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Manera de citar:

Acevedo-Rodrigo, Ariadna (2008) "Ritual Literacy: The Simulation of Reading in Rural Indian Mexico ", *Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 44, núm. 1-2, pp. 49-65

Ritual Literacy:

The Simulation of Reading in Rural Indian Mexico, 1870-1930.¹

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Focusing on reading methods and practices in rural Indian Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century, this article explains why schooling had little impact in terms of literacy in Spanish yet played a successful political and ceremonial role resulting in what I call a ritual literacy. At the time, the emerging educational system did not consider the difficulties of speakers of indigenous languages faced with a Spanish-only programme. The late-nineteenth century saw the introduction of important pedagogical innovations such as the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing but none addressed the needs of those who did not speak Spanish. Even when the direct method was adopted in the 1920s to teach Spanish as a second language, problems persisted. Throughout the period, educationalists insisted that reading skills enabled pupils to decipher any text, and not just well-known schoolbooks, but the context of diglossia, together with local politics and ceremonial life, encouraged a 'simulation' of reading, including the recitation of memorised text and the deciphering and pronunciation of words without understanding their meaning. In a socioeconomic context where individual literacy had limited value, the simulation of reading fulfilled an important symbolic role but did not necessarily encourage children's acquisition of Spanish literacy.

Keywords: Schools; Literacy; Reading; Indians; Spanish; Diglossia

This article derives from a wider piece of research which seeks to explain why a rural region of central Mexico (the Sierra Norte de Puebla) had undergone during 1870-1930 a considerable expansion of schooling and yet had seen very small advances in literacy. School growth was to a considerable extent the result of political interests. Poor school results and low literacy levels were explained in great part by the socio-economic context: as has often been observed in the history of education, a small number of literate people are sufficient to conduct town administration and commercial transactions in peasant societies. As I examined the problems faced by schools, I found language difficulties were an additional obstacle to the spread of literacy among school-goers. Linguistic problems were unsurprising given that most of the population of the region were monolingual speakers of indigenous languages (*náhuatl* and *tononaca*) but received a Spanish-only education. However, contemporary educational debates and school administrations rarely commented on this issue and in turn, historians have remained silent. Here I set out to examine the few but revealing pieces of evidence available for the Sierra Norte de Puebla, which suggest that language difficulties were widespread.

The main purpose of this article is to examine reading without understanding in a context of diglossia (with indigenous languages subordinated to the official Spanish language) and during the implementation of two important changes in the history of literacy: the expansion of extensive reading with prominence given to the ability to decipher any text, and the introduction of the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing. The political context of the period changed from a regime that was ideologically liberal and positivist but authoritarian in practice (1876-1911), to a revolutionary regime (1920-1940) that retained much of the liberalism and positivism of the past but in contrast to the pre-

1910 elitist federal measures that favoured urban education, introduced special provisions for the rural masses. Literacy policies, however, changed less than the broader political transformation may suggest. In what follows I examine the influence of pedagogy and politics in the classroom and argue that while national and local pedagogical discourse favoured reading comprehension, local political interests and ritual practices were much less concerned with it.

The coexistence of Spanish and indigenous languages in Mexico goes back to the sixteenth-century Spanish Conquest. During evangelisation in the early Colonial period Spanish missionaries learned indigenous languages and used them to deliver religious instruction. The administration recognised two widespread pre-Conquest languages, *náhuatl* and *maya*, which were extensively used in official documentation. Despite such efforts to improve communication, ritual was eventually seen as the only realistic way of spreading Christianity to a significant number of people. Strict adherence to external ritual was therefore valued more highly than understanding and inner conviction. The development of Catholic doctrine and practice reinforced the tendency to value image and ritual over written text and reflexive thought.² Ritual became a form of communication in a context of deep linguistic and cultural differences. During the modern period, heterogeneity and its concomitant need for ritual would persist.³ I will examine below how during 1870-1930 the logic of ritual, in a secularised, liberal-patriotic form, may have influenced school instruction and results, by giving little importance to reading comprehension.

After Independence (1821) Spanish became the only official language, whether to conduct administration or public instruction. During the second half of the nineteenth century Liberal governments instituted lay education excluding religious instruction from

state schools. Religious catechisms in indigenous languages were still circulated but writing in these languages was gradually relegated to the private sphere and eventually lost.⁴ The fact that many indigenous people did not understand what had become the only official idiom favoured a ritual relationship to written language. In the late-nineteenth century the heated debates on the best methods to teach reading and writing ignored the fact that around 15 per cent of the Mexican population did not speak Spanish, the ‘national’ language.⁵

Among the language difficulties encountered by Indian children in the Spanish classroom, the ‘simulation of reading’ appeared as a recurrent problem. By simulation I refer to either the actual pretence of reading when the student has just memorised a particular text, or a deciphering and pronunciation of words without understanding their meaning. Both situations may occur among those who are learning to read in their mother tongue, but are more common among those who are dealing with a second language they do not yet master. Before examining this issue during 1870-1930, we must note that the very idea of ‘simulation of reading’ implies a modern approach to the subject. This rejects an older understanding of reading based on oral transmission, mnemonic practice, recitation and other religious and ritual forms of relating to text that did not necessarily involve comprehension. Yet I speak of ‘the simulation of reading’ because many commentators in Mexico had taken such a modern view at least since the eighteenth century. For the period studied here educationalists at the local and national level already thought of reading in terms of its practical, non-ritual use and the acquisition of non-religious knowledge. They agreed that reading must come with comprehension.

I will examine three distinct periods in the teaching of reading:

a) Between Independence (1821) and the 1870s, memorisation and recitation were common among Indians and non-Indians. In contrast to the colonial period, instruction took place only in Spanish and educationalists did not reflect on the fact that some of the children attending school did not understand this language.

b) Important pedagogical innovations were introduced in the 1880s-1890s. These included the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing and promoted the deciphering of any print over memorisation and recitation of well-known texts. Yet the fact that indigenous pupils did not know the language of instruction meant lack of understanding persisted.

c) Between 1910-1930, during the armed revolution and the first decade of the revolutionary government, there was greater awareness of rural problems. Educationalists realised that in various areas Spanish had to be taught as a second language and chose the direct method (*castellanización directa*) for this purpose.⁶

Mexican history of education has matured considerably in the last twenty years. Concentrating on the schools opened by the revolutionary government in rural areas after 1921 and covering indigenous regions, it has contributed to a nuanced understanding of the educational system but has focused on political issues to the detriment of the history of literacy.⁷ Additionally, historical research has generally viewed the population homogeneously as peasant, as was done at the time, paying little attention to ethnic particularities. Both the history of reading and the history of education for indigenous peoples are growing but still incipient.⁸ This article seeks to build upon the pioneering work of Elsie Rockwell for the Indian region of La Malintzi, Tlaxcala, also in central Mexico.⁹ My findings lead to hypotheses rather than conclusions because of the difficulties of reconstructing classroom practice during a period when there was little or no discussion of

language issues, and for which I could not find information through oral history. The most important sources are local archives. Below I briefly introduce the region of study and follow with an examination of reading and writing practices, which is more a reflection on specific representations of such practices than a reconstruction of what happened.

The Sierra

The region studied, the Sierra Norte de Puebla, is of particular interest because of the strength of its liberal, Spanish-language schooling tradition before 1910 and the fact that the majority of its population were speakers of *náhuatl* and *totonaca*. It is a mountainous area located between the port of Veracruz on the Gulf coast (leading to the Atlantic) and Mexico City to the west. Its abrupt geography and strategic location turned it into a military stronghold of the Liberals during the tumultuous first three quarters of the nineteenth century. The population provided Liberals with crucial military, logistical and economic support against the Conservatives (1858-61) and the European Intervention (1862-67).¹⁰ In line with legislative changes, but with a pragmatic approach, the region's Liberals reduced the population's payments to the Church, making them voluntary in practice, and succeeded in persuading people to pay the new taxes of the Liberal state, including a school tax that would fund a lay, Spanish-language educational programme. Throughout the period of study, for a region primarily dedicated to subsistence agriculture, there were a significant number of schools. By 1900 villages with a total population of over 1,000 generally had two municipal schools (one for boys, one for girls); and villages under 1,000 possessed one school (either for boys or mixed).¹¹ Pedagogical innovations were introduced with

surprising rapidity. However, contemporary pedagogy was in many respects inadequate for a rural and indigenous context and teachers' own education often left much to be desired. The very slow changes in literacy rates suggest that not even all children who attended school learned enough to be able to read and write years after leaving education. In what follows, I focus on the municipality of Cuetzalan in the district of Zacapoaxtla, where 56 per cent of a total population of 12,610 spoke only *nahuátl* according to the 1930 census, and the municipality of Huehuetla in the district of Zacatlán, where 74 per cent of a total population of 6,443 were monolingual in *totonaca* in the same year.¹² These two municipalities were representative of the more rural and Indian central and northern part of the Sierra, by contrast to the southern area, which was closer to Puebla and Mexico cities and had a higher percentage of Spanish speakers.

Reading Before the 1880s

The teaching of reading in the Colonial period, and even after Independence for a good part of the nineteenth century, was bound to religious instruction and constrained to a few texts. Historians of reading in Western Europe have associated such a situation with 'intensive reading' practices, that is, the memorisation and recitation of text imbued with authority and a sense of the sacred, and integrated with everyday religious practice. For those primarily concerned with the capacity to read and understand any text, this practice presented two problems: recitation could stand in for the actual deciphering of text and when deciphering occurred, it did not guarantee comprehension. In fact, it was not uncommon that instructors were barely literate or even illiterate.¹³ This is not to say that

this was the only existing reading practice but it was probably one that predominated in rural contexts as long as religious goals prevailed. The trend in the nineteenth century was nonetheless to criticise this model and demand that children actually learn to read, if not to write.

In Mexico, as the nineteenth century advanced, lay education gained ground and schoolbooks diversified. The availability of a greater variety and quantity of texts for a wider public has been identified as a crucial change in the history of reading in Europe. Yet this does not mean that there occurred in Mexico, or in Europe, a unilinear shift from intensive to extensive reading whereby oral transmission, memorising and recitation of a few texts was replaced by the avid and fast consumption of a wide variety of text by a public capable of critical examination. The hypothesis of such a shift in reading practices, put forward around 1970, has already been questioned for Europe and would not hold for the Mexican case.¹⁴ Critics have rejected the idea that there was a clear shift from intensive to extensive reading or that they were mutually exclusive; they also disagreed with some of the specific characteristics assigned to the two styles. For instance, the rise of the novel, which did bring greater variety and a wider and faster-reading public, did not necessarily exclude characteristics of 'intensive' reading such as reading repeatedly, memorising favourite fragments or, indeed, reading reverently even if this was not religious reverence.¹⁵

Similarly, I here reject a simplistic dichotomy whereby extensive reading is a liberating affair inspired by Enlightenment ideals, whereas intensive reading is a submissive practice responding to religious domination. But I find that reflection on the characteristics that have been associated with intensive and extensive reading (and which I prefer not to assign to a specific type or time) is valid. For the purposes of this article I

distinguish between contexts in which memorisation, recitation and ritual are highly valued and may be more important than comprehension, and those in which reading without comprehension becomes meaningless and is thus criticised.

Let us now consider reading methods and practices in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. The first methods for teaching reading in Colonial Mexico began with the letters of the alphabet, then introduced syllables followed by words. The system of starting with letters, called *deletreo* (spelling), made children learn the name, rather than the sound, of the letters, and to recite such names before they actually put the letters together and pronounced a syllable. Criticism of such practice as confusing, tedious and unnecessary led to the first syllabic method in the 1780s, which emphasised the pronunciation of syllables without enouncing the names of individual letters. However, evidence available for the late-eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth suggests that the practice of naming letters remained widespread.¹⁶

During 1870-1940 about a dozen primers and readers were the most common in Mexican classrooms, including those of the Sierra Norte de Puebla.¹⁷ The most popular syllabic primer in nineteenth-century Mexico was a simple text known as Saint Michael's Syllabic Primer (*Silabario de San Miguel*). With big print, succinct lessons and a brief catechism in its final pages, it was appropriate to a time of transition as it gave primacy to learning to read, but still concluded with religious doctrine as the first proper text pupils encountered. Although the text only introduced the alphabet after the syllables, evidence of its use indicates that this, as well as the other syllabic primers, was used in conjunction with the practice of spelling (*deletreo*). Additionally, the presentation of meaningless lists of

syllables, letters and words in this and other primers was criticised for being arid for children and prone to memorisation and recitation without understanding.¹⁸

Reading practice beyond primers might have favoured comprehension but did not guarantee it. During the 1860s and 1870s religious catechisms continued to be the most numerous readers. Possibly the most popular textbook in the history of Mexican education, and present throughout the nineteenth century, was the Ripalda Catechism. In the region studied, the Ripalda appeared in school inventories up until the 1880s. Its first known edition dates from 1591 and, like all catechisms of its time, was written under the guidelines of the Council of Trent to clarify and transmit the main tenets of the doctrine in response to the Protestant Reform. It was originally brought from Spain but was published in New Spain (Colonial Mexico) from 1687 at the latest and translated into several indigenous languages. The Ripalda Catechism adopted what became a well-liked format of questions and answers.¹⁹ Because it reduced complex issues to a simplified set of sentences, it was not necessary for the teacher to be very knowledgeable and he could ask children to memorise the corresponding answers to each question, without worrying about comprehension. When prompted by the instructor's interrogation, pupils would recite the expected answers either individually or collectively. The tone or 'singing' of children's replies, more noticeable when responding in chorus, and believed to facilitate memorisation, would eventually become a target for censure and ridicule.²⁰

Both the success and failure of catechisms owed a great deal to their convenience: they facilitated the teachers' tasks but were susceptible to criticism when it was proved that children did not understand what they were saying. Already in the late-eighteenth century, the Ripalda Catechism was disapproved of for these reasons.²¹ Long before in France,

Claude Fleury had designed his *Catéchisme historique* precisely to avoid these problems by resorting to narrative, together with questions and answers, in order to make the doctrine more accessible and easily understood.²² First published in France in 1683, it became a bestseller and was used in its country of origin until the mid-nineteenth century. Despite Fleury's claims to accessibility, in Mexico the Ripalda was found more approachable and Fleury's was normally used to deepen religious instruction. The French catechism appeared frequently in Mexican inventories but maybe only the better-prepared teachers used it, provided their pupils were sufficiently advanced.²³ The popularity of the questions-and-answers format was further confirmed by non-religious textbooks which imitated their methods, as was the case of civic education books known as civic catechisms.²⁴

Two examples from the first half of the nineteenth century in Mexico City illustrate how reading practices were very dependent on memorisation and recitation, even as critics were already judging reading instruction by its capacity to enable pupils to decipher any text. In 1806 a newspaper reprovingly reported that children memorised the names of consonants and vowels, followed by the pronunciation of syllables, but instead of understanding that these were fragments of words and learning to decipher texts, they simply recognised the beginning of a line in their primer and then recited the rest of the line by heart. They were thus incapable of reading a book other than their school text. Geographer and textbook author Antonio García Cubas (1832-1912) relates in his much-cited memoirs that reading instruction in 'dame' schools (*escuelas amigas*) did not go beyond a rough recognition of text that allowed pupils to enunciate their lines. The peculiar tune adopted for recitation helped pupils memorise the text but not understand it. Despite such limitations, when children had completed the study of the syllabic primer, they

celebrated the achievement dressed in their best attire. If economic means allowed, they entered the school (normally the teacher's home in this period), followed by two maids carrying trays, one with sweets and cakes, the other holding a much adorned copy of the successful student's syllabic primer. The building was profusely decorated and the parade of victorious children was headed by a student carrying a flag with an image of the primer. An audience of neighbours and younger pupils acclaimed the students.²⁵ It is possible that García Cubas exaggerated the pomp of the ceremony and the vacuity of the learning for narrative effect. Yet his description captures the importance of ritual attached to some reading practices, with books treated as objects of reverence rather than holders of useful, practical knowledge. Further below I show how these values and practices were also found in the twentieth century.

I now consider the use of textbooks in the Sierra Norte de Puebla. Occasionally, schools were fortunate enough to have one primer or reader per student but more commonly the number of books available suggests children had to share the texts. There were cases in which pupils themselves contributed some books to the school's modest collection. A cheap solution were reading posters reproducing lessons like those of the syllabic primers but with the advantage that a single collection of posters, hung on school walls, was enough for a whole group of children. From time to time, teachers and local authorities complained of a complete lack of texts. Because of the highly humid conditions in the region, books could deteriorate rapidly and this, perhaps together with some theft, explains why only a few years after receiving supplies from municipal governments, schools complained of a lack of books. But this same situation possibly favoured the faster disappearance of the old texts and introduction of the new methods. Documents stating the

advancement of schoolchildren suggest teaching was very dependent on books; schoolmasters and mistresses registered the page numbers children were studying and examined on. Although inspectors rarely commented on classroom practice, it seems likely that Sierra teachers, most of whom did not have college training, relied heavily on the available books.²⁶ Such practices, among others, would come under criticism by the new pedagogical trends that arrived in Mexico and were disseminated from the 1880s.

The Innovations of the 1880s-1890s

The last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth saw heated debates on the best methods to teach reading and writing, in an atmosphere of strong belief in scientific progress and a nationalistic interest in the homogenisation of education. The first pedagogical conferences held in Mexico in 1889-90 and 1890-91, organised by the Ministry of Public Instruction and attended by state and federal educational authorities as well as directors from selected schools, discussed such issues and made recommendations based on the knowledge of European and US methods, and Mexican experience. In the name of uniform education they agreed on the basic criteria that reading and writing textbooks should fulfil. Yet educationalists encouraged teachers to emphasise oral explanation and use the texts as little as possible because it was believed that excessive reliance on books in the classroom favoured the widespread but inappropriate practices of mechanical repetition of sentences, memorisation and recitation without comprehension.²⁷

Three main changes were promoted in reading and writing instruction. Spelling (*deletreo*) was finally replaced by the phonetic method, i.e. the pronunciation of the sound,

rather than the name, of each letter. Additionally, the teaching of reading would start with words or phrases, following the analytic-synthetic method. Last but not least, the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing was brought in so that children started tracing letters and words at the same time they were learning to read. There was much consensus over the advantages of simultaneity and the use of phonetic methods, whereas the analytic-synthetic order was not adopted by all and would later be challenged. When children were to start with words, rather than syllables, the procedure was called the ‘normal word’ method (*método de palabras normales*) and it corresponded to what in other contexts has been called the ‘whole-word method’ or ‘the global method’.²⁸ The principle behind it was that letters and syllables did not occur ‘naturally’ in language, only words and sentences did; therefore it was artificial and unnecessary for the young pupils to have to start with letters and syllables. With these arguments most educationalists espoused starting with words, and some with sentences. For those following the ‘normal word’ method, the introduction of words would be followed by their analysis or separation into syllables and letters, only for letters and syllables to be merged back into words, a sequence known as the analytic-synthetic method (*método analítico-sintético*).

During the first part of the nineteenth century pupils had learned to read and write successively. Perhaps the single most important change in the last decades of the century was the introduction of the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing, which was adopted rapidly in schools.²⁹ One of the practicalities that had hampered the earlier teaching of writing was the expense and technical difficulty of using ink and pens. This obstacle, however, was surmounted in the nineteenth century with the introduction of cheaper and simpler tools, such as individual slate boards and slate pencils (*pizarras* and *pizarrines*).

Moreover, it seems likely that in Mexico, as Anne Marie Chartier has argued for France, simultaneity spread rapidly because it was practical and allowed teachers to better organise and discipline students. In her study of Tlaxcala (central Mexico), Rockwell argues that a further motivation for the introduction of the new method was the expense and scarcity of books needed for reading, compared to the accessibility of methods such as tracing letters on the wet earthen floor.³⁰ It is possible that familiarity with inexpensive writing tools in the late-nineteenth century was due to the Lancaster system introduced to Mexico in the 1820s. There is evidence that in these schools children traced letters on sand and later progressed to slate boards. In principle Lancasterians also introduced writing from the very first year but it is difficult to know to what extent this actually took place.³¹ When educationalists introduced simultaneity in the 1880s-1890s they either ignored the precedent of the Lancaster schools or claimed that the system had failed in its efforts to spread simultaneity. In any case the definitive introduction of the simultaneous method came with the work of recognised educationalists associated with the 'Model' School (*Escuela Modelo*) and Teacher Training College (*Escuela Normal*) in the cities of Orizaba and Jalapa respectively, in the state of Veracruz. The method was first used in the 1880s and publication of textbooks by Enrique Laubscher, Carlos A. Carrillo and Enrique Rebsamen started in 1884 and continued in the 1890s. These books were distributed throughout the country and the methods further disseminated outside Veracruz by the authors and their disciples.³²

In the district of Zacatlán, in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, a member of a local family of liberal intellectuals, Angel W. Cabrera, published his own method which was used regionally. Cabrera read the pedagogical journal *México Intelectual* founded by Rebsamen

and otherwise kept himself informed of the latest national advances, which he disseminated locally through his work as a teacher and his participation in the local press of his hometown of Zacatlán, including a periodical on education. Rebsamen was acquainted with Cabrera's textbook, which he believed to have been first published in 1888. Like the nationally-distributed text by Rebsamen, Cabrera's introduced the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing using the phonetic method, starting with words and following the analytic-synthetic method.³³

From the available evidence for the Sierra it is possible to conclude that the introduction of the new methods was indeed accompanied by a change from successive to simultaneous reading and writing. 1870s and 1880s school records indicate that children learned to read for at least one or two years and only then started writing. It is in the 1890s that we find pupils learning to both read and write from their first year in school, many of them using Cabrera's text.³⁴ The change was crucial because at the time most children attended school for one, two or three years at the most. Following the old system they would have left school knowing, at best, only how to read. Now they might learn to write even if they spent a short time in school.

Yet the specific problems faced by speakers of indigenous languages undermined this advance. While Spanish speakers could take full benefit of the new system, nothing prevented Indian children from reading and writing without understanding. In practice it is likely that this well-intentioned reform had the unfortunate consequence of widening the gap between Spanish speakers and speakers of indigenous languages. Teachers in the Sierra were familiar with Cabrera's book, or with those by the better-known educationalists, but nothing guaranteed that children understood the texts they learned to decipher. I will

illustrate this with an incident that occurred in San Miguel Tzinacapan, a Nahua village of less than 2,000 inhabitants in the municipality of Cuetzalan.³⁵

Practically all pupils in San Miguel Tzinacapan were children of Nahua parents and spoke the indigenous language at home. Adult males encountered Spanish in their relations with the village secretary or municipal authorities, and with traders who bought their agricultural produce. However, normally only the minority of adults who worked for Spanish speakers gained some command of the language. Meanwhile children generally only encountered Spanish at school; whether their transition from the Nahua household to school was more or less abrupt depended to a great extent on the teacher.³⁶ During the period of study all of San Miguel Tzinacapan's teachers were native Spanish speakers. Linguistic problems were not recognised officially and were therefore registered only exceptionally but a case in Tzinacapan in 1891 provides revealing information.

From the late 1880s Agustín Becerra taught at the boys' school. He was frequently praised for positive exam results, and the local authorities approved of his work.³⁷ However, in 1891, an observation registered by the village secretary in the council minutes revealed a deficiency:

The alderman would like to draw the attention of the council to the fact that the Spanish language is not taught at the Zaragoza school. Pupils must learn Spanish to be able to understand what they read. Otherwise it will not make a difference to them whether they read a book in French, Latin, German or any other language that they cannot translate, just as they cannot translate Spanish. He proposes that the council take the necessary measures so that instruction and learning become a reality and not a mere formula. The council recommends, once more, that the schoolmaster rectify the deficiencies observed, so that his pupils learn the Spanish language, all the more important because it is the national language.³⁸

Further comments in this and other municipalities suggest that reading without understanding was not an uncommon practice and it was a matter of concern for some.³⁹

After considering material conditions in schools, a teacher from a Nahua village observed:

To these difficulties we must add the lack of knowledge of the Spanish language and we will realise that the obstacles [faced in indigenous villages] will only be overcome in the long term provided we work very hard. An indigenous child will read and recite his lessons, word by word, without having understood the meaning of the sentences he has pronounced.⁴⁰

Why did educationalists not address this situation? Partly because experience possibly taught them that children's first steps in reading (even if they were reading their mother tongue) included a rough recognition of letters followed by memorisation of the text, as well as deciphering without comprehension; but even these rudimentary capacities (generally sufficient for religious and ritual reading) eventually led to a modern and enduring literacy, including the deciphering and comprehension of unknown and widely varied texts. The problem for indigenous peasant children, however, was twofold: after a maximum of three years of irregular school attendance, they had few opportunities to learn further Spanish, or to practice reading and writing in that language. This particular context was not addressed by contemporary pedagogy, not even by teacher and textbook author Angel W. Cabrera who lived in a mainly rural and Indian district.

The case of Cabrera's method poses important questions. He sought to adapt the latest pedagogical advances to the needs of modest rural schools in the Sierra. Bearing in mind that most teachers had minimal instruction, his book included concise and accessible guidelines for teachers, together with the lessons that children would follow, but did not address the fact that many pupils' first languages were *tonaca* or *náhuatl*. Dominant liberalism, in combination with evolutionism, meant that Mexican educationalists, even

those working in indigenous regions, overlooked ethnic particularities. Similarly to their progressive liberal counterparts in Europe, they believed that all citizens were equal and had to be treated equally, and that minority languages would inevitably disappear as the national language spontaneously spread. There was thus no pedagogical reflection on the need for speakers of indigenous languages to learn Spanish as a second language.⁴¹

Cabrera himself liked to emphasise equality over any specific needs: indigenous and non-indigenous peasant children were alike in that they had the same potential to learn and the obstacles they faced were merely economic. Other educationalists, with greater influence than Cabrera, including the Secretary of Public Instruction, argued along the same lines. In the name of equality and against the racist arguments which preferred European immigration to the education of the existing population, they ignored indigenous peoples' specific problems and consequently offered them an education that was less appropriate for them than for Spanish speakers.⁴²

Although it is difficult to know to what extent pupils actually simulated reading, this practice was probably difficult to prevent when socioeconomic conditions did not encourage the learning of Spanish, and no measures were taken to teach it as a second language. Additionally, in a rural context where selective literacy was sufficient for the community, even a simulation of reading may have played a significant role for villages. Below I suggest that such simulation contributed more to the fulfilment of ceremonial and political roles during school exams and patriotic festivals, than to the spread of conventional literacy and the acquisition of the Spanish language.

The Ritual of Reading Before and After the 1910 Revolution

The public and political pressure of school examinations and patriotic festivals in which teachers and pupils participated allowed for a practice of reading more akin to ritual forms based on repetition rather than understanding and reflection, since this was sufficient to give a good performance at such events. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, towns and villages in rural Mexico generally made the effort to build a school or used one or two rooms in the municipal administration building. Although these constructions struggled to meet hygiene regulations, it was increasingly rare for instruction to take place at the teacher's home or on the premises of the parish church. The municipally-funded school was part of the local administration and villages dependent on municipal seats had a keen interest in demonstrating their respectability by sustaining a school and organising public exams and patriotic festivals in their own locality. For these villages, school exams made public in a tangible manner the failure or success of their educational efforts, whereas festivals demonstrated their patriotism before the higher authorities. Both ceremonies were opportunities to maintain or enhance their status.⁴³ Under such pressure it is no surprise that the teacher and village authorities were concerned with giving a good performance.

During the nineteenth and the early-twentieth centuries school exams in rural Mexico were public affairs where village notables and authorities from the municipal seat formed part of the jury, and parents were present. The event would include music, and sometimes poetry and singing. Schoolmasters delivered speeches in which they presented a summary of the school's achievements over the year and also took the opportunity to warn the jury of possible shortcomings often related to the lack of school materials and children's

irregular attendance. For the case of the Sierra, months after results were given, a prize-giving ceremony was organised at which pupils were presented with diplomas.⁴⁴

The simulation of reading observed above allowed for a good performance in front of the jury and authorities in public exams. In some villages of Estado de México in the 1880s children were examined on pieces of information extracted from books and learned by heart as a matter of course. For the case of the Sierra evidence suggests that memorisation was no longer valued in its own right but persisted nonetheless. During an exam, children could read from a given text. They could also respond to questions the formulation of which they had previously memorised, just as they learned the right answer by rote. Indeed, exam regulations designed to prevent teachers from training children to answer specific questions asked during the test suggest that the practice occurred.⁴⁵ When pupils read aloud, if they were not asked for the content of the passage, they could have merely deciphered the text without having understood it. Therefore the simulation of reading might have been sufficient to satisfy exam juries and authorities, many of whom had not received much education themselves or, in a paternalistic and racist spirit, did not expect much from Indian children.⁴⁶

Further evidence of the importance of appearance is found in the school exhibitions held once a year in the Sierra municipalities. For these events, the most advanced students presented pieces of work such as samples of calligraphy, drawing, sewing and embroidery.⁴⁷ In a rural context where individual literacy had limited use, it was the exams and exhibitions, with all their ritual, that made the school an important institution in the political and everyday life of the village. Outward performance was much valued, independently of whether children were actually learning. Public opinion and reputation,

political pressures and rivalries might have encouraged some teachers to put up a show during the public examinations. If children left school with the capacity to decipher text but before they actually understood the Spanish language, they would find little use for their skill and eventually forget how to read.

A more explicit type of ritual involving schoolchildren were patriotic festivals. After Independence, the success of religious rite, which had become part and parcel of life among Indians, was not overseen by Liberal leaders who sought to curtail Church power and modernise the country. Together with legislation to deprive the Church of much of its wealth, Liberals sought to replace religious practice with civic ceremonies.⁴⁸ Memorisation and the ability to decipher text in Spanish allowed children to give speeches prepared by their teachers in these popular festivals. In this context it was unlikely that students would be asked to explain the meaning of what they had just recited or read, so the simulation of reading worked perfectly well.

The region studied had participated very actively in the Liberal wars against Conservatives and European Intervention with soldiers, taxes and other contributions. In municipalities with strong anticlerical sentiment and/or involvement in Liberal struggles, patriotic festivals became very popular. In localities where religious ceremony continued to be crucial, patriotic celebrations were nonetheless accepted and became part of local ritual.⁴⁹ So much so, that when teachers sent by the post-revolutionary government in the 1920s and 1930s sought to introduce new policies, they found that one of the best ways to get the community on their side was to organise civic festivals involving schoolchildren.⁵⁰ Thus teachers tapped into a popular nineteenth-century ‘invented tradition’ which allowed for symbolic and visual forms of communication between monolingual indigenous parents

and children, and monolingual Spanish-speaking teachers. As one teacher in the Sierra put it: ‘If you do not know the spoken language, what better language than that of ritual and music?’⁵¹

The speeches, recitation and singing of festivals perpetuated the techniques of memorisation and reading aloud in a rural context in which despite the long history of schooling, individual literacy remained the privilege of a minority. Festivals transmitted a patriotic and nationalist discourse to a much wider public than that of the literate schoolteachers and their disciples, and had other political and ceremonial uses, but did not require literacy in the modern conventional sense. Although some educational authorities were already concerned with modern literacy, as seen above, no specific measures were taken, so it is my hypothesis that a logic of ritual that did not require reading comprehension prevailed. This practice, together with socioeconomic factors, helps explain why despite the expansion of the number of schools in the region, literacy increased relatively little in the same period. In the municipality of Cuetzalan it went from 12.5 to 16.5 per cent between 1900 and 1930. For the same dates Huehuetla’s rate increased from 7.5 to 13 percent.⁵²

Change and Continuity during the Revolution, 1910-1930

The 1910 Revolution began as an opposition movement to reform and liberalise the authoritarian regime under Porfirio Díaz, but soon turned into a fully-fledged social insurrection. In 1900, 84 per cent of the population was illiterate and 15 per cent could not speak Spanish; by 1910 illiteracy had only decreased to 80 per cent. The 1910 census

calculated that there were a total of 62 different indigenous languages, though later counts concluded there were twice as many mutually unintelligible native idioms.⁵³ In 1911, there were already signs that greater attention would be paid to the rural masses. Inspired in part by the ideas of Gregorio Torres Quintero (1866-1934), renowned educationalist and textbook author, a new education law proposed to open schools for indigenous children to learn to speak, read and write in Spanish, as well as basic arithmetic. Criticised as having too narrow an objective, it was an attempt to spread literacy as widely as possible and a recognition that the national language would not always be learnt spontaneously outside the school and needed to be taught. However, little was done in the tumultuous 1910s. After the worst revolutionary violence had receded and the Constitutionalist faction had taken control of the government, interest in educational policy gained momentum with the opening of a new Ministry of Education (the *Secretaría de Educación Pública*, SEP) which began a process of administrative centralisation and gave priority to the opening of rural schools throughout the country.

With a heightened sense of the need to modernise rural Mexico, during the 1920s and 1930s the number of schools grew considerably. At the same time *indigenismo*, an ideology extolling the virtues of native cultures, spread under the impulse of archaeologists and anthropologists. However, *indigenismo* was part of a nationalism that emphasised homogeneity and praised the qualities of the Mexican mixed race or *mestizo*, as opposed to the pure Indian. For this reason it has been argued that the *indigenismo* of the 1920s and 1930s was in effect an ideology of *mestizaje* and unifying nationalism.⁵⁴ Educationalists shared these ideas and were concerned with the spread of Spanish as the national language. They took a step ahead in recognising the need to teach it as a second language but the

‘direct’ method they endorsed (*castellanización directa*) had unexpected results. Specifically, the prohibition of the use of native languages fostered misunderstandings. It frequently provoked indigenous rejection of schools and retrenchment in their own culture, or the development among both students and teachers of the idea that native languages were inferior. The problems thus generated would be observed by linguists during the second half of the twentieth century and highlighted by those who promoted bilingual methods.⁵⁵

The Puebla legislation of 1919 acknowledged for the first time the need to include a school year in which students learned the Spanish language, a belated response compared to pre-revolutionary legislation in other states with a significant indigenous population. The Puebla authorities gave no specific guidelines as to how the teaching of Spanish would take place.⁵⁶ Evidence from the district of Zacatlán suggests that after the Revolution, as before, most teachers did not speak indigenous languages but at least some were conscious that Spanish needed to be taught as a second language and were preoccupied with children’s understanding of the national idiom. In a regional magazine published in 1929 and 1930, teachers who sent letters and brief articles were non-indigenous and mostly ignorant of *náhuatl* and *totonaca*. One teacher lamented that this situation disheartened many who, faced with a class of children who did not understand them and whom they could not understand, found the task of educating Indians impossible. Yet many wrote to share their methods to teach Spanish. They used visual and oral prompts to introduce nouns, adjectives and verbs, and recommended walks and visits that allowed for the widening of children’s vocabulary and expressions according to the situation. Although these provincial teachers did not explicitly refer to their techniques as examples of the direct method, they were

effectively reproducing this system, as recommended by officials in the Ministry of Education.⁵⁷

Changes had occurred in the teaching of reading and writing. Already in the 1900s the previously recommended *método de palabras normales* (whole-word method) began to be questioned. After the Revolution the certainties as to the superiority of methods such as those of Rebsamen and Cabrera waned and there developed greater freedom for teachers to use whatever method they preferred. In Huehuetla, for instance, from 1909 and throughout the 1910s the most frequent and numerous reader was that of Gregorio Torres Quintero. Quintero's reading and writing text, published in 1904, criticised that of Rebsamen and all those which began instruction with whole words. Instead, Quintero reverted to the synthetic method, starting with the teaching of the sounds of letters, followed by syllables and words. Additionally the method stood out because it resorted to using onomatopoeias as a pedagogical device to facilitate the learning of the sounds of each letter. The method became very popular and is still used to this day but it has also had its critics.⁵⁸ A rural teacher who worked in the 1930s Sierra commented on the subject:

The problem was to teach people to read. I grouped all the pupils who did not know how to read into one class and only when I found out some knew more than others did I divide them. We had learned two methods of teaching reading – the natural method and the onomatopoeic of Torres Quintero. Using the latter, I had children reading in three months without understanding anything. The next year I used the natural method; it was extremely difficult and took a lot of work, but this was the one I used to teach Spanish. Parents were very pleased when their children knew how to read after the first year and that gave me a certain acceptance.⁵⁹

During the twentieth century, and confirming this teacher's observation, the most common praise of Quintero's method was the speed of learning whereas the most frequent complaint

referred to pupils' inability to understand the words pronounced.⁶⁰ Additionally, Quintero, together with official educationalists such as Rafael Ramírez, fiercely defended the advantages of the direct method to teach Spanish. However, they did not elaborate on the procedures to implement it beyond vague instructions prohibiting the use of indigenous languages, and generally published primers and readers that did not distinguish between those who spoke Spanish and those who did not, thus leaving teachers to their own devices in a context of limited funds and materials.⁶¹ Various forms of training rural teachers were devised from the late 1920s onwards precisely to improve the quality of education, but literacy figures suggest they had little impact during their first decade. For their part, teachers possibly realised that there was no single miraculous method. Indeed a great part of schools' success in providing a durable literacy continued to depend on teachers' ability to surmount the obstacles of a rural context, their capacity for implementing methods appropriate to their pupils, and the number of years the latter spent in school.

Final Reflections

Rockwell has observed that the shift from the use of religious texts to a variety of non-religious school textbooks might have made it more difficult for indigenous speakers to learn to read because with religious reading, children were at least familiar with the contents of the book, whereas the non-religious texts were generally unconnected to everyday life and therefore more difficult to understand.⁶² By contrast, I have emphasised here that the reading of religious texts was very much compatible with rote recitation without understanding, and even without the actual deciphering of texts. Thus religious

texts were closer to pupils in that they were more familiar and had spiritual significance for their community, but we must note that they did not necessarily facilitate language comprehension. The pedagogical reforms of the 1880s were conceived to facilitate the deciphering of any text instead of the recognition of some of the words followed by recitation of lines learned by heart. Additionally, the gradual disappearance of religious materials from school inventories in the 1880s, together with the introduction of a variety of non-religious books, allowed for a diversity which may have favoured such deciphering of text. However, and especially for the case of Indian children, the ability to decipher any text did not guarantee comprehension. When educationalists finally addressed the specific problems of speakers of indigenous languages from the 1920s, they underestimated the complexity of teaching Spanish as a second language and did not provide adequate materials or sufficient training for teachers. Finally, children did not stay long enough in school, or learn enough Spanish, to eventually acquire modern literacy skills. Unsurprisingly, problems persisted.

I have argued that the simulation of reading was a politically useful and symbolically significant practice that may be understood as a kind of 'ritual literacy'. But I have also sustained that it did not contribute to the already difficult advance of conventional Spanish literacy in indigenous regions. Further research is needed to assess the spread of this problem and the extent to which it hampered learning. For instance, it is necessary to take into account that even a simulation of reading and limited instruction could eventually lead to a useful literacy.⁶³ Surely, reading incomprehension was not the only possible scenario for indigenous children. But possibly only those pupils with privileged conditions,

such as the opportunity to stay longer in school and/or be in touch with Spanish outside school, were able to benefit from the available instruction.

NOTES

¹ I thank the Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados for providing the material conditions to research and write this article, and the participants at the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE) 2006 and Paedagogica Historica reviewers for their useful comments on earlier versions. Special thanks are due to Elsie Rockwell and Eugenia Roldán for their invaluable observations but any shortcomings remain my own.

² Julia, Dominique. "Lecturas y contrarreforma." In *Historia de la lectura en el mundo occidental*, edited by G. Cavallo and R. Chartier. Madrid: Taurus, 1998: 397-407.

³ Lomnitz, Claudio. "Ritual, Rumour and Corruption in the Constitution of Polity in Modern Mexico." *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (1995): 20-47.

⁴ Cifuentes, Bárbara. *Letras sobre voces. Multilingüismo a través de la historia*. Mexico: Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1998.

⁵ Secretaría de Fomento. *Censo General verificado el 28 de octubre de 1900*. Mexico, 1902.

⁶ King, Linda. *Roots of Identity. Language and Literacy in Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994: ch. 4.

⁷ See, for instance, Quintanilla, S. and M. K. Vaughan, eds. *Escuela y sociedad en el periodo cardenista*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998.

⁸ Seminario de Historia de la Educación. *Historia de la lectura en México*. Mexico: Colegio de México, 1999. Martínez, L., ed. *La infancia y la cultura escrita*. Mexico: Siglo XXI, 2002. Escalante, Carlos. "Los indígenas en la historia de la educación." In *Educación, derechos sociales y equidad*, edited by M. Bertely. Mexico: Consejo Mexicano de Investigación Educativa, 2004.

⁹ Rockwell, Elsie. "Learning for Life or Learning from Books: Reading Practices in Mexican Rural Schools (1900-1935)." *Paedagogica Historica* 38, no. 1 (2002): 1-24.

¹⁰ Thomson, G. with D. LaFrance. *Patriotism, Politics and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1999.

¹¹ Acevedo, Ariadna. "Paying for Progress: Politics, Ethnicity and Schools in a Mexican Sierra." Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick, 2004: chs. 2 and 3.

¹² All figures are for the population aged five and above. Secretaría de la Economía Nacional. *Quinto Censo de la Población 1930*. Mexico, 1930.

¹³ Gonzalbo, Pilar. *Historia de la educación en la época colonial*. Mexico: Colegio de México, 1995: 34, 39-41, 323-324. Staples, Anne. "Alfabeto y catecismo, salvación del nuevo país." *Historia Mexicana* 29, no. 1 (1979): 38, 50. Bazant, Mílada. *Historia de la educación durante el Porfiriato*. Mexico: Colegio de México, 1993: 129.

¹⁴ Cavallo, G. and Chartier, R. "Introducción" and Wittmann, Reinhard "¿Hubo una revolución en la lectura a finales del siglo XVIII?" Both in *Historia de la lectura en el mundo occidental*, 40-50, 439.

¹⁵ Darnton, Robert. "Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity." In *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes*. Vintage Books. New York. 1985. Darnton, Robert. "First Steps Toward a History of Reading." In *The Kiss of Lamourette. Reflections in Cultural History*. New York: Norton, 1990: 161-166. Wittmann, "¿Hubo una revolución?", 446-447, 451-452.

¹⁶ Rebsamen, Enrique C. *La enseñanza de la escritura y lectura. Guía metodológica*. Mexico: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1912: 5-7, 28-31. Tanck, Dorothy. "La enseñanza de la lectura y escritura en la Nueva España, 1700-1821." In Seminario de Historia de la Educación, *Historia de la lectura*, 55-63.

¹⁷ Bazant, Mílada. *En busca de la modernidad. Procesos educativos en el Estado de Mexico, 1873-1912*. Mexico: Colegio Mexiquense, 2002. Martínez, Lucía. "Los libros de texto en el tiempo." In *Diccionario de Historia de la Educación en México*, edited by L. E. Galván. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002. Rockwell, "Learning for Life."

¹⁸ Barbosa, Antonio. *Cómo han aprendido a leer y escribir los mexicanos*. Mexico: Editorial Pax-Mexico, 1978: 27-30. Bazant, *En busca de la modernidad*, 143. Archivo Municipal de Huehuetla (AMH), box 2, Instrucción Pública (IP), Huehuetla 30 April 1881 and box 3, IP, Caxhuacan 30 April 1882.

¹⁹ Gonzalbo, Pilar. "La lectura de evangelización en la Nueva España." In Seminario de Historia de la Educación, *Historia de la lectura*, 32, 34-35. Arredondo, Adelina. "El Catecismo Ripalda." In *Diccionario de Historia de la Educación*.

²⁰ Julia, "Lecturas y contrarreforma," 397-407. Carrillo, Carlos A. *Artículos Pedagógicos*. Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1964 (1st. ed. 1907): 63-65, 118-119.

²¹ Fernández de Lizardi. "La Quijotita y su prima." In Nájera, René. *La Isla de Saucheofú. Fernández de Lizardi, educador*. Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1986: 131-138.

²² Julia, "Lecturas y contrarreforma," 407-408.

²³ García Cubas, Antonio. *El libro de mis recuerdos*. Mexico: Porrúa, 1986 (1st ed. 1904): 405. Bazant, *Historia de la educación*, 58. Bermúdez, María T. "Las leyes, los libros de texto y la lectura, 1857-1876." In Seminario de Historia de la Educación, *Historia de la lectura*, 71, 135-136. Tanck, "La enseñanza de la lectura," 71. Tanck, Dorothy. "Las escuelas Lancasterianas en la Ciudad de México, 1822-1842." *Historia Mexicana* 22, no. 4 (1973): 503.

²⁴ Roldán provides a more nuanced view of learning practices associated with catechisms, particularly science texts by London publisher Ackermann, which were distributed in Mexico. Ackermann's translators and editors found that the question-and-answer format facilitated comprehension and reasoning. Yet evidence of how these and other catechisms were used is scarce. Roldán, Eugenia. "Reading in Questions and Answers. The Catechisms as an Educational Genre in Early Independent Spanish America." *Book History* 4 (2002): 17-48.

²⁵ Tanck, "La enseñanza de la lectura," 60, 64. García Cubas, *El libro*, 401-403.

²⁶ Archivo de la Junta Auxiliar de San Miguel Tzinacapan (ASMTz), box 15, Educación, 'Noticia...', Tzinacapan 18 Oct 1874; box 16, 'Exp. no. 70', Tzinacapan July 1875; box 19, Educación, Huidobro to Presidente Tzinacapan, Cuetzalan 13 Feb 1877; box 21, Educación, 'Escuela Zaragoza ...', 1878; box 22, Presidencia, 'Libro de sesiones 1879', entry for 17 March 1879; box 26, Educación, 'Inventario...', Tzinacapan 7 Feb 1881; box 39, Educación, 'Inventario', Tzinacapan 2 Jan 1889.

²⁷ Carrillo, *Artículos*, 96-110. Meneses, Ernesto. *Tendencias Educativas Oficiales en Mexico*, vol. I., Mexico: Centro de Estudios Educativos, 1998: 438-478. *Reglamento Económico de las Escuelas Primarias Elementales del Estado de Puebla*. Puebla: Imprenta de la Escuela de Artes y Oficios, 1894: ch. II, art. 56.

²⁸ Rebsamen, *La enseñanza de la escritura*. Chartier, Anne Marie. *Enseñar a leer y escribir. Una aproximación histórica*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004: 110-117.

²⁹ Census figures suggest a significant shift from successive to simultaneous teaching of reading and writing. While 16 per cent of the country's population could read and write, those who could 'only read' represented a mere three per cent. Figures for Puebla were similar. Ministerio de Fomento, *Censo General de la República Mexicana verificado el 20 octubre 1895*. Mexico, 1898 and Secretaría de Fomento, *Censo... de 1900*.

³⁰ Rebsamen, *La enseñanza de la escritura*, 130. Chartier, *Enseñar a leer*, 108-110, 118. Rockwell, "Learning for Life".

³¹ García Cubas, *El libro*, 403-407. Bravo, *La enseñanza del español*, 68-85. Cuevas, Pilar. "Historia de la educación elemental en Zacatlán, 1880-1900." B.A. diss., Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2000: 42-43. Roldán, Eugenia. "The Monitorial System of Education and Civic Culture in Early Independent Mexico" *Paedagogica Historica* 35, no. 2 (1999): 304. Tanck, "Las escuelas Lancasterianas", 500-505.

³² Carrillo, *Artículos*, 445-447. Rebsamen, *La enseñanza de la escritura*, 7-8, 22-23. Bravo, *La enseñanza del español*, 89-108.

³³ Rebsamen, *La enseñanza de la escritura*, 27-28. Thomson with LaFrance, *Patriotism*, 20. The only edition of Cabrera's book I have been able to locate is that of 1896 reproduced in Cuevas, "Historia de la educación," appendix; see also 153-162.

³⁴ AMH, box 7, 'Escuela municipal de Huehuetla' and 'Escuela municipal de Caxhuaca', 31 Oct 1883; 'Escuela municipal de Caxhuaca', 'Escuela de niñas de Huehuetla' and 'Escuela municipal de niños', 31 May 1884; box 12, 'Examen de la escuela de niñas', Huehuetla 4 Dec 1891; box 13, Libro de Actas de 1894, 17 May 1894; box 16, 'Acta de examen...', Huehuetla 27 Nov 1893, 'Inventario...' Huehuetla 8 Jan 1896.

³⁵ ASMTz, box 50, Educación, Calderón to Tzinacapan, Cuetzalan 25 June 1895; box 55, Educación, 'Lista de útiles...', L. Becerra, Tzinacapan 2 March 1897; box 57, 'Lista ...', Tzinacapan 12 Jan 1898 and 'Exp. no.

46.', July 1898; box 75, Educación, 'Expediente de los inventarios', 29 July 1907; box 83, Presidencia, Telles to schoolmaster, Tzinacapan 4 Oct 1909. AMH, Tesorería, 'Ramo de Instrucción.', Huehuetla, 1906.

³⁶ Chávez, Isauro. "El bilingüismo en San Miguel Tzinacapan." In *Conocimiento y Acción en Tzinacapan*, edited by E. Almeida and M. E. Sánchez. Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2001. Podestá, Rossana. *Funciones de la escuela en la cultura oral nahuatlaca*. Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000: 21, 59-61.

³⁷ ASMTz, box 39, Presidencia, 'Libro de Actas 1889', entries for 4 and 25 June, 23 Aug 1889. Archivo Municipal de Cuetzalan (AMC), box 34, 'Exp. no. 20.', 20 Jan 1890 and 'Exp. no. 82.', 31 July 1890.

³⁸ ASMTz, box 40, Presidencia, 'Libro de Actas 1891', 30 June 1891. My translation.

³⁹ AMC, box 10, Presidencia, Pérez to Presidente Municipal de Cuetzalan, Tzicuilan 2 Feb 1880; box 80, IP, 'Exp. no. 31.', reports for 31 Jan, 28 Feb, 30 April 1903. ASMTz, box 68, Presidencia, Hernández to Mora, Cuetzalan 3 March 1903.

⁴⁰ Archivo Municipal de Zacapoaxtla (AMZx), box 46, IP, 'Exp. no. 18.', Tahitic, Dec 1879. My translation.

⁴¹ Eric Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990: 28-36.

⁴² Angel W. Cabrera. "La Raza Indígena." *El Eco de Zacatlán*, 1 Dec 1891 and 15 Feb 1892. Charles A. Hale. *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989: 225-234.

⁴³ "Gacetilla/Exámenes." In *El Progreso de Zacatlán* 2, no. 18, 15 Nov 1883 and Téllez, Saturnino. "Exámenes." In *El Progreso de Zacatlán* 2, no. 22, 15 Jan 1884. AMH, box 5, *Boletín Municipal de Zacatlán* 1, no. 1, "Memoria 1884." 1 Feb 1885.

⁴⁴ For Estado de Mexico: Bazant, *En busca de la modernidad*, 188-198. For Puebla: ASMTz, box 23, Educación, 'Exp. no. 143.', Zacapoaxtla, 22 Nov 1879; box 26, Educación, 'Sinopsis...', 4 May 1881 and 'Diploma honorífico', Zacapoaxtla, 4 May 1881; box 27, Educación, 'Exp. No. 113.', Cuetzalan 20 Nov 1880; box 32, Educación, 'Exp. No. 34.', 14 Nov 1883. AMC, box 28, 'Exp. no. 229.', Cuetzalan, Oct 1888.

⁴⁵ AMC, box 43, IP, 'Exp. no. 141.', Consejo de Vigilancia, Zacapoaxtla 13 Nov 1893.

⁴⁶ Bazant, *En busca de la modernidad*. Thomson with LaFrance, *Patriotism*, 22.

⁴⁷ ASMTz, box 27, Educación, 'Estado...', Zacapoaxtla 4 Sep 1882.

⁴⁸ Thomson, Guy. "Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism: The National Guard, Philharmonic Corps, and Patriotic Juntas in Mexico, 1847-1888." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22, no. 1 (1990): 31-68.

⁴⁹ Acevedo, Ariadna, "Playing the Tune of Citizenship. Indian Brass Bands in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico, 1876-1911." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, forthcoming.

⁵⁰ Vaughan, Mary K. "The construction of patriotic festival in Tecamachalco, Puebla, 1900-1946." In *Rituals of rule, rituals of resistance. Public celebrations and popular culture in Mexico*, edited by W. H. Beezley, C. E. Martin and W. E. French. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994.

⁵¹ Quoted in Vaughan, Mary K. *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997: 127. Vaughan's translation.

⁵² The 1900 census calculated literacy for the population aged 10 and above whereas the 1930 census took the population from five. To make figures comparable, the population between five and nine was excluded from the 1930 data. Census figures are only rough indicators; on its limitations see Acevedo, "Paying for Progress", 59, 101-104, 169. Secretaría de Fomento, *Censo...de 1900*. Secretaría de la Economía Nacional. *Quinto Censo de la Población 1930*.

⁵³ Secretaría de Fomento. *Censo...de 1900*. Pani, Alberto. *La instrucción rudimentaria en la República*. Mexico: Müller Hmnos, 1912: 8-11. Bravo, *La enseñanza del español*.

⁵⁴ Brading, David. "Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7 (1988): 75-89.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Paulín, Georgina. *Los indígenas bilingües de México frente a la castellanización*. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1974.

⁵⁶ "Ley de Educación Primaria para las Escuelas del Estado de 4 de febrero de 1919." *Periódico Oficial del Estado de Puebla*, 1919. For Estado de Mexico and Oaxaca see: Bazant, *En busca de la modernidad*, 215-223 and Bertely, María. "Historia social de la escolarización y uso del castellano escrito en un pueblo zapotecó migrante." Ph.D. diss., Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, 1998: ch. 1.

⁵⁷ "Educación Preparatoria de Indígenas." and "Mis primeros ensayos en la enseñanza de la geografía a niños indígenas." *Mil Novecientos Diez*, Zacatlán, 15 Oct 1929. "Por el Indio." *Mil Novecientos Diez*, Zacatlán, 15

Jan 1930. "Educación de Alumnos Indígenas." *Mil Novecientos Diez*, Zacatlán, 15 Nov 1929. "Ejercicios de Lenguaje." In *Mil Novecientos Diez*, Zacatlán, 15 Jan and 15 Feb 1930. Ramírez, Rafael. "La incorporación de los indígenas por medio del idioma castellano." In *Cómo dar a todo México un idioma. Resultado de una encuesta*, edited by R. Ramírez. Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1928.

⁵⁸ AMZx, box 47-E, IP, 'Exp. no. 21.', Zacapoaxtla Feb 1910. Barbosa, *Cómo han aprendido*, 47-69.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Vaughan, *Cultural Politics*, 127. Vaughan's translation.

⁶⁰ Rodríguez, María de los Ángeles. "Words and Onomatopoeia: Two Literacy Methods that Compete in the Education of Mexican Children Between 1899 and 1934." Paper presented at the 28th ISCHE, Umea, Sweden, August 2006.

⁶¹ De la Fuente, Julio. *Educación, antropología y desarrollo de la comunidad*. Mexico: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1977: 108-110. Heath, Shirley Brice. *La política del lenguaje en México*. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1977: 158.

⁶² Rockwell, "Learning for Life," 11.

⁶³ See the case in Barrientos, H., M. D. Cárdenas and G. González. *Con Zapata y Villa. Tres relatos testimoniales*. Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1991: 9-29.