want to talk.”
Q: Do they speak to your husband in English?
A: *Aa*
“Yes.”

This excerpt points to the fact that English is available only to some fathers to the exclusion of San Lucas mothers. With the exception of Family 17 where the mother is a US-born English native speaker, the use of English in parent–child communication occurred only with fathers. Overall, San Lucas women who emigrate as adults rarely become confident speakers of English. Fathers and their children code-switch between Spanish and English and both the father and the children can dictate the language of choice at any given time. English is a language added to the parents' linguistic repertoire after Zapotec and Spanish. The place of English in a child's linguistic repertoire is more complex but with the exception of English is a second or third language for children as well, depending on place of birth, time of arrival to the US, and age of entry into the US education system. In terms of language shift, among the families interviewed, shift away from SLQZ was done in favor of Spanish first, and the use of English in father-child communication (and among children as will be discussed later) is not done to the detriment of Spanish as was observed in families 1, 5, 7 and 8 where Spanish is dominant over English in father-child communication.

Parental impact belief and the social context. San Lucas parents do not exhibit an impact belief as defined by De Houwer (1999), that is to say that they do not believe that their language practices have the power to alter the language acquisition process of their children. The deterministic view held widely among people from San Lucas that children are limited to acquiring the language or languages that are dominant wherever a child is born, diminishes the potential of parents holding an impact belief. This might go unnoticed in households where parents speak Spanish to their children, a language that Los Angeles-born children are expected to acquire. In households in which parents speak to their children in SLQZ, this lack of an impact belief is evident and detrimental to the development of children who are active speakers of SLQZ as predicted by De Houwer (1999) because without an impact belief, parents do not have the inclination to effect language intervention that fosters the active use of SLQZ by their children.

This points to the relevance of the social context of the language acquisition process of children (Döpke 1992; King et al. 2008). In the case of San Lucas migrants, two relevant social factors are the education system in the host community and the changes in the social networks of the migrants. The role of social networks becomes evident in the case of Family 4. The mother of this family grew up as a Mixe-Spanish bilingual who upon marrying a San Lucas man moved to San Lucas and learned Zapotec with her in-laws. In San Lucas the couple had two children who were reportedly socialized by the extended family and were active speakers of SLQZ until ages 5 and 6 when they emigrated. Families both in San Lucas and in Los Angeles are predominantly endogamous but exogamy is known to occur, with higher frequency in Los Angeles than in San Lucas. Exogamy is compatible with children's acquisition of SLQZ in San Lucas as in the case of Family 4 whose two children acquired SLQZ in their early childhood at a pace reportedly comparable to that of children of endogamous marriages. In diaspora, however, the less dense social networks are not sufficient to support language maintenance in exogamous families as the mother of Family 4 explains in example (5).

(5) *Ahí [en SLQ] si hablaba [yo] puro en zapoteco, por eso no hablaban [mis niños] ni un poquito de español. [Mi hija] unos cuantos que entendía pero el niño no… Es que como estamos solos [en Los Ángeles] y casi ya no, él (mi marido) siempre me habla en español. A veces si platicamos entre nosotros, pero los niños como que casi ya no les habla*
"Back there [in SLQ] I only spoke Zapotec that's why my children didn't even speak a little Spanish. My daughter could understand a little [Spanish] but not my son…Now since we are alone [in Los Angeles] and rarely, [my husband] almost always speaks to me in Spanish. Sometimes he and I do talk [in SLQZ] but with the children he rarely speaks (SLQZ) anymore."

The mother explains that in San Lucas, her social network fostered active use of Zapotec which enabled her children's early acquisition of Zapotec as their dominant language to it. The mother conveys a sense of loneliness related to the fact that in Los Angeles her family no longer lives in an extended family arrangement. She attributes her husband's shift to Spanish and consequently, her children's to the isolation she describes. The example also suggests that the interviewed mother does not consider herself and her husband to be able to modify their children's current language use patterns on their own and without the support of a social network, a position that is consistent with a lack of impact belief.

Ideologies associated with multilingual language acquisition. Parental language choices are further restricted by the belief that multilingual acquisition is a burden to children as illustrated in (6) below by a mother expressing her concerns for a nephew who is faced with multilingual acquisition. This belief is fueled by misconceptions about the process of language acquisition often presented to parents by educators and other specialists. For example, in 2011, a San Lucas mother living in Los Angeles reported that she had had her 3-year old son evaluated by a speech pathologist when the mother judged that her child might be developmentally delayed. The speech pathologist did an assessment in a clinic and followed up with a home visit. The mother reported that at the home visit, the speech pathologist attributed the child's delay to the use of SLQZ in the home and recommended that the mother stop speaking SLQZ to the child.

(6) *….pobre de él, también, ¿cuál va a hablar pues?*
"poor boy which (language) is he going to speak, then?"

Parents are, then, pressured into a subtractive model of language acquisition in which Spanish is to be favored in parent–child interaction at the expense of SLQZ. Given that Spanish is perceived by San Lucas parents as a dominant language in Los Angeles, and that most migrants are now proficient SLQZ-Spanish bilinguals, they are easily able to adopt such a model of socialization. As shown in Table 2, about half the families interviewed speak in Spanish to their children. Further, and as mentioned earlier, a lack of impact belief weakens parents' ability to implement language intervention that fosters additive bilingualism incorporating SLQZ. Table 2 also showed that half the interviewed parents report and have been observed to speak SLQZ with their children. However, without the confidence that they can or should impact their children's language acquisition process, parents do

Table 3 Language use in sibling communication by family as reported by parents

Language	Family	Time of arrival in the US	Number of children	Children's place of birth	Age at time of arrival in the US
Primarily Spanish	Family 1	1989	3	LA, LA, LA	–
	Family 3	1998	2	LA, LA	–
	Family 13	1988	2	SLQ, SLQ	5, 3
Primarily English	Family 2	2004	3	SLQ, SLQ, SLQ	10, 7, 5
	Family 4	2005	2	SLQ, SLQ	6, 5
	Family 8	Early to mid-1990s	4	SLQ, SLQ, LA, LA	11, < 1
	Family 12	1977	3	LA, LA, LA	–
	Family 17	1970s	2	LA, LA	–
Spanish and English	Family 5	1997	3	LA, LA, LA	–
	Family 7	1995	2	SLQ, LA	5 mos, –
	Family 11	Early 2000s	4	SLQ, SLQ, SLQ, LA	13, 11, 4, –
Spanish, English and SLQZ	Family 6	1989–1996 (1996–2001 return to SLQ) 2001	4	LA, SLQ, LA, LA	–, 3, –, –
	Family 10	2004	4	SLQ, SLQ, SLQ, SLQ	12, 9, 6, 3

not engage in language intervention intended to develop active, and not only passive, competence of SLQZ in their children.

Language use among children

Language choices among children favor Spanish and English over SLQZ. Table 3 shows language use patterns in child sibling communication as reported by their parents during interviews. Five families reported that their children speak in English in sibling interaction, while three reported a preference for Spanish. Three other families reported that their children code-switch in Spanish and English. Only two families—Families 6 and 10—report that their children use SLQZ in sibling interaction, and that this domain of language use is shared by all three languages in the children's repertoire.

These data allow us to begin to make generalizations that are relevant to the analysis of family language policy and to begin to identify factors that affect children's language choices. First, only children who have had some socialization in SLQZ in San Lucas use SLQZ in sibling interaction. Family 6 is a case of return migration that allowed for the eldest LA-born child to be socialized in San Lucas and for two of the four children to be born in San Lucas. Family 10 is a case where the family had arrived only 4 years prior to the time of the interview, and where the children had received between 3 and 12 years of socialization in San Lucas.

The data in Table 3 further indicate that the shift away from SLQZ not only occurs among US-born children for whom a preference for English is "expected", but also among SLQ-born and raised children who emigrated in recent years. In other words, children who were socialized in Zapotec in San Lucas and used Zapotec only in family interactions, shift to English in the domain of sibling interaction rapidly, perhaps within only a year or two after arrival in Los Angeles. Such is the case of a boy whose story is told in (7) by one of the parent organizers of a children's music band where the boy played.

(7) *Llevo conociendo un muchacho que está aquí en la banda de música de mis hijos, tenemos una banda de música. El chavo llegó aquí como a los 13 años…y cuando él llegó él hablaba en español pero hablaba también en zapoteco pero él prefería hablar en español. Yo lo veía, le hablaba en zapoteco, y como que, bueno veías en su rostro la tensión, pero me respondía en español y yo le dije a su mamá, "¿no habla en zapoteco?" "no, todos hablan, pero no quiere hablar". Y lo que he visto en él últimamente es que yo le hablo en español a veces y él me responde en inglés*

"I know a young guy who plays in the music band with my sons we have this children's music band. This young guy arrived here (in Los Angeles) at around age 13 and when he arrived he spoke in Spanish but he also spoke Zapotec, although he prefereed Spanish. So whenever I would see him I would speak to him in Zapotec and you could see the tension in his face, and he would answer in Spanish and I asked his mother, "doesn't he speak Zapotec?" "Oh no, [all of my sons] do but he doesn't want to speak it". And what I have seen in him lately is that I will speak to him in Spanish and he answers in English."

Family 4 is one such case of shift away from SLQZ despite socialization in the language prior to emigration. The two children shifted to English before ages 8 and 9, in sibling communication and in less than 3 years of their arrival in LA. It is plausible that the children's limited socialization in SLQZ and their entry into the US school system at an early age–ages 5 and 6—may have contributed to their favoring English. Similarly, in the case of Family 2, while the family had only been in Los Angeles for four years at the time of the interview, the young age of the children at the time of their entry into the school system is a likely factor contributing to the children's use of English in sibling communication.

This shift away from a heritage language is faster than the average reported by Rumbaut (2009) of shift by the second and third generation among Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants. Factors contributing to the rapid shift include parental language ideologies about the relationship between place of birth and L1, and a lack of impact belief that prevents parents from being effective implementers of language intervention aimed at SLQZ maintenance. Family language policy by parents is then limited to speaking SLQZ with no structured intervention to motivate active use of the language among children, and this, only in about half the families interviewed. This is illustrated in (8).

(8) Q: I have noticed that a lot of people, once they have their children, they do not speak to them in Zapotec, they only speak to them in Spanish. Why do you think they do that?
A: *Rrilua ti queity queityru rcazdi ra mniny ygwe Dizhsa, nazh Ingles rgwe ra mniny. Nii negza xtada ra mniny rgwe Ingles*
"I think because children don't want to speak Zapotec they only speak in English. That is why the fathers of the children speak English as well."

Example (8) is indicative of a general inability among adults to engage children in language maintenance: the interviewee actually considers that children have greater influence on parental language choices than the reverse. She explains that children reject Zapotec and exclusively favor English, and that fathers accommodate to the children by also shifting to English. This suggests that parent-led language intervention is not taking place, which leaves the door open for language intervention to emerge from outside the home and primarily in school, by educators and peers, which takes us back to the relevance of the social context.

Summary and conclusions

A family language policy approach acquires special importance in the study of use of endangered languages in transnational contexts. The micro-level family language policy approach implemented in this study produces an accurate description of language use and language choices in a diaspora community of speakers of an endangered language. It shows that ideologies relating to place of birth, multilingualism and impact belief do not allow parents to effect language intervention in a way that supports maintenance of their heritage Zapotec language. As a result, an unstructured family language policy strengthens other already dominant language intervention effectors such as peer groups or the educational system. The level of detail obtained through the analysis presented here provides information that is crucial for the development of appropriate strategies aimed at sustaining the use of SLQZ, given the impact that language use in diaspora has on language use in San Lucas itself. Further, it recognizes the linguistic diversity of Mexican migrants in the United States and provides solid argumentation for the need to break beyond all-encompassing analytical labels such as "Mexican" and assumptions about the role of Spanish as heritage language among Mexican and, more broadly, Latin American migrants in the United States.

The results of the study presented here invite follow up of two types. At an applied level, the data presented here should be used to inform language revitalization and language maintenance strategies for the benefit of the SLQZ-speaking community and more broadly for the advancement of the field of language revitalization. At a theoretical level, the apparent dominance of family-external language intervention should be given attention. With regard to language maintenance and revitalization, the types of ideologies identified among San Lucas parents suggest that family language policy that favors SLQZ could be cultivated through outreach that delivers linguistic research tailored to the community. For instance, parental concerns regarding multilingual acquisition could be eased if parents were presented with research in an accessible format that explains the relationship between brain plasticity in children and their ability to acquire more than one language. If done in a culturally sensitive manner, this could enhance parental impact belief and empower parents to engage in language intervention.

At a theoretical level, this study has explained the dominance that effectors of language intervention external to the family have on children's language choices. Such sources of family-external language intervention include the school and peer groups, often formed within the school environment. The relevance of peer groups as language socialization units ought to receive enhanced attention. Children's social needs migrate over time from being parent-centered to being peer-centered. Peer group membership therefore takes on a significant role in children's socialization especially when children need to recreate their peer groups in diaspora. An investigation on the role of the dynamic social priorities in children's own family language policy could provide crucial clues that could inform a more carefully and accurately tailored approach to language revitalization in diaspora in support of language maintenance in the community of origin.

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