

Voices of the Rain:
Indigenous Language Justice in California

By

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	vi
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	vii
Acronyms	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework	5
Chapter 3: Indigenous Immigrants & Language Access	9
Indigenous Immigrants in California.....	9
Mixtecos: The People of the Rain	10
Indigenous Farmworkers in California.....	12
Language Rights	14
Language Access Laws	15
Language Justice.....	18
Community Interpreting.....	20
Interpreter Certification	21
Remote Interpreting.....	22
Indigenous Language Interpreting.....	23
.....	29
Bridging the Gap.....	29
Chapter 4: Methodology	30
Project Origins.....	30
Community-Based Participatory Research	31
Positionality	34
Defining Our Roles: MICOP, the Advisory Committee, and the Graduate Researcher	35
Refining Our Focus and Gathering Data.....	37
Chapter 5: Findings	42
Theme 1: Conceptualizations of Language Justice	42
Language justice as rights.	42
Language justice as respect.	44
Language justice as resilience.	45
Theme 2: Indigenous Language Interpreting Programs in California	46
Trail Blazers: FIOB, CRLA, and CBDIO.....	48

Healthcare interpreting innovators: MICOP.	51
Mayan voices in court: Asociación Mayab.....	56
The first credential: Indigenous Interpreting+.	57
Theme 3: Celebrating Accomplishments	59
Improving language access.	60
Expanding respect, pride, and inclusion.	63
Forging pathways to success for Indigenous interpreters.	65
Theme 4: Barriers and Needs	66
No time for language classes.	67
Severe discrimination and harassment.	68
Pervasive lack of language access.	71
Legal protections are insufficient, unknown, and unenforced.	73
Lack of agency-level policies and procedures.	74
Mismatched variants and disrespectful interpreters.	75
Remote interpreting challenges.	77
Need for longer trainings.....	78
Need for assessment and evaluation.	80
Theme 5: Conceptualizing Solutions.....	83
Recommendations for Indigenous advocacy organizations.....	83
Recommendations for Indigenous interpreting programs.	85
Recommendations for agencies and employers.	93
Theme 6: Visions of the Future.....	96
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion	99
Implications for Scholarship	100
Implications for Practice.....	104
Implications for Indigenous immigrant community organizations.....	104
Implications for Indigenous interpreting programs.....	105
Implications for agencies and employers.	107
Implications for Policy.	109
Limitations	111
Looking Ahead.....	113
References.....	115
Appendices.....	133
Appendix A: Advisory Committee Members	133
Appendix B: Language Access Policy Report.....	134
Appendix C: Interpreter Certification Options in California	146
Appendix D: Interview Participants.....	148
Appendix E: Interview Questions	150
Appendix F: Focus Group Questions.....	153
Appendix G: Survey Questions	154

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Abstract

California is home to a diverse population of Indigenous immigrants from Latin America, including 165,000 Indigenous Mexican farmworkers (Mines, Nichols, & Runsten, 2010). The Mixteco people (*Ñuu Savi*, People of the Rain), originally from Southern Mexico, comprise the largest group of California's Indigenous farmworkers (Maxwell et al., 2015). Many Indigenous immigrants speak only Indigenous languages and little Spanish or English. While speaking one's ancestral tongue is integral to cultural survival, language barriers deepen systemic inequities. Farm labor researchers have documented that Indigenous farmworkers are routinely denied access to interpreters and face pervasive discrimination (Holmes, 2013; Mines, et al., 2010). Public health scholars argue that language barriers adversely impact health, yet language access protections are widely unknown and unenforced (Chen, Youdelman, & Brooks, 2007). Situated in this body of work, this thesis examines Indigenous language justice in California.

This is a community-based participatory research project led by the Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project in collaboration with Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, California Rural Legal Assistance, and Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales. The study's purpose is to inform the Indigenous interpreting field and identify strategies to promote equity for Indigenous language speakers. I draw on qualitative data from interviews with subject matter experts, focus groups with Indigenous immigrants, policy analysis, and surveys of service providers to explore the following research questions: 1) What is the state of Indigenous language interpreting in California? 2) How can Indigenous immigrant communities overcome barriers to language justice? The findings document exciting progress, as well as persistent challenges including discrimination and language barriers in labor, education, and healthcare settings. I conclude with recommendations for policy, practice, and scholarship.

List of Tables

Table 1. Collaborating Organizations.....	35
Table 2. Current Indigenous Interpreter Training Programs in California.....	47

List of Figures

Figure 1: Mixteco Interpreter in Oxnard and Strawberry Farmworker in Nipomo.....	4
Figure 2: Children of Indigenous Farmworkers on Strike.....	4
Figure 3: The Mexican State of Oaxaca	9
Figure 4: Indigenous Communities of Oaxaca	9
Figure 5: Ndusu tu'un savi: Mixteco Alphabet.....	29
Figure 6: Just Communities Language Justice Network Retreat in 2014	30
Figure 7: Advisory Committee Meeting in Oxnard in 2018	36
Figure 8: Indigenous Language Justice in California Timeline	46
Figure 9: Interpreter Training for Mayan Language Speakers in 1997.....	49
Figure 10: MICOP Interpreter Training Graduates.....	54
Figure 11: Mixteco Interpreting at Las Islas Clinic in Oxnard	60
Figure 12: Survey Responses: Knowledge of Language Access Laws.....	73
Figure 13: Survey Responses: Agency Policies	74
Figure 14: MICOP Representatives Rith a Radio Indígena Banner	83
Figure 15: Dancers and Musicians in Santa Maria at a FIOB Event.....	98
Figure 16: A Mixteco-speaking student	98

Acronyms

CBDIO	Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño / Binational Center for the Development of Oaxacan Indigenous Communities
CBPR	Community-Based Participatory Research
CCHI	Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters
CDI	Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Communities
CHIA	California Healthcare Interpreting Association
CoreCHI	Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter
CRLA	California Rural Legal Assistance
FIOB	Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales / Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations
ILLA	Indigenous Languages of Latin America
INALI	Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas / National Indigenous Languages Institute
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LEP	Limited English Proficient
LLD	Languages of Lesser Diffusion
MICOP	Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project
NBCMI	National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters
SFSU	San Francisco State University
UCSB	University of California, Santa Barbara

Chapter 1: Introduction

As Indigenous people, discrimination is what we most have to deal with. Our work and everything we have done has been devalued just because we don't speak a common language, that is, Spanish and English... the challenge I faced day in and day out was feeling devalued because I couldn't defend myself in Spanish... I was denied service at the hospital. They refused to serve me when I went to ask for help from any government agency. They refused to help me because of the simple fact that I didn't speak Spanish.

-Celso Guevara, Mixteco Farmworker and Community Leader

Nà xikà kwàchi inùún tu'un di'i kuyó = Those that demand justice for our language. This would be the most accurate way to express what we mean by "language justice."

-Griselda Reyes Basurto, Mixteco Interpreter and Translator

California is home to a diverse population of Indigenous¹ immigrants from Latin America, including 165,000 Indigenous Mexican farmworkers (Mines, Nichols, & Runsten, 2010). The Mixteco people (*N̄uu Savi*, People of the Rain),² originally from the Southern Mexican states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Puebla, comprise the largest group of California's Indigenous farmworkers, with 20,000 Mixtecos living in the Oxnard area, a coastal region north of Los Angeles known for strawberry cultivation (Maxwell et al., 2015). Many Indigenous immigrants from Latin America speak only Indigenous languages and little Spanish or English. While speaking one's ancestral tongue is integral to community cohesion and cultural survival, language barriers deepen the systemic inequities facing Indigenous immigrants. Speakers of Indigenous languages of Latin America (ILLA) are routinely denied access to trained

¹ According to the United Nations (2004), "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them" (p. 2). In this paper, I use "Indigenous" specifically to refer to Indigenous peoples of Latin America.

² In addition to *N̄uu Savi*, Mixteco people refer to themselves in other variants of the language as *N̄uu Davi*, *N̄uu Sau*, *N̄uu Dau*, *N̄uu Javi*, *N̄uu Djavi*, *N̄uu Dawi*, and *N̄uu Lavi* (Julián Caballero, 2006: 77). They are known as *Mixtecs* in English, which is derived from the Spanish name *Mixteco*, in turn a derivation of the Náhuatl word for the Mixteco homeland, *Mixtlan* (De Vriese, 2006: 221). I use the term Mixteco in order to be consistent with how my community partner, the Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), refers to their community.

interpreters³ and face pervasive discrimination (Holmes, 2013; Mines et al., 2010). For Mixteco speakers, language access is further complicated by the high number of distinct Mixteco variants (Campbell, 2017). Today, Indigenous immigrant advocates and interpreting organizations are grappling with how to bridge the language barriers that imperil the wellbeing of ILLA speakers.

To my knowledge, this is the first study to focus on Indigenous interpreting and language justice in the U.S. and this thesis will illustrate why these issues matter to Indigenous immigrant communities. Using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, I conducted the study in collaboration with four leading Indigenous immigrant organizations in California. The lead organization is the Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) in Oxnard, which initiated the project, and the Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO) in Fresno, the California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) Indigenous Program in Arvin, and Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB) in Los Angeles serve as advisers. The study's purpose is to inform the rapidly professionalizing field of Indigenous interpreting and identify strategies to promote inclusion and equity for Indigenous language speakers. I draw on qualitative data from interviews with subject matter experts, focus groups with speakers of Indigenous Mexican languages, policy analysis, and surveys of service providers to explore the following research questions: 1) What is the state of Indigenous language interpreting in California? 2) How can Indigenous immigrant communities overcome barriers to language justice? These questions matter because language is a crucial factor determining how Indigenous immigrants participate in institutions that impact their lives.

³ Interpreters relay messages from one language into another using spoken or sign language, while translators convert written text from one language into another. This thesis will focus on oral interpreting because Mixteco and many other Indigenous languages of Latin America are primarily oral and not written languages. For people who do not read and write their languages, written translation is not a useful method for providing language access.

Our inquiries are aligned with a rich literature about Indigenous migration (Kearney, 2000; Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2005; Velasco, 2005; Stephen, 2007); critical scholarship about the Indigenous Latin American diaspora (Blackwell, Boj López, & Urrieta, 2017); the recent focus in Interpreting Studies on community interpreting (Pöchhacker, 2016; Bancroft, 2015); and leading-edge studies about Indigenous language interpreting (Kleinert, 2016). While prior research has demonstrated that language barriers impact Indigenous immigrants in the U.S., there is no research about interpreting for Indigenous immigrants in the U.S. or strategies to promote language justice. This study bridges these gaps in the literature and provides recommendations to support the work of interpreter trainers, community organizers, and policy advocates.

In this thesis, I argue that language justice is a vital strand of the struggle for the human rights of Indigenous immigrant communities. With a focus on Mixteco speakers, I document how Indigenous immigrants grapple with severe language-based discrimination and persistent barriers to language access, while identifying exciting progress in areas like Indigenous interpreter training and improved language access in some regions. I present recommendations to promote Indigenous language justice, including creating radio campaigns about language rights; developing robust interpreter training programs that address linguistic proficiency; and improving the organizational policies of service providers and employers so that Indigenous language speakers have access to trained interpreters who share their linguistic variant.

This thesis is presented in six chapters. Following this introduction, in Chapter 2, I articulate the theoretical framework guiding the study. In Chapter 3, I use a review of the literature to introduce Indigenous immigrant communities and language access concerns. In Chapter 4, I present our CBPR methodology and how data were collected and analyzed. In Chapter 5, I present our findings, including documenting the growth of Indigenous language

justice efforts in California since the 1990s, pointing out what’s going well today, and describing persistent challenges, from anti-Indigenous harassment in agricultural workplaces to debates about how to evaluate the qualifications of ILLA interpreters. In Chapter 6, I present a series of recommendations and discuss the implications, limitations, and conclusions of the study.



Figure 1: Left: Mixteco interpreter Sabina Cruz communicates with a patient at Las Islas Clinic in Oxnard, CA. Right: Salomon Sarita Sanchez works in a crew of Mixteco strawberry pickers in Nipomo, CA. Photos by David Bacon.



Figure 2: Children of Indigenous farmworkers on strike. The sign reads “Justicia Para Todos,” which translates to “Justice for Everyone.” Photo by David Bacon.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a transdisciplinary theoretical framework that brings together three conceptual models: Critical Latinx⁴ Indigeneities, language rights, and community cultural wealth. Blackwell, Boj López, and Urrieta (2017) define Critical Latinx Indigeneities as an interdisciplinary approach at the intersection of Native American Studies, Latinx studies, and Latin American studies that uses critical theory to examine the experiences of Latin American Indigenous peoples with a focus on migration and diaspora. Scholars of Critical Latinx Indigeneities analyze anti-Indigenous attitudes among mestizos⁵ and how Indigenous immigrants navigate the hybrid hegemonies formed by overlapping Latin American and U.S. systems of racial and colonial dominance (Blackwell et al., 2017: 128). This framework rejects the conceptualization of the U.S. as a “nation of immigrants,” which Native scholars like Deloria (1999) argue erases the legacy and ongoing presence of North American Indigenous peoples. Instead, Critical Latinx Indigeneities acknowledges that when Indigenous migrants arrive in the U.S., they settle in the colonized homelands of other Native peoples, prompting new tensions as well as opportunities for alliances between Indigenous groups (Blackwell et al., 2017).

Critical Latinx Indigeneities is an ideal framework for this study because it prioritizes research about how Indigenous Latinxs in the U.S. resist layered oppressions, negotiate overlapping identities, and create new solidarities. This approach facilitates a hemispheric

⁴ The term Latinx, used instead of Latino or Latino/a, responds to calls from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ); genderqueer; and non-binary activists and scholars to challenge the gender binaries reinforced by conventions of the Spanish language. Blackwell et al. (2017) assert that the use of the term Latinx can also “signal the colonial nature of the imposition of gender binaries and opens up the possibility for recognizing the diversity of Indigenous sex gender systems in the Americas, many of which included more than two genders” (p. 129).

⁵ In Latin America, *mestizo* refers to a person of mixed Spanish, Indigenous, and/or African ancestry. The concept is rooted in the hierarchical ideology of *mestizaje* that values European characteristics (e.g. lighter skin and speaking Spanish) while denigrating characteristics associated with indigeneity and Blackness (e.g. darker skin and speaking Indigenous languages). According to Urrieta (2012), “Mestizos are often the perpetrators in the continued economic marginalization, racism, and social/cultural erasure of indigenous people” (p. 323).

analysis that embraces the complexity of the multiple racial structures and colonial forces at play in the countries of origin and destination of Indigenous immigrants (Castellanos et al., 2012). Other approaches generally take up separate strands of the experiences of Indigenous immigrants, such as political economic frameworks that position them as peasants expelled from their homeland by neoliberalism or farmworkers exploited by capitalist agriculture. Critical Latinx Indigeneities provides an intersectional lens with which to account for the complexity of Indigenous immigrants' multifaceted experiences as distinct Indigenous peoples, Latinx immigrants, farmworkers, and agents of social change. This approach emphasizes resistance, recognizing the ways that Indigenous communities promote cultural cohesion by organizing around issues of epistemology, youth cultural practice, and language (Urrieta, 2016).

Critical Latinx Indigeneities acknowledges that language is a critical element of Indigenous self-preservation and survival. Language is a thorny issue for Indigenous people of Latin American living in diaspora. Urrieta (2012) asks, "Which language should Latinas/os in the United States fight to maintain?" (p. 331), pointing out that while many Latinx people fight to retain Spanish, this was the language of conquest, colonization, and oppression of Indigenous peoples. Others call to revitalize Náhuatl, the Mexica language, yet the Mexica empire subjugated other Indigenous peoples, including Mixtecos (Forbes, 1973). Such questions about the languages, identities, and survival of Indigenous immigrants are at the heart of this thesis.

To explore these complex issues, I bring Critical Latinx Indigeneities into conversation with sociolinguistic theories of language rights, which are concerned with protections for non-dominant language speakers and the promotion of linguistic diversity (May, 2013). Language rights scholars address issues of linguicism, which Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) defines as "Ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an

unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language (on the basis of their mother tongues)” (p. 13). Because of linguisticism, non-dominant language speakers often struggle to make their voices heard in local decision-making, are prevented from fully participating in public schools, and are frequently barred from receiving life-sustaining healthcare and legal services. Linguicism frequently works in concert with racism and xenophobia by deepening the inequities faced immigrants of color (Alim, 2016). For example, Wiley and Lukes (1996) point to the long history in the U.S. of using discriminatory English language and literacy requirements to bar people of color from immigrating, voting, and accessing employment. Furthermore, linguisticism intersects with ableism in the barriers faced by Deaf people in a society that privileges spoken over signed languages.

Communities targeted by linguisticism, known as linguistically marginalized groups or non-dominant language speakers, assert an array of language rights that include the right to maintain their languages, access public services in their languages or through interpreters, and to be free from linguistic discrimination. Chen (1998) provides this broad definition of language rights:

Language rights are the rights of individuals and collective linguistic groups to non-interference by the State, or to assistance by the State, in the use of their own language, in perpetuating the use of the language and ensuring its future survival, in receiving information and State-provided services in their own language, and in ensuring that their exercises of other lawful rights (e.g. the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, the right to receive education, the right to employment), will not be handicapped or subject to discrimination for linguistic reasons (p. 49).

Chen’s (1998) definition casts a broad net, but scholars have argued that some language rights are so important that they constitute fundamental human rights. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson spearheaded the concept of linguistic human rights to refer to rights that must be protected to prevent linguistic genocide, promote integration, defend against forced assimilation, and promote the self-determination of linguistic minorities (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995; Skutnabb-

Kangas, 2006). For example, many scholars consider the right to mother tongue-based multilingual education to be a linguistic human right (Skutnabb-Kangas, Nicholas, & Reyhner, 2017). In this thesis, I use a language rights lens to analyze the language-related demands of Indigenous Latin American immigrants in California.

I also employ Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth by including a focus on the strengths of Indigenous immigrant communities, thereby rejecting the idea that marginalized communities are "broken" and in need of being "fixed" by outside groups. Community cultural wealth stands in opposition to deficit models that assume that communities of color have "cultural deficiencies" that inhibit their ability to succeed in mainstream society (Yosso, 2005: 70). Yosso (2005) argues that the cultures of communities of color nurture members by providing "capital" in the form of specialized knowledge, abilities, and relationships. For this project, I am especially mindful of Yosso's (2005) concepts of resistant capital and linguistic capital. Resistant capital refers to the resources that communities develop over a long history of fighting back against injustice and persevering in the face of adversity. Linguistic capital refers to the intellectual and social abilities tied to communicating within and across multiple languages and linguistic variants. This asset-based approach is buttressed by Chilisa (2011), who advocates for combining problem-focused research with a focus on community strengths, and Flores (2017), who describes searching for themes of agency, resilience, and resistance in qualitative data. To apply this framework, I begin with the premise that Indigenous immigrant communities are sites of strength and look for findings that elucidate what is working well in addition to challenges that must be overcome.

Chapter 3: Indigenous Immigrants & Language Access

In this chapter, I provide context for the study by presenting background information about Indigenous Latin American immigrants in California, with a focus on Mixteco communities. I then introduce key issues related to language rights, language access laws, language justice, community interpreting, and remote interpreting. Lastly, I present a review of the literature related to Indigenous interpreting and language justice concerns.

Indigenous Immigrants in California

In recent decades, Indigenous immigrants have become part of the fabric of communities across California. The total number of Indigenous immigrants from Latin America is unknown because Indigenous Latinxs are misidentified and undercounted on official surveys (Mercado, 2015), but data are available about specific populations. For example, the government of the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca estimates that over 400,000 Indigenous Oaxacans live in California (Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca, 2012). In *California's Indigenous Farmworkers*, Mines et al. (2010) estimate that 165,000 Indigenous Mexican farmworkers live in rural California and, of these, 80 percent have roots in Oaxaca. While Oaxaca is home to tremendous linguistic diversity, Mines et al. (2010) found that a large majority of Indigenous farmworkers in California speak Mixteco, Zapoteco, or Triqui, with Mixteco being the most widely spoken.



Figure 3: The Mexican State of Oaxaca (TUBS, 2011)

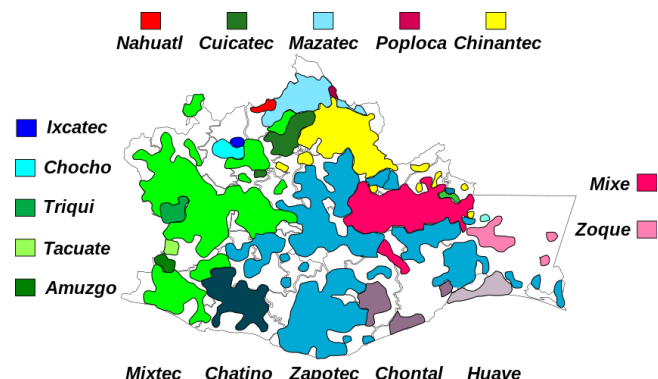


Figure 4: Indigenous Communities of Oaxaca (El bart 089, 2010)

Mixtecos: The People of the Rain

The Mixteco people, or *Ñuu Savi* [People of the Rain], are one of over 60 Indigenous peoples of Mexico. Today, 25.7 million Mexicans identify as Indigenous, or 21.5 percent of the total population and 7.3 million people speak one of the 364 linguistic variants of Mexico's 68 Indigenous languages (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, CDI, 2017; Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas, INALI, 2009). The ancestral homeland of the *Ñuu Savi* people, known as *la Mixteca* [Country of the Clouds], encompasses the Western half of Oaxaca and parts of neighboring states Puebla and Guerrero (Julián Caballero, 2006). Mixtecos are the third largest Indigenous group in Mexico and the second largest in Oaxaca, outnumbered only by the Zapoteco communities of Oaxaca's Central Valley. Today, 500,000 people speak Mixteco, known as *tu'un savi*, or "voices of the rain," a complex tonal language from the Otomanguean family with 81 distinct variants (Cota-Cabrera, Hildreth, Rodríguez, & Canseco Zárate, 2009; Julián Caballero, 2009: 32; INALI, 2009).

Like other Indigenous communities in Mexico, Mixtecos have defended their languages and lifeways during five centuries of colonialism. *Ñuu Savi* scholar Julián Caballero (2006) discusses his people's resilience, saying that "all possible means have been tried to extinguish any trace of the past because it is considered an obstacle to the development of the country," yet despite policies of extermination, "our languages, our histories and cultures, are still alive" (p. 79). Despite the remarkable persistence of Indigenous languages, Indigenous language speakers still face a pervasive ideology that denigrates Indigenous languages and equates Spanish with national identity (Bishop and Kelley, 2013). The dominant discourse of *mestizaje*, which purports to celebrate Mexico's Indigenous past, in fact perpetuates anti-Indigenous bias and contributes to the erasure of contemporary Indigenous communities, with Urrieta (2012)

explaining that “Mexican lip service to mestizaje... overlooks pervasively racist attitudes that continue to predominate” (p. 324). In response to oppression, Indigenous communities have engaged in sustained resistance. A salient victory is the approval of 2003 Mexican legislation called the General Law on Linguistic Rights of Indigenous People that recognizes Indigenous languages as national languages and promotes their conservation and development, including mandating their use in schools and public services (Gorbold, 2009; Hidalgo, 2006).

Mixtecos have increasingly been forced to leave their homeland in order to survive. First, neoliberal economic policies, especially the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, resulted in cheap, subsidized U.S. corn imports underselling local, family-grown corn (Holmes, 2013). Concurrently, Mexico ended investment in small farmers in the 1990s, leaving Mixteco cultivators with little access to the infrastructure, credit, and technology needed to compete in the liberalized market (Erickson, Menéndez, & Nichols, 2009). Second, ecological problems in *La Mixteca* resulted in cropland so degraded that farmers cannot produce enough food to sustain the population (Mines et al., 2010). *La Mixteca* has been designated an “ecological disaster zone” by the World Bank due to severe soil erosion caused by colonial deforestation and overgrazing practices that replaced the sustainable practices of pre-colonial societies, as well as 1960s Green Revolution technologies (Guerrero-Arenas, Jiménez-Hidalgo, & Santiago-Romero, 2010; Penniman, 2015). The third element foreclosing options for survival in *La Mixteca* is political repression. Mixteco leader Leoncio Vásquez explains that the Mexican government’s repressive actions toward Indigenous communities “closes off our ability to call for any change” and consequently people eventually opt for migration when it becomes unfeasible to take political action to improve local conditions (Bacon, 2013: 63). These compounding economic, ecological, and political problems have resulted in massive out-migration from *La Mixteca*.

Indigenous Farmworkers in California

Mixtecos initially migrated within Mexico looking for agricultural work, but now comprise a significant segment of California farmworkers. In the 1970s, Mixtecos began to migrate across the northern border as they were recruited for U.S. farm labor (López & Runsten, 2004). Indigenous migration into California rose sharply in the late 1990s (Mines et al., 2010), as migrants became increasingly willing to risk violence, arrest, and death to cross the U.S.-Mexico border to seek farm work as a means of survival for themselves and their families (Holmes, 2013). Today, one in three California farmworkers has roots in Indigenous Mexican communities and about half of California's Indigenous farmworkers speak Mixteco (Mines et al., 2010).

Though farmworkers help sustain California's profitable agricultural sector, Indigenous farmworkers are not included in this prosperity. Ninety percent of Indigenous Mexican immigrants live in poverty (Pérez, Vásquez, & Buriel, 2016). Indigenous farmworkers occupy "the bottom rung of the farm labor market" where they are crowded into arduous tasks such as picking raisin grapes and strawberries (Mines et al., 2010: 2). Holmes (2013) describes how agricultural labor hierarchies locate Indigenous migrants at the bottom, where they are considered less "civilized" and subject to harsher conditions than mestizo Mexicans (p. 84). Indigenous farmworkers are the lowest paid California farmworkers, making an average of \$13,750 annually as compared to \$22,500 for non-Indigenous farmworkers, and report housing discrimination, living in crowded trailers and apartments, and sleeping in cars and fields during harvests (Bacon, 2013). Thus, while Indigenous Mexican migrants came to California seeking a better life, these interlocking disadvantages truncate their opportunities to survive and thrive.

Scholars attribute these stark inequities to the racism that Indigenous immigrants face from both native-born U.S. residents and mestizo Mexican immigrants (López & Runsten, 2004).

According to Pérez et al. (2016), “the racial hierarchy that permeates Mexico and allocates Indigenous people to the lowest levels of the racial stratification system is reproduced within the communities of Mexican immigrants in the United States, and is further overlaid with U.S.-based racial categories” (p. 258). Thus, the mistreatment of Indigenous farmworkers has roots in centuries of systemic discrimination in Mexico that continues today on U.S. soil.

In response to these inequities, Indigenous Mexican immigrants have organized to defend their communities. Fox and Rivera-Salgado (2005) explain that “indigenous Mexicans bring with them a wide range of experiences with collective action for community development, social justice, and political democratization” (p. 103). Mixtecos have allied with other Indigenous immigrants, especially Zapotecos, to establish transnational civic and political organizations on both sides of the border, including FIOB and CBDIO (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2005).

MICOP continues this tradition of community organizing in Ventura County, California, which has a population of about 20,000 Mixtecos (MICOP, 2015). Founded in 2001, MICOP exemplifies the capacity of Indigenous organizers to respond to urgent community needs while advocating for systemic change. The nonprofit empowers the community through health promotion, literacy classes, leadership training, cultural events, and language services (MICOP, 2015). They advocate for policy change, including winning local victories like the approval of a Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program in 2017 (Wilson, 2017) and sending teams to the state capitol in Sacramento to advocate for pro-immigrant legislation such as the 2017 California Values Act. MICOP has a history of partnering with scholars to produce research benefiting their constituents, such as collaborations with public health scholars at the University of California, Los Angeles to study women’s health (Maxwell et al., 2015) and working with linguists at the

University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) to document Mixteco variants spoken in Ventura County (E. Campbell, personal communication, September 19, 2017).

Language Rights

Indigenous immigrants are part of a large population of non-dominant language speakers in the U.S., which includes people who use any language other than English. In spite of persistent English-only rhetoric that regards speaking English as essential to being “American” (Wiley & Lukes, 1996), linguistic diversity is a national norm. Non-English languages used in the U.S. include at least 169 Native American languages that are still spoken today (Siebens & Julian, 2011), American Sign Language, and the languages of the country’s 47 million immigrants and their descendants (Connor & López, 2016). Today, 63 million people in the U.S. speak a non-English language, and 25 million people are not proficient in English, representing eight percent of the U.S. population (Batalova & Zong, 2015). In California, the American Community Survey reports that 15.9 million people speak a language other than English at home, representing 44 percent of the state population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Of this group, 42 percent, or 6.7 million people, speak English “less than very well.” Among Californians with limited English, 3.4 million speak Spanish, 315,000 speak other Indo-European languages, 1.2 million speak Asian and Pacific Island languages, and 88,000 speak “other languages,” which include Latin American Indigenous languages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

People who use languages other than English bring rich linguistic and cultural resources to their communities, yet face deep inequities associated with linguisticism. People who are not fully proficient in English are twice as likely to experience poverty and only half as likely to finish high school than proficient English speakers (Batalova & Zong, 2015). Ding and Hargraves (2009) found that immigrants who face a language barrier are more likely to report

poor health than U.S. citizens and English-proficient immigrants, arguing that the combination of language barriers with immigration-related stress is harmful to health. In response to these problems, communities targeted by linguisticism have a long history of demanding respect for their language rights, including the rights to maintain their languages and to be free from language-based discrimination (Chen, 1998).

The right to language access is one dimension of language rights. Language access involves the use of interpreting, which refers to the transmission of a message from one language into another using spoken or sign language, and translation, which refers to the conversion of written text from one language into another. The purpose of language access is to enable cross-language communication and to provide non-dominant language speakers with opportunities to fully participate in events and have meaningful access to services. With a focus on public services, Bancroft (2015) defines language access as “The use of language services or language assistance to enable or help an individual who does not speak, read, write or understand the language of service to obtain meaningful access to that service” (p. 219). In the U.S., language access is regulated by laws that obligate the provision of interpreting and translation to enable non-dominant language speakers to have meaningful access to community services and public institutions, such as healthcare, social services, schools, and courts (Bancroft, 2015).

Language Access Laws

In the U.S., federal civil rights law is considered the strongest standard for language access. Chen et al. (2007) explain that, “the 1964 Civil Rights Act continues to be the single most important piece of legislation for providing LEP [Limited English Proficient⁶] individuals

⁶ Skutnabb-Kangas (2006) and others argue that terms like Limited English Proficient (LEP) regard speaking a non-dominant language as a deficit, rather than a resource. For this reason, I tend to use the term only in the context of government policy where it is the official term for people who are not fully proficient in English. Elsewhere, I use

a legal right to language assistance services” (p. 362). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on national origin in federally funded programs (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). In 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that conduct with a disparate impact on LEP people constitutes national origin discrimination (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In 2000, Executive Order 13166 clarified Title VI’s mandate by requiring federally funded agencies to develop language access plans to ensure that LEP people have meaningful access to publicly-funded services like courts and schools (LEP.gov, n.d.).

Most U.S. states have enacted their own language access laws. California law prohibits national origin discrimination in programs that receive state funding, functioning in parallel to federal Title VI protections (California Legislative Information, 2016b). The Dymally Alatorre Act requires state-funded agencies who serve a substantial number of LEP people, defined as five percent or more of the population served, to have enough bilingual staff or interpreters to provide equivalent services to LEP people and English speakers (California Department of Health Care Services, 2010). This includes Medi-Cal, and state law explicitly requires Medi-Cal to provide and reimburse for interpreting services (California Legislative Information, 2013). Similarly, SB 853 requires that health insurers provide language access and that interpreters be trained in accordance with California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA) standards (California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, 2017). California law also guarantees access to interpreters in courts (Judicial Council of California, 2014). In schools, state law requires translation of documents for LEP parents when at least 15 percent of families use a particular language (California Legislative Information, 2006), and requires that language not be a barrier

descriptors such as non-dominant language speakers and linguistically marginalized communities in order to emphasize the structural imbalance of power that puts people in the U.S. who have limited fluency in English at a disadvantage, thereby rejecting the idea that speaking a non-English language is itself a problem.

to the exercise of parents' rights to be involved in their children's education (California Legislative Information, 2004).

At the local level, three California cities have established language access ordinances: Oakland, San Francisco, and Monterey Park. Community advocacy helped pass Oakland and San Francisco's ordinances, which went into effect in 2001 and are modeled on California's Dymally Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (Jung, Gallardo, & Harris, 2013). San Francisco's ordinance requires vital documents and city information to be available in languages shared by at least 10,000 LEP people (Sykes and Hsieh, 2018). Oakland's ordinance also sets the threshold at 10,000 LEP city residents who share a language, requires translation of specific documents, and requires interpreting at public meetings if requested 48 hours in advance (Jung et al., 2013). Both laws require the creation of language access plans by city departments and establish mechanisms for residents to file complaints (Jung et al., 2013). Monterey Park's Multilingual City Services policy differs in that it is not based on federal or state law. This policy includes a volunteer interpreting and translation program, multilingual signage, and the use of language identification cards to help people tell service providers which language they speak (Jung et al., 2013).

In practice, the impact of these laws is limited. Service providers are often unaware of legal obligations, have not made language access a priority, or have not been held accountable due to lack of enforcement (Chen et al., 2007). Consequently, people who are not fully proficient in English are frequently denied access to interpreters altogether. For example, Flores (2006) found that interpreters were not used in 46 percent of emergency room visits involving LEP patients. In other cases, language access is compromised by the use of ad hoc interpreters.

Despite laws that obligate the use of "qualified" interpreters, the use of ad hoc interpreters is pervasive. Children and adults with any degree of bilingualism who provide

interpreting without having received formal training are referred to in the literature as ad hoc, informal, natural, and practical interpreters (Malakoff and Hakuta, 1991; Kleinert, 2016). According to Bancroft (2002), ad hoc interpreters are “untrained, unqualified individuals who may be family, friends, untrained bilingual staff, volunteers, community advocates or anyone who claims to speak two languages” (p. 220). In healthcare settings, Flores (2005) and Timmons (2002) present findings that ad hoc interpreters often misinterpret or omit physicians’ questions, commit errors with clinical consequences, do not mention medication side effects, and ignore embarrassing information. These problems have led to efforts to improve language access.

Language Justice

While linguistically marginalized communities have a long history of defending their language rights, a distinct language justice approach has emerged in the U.S. during the last two decades. The U.S. language justice movement was catalyzed by social movement organizers in the Southeast responding to the influx of Spanish-speaking Latinx immigrants to the region. For example, the immigrant population increased by 274 percent in North Carolina between 1990 and 2000 and 109 percent in Tennessee between 2000 and 2015 (Batalova & Zong, 2017). Some organizers recognized that addressing language was a key part of integrating new immigrants into social movements. Early efforts in this area are documented in Alice Johnson’s 2002 report, *Interpretation and Translation: Power Tools for Sharing Power in Grassroots Leadership Development*, about how interpreting and translation were used to strengthen Latinx empowerment and cross-race community work in Durham, North Carolina.

The Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee, a historic Southern labor and civil rights organization known for its popular education approach, launched the first known program in the U.S. to address language barriers within social movements. In 2003,

Johnson initiated Highlander’s Multilingual Capacity Building Program and, in 2005, Roberto Tijerina, an American Sign Language and Spanish interpreter, stepped in to coordinate the program until 2009 (R. Tijerina, personal communication, June 7, 2018). According to Tijerina, “The program provided interpreting and technical assistance to organizations and campaigns in the South (e.g. union drives and immigrant rights work), but perhaps even more impactfully, it fomented a language-focused analysis and practice that pushed beyond a service model to an understanding that language is inextricably linked to self-determination” (R. Tijerina, personal communication, June 7, 2018). Building on these efforts, in 2009 Tijerina published the groundbreaking curriculum, *Interpreting for Social Justice*, which uses popular education to help multilingual activists develop interpreting skills while teaching them that bridging languages is a critical part of cultivating broad-based, multiracial social movements.

Tijerina and collaborators crisscrossed the nation facilitating *Interpreting for Social Justice* workshops, seeding new efforts inspired by the Highlander language justice approach. Language justice collectives, cooperatives, and nonprofit programs have sprung up across the country, striving to make change by interpreting in social movement spaces, advocating for improved language policy, and teaching grassroots groups, nonprofits, schools, labor unions, and others how to use interpreting and translation to help linguistically diverse groups work together. A partial list of organizations that explicitly use a language justice approach includes the Antena Language Justice Collective in Los Angeles, California and Houston, Texas; the Boston Interpreters Collective; Caracol Language Cooperative in New York City; the Center for Participatory Change and Cenzontle Language Justice Cooperative in Asheville, North Carolina; Just Communities on the California Central Coast; Many Languages, One Voice in Washington D.C.; tilde Language Justice Cooperative in the North Carolina Triangle Region;

and Wayside Center in Virginia. While these organizations primarily focus on the linguistic inclusion of Spanish speakers, MICOP, FIOB, CBDIO, CRLA, and other Indigenous immigrant organizations have developed distinct Indigenous approaches to language justice that will be explored in the findings.

Community Interpreting

In recent decades, advocates for linguistically marginalized communities have expanded the availability of community interpreting, which addresses the need for meaningful language access in sectors such as healthcare, courts, social services, public schools, and nonprofit organizations. Until the field began to professionalize in the 1970s, almost all community interpreting was performed by ad hoc interpreters (Pöchhacker, 2016). Today, community interpreting has a growing number of professional associations and is the subject of an expanding body of research (Bancroft, 2015). Bancroft (2015) explains that community interpreting is rooted in social justice, saying that although access to community services is a human right, “adequate access to those services is fundamentally impractical or impossible without professional interpreters” (Bancroft, 2015: 217). Thus, efforts to train community interpreters are often rooted in a commitment to the human rights of non-dominant language speakers.

In the past, being bilingual was considered the only prerequisite to be an interpreter, but the professionalization of community interpreting has meant recognizing that interpreters need a distinct set of knowledge and skills which require specialized training (Pöchhacker, 2016). Research demonstrates that while bilingualism is a crucial starting point, interpreters must learn specialized skills in areas like working memory, and knowledge of interpreter ethics (Pöchhacker, 2016). Current guidelines about the minimum professional standards for

community interpreters include passing a linguistic proficiency assessment, completing professional training, and undergoing an evaluation of interpreting skills (Bancroft, 2015).

The training available to help aspiring interpreters meet these standards varies widely. Academic degrees in interpreting usually focus on conference interpreting, a field which was professionalized a half century before community interpreting and which carries more prestige (Pöchhacker, 2016). Consequently, there are few academic degrees in community interpreting and training is more often available through university extension programs, community colleges, non-profit agencies, and private companies. Bancroft (2015) argues that best practices for community interpreter trainings include: 1) combining skills training with training about ethics, roles, and protocol; 2) substantial “language-specific, skills-based practice” with supervision or mentorship; 3) requiring language proficiency assessment through a “validated, recognized test as a prerequisite;” and 4) using “standardized skills-based exit or credentialing exams” (p. 229). The use of standardized exams to evaluate interpreting skills is discussed below.

Interpreter Certification

Certification is a relatively recent, yet popular, way to assess if interpreters are qualified for the role. Mikkelsen (2013) defines certification as a process whereby an independent body verifies “mastery of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to practice the profession” (p. 67). Interpreter certification can be administered by the state or professional bodies and may use oral or written exams, training or work experience, or peer evaluation as assessment measures (Pöchhacker, 2016). In the U.S., certification is available only for medical and court interpreters.

Two national bodies certify healthcare interpreters, the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) and the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI). Both require a minimum of 40 hours of healthcare interpreter training to take their

exams. They offer language-specific exams in only a handful of widely-used languages, so these certifications are not available to interpreters of languages of lesser diffusion (LLD) which are spoken by relatively small numbers of people (Mikkelsen 1999b). To meet the needs of LLD interpreters, CCHI offers a written exam in English called Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter (CoreCHI) that covers professional standards and ethics (CCHI, 2017).

The Judicial Council of California governs the credentialing of the state's court interpreters. Court interpreters can become certified in the 15 languages that are most frequently used in California courts. Interpreters of languages not among the top 15 can become "Registered Court Interpreters" by passing a written exam in English (Judicial Council of California, 2017). When a certified or registered court interpreter cannot be located, which is frequent in cases involving LLDs, courts may use "provisionally qualified" or "temporary" interpreters, for which there are few requirements (Judicial Council of California, 2018). As a consequence, LLD speakers are routinely assigned ad hoc interpreters even in legal settings.

Remote Interpreting

Remote interpreting is a key issue impacting community interpreting today. Though highly controversial, interpreters increasingly provide language assistance via telephone or video link rather than in-person. Remote interpreting is considered an efficient way to address the need for qualified interpreters because large companies can provide interpreters in a wide range of languages on short notice without incurring the costs associated with having interpreters travel to assignments in-person (Braun, 2015). However, according to Braun (2015), "To date there is no consensus about the quality of interpreting that can be achieved in remote and teleconference interpreting compared to the quality of traditional interpreting" (p. 13). Research shows that interpreters working remotely report higher stress and become fatigued more quickly, resulting

in a decline in performance (Braun, 2013; Moser-Mercer, 2003). Research also show that video interpreting causes more interaction problems than in-person interpreting, such as overlapping speech that results in lost information (Braun & Taylor, 2012), and creates more fragmentation in communication (Braun and Taylor, forthcoming, as cited in Braun, n.d.). When remote interpreting is used, Braun (2015) recommends using high-quality telephone/video equipment and telephonic/internet connections, developing specialized training for interpreters and users, and limiting the length of remote assignments (Braun, 2015).

Indigenous Language Interpreting

The issues of language rights, language justice, and community interpreting described above play a critical role in the lives of Indigenous immigrants in California. For Mixtecos and other Indigenous peoples of Latin America, speaking Indigenous languages and passing them on to their children is a critical part of survivance⁷ as distinct Indigenous groups with rich cultures and traditions. Nevertheless, Indigenous immigrants confront deep linguistic inequities.

The existing literature is replete with examples of language problems facing Indigenous immigrants who speak limited Spanish or English. As the population of Indigenous immigrants in the U.S. grew in the 1990s, the press began reporting severe injustices such as medical misdiagnoses, wrongful convictions, and labor exploitation that occurred when “speakers of indigenous languages were provided with either no interpreter, a Spanish interpreter or an untrained and incompetent indigenous language interpreter” (Mikkelsen, 1999b: 365).

Recent literature shows that these problems persist today. For example, with regard to healthcare, McGuire (2006) found that language is a critical barrier to healthcare for Oaxacan

⁷ “Survivance” is a critical term in Native American Studies developed by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor who explains, “survivance... is more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence... survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (Vizenor, 2000: 15).

Indigenous women. Maxwell, Young, Moe, Bastani, and Wentzell (2017) found that Mixteco and Zapoteco women in Ventura County identified inconsistent access to interpreters as a major barrier to healthcare. Holmes' (2013) revealed a pattern in which Triqui farmworkers at migrant clinics were never offered interpreters in either Spanish or Triqui, struggled to communicate with providers, and received inappropriate treatment that compromised their health.

In addition to healthcare, language barriers are problematic in law enforcement and labor settings. For example, Human Rights Watch (2012) shows how language discrimination impedes justice, citing an example in which police said they took no action when a young Mixteca woman reported rape because she spoke neither Spanish nor English. A lack of language access for Indigenous immigrants can also contribute to deadly encounters with the police, such as in 2010 when K'iche' speaking day laborer Manuel Jamines Xum was shot and killed by two Latino police officers in Los Angeles after they gave Spanish and English commands that he may not have understood (Blackwell, 2017: 128). In agricultural labor settings, Mines et al. (2010) contend that language-based discrimination contributes to the exploitation of Indigenous farmworkers, providing illustrative examples such as the testimony of a Triqui-speaking farmworker who was ignored by a foreman when she explained in limited Spanish that he was undercounting her pounds picked.

Scholars attribute these problems to bias, a lack of awareness, and too few interpreters. ILLA speakers face deeply ingrained anti-Indigenous prejudice that fuels unfair treatment (Blackwell et al., 2017), compounding the fact that services providers and immigrants themselves are frequently unaware of legal obligations to provide qualified interpreters (Chen et al., 2007). Many providers do not understand that some Latinx immigrants may not be fully proficient in Spanish and thus assign Spanish interpreters to ILLA speakers rather than

interpreters of their dominant language (Beaton-Thone, 2015). Another challenge is that patients often do not request interpreters and indicate that they understand more Spanish or English than they really do, which may be done in order to appear respectful to healthcare providers (Maxwell et al., 2017) or to avoid “outing” themselves as Indigenous to protect themselves from becoming the target of anti-Indigenous bias (Mines et al., 2010). Lastly, multiple scholars point to a shortage of trained Indigenous interpreters as part of the problem (Mines et al., 2010; Beaton-Thone, 2015; Barrett, Cruz, & Garcia, 2016).

In response, advocates have launched efforts to improve language access for ILLA speakers across California. In 1997, FIOB and CRLA partnered to coordinate the first course in California for Mixteco and Zapoteco interpreters, with training from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, which is known today as the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (Mikkelsen, 1999b). This first training was six days long and included a proficiency screening with an Indigenous language specialist, oral and written qualifying exams in Spanish, and a final essay exam. This workshop was followed by a training for interpreters of Mayan languages later the same year (Mikkelsen, 1999b). Since these inaugural trainings, ILLA language justice efforts have continued to develop in California, including training and coordination of interpreters, training for public and nonprofit agencies about linguistically and culturally responsive services, workshops to inform ILLA speakers about their language rights, and programs to preserve and teach Indigenous languages (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2005).

In order to understand ILLA interpreting in California, especially with respect to Mexican Indigenous languages like Mixteco, it is important to be conscious of the parallel process of Indigenous interpreter professionalization that has unfolded in Mexico. Kleinert (2016) points out that Indigenous interpreting has a troubled history in Mexico, where it was

employed since the beginning of the Spanish conquest in the service of colonization and domination. Since the Zapatista uprising, however, Indigenous language interpreting has emerged as a tool of resistance and Kleinert argues that interpreters have the potential to exercise their agency in ways that help equalize the balance of power in situations of inequity (Kleinert, 2016). In the last decade, Indigenous interpreting in Mexico has undergone a radical shift.

Formal efforts to train Indigenous language interpreters in Mexico were spurred by widespread condemnation of the violation of the language rights of Indigenous language speakers. Despite the language access protections codified in Mexican law, the United Nations (2002; 2003) and the press repeatedly denounced the fact that nearly all Indigenous language speakers who interfaced with the courts did not have access to court interpreters (Kleinert & Stallaert, 2015). In response, INALI, CDI, and other state and federal actors launched a coordinated project to develop Indigenous court interpreters in 2007 (Kleinert & Stallaert, 2015).

The team that developed innovative Indigenous court interpreter training programs in Mexico addressed issues that are germane to ILLA interpreting in California. Indigenous interpreter programs in Mexico differ from their U.S. counterparts in that providing interpreting is an aspect of ensuring the rights of the nation's Indigenous peoples, in contrast to the immigrant rights concerns that drive language access efforts in the U.S. Nevertheless, Kleinert (2016) identifies salient issues that apply to the U.S. context, such as her warning that Eurocentric models of interpreter training should not be uncritically applied to Indigenous interpreters. Similarly, she explains that while scholars universally regard an advanced level of linguistic proficiency in at least two languages as an indispensable pre-requisite for interpreter training candidates (Mikkelsen, 1999a), linguistic proficiency in Mexican Indigenous languages is a thorny issue because Indigenous languages have been excluded from Mexican educational

institutions for centuries in favor of promoting monolingualism in Spanish. As a result, very few aspiring interpreters have had access to formal academic training in their Indigenous language. Furthermore, Kleinert (2016) explains that measuring linguistic proficiency in Indigenous languages is problematic due to the lack of validated assessment instruments for each linguistic variant. Kleinert's (2016) research provides a detailed account of how INALI has addressed these and other challenges that can serve as a resource for ILLA interpreter trainers in California.

For Indigenous language interpreters in California, linguistic proficiency is also a challenge with regard to English. Historically, many ILLA interpreters have been immigrants from Latin America who are fluent in Spanish and their Indigenous language but are not fully proficient in English. Consequently, many ILLA interpreter trainings, including the first training in 1997 described by Mikkelsen (1999b), have been offered in Spanish. These trained interpreters frequently use a method called relay interpreting, which "is necessary when more than two languages are involved in an interpreted event and no single interpreter commands all of the languages, or when no interpreter can be found in a given language combination" (Mikkelsen, 1999b: 363). In relay interpreting, two (or more) interpreters work as a team to transmit messages across three or more languages (Mikkelsen, 1999b). For example, to use relay in a healthcare setting in which a patient speaks only Mixteco and a doctor speaks only English, a Mixteco-Spanish interpreter would interpret the statements of the patient from Mixteco into Spanish and then a Spanish-English interpreter would interpret the message from Spanish into English for the doctor, and vice versa. Relay interpreting is challenging to implement because it demands more time than conventional bidirectional interpreting, more resources since at least two interpreters are required, and specialized training for interpreters. Moreover, most interpreter trainings and certification exams are only available to interpreters who are proficient in English

and thus inaccessible to many ILLA interpreters who work between Spanish and an Indigenous language, a problem which will be discussed in the findings.

Another challenge faced by ILLA interpreters is the chasm between Western and Indigenous languages, cultures, and worldviews. Mines et al. (2010) explain that Mixteco healthcare interpreters struggle to bridge communication barriers because Indigenous understandings of disease and healing are distinct from the Western biomedical model, and there are often no words in Mixteco to describe certain diseases and medical procedures. Maxwell et al. (2017) interviewed a Mixteco interpreter who explained that many healthcare providers lack patience for interpreters who need time to communicate complex Western biomedical concepts in Mixteco and ask them to summarize entire visits quickly, leaving many important concepts “lost in translation” (p. 5). Similarly, Barrett et al. (2016) describe how disparate cultural norms between Indigenous clients and social service providers breed miscommunication.

A crucial challenge specific to Mixteco interpreting is the language’s high number of distinct linguistic variants. While many Indigenous languages have multiple variants, Mixteco is a particularly complex case. Campbell (2017) explains, “Mixtec is highly diversified and its internal classification remains poorly understood” (p. 8), with some linguists arguing that it is actually a family of distinct languages (Macaulay, 1996). INALI (2009) recognizes 81 Mixteco variants and Josserand (1983) cites sixty distinct varieties spoken across 12 regions. DiCanio, Benn, and García (2018) explain that “there are a large number of languages, each of which is labelled “Mixtec”, but many of which are as distinct as modern-day Italian and Portuguese” (p. 8). This internal diversity stems from the isolation of different Mixteco communities by the mountainous terrain of their homeland, the time-depth of over 2,000 years during which Mixteco has diversified, and the dominance of Spanish since colonization which has diminished the use

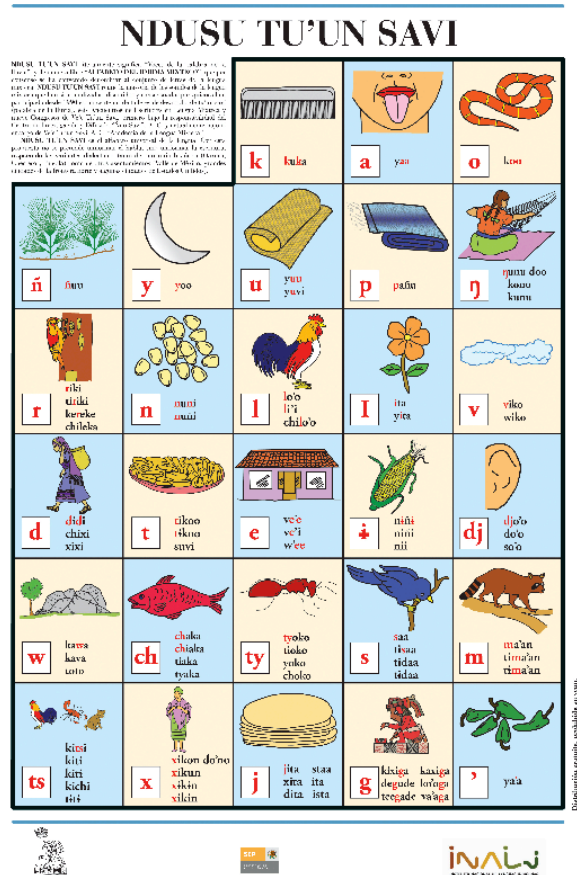


Figure 5: Ndsu tu'un savi: Mixteco alphabet (INALI, 2007).

Bridging the Gap

The existing literature makes clear that increasing access to qualified interpreters is a critical part of advancing justice for Mixtecos and other Indigenous immigrants in California. However, language rights scholarship rarely addresses the right to interpreting, few studies have examined Indigenous interpreting, and no studies have investigated strategies to promote language justice in linguistically marginalized communities. Because of the absence of research, community organizers and policy advocates often lack the information they need to overcome barriers to Indigenous language justice. By bridging the gap in scholarship, this study contributes to the literature and supports community organizing and policy advocacy in the service of the language rights of Indigenous immigrants.

of Mixteco (Egland, 1978). As a result, Mixteco speakers from different hometowns may not be able to communicate well with each other (Mikkelsen, 1999b). As will be discussed in the findings, with so many overlapping varieties of Mixteco, it is difficult to assess the linguistic proficiency of interpreters in any one variant and Mixteco speakers must be carefully matched with interpreters who speak a compatible variant in order to avoid serious misunderstandings.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology guiding the study. I begin by describing how this collaborative project came to be and then discuss our CBPR approach and how it is informed by Indigenous research methodologies. I address my positionality as a researcher, the role of MICOP and the advisory committee, data gathering methods, and our approach to data analysis.

Project Origins

This project is rooted in my history of collaboration with MICOP on language justice issues. From 2008-2014, I worked as a Program Manager for Just Communities, a social justice organization serving the California Central Coast. I developed a passion for language justice through multilingual community organizing, during which I witnessed appalling injustice toward non-dominant language speakers and saw



Figure 6: Just Communities Language Justice Network Retreat in 2014.

that language barriers separate communities from each other, obscuring our common ground. Together with others, I recognized that cross-language communication was needed to enable diverse communities to form alliances and advocate on issues of common concern so that our collective voices would be more powerful. In 2011, I co-founded the Just Communities Language Justice Initiative with a visionary team of Spanish, Mixteco, and American Sign Language interpreters. The initiative catalyzed a vibrant regional movement and MICOP became our most active partner, with dozens of MICOP interpreters joining Just Communities' social

justice interpreter network. During my tenure at Just Communities, I collaborated with Vanessa Terán, Program Manager of MICOP's Indigenous Interpreter Services.

After transitioning to graduate school, I reached out to Terán because I hoped to establish a collaborative research project that would benefit communities on the ground. Terán explained that, while MICOP had been working tirelessly to train and coordinate Mixteco interpreters in Ventura County for more than a decade, they still encountered alarming problems related to language access, such as a Mixteca woman who nearly underwent sterilization without her informed consent. At the same time, Terán explained that confusion reigned about overlapping state and federal language access laws and the certification pathways available to Mixteco interpreters (V. Terán, personal communication, February 10, 2017). At MICOP's request, I completed an initial investigation into language access policy and interpreter certification options (see Appendices B and C), which prompted new questions about how to overcome the challenges faced by Indigenous language speakers in California today. After discussions with MICOP's leadership, Terán invited me to launch this CBPR study under MICOP's direction and with the guidance of an advisory committee comprised of representatives of leading California Indigenous Mexican advocacy organizations: MICOP, CRLA, CBDIO, and FIOB.

Community-Based Participatory Research

In this study, I use a transformative approach to research that integrates critical theory and participatory methods to create research that engenders community transformation (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, I employ a CBPR approach that honors the tradition of using collaborative scholarship to address community priorities and social justice goals within Indigenous and Latinx communities (Chilisa, 2011; Deeb-Sossa, in press). Community participation in social change-oriented research matters because the seed of transformation lies

within oppressed communities. Groups with long histories of surviving and resisting injustice have invaluable knowledge and resources that are essential to overcoming barriers and creating more just and equitable futures. As Deeb-Sossa (in press) explains in her discussion of community-based research in Chicana/o Studies:

...the experts on the issues of their community are the members of the communities themselves, and thus, we need to identify the knowledge and voices (testimonios) of communities of color, the poor, women, farmworkers, students, activists, elders, immigrants, and undocumented and count as inside experts when doing anticolonial advocacy scholarship and community interventions.

Deeb-Sossa's guidance echoes the tenets of Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy, which teaches that liberation is impossible without the committed involvement of the oppressed. With grounding in this approach, my methodology is rooted in the premise that ILLA speakers are the experts who should guide the research from its inception to its conclusions.

The common thread connecting participatory models such as CBPR and participatory action research (PAR) is a commitment to sharing power with community partners and creating outcomes that benefit communities, whether through direct intervention or policy change (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005). CBPR is defined as an approach that "equitably involves, for example, community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all aspects of the research process and in which all partners contribute expertise and share decision making and ownership" (Israel, et al., 2005: 5). CBPR is ideal for this project because MICOP requires that researchers who work with them employ an equitable approach to co-producing knowledge that will benefit their constituents (MICOP, 2017) and CBPR has a track-record of facilitating collective knowledge production with immigrant communities in the service of social change (McQuiston, Parrado, Martínez, & Uribe, 2005). CBPR engages community members as co-researchers who identify questions that matter to the community, ensure methods of investigation

are culturally appropriate, help disseminate findings to practitioners on the ground, and use data to create interventions tailored to the community, increasing both efficacy and sustainability (de la Torre, 2014; Flicker, Travers, Guta, McDonald, & Meagher, 2007).

As part of practicing CBPR in collaboration with Indigenous immigrant community organizations, I sought to integrate elements of Indigenous research methodologies. Indigenous methodologies challenge dominant research paradigms rooted in Euro-Western worldviews that have excluded the knowledge systems of colonized and marginalized people (Chilisa, 2011). Louis (2017) describes her practice of Indigenous research methodologies as her commitment to “remain respectful and accountable, to reciprocate with the people with whom I would work, and to acknowledge the intellectual property rights of the people sharing their knowledge with me” (p. xxii). Echoing Louis’ approach, I have endeavored to remain accountable to MICOP through consistent communication, honoring the organization’s priorities, and producing tangible research outcomes that are beneficial to the community. Any publications based on this project will be co-authored with Terán and/or other MICOP or advisory committee representatives and we will share ownership of project deliverables in order to ensure community control over research outcomes. This project seeks to honor the central Indigenous value of relationality through practices such as investing in building relationships among advisory committee members and using the real names of study participants when given permission to do so, following Chilisa’s (2011) assertion that, from Indigenous perspectives, information loses power when it is disconnected from its source. Nevertheless, this project falls short of fully integrating Indigenous methodologies because it relies on conventional Western methods like a text-based literature review, interviews, and focus groups, rather than using knowledge production methods originating from within the Indigenous cultures of my collaborating organizations.

Positionality

My inability to fully integrate Indigenous methodologies into the project reflect the limitations of my role as a linguistic and cultural outsider to Indigenous immigrant communities. I am a white descendent of European settlers who was born into the privilege of U.S. citizenship, grew up speaking English, and had access to a university education that facilitated my opportunities to become bilingual in Spanish. Despite my liberatory values, I can never fully understand experiences like migrating to the U.S., being targeted by racism, and speaking only an Indigenous language in societies where English and Spanish are dominant. Thus, I approach this research as an “allied other” (Rogers & Swadener, 1999) who seeks to work in solidarity with Indigenous communities. I understand qualitative research as an opportunity for deep listening to marginalized voices, with the goal of using scholarship to lift up community concerns and fuel the work of Indigenous immigrant organizations to resist oppression. Solidarity requires setting aside my own agenda as an individual researcher and making sure the project is guided by the values and priorities of directly impacted communities.

A critical part of practicing scholar activism in solidarity with Indigenous communities is turning my lens inward. Louis (2017) explains that, “Indigenous scholarship emphasizes the need to position oneself with regard to the research agenda in order to determine the biases and assumptions the researcher brings into the dialogue, description, reflection, and analysis portions of the research” (p. xviii). In my case, this means engaging in a reflexive practice about how my privilege impacts my research and limits my perspective. Knowing that I will never be an expert on anyone’s culture but my own, I aspire to practice cultural humility, which requires collaboration, advocacy for equity, and self-reflection about my own identities, assumptions, and patterns of behaviors that reinforce inequities (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). To this end, I

have incorporated reflexive practices into the project through regular journaling and dialogue with similarly positioned graduate students, I maintain close communication with Terán to ensure that my actions are aligned with MICOP’s priorities, and I seek guidance from the advisory committee to revise my own necessarily partial interpretations of the data.

Defining Our Roles: MICOP, the Advisory Committee, and the Graduate Researcher

MICOP, the advisory committee, and I each took up different roles in our collaboration. After initiating the project, MICOP and I decided to convene a community advisory committee as a key component of implementing a CBPR approach. The 12-member committee includes representatives of MICOP in Oxnard, the CRLA Indigenous Program in Arvin, CBDIO in Fresno, and FIOB in Los Angeles (see Appendix A for a list of advisory committee members). The mission statements of the collaborating organizations are included below:

Table 1: Collaborating Organizations

Collaborating Organization	Mission Statement
California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA)	“To fight for justice and individual rights alongside the most exploited communities of our society” (CRLA, n.d.).
Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)	“To foster and strengthen the civic participation, economic, social, cultural development of the indigenous communities, as well as the resistance of the indigenous communities” (CBDIO, n.d.).
Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB)	“To promote indigenous peoples’ well-being, gender equity and self-determination in Mexico and the United States” (FIOB, 2018).
Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)	“To aid, organize and empower the indigenous community in Ventura County” (MICOP, n.d.).



Figure 7: Advisory Committee Meeting on June 30, 2018 in Oxnard.

From left to right: Alena Uliasz, Delfina López, Fátima Peña, Irene Gómez, Silvestre Hernández, Odilia Romero, Leoncio Vázquez, Arcenio López, Fausto Sánchez, Griselda Reyes Basurto, Vanessa Terán.

As a team, my co-researchers and I have taken up different roles. As a graduate student, I serve as the project's principal investigator, responsible for areas such as conducting the literature review; designing data collection instruments; applying for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval; seeking and managing funding; leading the process of collecting and analyzing of data; coordinating and facilitating research team meetings; writing papers and reports; and co-facilitating presentations about our findings. Terán, in her role as a MICOP Program Manager, is my primary community research partner, meeting with me by phone several times a month over the course of 1.5 years. Terán played a leadership role in many aspects of the project, including co-convening the advisory committee and co-facilitating committee meetings; recommending and connecting me with interview participants; developing interview questions; co-coordinating focus groups; inviting contacts to respond to the survey; providing feedback on drafts of written material; co-facilitating presentations about findings; and planned co-authorship of publications.

The advisory committee provided guidance that shaped the big picture of the project. The committee engages in regular phone and email communication and meets every two to three

months which, at the time of writing, includes six remote meetings via conference call, one in-person meeting in Oxnard, and an in-person meeting in Los Angeles planned for fall 2018. The advisory committee co-created project objectives; helped select methods; revised data collection instruments; conducted outreach to study participants; provided primary data; and gave feedback about the analysis of the data. *The committee is actively using the study's findings to design interventions to advance language justice efforts for their communities and plans to continue to operate as an active statewide committee beyond the formal conclusion of the research project.*

Refining Our Focus and Gathering Data

Based on the priorities and concerns of MICOP and the advisory committee, two research questions were selected to guide the study: 1) What is the state of Indigenous language interpreting in California? 2) How can Indigenous immigrant communities overcome barriers to language justice? While the study commenced with a narrow focus on Mixteco communities, the advisory committee recommended expanding our lens to ensure relevance to other ILLA speakers in California. Due to the study's exploratory nature, we selected primarily qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, surveys, and policy analysis. Research procedures were approved by the IRB of the University of California, Davis (IRB ID 1076678-1).

The first dataset is drawn from advisory committee meetings. Specifically, the findings about conceptualizations of language justice are informed by formal discussions that took place at the advisory committee meetings in July 2017 with a total of 12 members who participated via two conference calls. At the onset of the meetings, I asked the participants to share what language justice means to them and each member provided a personal definition. The meeting was recorded with permission and the definitions of language justice were transcribed. Other data gathered from advisory group meetings include information about the timeline of

Indigenous language justice activities in California, and details about current Indigenous language interpreter programs, which were invaluable because some advisory members are founders of the first ILLA interpreter programs established in California in the 1990s. The advisory committee members agreed by consensus to include notes and recordings from their meetings as part of the data for the study.

I conducted a review of federal and state language access laws and interpreter certification options, which resulted in the reports to MICOP included in Appendices B and C. To complete the policy analysis, I relied on previous scholarship, publicly available information on websites such as California Legislative Information, and invaluable guidance from interview participants such as Maureen Keffer, former director of CRLA's Indigenous Program; Eric Bishop, director of San Francisco State University's (SFSU) Legal Interpreting Program; and José García, Board President of the California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA).

I conducted a series of 23 interviews with subject matter experts recommended by MICOP, including leaders of Indigenous immigrant advocacy organizations, interpreter trainers, and linguists. The interview participants represent the leading organizations in California ILLA interpreting, including those that train interpreters, serve as interpreting agencies, and advocate for the language rights of Indigenous immigrants. In addition, I interviewed experts in court and healthcare interpreting and linguists with expertise in Mexican Indigenous languages. Please see Appendix D for a chart summarizing information about interviewees, including their professional affiliations, some of which changed between the date of the interview and the time of writing.

The interviews were conducted between March 2017 and June 2018. Interviews took place in either Spanish or English; lasted about one hour; and were conducted in-person, over video call, or by telephone, with one taking place as a formal email exchange. With guidance

from Terán, I prepared about ten questions tailored to the expertise of each interviewee about language justice and ILLA interpreting (see Appendix E). The interviews were semi-structured in that questions were asked in a flexible order, and I asked spontaneous follow-up questions to encourage participants to elaborate on important information. Due to constraints of time and technology, only ten interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. For all other interviews (except the email exchange), I took detailed notes about participants' responses. After drafting the thesis, I contacted each interview participant who is quoted in this document to invite them to review and edit how their words appear here.

In addition to interviews, two focus groups were conducted with 22 speakers of Mexican Indigenous languages in August 2017 at MICOP's office in Oxnard. Focus group questions were developed with input from the advisory committee and explored how language impacts participants' lives, conceptualizations of language justice, and what should be done to overcome language barriers (see Appendix F). Childcare, refreshments, and incentives in the form of \$20 gift cards to a big-box store were provided. Participants gave informed consent and the groups were audio-recorded. I co-facilitated one group with Fátima Peña, former MICOP labor advocate, and the other with Celso Guevara, a MICOP volunteer.

A critical aspect of the focus groups was the creation of an inclusive multilingual space. While nineteen participants spoke variants of Mixteco, two spoke Zapoteco, and one spoke Huave (all three are Indigenous languages of Southern Mexico). Some participants were monolingual in Mixteco, some were bilingual in their Indigenous language and Spanish, and a few also spoke English. Griselda Reyes Basurto and Silvestre Hernández provided simultaneous interpreting between Spanish and Mixteco using specialized audio equipment. Due to Mixteco's many variants, we asked participants for their hometowns when they registered for the focus

groups and selected interpreters and co-facilitators who spoke Mixteco variants that we believed to be compatible with those represented by the participants. I spoke in Spanish and my co-facilitators and the participants spoke in both Mixteco and Spanish. We carefully navigated the occasionally challenging communication across different languages and variants, often providing multiple interpretations of a question to ensure its meaning was clear to everyone. A MICOP staff member, Javier Martínez, took notes and transcribed the recordings. He concurrently translated segments in Mixteco into Spanish during the transcription process, both because Mixteco is predominantly not a written language and I am not proficient in it.

Our final data collection method was a survey to service providers who interface with ILLA speakers. The advisory committee suggested the addition of the survey because while their organizations have been training service providers for many years about linguistically and culturally responsive approaches to working with Indigenous immigrants, the agencies' internal policies and procedures related to language access (both formal and informal) remain unknown. Advisory committee members chose to conduct the survey in three California counties – Ventura, Kern, and Madera – due to their significant populations of Indigenous Mexican immigrants. We decided to direct survey outreach to people working in healthcare, legal, social service, and education sectors because of their critical importance to community wellbeing.

Based on guidance from the advisory committee, I drafted a 22-item survey in English and Spanish with a mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions about language access policy and practices, focusing on how agencies communicate with ILLA speaking clients (see Appendix G). The survey was made available online using the Kobo Toolbox platform. In April and May 2018, the advisory committee members, Terán, and I invited representatives of agencies in each of the targeted counties to complete the survey. The response rate was quite low, with

only 13 respondents. While we had hoped for stronger participation, the survey responses are a valuable addition to the rich data from the interviews, focus groups, and advisory committee meetings because they provide insight into the perspectives and priorities of agency staff and helpful information about the internal policies and procedures guiding the provision of language access to ILLA speaking community members.

I completed a qualitative analysis of the data using an iterative coding process. The total number of participants in the study is 70. The full dataset included the transcripts and notes from two advisory group meetings with 12 participants, two focus groups with 22 participants, interviews of 23 people, and 13 survey responses. I coded the data by looking for salient keywords and phrases that emerged from the text to identify themes. I used NVivo (version 11; QSR International) to organize the coding process, including determining code frequencies and patterns. The findings that emerged from the data are described in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter, I present the study's findings. Six key themes emerged from the data, including conceptualizations of language justice, the history of ILLA interpreting in California, current strengths and key challenges, recommendations from diverse stakeholders, and how participants envision the future of Indigenous language justice in California. To illustrate each theme, I provide representative examples from the data. Only interviewees and advisory committee members are identified by name because they gave permission for their real names to be used, while focus group and survey participants remain anonymous. A majority of the data analyzed was in Spanish, and all the Spanish to English translations that appear here are my own.

Theme 1: Conceptualizations of Language Justice

Indigenous participants in focus groups, the advisory committee, and interviews explained what language justice meant to them. Through stories and reflection, participants defined language justice as: a response to systemic discrimination; a set of rights; an expression of respect; and a series of determined efforts to ensure the resilience of Indigenous languages.

Language justice as rights.

Participants defined language justice as the manifestation of language rights, including the right to communicate, receive information, and express themselves. Participants said that Indigenous language speakers have the right to receive services and information in their own language, either by way of an interpreter or a provider who speaks their language. Participants emphasized that language justice is not just about receptive communication, but includes the right to make one's voice heard. The examples below illustrate participants' conceptualizations of language justice as a set of rights.

Irene Gómez, MICOP: With regard to the question about what language justice means, for me, I believe it's a human right, that as people who may be monolingual... we have to ensure that the services we receive are provided in our own language.

Focus Group Participant: Before I didn't know what it was, but now I've learned that it's our right to request a Mixteco interpreter if we don't speak Spanish or English.

Fausto Sánchez, CRLA: For me, language justice means the right to communicate with each other regardless of the languages we speak, and that people feel comfortable speaking their own native language through interpreters... For me, without language justice people won't have interpreters who can help them, there won't be good communication between people who seek justice or to defend their rights. So, for me language justice is very important, so that people can express themselves in their own language, say what they want to say and what they want to communicate to others and to the world.

Silvestre Hernández, MICOP: Language justice is highly important... it's each person's right to make their voice heard in the exact way in which they want to express it.

Focus Group Participant: We all have a right to express ourselves in our language and if many barriers exist, we have to break through them.

These examples frame language justice as the manifestation of a fundamental right to communication. This includes access to interpreters so that ILLA speakers can receive vital information and services in their own language, which is an existing legal right affirmed by laws related to healthcare, education, social services, and courts. However, the right to make one's voice heard is less likely to be codified. In part, this right refers to the continued use of Indigenous languages within language communities. In cross-language settings, fulfilling this right requires not only the provision of interpreting, but access to ethical, skilled interpreters who understand their role to transmit meaning across languages with integrity, thus honoring the self-determination of each speaker. It further requires that the non-ILLA speaking party is willing to listen to the Indigenous language speaker and that cross-language interactions are organized so that Indigenous language speakers are active participants in the communication, not passive

recipients of information. These concerns about equitable, bidirectional cross-language communication are intertwined with Indigenous language justice definitions focused on respect.

Language justice as respect.

When study participants brought up themes of respect, they referred to respect between people with different languages, respect for Indigenous languages, and valuing languages equally. The following excerpts reflect ideas about language justice as a form of respect:

Silvestre Hernández, MICOP: Every human being deserves to be heard. Language justice is what allows everyone to understand each other better and to treat one another like the human beings we are, regardless of our language, and that is the most important thing of all.

Gabriel Mendoza, MICOP, former Advisory Committee Member: Tù'in, tù'un nà ve'i, tù'un nà ñuù, ndzikúu va tù'un ña káku mí nuyivì yó'o íyo yá'vi. My language, my family language, a language of the village, all languages which were born in this world are important.⁸

Fátima Peña, MICOP: [Language justice] means having the ability to share your thoughts in the language in which you feel confident expressing them, without one language being considered less than another, having worldwide equality, having language equality. Often, we see that one language is considered better and we give it preference over our Native languages, and for me this is very important, that our language has the same value as other languages. So, for me this is language justice, not just having access to an interpreter, but obtaining the same value for each language regardless of origin.

When Indigenous people assert that their Indigenous language is equal in value to a colonial language such as Spanish or English, they counter the denigration of Indigenous Mexican languages. Since colonization, colonial and mestizo Mexican society has perpetuated the notion that Indigenous Mexican languages are inferior to Spanish, a pervasive attitude embodied by the frequent use of the term “dialect” rather than “language” to describe Mexican Indigenous languages (INALI, 2017). Participants see language justice as a way to dismantle

⁸ Mendoza requested that his quote appear first in his variant of Mixteco, followed by his own English translation.

dehumanizing practices by valorizing Indigenous languages, and using cross-language communication to help people humanize each other.

Language justice as resilience.

When the value of Indigenous languages is affirmed, people feel pride in speaking them and endeavor to pass them on to future generations. Participants described overcoming internalized shame about speaking Indigenous languages, working hard to strengthen their proficiency in their Indigenous language after having been discouraged from speaking it as children, and speaking it in public in defiance of anti-Indigenous discrimination. As reflected in the excerpt below, participants celebrated how speaking their Indigenous language connects them with their ancestors, perpetuates their culture, and embodies resistance against oppression. Many participants expressed the desire to teach Indigenous languages to children through both community and school-based efforts and to cultivate linguistic pride among Indigenous youth.

Lourdes Cerna, CHIA: It's very important to be able to speak the language that was spoken before the arrival of Spanish invaders.

Fátima Peña, MICOP: To cultivate that pride and more than anything to say, this is who we are and we are worthy, to value ourselves for who we are, because we are still submerged in the invasion that took place, right, when they came and told us that our language was bad, that if you want to make it then you have to speak Spanish, if you want to accomplish something then you have to speak Spanish... So, we have lived through a lot of oppression over the years and the one way that we've resisted is through our language. But we still have that fear, we still feel like we are below others, like we are the ones who get stepped on, like we are less than someone with light skin or someone who speaks English or another language that is not our own. So, I believe we have to start with adults first, so they can say "I'm worthy; my language doesn't make me less than anyone," and then this can be transmitted to children and youth.

Focus Group Participant: I always speak in Mixteco because we inherited it from our grandparents and the village elders. I believe that we represent a Mixteco-speaking people and for this reason we must speak Mixteco.

Focus Group Participant: I believe that we should teach our youth to be proud of our culture... I think a good way to do this is to show the whole world that we are not ashamed to be Oaxacan and that on the contrary we feel great pride because we have an Indigenous language, a mother tongue of which we have no reason to be ashamed. I think that often when we feel badly it's because we don't understand the richness of our culture.

Focus Group Participant: I think we should have teachers who speak Mixteco and Zapoteco in the schools to teach our children... for me this is very important and necessary.

In these examples, speaking Indigenous languages is understood to be an essential part of cultural continuity. Overall, participants defined language justice as a complex concept that encompasses a right to communication that can be protected through the provision of interpreters, respecting all languages equally, and the preservation of Indigenous languages.

Theme 2: Indigenous Language Interpreting Programs in California



Figure 8: Indigenous Language Justice in California Timeline created by the advisory committee on June 30, 2018.

As described above, participants articulated a language justice framework that is broader than interpreting, yet access to qualified interpreters remains a central part of ensuring that Indigenous language speakers can access essential services and fully participate in their communities. When Indigenous immigrant advocacy organizations were established in California in the early 1990s, language access was one of their first priorities. During the last 25 years, they have continued to fight for access to trained ILLA interpreters in healthcare, legal,

and community settings. Today, there are five interpreter training programs in the state that specifically focus on Indigenous languages. These include Asociación Mayab in San Francisco, CBDIO in Fresno, FIOB in Los Angeles, Indigenous Interpreting+ in Salinas, and MICOP in Oxnard. In addition to training interpreters, these organizations serve as interpreting agencies that send trained interpreters to clinics, police departments, social service agencies, and schools. California's current Indigenous interpreter programs are summarized below, based on interviews that I conducted with founders and current organizers of each program.

Table 2: Current Indigenous Interpreter Training Programs in California

Organization & Year Established	Interpreting Program & Year Established	Location	Indigenous Languages	Training Focus	Training Length
Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB), 1991	Indigenous Interpreter Training, 1997 Bene Shde Dixha Dao Indigenous Court Interpreter Training, 2017	Los Angeles	Mixteco, Zapoteco, Triqui	Legal	72 hours
Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO), 1993	Indigenous Interpreters Project, 1998	Fresno	Mixteco, Zapoteco, Triqui	Healthcare, Community	40 hours
Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), 2001	Indigenous Language Services, 2001	Oxnard	Mixteco, Zapoteco	Healthcare, Community	40 hours

Asociación Mayab, 2003	Indigenous Language Interpreters Program, 2008	San Francisco	Mayan Languages from Mexico and Guatemala	Legal, Community	25 hours
Indigenous Interpreting +, 2014 (Sponsored by Natividad Medical Foundation)	The Indigenous Interpreter Curriculum and Interpreting Services, 2014	Salinas	Indigenous languages of Mexico and Central America	Healthcare, Legal, Community	63 hours

Trail Blazers: FIOB, CRLA, and CBDIO.

The first organizations and programs devoted to empowering Indigenous immigrant communities were founded in the early 1990s, followed by the creation of the state's inaugural ILIA interpreter training programs. In 1991, FIOB was established with a focus on advocating for the language rights of ILIA speakers and founded its interpreting program in 1997; CRLA established its Indigenous Program in 1993 with a focus on empowering Indigenous farmworkers; and CBDIO was established in 1993 and founded its statewide Indigenous Interpreters Project in 1998. Leoncio Vásquez, CBDIO Executive Director, explained that, “Language is an enormous barrier for the Indigenous community,” and as a result, interpreting became one of the first priorities taken up by Indigenous immigrant advocacy organizations.

According to Vásquez, the first ILIA interpreter trainings in California in 1997 were a historic undertaking that paved the way for future endeavors. Odilia Romero, FIOB Binational General Coordinator, explained that FIOB and CRLA coordinated the first Indigenous language interpreter trainings together in 1997, using a grant from Oxfam America to hire Holly Mikkelsen from the Monterey Institute of International Studies (today called the Middlebury Institute of International Studies) to design and facilitate the trainings. The first training was

offered for Mixteco and Zapoteco interpreters in San Juan Bautista, followed by a training for interpreters of Mayan languages in San Diego.

Building on this foundation, CBDIO and FIOB have continued to train interpreters across California. Romero



Figure 9: Interpreter Training for Mayan Language Speakers in 1997.

explained that FIOB provides interpreter training autonomously and refuses corporate funding for their work because FIOB fights for the linguistic, cultural, and labor rights of Indigenous communities who have a long history of exploitation by large agricultural companies and therefore, “we do not accept money from the companies that exploit our people.” Today, CBDIO and FIOB provide training to interpreters from across the state and contract out interpreters to diverse community groups and public agencies, primarily in Mixteco, Zapoteco, and Triqui.

These early leaders continue to innovate today. Recent efforts by FIOB in Los Angeles have focused on preparing Indigenous interpreters to work in legal settings. In 2017, FIOB launched a 72-hour training focused on preparing Indigenous court interpreters. In the summer of 2018, FIOB launched a 24-hour Indigenous Interpreter Capacity Building and Linguistic Justice training focused on preparing interpreters to respond to the crisis caused by the Trump administration’s zero tolerance immigration policy that caused a massive increase in the number of migrants detained along the Texas border, including many children who were separated from their parents. These detainees include many ILLA speakers, especially Guatemalans who speak Mayan languages such as K’iche’ and Mam, for which local advocates were unprepared to provide language access. FIOB immediately sent trained Mayan language interpreters to Texas

to bridge communication between detainees and local advocates and attorneys (Snow, 2018) and quickly convened a team of experts to offer trainings in Los Angeles and Washington D.C. to prepare more ILLA interpreters to work in critical immigration settings.

The work to address the language barriers faced by Indigenous immigrants includes not only training interpreters and making them available to community nonprofits and public agencies, but steps to make sure interpreters are actually used when needed. FIOB, CBDIO, and CRLA provide training to staff members of nonprofit and public agencies about working with interpreters and Know Your Rights training for Indigenous community members. Romero and Vásquez explain that agencies must be informed about why and how to work with trained interpreters, and community members must be willing to request trained interpreters, rather than relying ad hoc interpreters or trying to muddle through with limited Spanish. Vásquez explained:

Leoncio Vásquez, CBDIO: It was very difficult for us to raise awareness and inform government agencies and other entities that the language barrier is a need for Indigenous families. We also had to raise awareness within the Indigenous community so that they would ask for trained interpreters. In the agencies, the staff had no idea how to communicate with them; they thought they spoke Spanish. On the other hand, Indigenous people didn't want to accept that they weren't proficient in Spanish and so this prevented them from being assigned an interpreter in their native tongue. Even though they aren't proficient in Spanish, they don't request an interpreter in their native language.

As part of this work, advocacy organizations have distributed "I Speak" cards to Indigenous language speakers that list the language they speak and their hometown (to help identify their linguistic variant). The cards include a request to be provided with an interpreter and indicate that language access is a legal right under federal and state laws. ILLA speakers who cannot communicate with agency personnel use the cards to ask for interpreters. FIOB also engages in political advocacy for language access, such as pushing for elected officials to compel public agencies to comply with their legal obligation to provide interpreters without cost to their clients.

Advocacy organizations also take steps to help agencies provide more holistic culturally and linguistically responsive services to Indigenous community members. Maureen Keffer, former director of the CRLA Indigenous Program, explained that CRLA teaches service providers about cultural humility when working with Indigenous clients. Similarly, Romero explained that FIOB educates agencies like hospitals and police departments about the causes of Indigenous migration to the U.S., saying, “Indigenous people didn’t come here to ask for services. We came because we were expelled by companies, like the mining companies.” In this way, the agencies disrupt negative stereotypes and help service providers understand the experiences and cultures of the Indigenous immigrants with whom they work.

Healthcare interpreting innovators: MICOP.

A few years after the first FIOB and CRLA training, MICOP’s Indigenous Interpreter Services took root in Oxnard. Because the study originated with a focus on MICOP before expanding to address statewide issues, my data about MICOP’s interpreting efforts is more robust than the findings about other programs. I interviewed Sandy Young, a MICOP founder; Arcenio López, current MICOP Executive Director; Margaret Sawyer, former MICOP Executive Director; and Lourdes Cerna, creator of MICOP’s interpreter training program.

MICOP’s story begins in the year 2000. Young describes how she began to see more monolingual Mixteco speaking patients in her job as a family nurse practitioner at Las Islas Family Medical Group, a large family practice health clinic in Ventura County. The patients were mostly young pregnant women and Young said that because no interpreting was available, patients would “nod their heads as if they were agreeing to whatever we were putting forward.” As a lifelong community organizer and social justice advocate, Young was motivated to take action and worked with colleagues to organize a community meeting by spreading the word

among her Mixteco patients. At the meeting, 15 Mixteco attendees discussed priority issues like Medi-Cal and public transportation and decided to continue meeting regularly. Young explains:

We just started having this little informal meeting in the back room of my clinic on Friday nights and, you know, that just kind of organically grew into people expressing what their needs were and the most important needs that they expressed right from the beginning was for interpreters in the clinic. So, that was kind of our first issue.

As the community meetings developed into more formal community organizing, Young and a handful of Mixteco collaborators established MICOP as a nonprofit organization in 2001 with language access as their first priority.

Young and her colleagues advocated for Mixteco language access in healthcare settings in Ventura County. Young wrote a position paper to her director at Las Islas Family Medical Group that resulted in hiring their first Mixteco-Spanish interpreter in 2002 to facilitate communication between Mixteco speaking clients and Las Islas' Spanish speaking staff. They pushed for interpreting in hospitals and county agencies, overcoming barriers related to requirements about employee citizenship and English proficiency by contracting interpreters who were employees or consultants of MICOP rather than the county agencies. The next step was to train to interpreters, and MICOP began by hiring Holly Mikkelsen, the facilitator of the first FIOB and CRLA trainings. In 2004, Mikkelsen provided a course for 12 Spanish-Mixteco interpreters about interpreting ethics and standards, followed by a session to develop glossaries to help interpreters communicate Western biomedical terms for which there are no direct translations in Mixteco. At this time and in the years to come, most MICOP interpreters spoke Mixteco and Spanish and either worked with Spanish speaking service providers (which are common in Ventura County) or provided relay interpreting by working in teams with Spanish-English interpreters.

After MICOP's establishment in 2001, the demand for interpreters continued to grow. For many years, MICOP provided a brief (2-4 hour) training about the interpreter role to their *promotores/as de salud* (health promotion staff). In 2008, López, then a MICOP community organizer, identified a need to provide more formal interpreter training and commenced the process of re-structuring MICOP's interpreting program. In 2010, MICOP secured a grant from Kaiser Permanente to support the development of a professional interpreter training and a business plan for MICOP's interpreting services. Soon, MICOP hired Cerna to develop and facilitate the training component. Cerna is a statewide and national leader in healthcare interpreting who speaks K'iche', Spanish, and English. She serves on the CHIA board, is part of the International Medical Interpreter Association, and teaches community college interpreter education programs. Cerna and a team of her students began by translating the CHIA training manual into Spanish⁹ and then designed a 40-hour healthcare interpreting course for MICOP.

Cerna and her students worked hard to tailor the training for MICOP's interpreters. The training materials had been written for a Western audience and needed to be revised in order to become relevant for Indigenous interpreters with a distinct worldview and ethical framework. Cerna explained, "Because I am Indigenous myself I know that the CHIA standards have six ethical principles that would have been difficult to understand... because they were written in the context of Western culture and we have a different understanding." Cerna gave the example of the ethical principle of confidentiality, saying that this can present a quandary for Indigenous interpreters because Indigenous community norms often require that people share information that could potentially be helpful to others. She also had to create a training that would be accessible to participants with vast differences in formal education, from people who had not

⁹ The Spanish version of the CHIA training manual has become a resource not only for MICOP, but for interpreting programs in multiple Spanish speaking countries in Latin America such as Colombia and Venezuela.

attended primary school to others with graduate degrees. Lastly, she had to grapple with the paucity of Mixteco terms for internal organs and Western medical procedures by giving students a crash course in medical terminology and teaching them to use Mixteco to “paint word pictures” of complex anatomical systems. In the end, Cerna created a unique training that she feels provides a strong foundation to Indigenous interpreters who are beginning their careers. For MICOP, the training was a big step forward, with Sawyer describing the moment when the first 20 interpreters graduated from the training as “beautiful, tearful, and glorious.”



Figure 10: MICOP Interpreter Training Graduates.

MICOP’s language access program has continued to grow since Cerna’s first training for MICOP in 2010. According to López, demand rose sharply as more trained MICOP interpreters became available, in turn increasing the need for a structured program to coordinate interpreters

and professional training so that interpreters were prepared to work in hospitals, social service agencies, the courts, and schools. In 2013, Terán took up the position of managing MICOP's Indigenous Language Services program. Terán's many contributions include establishing formal contracts with agencies and coordinating a workforce development project to train Indigenous healthcare interpreters and health promoters with support from the Women's Foundation of California. Terán continued collaborating with Cerna to provide 40-hour healthcare interpreter trainings and partnered with Just Communities to involve MICOP interpreters in the Interpreting for Social Justice workshop and the Just Communities Language Justice Network. Currently, Terán is working with Cerna to provide small-group coaching for five interpreters who are trilingual in Mixteco, Spanish, and English to support their goal of passing one of the national healthcare interpreter certification exams. In August 2018, Yolanda Velasco Fernández, a MICOP interpreter who is a member of the coaching group and part of the advisory committee for this project, successfully passed the national CoreCHI healthcare interpreter exam, representing the first Mixteco interpreter to do so, to our knowledge (V. Terán, personal communication, August 17, 2018). Also in 2018, MICOP expanded its focus to include legal interpreting by offering a two-day workshop about court interpreting with training from Lorena Pike and sponsorship from the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Barbara.

Over the last 17 years, MICOP has steadfastly engaged in advocacy similar to the work of CRLA, FIOB, and CBDIO. MICOP advocates for schools, hospitals, social service providers, and law enforcement agencies to hire Mixteco speaking staff and work with trained interpreters. Sawyer explained that one of the trickier parts of this advocacy is that once large agencies hire interpreters, sometimes the internal policies and procedures are not in place to make sure that the interpreters are actually used effectively. For instance, sometimes doctors and nurses are unsure

about when and how to call the hospital's interpreting staff and instead muddle through appointments with Mixteco speakers without interpreters. Because agencies don't always proactively offer clients an interpreter even when they are available, MICOP has continued to educate community members about their right to request interpreters. Sawyer explained that MICOP's Mixteco leadership and close community relationships were key to successful advocacy efforts, saying:

[It was important to have] a lot of Mixtecs in leadership and them being to say, this is what's going on on the ground, [for example, they would say], "We had a woman come in last week who just delivered a baby at the County [Hospital] and no one spoke to her in Mixteco the whole time..." It was important to have such close ties to the community, so that we knew exactly where the interpreters were needed.

Ultimately, MICOP's advocacy changed the local landscape, creating an environment in which a previously obscure Indigenous Mexican language is used every day in schools, courtrooms, and clinics across Ventura County.

Mayan voices in court: Asociación Mayab.

Nearly 400 miles north, a similar process unfolded for Mayan language interpreters in the Bay Area at Asociación Mayab, which was founded by Yucatec Mayan immigrants in San Francisco in 2003. Naomi Adelson is a Spanish-English court interpreter and long-time volunteer with Asociación Mayab who created and facilitates their interpreter training. In 2008, Asociación Mayab received calls from courts in Los Angeles searching for Tzeltal and Yucatec Maya interpreters. They realized that there was a need for legal interpreters in Mayan languages and launched a program to fill it. Adelson developed a 25-hour training that she has taught on a regular basis for ten years. She teaches the course in Spanish to those who primarily speak their Mayan language and Spanish. One of her colleagues teaches the course in English to younger students who have grown up in the U.S. and are more proficient in English than Spanish. The

course uses the INALI ethical standards as a guide and covers legal and medical terminology and skill building for consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. Adelson works with her students on the challenging task of developing legal equivalents in order to convey U.S. legal concepts in Mayan languages and has invited guests, such as a trainer from INALI, to support the trainees.

Today, Asociación Mayab provides interpreting in diverse Mayan languages such as Yucatec Maya, Tzeltal, Ch'ol, Mam, and K'iche' in a variety of legal, medical, and community settings. Like the organizations described above, they also provide community education about language rights, including San Francisco's strong local language access ordinance. Asociación Mayab protects the interests of their interpreters when they contract out their services by making sure they are paid fair wages. Adelson explained, "I always tell them, 'you will get paid in a dignified manner because your language is rare and because you are trained and because you have ethics.'" She also echoed the comments of the MICOP team by insisting that Indigenous leadership of interpreter programs is essential because they have deep expertise about cultural issues and their leadership facilitates long-term, trusting relationships with local Indigenous immigrant communities.

The first credential: Indigenous Interpreting+.

Indigenous Interpreting+, a project of Natividad Medical Foundation in Salinas, is the most recent addition to California's ILLA interpreter programs. The foundation supports Natividad Medical Center, a public hospital, and this is the only Indigenous interpreting program to emerge from a large formal institution rather than a grassroots community organization. Katharine Allen, co-president of InterpretAmerica and co-author and facilitator of the Indigenous Interpreting+ training curriculum, explained that the process began when Natividad Medical Center hired her in 2008 to conduct a language access assessment. At the time, the hospital relied

on untrained bilingual staff and provided no interpreting for ILLA speaking patients. Allen explained that that hospital staff were doing the best that they could with few resources and were highly motivated to improve:

Katharine Allen, Indigenous Interpreting+: In the maternity departments, nurses were helping deliver babies to mothers with whom they could not understand or speak a single word. It was all sign language and gestures. The nurses were the ones who were really motivated to try and communicate with these mothers.

After the assessment, Allen recommended that Natividad hire a language access coordinator and create formal policies and procedures to bridge communication between patients and providers.

Based on Allen's recommendations, Natividad Medical Center moved in a new direction. They hired Victor Sossa to coordinate language access, who quickly identified a critical need to provide interpreting for Mixteco and Zapoteco speakers, many of whom worked as farmworkers in the Salinas area. Linda Ford, former president and CEO of Natividad Medical Foundation, responded by raising funds from the large agricultural companies operating in the region, such as The Agricultural Leadership Council and Driscoll's, urging them to support the creation of an interpreting program that would improve healthcare access for their employees. According to Allen, "Without that philanthropic funding, there's just no way this would have happened." The resources secured by Ford were invested in a multi-year program development process.

After convening a team of interpreting experts, the Indigenous Interpreting+ project launched in 2014. The project includes a written curriculum, training courses, interpreting services, and language access consulting. Jennifer Leidich-Bonilla, Indigenous Interpreting+ Senior Advisor, explained that the project team began by spending two years building collaborative relationships with Indigenous leaders and interpreters. Allen and Sossa co-authored the 63-hour curriculum, called The Indigenous Interpreter, which includes 21 modules and 600 pages of written curriculum which is in the process of being published and will be made

available free of charge to other groups. The curriculum draws on Allen's experience designing interpreter trainings for Cross Cultural Communications in Maryland as well as collaboration with INALI in Mexico. The curriculum was piloted in full in 2017, with 21 graduates, and is unique in that it includes a credentialing exam. Because the training is offered in English and geared toward interpreters who can work directly into English, the training includes an English proficiency assessment. Allen explained that they tailored the curriculum to Indigenous immigrants by piloting each module multiple times, adding material about U.S. professional settings that may be unfamiliar to immigrants who are relatively new to the U.S., training interpreters to negotiate with employers, and helping interpreters learn to communicate complex U.S. medical and legal concepts in their Indigenous languages.

Indigenous Interpreting+ prioritizes creating employment pathways for training graduates. After the training, the graduates participate in a six-month paid internship, receive long-term mentorship, and go on to work for Indigenous Interpreting+ interpreting services, which was created as a vehicle to provide well-paying jobs that would make the training worth the investment for graduates. Today, the agency offers in-person and remote legal, medical, and community interpreting in numerous Mexican and Central American Indigenous languages.

Theme 3: Celebrating Accomplishments

Together, California's Indigenous interpreter programs have made a powerful impact on language justice for ILLA speakers, including advancing language rights, respect, and resilience. Below, I share discuss the accomplishments that have been achieved through the creative, sustained organizing of Indigenous immigrant communities and their allies.

Improving language access.

Having access to trained interpreters or ILLA speaking staff makes a powerful difference in the lives of Indigenous immigrants, including improving the quality of healthcare, involving parents in their children's schools, and building trust between law enforcement and the community.



Figure 11: Sabina Cruz, Mixteco Interpreter; Sandy Young, Family Nurse Practitioner; and a young patient at Las Islas Clinic in Oxnard. Photo by David Bacon.

Below, Sandy Young describes how working with interpreters transformed her ability to provide healthcare to a Mixteco speaking patient.

Sandy Young, MICOP: She was... 15 years old, pregnant, isolated in her apartment, wouldn't go outside, didn't know anybody, didn't speak Spanish. She's still my patient now, like 16 years later, and she has described for me, really beautifully I think, what it was like for her... that she would come to this clinic and the people were very nice to her, but she really had no idea what they were talking about, but she would nod her head because that's a respectful thing to do. And you know, we would limp along as best we could with the very little amount of Spanish that she spoke. And you know, it's very easy as a provider, particularly a medical provider who's supposed to see... 20 patients a day, to just accept that head nodding as communication and of course you know it's not... So she was about seven or eight months pregnant and suddenly there was Catalina there who spoke Mixteco although they had some variant differences... at least she felt suddenly that she had much more of an idea of what was going on, what I was asking of her, what I wanted to know, and that was a vast improvement... and over the next year... [Mixteco interpreters] gained their own skills in how to do interpretation correctly and how to really bridge whatever gap exists in dialect... it went from nothing to much better to very much better.... 18 years later, her son just graduated from high school, the one she was pregnant with when I saw her. He came in to see me... and she told the whole story... it really, really changed the provider-patient experience when there was even imperfect language access.

Young's testimony demonstrates that interpreting in healthcare settings has a powerfully positive impact on both patients and providers, ultimately improving the quality of healthcare.

MICOP and other ILLA interpreting organizations built on transformative experiences like Young's in order to advocate for system-wide language access in healthcare and legal agencies, and their efforts have paid off. Now, Indigenous organizations have many formal collaborations with powerful institutions like the courts and law enforcement agencies to guarantee access to interpreters. Moreover, an increasing number of public agencies have hired Mixteco speakers into staff positions and changed their policies and procedures to increase the inclusion of ILLA speakers. Below, interviewees describe recent successes in this area.

Arcenio López, MICOP: It took us approximately 15 years to be able to finally sign an interpreting services contract with the Oxnard Police Department. We signed an interpreting contract with the police last year. People have a card with the police department's logo and MICOP's logo. Creating more institutional collaborations is important, including creating protocols so that when someone gives them the card, for example, the police communicate with MICOP.

Fátima Peña, MICOP: What I'm seeing that [MICOP] is doing that is really great and that you don't see in other counties is that with each passing day there are more agencies that say, "I need someone who speaks Mixteco because now I understand the need."

Tracy Clark, Superior Court of California, County of Ventura: We're making sure that the whole courthouse accessible, including dropping in at self-help centers and everything. We're getting really good at that.

Clark explained that in addition to providing trained Mixteco interpreters throughout the court system, the Ventura Courts: 1) distribute "I Speak" cards with the court seal that people may use to request interpreters, and 2) created a video in Mixteco that is used to help familiarize Mixteco speakers with the U.S. legal system so that they will be better prepared for interactions with the court. These examples demonstrate that, at least in Ventura County, the provision of comprehensive language access for ILLA speakers is increasingly recognized as a best practice.

Several participants shared how, as ILLA interpreting becomes more common, Indigenous immigrants are overcoming the fear of admitting that they are not fully proficient in Spanish and becoming more willing to request an interpreter in their Indigenous language. Peña explained that, once they have a good experience with an interpreter, people often say, “Now I will ask for an interpreter every single time.” Adelson explained that, in Alameda County, the courts are accustomed to offering Mam interpreters, Spanish interpreters know that they must refuse to interpret for ILLA speakers with limited Spanish, and the Mam community is becoming more comfortable with requesting interpreters. To illustrate this point, she described a time that she was sent as a Spanish-English interpreter to work with an Indigenous Guatemalan detainee:

Naomi Adelson, Asociación Mayab: For example, I've been talking to someone who's detained and he's behind the window and he's speaking in present tense about everything... I said, “Do you speak another language?” “No.” ...So I just said... “Are you sure you don't speak another language? Because we have interpreters.” And I was purposely [first] naming everything but Mam because I knew he was Mam, and so I was like, “We have a Tzeltal interpreter, a Ch’ol interpreter, we've got K’iche’ interpreters, we've Yucatec Mayan interpreters, and oh, we've got Mam interpreters.” And he said, “Mam, sí!” And then he hid his head in his hands because that's how powerful it was for him, like he had been caught, right? Now he is Mayan, he is Guatemalan, and he just came out of a genocidal situation. So, the beautiful thing is that actually he then gets a Mam interpreter and found out that all of those terrible things did not happen, and he did not get discriminated against for identifying himself. So, I think the word is starting to get out to the community that it's okay to say it.

Peña and Adelson’s quotes suggest that the more ILLA speakers have positive experiences working with qualified interpreters, the more likely they are to self-advocate for their language access rights in the future by requesting an interpreter in their linguistic variant.

While using trained interpreters stood out as a critical step forward in creating access for ILLA speakers, participants asserted that it’s even better for agencies to hire ILLA speaking staff to work in various roles. ILLA speaking staff members build lasting relationships with

community members and can provide better help to clients because they understand the system within which they work. Fátima Peña explained this point as follows:

Fátima Peña, MICOP: Take the Oxnard School District for example. At the elementary level they hired three people, right, and the community knows that there are three people who speak Mixteco, so they go and ask for that person... Instead, at the high school level they tell them to ask for an interpreter, and why don't they do it? Because someone isn't physically, immediately there... So, having staff that speak the language is a big step forward.

ILLA speakers in the Oxnard focus groups also described the positive impact of hiring interpreters and Mixteco speaking staff at agencies in their region.

Focus Group Participant: I know that MICOP helps us. Today because of them there are more people who help us in our language in the clinics and hospitals.

Focus Group Participant: I think that it builds trust when there is [a Mixteco speaker] working in the courts, the hospital, clinics, and schools.

These examples suggest that hiring multilingual staff who speak the Indigenous languages of the local community is a best practice for service providers.

The successes described above were reflected on the write-in responses to the agency surveys, with many respondents saying that their agencies have hired multilingual staff, including Mixteco speakers, developed strong partnerships with organizations like MICOP, and have policies and procedures in place that make sure that ILLA speaking clients have access to either a staff person who speaks their language, or a staff or contracted interpreter who provides language assistance in-person or by phone or video. Overall, study participants gave voice to meaningful improvements in language access for ILLA speakers in their regions, in spite of the barriers that remain.

Expanding respect, pride, and inclusion.

Indigenous language justice efforts in California have raised the profile of ILLA speakers in some regions, such as Ventura County and the Bay Area, creating environments in which

Indigenous immigrants are recognized as vital members of the community and their languages are respected. In the Oxnard focus groups, participants spoke to the changes that MICOP's efforts have made possible, including experiencing less discrimination and feeling more pride and confidence in speaking their Indigenous languages.

Focus Group Participant: Before people made fun of us and didn't like us because we spoke Mixteco... Thank God and all who support the Mixteco community. Before it was different.

Focus Group Participant: To the contrary, now I like it; I speak my language and tell people, "this is my language."

Focus Group Participant: When we arrived in this country a lot happened to us and I used to feel sad but not anymore. Before I remember people called us "Oaxaquita" and today I don't hear that very much because MICOP defends us and trains us and gives us information to know how to defend ourselves.

These examples suggest that ILLA speakers in Oxnard have experienced a change in the environment that has increased their confidence and pride in speaking an Indigenous language.

Representatives of Indigenous interpreting organizations described how participating in interpreter training programs cultivated ILLA interpreters' pride in their languages and cultures, as illustrated by this example:

Katharine Allen, Indigenous Interpreting+: Some of the Indigenous community members we worked with would come in with very negative internalized feelings about being Indigenous and the value of their language... it is incredibly moving when you see the pride they feel when people say to them, "You have something special. The language you speak is in great demand." I've watched individuals change how they feel. They begin to see that they have this language and this culture that are really beautiful and valuable.

Allen's comment reflects the testimony of multiple ILLA interpreter trainers who described witnessing the growth of linguistic pride among participants in their programs, suggesting that ILLA interpreter trainings have a positive impact in how interpreters view their languages.

Indigenous language justice efforts have also impacted the broader community.

Interviewees described how the expansion of Indigenous interpreting has increased the inclusion of and respect for Indigenous immigrants.

Margaret Sawyer, MICOP: I would like more people in the world to know what Ventura County has done. I think it's pretty exceptional that a Mixtec speaker in Ventura County can just assume that... practically everybody is going to have an interpreter for them if they need it... that their language is going to be included... Another really beautiful thing about that is when we were working on getting the radio station the Star wrote an editorial that was so great about, like, "Every community, every culture needs to be able to access media in their own language and the Mixtecs need it too and you should support Radio Indígena..." It made me appreciate how the whole county has gotten behind us, like, "Yeah, we have this big Mixtec speaking population here and that's part of who we are."

Sawyer's example speaks to the power of interpreting to build relationships between speakers of different languages who may not previously have seen themselves as members of the same community who need to look out for each other's interests. In this way, language access can be seen as a tool for developing new solidarities across boundaries of language, race, and culture.

Forging pathways to success for Indigenous interpreters.

Indigenous language interpreters have been able to use the training and employment opportunities created by Indigenous interpreting programs as a launch pad to well-paying, respected careers where their languages and cultures are valued and considered an asset. This is important for Indigenous immigrants who sometimes arrive in the U.S. with limited formal education, with many using interpreting as a job to put themselves through college.

Representatives of interpreter training programs provided the following examples.

Naomi Adelson, Asociación Mayab: What I'm now seeing is thousands of dollars a month going into the pocket of Mayan language speakers... and I don't believe the Mayan community has been properly paid for 500 years... And by going out and speaking your language and interpreting your language, you're motivated to think about your language, but you're also making money off your language and starting to value for the first time ever your language. So, for example, I have a Mam interpreter, a young woman who's like 22 years old with a three-year-old

daughter... She's working in court three or four times a week and going to community college... What she's showing her daughter is that she goes to work in a Mam outfit, in traditional dress, and makes good money and is busy and is going to school and using her mind. So, I think it's an incredible opportunity.

Margaret Sawyer, MICOP: [I hope the] model can spread, especially the model of like, "You're an expert; you speak Spanish and Mixteco... you can be a professional by using those two languages even if you don't have a high school or college degree."

Linda Ford and Jennifer Leidich-Bonilla explained that most graduates of the Indigenous Interpreting+ training are now in college pursuing career goals unrelated to interpreting, such as becoming doctors and engineers. For many Indigenous interpreters, becoming an interpreter was an important step on their pathways to educational and career success. However, it should be noted that while this theme was highlighted by several non-Indigenous interviewees, multiple Indigenous interviewees and advisory committee members raised concerns about this development. They explained that, as more ILLA speakers see interpreting as a lucrative career, interpreting ceases to be a vehicle for showing solidarity and contributing your *tequio*¹⁰, or community service. This concern will be further explored in the section below.

Theme 4: Barriers and Needs

Despite the exciting accomplishments described above, barriers to language justice have not disappeared. Indigenous immigrants in California continue to face barriers to language learning; pervasive discrimination and harassment; and a lack of language access in labor, healthcare, and educational settings. Even when ILLA interpreters are used, study participants described problems that impede cross-language communication. While much has been done to

¹⁰ The term *tequio*, a derivative of the Náhuatl word *téquitl*, refers to community service as it is practiced within Indigenous Mexican communities (López-Bárcenas, 2004).

address these problems, interpreting experts described barriers related to Indigenous interpreter training, assessment, and certification. I present an overview of these findings below.

No time for language classes.

Despite the reality that Indigenous language speakers face benefit from gaining proficiency in Spanish and English, they often face significant barriers to language acquisition. In my experience discussing issues of Indigenous language justice in academic and community settings, many English speakers respond to learning about the language barriers facing ILA speakers by asking, “Why don’t they just learn English?” This is easier said than done, with research showing that acquiring a new language generally requires a combination of extensive exposure to the target language, active practice with native speakers, and formal language learning opportunities in classroom environments (Krashen, 1976; Spolsky, 1989).

Study participants noted that while most Indigenous immigrants are actively working to learn Spanish and English, many ILA speakers in California are farmworkers with little time to invest in formal language classes. Celso Guevara, a Mixteco farmworker and community leader in Oxnard, shared his experience with language learning in an interview. Guevara explained that when he came to California as a teenager who was monolingual in Mixteco, his first priority was to learn Spanish. As a farmworker, he was surrounded by Spanish speakers and experienced the most severe discrimination at the hands of Spanish speakers, yet he was unable to defend himself because of speaking only Mixteco. After teaching himself to speak, read, and write Spanish, he became an interpreter with MICOP. He is now learning English as part of his goal to become a certified interpreter but has never been able to attend classes. He explains:

Celso Guevara, MICOP: It’s very difficult for farmworkers... I’ve worked in the fields for the past ten years. The schedule is such that you go in at six in the morning and you leave at six in the evening and you just barely have time to bathe, eat, and try to sleep a little and get up the next day to do it again... so

there's not enough time to say, I'm going to school after work... it can't be done... everyone works seven days a week... So, the most difficult part for people in the fields is that you can never focus on both school and work, you have the option: study or work. If you study, there's no one to pay your rent, you can't support yourself, so most people opt to work.

While challenges related to second language acquisition are not a focus of this study, the reality that Indigenous immigrants frequently have limited access to the resources required to become fully proficient in dominant languages is an aspect of the language-based exclusion they face and exacerbates the need for access to qualified ILIA interpreters.

Severe discrimination and harassment.

Discrimination and harassment related to language emerged as the overarching theme of both focus groups. When asked how language impacts their lives, participants described instances in which they or their children were targeted because of speaking an Indigenous language. These experiences occurred in both Mexico and the U.S. across every sphere of life, including work, school, healthcare, and within families, and varied in severity from insults to death threats. Below, I provide excerpts about anti-Indigenous harassment in agricultural workplaces that demonstrate the ubiquity of linguistic discrimination:

Focus Group Participant: What happens a lot at work is that... people tell us, "Hey, if you want to speak your dialect, you'd better go back to your village."

Focus Groups Participant: When I arrived here I also suffered sexual harassment from managers because they think that we're not intelligent and just because we only speak an Indigenous language they view us as people from the past.

Focus Group Participant: My coworkers and I started chatting in our language and people started to make fun of us and make faces about how we were talking, laughing at us. The general manager arrived and told us to speak Spanish because "people speak Spanish," and we can't speak Spanish because our language is Mixteco. After that, people made fun of us and made us work more... Sometimes they send us into the freezer for three hours to clean vegetables and they make us suffer more because we don't speak Spanish. The people who speak Spanish help each other and the work isn't as difficult for them.

Celso Guevara, MICOP: When I first got here, I wanted to work in the fields in California and I went asking for work and they wouldn't give me a job... because I spoke Mixteco, and when I got a job they started to abuse my labor rights, like making me work 13 or 14 hours instead of 12, or sometimes working in mud or with things that weren't ready to be picked, but they made me do it. Why? Because I couldn't speak, I didn't know how to defend myself or say that this was wrong... My boss... would always say, "that indio¹¹... put him over there," and that's how I noticed the discrimination and different treatment toward Indigenous people."

As a result of harassment, some Indigenous farmworkers reported working in silence for hours to avoid being overheard speaking an Indigenous language, while others said they speak it proudly at work in defiance of anti-Indigenous attitudes. The testimony of Indigenous farmworkers demonstrate that linguisticism is unchecked within many agricultural workplaces.

Indigenous children also face discrimination at school based on being Indigenous, being from Oaxaca, and speaking an Indigenous language, as illustrated by these examples:

Focus Group Participant: Even the teachers discriminate against the children... There are kids who have recently arrived... They treat these children like little animals... they separate them because they think these children don't pay attention or don't understand, but that's not it. That child just speaks another language.

Focus Group Participant: What happens to our children, when you go to the school many times you can see how the other children start to make fun of them when they say they're from Oaxaca... you can see this in an elementary, middle, or high school.

In these examples, coworkers, supervisors, educators, and fellow students expressed contempt for Indigenous people through harassment and discrimination that caused humiliation, fear, and physical suffering. This mistreatment is rooted in an ideology that regards speaking an Indigenous language as a mark of being less than fully human, as evidenced by the reference to an Indigenous language as a "dialect" rather than a legitimate language and the manager's comment that, "*people* speak Spanish." These examples illustrate how racism and linguisticism are

¹¹ *Indio* means "Indian" in Spanish and is commonly used as an insult (Urrieta, 2012).

intertwined in the experiences of Indigenous immigrants, with speaking an Indigenous language often serving as a marker of being “more Indigenous” and thus farther away from mestizo and white ideals.

Linguistic discrimination and harassment increase the vulnerability of Indigenous farmworkers to wage theft and labor abuse. Fátima Peña, who previously managed a labor rights program at MICOP, explained that Indigenous farmworkers frequently experience that the person in charge of their squad undercounts their boxes picked or registers their boxes under the name of another worker. She explained that this behavior may be motivated by either anti-Indigenous attitudes or by favoritism in which the squad leader is trying to boost the pay of people they like. Regardless of the cause, Peña explained that Mixteco speakers who are not proficient in Spanish will frequently opt not to report the unfair treatment to a supervisor because, “It’s like letting everyone see that they have a hard time communicating in Spanish, which sets the person up to be the target of more harassment and being further cheated.” In this way, linguicism prevents people from defending their labor rights.

Anti-Indigenous discrimination affects not only monolingual ILLA speakers, but also the interpreters who attempt to bridge language barriers. Several participants mentioned that ILLA interpreters face discrimination, frequently perpetrated by Spanish-English interpreters. Odilia Romero of FIOB pointed out that Indigenous interpreters face racism similar to that experienced by Black interpreters. Naomi Adelson explained that when Asociación Mayab’s interpreters work in courtrooms, often the bailiff will stop them because they assume they are the defendant, or a Spanish-English interpreter will instruct them to sit in the back of the room without realizing that they are the interpreter with whom they are supposed to be providing relay interpreting. This

demonstrates that even the status associated with being a professional interpreter does not always protect people against anti-Indigenous bias.

Pervasive lack of language access.

While the denial of language access is different than the hostile behavior described above, it also threatens the wellbeing of Indigenous communities. Study participants said that ILLA interpreters still face a lack of language access in critical settings such as healthcare and education. The following examples are representative of numerous testimonies from participants about difficult experiences navigating language barriers in school and medical settings.

Focus Group Participant: They have not given me an interpreter during the three times I've given birth... I have asked for one and they say there aren't any... I've had to use only hand signals to explain what I need.

Focus Group Participant: This year I went to register my children in school. They said there was translation and they give you this computer and it says Spanish, English, and Mixteco... I said, "I speak Mixteco and I want to do the paperwork in Mixteco." I went on [the computer] and everything that appeared was in Spanish and there was nothing in Mixteco.

Arcenio López of MICOP echoed these quotes by explaining that after nearly two decades of advocacy, the provision of language access to Mixteco speakers Ventura County is still inconsistent. He explained, "Sometimes a provider looks at an 'I Speak' card and immediately recognizes their responsibility. But a lot of them don't respect it, saying, 'I'll just talk slow.'" This inconsistency was reflected with the survey responses, with a third of respondents saying that they don't offer language access for ILLA speakers and others saying that they allow relatives to interpret for clients or use untrained bilingual staff rather than trained interpreters. Communication is a crucial aspect of both the provision of healthcare and a parent's ability to participate in their children's education. We found that even if high-quality medical care and

public education are ostensibly available to marginalized communities, unless language access is provided, ILLA speakers will receive substandard care as compared to English speakers.

In addition to healthcare and schools, agriculture is a third critical setting in which Indigenous immigrants face a lack of access to interpreters. Below, a participant describes how these problems manifest for farmworkers in their workplaces.

Focus Group Participant: I have seen a lot of cases of field workers that I identify with, because sometimes they give talks to the workers, but there are a lot of members of our Mixteco community that don't speak Spanish and only understand it. So, there are times that [supervisors] ask, "Did you understand the rules?" and everyone says, "Yes." "Any questions?" and everyone says, "No," and says it's okay. Then the supervisor goes off thinking that everyone understood, and everything is fine. Some time passes, and an accident occurs, and [the workers] didn't have appropriate clothing or shoes and the company says, "Well, it's your fault," and [the workers] say, "Why is that? I didn't know." Well, it's because during the safety and training talks they sometimes give, there's no interpreter. They only speak in Spanish and if everyone says it's okay, they think everything is okay. One time I was in this company and I said, "Are you sure they really understood?" And I told them, "It's not true!" Then I spoke with a supervisor and said, "I know my community. They didn't understand most of what was said, but because of shame we don't ask questions." Then they looked for an interpreter right there and then, and I told my coworker, "Let's see if you can interpret what they said," and she said she would... When the others listened in Mixteco they said, "Oh, we didn't understand what they had told us!" ... So, it would be great to also have an interpreter at the safety talks because it's very important. Sometimes you don't realize the importance of wearing appropriate shoes, appropriate clothing, and the types of fertilizer. Sometimes that health-related stuff isn't understood, and people just say it's all okay, but sometimes we end up being impacted because we don't understand.

Like the example above, other participants described agricultural work environments in which Indigenous farmworkers sign contracts they cannot read, attend safety trainings they cannot understand, and handle chemicals without comprehending warning labels. Employers put the burden to speak up on farmworkers and expect them to interpret for each other rather than providing critical information in a language that employees understand or relaying it through a trained interpreter. Thus, a lack of language access imperils farmworkers' health and safety.

Legal protections are insufficient, unknown, and unenforced.

The problems described above are fueled by the lack of knowledge about language access laws. In focus groups, many participants described their uncertainty about when they have the right to request an interpreter, such as in the quote below.

Focus Group Participant: I would like to know exactly in what settings by law they should provide an interpreter... Because sometimes you don't know and because you don't know, you don't ask for this right.

The service providers in the study expressed similar confusion about language access protections. When responding to the question, “As far as you know, are there laws that affect language access in your sector?” a third of participants marked “yes,” a third marked “no,” and a third said “I don’t know.” While the agency responses were anonymous, most invited participants were service providers that receive state and federal funding, meaning that it is very

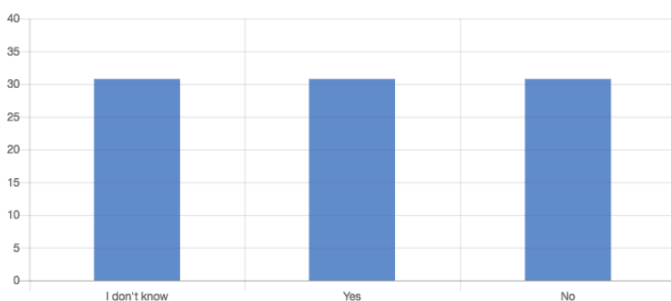


Figure 12: Survey Responses: Knowledge of Language Access Laws.

likely that almost all respondents work for agencies that have a legal obligation to provide language access. These findings reinforce previous research that demonstrates a lack of

knowledge about language access laws among both service providers and non-dominant language speakers (Chen et al., 2007).

In addition to the lack of awareness about language access protections, part of the problem is that there is little enforcement of language access laws. Maureen Keffer, formerly with CRLA, explained that during the Obama administration, the best option for language access advocacy was to bring Title VI complaints to the U.S. Department of Justice. Given the hardline anti-immigrant stance of the Trump administration, however, the U.S. Department of Justice is

unlikely to take up language access complaints. Therefore, Keffer says legal advocates must “completely reassess the landscape” when it comes to seeking enforcement of existing laws.

Moreover, participants argued that current laws do not go far enough to protect the language rights of ILLA speakers. For example, Keffer pointed out that public agencies can avoid legal requirements to provide language access if they can show that doing so would be an “undue burden.” Similarly, Arcenio López of MICOP pointed out that California schools are only required to provide language access for parents if 15 percent of the population served speaks a particular language and is not fully proficient in English. López explained, “This is unjust. All parents have the right to know what’s going on with their children in school.” Thus, changes in legislation will be needed in order to improve language access for ILLA speakers.

Lack of agency-level policies and procedures.

Part of the problem with inconsistent language access within agencies that provide services to ILLA speaking communities appears to be a lack of clear language access policies and procedures. As shown here,

six of 11 respondents said they either don’t have written language access policies or don’t know about such a policy, while six of 11 also said that

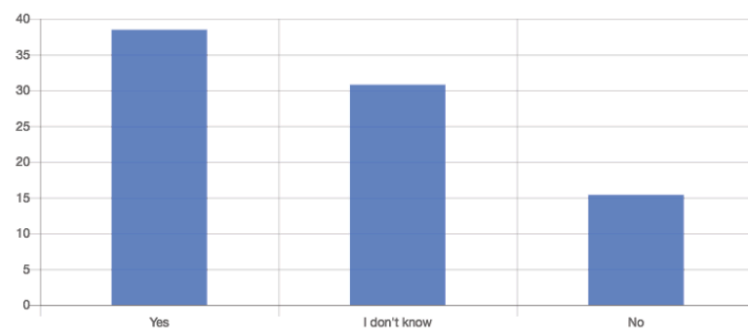


Figure 13: Survey Responses: Agency Policies.

they lack procedures for making sure that interpreters and clients speak the same linguistic variant. Only three survey respondents indicated that their agency had formal requirements about the qualifications of the people hired to provide ILLA interpreting.

Participants gave various examples of the problems caused by the lack of adequate internal language access policies and procedures. One respondent indicated that a language access challenge she faces is that, “Schools often submit requests [for interpreters] very close to the date of requested services.” This problem was echoed by Leoncio Vásquez of CBDIO, who explained that agencies often call at the last minute expecting an interpreter to be available. Meanwhile, MICOP’s Sandy Young explained that the lack of straightforward internal procedures makes it difficult to ensure that Mixteco speaking patients have interpreters when they are referred to specialists.

Sandy Young, MICOP: There's not a seamless system at all. So for instance, if I'm going to refer somebody to a cardiologist, and I know the cardiologist doesn't even speak Spanish, much less Mixteco, and if I as a provider jump through all of the hoops, I can arrange to have Las Islas Clinic contract with the cardiologist office and make sure an interpreter's there, but that probably involves 20 minutes of my time and if you look at it from the point of view of a provider and what's expected of us... it's like, that's a killer, so people just don't do it, so you're back to head nodding.

The lack of clear, efficient internal language access policies and procedures are likely responsible for much of the inconsistent language access reported by ILLA speakers, as well as problems related to discordant Mixteco variants described in the next section.

Mismatched variants and disrespectful interpreters.

Despite significant progress in providing language access for Indigenous language speakers, study participants described problems that persist when interpreters are used. Two related problems that came up in the focus groups were mismatches between Mixteco variants and interpreters who are disrespectful to clients. In the following excerpts, focus group participants describe negative experiences when working with interpreters.

Focus Group Participant: This person was interpreting and since her variant is different she said one word and he answered another and she didn't understand and the man that was interpreting basically made fun of the woman who needed

an interpreter because to him that word had another meaning. I think that he's there to help people and not to make fun of them.

Focus Group Participant: My sister-in-law doesn't speak Spanish and a person who speaks Mixteco, but not the same Mixteco from my community, asked her why she didn't understand and treated her poorly because she didn't speak the same variant. You go ask for help because you don't understand and then that person tells you that you're stupid [un burro] because you don't understand Spanish... That's why almost everyone in my family doesn't look for help because they don't want to help us.

These quotes reflect two distinct but overlapping problems. The first is that Mixteco speakers are often provided with an interpreter who speaks a different variant that makes communication difficult. Second, ILLA speakers sometimes feel that interpreters treat them in a disrespectful manner, including behavior as unprofessional as openly insulting and making fun of clients.

The problem with mismatched variants reverberates across our data. For example, survey respondents said that often they don't know which Mixteco variants are used by clients and Fátima Peña of MICOP described facing challenges as an interpreter when she was matched with clients who couldn't fully understand her due to variant differences. Linguist Jason Ostrove explained that many people don't fully appreciate how different Mixteco variants are, saying they are more like a family of related languages than a single language, thus "It would be like trying to squish Spanish, Romanian, and French into one language when they are very definitely not." A pattern of comments like these shows that the lack of understanding of Mixteco's diverse variants and the failure to take steps to match clients with interpreters who speak compatible variants are impeding language access for Mixteco speakers in California.

Another concern related to the multi-varietal nature of Mixteco and other Indigenous languages is that some interpreters may take advantage of the lack of knowledge among service providers to benefit professional and financially. Numerous interviewees and advisory committee members expressed concern that some unethical Mixteco interpreters take

assignments to interpret for linguistic variants and even languages in which they are not proficient in order to earn money. They explained that ILLA interpreters may feel intense pressure to do so because the demand for ILLA interpreting is generally not high enough for very many interpreters to be able to earn a living only from ILLA interpreting, so there is a feeling that they must constantly seek out any and all job opportunities. Similarly, interviewees and advisory committee members noted that, as interpreting becomes more professionalized, some Indigenous people pursue it as an opportunity for personal gain rather than a way to support the language rights of their communities. As a result of this shift to an individualized, profit-focused framework, some interpreters may be more likely treat Indigenous clients with little respect and to take assignments without ensuring that ILLA speakers have access to interpreters with a compatible variant. This is an important issue for today's ILLA interpreting programs to tackle.

Remote interpreting challenges.

Some study participants pointed to language access challenges that occur when interpreting is provided over the phone or by video. This practice is growing, with ten of 13 survey respondents indicating that their agencies provide phone or video interpreting. A participant explained her experience with phone interpreting by saying:

Focus Group Participant: We're in a doctor's office and they tell you, "We're going to give you telephone interpreting," and it's very uncomfortable. It's sometimes difficult to interpret in-person, and it makes it even more difficult by phone.

Similarly, Naomi Adelson explained that Asociación Mayab opposes video interpreting in courtrooms. She feels that remote interpreting is inappropriate for both hospitals and the courts.

Naomi Adelson, Asociación Mayab: Mayab has been opposing and will not send interpreters to appear in video remote interpreting in the courts... I believe that culturally you just cannot stick in front of a person who has barely gone to school a screen and... have proper communication... mostly [Asociación Mayab interpreters are] going in-person which I think is the preference at all times

because I don't think that video remote interpreting belongs in the hospitals or in the courts. Medical issues are really serious. There's just so much communication lost through a screen... And there are so many issues about privacy and violation of due process rights.

As these examples illustrate, remote interpreting can exacerbate the challenges associated with providing high-quality interpreting in Indigenous languages.

Not all study participants felt that remote interpreting is itself a problem. Some participants suggested that remote interpreting, when held to high standards, can help improve access to ILLA interpreters, pointing out that currently ILLA speakers often have to wait a long time for appointments at courts, schools, and health clinics in order for agencies to schedule in-person interpreters. Katharine Allen of Indigenous Interpreting+ explained that remote interpreting is a “disruptive sea change” that is beyond the control of interpreters. She suggested that interpreters work together to advocate for themselves by creating best practices for remote interpreting that protect quality standards and working conditions as much as possible. She also explained that combining in-person and remote interpreting assignments might help ILLA interpreters cobble together steady jobs that make it worthwhile for them to invest in extensive training and maintaining their professional skills. Meanwhile, Tracy Clark of the Ventura County courts is participating in a pilot project that seeks to create best practices for using video interpreting in legal contexts to deliver high-quality language access. These findings reflect the controversial but important position of remote interpreting in the language access field.

Need for longer trainings.

There is a critical need for robust, rigorous, and culturally relevant Indigenous interpreter trainings and ongoing professional development opportunities. Almost all participants with expertise in training interpreters agreed that the current 40-hour standard is not enough. Forty hours is frequently cited as the unofficial training minimum because 40 hours of training are

required to sit for the national healthcare interpreter certification exams. However, participants emphasized that, in order to be prepared to interpret in challenging legal, medical, and community settings, ILLA interpreters need longer initial trainings and access to internships, mentoring, and ongoing professional development, as illustrated by the quotes below.

Odilia Romero, FIOB: Don't fuck with me, don't lie to me, you can't train a court interpreter in 40 hours. They're selling what they can do, saying they can train a medical or legal interpreter. You don't become an expert in Indigenous interpreting in 40 hours... You have to keep studying. If interpreters don't recognize this, we're doing poor work.

Katharine Allen, Indigenous Interpreting+: The typical, initial 40-hour training for healthcare interpreting focuses primarily on providing an ethical and professional frame for the interpreter. Yet that is often enough to be considered "trained." If you want to cut someone's hair in California you have to have 1,800 hours of training and maintain a state licensure, so it's just absurd to me that people think that 40 hours is going to do it.

Leoncio Vásquez, CBDIO: A lot of people think that with only 40 hours of training they become experts and then they want to charge an exaggerated fee... We have to keep in mind that 40 hours of training isn't all there is to it. I have 15 years of experience with interpreting and I still consider it difficult work, especially in the legal context.

Eric Bishop, SFSU: In order for interpreters to have a basic knowledge of the criminal justice system, interpreter ethics, and the fundamentals of interpreting, the minimal training should include six courses at 45 hours each, such as is offered in the SFSU Extended Learning program.

The examples above demonstrate that ILLA interpreting programs should consider how to provide initial trainings and ongoing professional development opportunities that adequately prepare ILLA interpreters to enter the field and continue to grow as professionals.

Despite universal acknowledgement that interpreting is challenging work that requires significant training, numerous participants raised concerns about the viability of long trainings and ongoing professional development for ILLA interpreters. Naomi Adelson expressed concern that requiring long trainings is frequently not realistic for two reasons. First, Indigenous immigrants often work long hours with little time to participate in training courses. Second, there

is often not enough demand for ILLA interpreting to create full-time interpreting jobs, so many people do not want to invest long training hours in something that is only a side job, a concern that was echoed by multiple interviewees. An example of her perspective is below.

Naomi Adelson, Asociación Mayab: We have those challenges which are constant, which are how much time do people have? If we're going to get them into huge programs, how much work is there going to be? So, it's this whole balancing game and luckily I've just been blessed with really incredible people that really want to help their community and they're willing to put in a lot of time for free on a Saturday... People are here to work; getting the time off for the programs is hard.

Odilia Romero of FIOB shared a similar concern, saying, “You can’t live off what you make as an Indigenous interpreter, you don’t get paid every day. So, people don’t invest the necessary time.” While interview participants seemed to agree with the literature that interpreters should undergo significant professional training and participate in ongoing professional development (Bancroft, 2015; Kleinert, 2016), there was no consensus about the ideal training length or how to address the balance between time-consuming trainings and few work opportunities.

Need for assessment and evaluation.

While Bancroft (2015) argues that linguistic proficiency assessments and credentialing exams are best practices for interpreter trainings, these are generally not available to graduates of the ILLA interpreter training programs. There are no validated, recognized proficiency assessments or interpreter certification exams in non-standardized, multi-varietal Indigenous languages like Mixteco. ILLA interpreters who are proficient in English are eligible to take the written English exams required to become Registered Court Interpreters or CoreCHI healthcare interpreters, but these exams only measure knowledge about interpreting ethics and standards, not interpreting skills or linguistic proficiency. ILLA speakers with strong English and Spanish

skills can pursue healthcare or court certification as a Spanish-English interpreter, although in that case the interpreter's linguistic proficiency in the Indigenous language is never evaluated.

In my interviews, participants had different perspectives about the importance of creating specific healthcare and court certifications for ILLA interpreters, but they all agreed that evaluation measures are critical. In particular, almost all interviewees brought up the concerns about the linguistic proficiency of interpreters in their Indigenous language. First, participants asserted that ILLA interpreters often do not have the linguistic skills to explain complex legal and medical concepts in their native tongue. Second, many interviewees also said that a process is needed to determine the Mixteco variants in which interpreters are proficient because some interpreters claim to be fluent in many variants but are not actually able to interpret well in their non-native variants. Third, participants expressed concern about ILLA interpreters who were born in the U.S. or have lived here for many decades.

Several interviewees discussed concerns about heritage speakers¹² and long-time U.S. residents. These groups are more likely to have strong English skills, which makes them attractive candidates for interpreting because training programs and agencies increasingly aim to recruit and hire people who can interpret directly into English rather than working through relay. However, interviewees expressed concern that interpreters who lack extensive practice using their Indigenous language in an immersive setting may not have the linguistic proficiency required to provide high-quality interpreting in complex legal, medical, and educational settings. Some interviewees feel that interpreting is a great career opportunity for children of Indigenous immigrants, but others expressed concern that heritage speakers tend to have less proficiency in

¹² A heritage language is one that young children learn at home that is not a dominant language in the larger society (Rothman, 2009). In the U.S., this term is frequently used to refer to the children of immigrants who learn a non-dominant language from their family members yet often do not have access to formal education in that language.

their Indigenous language and less familiarity with cultural nuances that impact communication as compared to more recent immigrants. Examples of these concerns are included below.

Arcenio López, MICOP: It's necessary to certify that the person speaks the Indigenous language. Sometimes people are limited in their own language.

Leoncio Vásquez, CBDIO: Some people claim that they speak all the different types or dialects of Mixteco so that they're given more cases, and sometimes they're speaking primarily in Spanish with a few words in Mixteco. I've witnessed this. These practices result in the loss of respect and credibility for all the work we have done to reach our current level, hurting the whole community since then agencies no longer believe that Indigenous interpreters will respond appropriately when undertaking professional work in a medical office or a courtroom.

Odilia Romero, FIOB: There should be a linguistic proficiency assessment, but it's a long road... Sometimes interpreters believe there's not a word for certain things [in the Indigenous language] but there are. The problem is that they're limited in their language... The bilingual people have lived here a long time, so their Indigenous language suffers due to lack of practice.

Eric Bishop, SFSU: This is a problem with all registered languages -- they only test English proficiency so there's no assurance people are actually highly proficient in the other language. And if there's no assessment of Mixteco proficiency, then there's no way to tell if the Mixteco interpreter is really qualified.

The examples above demonstrate that the lack of ILLA interpreter assessment measures is a barrier to ensuring that interpreters are qualified to provide high-quality language assistance. This is also problematic for ILLA interpreters in terms of career opportunities, especially those who are not proficient in English and therefore not eligible become registered in California courts or take the CoreCHI healthcare certification exam. According to interviewees, without these credentials, ILLA interpreters are often paid less than certified interpreters and are ineligible for some positions, such as being hired on as staff member by the California court system. In this way, the lack of formal ILLA interpreter assessment rounds out the study's findings about barriers to Indigenous language justice, which began with obstacles to language

acquisition and ends with impediments to the language proficiency assessments that would help ensure that monolingual ILLA speakers have access to the qualified interpreters they deserve.

Theme 5: Conceptualizing Solutions

Multiple stakeholders provided feedback about how Indigenous immigrants can best overcome barriers to language justice. ILLA speaking community members, organizational leaders, interpreting experts, and linguists all offered suggestions about how to address the problems explored in the preceding section. Their ideas include recommendations for Indigenous advocacy organizations, ILLA interpreting programs, and agencies that serve Indigenous immigrant communities.

Recommendations for Indigenous advocacy organizations.

ILLA speakers in the Oxnard focus groups identified a need to inform Indigenous immigrants about when they have a right to an interpreter and how to self-advocate for language access. Proposed ideas included community forums, workshops, house



Figure 14: MICOP representatives with a Radio Indígena banner (MICOP, n.d.).

meetings, internet campaigns, neighborhood canvassing, fliers, posters, work site visits, and radio programs. Many participants expressed concern that farmworkers have little time to attend events and that fear of immigration enforcement has made people reticent to open their doors to visitors. Participants explained that in-person workshops are inaccessible to many Indigenous farmworkers because they work long hours and often lack transportation. They discarded the idea of door-to-door canvassing because immigration-related fear has made people unwilling to

open their doors to strangers. Participants suggested radio as the most viable option, especially since MICOP operates Radio Indígena, which broadcasts in Mixteco, Zapoteco, and Spanish.

The excerpts below represent this sentiment.

I think that the most convenient option would be to use a radio station like we have at MICOP. There should be a program about language justice telling all of us what our rights are in our language and where to go to get more information. Sometimes a fieldworker works fourteen hours and it's incredible and people ask, "How?" But it's true because we go in at 6:00am and leave at 6:00pm and it's an hour-long commute with traffic and you get home at 7:00pm and you bathe and barely eat and then it's very difficult to make it to a workshop. But with radio, it's my understanding that they let you listen to the radio in the fields as long as the volume isn't too high. That seems great because MICOP has a very good radio station and you would just need to add this topic to a program.

An important point was made by a participant who is monolingual in the Mixteco variant of his hometown. In the quote below, he explains that if radio is used to educate Indigenous immigrants, the information should be made available in different linguistic variants.

Listening to the radio helps a lot, talking about this on the radio is a very good idea, that way other people will be informed and it's necessary to include it there. Even though it's the same language, sometimes we don't understand the Mixteco from each municipality. Sometimes this happens on the radio and we try to understand, but it's not the same... There are different variants; like we are from San Martín Peras, others are from San Martín Durazos and Juxtlahuaca and the variants are different. I imagine the same thing happens with Zapoteco. One idea would be for the radio to use different Mixteco variants on different days.

The excerpts above reflect a long history of solidarity, ingenuity, and self-help among Indigenous immigrants, thus representing an example of resistant capital as described by Yosso (2005). Participants want their communities to have access to information about their language rights so that they can be safe at work, access essential services, and participate in their children's education. The enthusiasm for using radio for community education about language justice points to the efficacy of this medium for outreach to Indigenous farmworkers in general and calls into question traditional approaches that prioritize in-person workshops. The comment about providing information in multiple Mixteco variants is critical if the goal is to reach

monolingual Mixteco speakers. The suggestion about developing a radio campaign was taken seriously, and the advisory committee is working to make this a reality.

Recommendations for Indigenous interpreting programs.

Robust, ongoing, culturally appropriate trainings.

As previously described, interpreting experts, Indigenous leaders, and ILLA speakers concurred that longer trainings and ongoing professional developments are needed to adequately prepare ILLA interpreters to provide high-quality language assistance in diverse settings such as courtrooms, schools, and hospitals. While there was no consensus about the ideal number of hours for a baseline training, there was strong support for providing trainings that are more than 40 hours in length and for creating opportunities to develop professional skills through internships, mentorship, and ongoing professional development, such as through monthly meetings in which interpreters can practice new skills. Many interviews recommended learning from the Indigenous court interpreter training developed by INALI in Mexico (Kleinert, 2016). Luis Arturo Fuentes Gómez (Arturo Fuentes) of INALI explained that INALI's trainings are 220 hours in length and that 80 percent of the training time is devoted to hands-on practice with peer feedback, which differs significantly from the 40-hour healthcare interpreter training model in the U.S. that primarily introduce participants to interpreting ethics and standards but provide little opportunity for concrete skill building.

Participants emphasized that we must balance the need for more training with the realities of trainees who are almost always immigrants or children of immigrants who tend to work long hours in low paying jobs with few opportunities to take time off. This challenge is exacerbated by the sparse work opportunities available to many ILLA interpreters, which can make it hard to justify investing in time-consuming training programs. Solutions may include careful polling of

potential trainees in order to schedule longer trainings in a way that honors the availability of participants, even if this means spacing out training sessions over a significant period of time.

Study participants also suggested training strategies to address the challenges related to Mixteco's numerous variants. Participants recommended training interpreters to recognize the different variants and understand which variants are compatible and which are too far apart for interpreters and clients to communicate effectively. They said interpreters must be trained in a procedure to check-in with clients before appointments to assess if their variants are close enough for clear communication or if they need to find a different interpreter.

Multiple participants also said that skilled interpreters can learn to understand and speak multiple Mixteco variants so that they can successfully communicate with a broader range of speakers. For example, Mixteco interpreter Fátima Peña explained that she did this on her own, saying, "Little by little I have adopted certain words to be able to communicate." MICOP's Sandy Young said that many experienced interpreters in Oxnard have learned to speak the region's most frequently used variants, even if they differ from their native variants. Tracy Clark of the Ventura County courts emphasized that this challenge is common among speakers of other multi-varietal languages, such as American Sign Language and Arabic, and that interpreters can sometimes study in order to bridge the gap between variants that aren't so different that another interpreter is required. More research is needed to support interpreters who wish to learn how to identify and acquire other Mixteco variants, such as the study led by Eric Campbell, a UCSB linguist who is collaborating with MICOP to document Mixteco variants in Ventura County.

In addition to straddling different variants, participants recommended training to help interpreters facilitate communication between speakers who have radically divergent cultures and levels of formal education, such as when interpreting between Indigenous immigrants who

have participated in only a few years of formal schooling and doctors and attorneys with advanced degrees. For example, participants recommended training in both Western and Indigenous worldviews so that interpreters better understand the cultural frames of reference of their clients. Interpreters also need training about how to check in with Indigenous clients to make sure that they are understanding them during the interpreting assignment, especially when using a lot of specialized vocabulary and conveying complex medical and legal concepts that are likely to be unfamiliar to people from Indigenous backgrounds. This should include training about how to respectfully inform the non-Indigenous party that the interpreter needs to clarify a concept with a client, with participants explaining that this can be challenging in high-stakes legal and medical contexts in which doctors and judges may be in a hurry to move things forward. Lastly, participants suggested strategies to develop glossaries of specialized terminology for non-written Indigenous languages, such as by creating online video glossaries. Examples of these recommendations are below.

José García, CHIA: [Cultural competency] is primarily about each of us becoming aware of who we are, our own point of view and culture. Interpreters have to be aware of our own cultures, the patient's culture, and the doctor's culture and respect it.

Arturo Fuentes, INALI: The last update that we added to the training program was an anthropological perspective, since this gets at the cultural relevancy of interpreting and translation, which is necessary to achieve a better understanding between the people being assisted by the interpreter, that is, the interpreter should develop an understanding of what comprises a crime for the civil servant of the state institution, like robbery for example; and, on the other hand, the interpreter also must develop an understanding of what that same act signifies for the normative systems of the communities. And this enriches an intercultural understanding of the two systems of justice at play. We realized that this subject was important for the interpreters so that they could have a more robust frame of reference for comprehending and understanding both parties.

Katharine Allen, Indigenous Interpreting+: Honestly, we need groups of Mixtecos, Zapotecos and Chiapanecos who can work in workgroups or committees dedicated to creating those glossaries. That would be the ideal way

for creating what does not currently exist: a valid process for finding language equivalencies for concepts that do not currently exist in many Indigenous languages. We can take a page from sign language interpreting and use audio and video resources for languages with no written form. One idea we've discussed for a long time is the possibility of setting up a Wiki page where anyone could contribute a glossary to a national or international glossary site.

Arturo Fuentes, INALI: It is a priority for the interpreter to develop the consciousness that they must continually look for the best way to communicate, and to make sure that this happens by way of asking the other party if they understood and corroborating this by asking the client to explain their understanding of the information that they reported that they understood.

These recommendations suggest that strong ILLA interpreting programs must be culturally relevant and linguistically specific, which reflects Kleinert's (2016) assertion that Eurocentric models of interpreter training are inappropriate for Indigenous interpreters. It is clear that Indigenous interpreter trainings should build specialized vocabulary in Indigenous languages. Furthermore, such programs should explicitly address Indigenous and Western worldviews and cultures and the role of interpreters in mediating between them, developing the specialized skills needed to bridge communication between parties with disparate linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds who occupy different positions with regard to institutional power.

A related finding is the recommendation for training programs to teach interpreters about how to show respect and humility to Indigenous people and to approach interpreting as a way to advance Indigenous language rights and community empowerment, not as a vehicle for personal gain. Participants cautioned that sometimes interpreters treat clients like a business opportunity rather than fellow humans who deserve respect and compassion. Three participants explained:

Focus Group Participant: I believe that what people who interpret need, more than anything, is humility and respect because it's not worth anything to have a title and no respect for it.

Focus Group Participant: To be an interpreter it's not enough to say, I want to make some money; to be an interpreter you need to say, I wholeheartedly want to help people.

Focus Group Participant: I think that there should be training, but also there need to be reminders that we are human, and we have feelings. Sometimes [interpreters] don't speak appropriately or have an appropriate attitude, without knowing about the situation that brought someone into a clinic. Maybe someone feels really bad and then [the interpreter] comes in treating their work like a business... So, it would be good for [interpreters] to show a lot of humility and be conscious that we are humans and we are interpreting between humans and not electronic devices.

These testimonies from ILLA speakers in focus groups were echoed by the advisory committee, who worried that as interpreting becomes profitable, more ILLA speakers are pursuing it as a way to make money rather than an opportunity to give their *tequio*, or community service. Thus, preparing ILLA interpreters is not just about teaching technical skills and vocabulary, but also cultivating a deeply respectful, culturally appropriate approach to interacting with Indigenous clients and empowering them through high-quality language access. Advisory committee members emphasized that Indigenous interpreter training should include consciousness-raising about decolonization and Indigenous language rights, a stance that mirrors the recommendations offered by Kleinert (2016) about Indigenous interpreting in a Mexican context. Such an explicitly decolonial curriculum would help re-position interpreting as a way to advance equity and justice for Indigenous communities, not just a career opportunity.

Lastly, advisory committee members such as Odilia Romero of FIOB emphasized the need to for trauma-informed interpreter trainings. Interpreters must learn how to interpret completely and accurately for Indigenous people who have experienced trauma, such as rape survivors, including learning and using terminology related to sexuality that may be considered vulgar in some Indigenous cultures. Romero emphasized that training about trauma-informed interpreting must address self-care for interpreters, who may experience secondary trauma as a result of transmitting the testimonies of people who have undergone violence and suffering. This

important consideration reflects Kleinert's (2016) recommendation that Indigenous interpreter training in Mexico address strategies for interpreters to manage the emotional impact of interpreting in order to prevent serious long-term health consequences.

Create Indigenous language proficiency assessments.

Many interviewees recommended creating ILLA linguistic proficiency assessments to be used as a pre-requisite for the interpreter trainings described above. Most participants said that while the state and national certifying bodies would most likely not create exams in Indigenous languages because the demand is not high enough to justify the cost of developing and administering the tests, ILLA interpreter organizations should create the assessments themselves. Some felt that would be ideal for community-based organizations to be the ones to create ILLA linguistic proficiency evaluations rather than state or national agencies due to their expertise in specific linguistic and cultural issues. This perspective is reflected in the excerpts below.

Arcenio López, MICOP: MICOP has the capacity to evaluate the linguistic proficiency of interpreters... As organizations that are serving Indigenous communities, we should create internal systems or mechanisms to evaluate linguistic proficiency.

Eric Bishop, SFSU: It may be a more viable option for the organizations like MICOP and Indigenous Interpreting+ to take this work on internally because the California Court system is unlikely to invest in the development of interpreter exams in languages that are used less frequently.

Various participants, such as Chatina linguistic anthropologist Emiliana Cruz and Katharine Allen of Indigenous Interpreting+, recommended learning from INALI's approach to evaluating linguistic proficiency and interpreting skills in non-standardized, multi-varietal Indigenous Mexican languages, a process which is documented in research by Kleinert (2016). Below, Arturo Fuentes describes how INALI assesses the linguistic proficiency of candidates before each training session by first identifying a speaker of each linguistic variant present

among candidates and then training that person to serve as an evaluator of linguistic proficiency in that specific variant.

Arturo Fuentes, INALI: It's fundamental to evaluate the linguistic proficiency of aspiring interpreter trainees. We have had cases, for example, where 100 candidates have arrived and of these 100, only 40 have the bilingual capacity necessary to ensure clear understanding and communication. To evaluate the Indigenous language of the candidates, we seek assistance from a speaker of the Indigenous language. We train this evaluator in the use of an instrument that allows us to assess competency in the Indigenous language. The instrument is in Spanish and the evaluator has to translate it on the spot while conducting the oral assessment with the candidate. After we train the evaluator, we accompany them in their first evaluations to help them interpret their observations so that they can report the information we need to know, which is about linguistic proficiency, not so much their knowledge of their culture, if they can communicate in a high register, rather if they can communicate effectively. So, once we have trained and accompanied the evaluator and we ensure they can conduct an appropriate evaluation, we let them continue conducting the evaluations of the remaining candidates, and once in a while we check on them to make sure that they are doing well. We do this with the candidates of all the languages and variants that are present as soon as we have an evaluator trained for this purpose.

With regard to assessing linguistic proficiency, an important consideration was raised by UCSB linguist Eric Campbell. He cautioned against developing proficiency tests that are not responsive to the diversity of Mixteco variants, which includes recognizing the validity of contemporary Mixteco variants that integrate a significant amount of Spanish. Campbell argued that such tests have the potential to enforce purist ideas and denigrate linguistic repertoires that fuse Mixteco and Spanish. He expressed concern that proficiency tests could even discourage people from speaking Mixteco or from passing it on to their children, leading to language loss. Campbell's perspective is represented by the quote below.

Eric Campbell, UCSB: There is no single kind of standard Mixtec or lingua franca variety with which to measure general Mixtec proficiency. Mixtec is cluster of multiple languages and many varieties. Few people would be able to pass such a test if it were based on a single variety, and there would be no way to choose any "correct" variety. Presenting a single variety as if it were a standard could foster dangerous ideas like "everyone speaks broken Mixtec," which is false because everyone speaks great Mixtec if they're a native speaker... There are native Mixtec words that have fallen out of use and which can be recovered, but

someone not knowing those words doesn't reflect non-proficiency; proficiency is about if they can communicate effectively with others who speak their variety, and that communication may include a lot of linguistic influence from Spanish. Imposing a proficiency standard can be dangerous and promote a kind of purism that may discourage people from speaking Mixtec. They may feel they shouldn't even teach it to their kids because their Mixtec is not good enough, which can impede language transmission.

This warning will be a key consideration if Indigenous interpreting organizations decide to take up the task of creating linguistic proficiency assessments. In the case of Mixteco and other multi-varietal languages, such evaluations must honor each language's variants without imposing a hierarchy among them, while at the same time ensuring that aspiring interpreters have the level of bilingual competency required to accurately and completely convey complex concepts between their Indigenous language and Spanish or English. Moving forward, U.S.-based interpreter trainers can learn from the process developed by INALI to verify the bilingualism of Indigenous court interpreter training candidates in Mexico (Kleinert, 2016).

Use and build on the certification options that currently exist.

Interviewees emphasized that English-proficient ILLA interpreters should pursue any certification options available to them, such as becoming a Registered Interpreter in the California courts and taking the CoreCHI healthcare interpreting exam. While neither option addresses the linguistic proficiency assessment concerns discussed above, participants explained that passing these exams will help interpreters have access to better employment opportunities and higher pay. Examples of this perspective follow.

José García, CHIA: Education and certification are important in today's world. We support certification because it's a way of validating interpreting skills. Today, more hospitals and employers are asking for certification.

Leoncio Vásquez, CBDIO: [Should interpreters pursue the certification options that exist?] Definitely. We have to increase the credibility of the interpreters that we're using. Certification is something that is especially in demand in the legal realm. Most of our interpreters haven't taken this step. I understand both sides of

the issue. I understand why agencies ask for someone certified. But for interpreters, they see that they're not going to make a living by being an interpreter, so perhaps they don't see why they should invest a lot of time and resources in continuing with training, gaining expertise in a lot of areas of the profession, getting registered, and studying vocabulary in different languages, etc. because there's not a lot of demand. But if they do it, this may create more demand because the agencies want certified interpreters.

Naomi Adelson, Asociación Mayab: [Another reason it's important to become registered] is nobody can get a position at the courts, they can only contract for the courts unless they're registered... they do have part-time positions and if you end up working more than half-time you get full benefits. So, I think that this is a very excellent and possible career for speakers of Latin American Indigenous languages. And that is what I would like to see.

In addition, several participants discussed options to improve the options currently available for court interpreters. For example, Lourdes Cerna, who is on the board of CHIA and a committee member with the International Medical Interpreter Association, feels that it is worthwhile to push the national healthcare interpreter certifying bodies to create specific tests for Mixteco and other Indigenous languages for which there is a significant need for interpreters. Tracy Clark thinks that there is potential for the California court system to create a certification option for ILLA interpreters who are not proficient in English based on a new category called Enrolled Deaf Interpreters. This category recognizes Certified Deaf Interpreters who provide relay interpreting in teams with American Sign Language interpreters, similar to the way that Spanish-Mixteco interpreters work in teams with Spanish-English interpreters. If the state courts created a similar system to recognize trained Spanish-ILLA interpreters, they might be able to access some of the benefits that are now only available to English-proficient court interpreters.

Recommendations for agencies and employers.

Study participants converged on three key recommendations for public and private healthcare, social service, legal, and educational agencies that serve Indigenous immigrants. These recommendations are also highly relevant to employers with Indigenous employees. A

first step that agencies can take is to establish partnerships with ILLA interpreting organizations. Second, they should develop formal written policies to ensure clients have access to qualified interpreters or staff members who speak their language. Third, they should provide training to their staff about linguistic and cultural competency and how to work with Indigenous interpreters. Below, participants provide examples about the importance of formal collaborations between ILLA interpreting organizations and agencies.

Leoncio Vásquez, CBDIO: Sometimes the agencies that contract with interpreters call us and want an interpreter to be there in-person or on the phone right away. We prefer to work with them in a more formal manner and to establish long-term agreements that delineate their responsibilities and our own.

Odilia Romero, FIOB: We have an excellent relationship with the L.A. police. We provide them with three workshops each year and send them interpreters when they're working with Indigenous families.

By forging partnerships with Indigenous interpreting organizations, agencies will have the signed contracts and formal protocols in place ahead of time so that everything runs as smoothly as possible when the need to schedule an ILLA interpreter arises. Such contracts must cover financial concerns, such as hourly rates, travel reimbursement, minimum charges for appointments, and requirements such as hiring interpreters in teams of two for lengthy assignments. Negotiating costs and requirements upfront will help ensure that ILLA interpreters are paid fairly, protect the quality of service, and encourage agencies to incorporate language access expenses into their annual budgets.

To ensure that ILLA speaking clients have access to high-quality interpreting, agencies should create clear policies and procedures. Such policies should cover the use of interpreters and the roles of multilingual staff, ensuring that everyone who provides language assistance has specialized training beyond being bilingual. Based on suggestions from focus group participants, survey respondents, and interviewees, these policies should require that interpreting be provided

in the client's primary language, meaning that ILLA speakers should be provided with interpreters in their Indigenous language and not a Spanish-English interpreter if they are not fully proficient in Spanish. This also means that Spanish-English interpreters who work with agencies must be directed to refuse to interpret for ILLA speaking clients who are not fully proficient in Spanish, since they are often the gatekeepers to identifying clients who need ILLA interpreters. Participants emphasized that language access should be comprehensive, encompassing both outreach efforts and direct services, and should address both spoken and written communication, with procedures in place to serve clients with low literacy or whose languages are not written. Language access policies can also address hiring goals, encouraging the recruitment of staff who speak the languages of the agency's constituency.

Participants recommended that agencies contract with Indigenous interpreting organizations to provide regular training to their staff about linguistically and culturally responsive approaches to working with Indigenous immigrant communities. The training should cover legal obligations to provide language access and also explain the benefits to service providers of using qualified interpreters given that effective communication is essential to successful outcomes in most agencies that interface with immigrant communities. Training should include how to determine if a client needs an interpreter, such as by asking a client who shows signs of not being fully proficient in Spanish to repeat back information that was provided to them to check for comprehension. Training should cover how to identify the client's linguistic variant and inform service providers that additional time may be needed for interpreters to transmit complex concepts into Indigenous languages because of the lack of direct equivalents and that interpreters should be permitted to check-in with clients to ensure understanding.

A critical aspect of agency policies and staff training is ensuring that clients and interpreters share the same variant of the Indigenous language or that their variants are similar enough to allow for effective communication. This can be accomplished through two steps; first, asking for the client's hometown so that interpreting organization can identify an interpreter with a similar variant, and second, conducting a variant check before appointments so that the interpreter and client can confirm that they do indeed understand each other well. This check-in is also an important opportunity for the interpreter to make sure that the assignment doesn't pose a conflict of interest, because ILLA interpreters often come from small, densely knit communities and they may know the client and potentially have a relationship with them that could cause ethical concerns. Participants describe the importance of these steps below.

Eric Campbell, UCSB: There's a great need for educating providers that they have to know the person's hometown--village and municipality--in order to search for an interpreter that speaks or is familiar with the same variety, or at least fairly mutually intelligible variety.

Naomi Adelson, Asociación Mayab: When you start out, you have a minute to talk to the person to make sure you do understand each other, to make sure you're speaking the same dialect, the same language and everything, because the courts and the doctor's office... often mess that up asking a K'iche' interpreter to come instead of the Kichwa interpreter.

Language justice is a collaborative endeavor. By following the recommendations in this section, public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and employers can ensure that ILLA speakers have access to life-sustaining services, are safe at work, are treated fairly by the criminal justice system, and can actively participate in their children's education.

Theme 6: Visions of the Future

Indigenous community leaders, interpreters, and allies in the study looked ahead to the future of Indigenous interpreting in California. Some expressed uncertainty about if Indigenous Latin American migration would continue to their regions, especially in light of current anti-

immigrant policies. Others feel certain that ongoing political, economic, and ecological crises will continue to drive Indigenous people to leave their homelands and seek survival in California and other parts of the U.S., fueling an ongoing need for interpreting in diverse Indigenous languages. A few interviewees explained that the current wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric and brutal policies have created so much fear that it's difficult to feel hopeful about the future. Nevertheless, many interviewees had expansive visions of the future of both ILLA interpreting and Indigenous language justice, as illustrated by the examples below.

Fátima Peña, MICOP: What I see in the future most of all is our children and youth conserving our language. I see future doctors speaking with others directly in our language. I see future owners of big companies... Because when you know that someone who speaks your language is there, that's where you will go, right?

Odilia Romero, FIOB: We have to move up to the next level. We already have doctors, we have anthropologists, it's time for us to have professional interpreters... We need more ethical, dignified interpreters with the hearts of activists because you have to advocate for our people.

Alondra Mendoza, MICOP: In the future, I would like all parents to be involved [in schools] and to leave behind the idea that they don't speak Spanish or Mixteco in schools. [I would like] for them to be involved more in meetings, to ask more questions, to support their students more...if parents are more involved from when their children are young then I think more young people will graduate and go on to higher education.

In the excerpts above, Indigenous leaders envision a future in which ILLA speakers have access to highly qualified interpreters, Indigenous parents are actively involved in their children's education, Indigenous youth go on to higher education and fulfilling careers, and Indigenous languages remain vibrant for many generations to come. These visions were echoed by advisory committee members who said that by 2020, they envision an end to the shortage of ILLA interpreters and collaboration between organizations that provide Indigenous interpreting services. Participants prioritized improvements to ILLA interpreter training and evaluation, with Lourdes Cerna, Maureen Keffer, Naomi Adelson, and Tracy Clark all envisioning a future in

which ILLA interpreters can access formal certification in the courts and healthcare. With respect to the resilience of Indigenous language, Eric Campbell of UCSB said he hopes to see Mixteco taught in schools and Sandy Young and Fátima Peña of MICOP want to have so many Mixteco speaking healthcare practitioners and other professionals that interpreters become unnecessary. In spite of the obstacles, these diverse visions are fueling the interpreters, trainers, advocates, and scholars committed to advancing Indigenous language justice in California.



Figure 15: Dancers and musicians perform for Indigenous farmworkers in Santa Maria at an event organized by FIOB. Photo by David Bacon.



Figure 16: A Mixteco-speaking student named Ofelia at Ohlone Elementary School. Photo by David Bacon.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis investigated the state of Indigenous language interpreting in California and how Indigenous immigrants can overcome barriers to language justice. Working collaboratively with MICOP and our advisory committee, we gathered qualitative data from interviews with subject matter experts, focus groups with Indigenous language speakers, and surveys of service providers. These data deepened our insight into the history and accomplishments of Indigenous interpreting and language rights advocacy in California, today's complex obstacles, and recommendations from multiple stakeholders about how to best move forward. This thesis supports previous research that demonstrates that Indigenous immigrants, especially farmworkers, face language barriers that endanger their wellbeing (Mines et al, 2010; Holmes, 2013; Maxwell et al., 2017). While previous research touches on language as a tangential issue impacting the lives of Indigenous immigrants, this thesis is the first study about Indigenous immigrants to put language rights front and center, demonstrating that linguisticism deepens the severe inequities faced by Indigenous immigrants in critical sectors such as the workplace, education, and healthcare. I show that access to interpreters has been a major priority of Indigenous immigrant advocacy groups since their inception, ultimately arguing that language justice is a vital strand of the struggle for the rights of Indigenous immigrant communities.

As a CBPR project, the purpose of this study is to inform Indigenous language justice practitioners and contribute to advocacy and education projects that benefit communities and influence policy change. The findings presented here have inspired an energetic and sustained dialogue among the advisory committee members, who have opted to continue meeting on an ongoing basis in order to work through the thorny challenges facing Indigenous interpreting and develop collective solutions. In this section, I discuss the significance of the findings in relation

to one another and their broader implications for scholarship, practice, and policy, as well as considering the study's limitations. I undertake this discussion with the understanding that participatory research is a dynamic and iterative process. Thus, in the months to come, the Indigenous leaders who comprise the advisory committee will augment and analyze the study's findings and apply them to social change efforts in ways that are presently unforeseeable.

Implications for Scholarship

This thesis was guided by a transdisciplinary theoretical approach that weaves together three frameworks. First, I take up Blackwell, Boj López, and Urrieta's (2017) framework of Critical Latinx Indigeneities, itself an interdisciplinary approach that brings together Native American Studies, Latinx Studies, and Latin American studies. In order to center language justice, I employ a language rights framework rooted in the work of sociolinguists like May (2013) and Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995) and legal scholars like Chen (1998). Third, I bring in Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth, which is based on critical race theory. In addition to these theoretical frameworks, this study builds on work in Interpreting Studies about community interpreting (Bancroft, 2015; Pöchhacker, 2016), especially the sparse scholarship about Indigenous language interpreting (Mikkelsen, 1999b; Beaton-Thone, 2015; Kleinert, 2016). Together, the work of previous scholars laid a foundation for the collaborative development of a conceptualization of language justice based on the definitions of Indigenous immigrant leaders, interpreters, and community members, as well an exploration of the linguistic barriers faced by Indigenous immigrants in California and strategies to overcome them.

This thesis contributes to language policy scholarship by analyzing how current U.S. and California language policy impact Indigenous immigrants, applying language rights principles to ILLA speakers in California, and calling for renewed focus on issues of language access. The

definition of Indigenous language justice as rights, respect, and resilience reflects linguistic human rights models like that of Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995) by asserting that language justice is the manifestation of a set of fundamental rights that include the right to communication; the right to language access in public education, labor, and healthcare; the right to be free from language-based discrimination; and the right to maintain Indigenous languages. However, a salient difference is the while current linguistic human rights scholars such as Skutnabb-Kangas et al. (2017) focus on issues such as the right to mother tongue-based multilingual education, the participants in this study focus primarily on language access, especially the right to interpreters in healthcare, educational, and workplace settings. While multilingual education that helps preserve Indigenous languages is mentioned by study participants, access to interpreters is consistently highlighted as a priority due to its immediate relevance to the health and safety of Indigenous immigrants. Thus, my findings suggest that language policy scholars, especially experts in language rights, should deepen their attention to the language access concerns of marginalized immigrant communities, an issue that will only grow in importance as migration continues to surge worldwide.

At the time of writing, the need for Indigenous language interpreters in response to the current migration crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border is making headlines (Snow, 2018). While the popular press has occasionally picked up on the importance of interpreters to the wellbeing of Indigenous immigrant communities, there is still little formal research on the topic (Beaton-Thone, 2015; Kleinert, 2016). This may reflect the reality that Interpreting Studies is a young discipline that emerged in the 1990s with a focus on conference interpreting and has only recently dedicated serious attention to community interpreting (Pöchhacker, 2016). To my knowledge, this is the first academic paper to focus on Indigenous language interpreting in the

U.S. since Mikkelsen's (1999b) article describing the first Indigenous interpreter trainings organized by FIOB and CRLA in 1997. As my findings make clear, there is a critical need to invest in scholarship about the language barriers facing Indigenous immigrants and the vibrant efforts that are underway to improve the training of and access to qualified ILLA interpreters. Future research in Interpreting Studies should pick up this thread by addressing the many ILLA interpreting issues beyond the scope of this thesis, such as legal interpreting for detained Indigenous asylum seekers in the U.S. and how to strengthen the linguistic proficiency of heritage speakers of Indigenous languages who aspire to become interpreters.

My findings are also relevant to Critical Latinx Indigeneities because they spotlight the role of language in how Indigenous Latinx immigrants experience the overlapping racial and colonial hierarchies that Blackwell et al. (2017) call hybrid hegemonies. According to Blackwell et al. (2017), "Often the racism migrants experience is the entrenched anti-Indian hatred enacted by mestizos and Ladinos as they migrate from Southern Mexico and Central America through Mexico, as well as once they arrive in the United States" (p. 127). When focus group participants describe being discriminated against by Spanish speaking Latino supervisors who tell them to speak Spanish instead of Mixteco because *people speak Spanish*, and Spanish-English legal interpreters send ILLA interpreters to the back of the courtroom, this is the anti-Indigenous racism critiqued by Critical Latinx Indigeneities. Meanwhile, Indigenous immigrants must grapple with the xenophobia and racism of the general U.S. society, such as healthcare providers who devalue the health of immigrants so much that they refuse to provide them with interpreters, despite a legal mandate to do so. By presenting data about anti-Indigenous linguistic discrimination and documenting how language rights have been at the center of Indigenous immigrant social movements for decades, this thesis contributes to scholarship about the

Indigenous diaspora from Latin America and argues that language rights should be a focus of future research in Critical Latinx Indigeneities.

I believe that scholarship about Indigenous language rights should continue to look to Indigenous communities for answers. This thesis reflects Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth by turning to Indigenous community members to define the meaning of language justice and to elucidate both the barriers they face and the most promising strategies to overcome them. I document the sustained community organizing that has taken place since the early 1990s to improve language access for ILLA speakers in California and celebrate the accomplishments of these community-driven efforts, such as the transformation of California regions like Ventura County where numerous agencies contract with trained ILLA interpreters and hire multilingual staff who speak the Indigenous languages of their communities. While many challenges remain, it is important to reflect on the strategies that have been successful, such as the unrelenting advocacy efforts that resulted in fruitful partnerships between Indigenous interpreting organizations and public agencies like health clinics, schools, and police departments. As attention to Indigenous language justice grows, scholars must remember that while the issue may be new to scholars, the interpreting field, and the general public, Indigenous immigrants have been working on these issues for decades. While more research in this area is needed, as scholars we must approach Indigenous communities with humility and respect, recognizing that Indigenous immigrants are the experts on their own experiences and have a wealth of knowledge about how to fight for the human rights and wellbeing of their communities.

Lastly, there is a need for updated demography about Indigenous immigrants in California that prioritizes linguistic data. While *California's Indigenous Farmworkers* (Mines et al., 2010) provides important demographic information about Indigenous farmworkers,

agricultural workers are only one subset of Indigenous immigrants in California. Even this data is limited because Mines et al. did not investigate the linguistic proficiency of Indigenous farmworkers in different languages. That is, no data exist about how many Indigenous immigrants speak primarily Indigenous languages and are not fully proficient in Spanish or English, as opposed to being fully bi or trilingual. There is also a lack of quantitative data about the impact of speaking only an Indigenous language on measures of wellbeing such as health, income, and education. Without these data, it's difficult to make the case for funding, policy, and institutional changes to address the concerns of monolingual ILLA speakers. Thus, demography to document the linguistic proficiency of Indigenous immigrants in Indigenous languages, Spanish, and English should be a priority for future research.

Implications for Practice

Implications for Indigenous immigrant community organizations.

My findings highlight what ILLA interpreting practitioners believe should be done to advance Indigenous language justice, with specific recommendations for Indigenous immigrant community organizations, Indigenous interpreting programs, and agencies serving ILLA speaking communities. With regard to Indigenous immigrant community organizations, this study indicates that, while progress has been made, there is a need for community education for ILLA speakers in California about their language rights, especially when they have a legal right to an interpreter and must self-advocate for this right to be respected. In particular, community radio programs emerged as the most promising strategy to reach Indigenous immigrant communities, especially farmworkers who often have lack the time and transportation needed to attend in-person workshops. Such radio programs should be tailored to the linguistic variants in each local community and, in addition to education about language rights, could be a vehicle for

promoting other aspects of language justice, such as cultivating pride in speaking Indigenous languages and helping people maintain their languages and cultures and share them with their children by broadcasting oral histories and radio theater programs in Indigenous languages.

Implications for Indigenous interpreting programs.

As Indigenous interpreting begins to receive mainstream attention, it will be important for ILLA interpreter training programs to heed the recommendations offered by study participants. My findings suggest that completing 40 hours of introductory training is not enough to prepare skilled interpreters for all the complex settings in which they are needed, such as legal, healthcare, and educational settings. ILLA interpreter training programs should consider creating substantially longer training courses, as well as developing internships and mentoring programs in which trainees can hone their skills as they transition into professional practice. Next, ILLA interpreter programs should develop ongoing opportunities for study and skill-building, such as monthly meetings during which interpreters develop glossaries to help them interpret specialized vocabulary into their Indigenous languages, and practice specific skills that are in high demand, such as simultaneous interpreting in which interpreters transmit messages into the target language at the same time as a speaker is talking using audio equipment. Because of the limited time available to Indigenous interpreters who often have to hold down full-time jobs other than interpreting and care for their families, interpreter development programs must be scheduled so that they conform to the schedules of participants and include measures to increase accessibility, such as paying a living wage to interns so that they can afford to give up other jobs and offering childcare, meals, and transportation support for training and ongoing skill-building programs.

A critical part of creating effective training programs is to create ways to effectively screen the linguistic proficiency of aspiring trainees beforehand and assess skill acquisition

afterward. This study found a critical need to invest in evaluation measures to ensure that ILLA interpreters are qualified to provide high-quality language assistance. ILLA interpreters who are proficient in English should consider taking advantage of existing certification options, such as the CoreCHI healthcare interpreter certification and becoming a Registered Court Interpreter in the California courts. While Indigenous interpreting organizations may continue to advocate for state and national certifying bodies to create assessments for ILLA interpreters, the costs involved coupled with low demand may impede success in this area. My findings suggest that a more immediately viable option would be for Indigenous interpreting programs to develop their own assessments. Many study participants argued that community organizations are the best positioned stakeholders to do so because of their cultural and linguistic expertise. Indigenous interpreting programs can look to INALI in Mexico for guidance about how to develop linguistic proficiency assessments that are appropriate for measuring proficiency in multi-varietal, non-standardized Indigenous languages like Mixteco. Such assessments should focus on identifying effective communicators in specific variants and avoid creating a hierarchy of variants or enforcing a standard for internally diverse oral Indigenous languages.

Just as ILLA interpreters need assessment models that are appropriate for Indigenous languages, my findings suggest that successful ILLA interpreter training programs must be culturally and linguistically responsive, rather than carbon copies of existing interpreter training programs which are frequently based on colonial languages and Western worldviews. Indigenous interpreter training programs should be designed to ground participants in the worldviews and values of Indigenous cultures. Participants can learn to frame interpreting within the ongoing struggle for the rights of Indigenous people and to regard interpreting as vehicle for serving their communities with integrity, even as they learn to navigate U.S. institutions and demand to be

treated respectfully and paid fairly for their valuable skills. As part of working with integrity, interpreter training programs should address culturally specific practices to show respect to clients and identify the steps that interpreters can take to make sure the language rights of Indigenous people are respected. A key component of advocating for the rights of ILLA speakers is ensuring they have access to interpreters who speak a compatible linguistic variant by learning several essential skills. Interpreters must know how to conduct a variant check with a client, when to decline a job because the client needs an interpreter whose variant is a better match, how to check in with a client to ensure understanding when variant differences exist, and, as a long-term goal, how to expand their capacity to understand and speak similar variants. Lastly, trainings should help ILLA interpreters learn to bridge understanding between interlocutors who come from radically different cultures, including how to interpret complex concepts across languages and how to intervene appropriately if a communication break-down occurs.

Implications for agencies and employers.

My findings suggest that action is needed from public and nonprofit agencies that work with ILLA speakers and companies with employees who primarily speak Indigenous languages. Clearly, awareness is required as the foundation for change. This means dispelling assumptions that it is acceptable to muddle through communication with the little Spanish or English that an Indigenous person may know or that it's appropriate to use ad hoc interpreters like untrained bilingual staff or children. Agencies and companies must realize that people who speak limited Spanish and English need access to qualified interpreters in their linguistic variant for all important communication, from parent-teacher conferences to workplace safety trainings. They should understand their legal obligations to provide language access and the ethical problems associated with denying it, as well as how providing high-quality interpreting will benefit them,

such as by improving the quality of healthcare, increasing parental involvement in children's education, and creating a safer workplace. Agencies and employers need to learn that interpreting requires a specialized skill set and that interpreters are professionals who should be paid fairly. They also need baseline knowledge about the Indigenous languages used by their constituents, including if they have mutually unintelligible variants and how to identify them.

Once agencies and employers gain this knowledge, my findings suggest that they should take three steps. First, they should establish formal partnerships with ILLA interpreting organizations that will allow them to contract with trained interpreters on an ongoing basis. Second, they should develop formal written policies to ensure language access for non-dominant language speakers. Such procedures should include measures to ensure that ILLA speakers and interpreters share the same variant, like asking for the Indigenous person's hometown so that the right interpreter can be scheduled for the assignment and making time for interpreters to conduct a variant check to be sure that they understand each other. Third, agencies and employers should invite Indigenous community organizations to provide training to their staff about linguistic and cultural competency and best practices for working with Indigenous interpreters.

In addition to providing language access, public and nonprofit agencies and employers must act to eliminate anti-Indigenous language-based discrimination and harassment. For example, agricultural companies and public schools, two settings in which study participants reported severe harassment, must set clear, enforceable policies promoting equity and inclusion and take proactive steps to prevent the mistreatment of ILLA speaking students, families, and employees, including ongoing training for managers, employees, educators, and students about how to create inclusive work and learning environments. There must be clear pathways for ILLA

speakers to report mistreatment without risking their safety, such as the ability to confidentially report concerns to a supervisor or student/employee advocate who speaks their language.

Implications for Policy.

In concert with the other recommendations described above, policy change is an important part of advancing Indigenous language justice in California. My findings reflect previous research showing that current language access laws and policies are insufficient to meet the needs of non-dominant language speakers (Chen et al., 2007; Flores, 2006). Language protections are often based on convoluted case law, included as a detail buried in the text of a broader policy, imposed as an unfunded mandate, or too vague or cumbersome to be enforceable.

Moving forward, language policy researchers, policy advocates, and policy makers should focus their attention on developing new language access laws and policies. New legislation must explicitly mandate, fund, and enforce language access for linguistically marginalized groups like ILLA speakers. In order for new language policies to be effective, the threshold at which agencies/employers are required to provide language access must be low enough to include the most linguistically marginalized communities and include mechanisms to verify the size of Indigenous immigrant populations other than government surveys on which they are historically undercounted. New laws and policies must clearly define terms like a “qualified interpreter” and must establish oversight bodies, clear protocols, and funding sources so that the agencies affected by the regulations know how to implement the requirements, including who will pay for language access coordinators, interpreters, and translators. Furthermore, new laws and policies must include multiple measures to ensure accountability, such as requirements for agencies to report on their progress toward meeting the law’s

requirements, an accessible complaint process for people whose rights have been violated, and meaningful penalties to discourage non-compliance.

California has recently taken several steps in the right direction. In 2017, the state legislature passed SB-295, which requires farm labor contractors to provide sexual harassment prevention training in a language understood by employees (California Legislative Information, 2017b) and SB-223, which requires health care service plans and insurers to provide written notification of free language assistance services in the 15 most frequently used non-English languages in the state, establishes minimum qualifications for interpreters, and prohibits the use of ad hoc interpreters like untrained bilingual staff and adults or children accompanying the patient (California Legislative Information, 2017a). While these laws strengthen language access, more needs to be done, especially for ILLA speakers whose languages are often not written, and which are not among the 15 top languages in the state. AB-3179 is an active bill under consideration in the California Senate that would amend the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act to reduce the threshold at which state agencies must provide language access from five to three percent of the population served, which would help ensure access for ILLA speakers in areas where they comprise at least three percent of the population (California Legislative Information, 2018). In addition to these state-level changes, policy advocates can learn from strong local models, such the language access ordinances of San Francisco, Oakland, and Washington D.C. (Jung et al., 2013; District of Columbia Register, 2008). However, it bears noting that little is known about the current impact of existing language access laws or the potential impact of proposed legislation, pointing to the need for more language policy research.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study is that while the focus of the project was on overcoming language barriers faced by ILLA speakers who are not fully proficient in Spanish and English, very few monolingual ILLA speakers were among the 70 study participants. While this was partially a function of design, we also faced unforeseen challenges. The subject matter experts, service providers, and advisory committee members all need to speak Spanish or English (often both) as a prerequisite for occupying their roles as leaders, interpreters, and professional agency staff. For this reason, we conceived of the focus groups as a vehicle to involve monolingual ILLA speakers in the study.

While we envisioned the focus groups as an opportunity to promote the engagement of monolingual Mixteco speakers, things did not unfold according to plan. The advisory group recommended reserving one focus group only for monolingual Mixteco speakers and the other for bilingual and trilingual people in order to encourage more active participation among monolingual ILLA speakers, whose voices tend to be eclipsed by Spanish speakers, and to enable comparison between the groups. I prepared outreach materials to this effect and MICOP conducted outreach explaining who should attend each session. To the surprise of the research team, a mixed group of monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual Mixteco, Zapoteco, and Huave speakers arrived at each session. I learned that distinctions between being mono-, bi-, or trilingual are not well understood by the community, especially since people can have varying levels of proficiency in different languages. While there was strong participation by monolingual Mixteco speakers in both focus groups, I believe that participation would have been improved by having a group comprised of only monolingual speakers. Furthermore, the lack of specificity in the data makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the impact of speaking only an Indigenous

language as compared to also speaking Spanish and/or English. The lack in representative of monolingual voices could be addressed in the future by using better outreach strategies and adding interviews of monolingual ILLA speakers.

A second limitation of the study is the low response rate to the agency survey, with only 13 responses from Madera, Ventura, and Kern counties. While I knew that reaching a statistically significant sample was beyond our reach given the study's short timeframe and limited resources, I hoped to reach a total of 60 agencies, including 20 in each of the three counties spread evenly among legal, educational, social service, and healthcare agencies. Such a response would have allowed comparisons across sectors and counties that could have helped the research team identify strategies that are working particularly well for particular regions or types of agencies. It is unclear exactly why the survey garnered so few responses, as the advisory committee was in touch about the process of inviting and reminding agencies to respond to the survey and we extended the deadline twice to allow more time to collect responses. Nevertheless, the 13 survey responses enriched the data as a whole by providing insight about the policies, practices, concerns, and needs of service providers.

The difficulty with survey responses may relate to our third limitation, which is the challenge of conducting CBPR research in collaboration with community-based organizations whose staff must juggle numerous competing responsibilities that sometimes take priority over participation in a research project. The addition of an agency survey to our methods was suggested by advisory committee members and depended heavily on them since I lack relationships with the agencies we hoped to reach. While advisory committee members sent surveys to their contacts, their time for coordinating outreach efforts was understandably limited.

For future studies, I recommend that CBPR projects secure upfront funding for collaborating organizations so that they can afford to redirect staff time to research projects.

Remote communication was a final challenge to our CBPR methodology. MICOP and the advisory committee conducted most of our communication via email and conference calls, which truncated opportunities to build relationships and facilitate dialogue among members, many of whom had not yet met each other in-person. While we initially pursued remote communication in an attempt to not impose too much on the limited time of committee members, we learned that this strategy can be counterproductive because it inhibits the relationship-building and equitable communication that is crucial to effective and inclusive CBPR projects. In response, we planned the fourth advisory committee meeting as an in-person retreat that resulted in powerful dialogue and energetic re-commitment to the project, and members opted to hold all future meetings in-person. Based on our experiences, I recommend that CBPR projects prioritize face-to-face collaboration among co-researchers and raise the funds necessary to compensate organizations for the staff time and travel costs associated with attending in-person meetings.

Looking Ahead

In spring 2018, the Trump administration implemented a zero-tolerance immigration policy that resulted in more than 2,300 migrant children being separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexican border (Gambino, 2018). A significant number of detained families are Indigenous people from Mexico and Guatemala who speak only Indigenous languages (Snow, 2018). The immediate outcome was familiar, with immigrant advocacy organizations providing ILIA speaking detainees with either no interpreter or untrained bilingual volunteers via video call. However, the situation quickly began to change because Indigenous organizations mobilized to send trained ILIA interpreters to the epicenter of the crisis in Texas. FIOB led the

charge by raising funds, coordinating teams of trained interpreters, and putting together an Indigenous Interpreter Capacity Building and Linguistic Justice Training to prepare more interpreters in high-need Indigenous languages. It is no surprise that this rapid response came from California, drawing on a vibrant network of Indigenous language rights advocates and interpreters that has been nurtured over the course of over two decades of sustained struggle.

In the years to come, it is almost certain that economic, political, and ecological crises will continue to expel marginalized people from their homelands, including Indigenous communities. By learning from the history of Indigenous language justice advocacy and putting the recommendations of study participants into practice, we can support the linguistic inclusion of the Indigenous immigrants who are part of communities across California and other parts of the U.S., as well as prepare to meet the needs of new groups of Indigenous migrants who seek refuge and survival far from their homelands. This thesis has argued that language justice is a vital strand of broader movements for the rights of Indigenous immigrants. The trailblazers whose voices are at the center of this study have created innovative programs and improved access to Indigenous interpreters, yet more needs to be done by informing ILLA speakers about their language rights; developing culturally-relevant Indigenous interpreter training and professional development programs; creating methods to evaluate the qualifications of ILLA interpreters; improving the language access policies of service providers and employers; and strengthening language access laws. Working together, we can help realize a vision of California in which Indigenous voices are valued. In the words of Silvestre Hernández of MICOP, “Every human being deserves to be heard” – “Ta iìn ta ìl mio na ñuuyìví ,yoo ichio ña na txasoóna mlo.”

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Appendices

Appendix A: Advisory Committee Members

	Name	Organization and Role
1	Lourdes Cerna	Interpreter Trainer, MICOP; Board of Directors, California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA); International Medical Interpreter Association
2	Irene Gómez	Program Manager, Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)
3	Silvestre Hernández	Interpreter, Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)
4	Arcenio López	Executive Director, Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)
5	Marisa Christensen Lundin	Director, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) Indigenous Program
6	Janet Martínez	Women's State Coordinator, Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales, (FIOB), Los Angeles
7	Fátima Peña	Fátima Peña, Interpreter (Mixteco, Spanish, and English) and former MICOP Labor Advocate
8	Griselda Reyes Basurto	Interpreter and Translator, Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)
9	Odilia Romero	Binational General Coordinator, Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB), Los Angeles
10	Fausto Sánchez	Community Worker, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) Indigenous Program
11	Leoncio Vásquez Santos	Executive Director, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)
12	Yolanda Velasco Fernández	Mujeres Indígenas Avanzando Juntas, Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP)

Appendix B: Language Access Policy Report

CIVIL RIGHTS LAW	
FEDERAL	STATE
<p><u>Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:</u> “Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Lau v. Nichols</u>, 414 U.S. 563 (1974) established that conduct by programs/activities receiving federal funding that have a disparate impact on Limited English Speaking (LEP) individuals constitutes national origin discrimination under Title VI. “The failure of the San Francisco school system to provide English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak English, or to provide them with other adequate instructional procedures, denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational program and thus violates 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based ‘on the ground of race, color, or national origin,’ in ‘any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance,’ and the implementing regulations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). • <u>Executive Order 13166, August 11, 2000.</u> “Improving Access to 	<p><u>CA Non-Discrimination Law: CA Government Code 1135:</u> “No person in the State of California shall, on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, mental disability, physical disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, or sexual orientation, be unlawfully denied full and equal access to the benefits of, or be unlawfully subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity that is conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, is funded directly by the state, or receives any financial assistance from the state” (California Legislative Information., 2016b).</p>

<p>Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," 65 FR 50121 (August 16, 2000). "The Executive Order requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. It is expected that agency plans will provide for such meaningful access consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency. The Executive Order also requires that the Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries. To assist Federal agencies in carrying out these responsibilities, the U.S. Department of Justice has issued a Policy Guidance Document, "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency" (2002 LEP Guidance). This LEP Guidance sets forth the compliance standards that recipients of Federal financial assistance must follow to ensure that their programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin in violation of Title VI's prohibition against national origin discrimination" (LEP.gov, n.d.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Alexander vs. Sandoval</u>: This 2001 Supreme Court Case holds that there is no private right of 	
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<p>action to enforce Title VI disparate-impact regulations, i.e. individuals cannot sue directly but may file complaints with the Department of Justice related to disparate-impact claims. Individuals may sue only when there's evidence of <i>intentional</i> discrimination (Cornell University Law School, n.d.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 factor analysis from <u>LEP.gov</u>: “Recipients and federal agencies are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons. While designed to be a flexible and fact-dependent standard, the starting point is an individualized assessment that balances the following four factors: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee; 2. the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program; 3. the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program to people's lives; and 4. the resources available to the grantee/recipient or agency, and costs. As indicated above, the intent of this guidance is to find a balance that ensures meaningful access by LEP persons to critical services while not imposing undue burdens on small business, or small nonprofits” (LEP.gov, n.d.). 	
HEALTH CARE	
FEDERAL	STATE

<p><u>Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS):</u> Title VI of the Civil Rights Act covers services funded by HHS, which published guidance about language access for LEP individuals in 2000 called “Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Policy Guidance on the Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination As It Affects Persons With Limited English Proficiency” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).</p>	<p><u>SB-223 Healthcare language assistance services:</u> This law requires written notification of free language assistance services in top 15 non-English languages in the state. Is sets minimum qualification standards for interpreters and prohibits requiring LEP patients to bring their own interpreter, the use of unqualified bilingual staff as interpreters, and relying on adult or minor accompanying the patient to interpret (California Legislative Information, 2017a).</p> <p><u>SB 853: The Healthcare Language Assistance Act:</u> “This law holds health plans accountable for the provision of language services – requiring health plans and health insurers to provide their enrollees with interpreter services, translated materials, and to collect data on race, ethnicity, and language to address health inequities” (California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, 2017).</p> <p>SB 853 added Section 1367.041 to the Health and Safety Code and Section 10133.10 to the Insurance Code. A summary of SB 853 and its regulations are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Health plans must conduct a needs assessment to calculate threshold languages and collect race, ethnicity, and language data on their enrollees. 2. Health plans must provide quality, accessible, and timely access to interpreters at all points of contact and at no cost to the enrollee. 3. Health plans must translate vital documents into threshold languages. 4. Health plans must ensure interpreters are trained and competent, and that translated materials are of high quality. 5. Health plans must notify their enrollees of the availability of no cost interpreter and translation services. 6. Health plans must train staff on language access policies and procedures, as well as how to work with interpreters and limited English patients” (California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, 2017).
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Section 1557: Civil Rights Provision of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010:

“Section 1557 is the civil rights provision of the Affordable Care Act of 2010. Section 1557 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in certain health programs and activities. The Section 1557 final rule applies to any health program or activity, any part of which receives funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), such as hospitals that accept Medicare or doctors who receive Medicaid payments; the Health Insurance Marketplaces and issuers that participate in those Marketplaces; and any health program that HHS itself administers.

Protections for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency –

- Consistent with longstanding principles under civil rights laws, the final rule makes clear that the prohibition on national origin discrimination requires covered entities to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to each individual with limited English proficiency who is eligible to be served or likely to be encountered within the entities’ health programs and activities.
- Reasonable steps may include the provision of language assistance services, such as oral language assistance or written translation...
- Covered entities are prohibited from using low-quality video remote interpreting services or relying on unqualified staff, translators when providing language assistance services” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Title 28, CA Code of Regulations: Section 1300.67.04: Language Assistance Programs:

These regulations govern the implementation of changes made to the Health and Safety Code and Insurance Code under SB 853, which are described above.

- “Every plan shall develop and implement a language assistance program, which shall comply with the requirements and standards established by Section 1367.04 of the Act and this section...
- A requirement that qualified interpretation services be offered to LEP enrollees, at no cost to the enrollee, at all points of contact, including when an enrollee is accompanied by a family member or friend that can provide interpretation services. The offer of a qualified interpreter, and the enrollee’s refusal if interpretation services are declined, shall be documented in the medical record or plan file, as applicable.
- A plan’s language assistance proficiency standards shall require: (i) A documented and demonstrated proficiency in both English and the other language; (ii) A fundamental knowledge in both languages of health care terminology and concepts relevant to health care delivery systems; and (iii) Education and training in interpreting ethics, conduct and confidentiality. The Department will accept plan standards for interpreter ethics, conduct, and confidentiality that adopt and apply, in full, the standards promulgated by the California Healthcare Interpreters Association or the National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare” (State of California Department of Managed Health Care, n.d.).

	<p><u>County Medi-Cal Programs: Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>CA Department of Healthcare Services</u> (DHCS) is mandated by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act “to provide LEP individuals with meaningful access to services by providing language assistance. DHCS is responsible for the administration of the State’s Medicaid program (referred to in California as Medi-Cal) and for ensuring that county and local welfare/health agencies comply with these federal mandates and state laws” (State of California DHCS, 2010). Medi-Cal programs are required to provide translated written documents when <u>5%</u> of recipients in a county are LEP and speak the same primary language. Free oral interpretation services must be provided to LEP enrollees in any language (State of California DHCS, 2010). • The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (1973) was signed into law to eliminate language barriers that preclude LEP people from having equal access to public services. Local public offices or facilities of state agencies are “required to translate materials explaining their services into the languages spoken by five percent or more of the population they serve and to employ a sufficient number of bilingual persons to ensure access to LEP individuals... • Interpreter services can be provided in person or by telephone using a bilingual staff person who is acting as an interpreter, a contracted interpreter, an interpreter from an outside agency, or an interpreter from a telephone language line service. If counties do not have an individual on site to interpret the requested language, a service such as
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	those that provide telephone-based interpretation services must be utilized to provide meaningful language access” (State of California Department of Health Care Services, 2010).
COURTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUDICATION	
FEDERAL	STATE
<p><u>Court Interpreters Act, 28 U.S.C. §1827,</u> 2009: This act required the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts to “establish a program to facilitate the use of certified and otherwise qualified interpreters in judicial proceedings instituted by the United States” (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2009).</p>	<p><u>Criminal Cases: The California Constitution</u> mandates that “[a] person unable to understand English who is charged with a crime has a right to an interpreter throughout the proceedings” (Justia US Law, n.d.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the <u>Court Interpreters Program</u>: “This constitutional mandate and subsequent case law have been interpreted to include proceedings related to criminal, misdemeanor, and delinquency matters, as well as certain civil matters such as divorce or separation involving a protective order, and child custody and visitation proceedings. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing are entitled to an interpreter when participating in all court proceedings, whether criminal or civil. Plans are underway to expand the provision of spoken language interpreters by 2020 to include all civil proceedings” (Judicial Council of California, 2014: 1).
	<p><u>Court Interpreter Certification: CA Government Code Title 8, Chapter 2, Article 4: Court Interpreter Services:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Section 68561</u>: “Except for good cause as provided in subdivision (c), a person who interprets in a court proceeding using a language designated by the Judicial Council pursuant to subdivision (a) of <u>Section 68562</u> shall be a certified court interpreter, as defined in <u>Section 68566</u>, for the language used... A person who interprets in a court proceeding

	<p>using a language not designated by the Judicial Council shall be qualified by the court pursuant to the qualification procedures and guidelines adopted by the Judicial Council. If this qualified interpreter also passes an English fluency examination offered by a testing entity approved by the Judicial Council, this person shall be designated a ‘registered interpreter’” (California Legislative Information, 2014b).</p>
<p><u>Language Access in the State Courts, Guidance from the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division:</u> The “Civil Rights Division has prioritized protecting the rights of all people, whatever level of English proficiency they hold, to participate meaningfully, fully, and fairly in state court proceedings. Providing language services is essential to upholding the integrity of our justice system” (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2016).</p>	<p><u>Criminal and Civil Courts: CA Evidence Sections 750-757: Interpreters and Translators:</u> These sections govern the use of interpreters and translators in state courts. Key provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These codes establish that when witnesses cannot understand or express themselves in English, they will be assigned an interpreter. • Interpreters and translators are subject to all laws related to witnesses. • Interpreters and translators must take an oath that they will make a true interpretation/translation in the witness’s language and in English “with his or her best skill or judgment.” • When a medical examination of a LEP person who is a party in a civil action is requested by an insurer or defendant, a certified interpreter must be present (California Legislative Information, 2014a). <p><u>Civil Cases:</u> In 2014, Section 756 was added to establish that the Judicial Council will reimburse courts for court interpreter services provided for LEP people involved in civil cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To the extent required by other state or federal laws, the Judicial Council shall reimburse courts for court interpreter services provided in civil actions and proceedings to any party who is present in court and who does not proficiently

	<p>speak or understand the English language for the purpose of interpreting the proceedings in a language the party understands, and assisting communications between the party, his or her attorney, and the court” (California Legislative Information, 2014a).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are not sufficient funds to provide an interpreter to every LEP person involved in civil cases, then the Judicial Council will reimburse court interpreter services by case type according to a specific order of priority (California Legislative Information, 2014a).
	<p><u>Administrative Adjudication: CA Government Code Chapter 4.5, Article 8: Language Assistance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This code establishes the 25 state agencies that are required to provide language assistance for LEP people in adjudicative proceedings. The law covers which parties are responsible for compensating interpreters, the certification of interpreters, requirements to maintain lists of certified interpreters for different state agencies, and the requirement to advise parties of their right to an interpreter (California Legislative Services, 1995).
PUBLIC EDUCATION	
FEDERAL	STATE
<p><u>U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice Guidelines for Communication with LEP Parents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Schools must communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand about any program, service, or activity that is 	<p><u>Parental Involvement: CA Ed Code Section 51101.1:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A parent or guardian’s lack of English fluency does not preclude a parent or guardian from exercising the rights guaranteed under this chapter. A school district shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that all parents and guardians of pupils who speak a language other than

<p>called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts must provide effective language assistance to limited English proficient parents, such as by offering translated materials or a language interpreter. Language assistance must be free and provided by appropriate and competent staff, or through appropriate and competent outside resources. • School districts should ensure that interpreters and translators have knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts to be used in the communication at issue, and are trained on the role of an interpreter and translator, the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need to maintain confidentiality. • It is not sufficient for the staff merely to be bilingual. For example, a staff member who is bilingual may be able to communicate directly with limited English proficient parents in a different language, but may not be competent to interpret in and out of that language, or to translate documents” (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2015). • Complaints can be filed with the <u>U.S. Dept. of Education’s Office for Civil Rights</u> or the <u>U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division</u>. 	<p>English are properly notified in English and in their home language, pursuant to Section 48985, of the rights and opportunities available to them pursuant to this section” (California Legislative Information, 2004).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This law includes the following rights of parents/guardians of English Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To receive results of standardized tests; ○ To be given any required notification in the student’s home language; ○ To participate in school and district advisory bodies; ○ To support their children’s advancement toward literacy; ○ To be informed about statewide and local academic standards, testing programs accountability measures, and school improvement efforts (California Legislative Information, 2004).
	<p><u>Notification of Parent or Guardian: CA Ed Code 48985:</u> (1976): “When 15 percent or more of the pupils enrolled in a public school that provides instruction in kindergarten or any of grades 1 through 12 speak a single primary language other than English, as determined from</p>

	the census data submitted to the Department of Education pursuant to Section 52164 in the preceding year, all notices, reports, statements, or records sent to the parent or guardian of any such pupil by the school or school district shall, in addition to being written in English, be written in such primary language, and may be responded to either in English or the primary language” (California Legislative Information, 2006).
	<p><u>Translation of Individualized Education Plans: CA AB 2091:</u></p> <p>This law requires school districts to translate special education plans into the family’s primary language within 60 days of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting, if requested by the family (California Legislative Information, 2016a).</p>
LABOR	
FEDERAL	STATE
	<p><u>SB-295 Farm labor contractors: sexual harassment prevention:</u> Requires farm labor contractors to provide sexual harassment prevention training in a language understood by employees (California Legislative Information, 2016b).</p>
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	
FEDERAL	STATE
	<p><u>California Voting for All Act:</u></p> <p>Under the California Elections Code, when a LEP community comprises 3% in a precinct, the county elections office must post on the wall of that precinct’s polling place a translated facsimile of the ballot in the relevant language. This law strengthens these requirements by ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Facsimile ballots are available for voters to take into voting booth.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translated signage next to the roster of voters informs voters that facsimile ballots are available. • Voters are able to request a copy of a translated facsimile ballot [including vote by mail ballots]. • Poll workers are trained on the proper handling of facsimile ballots. • Counties put translated content in their county sample ballots and online about where facsimile ballots can be found. • Translated signage in polling places informs voters about the languages spoken by poll workers, and poll workers wear nametags identifying languages they speak. • Counties file a report after every statewide general election documenting their performance recruiting bilingual poll workers, & the Secretary of State posts those reports on his/her website.” (California State Assembly, 2017)
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Appendix C: Interpreter Certification Options in California

Type of Certification	California Court Interpreter
Certifying Body	<u>Judicial Council of California: Court Interpreters Program</u>
Certification Options	Certified Court Interpreter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Written Exam in English * Bilingual Interpreting Exam in English and a certified language * Requires an online orientation class and Code of Ethics course * Available in 15 certified languages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American Sign Language - Arabic - Eastern Armenian - Western Armenian - Cantonese - Japanese - Khmer - Korean - Mandarin - Portuguese - Punjabi - Russian - Spanish - Tagalog - Vietnamese
	Registered Court Interpreter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Available for all languages other than certified languages * Written Exam in English * Oral Proficiency Exam in English * Oral Proficiency Exam in the non-English language * Requires an online orientation class and Code of Ethics course
	Provisionally Qualified Interpreter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Allowed only when a registered or certified court interpreter is not available and the court finds good cause to appoint a non-registered, non-certified interpreter * Requires a form about the interpreter's qualifications that must be approved by a judge * Appointments are for 6 months at a time
	Temporary Use: (Not a form of certification) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One-time use in brief, routine matters * The LEP person must waive the right to have an interpreter who is certified, registered, or provisionally qualified * Allowed only when a certified, registered, or provisionally qualified court interpreter is not available and the court finds good cause to appoint an interpreter without these qualifications * Requires approval of a judge

Sources: Judicial Council of California, 2014, 2017, 2018

Type of Certification	Healthcare Interpreter Certification		
Certifying Bodies	<u>Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI)</u>		<u>National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI)</u>
Certification Options	Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter (CoreCHI) * Requires 40 hours of training, a high school diploma or equivalent, and oral proficiency in English and the non-English language * Written exam in English about professional standards and ethics * Available to interpreters of any language	Certified Healthcare Interpreter (CHI) * Requires 40 hours of training, a high school diploma or equivalent, and oral proficiency in English and the target language * Written CoreCHI Exam in English * Oral Exam in English and the non-English language * Available in: - Spanish - Mandarin - Arabic	Certified Medical Interpreter (CMI) * Requires 40 hours of training, a high school diploma or equivalent, and oral proficiency in English and the target language * Written Exam * Oral Exam in English and the non-English language * Available in: - Spanish - Russian - Mandarin - Cantonese - Korean - Vietnamese

Sources: CCHI, 2017; NBCMI, 2017

Appendix D: Interview Participants

	Name	Role and Organization	Interview Type
1.	Naomi Adelson	Creator and Facilitator of Asociación Mayab's Interpreter Training Program; Court Interpreter (Spanish-English)	Telephone
2.	Katharine Allen	Co-President, InterpretAmerica; Co-Author and Lead Developer of The Indigenous Interpreter training manual and program of Indigenous Interpreting+, Natividad Medical Foundation; Interpreter and Interpreter Trainer (Spanish-English)	Video Call
3.	Eric Bishop	Director, San Francisco State University Legal Interpreting Program; Court Interpreter (Spanish-English)	Video Call
4.	Eric Campbell	Assistant Professor, Linguistics, University of California, Santa Barbara	Video Call
5.	Lourdes Cerna	Board of Directors, California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA); Creator and Facilitator of MICOP's Interpreter Training Program; International Medical Interpreter Association; Healthcare Interpreter (K'iche', Spanish, and English)	Telephone
6.	Tracy Clark	Manager, Court Interpreting Services, Superior Court of California, Ventura County; American Sign Language Interpreter	In-person
7.	Emiliana Cruz	Linguistic Anthropologist, Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Mexico	Telephone
8.	Hilaria Cruz	Linguistic Anthropologist, University of Kentucky	Video Call
9.	Linda Ford	Former President and CEO, Natividad Medical Foundation	Telephone
10.	Luis Arturo Fuentes Gómez	Assistant Director of Training in Indigenous Languages, Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI)	Video Call
11.	José García	President, Board of Directors, California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA); Healthcare Interpreter (Spanish-English)	Video Call
12.	Celso Guevara	Interpreter and Volunteer, MICOP (Mixteco-Spanish)	Video Call
13.	Maureen Keffer	Former Director, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) Indigenous Program; Attorney	Telephone and In-person

14.	Jennifer Leidich-Bonilla	Senior Advisor, Indigenous Interpreting+	Telephone
15.	Arcenio López	Executive Director, MICOP	Video Call
16.	Alondra Mendoza	Health Promoter, MICOP	Telephone
17.	Vivian Newdick	Language Access Manager, City of Austin, Texas; Healthcare Interpreter (Spanish-English)	Telephone
18.	Jason Ostrove	PhD, Linguistics, University of California, Santa Cruz	Email
19.	Fátima Peña	Fátima Peña, Interpreter (Mixteco, Spanish, and English) and former MICOP Labor Advocate	In-person
20.	Odilia Romero Hernández	Binational General Coordinator, Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB), Los Angeles; Healthcare and Legal Interpreter (Zapoteco, Spanish, and English)	Telephone
21.	Leoncio Vásquez Santos	Executive Director, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO), Fresno; Interpreter (Mixteco, Spanish, and English)	Telephone
22.	Margaret Sawyer	Former Executive Director, MICOP; Pastor, United Church of Christ; Staff Adviser, ACLU Immigrant Protection Project of Western Massachusetts; Organizer, Pioneer Valley Workers Center	Video Call
23.	Sandy Young	Founder, MICOP; Family Nurse Practitioner, Las Islas Family Medical Group	Telephone

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview Introduction Script

1. This is a collaborative research project being conducted in partnership with the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) about interpreting, language access policy, and language justice for indigenous immigrant communities.
2. I have a series of questions for you and will take detailed notes about your answers and/or I will audio record the interviews with your permission. You are welcome to stop the interview at any time and you don't have to respond to any questions that you prefer not to answer.
3. Do you have any questions about the consent form that you signed?
4. If I plan to use any quotes from this interview in my Master's thesis or published writing, I will send you a list of quotes for you to review and approve beforehand.
5. Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Interview Questions for Language Access Policy Experts (Attorneys)

1. Please tell me about your organization and your role within it.
2. What does language access mean to you and your organization?
3. What are the most important laws and policies that you rely on when advocating for language access for your clients?
4. What does interpreter certification mean for your organization? For interpreters?
5. What policies are in place that govern certification requirements for interpreters?
6. What happens when there is a difference between federal and state language access laws?
7. How are the policies discussed so far enforced? What can someone do if they feel their language access rights protected by these laws have been violated?
8. Are there any risks associated with bringing forward a complaint related to language access? For example, if someone is undocumented, would making a complaint put them at risk for deportation?
9. Have there been any changes to enforcement of and advocacy for language access laws with the change in the federal administration?
10. Do you (or your agency) provide any education to indigenous language speakers about language access law and policy? If so, how has this been delivered?
11. What other laws or policies do you believe are needed to ensure language access for indigenous language speakers?
12. Do you have any recommendations of resources and/or other people I should talk with?

Interview Questions for Interpreter Training Experts

1. Please tell me about your organization and your role within it.
2. Why did you decide to develop your training for indigenous language interpreters? When did you begin the project and who initiated it?
3. How was the training curriculum developed?
4. How do you recruit trainees?
5. What pre-requisites must trainees meet to participate in the training in terms of linguistic proficiency, literacy, or formal education?
6. What language is the training offered in?

7. Do you assess linguistic proficiency of trainees? If so, in which languages? What kind of assessment do you use?
8. Does your training program offer a certificate or credential upon completion? If so, what is the meaning of this certificate/credential?
9. Do you see your training as a strong foundation for graduates to become certified court and medical interpreters? If not, what more is needed to prepare for certifying exams?
10. Is interpreter certification a priority for you? Why or why not?
11. Where are your training graduates working? What successes and challenges are they facing?
12. Do you have a train-the-trainer component? If not, do you plan to create one?
13. What is your vision for the future of indigenous language interpreting?
14. Do you have any recommendations of resources and/or other people I should talk with?

Interview Questions for Healthcare Interpreting Experts

1. Please tell me about your organization and your role within it.
2. What are the entities that administer healthcare interpreter certification?
3. Are any certification options available to interpreters of indigenous languages and other languages of limited diffusion for which there are no language-specific certifying exams?
4. If indigenous language interpreters are trilingual in Spanish, English, and their indigenous language, do you recommend that they become certified Spanish-English interpreters? If they do so, would they still be permitted to interpret into their indigenous language in addition to Spanish and English?
5. Is there a pathway to certification for interpreters who are bilingual in Spanish and an indigenous language but not English?
6. Are there any literacy or formal education requirements for certification?
7. What do you think needs to happen in order to establish a path to healthcare certification specifically for indigenous language interpreters?
8. If language-specific certification exams were made available to indigenous language speakers, how would you recommend approaching the assessment of linguistic proficiency of Mixteco speakers given the high degree of variation among dialects?
9. What laws and policies govern healthcare interpreting?
10. Do you have any recommendations of resources and/or other people I should talk with?

Interview Questions for Court Interpreting Experts

1. Please tell me about your organization and your role within it.
2. What is the difference between becoming a certified and registered court interpreter in the California courts?
3. Please describe the requirements for the court interpreter registration process.
4. Since indigenous language interpreters can become registered but not certified in California courts, do you think it is important for indigenous language interpreters to seek registration? Why or why not?
5. How do the courts assess linguistic proficiency in English and the non-English language for registered interpreters? If there is no assessment for Mixteco and other indigenous languages, do you think it is important to create one? Why or why not?

6. If you think that assessing linguistic proficiency in non-English languages is important, how would you recommend approaching this assessment process with Mixteco speakers given the high degree of variation among dialects?
7. Is registration possible for interpreters who are bilingual in Spanish and an indigenous language but not English?
8. If indigenous language interpreters are trilingual in Spanish, English, and their indigenous language, can they become certified in Spanish and registered in the indigenous language? If so, would you recommend this option? Why or why not?
9. What kind of training do you think is needed to prepare indigenous language interpreters to pass the registration exam and to be ready to interpret in court?
10. Do you have any recommendations of resources and/or other people I should talk with?

Interview Questions for Leaders of Indigenous Community Organizations

1. Please tell me about your organization and your role within it.
2. What kind of programs does your organization provide related to indigenous language interpreting? When did they begin and how did the program(s) develop?
3. What are your priorities related to language access for indigenous immigrant communities in California?
4. Is medical and legal certification of indigenous language interpreters important to you? Why or why not?
5. What is your vision for the future of indigenous language interpreting?
6. Are any changes to laws and policies needed to protect the language rights of indigenous immigrants?
7. What else does the indigenous community need in order to defend their language rights?
8. Do you have any recommendations of resources and/or other people I should talk with?

Interview Questions for Linguists Who Study Indigenous Languages

1. Please tell me about your research interests related to indigenous languages.
2. What do you see as the top priorities regarding language access for indigenous people from Mexico who live in the U.S.?
3. Can you tell me about any examples of cases related to language access that you think illustrate challenges or solutions?
4. Do you consider training of indigenous language interpreters to be important? Why or why not? If so, what recommendations do you have for training programs?
5. Do you consider legal or medical certification for indigenous language interpreters a priority? Why or why not?
6. Do you believe that teaching indigenous languages is important? Why or why not? If so, what approach do you recommend?
7. Do you believe that developing writing systems for indigenous languages is important? Why or why not? If so, what approach do you recommend?
8. Do you have any recommendations of resources and/or other people I should talk with?

Appendix F: Focus Group Questions

1. What is your name and your role in the community? Where are you from? What is one thing that reminds you of your hometown?
2. Please tell me about how language shapes your daily experience. Do you face any challenges because you speak an Indigenous language? Do you have any opportunities or advantages because you speak an Indigenous language?
3. What do you understand by the term “language justice?” What do you understand by the term “language access rights?”
4. As far as you know, when are you required to be provided with access to an interpreter in the United States?
5. As far as you know, do interpreters have to have any kind of training or certification in any of the settings described above? If not, do you think they should? Why or why not?
6. What information would you like to have about language justice? How would it be useful to you?
7. What would be the best way to deliver this information to you?
8. What else do you think needs to be done (and by whom) so that people who speak Indigenous languages can access services and participate in the community?
9. What else do you think is needed for people to feel empowered to speak their Indigenous languages?

Appendix G: Survey Questions

	<p>Introduction and Consent Form:</p> <p>Welcome!</p> <p>You are invited to participate in a survey about language access in your agency/organization. The study is being conducted by Alena Marie, a graduate student in Community Development at the University of California, Davis (UCD), in collaboration with Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), California Rural Legal Assistance Inc. (CRLA), Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO), and the Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional (FIOB). The survey is part of a pilot study that aims to collect information about the practices, strengths, and needs of healthcare, legal, education, and social service agencies/organizations related to language access. This information will be used to improve training and resources related to serving speakers of Latin American Indigenous languages in California. Your participation is very important and we are grateful for your time.</p> <p>To help us understand language access concerns from different perspectives, we request that two people from your agency/organization complete the survey, one director/manager and one staff member who provides direct services to clients. Your participation will require approximately 15-20 minutes and is completed online. There are no known risks associated with this survey. Taking part of the study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate you may withdraw at anytime without affecting your relationship with the sponsoring organizations. You may skip any question that does not apply to your agency/organization.</p> <p>You will not provide your name. Sharing the name of your agency is optional and if you choose to do so it will be confidential. Digital data will be stored in secure files. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include the name of your agency/organization or any other information by which you could be identified. If you have questions or want a copy or summary of this study's results, please contact almarie@ucdavis.edu. If you have any questions or concerns and would like to speak with someone outside of the research team, please contact the UCD Institutional Review Board at (916) 703-9151 or hs-irbadmin@ucdavis.edu. Please feel free to print a copy of this consent page to keep for your records.</p> <p>Clicking the "Next" button below indicates that you are 18 years of age or older and indicates your consent to participate in this survey.</p>
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	<p>Key Terms Used in This Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Language access” refers to the provision of interpreting and translation to enable communication between people who do not share a common language. In this survey, it refers specifically to providing interpreting and translation services for people with limited English proficiency. • “Interpreting” refers to the transmission of a <i>spoken</i> message from one language into another. • “Translation” refers to converting a <i>written</i> message from one language into another. <p>Please click “Next” to continue to the first question.</p>
Section 1: Respondent and agency/organization Information	
1	What is the name of your agency/organization? Providing this information is optional and if you do so it will be confidential.
2	In which county is your agency/organization located?
3	Which sector best defines your agency/organization? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare • Legal • Education • Social Services
4	What is your position in the agency/organization? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director or manager • Provider of direct services to clients
5	With respect to language access (i.e. interpreting and translation for people with limited English proficiency), what is a strength of your agency/organization? What is working well?
Section 2: Client Languages	
6	How do you obtain information about the languages used by your clients?
7	What languages are used by your clients with limited English proficiency?
8	Does your agency/organization serve clients who speak only an Latin American Indigenous language? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don’t know

Section 3: Legal Requirements	
9	As far as you know, are there laws that affect language access in your sector? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know
9a - If yes	If yes, as far as you know, what is required by law?
Section 4: Agency/Organization Policies and Procedures	
10	Does your agency/organization have a written policy about language access? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know
10a - If yes	If yes, please describe the policy:
10b - If yes	What are the procedures that staff members follow to comply with this policy?
10c - if no or don't know	If no or if you're not sure, what do staff members do when serving a client who doesn't speak English?
10d - if no or don't know	If no or if you're not sure, do you think your agency/organization should have a written language access policy?
10e - if yes to 10d	What suggestions do you have about what should be included in a language access policy for your agency/organization?
11	How are staff members informed about the agency/organization's policy (if you have one) and procedures related to language access?
12	In your agency/organization, for which languages do you offer interpreting and translation services?
13	What do staff members do when serving a client who doesn't speak English or Spanish, only a Latin American Indigenous language?
14	If your agency/organization provides interpreting for languages that have multiple variants, such as Latin American Indigenous languages, do you ensure that the interpreter and client share the same variant?
14a	How do you ensure that the client and interpreter speak the same variant?

15	Does your agency/organization serve clients who use languages for which you do not offer language access? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know
15a - If yes	If yes, what are these languages?
15b - If yes	If yes, what do your staff members do when serving a client with whom they do not share a language and for which interpreting is not offered?
Section 5: Staffing and Evaluation of Interpreting Services	
16	In your agency/organization, who provides interpreting services? Select all that apply. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff members • External contractors/consultants • Volunteers • Other
16a - if other	Please describe who provides interpreting services for your agency/organization:
17	What requirements exist for the people providing interpreting services in your agency/organization? For example, do they need to complete training or pass an exam?
18	Do you provide in-person, phone, or video interpreting services? Mark all that apply. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person • Telephone • Video
18a If in-person	How do you evaluate the quality of the in-person interpreting services that you provide? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know
18b If yes to 18a	How do you evaluate the quality of the in-person interpreting services that you provide?
18c if phone or video	Do you evaluate the quality of the in-person interpreting services that you provide? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • I don't know
18d If yes to 18c	How do you evaluate the quality of the telephone or video interpreting services that you provide?
Section 6: Cultural Responsiveness	
19	<p>Does your agency/organization take any steps to ensure that your programs and services are culturally responsive to Latin American Indigenous people?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know
19a - If yes	If yes, what do you do to ensure your programs and services are culturally responsive for Latin American Indigenous people?
Section 7: Challenges, Priorities, and Resources	
20	With respect to language access, what is a challenge your agency/organization is facing?
21	If you would like to make any changes related to language access at your agency/organization, what would be your top priority?
22	<p>Would you like to have more training, materials, or other resources about language access?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
22a - If yes	If yes, please describe the resources you would like to have:
	<p>Please share any additional comments here. We are grateful for your participation. To find out more about the study, please send an email to almarie@ucdavis.edu. Thank you!</p>