

Full Length Research

The intercultural co-theorization of a curricular model in Chiapas, México

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This paper provides an analysis of the collaborative design process of the “UNEM Curriculum Model of Intercultural Bilingual Education” (AAVV, 2009) in Chiapas, Mexico. Based on a critical statement of interculturality (Walsh, 2002; Gasché, 2008a and 2008b), this article demonstrates the construction of an intercultural rooted methodology (MAI, for its initials in Spanish) inspired by the postulates of critical theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), collaborative ethnology (Lassiter, 2005; Rappaport, 2007), and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; 2006). The result is the intercultural co-theorization of an EIB model sustained by socio-cultural and territorial rootedness and by the educational work of “teacher-*acompañantes*”, children, and other community members.

Key words: Intercultural education, curriculum design, collaborative ethnography, grounded theory, Indians people.

Abbreviations: UNEM: Teachers Union of New Education for Mexico, for its initials in Spanish. MAI: Intercultural Rooted Methodology, for its initials in Spanish. EZLN: Zapatista Army of National Liberation, for its initials in Spanish. JBGs: Councils of Good Government, for its initials in Spanish. EIB: Bilingual Intercultural Education, for its initials in Spanish.

INTRODUCTION

In this contribution, I aim to reflect on the findings that have developed throughout the process of designing the “UNEM Curriculum Model of Intercultural Bilingual Education” (AAVV, 2009), developed in Chiapas, Mexico, between November of 2006 and December of 2008 by a group of intercultural collaborators comprised of:

➤ 12 Tseltales, Tsotsiles and Ch’oles Mayan community educators from the Altos, Selva and Norte of Chiapas that, since 1995, have formed part of the Teachers Union of New Education for Mexico (UNEM, for its initials in Spanish) and that, in the sociopolitical climate generated by the armed uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN, for its initials in Spanish) in 1994, were appointed as educators by the community assemblies

where they live as substitutes for the official teachers who had been expelled.

➤ 4 non-indigenous academic advisers also called *kaxlans*.ⁱ The characteristics of an Intercultural Rooted Methodology (MAI, for its initials in Spanish) were outlined during this collaborative and intercultural process of curriculum design, which, as this article will

ⁱAs Alejos García points out (1999: pp. 132-133): “[...] for the Mayan the other is the *Kaxlan*, the ‘Castilian,’ the foreigner, Western.” The author explains that the *kaxlan* is the counterpart, the multifaceted *other* with whom the indigenous Mayan relates.

demonstrate, represents a methodological resource for the intercultural co-theorization of educational proposals.

The intercultural collaboration between the UNEM educators and the *kaxlan* advisers who participated in this curriculum design process has roots that are deeply grounded in the contemporary history of Chiapas and, in particular, in the social, political, and educational processes that were prompted by the 1994 Zapatista uprising.

THE POLITIC, EPISTEMIC AND PEDAGOGIC DIMENSIONS OF INTERCULTURALITY

The intercultural educational projects and teaching materials that UNEM and his advisors has developed between 1995 and the present are based on a critical conception of interculturality in which the conflict that characterizes relations between indigenous societies and Latin America's national societies is assumed as a referential framework (Walsh, 2002; Bertely, 2007a; Gasché, 2008a and 2008b). This is underpinned by a counter-hegemonic political position adopted by indigenous organizations, which, like UNEM, are opposed to the dominant neoliberal system and the educational policies implemented from an economic rationality.

In this context, the UNEM community educators form part of a political y pedagogical movement characterized by the emergence of organizations that, as collective subjects with an ethno-political project, claim their cultural identity and their right to participate in the construction and management of their territories and nations. These organizations fight for autonomy within the framework of the nation state and, in the educational environment, to have control over their children's education.

As experienced by the Councils of Good Government (JBGs, for its initials in Spanish) and the autonomous Zapatista municipalities in Chiapas, indigenous peoples develop political and socio-cultural concealment practices that are manifested in praxis of resistance opposite the hegemonic neoliberal model. Thus, a new relationship arises between the State and indigenous organizations, focused by the construction of new forms of citizenship (differentiated, ethnic) in which the ideal type that characterize indigenous societies are valued and strengthened.ⁱⁱ This political vision recovers the "positive

ⁱⁱThe ideal type is a conceptual instrument created by Max Weber to comprehend the essential features of certain social phenomenon. This mental construct cannot be empirically found in reality. The ideal type concept is, therefore, an instrument for unifying parts of reality contingently selected from the researcher's base of particular interests and established upon a subjective valuation of the determined aspect, ordering reality through the selection of that which is

values" that guide contemporary indigenous societies (Bertely, 2007), above all those struggling for the construction of alternative policies for their territories in resistance to accepting migration as the only solution to the loss of the rural countryside's economic profitability.

This vision, that Mayans call *lekil kuxlejal / buen vivir*,ⁱⁱⁱ emphasizes real and generalized processes in the contemporary indigenous societies of Chiapas, which often go unnoticed in the strong processes of socio-cultural change that are currently taking place. In effect, despite the growing penetration of Western culture in the indigenous cultures and societies, *lekil kuxlejal* continues to constitute a set of underlying normative references for conceptualizing and planning the future society of contemporary Mayan peoples (Paoli, 2003: 69). Collectively, these values characterize what UNEM and the *kaxlan* advisers identify as a "form of active democracy" that finds its basis in the validity of integrity between indigenous societies and nature, in the permanence of social mechanisms for distributive, work-related, and ceremonial solidarity based on intra-communal reciprocity (Gasché, 2008b). This kind of counter-hegemonic democracy presents an alternative conception of authority in the sense of ordering while obeying, or "*manda obedeciendo*," to comply with the community consensus agreed upon in the assembly.

On a methodological level, the foregoing considerations have an immediate repercussion on the adoption of a critical paradigm in which non-indigenous researchers assume a counter-hegemonic position characterized by a political and academic commitment to social justice and to the subjects and communities with which we collaborate. Therefore, we assume that the Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) is a right and a means by which to achieve the reproduction of indigenous cultures. Thus, the EIB changes from a functional strategy into a political project to strengthen and politicize ethnic identity; it is a project that questions the political, economic, and symbolical domination suffered by indigenous peoples and their cultures. In turn, indigenous culture becomes a political resource, and approaches to interculturality are developed within a political arena, an ideological battlefield for cultural and hegemonic struggle, and in the specific case of UNEM and its communities, a fight to not only have control over school culture, but also over the very production of knowledge.

In this struggle, which is both political and epistemic, there is criticism of the colonial difference that has relegated indigenous peoples along with their practices

considered to be essential for the aims of the investigation, without this meaning that the features in themselves are essential.

ⁱⁱⁱ*Lekil kuxlejal* is a compound word in the Tseltal Mayan language. *Kux* = to live; *lejal* = to seek; *lekil* = well. Accordingly, *lekil kuxlejal* can be translated as: "seeking the good life."

and knowledge, delineating the border between non-academic, local-folklore knowledge, and, as Walter Mignolo (2005) says, the epistemic universality of modernity. From this perspective, the design of the curriculum model is inserted within a cognitive struggle between different ways of producing and applying knowledge, a struggle between Mayans and *kaxlans* forms of knowing.

For us, inter-culturalizing from colonial difference implies entering the field of constructing new critical epistemologies that are based on decolonization processes directed toward strengthening this reasoning in response to and as a strategy for approaching the symbolic and structural violence of hegemonic thinking. Throughout the process of designing the curriculum model, this meant questioning the very ontology of school knowledge and creating a new school culture centered on making the intercultural conflict between national society and culture and indigenous societies and cultures visible.

In this process, we consciously adopted a *strategic essentialism* and, consequently, elevated the distinctive features of contemporary indigenous societies implicit in the *lekil kuxlejal* philosophy of life. Essentializing played a balancing role, as it contributed to counterpointing the power that was present in asymmetric intercultural relations marked by conflict and the domination of the national society over indigenous cultures. Hence, the curriculum was constructed from an ideal type vision of the indigenous societies that is politically significant in the politicized arena of the EIB. Based on a living reality, this theoretical construction is guided by the positive values implicit in *lekil kuxlejal*, which constitute the political and cultural horizons of many contemporary indigenous organizations.

It is precisely from this ideal type vision that the ontology of school culture is questioned and from which a curriculum based on indigenous pedagogy is constructed. For this end, school is integrated with the community and, through the Intercultural Inductive Method, the knowledge construction process is positioned in the children and teacher-*acompañantes*' participation in the activities that community members carry out in their socio-natural territory.

INTERCULTURAL ROOTED METHODOLOGY (MAI, FOR ITS INITIALS IN SPANISH)

In my consideration, by having been built on these premises, the MAI constitutes a methodological contribution for guiding the curriculum design processes of intercultural and bilingual educational proposals in collaborations between indigenous organizations and non-indigenous academic advisers. The MAI has been the methodological response to ground our political and epistemic approaches to interculturality, which we have understood from a critical perspective. In order to do this,

we had to assume that matters related to the method are secondary in relation to those that regard the paradigm, those that regard the system of basic beliefs that guide the researcher from an ontological and epistemological viewpoint (Guba and Lincoln, 2000).

The MAI's construction process involved an epistemological critique that challenges notions of objectivity and neutrality and that considers the research to be moral and political. It therefore implies the individual and collective subjects' active participation in the construction and validation processes of educational proposals that are created collaboratively and in making decisions about the problems that are to be researched, the methods that will be used to study them, the criteria to validate the findings, and about how these will be used or implemented (Christians, 2005).

As Renato (2000) emphasizes, academics who collaborate with indigenous organizations must deal with the reality that their "objects" of analysis are rather subjects that critically analyze and question. Thus, the researcher who aspires to take on a role as collaborator needs to explicitly relinquish control over the process and substitute this control with the will to be connected and form part of a moral community in which the main objective is the comprehension of the other's moral position as a premise for achieving the construction of a common proposal.

In this sense, it is essential to develop culturally responsive research practices that place the power within the communities that carry out the collaborative research or, as Denzin (2005) says, to develop collaborative research models in which researchers are responsible to the subjects that they are studying rather than to a remote discipline or institution. Reaffirming Erik Lassiter's (2005) contributions to collaborative ethnography, in the MAI we stress the importance of clearly defining the role of those subjects in the research process, considering them as collaborators and co-producers of meanings (Denzin, 2005).

In particular, for us, this implies being prepared to develop a continuous horizontal dialogue on this basis, assuming a shared moral responsibility that is mutually established. This is well explained by the expression from the Tselal language "*kochelin jbahtik*," which expresses the intersubjective action of a collective wherein each person influences one's self and the group as a whole, and where all who participate in the community do this at the same time. Thus, it is a mutual, reciprocal action in which all the participants affect the same process and are simultaneously affected by it.

As Luis Enrique Lopez (2009) points out, it means discovering and constructing knowledge through dialogue between different visions, perspectives, and life and educational experiences. This implies recognizing "the other" as the knowing subject, explicitly and deliberately assuming that it can be known only if it is accepted as a creator of knowledge (Santos 2006; 2009). This, of

course, implies considering the deep inequalities of power that exist between the two collaborating parties.

Therefore, the development of the MAI implies that researchers question their own positions of power and assume an explicit ethical position that allows them, as Villoro (1998) points out, to learn about the others with whom they are collaborating, recognizing the existence and validity of other rationalities. At the same time, researchers acknowledge others in their equality and in their diversity, recognizing them within the sense that they themselves give to their world (Villoro 1998).

In the case of the curriculum design process at hand, the foregoing implied continuous negotiation between two ways of exercising power: on one hand, the formal power of *kaxlan* researchers and, on the other hand, the substantive power of our UNEM collaborators (Bertely, 2013). Negotiating between, on one hand, the power that *kaxlan* academics exercised upon formalizing the contributions of our indigenous collaborators in an academic language and, on the other hand, their substantive power, granted by the control that they maintained throughout the entire process over indigenous knowledge, activities, meanings and teaching principles learned and practiced in community schools and life.

However, this was not enough. Moving from collaboration to intercultural co-theorization also implied redefining the meaning and value of the fieldwork that was developed in the curriculum design workshops. Following Rappaport (2007), we converted the fieldwork understood as data gathered in a space of co-conceptualization, repositioning our collaborators' platforms and expressions and, instead of considering them as ethnographic data, we conceived of them as parallel forms of analysis, as contributions to the construction of a theory that was being formed *in the field*.

This was facilitated through the adoption of a methodological resource taken from the Grounded Theory constructivist approach developed by Kathy Charmaz (2000; 2005; 2006), which considers that the information used as a source for the construction of theoretical categories is made up of the social narratives and constructions of subjects that are culturally positioned. Therefore, a multidimensional and polyphonic codification process must validate these emerging categories of information.

These reflections were deciding factors during the focused coding of the documentary corpus that we replicated throughout the curriculum design workshops. It was at this point when the *kaxlan* researchers and our indigenous collaborators worked together to specify and develop the initial codes used to synthesize the information into categories that would allow for participants' experiences to crystallize, and would make it possible to establish relationships between the visible structure and the implicit processes.

The 'en vivo codes' served precisely this purpose (Charmaz, 2006). For example, that of *acompañante*,

which emerged during the fieldwork, that is, during the curriculum design workshops. These 'en vivo codes' allowed us to highlight specific expressions and innovative terms that our indigenous collaborators mentioned in key moments of the process to express a meaning or capture an experience. As is shown in Figure 1, the 'en vivo codes' formed the conceptual core around which intercultural categories were co-theorized, like that of *teacher-acompañante*, which will be analyzed throughout the following pages.

The intercultural co-theorization process finds its core generator in the 'en vivo codes' by which our collaborators synthesize the indigenous teaching principles that are learned and practiced in community life and schools. These codes create the starting point for communicating with other categories—which we have called merged categories—that express the fusion of the different participating subjects' (*kaxlan* advisers and indigenous collaborators) perspectives. These viewpoints are also combined with a grouping of theoretical categories produced by other authors that allows for an expansion of the theoretical scope of intercultural co-theorization.

THE "TEACHER-ACOMPÑANTE" INTERCULTURAL CO-THEORIZATION PROCESS

The deeply intercultural dialogue between a) the 'en vivo codes' of our indigenous collaborators, b) the categories that the *kaxlan* advisers and the UNEM community educators created by merging our interpretive perspectives, and c) the theoretical categories that we took from our readings, is what has allowed us to develop the co-theorization process of this curriculum model.

With keenness to show how the intercultural co-theorization process operated, the following will provide a summarized analysis of the construction process for the intercultural category of "teacher-acompañante."^{iv}

The process began with an analysis of the curriculum construction process' documentary corpus, within which a selection was made of the contributions from indigenous and *kaxlan* collaborators that were related to the

^{iv}For more information, refer to: Sartorello, S. (2010). *Ser para hacer: el proceso de co-teorización intercultural del maestro-acompañante en el modelo educativo de la Unión de Maestros de la Nueva Educación para México (UNEM), educadores independientes y colaboradores no-indígenas en Chiapas*. [Be to do: the intercultural co-theorization process of the teacher-acompañante in the educational model of the Teachers Union of New Education for Mexico (UNEM), independent educators and non-indigenous collaborators in Chiapas]. In *Revista de Derechos Humanos y Estudios Sociales REDHES* [Journal of Human Rights and Social Studies REDHES], Universidad Autónoma de San Luís Potosí, Year II, number 3 January-July 2010, pp. 21-48.

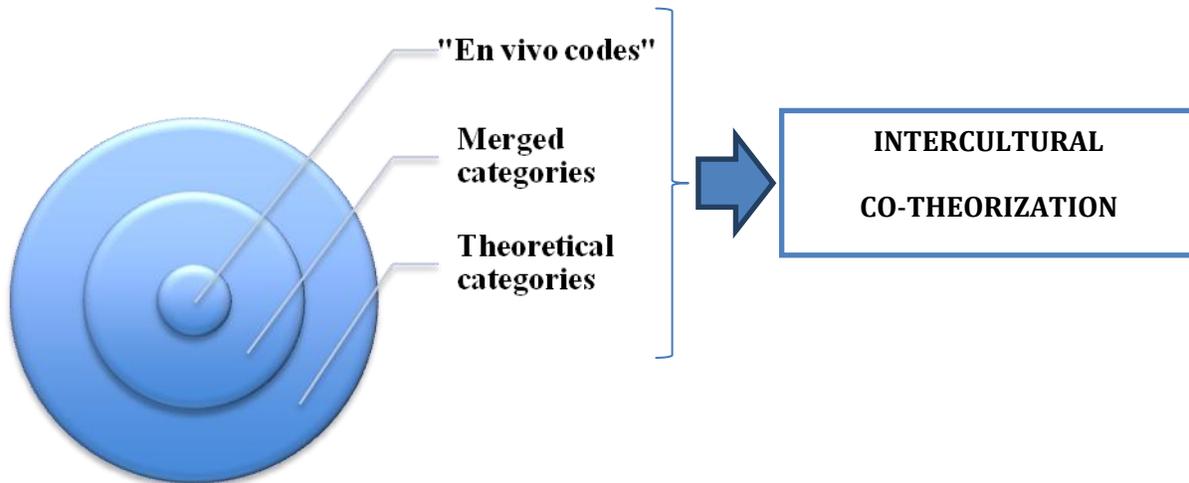


Figure 1. The intercultural co-theorization process.

definition of the teacher profile. Each one was marked with a code that identified the ethnical affiliation of the person who had stated it. Afterwards, 'en vivo codes' were identified that expressed the different collaborators' conceptions of the dimensions that were approached in relation to the teacher profile. These 'en vivo codes' were reviewed and the contributions of the indigenous collaborators (Indigenous Collaborators = IC) were differentiated from those of the *kaxlan* (*Kaxlan* Collaborations = KC) in order to consider the elements that could demonstrate how the different conceptions within the definition of the teacher profile could be joined together and/or contrasted. Two dimensions associated with the latter were identified, *el ser* and *el hacer* or "the being" and "the doing" of the teacher (the former stressing values and attitudes and the latter emphasizing practices). This was useful for qualitatively classifying the contributions of each collaborator and analyzing his respective contributions to the definition of the intercultural category of teacher-*acompañante*. Here are some examples:

ICB (indigenous contribution emphasizing the being of the teacher): Teachers must be connected to the community. They have to live and take part in the community, support it, and register the agreements of the assembly.

KCD (*Kaxlan* contribution emphasizing the doing of the teacher): Grade and ration the content. We must know what abilities and competencies are being practiced with each piece of content. If this is not clear, we are improvised teachers.

Having clarified the way that the information of the documentary corpus was classified, the analysis of the intercultural co-theorization process of the teacher-*acompañante* category could begin through the contributions of one of the *kaxlan* collaborators who, for

his leadership in the group and for his experience in the design of intercultural and bilingual educational programs,^v assumed the responsibility of coordinating the curriculum design process:

What is the teacher's role in school? It is to expand the children's knowledge. The teacher has an active role: he is a guide, a demonstrator. At the end of the class a child should know more than when he began. The teacher's role is positioned between these two tasks: expansion of knowledge and intercultural articulation between indigenous and scientific knowledge.

We can observe that, when laying out the teacher's main characteristics, the *kaxlan* collaborator placed emphasis on the dimension of the teacher's doing: expanding the knowledge of the child, intercultural articulation between indigenous and scientific knowledge, the acquisition of new competence.

We continue with the analysis of the indicators with which the *kaxlan* collaborator marked the beginning of the process for constructing the desirable teacher profile:

Teachers must support themselves with documentary evidence in order to become familiar with scientific knowledge, consulting books in order to complement the knowledge that the children already have. In order for the teachers to contribute their knowledge, they must learn more. They must qualify themselves. The curriculum

^vBetween 1985 and 1997, Dr. Jorge Gasché of the Peruvian Amazon Research Institute (IIAP) participated in the development and implementation of the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest's (AIDSESEP) curriculum proposal in Peru, which is an important precedent for the curriculum model that is analyzed in this article.

does not exclude the use of books, but books do not form the base; they are support. Teachers must first research, and then they can use a scientific text to explain their research to the children.

Once again, we observe that the *kaxlan* collaborator's indications emphasize the dimension of teachers' doing (supporting themselves with documentary evidence, qualifying themselves, researching). Now, in order to demonstrate how the process of co-theorizing the intercultural category of teacher-*acompañante* worked in practice, the following will show how the *kaxlan* collaborator's initial approaches were joined together with the indigenous collaborators' contributions.

Upon reviewing the documentary corpus diachronically, we observed that an important phase in this process of intercultural integration was carried out during the second curriculum design workshop when, by suggestion of the author, an activity was performed to recover the *individual educational stories* of the indigenous collaborators with their elementary teachers in order to retrospectively analyze and find elements that would contribute to the definition of the teacher profile that was being constructed.

In effect, the experiences of the indigenous collaborators from when they were elementary school students represent an important reference point for understanding the characteristics associated with the desirable teacher profile in the curriculum model that is being studied. In particular, the memory of the intercultural conflict that occurred with their teachers illustrated by the treatment they suffered (mistreatment, physical violence, punishments, humiliation) and manifested in the self-conception of the teacher in the relationship with indigenous students (teacher knows all, only repository of knowledge) and their cultures (superiority, contempt) is fundamental for understanding the emphasis that the UNEM educators associate with the dimension of being a teacher-*acompañante*.

In particular, by analyzing indigenous collaborators' individual educational stories we can gain an understanding of their insistence to define teachers in their educational proposal as additional classmates, except with a bit more experience. They help develop the knowledge that children already have, acting as fathers or mothers' who should have the same concern for the children in the classroom as they would have for their own children.

In the second curriculum design workshop, our indigenous collaborators define the central characteristics of what the teacher-*acompañante* would be:

What should the teachers be like? They recognize the child as a subject who possesses some knowledge acquired in the natural, social medium. All the knowledge that children have learned in their family and community environment is followed up on in school.

In the aforementioned paragraphs, two core aspects are

underlined that are once again related to the being of the teacher: 1) He or she must assume that children arrive to school with a set of knowledge that they have learned in their homes, in the community, and in the natural environments in which they live. 2) The school does not have to continue to be a space that breaks away from the community, but rather it can be one that follows through with it, one that provides socio-cultural continuity, as school-based knowledge is built based on what the children have learned and continues to learn in their community lives. Once again, we observe our indigenous collaborators' insistence within the dimension of the being of the teacher.

Another of our indigenous collaborators' contributions that would be fundamental in defining the intercultural category of teacher-*acompañante* was the idea that teachers must live and take part in the community, strengthen it, and register the agreements of the assembly. Throughout the entire curriculum design process, they stressed the teacher's connection to the community and, in particular, they highlighted the community's importance in regards to educational authority, to which the teacher should answer. In this way, they showed how UNEM's origins are sustained on the decision of some indigenous communities to take the control of their children's school-based education into their own hands, expelling official teachers and naming young people from the same community as educators (Roelofsen, 1999; Gutiérrez, 2005).

Yet, after analyzing contributions compiled from previous workshops, the need arose to think of a new term that would substitute the word 'teacher' and that would express the concept of the educator that was being constructed. It was during the workshop held in August 2008, and in response to the author's request, that one of the indigenous collaborators explicitly stated the 'en vivo code' of *acompañante*.

Teacher sounds a little more like someone who knows and only teaches. The teacher is like an *acompañante*. The official teachers have this mentality that they are teachers and that they teach, while we are referring to someone who guides during the learning process. The teacher should only help the children because the children can learn by themselves, they are free to learn on their own, but when they need something, the teacher helps them. Let the children be autonomous in their learning and let the teacher support them in their process, helping them to improve.

The emphasis on the dimension of the being of the teacher appears convincingly in our collaborator's contribution. By synthesizing and explicitly stating a concept of the teacher that is rooted in indigenous culture with the 'en vivocode' *acompañante*, he started to verbally define what one of the main characteristics of the teacher-*acompañante* would be in the curriculum proposal: to be conscious of the importance of not monopolizing the teaching process, and rather to share

this responsibility with the children, parents of the family, and residents of the community.

It is important to point out that the code *acompañante* came about in the curriculum design session. It was as if this word not only came from the person who contributed it, but that it also reflected a concept of the teacher that the other indigenous collaborators had known in community life and had practiced in their experiences as community educators. This 'en vivo code' was immediately echoed among the rest of the indigenous collaborators. Without questioning the term *acompañante* (this alone being very indicative of its rootedness), several of them began to supplement it and specify its relative characteristics and dimensions.

Having emerged from the reflection on practices and experiences in community education, the 'en vivo code' of *acompañante* represented an abstraction through which our collaborators synthesized a concept of the teacher rooted in the Tselal, Tsotsil, and Ch'ol cultures. In particular, through the 'en vivo code' of *acompañante*, two relevant aspects were combined that our collaborators emphasized throughout the entire process of creating the teacher's profile and that mainly stressed the dimension of the teacher's being.

As *acompañantes*, teachers do not direct or lead the teaching process, but rather they help the children in their development process that begins with the knowledge, skills, and values that they acquire in their homes and within the territory of the community. The *acompañantes* recognize children as active and autonomous subjects in the learning process, and so their role lies in accompanying them in a process that does not only depend on the teacher, but also depends on the children performing a central role.

In order to continue demonstrating how the process of co-theorizing the intercultural category of teacher-*acompañante* worked in practice and, in particular, with the aim of showing how this 'en vivo code' was joined with a theoretical category that already existed in the literature about indigenous pedagogy, we reintroduce a contribution from Paoli (2003) in reference to Tselal family and community education.

In particular, he explains that, as in other indigenous societies, among the Tselales, learning is a matter that has to do with an autonomous subject: The person who approaches knowledge is an autonomous being and no one can understand or learn for him. He must do it for himself (Paoli, 2003: p. 144 - 115). Actually, in the Tselal language and culture, the word *noptewswanej* is used to refer to what is defined as a teacher in Western culture, which can be translated as: "Someone who approaches another." The verb *noptsel* is to make the other approach, to foster him in having an experience (Paoli, 2003: p. 114). *Noptewswanej* does not teach something, but rather it introduces a process. First, it allows the other to see, experiment, and once he has experimented with something and brought it to his heart, it allows him to ask so that there is the desire to receive an answer. The true

noptewswanej leads us to experience its approach (Paoli, 2003: p.116-118). It seems evident that the 'en vivo code' of *acompañante* used by our indigenous collaborator to synthesize the concept of teacher is not only sustained in his practical experience in community education, but also supported by the theoretical analysis that Paoli has conducted in Tselal indigenous pedagogy. Thereby, it proves to be a code that merges into a pre-existing theoretical category. As shown in Figure 1, it is this combination that characterizes the intercultural co-theorization process that we developed through the MAI.

CONCLUSION

The concept of the teacher as an *acompañante* contrasts with the indications given by the *kaxlan* collaborator during the first curriculum design workshop, which emphasized the doing of the teacher more than the being of the teacher. Upon comparing these two conceptions of the being and the doing of the teacher, it would seem that the different collaborators who participated in the curriculum design process are presenting two contrasting ways of conceiving the teacher's role. One, from the *kaxlan* collaborator, is more in line with a traditional vision of a teacher who, fundamentally, teaches.

The other, deeply rooted in indigenous pedagogy, stresses the being of a teacher that, far from monopolizing the teaching process, accompanies children in the course of building school-based knowledge and invites community members to participate. By recovering their experiences and practices as community educators, our indigenous collaborators presented an interesting co-responsibility in the teaching-learning process among the teachers, children, and the children's parents.

This clash between the visions of the being of the teacher with that of the doing of the teacher is a clear example of how the intercultural conflict became apparent in the curriculum design process. However, it was possible to resolve this conflict through the MAI. Instead of maintaining the separation between teacher and *acompañante*, these two culturally positioned concepts could fuse together in the intercultural category of teacher-*acompañante*. It was the MAI that allowed us to co-theorize the intercultural category of teacher-*acompañante*, through which we merged two apparently contrasting concepts of the being and doing of the teacher. One Western, dominant, that the *kaxlan* adviser underlined by stressing the teacher's specific responsibility in the expansion of the children's knowledge and their attainment of new abilities. The other, which is deeply rooted in indigenous pedagogy, presents the collective participation and co-responsibility of the teacher, children, and community members in the process of building knowledge and in the children's education.

These two forms are distinct but complementary. The

intercultural fusion of conceiving the being and the doing of the teacher is an example of the intercultural co-theorization process among the indigenous collaborators and the *kaxlans* that characterized the design process for the “UNEM Curriculum Model of Intercultural Bilingual Education” (AAVV, 2009).

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