Inclusive Research Methodologies and Community Efforts in Nahuatl Language Revitalization

Metodologías de investigación incluyentes y esfuerzos comunitarios en la revitalización del idioma náhuatl

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Resumen

This research paper will stimulate intercultural debate around indigenous epistemologies of the Global South. It also intends to raise awareness about the importance of indigenous languages for social development and pedagogical practices. This research is based on inclusive research methodologies with native speakers of the Nahuatl language during four fieldwork seasons between May 2017 and March 2019, inside different indigenous communities such as San Miguel Xaltipan and San Pedro Tlalcuapan in Tlaxcala, but also Santa Ana Tlacotenco in Mexico City. This research uses mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative), and one of its goals is to achieve a deeper insight into the interplay between sociolinguistics and philosophy. The data gathered are based on conversational methodologies and extended interviews with indigenous scholars, teachers, and native speakers devoted to promoting capacity building and preservation of language, traditional knowledge, and cultural heritage. Most Nahua scholars interviewed headed or collaborate with a grass-roots organization that works independently and regularly without government support or funding. Also, the academic research of Nahua scholars has been instrumental in figuring out the framework of this research. This research is based on direct translations of unpublished material from Nahuatl to English. Inclusive research methodologies help face the question: why is it important to encourage, study, and promote indigenous languages globally?

Palabras claves: intercultural epistemology; inclusive methodologies; nahuatl language.

Abstract

Este trabajo de investigación pretende estimular el debate intercultural en torno a las epistemologías indígenas del Sur Global. También pretende sensibilizar sobre la importancia de las lenguas indígenas para el desarrollo social y las prácticas pedagógicas. Esta investigación se basa en metodologías de investigación incluyentes con hablantes de náhuatl, durante cuatro temporadas de trabajo de campo entre mayo de 2017 y marzo de 2019, dentro de diferentes comunidades nahuas como San Miguel Xaltipan y San Pedro Tlalcuapan en Tlaxcala, pero también Santa Ana Tlacotenco en la Ciudad de México. Esta investigación utiliza métodos mixtos (cuantitativos y cualitativos), y uno de sus objetivos es lograr una visión más profunda de la interacción entre la sociolingüística y la filosofía. Los datos recabados se basan en metodologías conversacionales y entrevistas extensas con académicos indígenas, maestros y hablantes originarios dedicados a promover la preservación de la lengua, el conocimiento tradicional y el patrimonio cultural. La mayoría de los eruditos nahuas entrevistados dirigen o colaboran con una organización comunitaria que trabaja de forma independiente y regular sin apoyo ni financiación gubernamental. Además, las investigaciones académicas de los estudiosos nahuas han sido decisivas para elaborar el marco teórico de esta investigación. Este estudio se basa en traducciones directas de material inédito del náhuatl al inglés. Las metodologías de investigación incluyentes ayudan a responder la pregunta: ¿por qué es importante fomentar, estudiar y promover las lenguas indígenas a nivel global?

Keywords: epistemología intercultural; metodologías incluyentes; idioma náhuatl.

Introduction

Does this paper address why it is essential to encourage, study, and promote indigenous languages globally? With this previous question in mind, it is necessary to point out that about 46% of all languages of the world are currently under threat, and most of the 6,879 languages are not spoken by many people (Campbell & Okura, 2018, pp. 79-80). Moreover, most endangered languages are indigenous ones. Researchers highlight that these languages will disappear within the next 100 years. This fact would consider a significant loss in linguistic and knowledge diversity, i.e., epistemicide (de Sousa, 2014, p. 238). However, are those who disagree and consider it useless. There are pros and cons to this issue, and this paper will discuss the arguments of whether language endangerment is problematic.

The United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations, 2018) was a significant movement in international law to a more promotion-orientated perspective on indigenous rights. Article 13 states: "Indigenous peoples have the right, use, develop, and transmit to future generations their stories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons".

When an indigenous language disappears, it does mean not only the extinction of a set of grammar rules but also an entire culture, worldview, and traditional knowledge embedded in it (Bergier, 2014). The causes of this endangerment are diverse and frequently overlap. Endangered means these languages are at risk of no longer being spoken. It may be very soon or maybe in a few generations. Language loss is happening faster now than at any time in known history (Belew & Simpson, 2018, p. 49). To go straight to the point is necessary to analyze some of these causes.

Language endangerment is related to a lack of free choice, colonization, economic pressures, outlawing, and repressive policies. But also, to stigmatization and sociolinguistic and attitude factors. For instance, identity, loss of traditional livelihoods, migration, urbanization, or changes in how people perceive a language (Olko et al., 2016, pp. 9-10). As it is possible to appreciate is not a single factor that causes language endangerment, and it is not my aim to analyze each one in detail. Instead, in this brief introduction, it is necessary to explain how it is possible to identify an endangered language.

The most common criteria to face this issue are quantitative and are related to a bundle of questions such as how many speakers have the language? Is the number increasing, decreasing, or staying the same? How quickly? For instance, in Mexico, the number of native speakers of indigenous languages inside the Army has been halved in only ten years. Thirteen years ago, the amount of indigenous native speakers inside the Army was 7,518. Nowadays, this number dropped to 3,257, and the trend is downward. (Medellín, 2018). In other words, it means a rapid decline of speakers.

The data show that since 2005, inside the Army were 1,736 soldiers who speak Nahuatl. However, in March 2018, the amount fell to 952. In 2005 Zapotec language was spoken by 1498; nowadays, the amount is nearly a third with 502 speakers. Nevertheless, the most dramatic case within this context is the Tepehua language because in 2005 had 434 speakers, but this amount plummeted to 14 speakers nowadays (Medellín, 2018).

These data provide an overview of the steadily decreasing of some specific indigenous languages. However, beyond the numbers and quantitative criteria is relevant to face the following question, why is it relevant to reflect on the native speakers of Mexican indigenous languages inside the Army? To face this question is possible to argue that, in a hypothetical scenario, their action could be a pivotal element to conflict prevention and even in the resolution of critical scenarios. Some signed agreements exist between Mexican Army and Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI) to train about 200 soldiers as translators, interpreters, and mediators. Unfortunately, none of them was required as a mediator to resolve critical scenarios.

However, the number of speakers is not the principal issue; the social importance of indigenous languages involves topics such as cultural, personal, and spiritual identity; self- determination and sovereignty; social structure, and ecological and scientific knowledge. The extinction of indigenous languages also implied the disappearance of a vast amount of traditional knowledge (TK). "Embedded in indigenous languages, in particular, is knowledge about ecosystems, conservation methods, plant life, animal behavior, and many other aspects of the natural world" (LaPier, 2018). Concerning this issue is necessary to point out the inter- relationship between the extinction of indigenous languages and traditional knowledge, by this reason is possible to talk about endangered knowledge.

Nowadays, most of this knowledge is under threat and at risk of disappearing. For this reason, studying cognitive processes embedded in indigenous languages is also helpful in distinguishing and preserving the main categories of indigenous philosophies and worldviews (Cajete, 2004, pp. 45-57; González, 2021, pp. 33-54). Moreover, TK about ecosystems, natural resources management, and medicinal plants results from a specific way to conceive the ties between the natural world and human beings (Reo, 2011). Consider TK could be beneficial to face and find alternatives to face global challenges such as climate change, management of water, air pollution, or pandemic diseases.

Inclusive Research Methodologies

How is it possible to implement inclusive research methodologies? The academic importance of this question lies in the possibility of approaching the categories of Nahua thought, which is a crucial aspect of developing postcolonial hermeneutics (Jansen & Pérez, 2011, p. 213). In addition to the above, it is essential to highlight the fact that methodology has been considered a branch of logic (Bochenski, 1988, p. 25), so a systematic and critical study will be able to show the set of relationships that make possible the construction of Nahua knowledge.

Undoubtedly, the work of the Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008) on the need to decolonize research methodologies is an essential reference for studying the cultural heritage and philosophies of indigenous peoples. However, to try to go further than what this researcher proposes, it seems pertinent to show the "difficulties" that exist concerning the translation of the notion of methodology, especially in the Nahuatl language. To carry out this part of the research, I have resorted to the conversational methodology (Kovach, 2010, pp. 40-48). The objective has been to establish an intercultural dialogue. In this paper, I intend to foreground the reflections of Nahua intellectuals (mainly historians, linguists, lawyers, and teachers) concerning how a methodology for teaching the Nahuatl language is applied.

These reflections show the challenges within the full development of an *intercultural epistemology*. But also, the challenges concerning the implementation of participatory research methodologies (Olko, 2018, pp. 1-34). Here the aim is to critically examine how it is possible to understand diverse indigenous methodologies and the production and distribution of knowledge (Wilson, 2008, pp. 69-77). As can be appreciated, the question of knowledge is not a purely theoretical issue but has repercussions in the daily lives of native peoples, and that is precisely why its full recognition is indispensable. Such methodologies must consider language, cultural heritage, values, and customs.

Indigenous methodologies approach cultural protocols, values, and behaviors as an integral part of the methodology. They are "factors" that should be incorporated into the research explicitly, thought through reflexively, stated openly as part of the research design, discussed as part of the results of a study, and disseminated to the population in a culturally appropriate way and in language that can be understood (Tuhiwai, 2008, p. 15). Regarding *collaborative methodologies*, it is vital to provide them with medium- and long-term continuity, both on the part of indigenous researchers from the communities and researchers trained in the educational institutions of the colonial metropolis.

Such continuity highlights the question of who benefits from the results of a particular research. In this sense, it is necessary to emphasize that sharing the results of research is not only a matter of courtesy but is an integral part of the process and reflects an ethical position. There is not only one way to do it; however, beyond the specific cases, what is at stake is the possibility of sharing the knowledge building. Emphasizing this aspect is of utmost importance since, in many technocratic research institutions, attention is focused on what the researcher does individually, or on the economic or industrial benefits, without considering other aspects, such as how knowledge and information are constructed, represented and disseminated.

Knowledge Sharing and Epistemologies of the Global South

Knowledge sharing is also a long-term commitment. It is easier, since a technocratic approach, to deliver a report and for organizations to distribute brochures than to engage in ongoing processes of knowledge sharing. However, for indigenous researchers, this technocratic approach does not fit within communities' values. "The old colonial adage that knowledge is power is taken seriously in Indigenous communities, and many processes have been discussed and enacted to facilitate effective ways of sharing knowledge" (Tuhiwai, 2008, p. 16). The sharing of knowledge is a fundamental aspect that distinguishes a *collaborative methodology* since its repercussions are not limited to delivering a report or distributing information or pamphlets. On this point, it is worth explaining the difference between information and knowledge since the simple compilation of data is not enough to be considered knowledge. Indeed, if we consider that knowledge is power, then power must be understood as a possibility to develop *alternative pedagogies* and not only as an instrument of domination.

Now, to further explain the difference between information and knowledge, Linda Tuhiwai's approach is advantageous: "I use the term "knowledge sharing" deliberately, rather than the term "information sharing. Because the responsibility of researchers and scholars is not simply to share surface information (pamphlet knowledge) but to share the theories and analyses that inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and

represented" (Tuhiwai, 2008, p. 16). One of the main criteria for establishing the distinction is the responsibility of researchers to make their theories and analyses explicit to show how knowledge is constructed and represented. In other words, it is essential to account for how the process has been carried out and not just to present the results. Recognizing this responsibility is the basis for developing an ethical position and an adequate methodology.

Nahua Cultural Heritage

Some branches of the Nahua people could be considered direct descendants of the Aztecs, a very well-known ancient civilization of Mexico (Caso, 1993, pp. 15-30; León-Portilla, 1956, pp. 1-6). The Aztecs spoke the Nahuatl language, which is still alive in a wide array of indigenous communities in central Mexico. Many people speak the language despite colonization, discrimination, and stigma (Bergier & Olko, 2016, pp. 295-344). However, it is necessary to clarify that, in this paper, the term Nahua is not restricted to the ancient Aztec civilization. Furthermore, it corresponds to individuals and communities who spoke the Nahuatl language before, during, and after the colonization process started in 1521. To avoid misunderstandings, in this paper, I will use the Nahuatl term as the name of the language and "Nahua" as the name of the language group eponymous and adjective (Dehouve, 2015, pp. 37-57).

According to Intercensal Survey INEGI 2015. In Mexico, there are 1,725,620 speakers of the Nahuatl language. Of which 836,144 are men and 889,476 are women. These data give us an overview. However, it is essential to note that some people prefer not to respond to this request for information due to the discrimination and racism that still prevails in some places in Mexico.

This research analyzes the methodologies for documentation and revitalization of Central Nahuatl; alternate names are "Mexicano" and Aztec (in English only). According to UNESCO'S Atlas of Languages in Danger (Moseley, 2010), Central Nahuatl is vulnerable, with 395,581 speakers, according to the 2000 census. The locality of Milpa Alta and others with few remaining speakers in the south of the Distrito Federal; several municipalities in the State of Mexico such as Tianguistenco, Jalatlaco, Coyotepec, and Huehuetoca; municipalities of Chiautempan, Mazatecocho, Contla and others in the State of Tlaxcala; several municipalities in the State of Puebla such as Atlixco and Huejotzingo; in the State of Hidalgo, municipalities such as Acaxochitlán and Pahuatlán; in the State of Veracruz, several municipalities such as Rafael Delgado and Zongolica; municipality of Teotitlán and others in the State of Oaxaca. The data of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) shows that the language status of Central Nahuatl is threatened (6b) according to the Ethnologue. This label means that the language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users. However, according to the fieldwork data and the teaching experience of indigenous scholars, it is possible to estimate that the level is 8.

Nahua Methodologies

Nowadays, indigenous communities in Milpa Alta and Tlaxcala have developed institutional and personal efforts to face this language endangerment (Karttunnen, 1991, pp. 271-291; Nava, 2016, pp. 269-294). One meaningful case is the work developed 40

years ago by the Academia de Lengua y Cultura Náhuatl de Santa Ana Tlacotenco. The Academia is headed by indigenous scholars such as historians and professional language teachers. Despite lacking resources and governmental support, they offer free Nahuatl courses and developed indigenous research methodologies. In 2018, the Academia offered a specialized course focused on Nahuatl teaching methodology.

In the case of this research, one of the most meaningful theoretical challenges was to reflect on the role of the word: "methodology" that comes from a different worldview— for instance, challenging the assumption that the meaning of methodology is universal and homogenous because indigenous languages have specific features. Consequently, developing an intercultural epistemology is essential to encourage a reciprocal transference of knowledge (Mall, 2000, pp. 11-12). As a result of this intercultural dialogue, it is possible to present some reflections about methodology gathered during fieldwork.

For example, some interviews were carried out in Nahuatl about language teaching methodology, with Francisco Morales Baranda, a Nahua historian and experienced teacher, born in Santa Ana Tlacotenco who is the head of the Academia de Lengua y Cultura. In order to answer the question, which is the best translation for methodology? The Nahua scholar considered:

Nahuatl Interview

- Quema nicahcicamati temachtiani. Niquimpia ce tlatlaniliztli. Quen mihtoa nahualcopa "methodology"?

FMB-Ahzo nicnemilia, nicnemilia, mihtoz nahuatlahtolcopa, cenca, ipampa "método" huitz ipan griego "meta": ohtli, ipan nicahciz, in tlen nicnemiltica. Nicnemilia mihtoa: "huey ohtli temachtiloyan", "huey ohtli temachtiloyan", inon nicnemilia. Yece noyuhqui onyez occequintin tlacah ahzo occe tlahtolliquihttoz. Yece inon nicnemilia.

English Translation

- Yes, I understand, professor. I have one question. How do you say methodology in the Nahuatl language?

FMB-First, I consider it possible to say it in the Nahuatl language because "method" *comes* from the Greek language "meta": road, way. A path in which I shall arrive. I consider that it could be: "the great road to the place of teaching or education. However, it is also true that other people use different words. I believe this[1].

Firstly, it is necessary to point out the implications of the translation embedded in a word from a different worldview. This philosophical issue belongs to epistemology. Secondly, in the example given above is possible to appreciate an effort to argue that it is possible to refer to this idea in the Nahuatl language based on a "literal translation" of the Greek word. Nevertheless, this proposal considers some of Nahua's cultural heritage features. The hypothesis that Nahua's epistemology involves the idea of "following the path" has been highlighted by outsider researchers (Maffie, 2014). Thirdly I want to highlight that this path (*ohtli*) conduces to the teaching place. In this case, the methodology is associated with schools and education. However, not only those provided by the State but also education deeply rooted in ancient wisdom and cultural heritage developed for indigenous peoples for millennia.

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[1] Personal communication. Interview in Santa Ana Tlacotenco, Milpa Alta. 20.05.2018.

To move forward is crucial to provide more examples; for this reason, it is necessary to point out some considerations about this issue made by Santos de la Cruz, a poet and also a Nahuatl teacher, born in Ichcatepec, Veracruz. To answer the question, which is the best translation for methodology? The Nahua scholar considered:

Nahuatl Interview

- Quen *mihtoa* nahualcopa "methodology"?

SDC- (*Methodology*) "Ce Yancuic tlahtolle, yece ce nahua temachtiliztli".

- "*Quema*, tleica inin tlahtolli for methodology?

SDC-"*Ce* cualli nahuatlamachtiliztli ipan amatl, ce nahuatlamachtiliztli nahuatlacuilloli ipan amatl, (...), ihuan ce aca aquin quitequiliz inin amoxtli, inin amatl, cualle ihca temachtiz, cualle, ahmo zan zazotlein (...), inon monequi ce cualle tlamachtiliztli, cualle nahua tlamachtiliztli, monequi "metodo", nahuatlamachtili, tlacuilolli, nahuatlacuilloli monequi ipan amatl".

English translation

- How *do* you say "methodology" in Nahuatl language? SDC-This is a new word, but the Nahua "teaching."

- Yes, *and* why do you choose this word for methodology?

SDC-The good Nahua teaching about books, wisdom, and writing. When somebody *makes* a book, and this book is capable of teaching something, not only random things but also good teaching, a good Nahua teaching, i.e., This is the meaning of "methodology," the Nahua teaching, the Nahua writing about books[2].

In the example given above, the methodology is considered a new word, or neologism: "*yancuic tlahtolle*," i.e., a linguistic loan linked with Nahua education and wisdom embedded in ancient books and cultural heritage. I want to highlight that wisdom and methodology correlates with writing. This wisdom and knowledge are heavily threatened by colonization, and most contemporary Nahua communities are isolated from their ancestral cultural heritage. One of the leading causes of this language endangerment is the lack of interest in indigenous issues inside public elementary schools.

Discussion. Towards an Intercultural Epistemology

Translation of western categories into indigenous languages is an issue that an intercultural epistemology must address. This research focuses on Nahua thought, but this problem is undoubtedly valid for the different indigenous languages in Mexico. For example, to decolonize the methodology of scientific research, it is necessary to know the language directly, as well as the difficulties of translating thought. The purpose of these interviews was to show the difficulty of translating concepts. However, this difficulty is not insurmountable, as shown by the diversity of responses in this section.

The philosophical approach of this research lies in critically reflecting on those concepts and categories taken for granted without being systematically or suspiciously questioned (Macuil, 2017). For example, the data derived from the fieldwork conducted

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[2] Personal Communication. Interview 23. 05. 2018. Mexico City.

for this research -based on conversational methodology- show that there is no uniformity regarding how it is possible to translate the notion of methodology. This diversity is understandable not only because there are currently more than thirty variants of the Nahuatl language but, above all because each Nahua scholar is making an effort to translate the "western" notion of methodology into a term that is understandable to Nahua thought. The diversity of responses found is instrumental in including a general outline of the scope that this exercise can have if taken further, not only in the case of the Nahuatl language but also with other native languages of Mexico. The following table summarizes the results obtained.

Chart 1

Summary of findings

Name	Village	Translation for methodology
Francisco Morales Baranda	Santa Ana Tlacotenco, CDMX	Huey ohtli temachtiloyan/ the way to the teaching site
Santos de la Cruz	Ichcatepec, Veracruz	Nahua tlamachtiliztli/the Nahua teachings
Alfonso Vite	Huejutla, Hidalgo	Tlamachtiliztli/ teaching
Orlando Oliveira García	San Miguel Xaltipan, Tlaxcala	Quince quichihuaz/how you do it
Diana Flores	Huautla, Hidalgo	Catza ticchihuaz/ how you do it
Humberto Iglesias Tepec	Atlanta, Guerrero	Temachtili tlachihuallotl/what is being done for teaching

The significance of reflecting on the difficulty of translating key concepts for "western science" into indigenous languages lies in a series of epistemological problems. One of the objectives of this research is to show that the unreflective application of categories can be problematic, even those that seem obvious. From the perspective of postcolonial hermeneutics, all the western categories are mainly heuristic tools that allow us to explain and construct analogies. Recognizing this heuristic character is extremely useful to avoid the dogmatism mentioned at the beginning of this research. All these interviews are important because they show us: 1.- The difficulty in translating a concept from one worldview to another 2.- The diversity of ways to express and adapt an idea; this means that there is no univocal or dogmatic notion of methodology, 3.- The significance of analyzing the categories of the thought of indigenous peoples.

The study of the indigenous categories of thought used in the production of knowledge based on indigenous languages is an indispensable methodological step to avoid, as far as possible, the projection of cultural features. Thus, the academic importance lies in building a to develop an intercultural epistemology. To round off these considerations, it seems pertinent to reflect on the consequences of the disappearance of indigenous languages. At the beginning of this research, it was pointed out that indigenous knowledge is embedded in languages. So, it is not superfluous to emphasize that the disappearance and weakening of indigenous languages involve the disappearance of the knowledge inherent to them would be considered an *epistemicide*.

The lack of recognition of the knowledge of indigenous peoples reflects the implementation of cultural assimilation policies, which demonstrates how the imposition of monolingual educational systems reproduces discrimination and racism (Llanes, 2008,

pp. 49-63). These undesirable effects affect all sectors of the population, especially indigenous youth and people who migrate from their communities for economic reasons. In that sense, if we consider language as a critical element to understanding indigenous wisdom and knowledge. Then how can we ensure that we are not excluding those individuals who do not speak an indigenous language but were born and continue to live in the communities or the big cities?

Answering this question is not a simple matter, but it shows us the importance of the different efforts undertaken to revitalize the languages of the native peoples. In this sense, many of the researchers interviewed here have developed efforts through community organizations to initiate a process of revitalization and strengthening of indigenous languages (de la Cruz & de la Cruz, 2016, pp. 261-268). Unfortunately, these efforts do not always have the support of educational institutions, which is why the development of public policies and - intercultural democratic mechanisms is required to guarantee the cultural rights of indigenous peoples in Mexico.

An outstanding example is the M.A, Program in Nahuatl Language and Culture implemented by the Intercultural University of Veracruz is a notable effort aimed at young Nahua people. The novelty of this educational program is that it is the only graduate educational program in the world implemented entirely in the Nahuatl language. The objective is to train several generations of young Nahuas so that they will be in charge of creating and leading the efforts to revitalize the Nahuatl language, creating study plans and programs, and developing didactic resources, among other activities. The implementation of this graduate program has been possible because several generations of undergraduate students completed their studies. Furthermore, some of these young people have even written their theses entirely in the Nahuatl language, representing a significant advance.

In some parts of Mexico, there are young people interested in the study and strengthening of the languages of the native peoples. In the last ten years, there has been an increase in the number of people identifying themselves as indigenous. For example, from approximately 10 million at the beginning of the 21st century to 17 million today. Of this number, approximately 7 million consider themselves speakers of an indigenous language; for this reason, it is very important to reflect on how the population that identifies itself as indigenous but does not speak any language can reconnect or reappropriate its cultural heritage.

This reappropriation is especially true for people forced or have voluntarily decided to migrate to other cities or countries. For example, approximately 170,000 people of Nahua origin live in the United States, representing 10% of the population that is assumed to speak the language. Undoubtedly, the situation of Nahua migrants in the U.S. requires a specialized study with specific theoretical frameworks and methodologies; it is not my goal to address such an intricate issue. One difficulty is to have reliable data since, due to the fear of being deported, many people hide their identity or do not censuses or surveys.

> There is no official estimate of the nearly 12 million Mexicans living in the United States in either of the two countries of how many are speakers of an indigenous language or who self-identify as indigenous. There are, of course, reasons for this, and they are linked to the official and academic perception of the national territory (urban/rural), where the indigenous is inscribed in the notion of the rural sphere. (López, 2015, p. 6)

It is precisely these types of social phenomena that make the work carried out by different community organizations in the revitalization and strengthening of the Nahuatl language and culture essential. In the U.S., there are some organizations interested in teaching the Nahuatl language, as well as other organizations that reinterpret the legendary city of Aztlan to strengthen the feeling of rootedness and identity. There are also some examples of community organizations focused on the use of art as a strategy to revitalize and strengthen the Nahuatl language. The implementation of *postcolonial hermeneutics* represents only a part of the collective effort to be led by Nahua community organizations, who, for several decades, have been working to preserve and strengthen their cultural legacy in the face of the adversities of colonization, discrimination, and racism.

Conclusions

In Mexico, despite linguistic diversity, many indigenous languages are endangered. Mainly due to the implementation of neoliberal policies and technocratic pedagogies. Preservation and revitalization of language is a sensitive issue related to indigenous identity and cultural heritage, as well as the full recognition of indigenous rights. As mentioned above is possible to find community organizations in San Miguel Xaltipan, and San Pedro Tlacuapan (Tlaxcala), and Santa Ana Tlacotenco (Mexico City) devoted to promoting and encouraging teaching and learning the Nahuatl language, in spite the fact of the lack of governmental support and recognition.

It also is crucial to highlight the positive attitudes promoted by women as Nahuatl teachers, despite facts such as racism in the context of the national crisis, which involves a lack of recognition of women's rights. Despite feminicide, sexual harassment, or gender violence and discrimination, the social role of women as promoters of the value of cultural heritage has been treasured. Finally, the community organizations headed by indigenous scholars represent an effort to encourage intercultural understanding. Grassroots organizations can contribute to developing best practices in language policymaking. Inclusive research methodologies are essential to developing an *intercultural epistemology*.

A systematic analysis revealed the significance of challenging and questioning some assumptions embedded in western epistemologies. Even the notion of methodology because indigenous epistemologies require a different framework and a good command of the native language. The challenge in translating those concepts is not only a linguistic or literary endeavor but also philosophical and educational. The development of critical pedagogy has to consider indigenous languages as one of the main grounds to avoid a naive perspective of education and challenge the truth's neoliberal regime. More research is required to understand indigenous languages' and philosophies' scope and significance in education.

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